

## Application of the Doctrine of Method in the critical examination of reason

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### I.

In his *Discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*, at the beginning of his Latin *Logic*,<sup>1</sup> Christian Wolff asserts that the method of Philosophy is the very same as that of Mathematics: *Methodi philosophicae eadem sunt regulae, quae methodi mathematicae* (1740, § 139, p. 69). Already in 1762 Kant states that it is not so: namely, that the method of Philosophy is very different from that of Mathematics and in some respects it is downright opposed to it.<sup>2</sup>

Let us describe some of the moments of the philosophical method proposed by Kant in 1762, which are retained later on in the *Methodenlehre* of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The foremost aspect of this method of 1762 is precisely such distinction between the philosophical and the mathematical methods; a distinction which is performed by means of a detailed exposition of the philosophical method, throughout which Kant states the differences there are between both methods. We can distinguish there:

1) A first moment, wherein there is but an obscure and confuse concept; such concept cannot be accounted for (“it is already given”).<sup>3</sup> Yet its origin does not matter, since philosophical work starts precisely with that initial concept, as if nothing of that sort had ever previously existed.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Wolff: *Philosophia rationalis sive Logica Methodo scientifica pertractata et ad usum scientiarum atque vitae aptata*. Praemittitur *discursus praeliminaris de philosophia in genere*. We quote according to *Editio Tertia* (1740).

<sup>2</sup> *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*. Zur Beantwortung der Frage, welche die Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin auf das Jahr 1763 aufgegeben hat (hereinafter UDG), AA II, 273f. Kant’s exposition reminds that of Pascal about the opposition of *Esprit de Géométrie* and *Esprit de Finesse*; but although Kant mentions Pascal in several instances, I have not found any actual reference pointing out those concepts.

<sup>3</sup> *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* AA II, 276: “Es ist hier der Begriff von einem Dinge schon gegeben, aber verworren und nicht genugsam bestimmt”.

- 2) Detecting some element within the concept. To this end it becomes necessary to “analyse the concept”.<sup>4</sup>
- 3) The so detected elements are isolated and separately studied, in order to bring them to their foremost clarity and distinction.<sup>5</sup> Isolation of the elements and their separate study form part of the second rule of the method stated in UDG.
- 4) The cognitions obtained by means of the study of the separated elements serve as axioms for the deduction of further knowledge.<sup>6</sup> These new cognitions must necessarily give rise to references to hitherto undetected elements (since on distinctly knowing the elements *precisely as elements* we may then become aware of their reference to the whole of which they are part of; being a part of a whole, the isolated element demands the existence of other elements of the same whole). The fore-mentioned new elements must be submitted then to the same procedure as in step 3.<sup>7</sup>
- 5) After study, elements are unified or synthesized (they are now clearer and more distinct while each one of them bears a reference to the other ones) thus allowing us to attain partial syntheses.<sup>8</sup>
- 6) Once the discerned elements are dealt with in this way, the partial syntheses are unified in turn, in a complete and all embracing synthesis. Such synthesis is to Philosophy what definition is to Mathematics. Thus it is manifest that in Philosophy definition is reached at the end of research, being the last step of methodical procedure (we can even disregard definition without therefor resigning the accomplishment of our philosophical task);<sup>9</sup> whereas in Mathematics we start by providing a

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<sup>4</sup> UDG, AA II, 276 s.: “Ich muss ihn zergliedern [...] um Merkmale derselben [d. i. der gegebenen “Idee”, MC] durch zergliederung zu entdecken”. In the same sense we read in UDG, AA II, 285: “Die zweite Regel ist: daß man die unmittelbare Urtheile von dem Gegenstände in Ansehung desjenigen, was man zuerst in ihm mit Gewißheit antrifft, besonders auszeichnet”.

<sup>5</sup> “Ich muss [...] die abgesonderte Merkmale [...] ausführlich und bestimmt machen.” UDG, AA II, 277. Equally, it is demanded in UDG, AA II, 285: “dass man gewiss ist, dass das eine [unmittelbare Urteil, MC] in dem andern nicht enthalten sei”. Namely isolation of the elements and their separate study is required.

