On *Articulting Reasons* of Robert Brandom and His Hegelian Methodology

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Abstract

The purpose of this review is to summarize the main ideas and parts of the book by Robert Brandom, Articulating Reasons, an Introduction to Inferentialism. This review is a reading guide of this work that remains in the current debate about the key philosophical issues, such as analytic philosophy, inferentialism and German idealism. What are the strategic choices made by the author to study topics such as pragmatism, inferentialism, intentionality, holism, rationalism, expressivism and so on? Another objective is to present some aspects of the Hegelian approach done by Brandom. What is his reading of Hegelianism, especially what is its methodology from the perspective of North American philosophy? There are different elements in this book; however we are presenting only the Hegelian methodology and some aspects, because in our opinion the Hegelian methodology is the principal strategy for the rapprochement between Hegelianism and Analytic Philosophy. Brandom's research is one of the most important works in this sense. We chose these three concepts: the logic concept and its content; the dialectic between whole and parts; and the determinate negation and the contradiction as the core of the Hegelian system.

Key-words: Inferentialism. Analytic Philosophy. Hegelian methodology. Holism. Contradiction.

1 – Inferentialism: Strategic Choices and Historical Context

Brandom writes this introduction, starting with a special strategy, putting in opposition concepts in order to explain the nature of the conceptual. He wants to emphasize some aspects, such as: in the philosophy of mind the sense of *sapience* rather than of mere *sentience*; in semantics, he stresses the conceptual content and not other contents; in pragmatics, he highlights the discursive practice. His aim is to focus on the conceptual, that consists in applying a concept by saying or thinking something.

***Assimilation* or *Differentiation* of the Conceptual?** There is a methodological difference between discursive and non-discursive creatures, that is, "the similarities and differences between the judgments and actions of concept users, and the instrumental interventions of non-concept-using organismus and artifacts" (AR, p. 3).

Brandom adopts the discontinuity or differentiation between conceptual and non-conceptual theory. He is interested in what separates concept users from non-concept users. This project is different from contemporary semantic authors (Dretske, Fodor, and Millikan) or from the classical American pragmatists (Pierce, James and Dewey) and from the later, Wittgenstein.

Conceptual *Platonism* or *Pragmatism*? We have here two different methodological strategies: a) The Platonist strategy explains the use of concepts from the understanding of conceptual content. b) The Pragmatist strategy begins with applying concepts. It "seeks to explain how the use of linguistic expressions, or the functional role of intentional states, confers conceptual content on them" (AR, p. 4).

Brandom chooses a conceptual pragmatism, which offers an account of *know that* in terms of *know how* to do something. This approach makes explicit propositions or principles that are implicit in practices of using expressions, acquiring and deploying beliefs.

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Is *Mind* or *Language* the Fundamental Locus of Intentionality? The philosophical tradition from Descartes to Kant took a mental order of explanation that privileged the mind as the locus of concept use. They relegated language to a secondary role in communicating to others, thoughts already full-formed within the individual. Dummett defends a linguistic theory of intentionality. He opposed the view of assertion as the expression of an interior act of judgment. For him judgment is the interiorization of the external act of assertion. Davidson claims that language is necessary to think and to communicate to each other. He takes the concept use in the context of language, but does not insist that linguistic practices can be made sense of without intentional states such as belief (AR, p. 6).

Brandom's approach takes the form of a linguistic pragmatism in terms of practices of using concepts. In other words it means that "grasping a concept is mastering the use of a word" (see Sellars). We have, on the one side, later Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars, Dummett and Davidson, that consider the meaning of expressions by use and on the other, Frege-Russel-Carnap-Tarski have a Platonist model of meaning.

The Genus of Conceptual Activity: *Representation* or *Expression*?   From the time of Descartes until the Enlightenment the representation was the model dominant in the espistemology and the semantics that means awareness was understood in representational form. The Enlightenment has a picture of the mind like a mirror, whereas Romanticism opposed with an image of the mind as lamp. The cognitive activity was not a passive reflection but the active revelation or intervention. Then the expressivism begins by the process when the inner becomes outer by a gesture. This is a complex process of transforming: (i) What is inner in outer, that is, making explicit what is implicit, to do into say, to know how into know that. (ii) The process of making explicit is to apply concepts: to conceptualize some matter. (iii) What is expressed must be understood in a relational expressivism.

There is a Platonist representationalism that is a psychological or functionalist representation of the contents. However, the expressivism is a pragmatic, relationally linguistic and semantic explanation of the conceptual content and of the concept use.

Distinguishing the Conceptual: *Intensionalism* or *Inferentialism*? Brandom is interested in distinguishing the conceptual from the non-conceptual. The conceptual or the intentional is "distinguished by the intensionality: intersubstitution of coreferential or coextensional expressions or concepts does not preserve the content of ascriptions of intentional states" (AR, 10). The principal distinction between discursive practices of non-conceptual creatures is their inferential articulation. The rationalist expressivism is to make something explicit, as putting it in a form of reasons, that is, a form which serves as a premise and conclusion in inferences. Saying or thinking is undertaking inferentially articulated commitments, putting the premise for further inference, "authorizing its use as such a premise, and undertaking responsibility to entitle oneself to that commitment, by exhibiting it as the conclusion of an inference from other such commitments to which one is or can become entitled" (AR, p.11). He says, "grasping the *concept* that is applied in such a making explicit is mastering its *inferential* use" (p. 11).

The *pragmatic principle* of Frege is that in asserting a claim, one is committing to its truth. This is a Platonist principle, that derives the concept of truth from a semantic theory, but the linguistic pragmatism reverses the Platonist order of explanation, starting with one that is making a claim, it seeks to elaborate from what is said, the content or proposition, to one which commits a speech act. The Inferentialist pragmatism also reverses the *semantic principle* of Frege. It starts with a practical distinction between good and bad inferences, as appropriate and inappropriate doings, and after it talks about truth.

