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Representing without founding: religion and the unconditional pursuit of truth in Habermas's Kantian pragmatism.

Representing without grounding: religion and the unconditional of truth in Habermas's Kantian pragmatism

Representing without grounding: religion and the unconditional nature of truth in Habermas's Kantian pragmatism

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Abstract: After abandoning the consensual theory of truth, Jürgen Habermas went on to argue that the truth of a statement is not synonymous with the best available justification: a statement accepted under the most demanding conditions of argumentation may still prove to be false. This unconditionality, which the author himself associates with a transcendence from within, is presupposed by the one who argues, but does not appear in the content of what is being discussed.
The question arises as to where this becomes visible. It is argued that religion offers this presupposition a symbolic presentation in the Kantian sense: it makes thinkable, by analogy, that before which all human justification remains revocable, without converting it into an object of knowledge and without giving it a foundation. The thesis draws on the theory of the symbol from the Critique of Judgment (§ 59) and the Prolegomena (§§ 57-58), which Habermas sets aside when detranscendentalizing the ideas of reason, and is put to the test in two 20th-century ecclesial documents, the Barmen Theological Declaration (1934) and the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (1945). Habermas's distinction between truth and normative correctness limits the scope of the latter. Objections of the self-sufficiency of argumentation, functionalism, theology, and a strict Kantian reading are examined. It can be concluded that the relationship between post-metaphysical thought and religion is not limited to the translation of semantic content: it includes the representation of a formal presupposition of communicative reason itself, without this implying the truth of religious beliefs.

Keywords: Habermas; truth; transcendence; symbol; philosophy of religion.

Abstract: After abandoning the consensus theory of truth, Jürgen Habermas came to hold that the truth of a statement cannot be equated with the best available justification: a claim accepted under the most demanding conditions of argumentation may still turn out to be false. This unconditionality, which Habermas himself relates to a transcendence from within, is presupposed by anyone who argues, yet it does not appear in the content of what is being discussed. The question is where it becomes visible. It is argued that religion offers this presupposition a symbolic presentation in the Kantian sense: it makes thinkable, by analogy, that before which every human justification remains revisable, without turning it into an object of knowledge and without grounding it. The thesis draws on the theory of the symbol in the Critique of the Power of Judgment (§ 59) and the Prolegomena (§§ 57-58), which Habermas sets aside when he detranscendentalizes the ideas of reason, and it is tested against two twentieth-century church documents, the Barmen Theological Declaration (1934) and the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (1945). Habermas's distinction between truth and normative rightness limits the scope of the second case. The objections from the self-sufficiency of argumentation, from functionalism, from theology and from a strict Kantian reading are examined. The conclusion is that the relation between postmetaphysical thinking and religion

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is not exhausted by the translation of semantic contents: it also includes the representation of a formal presupposition of communicative reason itself, without this implying the truth of religious beliefs.

Keywords: Habermas; truth; transcendence; symbol; philosophy of religion.

Abstract: After abandoning the consensual theory of truth, Jürgen Habermas only supported that the truth of a statement cannot be confused with the best justification available: a statement accepted under the most demanding conditions of argumentation could turn out to be false.
This unconditionality, which the author himself associates with transcendence from within, is presupposed by those who argue, but does not appear in the content of what is discussed. If you wonder where it becomes visible. It is held that religion offers this presupposition a symbolic presentation in a Kantian sense: again thinkable, by analogy, that before which every human justification remains revocable, without converting it into an object of knowledge or grounding it. The thesis resorts to the theory of the symbol of the Critique of Judgment (§ 59) and of the Prolegómenos (§§ 57-58), which Habermas sets aside to destrascendentalize the ideas of reason, and is put to the test in the ecclesial documents of the XX century: the Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934) and there Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (1945). The Habermasian distinction between truth and normative correction limits the scope of the second case. The objections of the self-sufficiency of argumentation, of functionalism, of theology and of strict Kantian reading are examined. It is concluded that the relationship between postmetaphysical thought and religion is not exhausted in the translation of semantic contents: it includes the representation of a formal presupposition of the communicative reason itself, without the truth of religious beliefs being followed.

Keywords: Habermas; truth; transcendence; symbol; philosophy of religion.