<sup>6</sup> “Die zweite Regel ist: daß man die unmittelbare Urtheile von dem Gegenstände in Ansehung desjenigen, was man zuerst in ihm mit Gewißheit antrifft, besonders auszeichnet und [...] sie so wie die Axiomen der Geometrie als die Grundlage zu allen Folgerungen voranschickt.” UDG, AA II, 285.

<sup>7</sup> [Ich muss] “verschiedene abstrahirte Merkmale [...] unter einander zusammenhalten, ob nicht zum Theil eins die andre in sich schließe” (loc. cit.).

<sup>8</sup> [Ich muss] “verschiedene abstrahirte Merkmale verknüpfen, ob sie einen zureichenden Begriff geben” (loc. cit.).

<sup>9</sup> UDG AA II, 284: “In der Philosophie und namentlich in der Metaphysik kann man oft sehr viel von einem Gegenstände deutlich und mit Gewißheit erkennen, auch sichere Folgerungen daraus ableiten, ehe man die Definition desselben besitzt, auch selbst dann, wenn man es gar nicht unternimmt, sie zu geben.” UDG, AA II, 293: “Daher ist es möglich, den Irrthümern zu entgehen,

definition.<sup>10</sup> *Not to begin by a definition* is the first and most important rule of the method of metaphysics, as stated in UDG.<sup>11</sup>

## II.

The aforementioned hints about method, present in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit*, are adopted with slight modifications in the Methodenlehre of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thus it may suit the aims of our study to carefully review the correspondences in both the texts of 1762 and of 1781:

The Doctrine of Method in the *Critique of Pure Reason* also points out the necessary separation of the philosophical and the mathematical methods: “But although [...]they [that means, Mathematics and Philosophy, M.C.] have a common object, the mode in which reason considers that object is very different in philosophy from what it is in mathematics”.<sup>12</sup> The mathematical method can by no means be adopted, not even imitated, by philosophy: “The procedure of the one can never be imitated by the other” (A 726/ B 754). “It follows from all these considerations, that it is not consonant with the nature of philosophy, especially in the sphere of pure reason, to employ the dogmatical method, and to adorn itself with the titles and insignia of mathematical science. It does not belong to that order” (A 735/ B 763).

However, the coincidences of the rules of method in *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* and in the *Critique of Pure Reason* exceed such general remarks. The steps we have found out in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* are to be also met in the *Critique*. As the formulation of the forementioned steps in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not as detailed and manifest as in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit*, we shall outline them in some detail:

1) Also in the Methodenlehre the starting point of philosophical work is a concept which does not appear in a clear and distinct way, but obscurely and confusedly and occurs without furnishing us with the knowledge of its origin: “Systems seem, like certain worms, to be formed by a kind of

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wenn man gewisse und deutliche Erkenntnisse aufsucht, ohne gleichwohl sich der Definition so leicht anzumaßen.”

<sup>10</sup> UDG, AA II, 283: “In der Mathematik fange ich mit der Erklärung meines Objects, z.E. eines Triangels, Zirkels u.s.w., an, in der Metaphysik muß ich niemals damit anfangen, und es ist so weit gefehlt, daß die Definition hier das erste sei, was ich von dem Dinge erkenne, daß sie vielmehr fast jederzeit das letzte ist.”

<sup>11</sup> UDG, AA II, 285: “Die erste und vornehmste Regel ist diese: daß man ja nicht von Erklärungen anfangen”.

<sup>12</sup> A 715/ B 743. Quotations taken from: *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated from the German of Immanuel Kant by J. M. D. Meiklejohn (1855).

*generatio aequivoca* — by the mere confluence of conceptions, and to gain completeness only with the progress of time. But the schema or germ of all lies in reason” (A 835/ B 865). The idea which serves as basis of a science “lies, like a germ, in our reason, its parts undeveloped and hid even from microscopical observation” (A 834/ B 862). This can be said also with regard to the total system formed by the whole of the single systems of human knowledge (that is to say, formed by the whole of all sciences); and it concerns particularly that part of the whole system which originates in pure reason.

2) *Decomposing* of the concept also appears in the *Critique* as a necessary moment in the method. That moment of analysis is presupposed in the theory of definition, wherein it is acknowledged that definition is not possible in philosophy, precisely because we cannot be sure of the thoroughness and completeness of our analysis of the concept and of the representations therein included. It is that and no other reason why we cannot formulate definitions of a priori concepts in philosophy (B 756).