***Bottom-up* or *Top-down* Semantic Explanation?** Brandom's inferentialism has as the form of the propositional concept. He applies concepts in propositionally content such as assertions, beliefs, and thoughts. The traditional and Tarskian theories offer first accounts – the *bottom-up* or ascendant semantic explanation - of the meanings of the concepts associated with singular and general terms, "then of judgments constructed by relating those terms, and finally of proprieties of *inferences* relating to those judgments" (AR, p.13).

The pragmatics semantic adopts a *top-down* or descendant semantic and pragmatic explanation starting from the use of concepts, and it applies in judgment and action. "Inferentialism, however, is an essentially propositional doctrine" (AR, p.13). Expressivism and inferentialism are propositional conceptual contents.

Rationalist expressivism understands the explicit in terms of its inferential role. "Practices that do not involve reasoning are not linguistic or discursive practices"; if it does not involve reasoning "it is a vocal but not yet a verbal practice", says Brandom (AR, p.14).

Atomism **or** *Holism***?** The tradition of formal semantics has been atomistic, that is bottom-up explaining elements, such as predicates or other proper names. By contrast, inferentialist semantics is holistic. "For the content of each concept is articulated by its inferential relations to other concepts" (AR, p.16).

Traditional **or** *Rationalist* **Expressivism?** The traditional Romantic expressivism took just the relationship between an inner feeling expressed by an outer gesture. The rationalist expressivism is a conceptual articulation, "expressing something is *conceptualizing* it: putting it into conceptual form" (AR, p.16). In fact, the inferentialism plays with several notions of implicitness. An explicit claim has implicit in it: "1. Proprieties governing inferential moves to and from the commitments to the claimable content in question; 2. the other claims that are inferential consequences of the first one, according to the practical proprieties mentioned in (1); and 3. the conceptual content of the claim, which is articulated by the inferences in (1)." (AR, p.19) For example, what is made explicit by a claim is a proposition: what is said or thought or believed. But "we can talk about what still remains implicit in an explicit claim, namely, its inferential consequences" (AR, p.18).

Is the Semantic Task of Logic Epistemological or Expressive? We have a standard way to understand the logic as a "special epistemic access to a kind of truth", that is "for establishing the truth of certain kinds of claims, by *proving* them" (AR, p.19). There is, also an expressive logic that is a set of tools for saying something in order to make explicit. The inferentialist account of concept use affirms that "in making a claim one is implicitly endorsing a set of inferences, which articulate its conceptual content" (AR, p.19). Making explicit the know-how, the inferences one has implicitly endorsed, is putting it in the form of a claim know-that. In this case the expressive logic is provided by basic logical vocabulary. Brandom gives us this example, in applying the concept *lion* to Leo, I implicitly commit myself to the applicability of the concept *mammal* to him (1). If my language contains *conditionals*, I can say that *if* Leo is lion, *then* Leo is a mammal (2).

Brandom says that by saying this I am using logical vocabulary. Then I can make explicit the implicit inferential commitments that articulate the content of the concepts which I apply in making ordinary explicit claims. We have here the original inferential-propositional model of awareness, in the sense of sapience, that is applied to know the reality. In the first application – Leo is a lion – we get an explication in the level of *consciousness*. In the second application – Leo is mammal – we get an explication in the level of *self-consciousness* (see AR, p.20). Applying the inferential model of explicitness makes possible a new kind of expressivism about logic.

The idea is to studying the conceptual by its inferential articulation, which is the relation of expression between what is explicit and what is implicit. "The result is an account with a structure recognizable as Hegelian: a rationalist, expressivist account of consciousness (namely, sapient awareness) that provides the basis for a corresponding account of self-consciousness (namely, semantic or conceptual self-consciousness)" (AR, p.22).

Historical Context: Rationalism, Pragmatism, and Expressivism: Brandom has a central preoccupation in rationalism throughout the inferential articulation implying in practices of giving and asking for reasons. The resulting rationalistic pragmatism is different from that of other semantic pragmatists such as Dewey, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Quine, and Rorty.

The empiricism started with Locke and was developed by thinkers such as Russell, Carnap, and Quine. Empiricism defends the origin of knowledge in experience emphasizing on the cognitive role played by language and logic. Brandom wants to discuss in this book empiricism tradition and others themes such as meaning, mind and knowledge.

Brandom analyses the *platitudinous empiricism* restricts itself to the observations that without perceptual experiences we can have no knowledge of contingent matters of fact and that the conceptual content is unintelligible apart from its relation to perceptual experience (see AR, p.23). He says, "experience is not one of my words. I did not find it necessary to use it in the many pages of *Making It Explicit* (though it is mentioned), and the same policy holds in the body of this work" (AR, p.205, note 7). He thinks that it is not necessary in epistemology or in semantics to appeal to any intermediaries between perceptible facts and reports of them.

There are, he says, many causal intermediaries, from the noninferential observation at the end of a whole causal chain of events. He concludes: "I do not see that any of these has any particular conceptual or (therefore) cognitive or semantic significance" (AR, p. 206, note 7).

The classical empiricism of the philosophy of mind takes the perceptual experience as paradigm of awareness of consciousness. The classical empiricist epistemology takes the experiences as its paradigm of empirical knowledge. The content of experiences, awareness, and knowledge is to be understood as representation of the states or episodes. In contemporary empiricism the concept of representation is presented as objects, events, or states of affairs.

Empiricism understands the content of concepts in terms of the origin of empirical beliefs in experience and the origin of practical intentions in desires or preferences. Rationalists understand concepts as norms for particular beliefs, claims, and intentions. The difference is most telling when we ask about the relation between awareness and concept.

