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Philosophy

Conditional unconditionality, or modern reason.

La incondicionalidad condicionada, o de la razón moderna.

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Abstract.
Modern reason seeks absolute certainty or the unconditional foundation of truth. It explicitly contrasts with everything that came before, affirming a totally new beginning. Furthermore, to achieve its proposed objectives, it develops a method from the subject, which must be apodictic and universal. In this quest, felt as asceticism, the three proposed forms of unconditionality, evidence and realism fail relatively. The processes in which these results, this partial advance, are formed are analysed. This study reveals much about modernity, its mathematical foundation and the limits that determine it. From the above, a double conclusion is reached about modern reason: it requires the presence of empirical content, and its processes are complex and partial. Imagination is necessary in ways of understanding and transforming the world. On the one hand, modern reason needs to recognise the historical and real person, for who is the subject if not the person? On the other hand, unredeemed, it will continue to seek unshakeable foundations.

Keywords: Reason. Modernity. Foundation. Evidence. Reality. Empirical experience. Imagination. Person.

Resumen.
La razón moderna busca la certeza absoluta o fundamento incondicionado de la verdad. Se contrapone explícitamente con todo lo anterior, afirmando un inicio totalmente nuevo. Además, para los objetivos propuestos, desarrolla desde el sujeto el método, que debe ser apodíctico y universal. En esa búsqueda, sentida como ascesis, las tres formas propuestas de incondicionalidad, evidencia y realismo fracasan relativamente. Se analizan los procesos en los que se forman estos resultados, ese avance parcial. Estudio que desvela mucho de la modernidad, de su fundamentación matemática y de los límites que la determinan. Desde lo anterior, se alcanza una doble conclusión acerca de la razón moderna: precisa de la presencia

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del contenido empírico, y sus procesos son complejos y parciales. La imaginación es necesaria en las formas de comprender y transformar el mundo. Por una parte, la razón moderna necesita reconocer a la persona histórica y real, pues ¿quién es el sujeto si no es la persona? Por la otra, irredenta, continuará buscando la fundamentación inconmovible.

Palabras clave: Razón. Modernidad. Fundamentación. Evidencia. Realidad. Experiencia empírica. Imaginación. Persona.

Modern reason.

It is Descartes (1641/1961) who consciously and clearly inaugurates the foundation of modern reason, in which we find ourselves. The purpose of theoretical action is, he asserts, "to start again from the foundations" (p. 43). Therefore, not from this or that position, from something given and prior, but as a construction *ex novo*. Not appearance, nor probability, nor authority, nor the memory of the centuries, but rather reaching the conviction of having the complete and apodictic truth for every rational being who uses reason for themselves. We are faced with reason asserting itself as radical criticism in history.

Thus, Descartes (1637/2008) feels compelled to "never admit anything as true without having known with certainty that it was so" (p. 24). And not to lay the foundation for a truth, a field, but for the unique wisdom for all fields and problems (Descartes, 1701/1996, pp. 61-66). As Husserl (1931/1985) states, it is a matter of finding the radical and total foundation of human knowledge (p. 38), or "radical authenticity" (p. 47).

This is a demanding programme on which the nascent modern science is built. Already in 1604 (16 October, letter to Paolo Sarpi, as quoted in Berrone, 2001, pp. 634–635) affirmed the need to demonstrate laws of motion based on "a totally unquestionable principle that could be taken as an axiom," a principle or "proposition" that should be "very natural and evident." Galileo therefore advanced the goal of establishing universal, mathematical laws based on incontrovertible principles, from which all perceptible cases could be deduced, as analysed by Cassirer (1906/1993, pp. 362-365).

Consequently, modern reason became mathematised, or rather mathematics became modernised, it does not matter: he affirmed that the world was *ordine mathematico*. That is, if mathematics is the 'theory of formal structures' (Frey, 1972, p. 129), or operational-constructive procedures (p. 143), then it is a matter of reducing every problem of content to a formal or

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constructive question. Therefore, when Descartes (1701/1996) proposes to constitute a *Mathesis universalis* as "a certain general science that explains everything that can be sought about order and measure" (Rule IV, p. 86), this science proceeds from the general method, but this method has already been mathematised by placing order or construction as a principle. On the one hand, Newton and Leibniz will develop, within this framework, differential calculus, conceived as "the universal means for the mathematical description of the phenomena of motion, of all dynamic processes" (Frey, 1972, p. 26). On the other hand, mathematics will focus as a fundamental theory on arithmetic[1] .