1. Introduction

A community can, after long deliberation, reach a conclusion that everyone agrees with.
Participants consider it justified. No one lied, the reasons were heard, the objections...
They received a response. Years later, the same community declares that it was wrong. The statement
It has a curious structure. It claims that what was justified was not true, and the
He asserts this without having any other point of view than that of a subsequent justification, which is so fallible.
Regarding the first point, whoever confesses to such an error assumes something that does not coincide with anything.
Of the two agreements: neither the old one, now rejected, nor the new one, which could also fall apart.
Jürgen Habermas made this assumption the center of his theory of truth from then on.
Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung (1999). In reviewing the consensus theory he had formulated in the decade of
In 1970, he began to distinguish truth, which is unconditional, from justification, which is always situated and
Revocable. A statement accepted under the best conditions of argumentation can still be false.
This distance is not a defect to be eliminated by more demanding procedures; it is what
which gives meaning to the very act of justifying. Those who argue are not merely seeking agreement,
But the agreement is about something that would be valid even if the agreement didn't exist.

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However, the unconditional nature thus recovered has a peculiar status. Habermas
It is understood as a pragmatic presupposition: it is implied in the act of raising claims of
validity, without being an object of argument. Whoever argues about whether a bridge will withstand the
The argument focuses on the bridge, not the unconditional nature of truth. The latter remains in the background.
operating without appearing. Hence the question that guides what follows: if truth exceeds all
If this excess is merely an assumption, where does it become visible to the person arguing?

The hypothesis is that religion provides a form for this excess. It does not create it, because
No religious belief is necessary for someone to assume the unconditional nature of...
truth; nor does it demonstrate it, because the religious figure provides no reason whatsoever that
Argumentation no longer presupposes it. What it does is represent it, in the precise sense that Kant attributes to it.
Symbolic presentation of an idea of reason: making it thinkable by analogy, without determining it.
as an object. The names of God, the confession of guilt, and the prophecy against oneself.
The community presents the unconditional as the instance before which all justification is given.
Human rights remain revocable.

The procedure involves conceptual reconstruction. It starts from the theory of truth of
Habermas, as revised in 1999, examines how he himself dealt with...
transcendence is discussed with theologians, and Kantian theory of symbols is used to give...
precise status regarding the relationship of representation. Two ecclesiastical documents from the 20th century, the
Theological Declaration of Barmen (1934) and the Declaration of Guilt of Stuttgart (1945) are included.
as test cases: they don't prove the thesis, but they allow us to verify if the distinction between representing
And founding describes something that actually occurs. The thesis has deliberate limitations. It does not assert that...
Neither the truth nor the falsehood of religious beliefs identifies truth with an entity.
transcendent and does not intend to refute Habermas, but to complement him from the perspective of the symbol, which...
His reading of Kant leaves that out.

2 The truth after the consensus theory

In his 1973 formulation, Habermas explained truth by the consensus that it would be...
achieved in an ideal speaking situation, free from coercion and open to all arguments.
relevant (HABERMAS, 1973). The proposal had a clear advantage: it dispensed with the
an image of a correspondence between phrases and facts, which the linguistic turn had made difficult to...
to uphold, without falling into the relativism of those who reduce truth to what a community...
effectively accepted. The criterion was not the actual agreement, but the agreement that would be reached in
idealized conditions.

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The difficulty arose in the very idealized concept. Albrecht Wellmer argued that...
The notion of a final consensus, obtained under perfect conditions, or is it an endpoint that...
no finite community can recognize it as such, or it is an agreement that, however well-founded
That being the case, it remains subject to the question of whether it is true (WELLMER, 1986, pp. 51-113).
Cristina Lafont added an objection stemming from reference theory: if truth is defined
Due to epistemic conditions, we lose the intuition that we are talking about a world that can
to refute what we say about him, and the distinction between what we know and what is the case if
dissolves into the very practice of knowing (LAFONT, 1999). Habermas expressly acknowledged
that these objections motivated the revision of his theory (HABERMAS, 1999, p. 50, 256-257),
as Langlois (2003) observes.

The review appears in the lengthy introduction to Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung, entitled
“Realismus nach der sprachpragmatischen Wende” (HABERMAS, 1999, p. 7-64). Habermas
It then treats consensus theory as an overgeneralization. The truth is not...
Idealized rational acceptability; it is what rational acceptability seeks and what it can
It is lacking. The concept therefore takes on a dual aspect. In the world of life, the certainties of action
They operate as unquestioned truths: one crosses the bridge because one trusts that it...
resists. When these certainties become doubtful, they move to the realm of discourse, where they are
tested by reasons. And when the discourse reaches a result, this returns to action as certainty.
Renewed. Truth is what connects the two planes without being reduced to either of them: without it,
The justification would have nothing to seek, and the action would have nothing to rely on.

