

The principle of community in Kant: conceptual and concrete dimensions of *sensus communis*

[O princípio de comunidade em Kant: dimensões conceituais e concretas do *sensus communis*]

Pedro Gallina Ferreira¹

Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Campinas, Brasil)

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Abstract

In this paper, I analyze the possible political significance that Kant's concept of the faculty of judgment <*Urteilkraft*> acquires when articulating abstract rules and concrete circumstances so as to reflect from a universal standpoint. Such a procedure is intrinsic to theoretical and practical interests of human reason in determining particular representations according to the transcendental categories of understanding and the ideas of pure reason. My goal is to explore the *communal aspect* of this universal perspective of judgment and of its development. Although Kant did not write about a theory of community, I argue that an investigation of his conception of *sensus communis* can provide a fruitful approach to the collective dimension of his “architectonic of reason”. I aim to show that common sense and social reciprocity should work as a substrate to political judgment as far as they are considered the result of a transcendental idea of community. **Keywords:** Community; *sensus communis*; faculty of judgment; Politics; Anthropology.

Resumo

Neste artigo, analiso a possível significação política que o conceito da faculdade de julgar de Kant adquire ao articular regras abstratas e circunstâncias concretas para refletir de um ponto de vista universal. Tal procedimento é intrínseco aos interesses teóricos e práticos da razão humana em determinar representações particulares de acordo com as categorias transcendentais do entendimento e as ideias da razão pura. Meu objetivo é explorar o *aspecto comunal* dessa perspectiva universal do juízo e o seu desenvolvimento. Apesar de Kant não ter escrito sobre uma teoria da comunidade, argumento que uma investigação da sua concepção de *sensus communis* pode fornecer uma abordagem frutífera à dimensão coletiva da sua “arquitetônica da razão”. Busco mostrar que o senso comum e a reciprocidade social devem funcionar como um substrato do juízo político, desde que sejam considerados o resultado de uma ideia transcendental de comunidade.

Palavras-chave: Comunidade; *sensus communis*, faculdade de julgar, Política; Antropologia.

¹ Doutorando em Filosofia pela Universidade Estadual de Campinas. E-mail: pgferreira94@gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4773-5915>.

I. Introduction

In the contemporary framework of the critical revisiting of the Enlightenment legacy and the modern origins of ethical-political universalism, Immanuel Kant's work still remains one of the most important sources of debate regarding the normative validity of practical reason and its effectiveness in guiding agents situated under complex social and historical conditions.² Even when facing a complete overcome by more encompassing conceptions of reasoning, or risking being left aside due to its strong metaphysical assumptions, the historic and philosophical reconstruction of Kantian practical reason is still acknowledged to “provide a critical standard against which actual practices – the opaque and perplexing reality of the constitutional state – could be evaluated”.³ However, such a reconstruction should consider, at the same time, abstract and concrete aspects of human reasoning, as well as the intersection between practical and theoretical domains of thinking.

In this paper, my goal is to approach the question of whether Kant's political philosophy can offer such an open conception of reason by means of the analysis of the mediating role of the faculty of judgment. I will address the political significance of the power of judgment <Urteilkraft> in articulating abstract rules and concrete circumstances from the perspective of the reflectivity of communication, which I argue is contained in Kant's conception of *sensus communis*. By comparing passages from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Kant's *Anthropology*, I will defend that the importance of *sensus communis* for connecting autonomy and community is better contemplated once we take Kant's distinction between aesthetic and logical common sense as containing a critical and an anthropological meanings. Such an understanding allows to differentiate between the transcendental and the empirical dimensions of community or reciprocity. My main focus are the reflecting conditions of political action, once it is considered the necessary connection between *a priori* and *a posteriori* principles in the act of judgment. I begin with a brief discussion about the plausibility of this reading and move on to an overview of Kant's conception of judgment in Politics. The last part of this paper deals with some supporting interpretations of the political significance of the *sensus communis*.