3) *Isolating* of the elements of the concept, studying them separately, and 4) *using* the cognitions thereby obtained as if they were axioms, to enable deduction of further cognitions, are both moments of the method of 1762 presupposed in the theory of definition in *Methodenlehre*, where Kant recognizes that even without accomplishing a definition we may derive valid consequences from the studied *elements*: “But, as incompletely defined conceptions may always be employed without detriment to truth, so far as our analysis of the elements contained in them proceeds, imperfect definitions, that is, propositions which are properly not definitions, but merely approximations thereto, may be used with great advantage” (A 731 note/ B 759 note).

5) *Performing partial syntheses* is involved in the concept of “imperfect definitions” found in the *Methodenlehre*. The process of defining the a priori concepts involves analysing the concept and the later synthesis of partial representations contained in it; it is precisely in this aspect that philosophy and mathematics differ, since perfect definition demands a clear and distinct synthesis of all the marks of the concept — mathematics being the only science capable of supplying such *complete* collection of marks as well as their a priori “arbitrary synthesis”; such complete collection being nothing but the formula of building a mathematical concept. Philosophy instead must content itself with *partial syntheses* of whose thoroughness we can never be certain enough. As stated in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “There are no other concepts which can bear definition, except those which contain an arbitrary synthesis, which can

be constructed a priori. Consequently, the science of mathematics alone possesses definitions.”<sup>13</sup>

6) Lastly, the first rule of the method of philosophy exposed in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* states that philosophical work should not start by definitions, but these should be placed at the end of investigation, definitions being the accomplishment of philosophical research. In the same sense we read in the *Methodenlehre*: “a full and clear definition ought, in philosophy, rather to form the conclusion than the commencement of our labours.”<sup>14</sup>

### III.

We may therefore admit that the same steps we have pointed out in the method developed in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* can also be found in the Doctrine of method explained in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Not very many interpreters have been aware that *these very same steps rule the development of the research in the Critique itself*.<sup>15</sup> Hereafter we shall endeavour to prove this last assertion.

1) As formerly mentioned, the first step consists in the initial occurrence of a confuse concept. The *Critique of Pure Reason* aims at investigating pure reason, in order to establish its reach and limits, this being the general task of the *Critique*. As the concept of “reason” is initially far too imprecise, the general task is formulated in such a way as to exclude imprecision: it is stated as the problem of explaining how synthetical a priori judgements are possible. This formulation is but a further determination of the general task expressed in the title of the book. Enquiring about the possibility of a priori synthetical judgments is no other thing than enquiring about the possibility of formulating judgments that can enlarge our knowledge with the sole help of reason (a priori). It is precisely pure reason that “faculty which furnishes us with the principles of knowledge a priori” (A 11/ B 24). Therefore, the concept of “pure speculative reason” is that concept we are initially furnished with; this is the one concept we should examine following the steps established in the

<sup>13</sup> A 729/ B 757. We have slightly modified the English version.

<sup>14</sup> A 730 f./ B 758 f. This is confirmed by Claudio La Rocca: The idea serving as grounds for a system “è un principio operativo che non ha bisogno di essere interamente dispiegato —essere interamente cosciente e esposto come regola— per svolgere la sua funzione, e che dunque può esser presente all’inizio e tuttavia colto solo alla fine” (2003, p. 210).

<sup>15</sup> This interpretation of the argumentative structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* differs from that of Hermann Cohen in *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*. Cohen applies in his explanation the analytical method proposed by Kant in *Prolegomena*.

method. The object of critical examination “is exclusively a critique of the faculty of pure reason” (A 13/ B 27).

2) The second step in the method consists in distinguishing elements within that yet undifferentiated concept. This is to be found in the titles themselves of the main sections of the *Critique*: in “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. First Part – Transcendental Aesthetic” (A 19/ B 33), and in the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements. Second Part – Transcendental Logic”.<sup>16</sup> Such mention of “elements” is precisely the mark of compliance with the second step in the method. The elements marked out in the faculty of a priori knowledge under study are firstly sensibility and secondly understanding.