The discussion with Richard Rorty makes the point clearer (HABERMAS, 1999, p. 230).
ss.). Rorty admitted that the predicate “true” retains a cautionary use: to say that
A belief is justified, but perhaps not true; remember that another audience may come.
to reject it. Habermas replies that the warning only makes sense if it points to something that
No audience possesses one. If "true" meant only "justified before an audience"
"better," the warning would turn into a sociological expectation about future audiences. The
What she expresses is something else: that all justification, including that of any future audience,
She is exposed to a world that was not made by her.

Habermas calls this position Kantian pragmatism. The expression appears in
Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung first as a designation of the position of Hilary Putnam, to whom
The sixth essay in the volume is dedicated to Habermas (1999, p. 271 ff.), with whom Habermas...
It shares the starting point and those with whom it diverges regarding the relationship between values and norms. Applied.
According to Habermas himself, the expression accurately describes the 1999 position, and indicates two

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things. From the Kantian perspective, the refusal to reduce validity to the fact of acceptance and the preservation of an unconditional moment in the claims of validity. From a pragmatic standpoint, the detranscendentalization: the conditions of possibility of knowledge cease to belong to a transcendental consciousness and become situated within the linguistic practices of subjects. finite, which raise claims, offer reasons, and correct themselves.

Precision prevents misunderstandings in what follows. Habermas does not attribute the same structure to all claims to validity. The normative correctness of moral judgments is exhausted, for him, in rational acceptability under ideal conditions, because it lacks reference to an objective world. which is not done by us; only the truth retains a surplus over all justification, including the idealized one (HABERMAS, 1999, p. 299 ff.). The unconditionality in question is, therefore, rather of everything, of the truth. The result can be formulated in two propositions. First: all The claim to truth carries an unconditional element, because it aspires to be worth more than... context in which it is raised. Second: this moment is presupposed in the act of arguing and not The subject matter is thematized within it. The person arguing acts as if there's something that no agreement can exhaust, but This "something" is not among the objects of discussion. The first proposition is Habermas's without... The second describes how he sustains it, and it is from this that a difficulty arises. which Habermas himself encountered when theologians questioned him about transcendence.

3 Transcendence from within

In the late 1980s, American and German theologians submitted the theory From communicative action to a question that Habermas had not formulated: whether reason Communicative dialogue presupposes universal solidarity among all possible participants. In the speech, what happens to those who can no longer participate? Helmut Peukert answered the question. its most acute form (PEUKERT, 1984). An ethics founded on universal reciprocity. It should include the innocent victims of history, who died without answers and whose demand for... No future discourse can satisfy justice. Either this inclusion is abandoned, and the Universality becomes selective, or it refers to an instance capable of saving the dead, and to The theory opens itself to the question of God. Peukert called this requirement anamnetic solidarity. which the theory could neither fulfill nor dispense with.

Habermas' response, collected in the essay “Transzendenz von innen, Transzendenz ins "Diesseits" (HABERMAS, 1991, pp. 127-156; English version in BROWNING; FIORENZA, (1992, pp. 67-94), consists of acknowledging the force of the question and rejecting the conclusion. The claims Validity, in fact, transcends all context: no one who claims something as true...

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It only affirms this for its group or its time. But this transcendence is internal to...
language and geared towards this world. It does not rely on anything that is beyond the practices in
that emerges; it is the surplus that these practices produce from themselves. Post-philosophy
Metaphysics, Habermas concludes, must maintain an attitude of...
Abstention: one cannot appropriate them nor deny them, because one lacks the means to judge them.
which is only sustained by revelation.

Habermas does not reduce this abstention to indifference. In Postmetaphysical Thinking,
He acknowledges that, as long as religious language carries with it inspiring semantic content,
that philosophy has not yet been able to express in the language of public reason, the thought
Philosophy cannot replace or suppress religion (Habermas, 1990). This position...
This develops in later writings in the form of a translation program. Religion is seen
as a repository of moral intuitions, which can be converted into concepts accessible to all:
The idea that human beings were created in the image of God, for example, finds a translation.
secular in the equal dignity of all persons (HABERMAS; RATZINGER, 2007). The relationship
The relationship between philosophy and religion is thus one of content: religion guards, philosophy guards.
It translates, and what is translated becomes valid for its own reasons, not its authority.