The rationalist pragmatism and expressivism is opposed to naturalism, because there is a distinction between discursive and non-discursive creatures. Conceptual norms are social linguistic practices, products of social interactions. There is a distinction between things that have *natures* (*Naturwissenschaften*) and things that have *histories* (*Geisteswissenschaften*).

Brandom endorses a strong inferentialism that is committed to a semantic holism as opposed to atomism. "Inferentialism also carries with it a commitment to the conceptual primacy of the propositional". This inferentialism semantic reverses the traditional order: "beginning with proprieties of inference, they explain propositional content, and in terms of both go on to explain the conceptual content expressed by subsentential expressions such as singular terms and predicates" (AR, p. 30). The rationalist form of expressivism rejects the conventional wisdom about the nature and philosophical significance of logic. "Logic is not properly understood as the study of a distinctive kind of *formal* inference" (AR, p. 30). It is rather the study of inferentialism in the dialetic between implicit inferences in the use of ordinary, nonlogical vocabulary and explicit in the form by the use of logical vocabulary. "Logic is accordingly not a canon or standard of right reasoning. It can help us make explicit the inferential commitments that govern the use of all our vocabulary, and hence articulate the contents of all our concepts" (AR, p. 30).

In the end Brandom criticizes the Humean ideas about practical reason. According to this approach, as in Davidson's writings on action, and of rational-choice theorists, decision theory or game theory, which approaches defining rational action are essentially instrumental norms, which derive their authority from intrinsically motivating preferences or desires. The author offers another vision about what an agent prefers or desires. Those are demoted from their position of privilege, and take their place as having a derivative sort of normative authority. "So I am putting forward a view that is opposed to many (if not most) of the large theoretical, explanatory, and strategic commitments that have shaped and motivated Anglo-American philosophy in the twentieth century: empiricism, naturalism, representationalism, semantic atomism, formalism about logic, and instrumentalism about the norms of practical rationality" (AR, p. 31).

Sellars once said that the aim of his work was to begin moving analytic philosophy from its Humean phase into a Kantian one. And Richard Rorty described his enterprise to make possible a further transition from a Kantian to a Hegelian approach to thought and action. Brandom is associated with these strategies. He is interested in such issues as these: (i) nature and culture: "Cultural products and activities become explicit as such only by the use of normative vocabulary that is in principle not reducible to the vocabulary of the natural sciences" (AR, p. 33); (ii) the Hegelian pragmatism and his influence about conceptual norms. Kant understood concepts as the norms that determine what we ourselves are responsible for, committed and entitle us to it, by particular acts of judging and acting. However, Kant punted the origins of this normativity into the noumenal realm. "Hegel brought these issues back to earth by understanding normative statuses as social statuses, … all transcendental constitution is social institution" (AR, p. 34).

Pragmatism about the norms implicit in cognitive activity norms came down in the first half of the twentieth century from three independent directions: from the classical American pragmatists; from the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, and from the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Brandom picks up the insights of these traditions and he refers back to Hegel's original version, because of these three recent sorts of social practice theory, "Hegel's is a *rationalist* pragmatism" (AR, p. 34). In his conceptual assimilationism, he stresses the importance of reason in understanding what it is to say or do something.

Dewey, James, Heidegger and Wittgenstein each resisted, in his own way, the representational semantic paradigm. However, none of them find an alternative paradigm. For Brandom, it is Hegel who found an alternative paradigm. "Hegel's version of expressivism is not only pragmatic and inferentialist about the conceptual but also relational, in the sense that the implicit and the explicit are each at least in part constituted by their expressive relation to each other" (AR, p. 34-35). The inferentialism as explicitness is an alternative to representationalism, and "rationalist expressivism understands the explicit in terms of its role in inference" (AR, p. 35). Brandom understands that Hegel has introduced this idea, "although he takes the minimal unit of conceptual content to be the whole holistic system of inferentially interrelated judgeables, and so is not a propositinalist" (AR, p. 35).

We have, says Brandom, a Hegelian influence in this rationalist expressivist pragmatism that links logic and self-consciousness, in the sense of making explicit what is implicit. He offers a kind of consciousness in the sense of *sapience* that corresponds to a kind of self-consciousness: semantic or conceptual self-consciousness. "This notion of what is made explicit by the characteristic use of specifically logical vocabulary then makes possible a new appreciation of the sort of consciousness with which the story begins" (AR, p. 35), affirms Brandom.

2 – Holistic Semantic Inferentialism

2.1 – "Semantic Inferentialism and Logical Expressivism"

Chapter 1 introduces two ideas: (i) The conceptual plays a role in reason. The most basic sort of conceptual content is propositional content, expressed by declarative sentences. (ii) The expressive role of logical vocabulary is to make inferential relations explicit. Brandom wants to present a vision about semantics that is different from more familiar ones, and on that basis also a new way of thinking about logic. For this chapter, he analyses three thinkers: Frege, Dummett, and Sellars.

2.2 - "Action, Norms, and Practical Reasoning"

Chapter 2 "extends the inferentialist paradigm in logic and semantics to encompass practical reasoning, culminating in noninferential discursive exit transitions in the form of intentional actions" (AR, p. 37).

Some Background: Brandom's objectives, in this chapter, are as follows: (i) To explain the *normative vocabulary*; That is, to say what the job of such vocabulary to make explicit is. Doing this is saying what 'ought' means. (ii) To introduce a non-Humean way of thinking about *practical reasoning*; (iii) To expose the Kantian account of the *will* as a practical reason. The background for this goal is Kantian philosophy.

The first idea from Kant "is that what distinguishes judgment and action from the responses of merely natural creatures … is a distinctive way *responsible* for." (AR, p. 80) Judgment and action express commitments for entitlement and reasons for it. The second idea is "seeing the *judgment* as the smallest unit of experience" (AR, p. 80), because in this "smallest unit" we can be responsible. The third Kantian idea is to understand judgment and action as the application of *concepts*. Understanding concepts as the *rules* is determined by what knowers and agents are responsible for, or committed to.