3) Thirdly, we should isolate those elements and study them separately. That is precisely what is said in the text of the *Critique*: “in the science of transcendental aesthetic accordingly, we shall first isolate sensibility” (A 22/ B 36); and further on: “In transcendental logic we isolate the understanding (as we in transcendental aesthetic the sensibility)” (A 62/ B 87). Isolation is even carried further: “Pure understanding distinguishes itself not merely from everything empirical, but also completely from all sensibility” (A 65/ B 89).

Study of each single element taken separately includes applying to it the steps of discrimination and isolation of elements; so explained at the beginning of Transcendental Analytic: “Transcendental analytic is the dissection of the whole of our a priori knowledge into the elements of the pure cognition of the understanding” (A 64/ B 89).

4) Study of each single element taken separately inevitably leads to acquiring new cognitions; such new cognitions, in turn, include references to further elements other than the single element first analysed. It is not possible to know objects by means of sensibility alone (the analysis of sensibility does not allow us to account for knowledge of objects); neither is it possible to get any contents for knowledge by means of concepts alone (mere analysis of understanding does not furnish us with actually given objects to which we might apply our concepts). “Without the sensibility no object would be given to us, and without the understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are void; intuitions without concepts, blind.”<sup>17</sup> That is why study of the sensibility requires study of the understanding, and study of the understanding, in turn, demands (due to the restriction thesis of the application of categories) study of the sensibility.

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<sup>16</sup> A 50/ B 74. We have slightly modified the English version.

<sup>17</sup> A 51/ B 75. We have slightly modified the English version.

5) As a result of those demands originated in the partial studies of the isolated elements, partial syntheses are performed; yet those syntheses are wide apart from the complete synthesis that would be the definition of the concept. Accordingly, we find in the *Critique of Pure Reason* the partial syntheses of categories with time, constituting the subject of the chapter on Schematism. The reasons why these partial syntheses are necessary are already explained in the introduction to Transcendental Logic: “Understanding cannot intuit, and sensibility cannot think. In no other way than from the united operation of both, can knowledge arise.”<sup>18</sup> More embracing partial syntheses allow for later unification of the categories with phenomena in general, thus giving rise to the universal principles of experience.

6) The sixth and last step of the method explained in *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* and adopted in the *Methodenlehre* requires that, once clearly and distinctly known all the elements of the studied concept and their rational connection, a comprehensive synthesis be reached—a final synthesis embracing all the elements. The proposition expressing that final synthesis is the definition of the concept. *At the end* of the philosophical enquiry a definition of the studied concept should come out.

In compliance with it, we find in the “Architectonic of Pure Reason” a detailed and articulated exposition of the concept of philosophy of pure reason (A 841/ B 869). This is the nearest analogous to a definition which philosophy can afford. Thus, also this sixth step of the method is accomplished in the very text of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Everything seems to indicate we are allowed to interpret the argumentative structure of the text as if it were organized following the steps of the method formulated in 1762.<sup>19</sup> This fact has some consequences which are not merely formal, but they involve also the contents of the work. We shall refer to them in the following.

#### IV.

Provided our observations are right, those parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* dealing with reason, its concepts, the ideal and other sub-

<sup>18</sup> A 51/ B 75 f. We have slightly modified the English version.

<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, La Rocca (2003, p. 203) states that the chapter on the discipline of pure reason “può essere un chiave di lettura essenziale per le stesse pagine della Dottrina degli elementi.” Also De Vleeschauwer finds correspondence of the *Methodenlehre* with the *Doctrine of Elements*; but De Vleeschauwer offers a different interpretation to this correspondence: in his views, it is the *Elementarlehre* which should be found in the *Methodenlehre*: the metaphysical Deduction (the inventory of the a priori cognitions) is to be found in the *Architectonic*; the transcendental Deduction in the *Discipline*; the doctrine of restriction of a priori cognitions corresponds to the *Canon of pure reason* (Vleeschauwer, 1967, p. 180 f.).

jects found in the Transcendental Dialectic, as well as the Discipline, the Canon and the Architectonic, become the most important parts of the book. Its *end* turns out to be the core and the heart of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Then, the results of Kant's enquiry are not likely to be solely negative; they may not consist solely in abolishing dogmatic speculative metaphysic. In this final part we should find positive answers to the questions which constitute the task and purpose of pure reason.

