

# THE NORMS OF THOUGHT, A GENEALOGICAL SKETCH

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## 1. Introduction

In one of his last works, *On the Genealogy of Ethics*, Michel Foucault claims that Descartes and modern philosophy have completely separated the quest for truth from the quest for moral goodness:

I can be immoral and know the truth. I believe this is an idea that, more or less explicitly, was rejected by all previous culture. Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral and know the truth. With Descartes, direct evidence is enough<sup>2</sup>.

According to Foucault, Descartes and then Locke would have created a sort of disenchantment, *Entzauberung* in Max Weber's sense, of the value of truth. Before Descartes and Locke, theoretical wisdom went hand in hand with practical wisdom and virtue. After them, the norms of knowledge, or epistemic norms, can have all sorts of origins: they can be based on natural facts, or created by language, or even established by God; in any case they do not have any relationship with our moral virtue.

Following Canguilhem, Foucault studied the way in which, especially in the XIX century, the old notion of norm (*norma*, square), formerly designing a rule governing conduct – how to act – eventually became associated with the notion of normality, which designs the regularity of conduct – how we act – especially in the field of medicine. Then Ian Hacking and others showed how the probability calculus and the statistical methods provided the theoretical and practical devices to this normalization of the *norma*<sup>3</sup> and normalization *tout court*. After that, following this Foucauldian – and primarily Nietzschean – claim, the contemporary theory of knowledge would have marked a break, once and for all, between the domain of knowledge and the moral domain. So the followers of Michel Foucault and of Pierre Hadot would have been left with the mission of restoring the lost connection between ethics and logic, or morality and knowledge, coming back to our ancient wisdom, which in their opinion had never been really theoretical<sup>4</sup>.

However, if we look at the true story of it, from the XVIIth century till now, we see that things are far from being the way the Weberian and now Foucauldian slogan claims they are, namely that modern science would have disenchanted all values, including the values of

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<sup>2</sup> “Afterword: On the Genealogy of Ethics”: An Overview of Work in Progress, in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, eds., *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: U Chicago, 1982: 279).

<sup>3</sup> Ian Hacking, *The Taming of chance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. see also L. Krüger, L. Darston & G. Gigerenzer, eds. *The Empire of Probability*, 2 vol. Cambridge

<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, Paris, Gallimard 1983 ; Pierre Hadot, *qu'est-ce que la philosophie grecque ?*, Paris, Gallimard 1993

knowledge, so that the role of values had shrunk in a world of facts dominated by a value-free positivism<sup>5</sup>.

If you read Descartes, Locke, and many of the Enlightenment thinkers, you cannot but notice that, on the contrary, they did not stop using the language of virtue, responsibility, duty, blame and fault with respect to the knowledge of truth. When Descartes is concerned with error he speaks of “using the faculty of judgment correctly” (*Clarum me recte ager*) or judging “as it ought to” (*recte utor*) (*Fourth Meditation AT IX*, 47-48). One might quote several passages from Malebranche as well. In a well-known page on assent, Locke explicitly uses a moral language:

He that believes, without having any Reason for believing, may be in love with his own Fancies ; but neither seeks Truth as he *ought*, nor pays the Obedience due to his Maker, who would have him use those discerning Faculties he has given him, to keep him out of Mistake and Errour. He that does not this to the best of his Power, however he sometimes lights on Truth, is *in the right* by chance; and I know not whether the luckiness of the Accident will excuse *the irregularity* of his proceeding. This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever *Mistakes* he runs into: whereas he that makes use of the Light and Faculties GOD has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover Truth, by those Helps and Abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his *Duty* as a rational Creature, that though he should miss Truth, he will not miss the Reward of it. For he governs his Assent *right*, and places it as he *should*, who in any Case or Matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves, according as Reason directs him. He that does otherwise, transgresses against his own Light, and misuses those Faculties, which were given him to no other end, but to search and follow the clearer Evidence, and greater Probability” (*Essay*, IV, xvii , 24: *Reason and Faith not opposite*; my italics)<sup>6</sup>.

The relationship between the quest for truth and the ethical needs is central to modern science as well. According to the well-known thesis defended by Robert K. Merton (1938), our classic science from the XVIIIth century in England gained influence in a puritan context: the scholars believed they had a duty to search for the truth in the scientific domain. Merton was inspired in his turn by Weber, in this case by his book on the Protestant Ethic, where he notes among other things that the Pietists manifested a strong disapproval of philosophical speculations and praised on the contrary the quest for empirical knowledge<sup>7</sup>.

Contrary to what is claimed by Foucault, my impression is that the reflection on the role of values and epistemic norms, in their relation with ethical norms and values, has never really left the scene after Descartes. In fact, the notion of norm itself played a very important part in the philosophy of the end of the XIXth century and the beginning of the next century, as well as in the legal domain. There was a debate on normative sciences. Today the notion of norm is everywhere, from ethics to epistemology, passing through sociology and jurisprudence.

Focusing simply on the theory of knowledge, one may notice how people still talk of epistemic duties, still compare intellectual virtues to moral ones, and still connect ethics and epistemology. The contemporary philosophers of knowledge usually ask questions of the following sort:

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<sup>5</sup> To use the title of Wolfgang Kohler, *The Place of Values in a World of Facts*, New York : Liveright 1938.

<sup>6</sup> I studied the question of whether Descartes and Locke can be considered as precursors of the responsibilist epistemologies of *ought* and virtue in my essay in Spanish «Descartes y la responsabilidad epistemica» (*Laguna*, 10, pp. 9-26 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the spirit of capitalism*, tr. Talcott Parson, Unwin Hyman, London & Boston, 1930; . See, in Merton’s book, p. 134 on Candolle, who in his *histoire des sciences et des savants* notes that there is a majority of protestants among the foreign members of the Paris Academy of Sciences from 1666 to 1883. Merton’s thesis has been contested, but essentially on the normative level (should the scientists obey an ethical ought?). It was less contested on the descriptive level (did the XVII century English scientists believe they had an ethical ought in scientific matters?).

- In what sense is the notion of justification of knowledge normative? Is it the same normativity one may find in the moral or legal domain?
- Are there any specifically cognitive duties or cognitive oughts?
- Can we talk of an ethics of belief?
- Can we base our theory of knowledge on the notion of intellectual virtue?
- Do reasons to believe and reasons to act belong to the same kind?
- Are the weaknesses of practical rationality, like *akrasia*, of the same kind as the weaknesses of theoretical rationality?<sup>8</sup>

You might reply that a question or a series of questions does not amount to an argument against Foucault's thesis, as far as no one today would require a candidate to a scientific appointment to pass a moral examination, even though some academic institutions state their «ethical codes» and plagiarism and scientific fraud explode in our information society. However, if Foucault claimed, as it seems he did, that the question of the relationship between norms and cognitive values on the one hand, and norms and ethical values on the other, disappeared from the philosophical scene with Descartes, then such a claim is false.

Here I would like to focus on some historical episodes of what I would call a “genealogy”, namely of the relationships between epistemology and ethics, taking into consideration some theories of what we might call the “norms of thought”, from Kant to the beginning of the XXth century.