Brandom inserts this topic in his book *Making it Explicit*, where he treats these several themes: (i) The *normative pragmatics*, namely, the discursive practice as deontic scorekeeping of the speech act insofar as commitments and entitlements one attributes and acknowledges. (ii) The *inferential semantics* that is discursive commitments to begin with doxastic ones, that is a specifically inferential articulation, "that qualifies us as *sapiens* (and not merely sentients) can be identified with being a player in the social, implicitly normative game of offering and assessing, producing and consuming, reasons" (AR, p. 81). (iii) The *expressive logic* that is a role of the logical vocabulary as being made explicit, in the form of a claim as a game of giving and asking for reasons. Here, the paradigm is the conditional: "After introducing the conditional, one can now *say* that the inference is a good one.

The expressive role of the conditional is to make *explicit*, in the form of a claim, what before was *implicit* in our practice of distinguishing some inferences as good" (AR, p. 81). (iv) The *actions* are possible only in the context of practices of giving and asking for reasons. "For giving a reason is always expressing a judgment: making a claim." (AR, p. 81)

Conclusion: In this chapter, Brandom aimed to do three things: (i) "to explain the expressive role that distinguishes specifically *normative* vocabulary, that is, to say what is the job of such vocabulary to make explicit; (ii) to introduce a non-humean way of thinking about *practical reasoning*; and (iii) to offer a broadly Kantian account of the *will* as a rational faculty of practical reasoning."(AR, p. 96).

3 – *The Subjective and the Objective Articulated by Inferentialism*

3.1 - **"Insights and Blindspots of Reliabilism"**

Chapter 3 discusses contemporary epistemological reliabilism, which seeks to put appeals to reliable processes in place of more traditional appeals to inferential justifications.

Inference and the Implicit Insight of Reliabilism: Brandom raises several questions: "How, then, ought we to understand the significance of considerations of reliability in epistemology? How can we properly acknowledge both the Founding Insight and Goldman's Insight while avoiding both the Conceptual and the Naturalistic Blindspot?" (AR, p. 117). He will answer by the 'Implicit Insight' of epistemological reliabilism.

Espistemology is a theory of knowledge, that is, to justify true belief, or true beliefs that have resulted from reliable belief-forming processes. What is one doing in taking someone to have knowledge? "To begin with, one is attributing some sort of *commitment*: a belief." (AR, p. 118) Brandom continues: "So to take someone to know something, one must do two things: attribute a certain kind of inferentially articulated *commitment*, and attribute a certain kind of *entitlement* to that commitment." (AR, p. 118). He says: "In calling what someone has 'knowledge', one is doing three things: *attributing a commitment* that is capable of serving both as premise and as conclusion of inferences relating it to other commitments, *attributing entitlement* to that commitment, and *undertaking* that same commitment oneself." (AR, p. 119).

Brandom applies this conception of epistemology to reliabilism: "Inferences exhibiting this socially articulated structure are reliability inference." (AR, p. 120) Reliabilsm is a form of epistemological externalism, because assessments of reliability and hence of knowledge "can turn on considerations external to the reasons possessed by the candidate knower himself. Reliabilism points to the fundamental social or interpersonal articulation of the practices of reason giving and reason assessing within which questions of who has knowledge arise." (AR, p. 120) Brandom recommends that "to avoid the Conceptual Blindspot, one must appreciate the significance of specifically *inferential* articulation in distinguishing representations that qualify as *beliefs*, and hence as candidates for knowledge. To avoid the Naturalistic Blindspot, one must appreciate that concern with reliability is concern with a distinctive interpersonal *inferential* structure." (AR, p. 121-122)

3.2 - **"What Are Singular Terms, and Why Are There Any?"**

Chapter 4 is composed of two parts: "The first argues that singular terms and predicates can be distinguished by the structure of the contributions they make to the correctness of substitution inferences involving sentences in which they occur. The second part argues that this is not a contingent or accidental structure" (AR, p. 40).

The strategy that Brandom uses in answer to this question – why there are singular terms – "is to focus on the use of logical vocabulary to permit the explicit expression, as the content of sentences, of relations among sentences that are partly constitutive of their being contentful." He continues: "To say that subsentential expressions are used by a community as substituted-fors and substitution-structural frames is to say that the contents conferred by the practices of the community on the sentences in which those expressions have primary occurrence are related systematically to one another in such a way that they can be exhibited as the products of contents associated with the subsentential expressions, according to a standard substitutional structure." (AR, p. 152).

4 – Material Inference: Commitments and Entitlments

4.1 - "A Social Route from Reasoning to Representing"

Chapter 5 pursues a double dimension expressivist and pragmatist strategy. (i) "On the expressivist side, it aims to understand what is implicit in what one is doing in terms of the kind of saying that makes it explicit" (AR, p. 42). (ii) On the pragmatist side, "we ask how one must use expressions in order for them to play the expressive role of explicit *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude" (AR, p. 42).

Conclusion: In ordinary language, "we use to talk about the representational dimension of our thought and talk, to specify what we are thinking and talking *about*, is *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude. It is the role they play in such ascriptions that gives their meanings to the 'of' or 'about' we use to express intentional directedness." (AR, p. 183) Brandom concludes: "Beliefs and claims that are *propositionally* contentful are necessarily *representationally* contentful because their inferential articulation essentially involves a *social* dimension. The *representational* dimension of propositional contents reflects the *social* structure of their *inferential* articulation in the game of giving and asking for reasons." (AR, p. 183)

4.2 - "Objectivity and the Normative Fine Structure of Rationality"

Chapter 6 offers an argument in two parts: (i) The norms governing any practices recognizable as including the giving of and asking for reasons; (ii) "Normative fine structure of rationality" is the constellation of kinds of broadly inferential relations that is generated once we recognize such normative status.