This task is stated in the well known questions: "What can I know?, What ought I to do?, What may I hope?". Neither do the assumed task and purpose consist solely in the critical examination of knowledge. Certainly, the first of the questions which constitute the task of reason is: "What can I know?"; however, it is not the only question; moreover it is just a preparatory and purely speculative question,<sup>20</sup> and has been dealt with in the preliminary parts of the book. The second question expressing the task of reason is, according to Kant, just a practical one: "The second question is purely practical. As such it may indeed fall within the province of pure reason, but still it is not transcendental, but moral, and consequently cannot in itself form the subject of our criticism" (A 805/ B 833). The critique of reason does not aim at that. There remains the third question: "What may I hope?". This question "is at once practical and theoretical." It also comprises the answers to the speculative questions of reason as well. The development of the answer to this question, as supplied in the Canon, leads to the concepts of "Supreme original good" and of "highest derivative good". In so doing, the argumentation leads to subjects which pertain to speculative metaphysics. Herewith both speculative and practical reason meet. Consequently, the metaphysics therefrom resulting is not just a practical one (as is widely understood) but it is a practic-dogmatic metaphysic in which "the practical forms [but] a clue to the answer of the theoretical, and [...] speculative question".<sup>21</sup>

What I may hope is, in accordance to the Canon of pure reason, to reach the "highest derivative good", namely the union of virtue and thereto proportional happiness. Since the condition for this highest derivative good is the Ideal of the Supreme original Good (namely the existence of God as "an intelligence in which the morally most perfect will, united with supreme blessedness, is the cause of all happiness in the world, so far as happiness stands in strict relation to morality" (A 810/ B 838)), it follows that we have sufficient subjective grounds to believe in

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<sup>20</sup> "The first question is purely speculative" (A 805/ B 833).

<sup>21</sup> A 805/ B 833. We have slightly modified the English version.



the existence of God. Such subjective grounds are called “belief”; yet such belief (believing in the existence of God and in a future life) does not strictly belong to practical reason: “Still, if we use words strictly, this must not be called a practical, but a doctrinal belief” (A 826/ B 854). The judgments expressing doctrinal belief bear “an analogon of practical judgments”, but they are “purely theoretical judgments” (A 825/ B 853). We find here a theoretical development of metaphysics, although its grounds and origin be practical.

Are we then before a new kind of metaphysics, whose grounds are practical, and whose objects, however, are the objects of speculative reason? Indeed, I believe so. Certainly in the text of the *Methodenlehre* the positive results of *practical* metaphysics are exposed with remarkable clarity, distinction and stress. Precisely such clarity, distinction and stress might turn us away from considering a *theoretical* metaphysic also present in those very same texts. Such theoretical metaphysic has been developed in *Prolegomena* without recourse to practical grounds. Therein it was developed as a doctrine of “limits” and of “analogy”, a doctrine which allows an analogical knowledge of the objects beyond the limits of possible experience.<sup>22</sup> And it has been further developed in the *Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, here but including the practical grounds.<sup>23</sup>

The present research allows us to suggest that the results of the labours undertaken in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to be found precisely in this theoretical (or rather practical-theoretical) metaphysics.

The purely theoretical and speculative metaphysic explained in *Prolegomena*, based on the concepts of “limit” and of “analogy”, offers just a partial and one-sided version of the critical metaphysic we attempt to expose here. This purely theoretical and analogical metaphysic derives from *withdrawing* from the complete, practical-dogmatic metaphysics (the one studied in the Canon of pure reason) its moral grounds. Kant himself suggests it, as he states: “If we [...] take a man who is entirely indifferent with regard to moral laws, the question which reason proposes, becomes then merely a problem for speculation, and may, indeed, be supported by strong grounds from analogy, but not by such as will compel the most obstinate scepticism to give way” (A 829 f./ B 857 f.).

This steadiness of the grounds, capable of overcoming “the most obstinate scepticism”, is more than the sole verisimilitude of a hypothe-

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<sup>22</sup> On the metaphysics developed in the *Prolegomena* based on the concepts of limit and analogy, see Günter Zöllner (2008). On the same subject, see also Norbert Hinske (1999) and Marcos Thisted (2008).