II. Kantian models of political judgment

It may seem odd to search for a conception of political judgment in Kant's political philosophy, once we discover that this terminology is not to be found in his work. Indeed, the notion of a political function or use of the faculty of judgment is not explicitly put in such words. The enterprise of a “Kantian theory of political judgment” may appear to many as a serious misunderstanding of Kant's own interests in political theory, specially due to its philosophical basis be considered Hobbes', Locke's and Rousseau's contractarianism – and, thus, in a direct opposition to Aristotle's and Maquiavelli's prudencalist theory of political virtues. Therefore, the overall thesis that there is such a conception in Kant overshadows his true critical analysis of the political normativity concerning the “united will of the people” and its historico-juridical conditions of effectiveness in history. At best, it amounts to a grave anachronism, led by the general impetus of contemporary theorists of dissolving all philosophical systems and detaching their elements according to alien interests.

² Santos, 2012, p. 29 et alia: “If there is a neokantianism in the last quarter of the twentieth century, [...] it is moved by a new interest in ethical, political and juridical issues”, which now preferably mobilizes Kant's work “from the fecund perspectives opened by the third Critique to capture the deeper significance of Kant's conception of reason and the still possible meaning for the human condition”.

³ Habermas, 1996, p. 5. See also Beiner and Booth, 1993, Introduction; Beiner and Nedelsky, 2001, Introduction; Kneller and Axinn, 1998, Preface.

Although Kant did not write about political judgment, there are plenty of good reasons to assume such an enterprise is *plausible*. First of all, the terminology indicates a possible political role of the faculty of judgment and, as one of the legislating cognitive faculties of human reason, judgment is a terminology which definitely applies to politics. Or, at least, Kant did not deny that the faculty of judgment could play any role in political matters. Second, even if we accepted that Kant's political philosophy deals exclusively with the republican principle of the "united will of the people", it would not exclude that the faculty of judgment could still have an important role to play in constituting the formation of the united will – for instance, when universalizing the principle of publicity and seeking political consent.

In order to elaborate on this discussion and raise the question whether the *sensus communis* plays any special role in it, I would like to begin with three different variations of a Kantian political judgment. Possibly the most famous one is Hannah Arendt's well-known political reinterpretation of aesthetic judgment in her *Lectures of Kant's Political Philosophy*, inspired by Kant's conception of "[universal and yet unselfish] participation <allgemeine und doch uneigennützigte Theilnehmung>" in the *Conflict of Faculties* (SF, AA 07: 85). Arendt was the first to draw attention to the politically relevant aspects of *sensus communis aestheticus* as a reflective distancing of actions and events that create potentially public spaces of communication to judging spectators.⁴

We found that in Kant the common distinction or antagonism between theory and practice in political matters is the distinction between the spectator and the actor, and to our surprise we saw that the spectator had precedence; what counted in the French Revolution, what made it a world-historical event, a phenomenon not to be forgotten, were not the deeds and misdeeds of the actors, but the opinions, the enthusiastic approbation, of spectators, of persons who themselves were not involved. We saw that these uninvolved and non-participating spectators [...] were involved with one another (in contradistinction to the Pythagorean spectator at the Olympic games or the spectators in the Platonic cave, who could not communicate with one another). This much we got from Kant's political writings; but in order to understand this position, we turned to the *Critique of Judgment*, and there we found that Kant was confronting a similar or analogous situation, the relation between the artist, the maker, or the genius and his audience. Again the question arose for Kant: Who is the more noble, and which is the more noble quality, to know how to make or to know how to judge? (Arendt, 1982, p. 65).

Arendt argues that Kant's analysis of taste contains in fact an investigation of the human capacity to communicate themselves and establish a common shared reality from which to assess thinking and acting. According to Arendt, it all starts with *impartiality*: an examination that is "obtained by taking the viewpoint of others into account; not the result of some higher standpoint that would actually settle the dispute" (Arendt, 1982, p. 42). The application of "critical standards to one's own thought" – in order to seek enlightenment – is learned by impartiality. Arendt views impartiality as a way of ascribing to disinterestedness and linking it with the first and second maxims of common understanding. To think for oneself is to disregard self-interest in order to reach "a viewpoint from which to look upon, form judgments and reflect on human affairs" (Arendt, 1982, p. 43-44). To think in the position of others is to "judge as a member of a community"; and once it reaches a generality, it judges as "a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human" (Arendt, 1982, p. 76). Critical and enlarged thinking together form the criterion of correctness of judgment: leaving "the part of the whole that concerns us" in order to "see the whole that gives meaning to the particulars" (Arendt, 1982, p. 68-69).⁵ Such is the standpoint of the spectator that ascribes to universality.