Objectivity: Brandom wants finally to demonstrate one of the semantic payoffs that gives the pragmatic structure. Brandom distinguishes three moves beyond classical assertibility theories in order to fund the notion of objective representational content for declarative sentences. (i) The move from treating assertibility as the fundamental normative pragmatic; (ii) the move from the *circumstances* under which the normative status in question is acquired to include also *consequences* of acquiring it. This is moving toward a notion of content as inferential role. The interaction of this move with the previous one generates the three notions of inference employed in this text: commitment-preserving, entitlement-preserving; and incompatibility entailments; (iii) the move from looking at normative *statuses* (assertibility, commitment, entitlement) to normative *social attitudes*. This is to focus on *attributing* to others and acknowlegding oneself commitments (see AR, p. 221, note 7).

5 – Hegelian Approach According to Brandom

I will point out and summarize the main ideas of Brandom that he wrote in this paper "Untimely Review of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit"[2]. The aim is to show the Hegelian presuppositions that are presented in this book and in general in Brandom's work. We apply these concepts to understand this book and make it more explicit as Hegelian thought is interpreted by Brandom. We adopt the category 'conceptual content' to inspire this review, because Brandom himself calls the conceptual content as "the main topic" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We would say that the concept is working in the back of consciousness. Hegel says that the logic is in the back of consciousness. Hegel's *Science of the Logic* is the developing of the concept that in its three moments - *Logic of Being*, *Essence* and *Concept* - determines the content, that is, the *conceptual content*. The concept is the "whole" in the *Science of Logic*, that is, it unites holistically all movements and moments of the logical content. Brandom takes this Hegelian category and applies it methodologically in his work. First, the conceptual content is determined as the norm through which actions are governed by statuses, and the individuals recognize each other through their commitments and entitlements. Then, the movement of the concept articulates the relation between subject and object as thought and world. Finally, this concept implies consequences which result in material inferences.

5.1 - Conceptual Content

According to Brandom the main topic of Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the conceptual content.

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[2] Brandom, Robert. "Untimely Review of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit." University of Pittsburgh. Current work available in Brandom website: http://www.pitt.edu/~brandom/index.html - Henceforth UR.

The presentation of the conceptual content implies "the essentially *normative* character of intentionality."(UR, p. 1) For Hegel the intentionality means the activity of consciousness. In this case, how can Hegel understand conceptual normativity? Hegel understands as the kind of normative statuses that are at the same time social statuses. These normative statuses are expressed by normative attitudes: responsibility for, committed to, and invested our authority in. Hegel understands that the normative statuses are instituted by a process of *recognition*. "Recognizing someone is attributing normative statuses: taking or treating that individual as responsible, committed, entitled, or authoritative."(UR, p. 2) This is a process of reciprocal recognition that both self-consciousnesses are recognized. In the modern society the normative statuses bind the objective with the subjective normative attitudes in the process of recognition.

Hegel situated the normative attitudes in the 'ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*), that bind self-consciousness to institutions. "He thinks reciprocal recognition (a structure of normative attitudes) is what exhibiting a normative status consists in." (UR, p. 5) The communication in ethical life is done by language, that is, the possibility of discursive practice. The practices are commitments (normative statuses) as materially incompatible with others, and as having others as material inferential consequences. "Hegel's idiosyncratic terminology for material inferential and incompatibility relations is 'mediation' and 'determinate negation'. To be conceptually articulated, for him, is to stand in such relations to other such contents."(UR, p. 6) The *conceptual content* has three consequences for Brandom: a holistic semantics, subjective and objective conceptually articulated, and material inference.

a) Holistic Semantics – Hegel derives from the conceptual content a holistic semantics. The contents of concepts are the category of 'mediation' and 'determinate negation' that includes whole conceptual commitments and their relations. "What Hegel calls 'the Concept,' comprising judgments, practical commitments, and commitments regarding what relations of material inferential consequence and incompatibility all the possible commitments stand in to one another." (UR, p. 7)

b) Subjective and Objective conceptually articulated – "Hegel thinks that *both* subjectively entertained thoughts (conceptual contents subjects can be committed to) and objective states of affairs are alike conceptually articulated." (p.7) Brandom cites his colleague, John McDowell, that "the conceptual has no outer boundary" means that the objective world and the facts that it comprises we cannot understand independently of the conceptual activity and of the intentional subjects. In other words, we cannot understand the world apart from our conceptually articulated, "that includes inferential consequences and excludes incompatible commitments." (UR, p. 7)

c) Material Inference – According to Brandom the process by which conceptual contents develop is essential to the content they express. This process is the rational integration in two moments: expressing the *ampliative* dimension of material inferential consequences and the *critical* dimension of resolving material incompatibilities. (see UR, p. 8)

Brandom says that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* develops "a historicized social practice approach to conceptual normativity encompassing a holistic semantics that emphasizes language as the medium in which an already conceptually articulated world becomes explicit for us." (UR, p. 9)

5.2 – Hegelian Philosophy and Analytic Philosophy

Robert Brandon wrote the paper "Hegel and Analytic Philosophy"[3] with the aim of answering some critical points that Paul Redding made in his book *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*. We can find in this paper what Brandom says about that, and at the same time how he understands the reception of the Hegelian philosophy by Analytic Philosophy. We take the principal ideas of Brandom in this discussion with Redding and we make explicit the principal Hegelian concepts that emerge in this debate. From these Hegelian concepts we can establish the relation between Brandom's Hegelianism and how these are articulated in his book *Articulating Reasons*.

a) Atomism or Semantic Holism: the way of the rapprochement – Brandom gives us a brief history about analytic tradition from the concept of atomism and semantic holism.

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[3] Brandom, Robert. "Hegel and Analytic Philosophy". University of Pittsburgh. Current work available in Brandom website: http://www.pitt.edu/~brandom/index.html - Henceforth HAP.