What shall we mean by “norms of thought”? It is an ambiguous notion. It has different meanings that can be very schematically classified by their range of generality and abstraction. In the first place, it can convey some very general principles of rationality governing thought in general, like the logical principles of non contradiction and excluded middle. Such principles are norms constituting the activity of thinking. In this sense we are not free to follow them or not: if we do not comply with them, we are simply outside the domain of thought (at least according to the view that credits them with an absolute validity, something which is contested by those who want to replace them with some other principles, like the intuitionist mathematician on the excluded middle). Secondly, the notion of norms of thought may convey, in a less abstract way, some principles governing the fixation and justification of belief, like the “evidentialist” principle supported by Locke: “The not entertaining any Proposition with greater assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant” or its “Victorian” and quasi-moralistic adaptation made by William Clifford: “It is wrong in all cases to believe on insufficient evidence”. At a third level we might designate by such notion some maxims and rules for the conduct of the understanding, like those that we find in the classic books of philosophy with titles as *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding*, *Logic or the Art of Thinking*. Finally, we can designate not the principles of thought, but the general disposition of character and of cognitive activity of the agents engaging in the quest for truth, namely some intellectual virtues such as probity, honesty or intellectual integrity, truthfulness, sincerity, accuracy, curiosity, openness of mind, scruples, etc. However, it is true that, in this last sense, we are not concerned with *norms* anymore. We rather deal with some principles of ethical conduct or, at least, with some features of the thinking subject. What Foucault claims is that we moved, from a conception of the quest for truth according to which ethical disposition – in the *ethos* sense, of the *hexis* – governs our thought, to a conception where thought is no longer governed by such ethical dispositions, but only by abstract principles. In this sense, his thesis is not very different from that which was defended, for different purposes and to varying degrees of detail, by the authors who noticed a return to the Aristotelian, in particular, and

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. my article “Akrasia pratique et akrasia épistémique”, *Le philosophe*, 29, 2007

Greek, in general, conceptions of the ethical life, in favor of a deontological morality based on autonomy<sup>9</sup>.

The important philosophical question is precisely to know whether or not there are any connections between those notions. I will try to figure it out by proposing, firstly, a kind of genealogy which will allow us to examine the different senses of these notions. Secondly, I will take into account some major discussions, from Kant till the present context, in order to show how the different senses of the notion of norms of thought opposed each other and are part of our recent heritage.

In doing this, I take inspiration from what Bernard Williams has recently done in his book *Truth and Truthfulness*<sup>10</sup>. There he wants to tell a story about what he calls the “virtues of truth”, such as accuracy, sincerity, and authenticity. However, as we shall see, my aims and conclusions are quite different from his own.

## 2. A sketch of a Genealogy of the Norms of Thought

In *Truth and Truthfulness*, Williams is concerned by what he calls the “virtues of truth”, such as accuracy, sincerity, and authenticity, which are virtues attached to the attitude we have with respect to truth. The notion of a genealogy of truth has been familiar since Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morality* and its Foucauldian transposition. But the conception developed by Williams is quite different from Nietzsche’s and Foucault’s. He explains it very clearly at the beginning of his book. In the ordinary sense of the term, a genealogy is a certain kind of narrative which tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing how it took place, or how it might have taken place, or how we could imagine it took place. In a large measure, a genealogy is a story. It can contain some historical elements. With Nietzsche and Foucault, it is a story starting from a contemporary notion that is implicit in our culture, namely that of morality, with a view to revealing its origin and showing how it is different from the one we have now. To put it differently, the Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogy aims to «deconstruct» such a notion, and to show that it is not only largely illusory, but also serves some other forces or stakes – those of desire, political power or will of power. So it is basically a negative genealogy, destructive and demystifying. It aims to show that morality is not the kind of thing we believe it to be, that truth is not what we believe it to be, and that such notions serve some completely different interests (by definition suspect). Archeology in this Foucauldian sense aims to uncover the historical layers of a notion’s sense. Secondly, the genealogy in the Nietzschean sense is necessarily subjective and relativist in the following sense: it is not concerned with a notion – i.e. truth, ethical values and principles – in the objective sense of the term, since its purpose is exactly that of showing that such notions are largely illusory and do not exist except in the mind of those who represent them to themselves in a certain way. To put it differently, it is a genealogy concerned with our *beliefs* on morality and truth. But according to Nietzsche and Foucault, neither truth nor ethical principles and values exist independently of the representations and attitudes we have with respect to them. Indeed they want to show that such notions change from age to age. They want to show that truth can be reduced to the beliefs and voluntary attitudes we have about it (will of truth, will to know); therefore, that truth and morality are rather “errors” (both in the

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<sup>9</sup> Elisabeth Anscombe “Modern Moral philosophy” *Philosophy* 33, No. 124 (January 1958).). See also Alistair McIntyre, *After Virtue*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame press, 1981, J. Schnewind, *The invention of autonomy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1988.

<sup>10</sup> B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness. An Essay in Genealogy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002.see . my review of this book in *La quinzaine littéraire*, septembre 2006

<sup>12</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*; J. Mackie, *Ethics, inventing right or wrong*, Penguin, 1977

sense in which Nietzsche tells the story of an “error” about truth and in which Mackie exposes an “error theory” about ethical properties<sup>12</sup>). Thus a genealogy of truth and morality embodies a form of skepticism on truth and ethics<sup>13</sup>.

The genealogy of Bernard Williams is completely different. It is not basically a story, nor is it an archeology in the sense of revealing the foundations of a doctrine or a notion one wants to demolish. It is rather an imaginary or theoretical story aiming to *reconstruct*, and not to deconstruct, a determinate notion. Among such genealogies one may count the reconstructions of the State of Nature in political philosophy, as in Hobbes and Rousseau, or the reconstruction of artificial virtue by Hume. Or, more recently, the reconstruction of the State of Nature developed by Robert Nozick in his *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. A positive genealogy of this kind is not a denunciation of notions claimed to be deceitful and fictional: it claims on the contrary the reality and utility of such notions. Williams takes his inspiration from the genealogy of the notion of knowledge provided by Edward Craig in his book *Knowledge and the State of Nature*<sup>14</sup>, where the author aims to show that the notion of knowledge emerged, in a hypothetical “State of Nature”, from the notion of “reliable informant”, capable of forming true beliefs and of transmitting them to others in a reliable way. According to this view, the objectivity of knowledge is the product of a practical necessity, namely that of reporting correctly to others some useful information. Now, such a story presupposes that the notion of knowledge has a definite and stable sense from the very beginning: the attitudes related to it can change, not the notion itself.