This situation leaves one possibility unexamined. Religion may hold more than just
not just content, but a form: the form of the distance between what is considered justified and that which...
Regarding what is the response? This distance is the same one that the 1999 theory of truth demands and
which the translation program doesn't capture because it's not semantic content among other things.
but a structure of the very claim to validity. Translate “image of God” as
“Dignity” conveys a certain content. There is no corresponding translation for unconditionality.
of the truth, because it is already, hypothetically, present in communicative reason. What could possibly be lacking in this?
It's not the concept, but the figure.

The fact that the figure may be missing stems from the status of unconditionality as a presupposition.
The following proposition has the force of a tendency, not a law: assumptions not
Thematic concepts tend to be absorbed by the practice that presupposes them. A community of
Institutionalized argumentation, whether in a court, a scientific academy, or a synod, knows
In principle, your best result could be wrong. But the possibility of error only exists for you.
It appears as a possibility for future review, and the future review will be done by the same people.
procedures, according to the same criteria, by the same institution or its successor. A
The distance between what is justified and what is true becomes, in practice, a distance between the
Justified now and justified later. The unconditional does not disappear from the concept, but leaves.

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to take place in the participants' experience, who then treat the well-formed agreement as If that's what he's looking for.

This is neither a pathology nor bad faith. The tendency stems from a property. structural: what is merely presupposed cannot be opposed, in the presence of the participants, to The result they produced. A trend admits counterexamples, and communities Argumentative approaches can resist it through entirely secular means, such as dissent. organized or peer-reviewed by external parties. The thesis does not depend on denying these means; it depends It is simply a matter of the tendency existing and religion being one of the ways to counteract it. Habermas has the conceptual tool to resist this tendency, namely the distinction between rational acceptability and truth. But the resource only operates in philosophical reflection on practice. Not in practice. For those who decide, the distinction remains abstract until something makes it present.

Habermas seems to acknowledge this point at the end of Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophy. In the postscript to the second volume, he observes that modernity derails when It dries up the spontaneity of reason capable of projecting worlds, this form of transcendence from inside, and admits that religious experience remains a thorn in the side of a modernity inclined towards a being without transcendence, as long as it can rely on a “Praxis of "Vergegenwärtigung einer starken Transzendenz" — in a practice of making present a strong transcendence (HABERMAS, 2019, v. 2, p. 807 apud DAUSNER, 2021, p. 1,

(Our translation).1 The formulation is sociological and genealogical. Habermas does not link it to the theory of The truth is that in 1999 it doesn't even give him status. epistemological. But the term chosen, ergegenwärtigung points precisely to the missing category: that of a practice that makes Presenting what would otherwise only be assumed.

4 The Other Kant

The connection between this practice of making present and the theory of truth passes through Kant, and by a Kant that Habermas knows but does not use. In the opening essay Between Naturalism and In religion, Habermas describes detranscendentalization as a transformation of ideas. Kantian assumptions of reason in pragmatic presuppositions of communicative action (HABERMAS, 2007). The cosmological idea of a totality of the world reappears as the assumption of a world. A common goal, the same for all participants. The idea of freedom reappears as

[1] In the original text, Habermas speaks of religious experience as “ein Pfahl im Fleisch der Moderne, die dem Sog zu einem transzendenzlosen Sein nachgibt” — a thorn in the flesh of modernity that yields to the attraction of a being without transcendence — insofar as it can rely on the practice of presentification mentioned in the text. The noun Vergegenwärtigung designates the act of making present, and it is in this sense that it approaches the

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Kantian presentation (Darstellung) discussed below.

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The assumption that the interlocutors are rational subjects, capable of being held accountable for what they say. The unconditionality that Kant attributed to the ideas of reason reappears as the unconditionality of claims of validity, especially the claim of truth. And the regulatory use of reason. It reappears as a guiding principle in the argument for an agreement that was never definitively reached.

The transposition retains a decisive trait from Kantian ideas: none of these presuppositions can be given as an object. The common objective world is not an item in the world; the The responsibility of individuals is not an observable property; the unconditional nature of Truth is not a statement among others. That is why Habermas can call them... idealizations. But if presuppositions inherit this trait from ideas, they also inherit the The question Kant posed regarding them. An idea of reason has no corresponding intuition. So how can it be presented?