In his analytic philosophy, Russell defends first-order quantificational predicate logic. He insists in the atomistic model starting with objects, propositions, and inferential relations as the same order of the traditional logic that was, doctrine of concepts, judgments, and syllogisms. But "the first step on the holistic road to Hegel was taken already by Kant, who broke with the traditional order of semantic and logical explanation by insisting on the primacy of judgment." (HAP, p. 2) Frege follows this Kantian idea "in the form of his 'context principle': only in the context of a sentence do names have a reference." (HAP, p. 2) Wittgenstein sees sentences as the "minimal linguistic unit that can be used to make a move in a language-game." It is with Kant-Frege-Wittgenstein that analytic philosophy approximated with Hegel, according to Redding. With this approximation we passed from the semantic, logical, and metaphysical atomism to a semantic, logical, and metaphysical holist.

Brandom understands that these strands of analytic tradition were represented also in the classical American pragmatism. He cites James as an empiricist-atomist, Peirce as a Kantian, Dewey as a Hegelian, and Quine as the logical analytic that proposed the minimal unit of meaning, not the proposition, but "the whole theory." Quine endorses this holistic movement with his slogan: "Meaning is what essence becomes, when it is detached from the thing, and attached to the word." (HAP, p. 5) This development is dynamic and active today. It continues "and now, as day follows night, we see the first stirrings of what Redding calls 'the return of Hegelian thought' in analytic circles, says Brandom. Wilfrid Sellars hoped that his work would "begin to move analytic philosophy from its Humean to its Kantian phase". And Rorty characterized the work of Brandom and of John McDowell as potentially helping to move it from a Kantian to a Hegelian phase. (see HAP, p. 6) This change, according to Brandom, needs to move from the order of semantic and ontological explanation based on the judgments and the *understanding* to the inference and *reason*, "that is to move from the framework of *Verstand* to that of *Vernunft*." (HAP, p. 9)

b) Determinate negation and Mediation – According to Brandom, "the master-concept of Hegel's logic, semantics, and metaphysics is *determinate negation*. It is modal concept." (HAP, p. 12) For him *mediation* is also a very important concept, but it is subordinated to determinate negation. He understands the mediation in inferential relations, as derived from the middle term in a syllogism which moves from major and minor premises to the conclusion. "The inferential relations Hegel has in mind are thought of as modally robust inferences of the sort that would be expressed by counterfactual conditionals," and "inferences can be defined in terms of material incompatibilities (determinate negations)." (HAP, p. 12, note 8) Brandom gives us this example: Since *p* entails *q* everything incompatible with *q* is incompatible with *p*. Thus 'Peter is a donkey' entails 'Peter is a mammal', because everything incompatible with being a mammal is incompatible with being a donkey.

Brandom explains the concept of determinate negation from the *Perception* chapter of the *Phenomenology* in terms of the two kinds of difference: (1) indifferent (*gleichgültige*) difference and (2) exclusive (*ausschließende*) difference. For example, *square* and *red* are different properties in the 1st sense, while *square* and *circular* are different in the 2nd sense, here they are *incompatibles*, because it is impossible in alethic modal logic to be or not be at the same time. Determinate negation has also a sense as 'formal' or 'abstract' negation, in the above example: It is not-square. "As Redding notes, determinate negations are Aristotelian *contraries*, while formal negations are Aristotelian *contradictories*," in other words, "term negation produces the *contrary* of the term negated, while *denying* rather than affirming a predicate of a subject produces a sentence that is *contradictory* to the affirmation." (HAP, p. 13) Then Brandom concludes: "After all, we can use classical formal negation to form the contradictories of predicates, too, as we did with not-square above. The important move is from formal inconsistency to material incompatibility." (HAP, p. 13) That is, on the side of inference, "this is the move to what Sellars calls 'material inferences', these are inferences such as 'It is raining, so the streets will be wet'. Material incompatibilities and consequences can be considered either for predicates (properties) or for sentences (states of affairs)." (HAP, p. 14) The answer to Redding is finally: "I do not see that the centrality of the concept of *determinate negation* to Hegel's enterprise gives us any reason to think that Hegel's meaning will be 'masked' if we don't follow him in setting his claims in the framework of term logic." (HAP, p. 14)

c) Understanding and Reason – Brandom distinguishes the two concepts: *Understanding* is a logic-semantic category that is placed to the level of *judgment* and it is linked to Kantian and Fregean approaches. *Reason* is a Hegelian concept that is "articulated by *material* incompatibility and consequence relations.

But Fregean logic concerns formal logical inconsistency and consequence." (HAP, p. 15) From this presupposition Brandom answers Redding: "But the conclusion that because I use Fregean apparatus I am not capturing what is distinctive of Hegel's framework of *Vernunft* does not follow from them." (HAP, p. 15) Brandom uses the concept of *inference* and *conceptual content* from Frege. "Conceptual content is determined by inferential role… it is clear that the inferences he has in mind as articulating those contents are material inferences." (HAP, p. 16) Frege uses the strategy of the "holistic-top-down of semantic explanation characteristic of *Vernunft*." He implements an "explanatory strategy that moves from inference, through judgment, to terms and concepts, reversing the traditional term-logical strategy." (HAP, p. 16) Brandom is convinced that Frege's logic gives us better tools "to shift from an empiricist atomism-nominalism, first to judgment-based (*Verstand*) and then to inference-based (*Vernunft*) than does the traditional logic."(HAP, p. 16)

d) Contradiction, **conceptual change, and truth** – Brandom summarized this question that is linked with determinate negation as follows: 1."The formal law of noncontradiction, forbidding simultaneous commitment to p and its negation ~p, is correct as far as it goes, but fails to capture more than an abstract shadow of the important phenomenon. 2. Material contradiction – finding oneself with materially incompatible commitments, commitments that are determinate negations of one another – is inevitable. 3. Such contradictions show that something is wrong: that one has made an error (or practical failure). 4. Nonetheless, material contradictions and the errors they indicate are the path of (not to) truth." (HAP, p. 17)