This is the sense in which Williams proposes a genealogy of the values of truth. As Craig does, he starts by describing a primitive situation (even if what is at stake is not a paleontology or an evolutionary story: we should not confuse the State of Nature with Pleistocene); in such situation the truth and its quest are supposed to have a certain social function for a group of people, even a small one, formed by individuals who supposedly have at least some beliefs and thoughts that they can express in their language and transmit to others. Supposedly, in this picture, the basic function of language is communication, and one of the goals of communication is the transmission of information, in particular of that which other agents cannot collect from their epistemic position. For instance, having seen something that others did not see, someone might wish to report what he saw. This communication of information can have two desirable features: (a) being true, that is reporting some true information, and (b) being sincere, that is expressing the content of the beliefs the agent has. There is at this primitive stage, according to Williams, a “truth-assertion-belief triangle”: beliefs or thoughts are true or false, and we express them by our assertions that communicate to others the content of those very beliefs. The function of the notion of truth is established on such a stable core. By itself it does not imply anything about the way it is used. Subjects can subsequently develop some habits and dispositions about it, can abide by it or violate it, and attribute to it some value by consequence of this. What Williams calls “virtues of truth” are simply the habits and dispositions that we primarily associate with the truth-assertion-belief triangle. Accuracy is the disposition to form true beliefs, sincerity the disposition to report them as such. At this stage, “virtue” simply means an attitude which is desirable or

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<sup>13</sup> The interpreters of Nietzsche and Foucault (starting by Williams himself) reject this implication and claim that Nietzsche and Foucault take truth to be a value nevertheless (« We the truth seekers», says Nietzsche). Sure, but then one should explain how it is possible to admit truth as a value without believing in the reality of truth as a property of our statements and beliefs! Williams has defended, in his books on ethics, a form of « reasonable » ethical relativism, against the “absolutivist” positions in ethics (Aristotelian, Kantian, utilitarian). The problem, when he comes to a genealogy of truth, is to understand whether he subscribe himself to this kind of relativism. He explicitly denies it. But then the problem is to see whether he should reject such relativism in ethics as well. I cannot deal with this point here.

<sup>14</sup> Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1990

significantly useful to the community members. The point is that accuracy and sincerity can have an instrumental value at least for those who are in such State of Nature.

While Williams sketches such a conception of the truth-assertion-belief triangle, I wish to describe it more in detail than he does. For a subject to be able to report correctly some information, what are needed are some *constitutive norms* of assertion and belief (or of thought):

- (1) Thoughts aim at truth
- (2) Assertions aim to be true
- (3) Assertions express thoughts.

This is my terminology, not Williams'<sup>15</sup>. There is in it a first meaning of the word « norm », in the constitutive sense I referred to above. What it might mean, that principles as (1)-(3) are norms, has been a matter of much debate in contemporary philosophy. Is it the case, for instance, that the members of our State of Nature might have some beliefs without aiming at truth? If “aiming at truth” meant that subject could have either true or false beliefs depending on what they desire, this would mean that wishful thinking is possible. We do not need to deny that they have passions and desires. Rousseau stresses this point in his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality*. Nevertheless, we might think that those who systematically take their desires for reality do not benefit too much from that. Otherwise, if “aiming at truth” meant an intentional or voluntary aim, a well-known argument elaborated by Williams himself<sup>16</sup> claims it is impossible. For those who intentionally had a belief without aiming at the truth of it, would put themselves in a predicament of this kind: on the one hand, they would believe something (by virtue of their will) but, on the other, they would not believe it (since the belief they desire to have is just the opposite). Being in this predicament would make it very hard to transmit and share some information.

Although all kinds of questions can be raised concerning these principles, it is reasonable to suppose that it is a norm of belief that belief aims at truth. We might state this principle as follows:

- (A) A thought is correct only if it is true.

I shall call it the basic norm of thought or belief<sup>17</sup>. By ‘basic norm’, I do not mean what Kelsen meant in his *General Theory of Norms*, where he took the basic norm of a legal system to be the expression of an act of will. Here I just deal with the norms of thought, leaving open for now the question of the sense in which they are normative. How are we to understand (A)? It can be taken in two ways:

- (A1) A thought is correct only if it is *objectively* true;
- (A2) A thought is correct only if it is true *for the subject who has it*.

We can imagine a State of Nature where the subjective condition obtains but the objective does not. It is therefore doubtful that someone may have the idea of information to be transmitted to others, without having a concept of minimal objectivity, at least in the sense of

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. my remarks in P.Engel et R. Rorty, *What's the use of truth ?* Columbia University Press, 2006, tr. Ital. *A cosa serve la verita ?*, Il mulino, 2007

<sup>16</sup> . Williams, “Deciding to Believe”, 1969 in *Problems of the Self*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

<sup>17</sup> cf. R. Wedgwood “On the Aim of Belief”, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 2002, P. Engel, “Truth and the Aim of Belief”, in *Models in Science*, ed D. Gillies, King's College London., 2005, 77-97

a convergence among subjects. Therefore the objective sense of (A1) is certainly the one constituting the norm of belief.

A second question concerns the relation between the basic norm and other norms. For we might suppose that other norms are required, in the State of Nature as well:

(B) A thought is correct only if it is based on good reasons.

In other words, the inhabitants of our State of Nature would need some evidence to ground their beliefs and justify to others the information they have. So they might have some norms more specific than those I have mentioned up to now. The justification of such norms might be an empirical one, but can also come from the fact that they infer some thoughts from other thoughts, or that they perform some reasoning. This implies that inferences have reasons as well. It is here that the idea of *method* and of criteria for seeking truth comes into play. And it is here that further norms are needed, namely those of logic and correct inference, those of hypothesis confirmation etc. In particular, for their empirical beliefs, they might have norms like this:

(C) A belief is correct (justified) only if it supported by sufficient evidence

and, concerning logical norms, like this:

(D) A belief is correct only if it logically follows from other beliefs by valid rules of reasoning.

We might suppose that at any given time the members of our State of Nature develop such methods. This is what we usually call norms of thought, being codified as a set of rules, methods, canons and heuristics.

What is the relationship between the idea of a norm of objective truth and the idea of good reasons to believe? This is one of the most important problems concerning the norms of thought: Is a thought correct or rational *if it is rational for an agent to have it*, or, the other way around, the agent should have *if it is rational or correct by itself*? This reminds us of *Euthyphro's* dilemma, asking whether what is pious is so because the gods desire it, or the gods desire it because it is pious. We have here two different conceptions of the norms of thought, either as procedural criteria followed by an agent or as objective criteria of justification external to the agent. This can be stated as an opposition between an *internalist* conception of norms (procedural and constructive) on the one hand, and an *externalist* conception on the other (where the norms require not only that a certain procedure be followed, but also that some independent objective truths exist and the agent has to recognize them). The notions of rationality and norm of thought have of course different meanings in each scenario. This is a fundamental division, as I will try to show.