⁴ I will not go into critical details concerning Arendt's general use of Kantian philosophy for her own work or its consequences to Kantian exegesis, though I am aware of the difficulties of employing her interpretation as an explanatory commentary on Kant. Arendt cannot (and should not) be taken as a strict commentator of Kant's work; however, it is undeniable that her peculiar (and often unprecise) reading of Kant's philosophy had a profound influence in investigations regarding the role of the faculty of judgment in moral and political contemporary philosophy. For details, see Santos (2012), Terra (2001) and Ellis (2005).

⁵ The adoption of maxims for common understanding "testifies to one's revolution of the way of thinking in worldly

According to Arendt, *sensus communis* is the capacity to guide the practice of impartiality that leads to disinterestedness, which then gives rise to critical and enlarged thinking. It activates the reflecting power of judgment so it can work by means of heuristic ideas (original contract of society, original contract of taste, purposiveness of nature)⁶ that initiates the search for a general standpoint. However, Arendt proposes that, instead of purely rational ideas, *sensus communis* operates by examples: “the exemplar is and remains a particular that [...] reveals the generality that otherwise could not be defined” (Arendt, 1982, p. 75-77). With this claim, Arendt refers to Kant’s definition of reflection in the *First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment*: “comparing and holding together given representations [...] in relation to a concept thereby made possible” (EE, AA 20: 211). For Arendt, common sense is “an extra-sense [...] that fits us into a community” (Arendt, 1982, p. 70) and, therefore, is “what [the faculty of] judgment appeals to in everyone, and it is this possible appeal that gives judgments their special validity” (Arendt, 1982, p. 72) – that is, the fact that they can be universally communicated and appeal to everyone’s consent. Arendt’s view of the disinterestedness of aesthetic judgments in politics leaves a breach to explore community, communication, and aesthetic sensibility in Kant.⁷

Arendt’s interpretation of a political judgment in Kant also brought enormous interest to Kant’s pragmatism in politics, which would in turn refuse any specially political role to aesthetic common sense. In *Kant’s Politics: Provisional Theory for an Uncertain World*, Elisabeth Ellis presents the following critique of the political role of *sensus communis* or aesthetic judgment. Since aesthetic judgments are not determined by empirical knowledge of the human being in the world or even ideas of practical reason, any analogy with the political domain is bound to forfeit the conditions of judgment in the practical domain of right and pragmatic anthropology (Ellis, 2005, p. 49). This is so, because such a wider view on Kantian politics through the lenses of the power of judgment may fall within metaphysical fallacies of rationalist teleology and stray from any “internally coherent or empirically plausible” theory of the organization of collective life. For Ellis, Kant facilitates Arendt’s misleading interpretation as he “fails to emphasize reflectivity” as the main criterion of aesthetic judgment (Ellis, 2005, p. 57).

For Ellis, the “common human understanding” <*gemeiner Menschenverstand*> is the basis of political judgment in the public sphere (“ordinarily at work”): “in judging the gap between political ideals and reality, Kant’s members of the judging public apply standards derived from common moral principles to actual institutions of government”⁸ and “such judgment does not require enlarged thinking” (Ellis, 2005, p. 58). In fact, political judgment from this perspective “requires no special act of imagination”, but only determining judgment based on “ordinary sociability”. Therefore, Ellis considers the maxims of common human understanding contradictory, if they are supposed to (as Kant says they do) “serve to elucidate [the] principle [of the faculty of judgment]”. Ellis argues that there must be only a distinction between the “process of abstraction from circumstances” (which is identified with the maxim of thinking for oneself and rising out of prejudices) and the “process of universalization” (which is “the mode of thinking” that determine what is morally relevant) if we are to elucidate the reflecting procedure contained by the maxims of human understanding (Ellis, 2005, p. 58).