In its development, modernity is confronted with Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The latter had relied on a gradual approach based on the belief that human senses and reason would reveal the truth on their own, which Arendt (1958/2022) analyses as the conviction that we know what exists directly (pp. 302 ff.), since 'truth reveals itself' (p. 303)[2] . This difference in approach is clearly seen in practical reason. Thus, Aristotle (4th century BC/1985) states that "one must begin with the things that are easiest to know" (p. 133, 1095b), understanding them, of the two alternatives he considers, as the easy to know for people (p. 4): "For the starting point is the what" (1095b, p. 133), he adds. Therefore, in order to ascertain goodness, it is preferable to start from the fact of already being good: from good customs (1095b, p. 133). On the contrary, Kant (1785/2012) asserts that a moral law, an ethical duty, must be obligatory without exception, which is why he specifies and defends an 'absolute necessity' of moral law ([A viii] p. 70). This implies that it must be sought 'a priori in the concepts of pure reason' (p. 71). Nothing empirical can contribute to moral foundations. Ancient and modern thought show their opposition.

However, the search for unshakeable truths is not comfortable and requires asceticism on the part of the person who becomes the subject of themselves, who questions themselves. The feeling of uncertainty and the demand for certainty are internal spurs that generate strong discipline in life. Foucault (2) points this out when he notes that modernity is not a historical period, but an "attitude" (p. 81) that imposes on man "the task of working on himself" (p. 86). In other words, if the

[1] Frey (1972) asserts two theses that are perhaps key to constructing a complete philosophical concept of mathematics: "there is only one arithmetic" (p. 68) and "numbers cannot be constituted without reference to experience" (p. 72), both of which are discussed in Chapter 3.
[2] In Husserl's (1931/1985) terms: "from naive objectivism to transcendental subjectivism" (p. 40). But here it is considered that this notion of objectivity is formed in the modern age.

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field of consciousness is all that one possesses, the non-acquisition of truth places us in the pillory before the modern age.

Inevitably, modernity will move from theoretical knowledge not only to the field of ethical duty, but also to the totality of that practical reason: political organisation. From the duty established by a universal and a priori rational law, we move to the state governed by that single rationality. It is typically modern that the "rational state" (Berlin, 2022, p. 42) is both the imposition of a single, universal, ironclad rationality and absolute freedom, as that state coincides with the conclusions reached by all citizens when using reason for itself (pp. 41 ff.)[3] . In other words, modern reason solves arithmetic in the same way as it solves geometry, the organisation of industrial design and assembly, the problem of the categorical imperative (Kant, 1785/2012), the organisation of the economy, the determination of power and its legitimacy, etc. There is nothing more modern than the formal rules themselves.

Now, in the search for the unblemished certainty that must arise from the previous moment of the "universality" of "Cartesian doubt" (Arendt, 1958/2022, p. 303), when any unfounded prior assumption would nullify the entire rational edifice built upon it, what is the foundation of the method of modern reason? How does modernity address the problem of the universality of the rules of method? How does it manage to satisfy the demand for apodicticity? Three proposed solutions arise from this problem. Do not take anything as previously true, since truth and condition are incompatible. Start from principles that are absolutely self-evident. Finally, reality as a construction and reference point for rational knowledge. The three are analysed below.

Unconditional truth.

How can unconditionality be achieved without falling into circular reasoning? This question appears in Renaissance philosophy because, as Cassirer (1906/1993) analyses, considering Campanella's philosophy, "doubt already implies certainty" (p. 269): one doubts from an idea of truth already

[3] Evidently, modernity in ethics and politics is much more complex than what is presented here. For example, Escañuela Romana (2024) considers the relationship established in Arendt (1963/2013) between the Constitution of Liberty and modernity.

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acquired. How can one advance towards truth if one does not already have the concept of what it consists of?

Similarly, when Descartes (1637/2008) rejects the different ideas of the past and perceptions, is he not doing so from the requirement of a given criterion? Does Cartesian methodical doubt not imply rejecting the veracity of certain thoughts, or contents of consciousness, because they do not reach a measure, or ideal, that is not doubted? Thus, problematisation seems to negate itself: evaluating its own procedure of doubt as fundamentally questionable.