Another consequence of the distinction between an internalist and an externalist conception of the norms of thought is that, according to the internalist conception, there is no gap nor possible distance, at least in principle, between the norms of thought and their application: since the moment a norm is taken as such it leads directly to act according to what it prescribes. On the contrary, according to the externalist conception, there could be such a gap: it is perfectly possible that a norm exists and it is recognized as such without being applied. Applying it requires experience and is not immediate<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> My distinction between internalism and externalism is very near to the one we find in contemporary moral psychology about the relations between motivations and moral principles. Cf. Williams, « Internal and External reasons » , in *Moral Luck*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press,. A distinction between internalism and

What we should retain from this genealogical sketch of the norms of thought is that there is an *intrinsic* relation between belief (thought), assertion and truth. However, does this internal connection, that I call “normative”, imply that truth is a value or norm in itself? Does it hold in the stronger sense of a more or less categorical prescription, or in the weaker sense of a goal to be achieved? Undoubtedly if truth is what our beliefs and statements aim at, truth is a value, in the sense of a fundamental evaluative dimension of our thoughts. Indeed it is usually taken as such. However, in a more fundamental sense, the internal connection of belief, truth and assertion, is simply a *functional* connection. It does not imply, in particular, that those who would have some beliefs without aiming at truth, or those who would lie or be unreliable informants, would have to be sanctioned, blamed or criticized, while, on the other hand, those who would be reliable and truthful informants would be approved, praised or taken as models. The beings living in the State of Nature might have many different motives for not respecting such norms. Nothing in the internal relation I referred to explains how the norms of thought may hold and how the community may defend them. What is needed is a specific argument, and a certain conception of the norms of knowledge and their value, affirming the relation in question. It is usual to give an argument against lying— as Kant gave first – claiming that lying undermines the practice of assertion itself. It is not sure however that such an argument is compelling. Something more is needed than the truth-assertion-belief system for the agents to say: “Shall I tell the truth?” or “How many truths am I going to tell?”. We should seriously go beyond the State of Nature to reach situations like that of Saint Athanase, who was one day rowing on a boat when those who wanted to persecute him did not recognize him and asked him: “Where is the traitor Athanase?”<sup>20</sup> – «Not far» responded the Saint, who, in such circumstances, decided not to tell the whole truth. This presupposes a distinction between lying and not telling the whole truth, together with the attitude which is not really thought to be that of a saint, namely to tell a half truth. How such attitudes to truth like trust, authority, lying, sincerity, truthfulness, authenticity, and precision become possible, and how such attitudes can give way to virtues, are not questions whose answer can be inferred by deduction from the intrinsic relations of belief, truth and assertion. Using a terminology proposed by Williams himself, we might say there is a great distance between the “thin” concept of truth as internal norm of assertion and belief and the “thick” concept of it as value or norm *tout court*. Such distance does not only depend on the fact that moving from functional truth to axiological truth requires a number of attitudes, but also on the fact that the respect of truth, or the lack of it, implies some attitudes that have practical consequences, not only epistemic ones, as trust does for instance. It is there that a real genealogy should start, but I will not take that up.

### 3. The Constitutive Norms of Thought from Kant to Husserl

Let me leave the State of Nature in order to address a different question, namely the relation between what I called the constitutive norms of thought on the one hand and some values on

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externalism about norms can be found in J. Pollock et J. Cruz , *An introduction to the theory of knowledge*, Totowa, Rowman and Littlefield, 1ere ed. 1986, second ed. 1999, but is different from the one proposed here.

<sup>20</sup> Consider alternatively what Kant tells about Abelard (*Hechsel Logik*, 112): Abelard travelled with a priest who told him suddenly: Lo! A flying cow! ». Abelard asks : “Where? » The clerk laughs : «How can a great philosopher believe such bullshit» Abrelard answered: it is more possible that a cow flies than than that a priest lies”.

the other. I will follow a historical path, but only an outline would be provided here. I will move to the end of the XVIII century, when many centuries of normative thought, of essays on logic and on the direction of understanding, with their sections on sophisms and rules of correct thinking etc., have already gone before. Also here an archeological work might be done, in the Foucauldian sense of a historical genealogy, with textual details, of the underground movements leading to certain conceptions, focusing mainly on texts and authors excluded from the canon or forgiven, and aiming to show that the ideas of the most celebrated authors come from the obscure ones, the ones with no ranking, the infantrymen of thought and institutions. However, the authors I will refer to here are quite well-known.

An author asserting with clarity the intrinsic relation between the constitutive norms and a moral value is Locke. The passage quoted above (§1) is perfectly clear in that respect. According to Locke we have a duty to search for the truth: those who do not do this, for example allowing themselves to believe what they wish, do not comply with such a duty. The rule I quoted, *i.e.*

*not entertaining any Proposition with greater assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant*

corresponds quite strictly to what I called the norm of reasons to believe:

(B) A thought is correct only if it is based on good reasons.

Such a rule is stated in a context where Locke appeals to the idea of specific epistemic duties or obligations:

He that would seriously set upon the search of Truth, ought in the first Place to prepare his Mind with a Love of it. For he that Loves it not, will not take much Pains to get it; nor be much concerned when he misses it. There is no Body in the Commonwealth of Learning, who does not profess himself a lover of Truth: and there is not a rational Creature that would not take it amiss to be thought otherwise of. And yet for all this one may truly say, there are very few lovers of Truth for Truths sake, even amongst those, who persuade themselves that they are so. How a Man may know whether he be so in earnest is worth enquiry: And I think there is this one unerring mark of it, *viz. The not entertaining any Proposition with greater assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant* (*Essay*, IV, xix, 1: *Of Enthusiasm*; my italics).

This is usually considered to be the first rule of Locke's ethics of belief<sup>21</sup>. But Locke is quite clear: the content of our duty is not truth by itself, but the love of truth, or the search for truth, or the knowledge of truth. So, the question is whether we are concerned here with a *moral* duty – as Locke seems to claim – or with a duty related to the theoretical sphere. It is also clear that such a norm is stated in a quite precise context, namely where a conflict is implied between the norm itself and some reasons to believe (or the absence of them) which are not appropriate for empirical beliefs but are appropriate for religious ones (this is why such rule is stated in a section on enthusiasm). Locke's discussion is situated in the context of the XVIIth century's deep revision of the empirical beliefs evaluation criteria, given in particular the emergence of probability calculus. This will strongly affect the reflection on miracles and religious belief.

However, it is mainly with respect to logical rules and norms that the question I am addressing here has been raised. And here history essentially formed itself around certain Kantian conceptions.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. N. Wolterstorff *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996.

Kant, as a good *Aufklärer*, in a sense does not say anything different from Locke, even if he insists, more than Locke did, on the self-contradiction of not searching for truth and not comparing it to the judgment of others (he who does not do that is a “logical egoist”)<sup>22</sup>.

Kant is very careful to distinguish, here and elsewhere, what pertains to the faculty of desire and what pertains to the faculty of knowledge, practical reason and theoretical reason. When belief is subjectively sufficient, but objectively insufficient, he says that we can give our assent to it: we can hold it true (*Fürwahrhalten*) for moral reasons. I will come back below to this issue concerning the debate on the ethics of belief.

Kant addresses the issue of the relations between norms of thought and practical values when he takes into consideration the nature of logic. He meets here the issue of the link between some norms of thought and some practical maxims. In its traditional form, the question is the following: Is logic an art or a science? Is it practical or theoretical? An *organon* or a *canon*?

According to the traditional description – examples of which can be found in the classical handbooks and in the *ars inveniendi* tradition, like in Leibniz and Lambert – logic is an *organon*, also in the sense of an art of invention or discovery of hidden truths. It is conceived in the same way when it comes to be applied to reasoning and thinking. Now Kant is very clear on this, when he says that logic does not concern but the form of thought in general and that, in this sense, it is a *canon*, a doctrine and not an *organon*. It is a theoretical science, not a practical discipline. Methodology is not a part of logic.