Kant responds in § 59 of the Critique of Judgment (KANT, 2005). All

> The presentation of a concept in intuition, which he calls hypotyposis, can be of two types. It is schematic when the concept of understanding corresponds to an intuition given a priori. It is Symbolic when it comes to a concept that only reason can conceive and to which no intuition can relate. Sensible can be appropriate. In the symbol, judgment performs a double operation: it applies first a concept is applied to the object of a sensible intuition, and then the mere rule of reflection is applied to it. This intuition refers to an entirely different object, of which the first is merely a symbol. A monarchical state governed by the internal laws of the people is represented as an animated body; the The same State, governed by an absolute will, like a simple machine, a mill of hand. There is no resemblance whatsoever between the despotic state and the windmill, but there is a resemblance between the rules by which one reflects on both and on their causality.

The Prolegomena apply this structure to the knowledge of God (KANT, 1988, §§ 57-58). Kant rejects dogmatic anthropomorphism, which attributes predetermined decisions to God. from experience, and admits a symbolic anthropomorphism, which pertains only to language. and not to the object. The relationship of God to the world is thought of by analogy with relationships known analogies, such as that of the craftsman with his work, and analogy does not mean a resemblance. imperfection between two things, but a perfect resemblance between two relationships that... They establish a distinction between entirely different things. Nothing is known of God in Himself. We only know how we should think about it in relation to the world and to ourselves.

The two passages give the exact status of the relationship proposed in the hypothesis. The presentation Symbolism makes an indeterminate idea thinkable without converting it into an object and without giving it... foundation. The symbol does not prove that the idea has an object; it does not add knowledge; it does not

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It replaces the reason that thinks about it. But it's not just an ornament either. Without it, the idea would remain.
completely devoid of reflection, without any rule by which it could be considered.
To represent, in this sense, is to provide reflection with a figure for that which it already thinks without...
to be able to intuit.

Transposed into the Habermasian framework, the category allows the thesis to be formulated with
precision. The unconditionality of truth is an idealization without a corresponding object. It can,
therefore, it should only be presented symbolically, that is, by analogy with relationships that...
Experience offers. Religious forms provide one of these analogies: the believer thinks of their
relationship with God as that of someone who answers before a body whose judgment is not
It does not coincide with any human judgment, including that of his own community. The analogy does not
It says nothing about God himself. It says how to think about the relationship between what is considered justified and that which is not.
that which justification seeks. Between the God of tradition and the truth of pragmatic theory there is no
There is no resemblance whatsoever, but there is a similarity between the rules by which one reflects on the relationship of
Both rely on human judgment. Analogy requires caution. Truth, in Habermas, is not...
The person doesn't question anyone; it's a reference to a world that isn't made through justification.
What is transferred from the religious figure is not the personality of the judge, but a rule: that
No agreement between the judges decides the judgment. To take analogy as a similarity between the
To focus on things, and not on relationships, would be to fall back into the dogmatic anthropomorphism that Kant rejects.

Transposition has a limit that needs to be respected. In Kant, the symbol presents
ideas of pure reason; in Habermas, unconditionality is a pragmatic presupposition already
detranscendentalized, situated within historical practices. Therefore, the doctrine is not transposed.
Kantian ideas do not have a systematic place. Only the trait that the presupposition implies is transposed.
Pragmatics demonstrably inherits the impossibility of being given as an object, and the question
that this trait evokes. If Habermas is right in saying that the presuppositions of action
What is communicative are the transformed Kantian ideas; the question for their presentation is not...
imported from abroad: it is the same question that Kant asked, now directed at ideas in the form in which
Habermas preserved them.

Kant also offers a precedent for the representative function of historical religion. In
Religion within the limits of simple reason distinguishes ecclesial faith, linked to statutes, narratives and
particular practices, of pure religious faith, which belongs to reason, and describes the former as
vehicle of the second (KANT, 1992). Historical faith neither founds nor adds to rational faith.
content; it makes it present to finite beings, who need something tangible to maintain in their presence.
Yes, that which reason demands. The thesis defended here does not depend on Kantian philosophy of religion.

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which entirely subordinates religion to morality. But the vehicle's design shows that the idea of
A religion that represents without founding is not foreign to the tradition that Habermas claims to belong to.
heir.

