G. Anthony Bruno, *Facticity and the Fate of Reason After Kant*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2025, pp. 352, £ 93.00, ISBN 9780198875673

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G. Anthony Bruno's book, *Facticity and the Fate of Reason After Kant*, offers a systematic reconstruction of the history of the concept of facticity. The problem, according to Bruno, lies in the impossibility of deriving the absolute necessity of the conditions of experience, thought, and existence from a first principle. The inquiry opens with a decisive post-Kantian question: can a "science of intelligibility tolerate any conditions of intelligibility as brute facts?" (p. 2).

The central thesis of the volume is that the phenomenological reappropriation of Kantian philosophy provides a more compelling answer than those advanced within classical German philosophy. From this perspective, facticity ceases to be an obstacle to science and instead reveals itself as a groundless ground. This concept was introduced by Fichte in response to the controversies raised by Jacobi on pantheism and nihilism, and its use extends as far as Heidegger, in a trajectory ultimately aimed at restoring "modesty and contingency to the science of intelligibility" (p. 10).

The volume is structured into three parts, each devoted to a specific methodological crisis: (I) the transcendental logic of Kant and Fichte; (II) the dialectical logic of Hegel and Schelling; and (III) the hermeneutics of Lask and Heidegger. In retracing this fate of reason, Bruno brings the reader back to the central question: whether we are sustained by the autonomy of reason or instead exposed to the groundless givenness of being. In other words, whether facticity, as a problem that is "livable and, often in our own lives, lived", is ultimately impermissible or unavoidable (p. 14).

The first chapter examines Fichte's solution to Kant's problem of facticity or rhapsody, that is, the problem of an ungrounded origin and a radical contingency in the deduction of the categories. Fichte aims to establish an absolute science of the conditions of intelligibility by demonstrating the unity of

reason, which Kant left incomplete. He develops a genetic deduction of theoretical reason from practical reason, namely, from the absolute freedom of the I as a first principle.

In this way, Fichte engages with Kant's questions *quid facti* and *quid juris*, deriving the categories from a non-arbitrary origin: reason itself. The genetic deduction thus performs both a "genealogical" task of "deriving the categories from a first principle" and a "jurisprudential" task of "establishing our right to use them" (p. 25). Grounded in the I's self-reflection and self-determination, the genetic method constitutes a fundamental contribution to post-Kantian logic, anticipating Hegel's dialectic. What emerges is a rigorous system that highlights the connection between freedom, rationality, and systematicity.

However, as Bruno notes, Fichte derives the categories from the I without eliminating the contingency of the initial act, positing it as a principle. The dispute between idealism and dogmatism is resolved only on the practical level, through the consciousness of one's own freedom, for which, however, no further reason can be given. If the choice of idealism remains a radically contingent fact, then Fichte, despite his opposition to facticity, "clearly admits of at least one brute or factical element" (p. 56).

The second chapter analyzes Fichte's attempt to eliminate the facticity of the conditions of intelligibility, particularly in the Berlin *Wissenschaftslehre*. Through the notions of intuition and genesis – on the one hand, the unconditioned knowledge of the first principle and, on the other, the deduction of the conditions of experience – Fichte argues that these conditions are necessary rather than contingent, since they are generated by the I's own autonomous activity.

Fichte recognizes that knowledge of this first principle risks being factual, that is, unfathomable and imposed on reason in an inscrutable way. This difficulty arises from the disjunction between thinking the essence and intuiting the being of the I, that is, between an epistemic and an ontological aspect. Both appear factual because, taken separately, they fail to grasp their true condition of intelligibility. This brings into focus a decisive challenge: the "I's oneness must itself be deduced, that is, that insight into the I must itself be made genetic" (p. 73). Only by deriving both the idealist and the realist aspects of the I's cognition is it possible to ground philosophy in the absolute

self-sufficiency of reason, capable of systematically deducing all the conditions of intelligibility.

The unity of the I, as absolute or originary facticity, thus manifests itself as a non-derivable principle, grasped through a genetic intuition. Fichte's anti-nihilism therefore defends reason and freedom, maintaining – unlike Heidegger – that the possibility of a science of intelligibility lies in the removal of radical contingency, that is, in the absolute "elimination of facticity" (p. 96).

The third chapter examines Hegel's critique of Fichte's deductive method. Fichte pushes Kant's transcendental philosophy further, identifying reason not merely as the source of knowledge but as a systematic principle. The absolute freedom of this science lies in the absence of external determinations. Yet, within this framework, a problem persists: the system fails to achieve scientificity due to a radical contingency or facticity in the presupposition of the I, from which the conditions of intelligibility are derived, as well as in the absolute opposition between the I and the not-I.

Bruno investigates the charge of facticity and subjectivism that Hegel advances against Fichte in the *Difference* essay and in *Faith and Knowledge*. Fichte's idealism fails to grasp the absolute identity of subject and object because it remains bound to a "factical opposition" between the I and the not-I (p. 121). In this way, he does not fully realize the aim of genuine idealism: the "nullification of finitude and hence of any finitizing opposition" (p. 152), that is, the dialectical sublation of the contradictions of the understanding in identity.

The true infinite, therefore, is not the reproduction of an irresolvable and unjustified dualism – which logically follows from the facticity of the presupposition of Fichte's system – but rather the full self-sufficiency and transparency of rationality. For Hegel, it is through this dialectical overcoming of absolute opposition that thinking advances toward the speculative unity of reason.