But Kant is less clear when, in a famous passage, he says that logic does not tell us how we think but how we ought to think<sup>23</sup>. He uses here the vocabulary of the «correct use of the understanding» and of the «necessary laws of thought», declaring solemnly that to bring psychological principles into logic would be as absurd as to derive morals from life. So we see that logic does not describe the laws of our understanding. Now, at the same time, the first page of each of his courses on logic tells us that everything in nature happens according to rules – «the fish in the water, the bird in the air move according to rules». According to Kant, our understanding does not constitute an exception to that, being the source of our faculty of thought. Logic, he says, amounts to grasping the rules of our understanding *in abstracto*, disregarding what pertains to their application. However, if such rules have their source in our faculty of thought, how could they be abstract and general in the sense required by a *canon*? To put it differently, how could such rules be natural and, at the same time, necessary and *a priori*? This is a first ambiguity in Kant’s position and was noted by Cavailles, who claimed that, even if Kant wants to get rid of psychologism in logic, «the beginning of his logic course recalls us unfavorably Arnauld’s one . Then a second ambiguity concerns the

<sup>22</sup> Cf ; *Logik*, tr. EnglYoung, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press., 1992 , *Anthropologie* I, 2

<sup>23</sup> *Logik Jäsche* , § 1 tr. Engl Young, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.527

<sup>25</sup> The notion of fact entered the German philosophy in the second half of the XIX century. Its origin in the legal domain is quite old, and the most ancient reference I found in epistemology is in a disciple of Kant, Ernst Reinhold (not to be confused with Karl Leonhard Reinhold, who in his *Theorie des menschlichen Erkenntnisvermögens*, 1832, deals with the norms of thought); but the notion is equally present in Lotze, who writes in the first half of the XIX century. see also Drobisch, quoted by Husserl in *Logische Untersuchungen*. On this story, there is a volume by Peter Freund, *Die Entwicklung des Normbegriffs von Kant bis Windelband*, dissertation, Berlin, 1933, cited by Kelsen in his *Allgemeine Theorie der Normen*. Freund marks the origin of the term in Kant’s writings in ethics, logic and aesthetics, then in Fries, Schleiermacher, and Beneke, E. Reinhold, Ulrici, Trendelenburg. To his view, Beneke was the first to introduce the variety of meanings of “norm” in the philosophical vocabulary. At p. 53 ff. he distinguishes in Beneke the norm as a) measure, b) average, c) teleological ideal, d) rule, e) imperative, f) ideal, g) deontological law and h) law of customs. Freund (ch. III) places the origin of a «theory of norms » in the work of Drobisch, Ueberweg, Lotze, Sigwart, and Windelband. Freund’s work is mainly descriptive, but, to my knowledge, it is the only one that tells this story, which is better known from the perspective of the discussions on psychologism, on which Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* are still the fundamental work. Once I found very helpful Martin Kusch’s book, *Psychologism*, Routledge 1995. Thanks to Kevin Mulligan for providing me with Freund’s book.

normative character of logic. Kant does not use the term « *normativ* », nor the notion of norm or that of normativity, all of which will be introduced into the philosophical dictionary at a later date<sup>25</sup>.

But Kant, discussing of the rules of logic, uses terms like *Sollen* and *Berichtigung*. As Husserl remarked, to say that logic is the science of the correct use of the understanding [l'entendement], and that it says how we ought to think, or what it is correct to think, is to make reference to some goal that orientates the activity of our understanding. In this sense, logic becomes practical, i.e. an *organon*. There is nothing, in this sense, that psychologist logicians might resist, together with those who claim that logic is an art or a technology.

A way of reconciling these statements and withdrawing their tensions consists in noting that, for Kant, logic deals with the correct use of the understanding, «that is the which is in agreement with itself ». Two things make logic normative according to Kant. In the first place, the relevant correction of our thoughts consists in the self-agreement of the understanding, or that of thought. This means that Kant interprets what I called the basic norm of thought in a sense which is *internalist* or constructivist: the correction comes to what is rational to thought for our understanding, by virtue of its rules. Kant defines logic as a science concerned not with truths, but with the coherence of our thoughts. In this sense it is an *organon* for thoughts. In this sense it is analytic and not synthetic. In the second place, such rules become logical rules in that they define what we *ought* to think when we become aware of the rules we implicitly use. Reflection makes their normativity possible. Belief is not voluntary for Kant: he is very clear on this, for instance in Sec. 3 of the Canon of Pure Reason “On belief, Knowledge and Faith”, except the case of what he calls “ pragmatic believing”. However, for him it does not follow from this that there is no form of activity and control in thinking. Kant does not say that the norms of logic are prescriptive *by themselves*, nor does he claim that they motivate directly to think what one *ought* to think, as should be the case for moral principles and rules (at least, in principle, for the *internalist* conception of morality held by Kant). But he claims nevertheless that the reflexive access we may have gives us a form of control over our thoughts, or at least provides us with the possibility of directing them. We can explain along these lines the passage from the natural rules of the understanding to their reflective use in reasoning, and the passage from the *logica utens* to the *logica docens*, or that from the *logica naturalis* to the *logica artificialis*.

In fact, as Bolzano and Husserl will do, Kant claims that logic is a normative discipline not because its rules are prescriptive in themselves and take the form of imperatives, either categorical (as necessary rules) or hypothetical (as suggestions, recommendations) – Kant does not make here any connection with his conception of practical reason and morality – but because every norm is based on some truth. Logic is normative because it *describes* – not because it prescribes – the necessary laws of the self-agreement of the understanding. However, as we will see, this conception of normativity is not the same that his followers will use.

The ambiguities of the Kantian conception explain why it was rejected by authors like Bolzano, notwithstanding the proximity of it to his own conception, and, at the same time, why it was adopted by those among his followers who supported a psychologist interpretation of his theory of logic.

Just as Kant did, Bolzano takes logic to be above all theoretical, not practical: it is a science, not an art. But he does not reject the traditional conception according to which it is also an *organon* and a method. However, he does not claim that its norms are normative in themselves, being a kind of prescriptions: they describe some truths that are primary to their applications (against Kant, he takes such truths to be synthetic, but I leave aside this important point). So he supports an externalist conception of logical norms, as Frege and Husserl will

do. The truth of logical laws is independent from what we judge to be true or correct. This does not prevent us from learning how to use the logical laws. But such learning takes time<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, many thinkers of the XIX century, as Mill in England, as Beneke<sup>27</sup>, Fries, Erdmann, Sigwart and Lipps in Germany, read Kant literally and take logic to be a theory of the *natural* rules of understanding, of the laws of thought as psychological laws. The Neokantian tradition qualifies such authors as psychologists and Husserl will write the history of these tendencies in his *Logical Investigations*. The question of psychologism and of the natural explanation of the logical laws is not our main concern here, for it is largely orthogonal to the question we are dealing with, namely of the relation between logical and ethical norms, but also because, as Husserl remarked correctly at § 19 of the first book of his *Logical Investigations*, the psychologists are ready to admit some of the Kantian arguments. Firstly, the psychologists can admit that logic is normative since it is based on certain truths. They just need to claim, departing from Kant, that such truths are not the pure form of thought, but some natural regularities, psychological or anthropological. In the sense in which “normative” means “susceptible of practical applications” or giving some recommendations on how to think”, the psychologists can admit that logic is normative. Thus John Stuart Mill says, in the introduction to his *System of Logic*, that logic «comprises the science of reasoning, as well as an art, based on that science». In this sense, notes Husserl, it does not make sense to stress, as Herbart does in the name of Kantians and against such authors as Beneke, that logic is not a *Kunstlehre*, an art or technology, being on the contrary the “ethics of thought”<sup>28</sup>. As Husserl points out:

« such arguments do not embarrass the psychologist logicians. They answer that the necessary use of the understanding is precisely aussi a use of understanding which, like the understanding itself, belongs to the domain of psychology. Thought as it ought to be is simply a case of thinking as it is » (Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* 1900, I, §19 ,)

To the well-known objection according to which the psychologists run in a circle when they want to base logic on psychological laws since they so presuppose the pure logic, the psychologists can reply, says Husserl (*Logical Investigations*, I, § 19, p.58.), that we should not equivocate on the meaning of “presuppose”: to “presuppose” the laws of logic might mean to take them as premises (*Begründungen*) for some demonstrations, but also that they are rules that say how science should proceed. Now the argument of the vicious circle confuses the two senses of “presupposition”. Reasoning according to (*nach*) logical rules is not the same as deductively inferring from (*aus*) them, for only the latter case involves a vicious circle<sup>29</sup>.

Against psychologism, Husserl gives a number of arguments that he considers better and which are indeed, in various respects, better. I will not deal with them here<sup>30</sup>. Rather, I will focus on the sense in which logic is a «normative science» according to Husserl. The unsurprising conclusion to be drawn from the preceding remarks is that the notion of normativity is quite confusing.

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<sup>26</sup> On Bolzano’s conception of logic, see the dissertation of Anita Von Duhn, *Bolzano critique de Kant*, Genève, 1999, and her article « La logique est-elle une discipline théorique ou pratique ? Kant et/ou Bolzano », in P. Engel ed. Philosophie analytique , *Cahiers de philosophie de l’Université de Caen*, 1997-1998, 31-32

<sup>27</sup> On Beneke, see R. Pettoello, *Un "povero diavolo empirista". F. E. Beneke tra criticismo e positivismo*, F. Angeli, Milano 1992

<sup>28</sup> See J-F Herbart, *Points principaux de la Métaphysique*, traduction française précédée d’un commentaire par C. Maigné « le réalisme rigoureux de J F Herbart », pp. 7-162, Vrin, 2005

<sup>29</sup> It would be interesting to compare this analysis by Husserl with the argument of circularity opposed by Quine to logical conventionalism in his « Truth by convention » (1936) , in *The Ways of Paradox*, Harvard 1976

<sup>30</sup> See Kusch’s book cited above, and P. Engel, *Philosophie et psychologie*, Gallimard 1996

On the contrary Husserl's position is quite clear (*Logical Investigations*, I, § 16, „ According to him, every normative discipline, as a discipline prescribing how to think or how to act – here both ethics and logic are concerned – presupposes a theoretical, non-normative discipline. The theoretical propositions belonging to such non-normative discipline state some constitutive relation between some properties. In his courses of 1906-1907 on the theory of knowledge (*Husserliana*, XXIV.), Husserl also calls them «foundational laws “To give an example, a normative judgment presenting a deontic term like

(a) An A should be B |

presupposes a theoretical statement of the following form:

(b) Only an A which is B has the properties C.

For instance, to say

(a') A good warrior should be brave

presupposes the non-normative proposition

(b') Being brave is constitutive of being a good warrior

To put it another way, these are true attributions concerning some properties that are constitutive of *values*, in the domain of knowledge or in that of morality. Such properties are presupposed by the relevant normative statements. As to logic, the theoretical propositions are propositions concerning some truths. So the non-normative sense provides a foundation for the normative sense of such statements. Frege makes the same point when he says that the laws of thought are presupposed by the normative laws of logic. In addition, Husserl says that every normative domain has its own underlying theoretical propositions. He does not claim that some theoretical propositions are shared by different domains. Ethical norms, in particular, are based on values, while logical norms are based on truths: the two domains do not cross in any way.

This realist reading of the notion of normativity, as presupposing such theoretical statements, is at variance with the reading we might call « normativist ». The latter can be found, for instance, in Kelsen. Discussing the passage from Husserl considered above, in his *General Theory of Norms*, Kelsen turns the tables and claims that the normative propositions *are* the fundamental ones, those explaining the content of the non-normative propositions that presuppose them. Then «A good warrior is brave» presupposes in fact «A good warrior should be brave»:

« To say of a thing that it is « good” is to say that it is obligatory according to a norm » ( H. Kelsen, *Allgemeine Theorie der Normen*, 1979,)

Such an opposition between a *realist* and a *normativist* reading of the notion of norm of thought does not have a clear profile in the first debates on psychologism in logic. It becomes more preeminent among the Neokantian philosophers. What such authors are lead to claim is not only that the notion of norm is primitive and irreducible (for norms constitute the foundations of values, not vice versa), but also that logical and ethical norms are quite similar, if not identical. In other words, one envisages the idea that the “normative sciences” can be unified.

Such a movement was largely begun by Hermann Lotze, who supported the idea that all philosophy is nothing but a theory of values: philosophy is a critical science of values having a universal validity (*Geltung, das Gelten*). The same said of logic Wilhelm Windelband, disciple of Lotze:

« The system of logic is the incarnation of all the fundamental principles which have to be developed teleologically and without which there could not be any universally valid thinking : the norms of ethics are developed as a means to realise a will and an action which is such that they could be universally approved : the rules of aesthetics are the conditions under which only a sharable feeling is possible. All the axioms, all the norms – independently of any particular content and of any historical determination are means for an end which has universal validity ( *Geltung* ) » (W. Windelband, *Präludien*, 1883-84)

This thesis is even clearer with Windelband's follower at Heidelberg, Heinrich Rickert, who likens truth to a value and proposes an assimilation of logic and ethics.

As soon as one associates truth as a value to a human will, true propositions become goods which ought to be, and the thinking subject must necessarily count as a person directed by the consciousness that she would have to realise truth. It only forces the man who obeys his theoretical conscience to want truth in science. Such a man is thus autonomous, and a value whose validity cannot be doubted belongs to his will ( H Rickert, „Über logische und ethische Geltung“, *Kant Studien*, 1914)

And so the loop is closed. We started with Kant and the idea that logic is the discipline that teaches us how we ought to think, and not how we actually think; this led Herbart to claim that logic is the ethics of thought. We end with the idea, held by the Neokantians of Heidelberg, of a complete assimilation of logic and ethics, under the protection of a prescriptivist conception of logical normativity as a specific case of ethical normativity. Insofar as it is the will, for a Kantian, that determines the norms, and where the prescriptions are neither true nor false, the norms not only are not based on values, but are also external to the realm of knowledge. It is the will that creates the norms. Thus the norms are not real. It is difficult to imagine a more anti-realist, and « internalist » in the sense indicated above, conception of normativity than this; nor is it easier to push further the Kantian and Fichtean idea of the primacy of practical reason.