On the other hand, the *sensus communis* (which is identified by Ellis with the maxim of “thinking from the standpoint of everyone else”) is “only part of common sense” as containing the basic human mental apparatus and, therefore, it is “the source of a kind of unity, yet it is strictly speaking not a sense at all but a cognitive [undeterminative] ability”, which serves “merely

matters that are ruled by community sense” (Arendt, 1982, p. 71).

⁶ The original contract of taste (KU, AA 05: 297) provides a definition of humanity based on “the universal feeling of participation” and “the capacity for being able to communicate one’s inmost self universally” (KU, AA 05: 355).

⁷ Arendt, 1982, p. 64, 70-71; *Anth*, AA 07: 139, 145, 197-8, 201, 228.

⁸ This is a derived reading of the public use of reason from Kant’s definition of politics as the “applied doctrine of right” <*kausübender Rechtslehre*> (ZeF, AA 08: 370) in *Perpetual Peace*. It points to the mediating ground of the power of judgment as a “middle term required between theory and practice, providing a link and a transition from one to the other” (TP, AA 08: 275).

[as] the basis for the presupposition of universality expressed in a judgment” (Ellis, 2005, p. 59). From this kind of subjective metaphysical condition, it follows that enlarged thought cannot be “the criterion for political truth”. This variation of Kantian political judgment denies the role of aesthetic judgment in politics due to its indeterminability. Since aesthetic judgments cannot be determined neither by concepts of the understanding nor by principles of practical reason, any analogy with the political domain is bound to forfeit the objective conditions of judgment in its application (Ellis, 2005, p. 49). Only logical common sense is allowed to enter the realm of principled praxis.

The third variation of judgment in politics is that of Onora O’Neill, presented in *Constructions of Reason*, and it offers a *procedimental* approach. O’Neill claims that Kant’s *sensus communis* can articulate ways in which the principle of autonomy (the supreme principle of reason or Categorical Imperative) bears on practices of communication that formally constrain an unrestricted diversity of understandings: “self-discipline of thinking will be required if there is to be communication among a plurality whose members are not antecedently coordinated” (O’Neill, 1989, p. 25).⁹ Political significance stems from the fact that the maxims of common understanding are rational principles that can define tasks and constraints for an open-ended orientation of judgment: “a lawlike guidance of thinking and doing in a dynamic process that neither submits to outside control nor fails to acknowledge differences of opinion and practice, and which treats resulting contradictions and tensions as demanding revision” (O’Neill, 2015, p. 34). *Sensus communis* is the discursive grounding of practical reason and it “points to conditions of possible communication, leaving it open how far this will enable settlement of truth, moral and other claims” (O’Neill, 2015, p. 31).

Differently from Ellis, O’Neill views *sensus communis* as a transcendental presupposition of practical reason, if there is to be any reasoned and principled judgment. Therewith, it articulates the three ways of thinking (KU, AA 05: 294-5) as discursive principles for judging within possible communities. However, this reading may relapse into the “arid formalism” it seeks to tackle. O’Neill’s proceduralism does not dwell on elements of aesthetic judgment, but only on the logical conditions and constraints of communicability. This strong open-ended epistemic elaboration seems to abdicate the connection of common sense with human sensibility and its anthropological grounds.

III. The political significance of the faculty of judgment

Considering the previous discussion of the three different models of Kantian political judgment, it may be well to ask the following question about the reflecting procedure of the *sensus communis*. Could the Kantian enlarged mentality offer relevant and compelling standards for political judgment? By considering the *idea of a sense of community as a principle of judgment*, could one broaden the practice of executing abstract rules to concrete circumstances? Would it be possible to a reflecting procedure guide political thought and action by taking in account sensible aspects (sentimental, religious, cultural) of the public sphere only visible through interpretation and communication? I believe it is plausible to think that, as long as we can relate *reflecting judgment* to *publicity* in Kant’s work.