Formal negation is an abstraction from determinate negation, for example, if p is a property, ~p can be thought of as the minimal materially incompatible property of p. Thus not-square is entailed by circular, triangular and so on, because *omnis determinatio est negatio*. The material incompatibility, as contradiction, is fundamental to understand the objective world, because a determinate property or state of affairs excludes other properties of the other object or states of affairs in the same ontological category. About this material incompatibility and our cognitive and practical activities "there is no set of determinate concepts such that *correct* application of them… will never lead to commitments that are according to those material conceptual norms." (HAP, p. 18)

Hegel has a new idea, says Brandom, about the conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous immediacy. "The conceptual inexhaustibility of sensuous shows itself precisely in the impossibility of *stable* capturing how things are using *any* set of determinate concepts." (HAP, p. 18) But the application of determinate concepts will show their inadequacy to embrace commitments that are materially incompatible according to the norms implicit in those concepts. "At the core of Hegel's view is not only an epistemic, but a deep semantic fallibilism", because it is possible "contradicting ourselves – endorsing materially incompatible commitments – is unavoidable." (HAP, p. 19) We are normatively obliged, says Brandom, when we find ourselves with materially incompatible commitments, to refine our concepts, some judgments, and overcome the contradiction. "That is why the same relations of determinate negation that articulate the determinate contents of our concepts are also the motor of *change* of our conceptually articulated commitments – both at the level of judgments and the level of inference, hence at the level of concepts themselves."(HAP, p. 19) Then contradiction has a roll in order to makes determinate negation and the reason dynamic: "It is the source of conceptual change. Insofar as the merely formal law of noncontradiction expresses, however inadequately, the overarching normative obligation to *repair* material incompatibilities when they are encountered, it is correct – as far as it goes." (HAP, p. 19)

Brandom concludes that this is the way of enlightenment, because we improve our understanding, develop better concepts-and-commitments, and articulate more closely objective and subjective relations. "This is the truth-process, the path of truth. That every commitment is liable to being found to collide with another, and so to be rejected means that as this process, 'truth includes the negative'."(HAP, p. 20) He continues, "this is not a coherence theory of truth… for classical theories of truth, like their rival, correspondence theories, share a commitment to truth as an achievable state or property (truth as 'rigid, dead propositions'). But the concept of truth in Hegelian thought "is something much more radical and interesting", because "what matters is the process, not the product." (HAP, p. 21)

6 – The Hegelian Methodology and Brandom's Articulations

We find some Hegelian methodological concepts in the works of Brandom. We point out these concepts in particular from this summary and reading guide of the book *Articulating Reasons*.

There are different elements in this book, however we are presenting only the Hegelian methodology and some aspects, because in our opinion the Hegelian methodology is the principal strategy for the rapprochement between Hegelianism and Analytic Philosophy. Brandom's research is one of the most important works in this sense. We chose these three concepts: the logic concept and its content; the dialectic between whole and parts; and the determinate negation and the contradiction as the core of the Hegelian system.

a) The Concept: The Movement of Inferentialism

Hegel's *Science of Logic* is the exposition of the concept. This book presents the development of the concept in three moments: The *Logic of Being* is the concept as *immediate,* that is, the categories make the movement of mediation as the *passage* through one another. The *Logic of Essence* is the concept as *mediate,* that is, the categories make the movement of mediation as the *reflection* through one another. Finally, the *Logic of Concept* is the concept as *development* that is the categories make the movement of mediation as the *immanent movement*, or self-development in each category. These moments of the concept is a methodological process of concept itself, it means the concept from the abstract immediate moment became concrete by mediation moments of passage, reflection and self-development. This is the movement of logic inferentialism in which the concept realizes the dialectic movement at the same time of top-down – deduction – and of bottom-up – induction.

Brandom applies this for the conceptual content by its inferential articulation, that is, it makes explicit the implicit inferential commitments that articulate the content of the concepts. There is a Hegelian influence in this rationalist expressivist pragmatism that links logic and self-consciousness, in the sense of making explicit what is implicit. There is a kind of consciousness in the sense of *sapience* that corresponds to a kind of self-consciousness: semantic or conceptual self-consciousness. Inferentialism is the claim that means the conceptual content in the game of giving and asking for reasons is the inferential relations between assertions and other assertions. Inferentialism is a holist semantics that grasp many moments of the conceptual content or the logic concept. Inferentialism is a normative theory: inferential relations are to be understood in terms of endorsements, commitments, and entitlements. These normative statuses are the building blocks of meaning. The context in which these inferential relations can exist as normative statuses is the essentially social game of asking and giving reasons: commitments, endorsements and entitlements are attributed, acknowledged, and undertaken.

The movement of inferentialism performs the movement as the concept, namely, its moments: (i) The *Being* of the concept finds in the *immediate* discursive practices the practical game where there is the *passage* between social players that make inferential claims. (ii) The *Essence* of the concept realizes in the *mediation* of the recognition process in which discursive practices adopt practical attitudes by which interlocutors keep score on one another's commitments, because to claim is to undertake or to acknowledge a commitment. (iii) The Concept itself realizes in the *development* of inferential relations in the assertible contents expressed by sentences in the practices of normative statuses – commitments and entitlements - the self-development in these categories: the commitive inferences or commitment-preserving, a category that *universalizes* deductive inference; the permissive inferences or entitlement-preserving, a category that *particularizes* the inductive inference; and incompatibility entailments, a category that *individualizes* modal inference (counterfactual-supporting).

b) The Whole and the Parts: The Semantic Holism

We find in Hegelian philosophy the fundamental concept: the absolute. At the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* there is *Absolute Knowledge*; at the end of the *Science of Logic* there is *Absolute Idea*; and at the end of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* there is *Absolute Spirit*. The concept of the absolute synthesizes the movement between the whole and the parts.