Other philosophers than Husserl reacted to this kind of assimilation. Rickert's pupil, Emil Lask, protested against such primacy of practical reason in logic, denouncing what he called the “moralization” of logic:

We do not subscribe to a moralisation of the concepts of *knowledge* and judgement. We call for an axiological concept ( *Wertbegriff* ) which is non ethical, and we distinguish it sharply from scientific *life* where, indeed practical reason will have priority. We thus object that to make ethical value the correlator of objective truth would be to give it a position which, from the systematic point of view, is not its proper position. Knowledge and moral decision are *two* kinds of behaviour, and knowledge has only a contingent relation with moral truth, which lies outside it, a relation which makes it a *possible* object of moral obligation. Neither logic in general nor the doctrine of the subjective

meaning of the “knowledge process” is a part of ethics ( E. Lask „über den Primat der praktischen Vernunft in der Logik“, *Gesammelte Schriften*, I, 1923)

Another reaction inspired by Husserl is that of Max Scheler. Scheler devoted his doctoral dissertation at Iena in 1897 to the relationship between logic and ethics, *Beiträge zur Feststellung der Beziehungen zwischen den logischen Prinzipien*. The subject was very much in the air at the time, but, to my knowledge, this is one of the most explicit works on it in this tradition of thought. Scheler argues in favor of the idea that the conditions of knowledge are autonomous from those of moral life, and that the sphere of logic is fundamentally distinct from that of ethical values. «Between thinking and willing, knowing and acting, truth and goodness, there is in our opinion an unbridgeable gap», he says in the first page of his dissertation. About twenty years later, Scheler comes back to this question in his book *Formalism in ethics and the material ethics of values*, where he supports the realist and anti-normativist thesis according to which values give the foundations of norms, and not vice versa. There he says:

One should reject the statement that values «are» not but only «hold». The only propositions which have a “value” are those which are true, in so far as these propositions and their contents are the subject of a possible assertion. This definition applies naturally also to the propositions which attribute a value to a *res*. But it does not follow from this that values are reducible to a validity, as if they emerged from such a validity. . . . Logic cannot be placed on the same level as ethics and aesthetics and it cannot be considered like these as an axiological science, because it putatively deals with the «value» of truth. For truth is *in no way* a value. There is no doubt that one can attribute a value to the search for truth, as well as to the certainty that a proposition is true. *Knowledge of truth* is also a value; but truth in itself is not a value: it is an idea, distinct from all value, which is realized when the constituents of the meaning of a judgment (expressed through a proposition) agree with an ideal structure; and that this agreement is itself given as evident. But in this sense our axiological statements too have to be «true» and can be «false», whereas it would be pure non sense to ask of a theoretical judgement that it be «good» or «beautiful»; (M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, 1916, 189-192 )

Scheler has an explicitly externalist conception of values: he refuses to consider even truth itself as a value.

#### **4. The Ethics of Belief and the Norms of Thought, from Clifford to Peirce and Ramsey**

I have essentially tried to retrace the German origins of the contemporary question of the relationship of logic and ethics. But a distinct genealogy of the problem begins with Locke. We should remember that Locke considers the quest for truth as a sort of moral value: in doing so, he poses the premises of what will subsequently be called the “ethics of belief”.

The question is whether such norms as the one considered above

(B) A thought is correct only if it is based on good reasons

can be conceived of as a form of moral imperative or ethical obligation. It is frequently objected that it is not possible, for, in order to have an ethical or cognitive «ought», there should be a relevant «can». In other words, *ad impossibilia nemo tenetur*. So, being belief, or thought, involuntary, we cannot take (A) [or B?] as a genuinely *ethical* imperative. Locke does not fall into such confusion, since in Book IV of the *Essay* he explicitly claims that belief is not a voluntary phenomenon. If we want to claim that something voluntary is present in the process of belief formation, and that, in this sense, there is an ethics of belief, we should claim that will intervenes in such a process in a more indirect way, for instance in the active learning of a method, and not by the direct compliance with an injunction.

However, there is an author who seems to have taken literally what Locke said about such ethics. It is William Clifford, who famously declared the following:

“It is wrong in all cases to believe on insufficient evidence” (W. K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief*, 1877).

But James famously replied to this, arguing that, on the contrary, nothing bad or illicit is involved in believing on insufficient evidence, when our «passional nature» has to decide between two options, every time there is an authentic choice that cannot be taken on purely intellectual grounds.

*“Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say, under such circumstances, “Do not decide, but leave the question open”, is itself a passional decision – just like deciding yes or no – and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth”* (W. James, *The Will to Believe*, IV).

Clifford and James make different errors, since both are confused on this issue<sup>32</sup>. Clifford confuses ethical and epistemic obligations, claiming it is a *moral* fault to believe on insufficient evidence. James confuses the question of whether believing on insufficient evidence always lead to unjustified beliefs with the question of whether believing on insufficient evidence is always damaging to the conduct of inquiry. James’ thesis is usually considered to be the pragmatist position on the matter, in that it is often defined as the thesis according to which the reasons to act take precedence over the reasons to believe, and the practical consequences or practical justification of a belief take precedence over its theoretical justification.

The founder of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce, did not fall into such confusion as James’, whose doctrine of the will to believe he found “suicidal”<sup>33</sup>. However Peirce, as any other Neokantian, treats logic, as ethics, as a normative science. The positive sciences are concerned with the search for positive facts and knowledge; whereas the normative sciences analyze the formation of norms and the conformity of things to their ends: aesthetics deals with the things having as their end the incarnation of the necessities of sentiment; ethics with the things whose end is in action; logic with the things whose end is to represent something. Peirce even goes as far as saying that there is not only an analogy, but also a strict parallelism between logic and ethics.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Susan Haack, “The ethics of belief” reconsidered. (in *The Philosophy of R. Chisholm*, L. Hahn, ed. Library of Living Philosophers, Open court, La Salle, Ill, 1997, repr in M. Steup 2001 (Ed.), *Knowledge, truth and duty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>33</sup> C.S. Peirce, letter to James, march 1909, quoted by R.B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Harvard University Press, 1948, p. 291 : « I thought that what you said in your Will to Believe were exaggerated and socking for any serious man, but to say what you know say [ in *A pluralistic Universe*] seems to me even more suicidal . »

The phenomena of reasoning are, in their general features, parallel to those of moral conduct. For reasoning is essentially thought that is under self-control, just as moral conduct is conduct under self-control. Indeed reasoning *is* a species of controlled conduct and as such necessarily partakes of the essential features of controlled conduct. If you attend to the phenomena of reasoning, although they are not quite so familiar to you as those of morals because there are no clergymen whose business it is to keep them before your minds, you will nevertheless remark, without difficulty, that a person who draws a rational conclusion, not only thinks it to be true, but thinks that similar reasoning would be just in every analogous case. If he fails to think this, the inference is not to be called reasoning. [...] To be sure, every inference forces itself upon us irresistibly. That is to say, it is irresistible at the instant it first suggests itself. Nevertheless, we all have in our minds certain *norms*, or general patterns of right reasoning, and we can compare the inference with one of those and ask ourselves whether it satisfy that rule (Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.606).