5 Religion as a figure of the unconditional

It remains to be shown that the described representation actually occurs, and not merely that it is conceivable.
Religious forms are many, and not all present the unconditional truth. Rites of
Transition, seasonal festivals, and healing practices can have other functions. Three forms, however,
They seem to do it in a specific way. The name of God, when it functions as the name of that person.
whose judgment does not coincide with that of any human authority. The confession of guilt, when
A community declares that it was wrong about what it held to be right. And prophecy, when...
Someone speaks against their own community in the name of something that community professes, but does not.
controls. In each of them, the distance between the justified and the true ceases to be merely
presupposed and then spoken of, celebrated, staged. The two cases examined below.
These forms combine: in Barmen, the prophecy is made in the name of the one who makes the declaration.
He calls it the one Word; in Stuttgart, confession is addressed to God in the presence of witnesses.
Humans.

The Barmen Theological Declaration, approved in May 1934 by the Synod of the Church
German confessor, offers a clear case of institutional prophecy (EVANGELISCHE
KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND, [sd]). The context is known: the direction of the official church,
dominated by the so-called German Christians, it sought to reorganize it according to the principle of
leader, and the movement maintained that political events and figures of state power could
to be recognized as sources of revelation alongside Scripture. The first Barmen thesis.
It affirms that the church has only one Word to hear, trust, and obey, and rejects as false the...
doctrine according to which she could recognize other events, powers, figures and
truths as the source of his preaching.

Regardless of the theological judgment one might make about the content of the statement, its
Structure is relevant to the thesis. Barmen argues, and argues from Scripture and the confessions.
of the Reformation; it does not renounce reasons. But its decisive move does not consist in opposing a
a better justification than a worse one. The German Christians had reasons, broad support and
of institutional recognition; according to the criteria then in force in the official church, they were
justified. The statement rejects the idea that these criteria should decide the issue and names an instance
which no ecclesiastical or state authority holds and before which they all become

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revocable. The rejection of a “false doctrine” is, moreover, a claim to truth in
In a strict, albeit theological sense: it states that something is not the case, and not merely that it is.
inconvenient or illegitimate. The prophecy, in this case, does not provide an additional argument; it presents the figure
of that in the face of which the majority argument may be wrong. That is the
The role that the hypothesis assigns to religion.

The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, dated October 19, 1945, shows the same structure.
in the retrospective form of confession (RAT DER EVANGELISCHEN KIRCHE IN
GERMANY, 1945). In the presence of representatives of the ecumenical movement, the council of
A newly formed Evangelical church in Germany has declared itself guilty of not having confessed to...
More courage, prayed with more faithfulness, believed with more joy, and loved with more fervor. A
The confession admits that the church, including some of those who had resisted, took by
What was not sufficient is now apparent. What was considered justified, at least as a matter of prudence, appears to have become apparent.
Looking back, it was a failing in the face of an instance that prudence could not reach.

Stuttgart demands a restriction that Barmen does not. The confession does not reject a
the proposition is presented as false; it acknowledges a practical flaw, that is, something concerning correctness.
normative and not truth in the strict sense. According to Habermas's distinction, correctness does not have
an excess over idealized acceptability, and the distance that confession expresses is what separates
What the community actually accepted compared to what would be accepted under ideal conditions. Even
In this weaker register, however, the structure repeats itself: no real community occupies the
The position of ideal conditions, and the religious figure presents an instance that no agreement
The case shows, therefore, that the argument extends to correction, with the modification of
where the unconditional element represented is idealization, not an excess of it.

The Stuttgart case also serves to test the strength of the thesis, because it exposes its limitations.
The statement was strongly contested within the communities themselves, who considered it...
It was excessive, and criticized by others who considered it insufficient: it does not mention the murder.
of the Jews, nor the role of German Christians. The representation of the unconditional did not guarantee,
Therefore, a complete correction did not prevent the confession from falling short of what was due.
This doesn't disprove the thesis; it just needs to be examined within its scope. Religious figures don't decide what is true.
It does not guarantee that the community will recognize it. It makes possible, within the community, the form
of a statement of error that is not simply a matter of replacing one justification with another. The content
This statement remains subject to reason, and can be criticized for reasons, as indeed it has been.

This precision sets the thesis apart from two neighboring positions. The first is that of Peter Berger.
In A Rumor of Angels, Berger searches for signs of transcendence in everyday experience.

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Human gestures that point beyond the natural reality in which they occur. In the argument
of the order, the best known, examines the mother who consoles her son who is awake from a nightmare and
She tells him that everything is fine. If natural reality is the only one, the mother lies out of love, because the
The world that promises safety is the same one in which the child will die. Berger concludes that,
From the point of view of what he calls inductive faith, religion is the true justification of the human order (BERGER, 1997,
pp. 90-96). It is the strong version, the one that founds: from the sign one infers the
meaning. The thesis defended here is for before. It admits that certain religious forms point to
Something that exceeds human understanding, but does not imply the existence of what is being pointed out.
To represent is not to prove.