Within the architectonic, the public use of reason constitutes the normative structure of the *judging public*. The judging public was Kant’s addressed readers of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, whose “ripened power of judgment” demanded the institution of the tribunal of reason for the sake of “free and public examination” of traditional authority (KrV, A xi). It was established

⁹ Kantian reason cannot be dialogical in the sense of a “product of real-time, actual dialogue”, but only as taking others into account through the offering of “patterns of thought which others can follow without assuming some arbitrary starting point” (O’Neill, 2015, p. 67-68).

by a civilizing historical progress of collective cultivation and instruction that transformed “the primitive natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles” (*IaG*, AA 08: 21) and it reached intellectual and political autonomy to speak for itself (*Mündigkeit*) in the age of enlightenment. The main task of the judging public is to learn how to use its reason and it must do so publicly: autonomous agents gathered in community should think “as a member of a complete commonwealth <*gemeines Wesen*> or even of cosmopolitan society”, who communicates with others “as men of learning <*Gelehrter*> addressing the entire reading public <*Publikum der Leserwelt*>” (*WA*, AA 08: 37).

The kind of publicity which is necessary to the formation of the judging public is based on the progress of civil institutions and culture. But ultimately, publicity is the form of reason itself: “The very existence of reason depends upon this freedom [of critique], which has no dictatorial authority, but whose claim is never anything more than the agreement of free citizens, each of whom must be able to express his reservations” (*KrV*, A 739 / B 767). The cultivation of the power of judgment as rational disposition for communication allows the progress of humanity’s moral worth. Common practical knowledge is extended by the public examination of social norms, which are then viewed within a more complex structure of interrelation of pure and empirical principles of the will, as they are distinguished and compared in concrete or hypothetical examples. Such is the case of moral education through conversation, in which Kant finds a “propensity of [common] reason to enter with pleasure upon even the most subtle examination of practical questions” that can serve to exercise the power of judgment “by comparison of similar actions under different circumstances” (*KpV*, AA 05: 154). This also seems to be the case for republican reformism in public deliberation, by which citizens “comment publicly [...] on the inadequacies of current institutions” to reach “public insight into the nature of such matters” and produce public opinion <*Vereinigung der Stimme*> (*WA*, AA 08: 39). These are conditions of the sensible and affected nature of human will, whose practice sharpens the power of judgment through experience, in order to distinguish the cases practical laws can be applied and to emphasize their fulfillment <*Ausübung*> (*GMS*, AA 04: 389).

In the first Appendix to *Perpetual Peace*, Kant defines *politics* as “*ausübende Rechtslehre*” – “the applied doctrine of right” – in distinction from *morality*, which is defined as “the theoretical doctrine of right” (*ZeF*, 08: 370). This definition implies two complementary aspects of the Kantian political judgment. First, that if political agents aim at achieving their ends, they must consider the particular historical circumstances and the effects of their decisions on civil society, different States, and even the human world as a whole. We may call this first aspect prudential or realistic: politics is “a practice [*Praxis*] based on empirical principles of human nature... which draws instruction for its maxims from the way things happen in the world” (*ZeF*, 08: 371).

The second aspect is that to which morality serves as a “limiting condition” to the execution of political ends and as a “set of laws that command us unconditionally and according to which we must act” (*ZeF*, 08: 370). As the theoretical part of politics, morality establishes the boundaries <*Grenzen*> of political practice, because the finitude inherent to human reason “is not sufficiently clarified to grasp the series of pre-determined causes that allows predicting with certainty the fortunate or unfortunate outcome of men’s actions and omissions according to the mechanism of nature” (*ZeF*, 08: 370). Thus, political prudence depends on morality to conform to natural law, which must serve as a model for choosing the correct ends and learning to stay on the path that leads to perpetual peace, the perfect constitution, and justice (*ZeF*, AA 08: 372).

For the realization (or approximation) of these political ideas, agents must take the *transcendental principle of publicity* <*Publizität*> as the ground of determination of their actions. Publicity mediates the external coercion of right and the internal coercion of morality, so as to “dispel all suspicion against [political] maxims” and become the universal condition of the “union of the ends of all” (*ZeF*, AA 08: 387). This results in Kant’s definition of the *moral politician* – that is, the representative of the sovereign people who guides himself in executing

the ideals of practical reason through the test of publicity. By making their judgments universally communicable, decisions are debated and concretely evaluated by civil society, guaranteeing sovereignty and justice through the assent of the united will of the people. Still, this publicist mechanism cannot go without the “permissive laws of reason” that “allow the postponement of execution until a more opportune moment” (ZeF, AA 08: 373), and contributes to the approximation of ends in a prudent manner and through gradual reforms, attentive to the internal and external circumstances of the State (ZeF, AA 08: 372).