He takes logic to be the “theory of deliberate thinking” and even claims (CP 2.198) that it is impossible to be completely and rationally logical but on an ethical ground. Nevertheless, such a Peircean doctrine, whose origin is clearly Kantian and Neokantian, is by no means evident. How can the fact that reasoning is a form of deliberate conduct make logical rules and their application «an application of the doctrine of what we deliberately choose to do»? (CP 5.35). One may suspect that there is again confusion between a theory and its application, theoretical science and its practical uses that are grounded in it but do not identify with it.

Peirce’s argument seems to be the following. When we reason, certain inferences and transitions from some propositions to others force themselves upon us “irresistibly”, in a completely passive way, without any reflection on our part. Let us call them first-order transitions or thoughts. Now we can reflect on the logical principles and norms that we use, or on the principles that we *should follow*. Let us call the judgments on such principles second-order judgments. According to Peirce, when we perform such a reflection our reasoning becomes a form of controlled conduct. In this sense, the logical norms play the same role that ethical principles play with respect to action: therefore, the activity of logical reasoning is a form of action. One may object to this in that, in the first place, even by accepting such a description of reasoning as a deliberate conduct, it does not follow that logical norms are related in such a way to ethical norms and that logical justification is a particular case of ethical justification. I think that Peirce was aware of this problem and that, despite his declarations, he did not support Rickert’s position. Secondly, even by accepting that there are some cases in which we reason in a reflective way being explicitly aware of the rules we follow (even though such cases are extremely rare), one may wonder how the fact of making some second-order judgments on our transitions between first-order beliefs makes our reasoning a form of *activity*, and how such second-order judgments on our logical norms could *motivate* our first-order transitions.

But Peirce supports elsewhere a thesis that is much closer to Husserl’s. He says that ethics is not a practical science, but rather a theory of the ideal of conduct, of the nature of goodness. He adds that we should not confuse an «ideal of conduct with a motive of action»<sup>34</sup>.

As far as logic is conceived of as a theory of the conduct of deliberate reasoning, there should be, according to the pragmatist position, a strict relation, or even an identity, between theoretical and practical reasoning. As far as logic is a theory of rationality, being a theory of the norms of thought and a «normative science», it is concerned with a procedural kind of rationality: it depends on what the agents are capable of performing in the actual world. This implies that it cannot be completely divorced from psychology. Kant admitted it implicitly, Bolzano recognized it explicitly. Another author who, in the pragmatist tradition, admits it explicitly is the Cambridge philosopher Frank Ramsey:

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. C. Tiercelin, *La pensée-signe. Études sur Peirce*, Nîmes, J. Chambon, 1993.

We may agree that in some sense it is the business of logic to tell us what we ought to think; but the interpretation of this statement raises considerable difficulties. It may be said that we ought to think what is true, but in that sense we are told what to think by the whole of science and not merely by logic. Nor, in this sense, can any justification be found for partial belief; the ideally best thing is that we should have beliefs of degree 1 in all true propositions and beliefs of degree 0 in all false propositions. But this is too high a standard to expect of mortal men, and we must agree that some degree of doubt or even of error may be humanly speaking justified<sup>35</sup>.

Ramsey is concerned here not with deductive logic, but with what he calls logic of « partial » belief, that is the logic of subjective probabilities. To give a complete account of the importance of his contribution, I need to discuss here another development strictly connected to the one mentioned, concerning the theory of probabilities. Such development is part of the evolution of the theory of norms of thought in the XIX century. With Ramsey, probability explicitly becomes the measurement of belief, and the norms regulating the justification of belief become agent-relative norms. They are no more based on truths, as they were in Husserl and Frege: they become ideal “standards”. They are no more reality- or fact-responsive. They become ideal standards used to evaluate the rationality of agents, and, at least, properties belonging to the psychology of such agents, as can be seen in the works of Kahneman and Tversky, who sanction the psychological interiorization of the norms of Bayesian rationality. It is the triumph of the internalist conception of the norms of thought.

## 5. Conclusion

Today the notion of norm and normativity is widespread. It moved from the legal domain to that of sociology and political philosophy, then to the philosophy of mind and epistemology. Here I have tried to review some steps of this story, giving a sketch of them. They are not the only steps. We started with Foucault’s declaration that the contemporary theory of knowledge, after Descartes, has expelled from the ideal of being a scholar the idea that ethical values might have a relation with cognitive values. According to Foucault, the Post-cartesian conception of thought is perfectly neutral from an axiological point of view, a little as if Descartes had been a precursor of positivism. I have tried to show on the contrary that the question of the relation between ethical and cognitive values did not disappear at all from the Post-cartesian epistemology: it took instead the form of a reflection on the constitutive norms of thought, while the question of whether such norms had a prescriptive character or not reintroduced the question of the relation between cognitive and ethical norms, and culminated, in the Neokantian years at Marburg, in an “ethical” conception of the norms of thought. We have also seen that two conceptions of these norms were opposing: an internalist and anti-realist one, according to which such norms are imperatives (ethical or cognitive), and a realist and externalist one, according to which such norms are grounded in non-imperative truths. Only the latter conception seems to avoid the confusion dominating many such debates, namely of norms of thought and norms of action, of logic and ethics. Now the fact that we should not confuse these kinds of norms does not imply that there is no relation at all between ethics and logic, or between ethics and knowledge. In fact we could better address such questions once the levels are not confused. When Foucault, in the last part of his work, proposes to place the question of «how to live » at the heart of our philosophical thought, substituting the care for

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<sup>35</sup> F.P. Ramsey, *Truth and Probability* (1926), now in *Foundations. Essays in Philosophy, Logic, Mathematics and Economics*, ed. by D.H. Mellor, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1978, pp. 58-100, quotation p. 86.

truth with the case of oneself, he performs a further step of such confusion of the cognitive with the ethical.

Julien Benda, in his *du style d'idées* (1948), identifies the systems that, at the end of the XIXth century, made of thought an object of contempt: the instinctivist according to which the supreme moral state for man is instinct, a state where our thought, made for action, is completely freed from any conceptual activity (Bergson, Nietzsche); the pragmatist that deems as highly moral the state of mind directed to strengthen a certain human group considered as an indecomposable unity; and the aestheticist, i.e. the doctrine defining the artistic activity as a break with the processes of intelligence. Against those trends, Benda affirms that thought is one of the highest forms of human morality:

« Thought seems to us to have a high moral standing in so far as it wishes the enjoyment of a perfect state of serenity through the possession of truth and the respect for truth»

These are beautiful ideals, that Benda almost alone defended explicitly in France in the XX century. However, they do not imply a moralization of the norms of thought<sup>36</sup>.

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