The second neighboring position is functionalism in the Durkheimian tradition. For Durkheim,
Religion represents society: the forces that the believer attributes to the sacred are the forces of society itself.
Collectivity, transfigured into collective representations (DURKHEIM, 1996). If that were true.
For the forms examined, the thesis would fall apart, because the unconditional element represented would only be...
The group, and the religious figure, would reinforce precisely the absorption of the true by the accepted that it should
contradict. At first glance, Barmen and Stuttgart resist this interpretation, because the
The invoked instance is set against the collectivity that invokes it. Durkheim, however, has an answer:
The sacred represents not society as it is, but the ideal society that it conceives in us.
In moments of effervescence, this ideal can be used against the actual society.
In that version, Barmen would invoke the ideal church against the real church. The response needs to be more nuanced. The
The Durkheimian ideal continues to be produced by the group and to derive its authority from the group;
It is the sociological correlate of the idealized consensus that Habermas abandoned in 1999.
The instance presented in Barmen is put forward as one in comparison to the ideal church.
This may be incorrect. If a Durkheimian interpretation were sufficient, the religious figure would represent...
only what the consensual theory of truth already represented, and Wellmer's argument...
I would apply it to her.

What do the three forms have in common, and what distinguishes them from other presentations?
Possible aspects of the unconditional, are those that present unconditionality as an instance in relation to
which one responds, and not merely as an ideal to pursue. The regulative ideal of a perfect agreement.
It guides the argument, but doesn't directly address anyone. The religious figure does address someone: who
Confess, confess before someone; he who prophesies, speaks in someone's name. The analogy
Kantian thought finds its precise point here. The relationship between human judgment and truth is...
conceived as the relationship between the one being judged and the one judging, without making any assertions about...

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the one who judges. What is transferred is the rule of reflection: that no agreement between the

The court decides based on the judgments.

6 Objections

The first objection is Habermas's own, or at least the one that stems from his position.
The argumentative practice would be sufficient unto itself. Whoever argues presupposes unconditionality.
of the truth, and this presupposition is sufficient to keep open the possibility of error; the figure
A religious approach would be, at best, redundant and, at worst, a relapse into metaphysics.
The answer depends on the distinction between presupposing and safeguarding. Presupposition is sufficient for
that the argument makes sense; it is not enough to prevent, in institutional practice, the
The objection would be valid if absorption were impossible.
And the case of German churches between 1933 and 1945 shows that this is not the case. The thesis does not claim that the figure
Religious belief is the only protection against this absorption. It claims that it is one of them, and that the theory of...
Habermas, by treating unconditionality merely as a presupposition, fails to account for
no need for protection whatsoever.

The second objection, from a functionalist perspective, is the most serious. If religion only represents the
While other practices could do it equally well, art, which presents what is not unconditional, presents other practices that are equally effective.
Let's put it in terms of concepts; the scientific ethos, which establishes methodical doubt against the results.
accepted; the legal tradition of human rights, which invokes a dignity prior to all
legislation. In this case, the thesis would describe a generic function that religion performed.
Historically, it would lack anything of its own and lose its philosophical interest. The answer lies...
The thesis has two parts. First, it does not claim exclusivity: it admits that other forms may be possible.
to present the unconditional and that some do it better in certain contexts. Second, the
Religious specificity is a matter of manner, not function. The scientific ethos presents the unconditional.
as an endless task; the tradition of rights, as a limit to power. Religion presents it as
The instance to which one responds, and this form corresponds to the structure of a confession.
of the error described at the beginning. If the answer is not convincing, the thesis is reduced to an observation about
the history of culture. If it convinces, it shows that religion has its own way of...
representation. If secular alternatives can reproduce it without taking away from religion its
The thesis leaves the question of grammar open-ended.

The third objection comes from theology. To represent without grounding would empty faith, because...
The faithful do not believe in a figure of the unconditional, but in God. Peukert and, in another register, Joseph
Ratzinger, in his dialogue with Habermas, rejects the notion that secular reason is self-sufficient.