<sup>23</sup> About the practical-dogmatic metaphysics in *Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, see Max Wundt (1991), as well as Mario Caimi (1989).

sis; it is based on the moral grounds of belief. It is only the inclusion of such moral grounds what constitutes the authentic new critical metaphysic: it is a metaphysic which combines practical doctrines with theoretical ones and so becomes a practical-dogmatical metaphysic.

We have seen that in such combination practical metaphysic supplies the grounds for holding something to be true; thus enabling a theoretical approach to the objects of speculative metaphysic. It then becomes manifest that such new metaphysic is not confined to its practical contents, but it satisfies also (as far as it is possible) the *speculative* interest of reason. Even the aforementioned rational belief: that which supplies the grounds for holding something to be true, is (as we have already seen) a “doctrinal” belief, one that is theoretical and not practical. Determination of the objects of metaphysic is later undertaken (by means of analogy) upon those theoretical-practical grounds.

## V.

Our methodological considerations led us to expect that the solution to the problems put forth by the *Critique* (the answer to the questions put forth by pure reason) should be found at the end of the book. Particularly, granted that the methodical steps explained in the *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit* and in the *Methodenlehre* are applied in the argumentation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we should expect to find out at the end of the book a definition of the concept of “knowledge by pure reason”, showing in a clear and distinct way the inner logical divisions of the concept and their connections. As a matter of fact, this has proved to be so. This compels us to change, to some extent, our reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Mainly its final part (from the Dialectic onwards) acquires a decisive importance. The interpretation of the Dialectic as a critique whose results are only negative reveals itself as insufficient; we should acknowledge the importance of its positive contents (offered mostly in the enigmatic second Appendix: “Of the Ultimate End of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason”),<sup>24</sup> as well as the importance of the positive contents of the *Methodenlehre*. Moreover, the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* stating that once uncovered the transcendental illusion we are compelled to retain only the *practical* metaphysic, proves insufficient.

We are faced with the manifest need of conceiving a new kind of metaphysics: a practical-dogmatical one, whose purpose is the solving of

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<sup>24</sup> Stated mostly in its enigmatic second appendix: “Of the Ultimate End of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason” (A 669/ B 697).

*speculative* problems of the theoretical reason, though the solving of those problems must be kept within very strict boundaries.

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**Resumo:** Em 1762, Kant formula um método da filosofia que é distinto do método matemático. Com isso, ele distancia-se do pensamento metodológico de Leibniz e de Wolff. No presente artigo formularemos, primeiro, os preceitos deste método. Depois mostraremos que estes preceitos do método de 1762 se encontram, de modo explícito ou implícito, na doutrina do método da *Crítica da razão pura*. Finalmente, tentaremos demonstrar que a argumentação da *Crítica* guia-se exatamente por esses preceitos metodológicos. Como o mais importante destes preceitos metodológicos diz que a definição não pode estar no início, senão no final da investigação filosófica, é de se esperar que, no final da argumentação da *Crítica da razão pura*, se encontrará uma definição da filosofia da razão pura, ou, pelo menos, uma explicação bastante completa da mesma. Essa expectativa cumpre-se, e isso nos obriga a alterar, em muitos pontos, nossa interpretação da *Crítica* e do tratamento dado nela à metafísica.

**Palavras-chave:** método, metafísica crítica, razão pura, filosofia transcendental

**Abstract:** In 1762, Kant lays down a philosophical method which is quite distinct from the mathematical method. Thereby he withdraws from the methodical thought of Leibniz and Wolff. In the present article first we point out the prescripts of this method; then we show that these prescripts dating from 1762 were incorporated, in an explicit or implicit way, in the Doctrine of Method of the *Critique of pure reason*. At last, we want to show that the argumentation of the *Critique* is guided just by those methodical prescripts. As the most important of these methodical prescripts says that a definition cannot be in the beginning, but must be placed at the end of philosophical investigation, we can expect that we will find in the end of the argumentation of the *Critique of pure reason* a definition of philosophy of pure reason or, at least, a detailed explication of that philosophy. This expectation is fulfilled, and this obliges us to change in many respects our interpretation of the *Critique* and its mode of treating metaphysics.

**Keywords:** method, critical metaphysics, pure reason, transcendental philosophy

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