There are two historical readings that emphasize the importance of this mediation between pure principles and sensible attention to context in political matters. In an extended comparative analysis, Frederick Beiser shows that one of the central issues of German Enlightenment was that of the possibility and effectiveness of human reason guiding politically moral actions. According to Beiser, this quarrel was transformed by the reception of the French Revolution: the function of rationality shifts from *critical and normative* (an “instrument of social and political reform”) to *explanatory*, in order to understand how institutions, laws, and traditions arose and developed empirically, “making society what it is out of necessity” (Beiser, 1992, p. 6).

In turn, Dieter Henrich explains how Kant had revitalized the classic meaning of application (*Ausübung*) as an “action-oriented theory” in the Kantian essay *Theory and Practice*. If theory and practice are distinct ways of acting rationally in the world and, thus, fields of meaning determined by specific principles, then the faculty of judgment is the mental activity responsible for the “connection and transition <Übergang>” from one to another, through which “it is distinguished whether something is or is not a case of the rule” (TP, AA 08: 275). Therefore, the distinction between theory and practice in politics consolidates the Kantian meaning of judging according to universal principles: the search for the appropriate rules to act in particular circumstances, much like an investigation guided by ideas of reason, which are thought of as “signs in experience” or constantly approaching their realization (TP, AA 08: 276).

On the other hand, in the essay “Determination and Reflection in *Perpetual Peace*”, Ricardo Terra presents an interesting systematic kind of reading of the political role of the power of judgment. His hypothesis aims at reconstructing Kantian political judgment exclusively from the distinction between the determining and reflective procedures of the faculty of judgment in the third *Critique*. This way, Kant’s view of politics turns into a systematic interweaving of different spheres and levels of theoretical and practical knowledge, in which reflection and determination coherently articulate the pure principles of morality, law, and virtue with those empirical conditions related to natural history, pragmatic anthropology, and aesthetics (Terra, 2001, p. 95-99). Thus, the relationship between political action and the faculty of judgment is based on an *architectonic of practical reason*: that is, on a complex theory of action that involves a wide variety of rational procedures (ibidem, p. 83). This means that it is impossible to understand Kant’s Political Philosophy without considering the sensitive nuances of human nature, such as perception, feeling, sociability, habit, and education.

Through the faculty of judgment, the relationship between theory and practice constitutes the critical unity of knowledge of the hybrid human nature (animal and rational, phenomenal and intelligible), insofar as human action comes to be understood as *an ordered whole of its individual parts*. From the point of view of the rational ground of determination, every action can be considered, at the same time, in the field of the laws of nature – inserted in a complex system of efficient causes – and in the field of the laws of freedom, in which agents experience absolute spontaneity and the autonomy of their own decisions. In summary, although Kant did not use the term “political judgment”, it is possible to outline a theory of political judgment from the connection between the judging public, the definition of politics as “the applied doctrine of right” and the mediating activity of the faculty of judgment.

IV. The political dimension of common sense is the substrate of human nature

As I have emphasized so far, from the models of political judgment to the political significance of the faculty of judgment, the rational activity of determining representations according to pure principles of the understanding and the will does not exclude rational considerations of those empirical conditions of human nature in which judgment actually takes place. In fact, in order to determine anything at all, human beings depend on a faculty of judgment that reflect upon the sensible conditions of fulfillment of those pure principles (even if their judgments are partial or illegitimate and end up producing transcendental illusions).

This hypothesis is supported by the psychological and anthropological fact linked to publicity and to human perception. The transcendental concept of publicity, which demands that every maxim is to be universally and publicly manifested, mirrors the physical interaction of all individuals of the human species with each other, as long as they are within the limited boundaries of the planet Earth. Without these two dimensions together – conceptual and sensible – communication and communal life are simply impossible to be understood from a rationally ordered perspective. Publicity must not only be a goal of political action, but also its ground in human sociability. For it constitutes the empirical substrate of human action, concerning not only the “knowledge of the world” of each individual, society, and people, but also the pragmatic knowledge about what the human being is and what can be made of him as a rational and free being (Z_eF, AA 08: 374).