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(HABERMAS; RATZINGER, 2007). The thesis does not contradict this insistence: it refrains from judging-
She states that religion represents the unconditional pursuit of truth, not that it is reduced to that.
representation. If religious beliefs are true, the figure will have a referent, and the
Representation will also be revelation; if they are false, the figure will continue to fulfill its function.
described, without any reference beyond its own claim to validity. Philosophy, within the limits that
Habermas attributes to him the inability to decide between the two hypotheses. Abstention is philosophical and leaves...
the theological question remains intact.

The fourth objection, strictly Kantian in nature, argues that the transposition is illegitimate. In
For Kant, the symbol presents ideas of pure reason, and the theory of ideas belongs to an architecture.
The transcendental approach that Habermas abandoned; applying § 59 to pragmatic presuppositions would be...
To use an instrument outside the system that gives it meaning. The answer has already been indicated. It's not the
architecture that is transposed, only the common trait and the question that arises from it. It is the very essence of architecture.
Habermas describes pragmatic presuppositions as transformed Kantian ideas.
If the description is correct, they retain the impossibility of being given as an object, and the
The question regarding its presentation remains legitimate. If it is incorrect, the thesis loses that support and...
I would need another argument to treat unconditionality as something that cannot be given.
as an object. The dependency is real and it is worth noting.

The fifth objection, of phenomenological inspiration, accuses the thesis of reductionism: it would treat the
religion as a service rendered to epistemology, ignoring what religious experience is for
who lives it. The objection is valid against any claim to define what religion is. No.
It argues against a thesis that states what religion does in relation to a specific problem.
Describing the function of a practice is not the same as exhausting its meaning. The faithful who confess before God
He does not confess in order to maintain the distance between the justified and the truthful; but, by confessing,
It keeps it open, and that's what interests the theory of truth.

There remains one objection that the thesis does not intend to overcome, only to record. Maeve Cooke
It contrasts transcendence from within with other ways of understanding transcendence.
and provocatively asks in what sense Habermas does not believe in God (COOKE, 2019). A
The question suggests that unconditionality, once recognized, may require more than one.
pragmatic idealization, and that the refusal of any referent beyond practice is itself an unjustified decision. The thesis
defended here does not depend on the answer. It is compatible with both
with Habermas's position, for whom the unconditional has no referent beyond practice,
as well as that of the person who claims to have it. In both cases, religion represents without founding;
What changes is whether the representation points to something specific or merely to the form of the claim itself.

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7. Final Considerations

The theory of truth that Habermas has upheld since 1999 needs a moment.
unconditional and obtains it without resorting to any transcendence beyond the practices of
argumentation. This moment, however, is only a presupposition, and presuppositions are not thematized.
They tend to be absorbed by the practices that presuppose them. It has been argued that religion offers
at this moment a symbolic presentation in the Kantian sense: it makes thinkable, by analogy,
the instance before which all human justification remains revocable, without converting it into
object and without giving it a foundation. The Kantian category was not imported from outside: it is suggested
by Habermas' own description of pragmatic presuppositions as ideas of reason
transformed, and it depends on her.

The Barmen and Stuttgart cases showed that this representation occurs and what it is.
its scope. Barmen displays it in the register of truth; Stuttgart, in that of normative correctness, where
The unconditional aspect represented is the idealization of acceptability, not an excess over it.
It allows a community to declare against its majority, or against its past, that the
The justified statement was not true. It does not guarantee that the statement is correct or complete.
The religious figure opens the way for correction; the content of the correction continues to depend on reasons.

This does not imply the truth of religious beliefs, nor the necessity of religion for...
who argues. It follows that the relationship between post-metaphysical thought and religion is not
It is exhausted in the translation of semantic content. It includes the representation of a presupposition.
formal aspect of communicative reason itself, which the translation program fails to achieve because it does not...
It deals with content, but also with structure. Habermas came close to this conclusion when he said,
at the end of its history of philosophy, of a practice of making transcendence present. What
What was missing was linking this practice to the theory of truth, and Kant provided the link.

Two questions remain open. The first is whether secular forms of
The representation of the unconditional can present it as an instance to which one responds.
without adopting religion's grammar, or if, in doing so, they become religious in a different sense.
functional. The second is empirical: under what conditions does the religious representation of the unconditional occur?
It favors the correction of the communities that cultivate it, and under what conditions, on the contrary, if...
It itself becomes an instrument of absorption, when the community begins to identify the
God's judgment is presented in conjunction with his own. The thesis does not answer either of these questions. However, it makes them...
formulable within the Habermasian framework, where they had no place until now.

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