The absolute is a dynamic concept that needs to understand itself as the open concept, and in perpetual movement. (i) The *absolute knowledge* is the movement of the consciousness in which the parts that are the subject and object supersede its contradiction as a game of the whole and the parts. In this game the consciousness becomes self-consciousness, and reason in the recognition process of absolute knowledge. (ii) The *absolute idea* is the development of the logic idea in the whole of the concepts by the parts of the *Being*, the *Essence* and the *Concept*. The absolute idea is the unity of Being and Essence (Objective Logic) and thought (Subjective Logic), in which the parts are the subjectivity and the objectivity.

The inner teleology articulates the immediate and the mediate of these parts in the absolute idea. (iii) The *absolute spirit* is the three logical syllogisms between three different figures (1) Logic – Nature – Spirit, (2) Nature – Spirit – Logic, and (3) Spirit – Logic - Nature. The parts of the system are united in the absolute spirit by the syllogism, therefore, the system as pure concept is truly encyclopedic, that is contained in a threefold cycle. The truth is the whole, said Hegel, or the absolute spirit.

The Hegelian logic is a holism semantic that we can find in this movement between the parts and the whole in the Brandom inferentialism: (i) "The *normative pragmatics*, namely, the discursive practice as deontic scorekeeping of the speech act insofar as commitments and entitlements one attributes and acknowledges." (AR, p. 81). In the *absolute knowledge* as the consciousness needs to be recognized in the *Phenomenology*, thus the normative pragmatics is the *whole logic* where we have the discursive practice that implies commitments and entitlements as the parts of the whole in the conceptual content. (ii) "The *inferential semantics* that is discursive commitments to begin with doxastic ones, that is a specifically inferential articulation, "that qualifies us as *sapiens* (and not merely *sentients*) can be identified with being a player in the social, implicitly normative game of offering and assessing, producing and consuming, reasons" (AR, p. 81). The *absolute idea* is the logic unity between objectivity and subjectivity, thus in the same way the inferential semantics is the inferential articulation between the subjective commitments and the objective social normative game as the parts in the whole holistic semantics. (iii) "The *expressive logic* that is a role of the logical vocabulary as being made explicit, in the form of a claim as a game of giving and asking for reasons. The expressive role of the conditional is to make *explicit*, in the form of a claim, what before was *implicit* in our practice of distinguishing some inferences as good" (AR, p. 81). The *absolute spirit* is a syllogistic process or inferentialist process where we find the whole material inference through the parts of the game of giving and asking for reasons or in the actions in which they happen the process that makes explicit through the claim what was implicit in the practices.

c) Determinate Negation and Contradiction: The Motor of the Pragmatic Game

We need to understand the mediation and determinate negation as moments of the process of the supersede (*Aufhebung*), that involves dialectical sequence: (1) affirmation, (2) negation, (3) negation of negation = affirmation of something new. To determine something is to articulate, identify, particularize, and specify it. Determination presupposes negation that is a thing is determinate only in so far as it contrasts with other things or concepts which are determined in a way in which it is not. Determinate negation is an internal contradiction that makes possible the mediation of concept. The mediation (*Vermittlung*) is working in the conceptualization, that is the union of two terms by a third, especially the union of the universal and the particular in the individual.

"Contradiction (*Widerspruch*), is "the very moving principle of the world," or "contradiction is the root of all movement and vitality", says Hegel. Part One of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*: *The Logic*, Hegel says in ¶ 79: "In point of form Logical doctrine has three sides: [a] the Abstract side, or that of understanding; [b] the Dialectical, or that of negative reason; [c] the Speculative, or that of positive reason." Hegel continues "these three sides do not make three parts of logic, but are stages or 'moments' in every logical entity, that is, of every notion and truth whatever." This paragraph says the moments of the mediation in which there is the contradiction between the opposition affirmative and negative reason. The determinate negation is one moment of this process as Hegel says in ¶ 82 "The Speculative stage, or stage of Positive Reason, apprehends the unity of terms (propositions) in their opposition - the affirmative, which is involved in their disintegration and in their transition." And "the result of Dialectic is positive, because it has a definite content, or because its result is not empty and abstract nothing but the negation of certain specific propositions which are contained in the result - for the very reason that it is a resultant and not an immediate nothing." (Hegel, 1975)

The categories of determinate negation and contradiction are very important for the approximation between Hegelian and analytic philosophy. Brandom worked specially at the determinate negation, while at the same time considering the contradiction that leads to the mediation of the concept. We think that he points out the determinate negation because he wants to grasp the Hegelian system as the open and dynamic system in which there is the conceptual change in order to indicate the path of truth. We find in the pragmatic structure of Brandom the logic of determinate negation and contradiction.

Brandom distinguishes three moves beyond classical assertibility theories in order to fund the notion of objective representational content for declarative sentences.

(i) The move from treating assertibility as the fundamental normative pragmatic: this is as "the Abstract side, or that of understanding" in the Hegelian Logic. (ii) The move from the *circumstances* under which the normative status in question is acquired to include also *consequences* of acquiring it. This is moving toward a notion of content as inferential role. The interaction of this move with the previous one generates the three notions of inference employed in this text: commitment-preserving, entitlement-preserving; and incompatibility entailments: this is as "the Dialectical, or that of negative reason" in the Hegelian logic. (iii) the move from looking at normative *statuses* (assertibility, commitment, entitlement) to normative *social attitudes*. This is to focus on *attributing* to others and acknowlegding one's own commitments (see AR, p. 221, note 7): this is as "the Speculative, or that of positive reason." This note above, already used in our text, is interesting because it shows us the mediation process of the determinate negation and contradiction in the semantic inferential pragmatic game of Brandom.

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