The contemporary readings of Kant’s practical philosophy have shown the wider and structural meaning of politics that emerges from Kant’s political metaphors for expressing the public and collective dimension of reasoning. According to them, the critical method is a reflective, antidogmatic and intersubjective enterprise for elaborating, bridging and grounding universal principles by which agents can autonomously orient themselves within a worldwide community. Kant’s conceptions of publicity and *sensus communis* that operate at the base of human sociability join the collective formation of autonomous judgment with the development of discursive and communal capacities through maxims of interpretation and communication. I would like to consider three possible ways of elaborating on the link between the epistemic, aesthetic and anthropological meaning of *sensus communis* that indicates its political significance and what it is implied in this conception of communal interaction that seems to inspire those of publicity.

In “Commerce and Community in Kant’s Early Thought”, Susan Shell seeks to explain how Kant anticipates results of his later political philosophy by reflecting, still in the 1750s, on the universe as “a community of reciprocally related and dynamic elements” (Shell, 1993, p. 117). The problem of community emerges from the cosmological metaphysical question of conceiving the world as “a universal mechanical system that is at the same time the object of God’s plan”, but gradually evolving into an epistemological question of how to explain human knowledge of nature as a complex unity of individual parts that are maintained in reciprocal relation through a common ground (Shell, 1993, p. 119). Thus, the category of community makes the totality of experience intelligible through *reciprocity*, without appealing to essential or absolute forms of world, time, and cause (Shell, 1993, p. 118).

According to Shell, there are three complementary *metaphysical connotations of community* based on reciprocity. The first one concerns the Newtonian notion of “interaction” <commercium>, being used to describe the reciprocal relation of different physical elements among themselves, as interrelated substances in the same world (Shell, 1993, p. 144). The second one deals with the Leibnizian reciprocity that is obtained from each individual substance by its immediate relation to an end (the idea of God, the providence of nature, the definition of rational being etc.) (Shell, 1993, p. 144). And the third meaning indicates the Aristotelian mutual relationship of

unity between body and spirit, as a condition of human finitude and self-conscious rationality (Shell, 1993, p. 145). Shell argues that Kant does not abandon these notions of communal <*gemeinschaftlich*>, but transforms them throughout his thought, mainly through critical teleology, into regulatory ideas of history, politics, and aesthetics (Shell, 1993, p. 148). Shell also points out that the philosophical meaning of reciprocity functions as *a principle of interconnection between non-hierarchical parts*.

Following the investigation of the concept of community through the work of Margit Ruffing, we attain its *anthropological meaning*. Ruffing considers Kantian pragmatic anthropology a theory of the formation of human consciousness and its spiritual faculties, which begs the question of the most appropriate way of thinking for the collective life of human society (Ruffing, 2015, p. 340). The common ground of such a process is common sense <*Gemeinsinn*>, the basis of rational activity that can be assumed in all human beings.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant distinguishes two meanings of *common sense*. The first one is that of the “common human understanding” or “healthy understanding” – the faculty of judging according to “concepts and principles obscurely represented” (KU, 05: 238). It is a natural, uncultivated intellectual capacity that is formed through intuition, reflection, and practical knowledge. Kant presents three fundamental maxims for the constitution of a healthy understanding: *to think for oneself* (maxim of thinking freely from prejudices), *to think in the place of all others* (maxim of enlarged or liberal thinking), *to think in accordance with oneself* (maxim of consistent thinking). Each of these interrelated maxims develops a specific faculty of knowledge: respectively, understanding, the faculty of judgment, and reason. Therefore, once interrelated, these maxims lead to the full development of the faculty of knowledge and to the true freedom of thought, seen by Kant as “the most important revolution within the human being” (Anth, AA 07: 229).

The second meaning of common sense is that of *sensus communis*: “a faculty of judging that in its reflection takes account (a priori) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole” (KU, AA 05: 294). Unlike common understanding, *sensus communis* is a subjectively universal regulative principle of reflective judgment, being a necessary presupposition for assent and unanimity among different judging spectators (KU, AA 05: 239). In the quality of a communal sense, it functions as a procedure for attributing *exemplary validity*, that is, an “ideal norm under the presupposition of which one could rightfully make a judgment that agrees with it and the satisfaction in an object that is expressed in it into a rule for everyone” (KU, AA 05: 239).