The fourth chapter examines Schelling's critique of Hegel's idea of a presuppositionless science through the distinction between negative and positive philosophy. Negative philosophy seeks the first principle that makes existence fully intelligible, but it fails to justify the assumption that anything exists. This failure gives rise to positive philosophy, which proceeds from the extra-logical character, brute givenness, and

radical contingency of the fact of existence. Rendering existence rational and demonstrating the reality of the first principle thus constitute necessary and inseparable moments of systematic cognition.

This epistemic reciprocity between principle and experience is already present in Kant as a response to the question of the objective reality of the categories. Maimon's skepticism calls this validity into question by exposing the empty formalism of the idealist first principle. Schelling develops this insight to overcome the limits of negative philosophy, showing that existence must be presupposed alongside the first principle. According to Schelling, Hegel presupposes precisely what he intends to render intelligible, thereby collapsing the conditions of existence with existence itself, their necessity with their reality. By refusing to eliminate contingency, Schelling advances toward the primacy of the factical, calling into question the very meaning of an absolute science.

The "facticity of time" (p. 180) – that is, the past of a choice from which science derives and the future of its complete actualization – emerges as an extra-logical and non-derivable condition of possibility. Despite post-Kantian attempts to overcome it, reason presupposes the actuality of existence as an ineliminable, brute, and contingent facticity. Negative philosophy thus depends on positive philosophy, which reveals itself as the "thought of the experience of actuality", that is, of "our non-discursive openness to the thatness of existence" (p. 204).

The fifth chapter reconstructs the problematic role of Lask's interpretation of Fichte, focusing on the recognition of a *hiatus irrationalis*, that is, an irreducible gap between the conditions of intelligibility and contingent existence. Lask's reading of Fichte's problem of facticity – namely, of the untenable conditions that reason must eliminate – is both a fateful misreading and a productive one. He interprets this problem as the resistance of the brute uniqueness of individuals to explanation, that is, as the irreducibility of concrete particularity to the genetic deduction of the categories.

Fichte, by contrast, does not aim to eliminate material facticity but formal facticity. His deduction does not concern haecceity but rather the rhapsody of the conditions of intelligibility. Consequently, the limit does not concern empirical individuality but those elements that are assumed

without justification. Lask transforms this perspective and insists that the "unique and singular actuality" of the individual is "undeducibly brute" (p. 235).

The categories thus always depend on an alogical matter irreducible to them, revealing facticity not as a problem to be eliminated but as a constitutive dimension of knowledge and existence. Bruno concludes that Lask's misreading of Fichte's philosophy is productive because, mediated by Dilthey's theoretical framework, it anticipates Heidegger's "hermeneutics of facticity" (p. 256).

The sixth chapter is devoted to Heidegger's attempt to dissolve the problem of rhapsody through an analysis of the conditions of intelligibility grounded in a hermeneutic interpretation of *Dasein*'s facticity. Heidegger criticizes dialectics, arguing that the project of establishing a science of absolute intelligibility is not presuppositionless, since it admits the brute fact of lived experience as its pre-theoretical origin. The meaning of this presupposition is not logical but hermeneutic, insofar as existence is always already thrown into the world in a non-derivable way.

Philosophy interprets experience in its own terms, without reducing it to a theoretical object, and recognizes it as the presupposition of every inquiry. Heidegger thus emerges as the philosopher of facticity *par excellence*, replacing the ideal of rational knowledge with the "existential ideal of authenticity" (p. 280). The conditions of intelligibility are thereby rooted in a radically contingent and factical origin.

In the attempt to determine being, a kind of vertigo arises, whereby the ground reveals itself as the experience of nothingness. Anxiety discloses this relation to facticity, revealing the contingency of being itself. The philosophical turn requires interpreting and experiencing nothingness as the ground of all beings, thereby calling us back to our factical life. This constitutes the central task of philosophical inquiry, which, to be authentic, must at the same time be unscientific. For this reason, however, philosophy can never transcend the conditions of intelligibility, since in interpreting them it "forever exhibits its own facticity" (p. 300).

In conclusion, Bruno's volume is a significant work that, through its systematic approach, casts new light on some critical aspects of classical German philosophy. What emerges is a dense and coherent work, capable of engaging with one of

the enduring problems of philosophy, that of facticity, through an original and stimulating theoretical perspective. By reconstructing the different articulations of this concept, the book highlights both the continuities and the internal tensions within a complex trajectory from Kant to Heidegger.

It is precisely the breadth of this volume – within which Bruno explicitly makes no claim to completeness – that enables the further development of specific conceptual insights while opening new lines of inquiry. On the one hand, due to its polysemy and the different contexts considered, the notion of facticity undergoes significant semantic shifts. On the other hand, it may be fruitful to extend the comparison – among other positions – to Hegel's *Science of Logic*, where the questions of facticity and contingency receive a radical formulation. Such an analysis would further enrich this constellation of perspectives, showing how Hegel engages with the problems highlighted in the volume.

The theoretical tensions emerging from the dialogues among these positions make the volume a productive contribution to contemporary debate. As suggested by the cover image of the half-closed hand by Goltzius, the question raised by the book remains open: as post-Kantians, we must ask whether we are "held by reason or thrown into being", that is, whether we are "supported by the all or by the nothing" (p. 301). Ultimately, can reason ground itself entirely from within? Or must it instead acknowledge its own limit in the irreducible presence of an ineliminable facticity? According to Bruno, it is precisely in this constitutive incompleteness of every interpretation – radicalized above all by Schelling and Heidegger – that the fundamental problem emerges: insofar as we engage with our contingent condition, we are called to answer the question of facticity, namely "whether and to what extent we own up to our finitude" (p. 302).