Kant claims that the two meanings of common sense can be called *sensus communis*: while the first one is logical, because it relates to the reciprocity of understandings seeking correctness; the second is aesthetical, for it relates to the reciprocity of feelings (KU, AA 05: 295). *Thinking in the place of all others* is the core of common sense, as we must “hold our judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgment of others, and putting ourselves into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our own judgment” (KU, AA 05: 293). However, only the aesthetic common sense can be strictly called a *sensus communis*, due to the pureness of its communicability without the mediation of concepts.

According to Ruffing, in Kant’s architectonic of reason, the amplitude of thinking is at the same time an anthropological component of the system of human consciousness and the transcendental condition of taste (Ruffing, 2012, p. 176). In the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant says that the purpose of the enlarged way of thinking is to overcome the egoism of isolated thought and to examine the correctness of our own understanding in comparison with the understanding of others (Anth, AA 07: 219). The enlarged way of thinking guides agents towards *pluralism*, which means “considering and conducting oneself as if one were a mere citizen of the world” (Anth, AA 07: 130).

However, reciprocity can only become the common ground for a collectively shared human consciousness when the sensibly apprehended representations are judged by feelings and reflected from the point of view of its universal communicability (Ruffing, 2012, p. 171-172). Therefore, *sensus communis* is not only a presupposition of the logical intelligibility of judgments, but also an *heuristic idea of humanity*, like an original contract that obliges each person to expect and demand from all others the universal communication of sensations (KU, AA 05: 297).

Leonel Ribeiro dos Santos highlight this normative aspect of common sense by drawing attention to the importance of communication to the constitution of a “community of reason”. In *Metaphors of Reason*, Santos elaborates on the transcendental dimension of *sensus communis* by focusing on the form of the public authority of reason, arguing that reason operates as a community. The communal sense works as a perspectivistic metaphor of rationality, a guiding sense to rational life that seeks to align one’s judgment with all of humanity (Santos, 1994, p. 608). Enlarged thinking is the way human consciousness opens up and relates to a world inhabited by multiple objects and subjects, seeking that unity of perspectives that would allow multiplicity to become a coherent and complete whole (Santos, 1994, p. 605). In the case of aesthetic judgments, “communal” means an universal point of view within a “world of feelings”, that is, a way of feeling humane or part of humanity. Thus, *sensus communis* constitutes the transcendental structure of reflecting judgment from a political perspective: to reflect is to “arise in thought to a universal standpoint from which one can understand their own and other’s manner of thinking”; (Santos, 1994, p. 608). According to Santos, such equivalence between the community of reason and publicity represents the republican core of the authority of reason and its link with the critical method.

IV. Conclusion

The psychological and anthropological fact of human reciprocity is necessary to the connection between politics, publicity and the faculty of judgment. Not only the metaphysics of morals is a condition for political action, but also anthropology and aesthetics, which set the expanded way of thinking through reflection and communication – two fundamental aspects for considering the human praxis in its context. The meaning of “community” and “communal” preserves the notion of reciprocal individual parts interrelated in a systematic whole through the idea of universal communicability, as practices of communication or expressions of a world of reason and feeling. This way, exploring the sensible conditions of the Kantian conception of agency may provide valuable insights into the perspective of the autonomy of the will as self-legislation within a world community.

Kant’s practical philosophy is revered for its continuous and systematic effort of elaborating, grounding and bridging universal principles by which agents may autonomously orient thought and action within a worldwide community. Several epochal and contemporary readings of Kant’s work have focused on the rational conditions of his conception of moral agency fundamentally based on the political conceptions of practical reason and autonomy of the will as self-legislation.¹⁰ By taking into account Kant’s architectonic of practical reason with its many domains and levels of transition through the power of judgment, such readings could be developed into a myriad of Kantian theories that brought together insights on the human sensibility, sociability and community.

¹⁰ O’Neill (1989, 2015), Hulshof (2020).

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