Spinoza (1677/1988) recognises the problem of consciousness's circle of self-reflection when he points out the infinite regression involved in finding a method of knowledge, since this requires another method from which to investigate it, and thus others in an endless process (30) (p. 86). This leads him to consider that the method is a reflection on true ideas that already exist (38) (p. 89): in order not to fall into this circle or infinite process, one must take the certainty of possessing the true idea. This, Spinoza (1677/1988) points out, avoids Cartesian doubt and produces certainty, since it is enough to start from the true idea that we already possess (36) (p. 88), and the method is reduced to seeking the correct order of true ideas. Now, "certainty and objective essence are the same" Spinoza (1677/1988 (35) (p. 88), which implies that the true idea is true because it is a reflection of being. In short, 'truth manifests itself' Spinoza (1677/1988, (44), p. 92), and with it, being. As Cassirer (1906/1993) considers, while Descartes analyses thought in order to achieve "the fixed point", the idea that assures us of certainty, Spinoza takes that truth and the certainty it produces as already given (p. 9). Therefore, in contrast to Descartes and his methodical reconstruction of certainty based on the subject, Cassirer (1906/1993) points out that for Spinoza, the order of knowledge reflects the order of being, "the pure image of reality" (p. 27). Given that modernity began by rejecting the giving of truth for its own sake, Descartes focused on a universal method that would allow us to escape error and provide a basis for what we think and initially do not know. Spinoza, however, takes a different perspective.

Likewise, Habermas (1989) finds this criticism in Hegel (1833/1985): as a problem of Kantian critical theory[4] . Indeed, Hegel (1833/1985) argues that it is not possible to know and establish cognitive faculties before knowing: this would be done with the very capacities that are to be set

[4] Hegel (1833/1985) would have found this analysis in Reinhold: "Hegel praises Reinhold, who clearly grasped the circular character..." (Habermas, 1989, p. 15).

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aside for analysis. It would be like finding the conditions of truth of the method using precisely that method, proving a statement on the basis that it is true. As Hegel (1833/1985) states, this would be equivalent to "attempting to seize the truth before the truth itself" (p. 421), or knowing knowing without knowing (p. 421)[5] . Habermas (1989) considers Hegel's argument to be "conclusive," stating that "no consistent theory of knowledge can escape this circle from the outset" (p. 14). Indeed, Habermas (1989) adds, even if Reinhold's procedure of starting from unproblematic assumptions to analyse the others and later returning to their foundation is adopted, we are still in an arbitrary sequence of research (p. 14).

Based on the above, Habermas (1989) analyses that Hegel's critique (1833/1985) leads to the phenomenological self-reflection of knowledge, and not to Hegelian absolute knowledge, since the theory of knowledge would now be a "reflection" that starts from a previous point, like a "later moment" that starts from "information from consciousness that has reached it empirically" (p. 15). It starts from "prior knowledge" (Habermas, 1989, p. 16). This highlights the problem: how do we know whether it is knowledge or not if we are examining it to determine this? The distance from the Cartesian approach is obvious: instead of Cartesian doubt leading to universal rules and unconditional certainty, previous data that is accepted as true as given, to extend this form to the theory of knowledge. Instead of the construction of truth, its existence. The general outline is similar to that analysed in Spinoza (1677/1988). But how can we recognise what is true if we have not yet applied any method? On what basis do we choose what is true? We seem to ignore the circularity in order to place ourselves in a *petitio principii*.

In any case, the problems of circular foundation reappear in the formalist programme, the direct heir to the idea of *Mathesis Universalis*. This programme aims to reduce mathematics to an axiomatic system in which the first concepts are defined by their use and th s within the same system. In other words, writes Hempel (1945), mathematics would be the set of theorems whose truth comes from the postulates made, already implicitly contained in those postulates (p. 9). A complete and well-founded truth would be achieved, leaving no room for doubt, and without the need to resort to empirical experience, the existence of mathematical entities or mental construction by the subject. Hilbert's programme stood out in this formalism project. Nagel and Newman (1958) consider this

[5] This reflection is also included in Escañuela Romana (2025).

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programme to be the search for principles of its own and the construction of "absolute proofs, by which the consistency of systems could be established without assuming the consistency of some other system" (p. 26). In other words, the system of axioms is self-sufficient and requires only a few rules of inference to demonstrate its consistency, rather than the consistency of another different system of axioms (Nagel and Newman, 1958, pp. 33-34). Reducing mathematics to a "pure logical-formal system" without content (Frey, 1972, p. 53). Where, if axioms are considered "natural" or "logical," as undeniable, we once again find the search for unconditionality.

Then that aspiration proves unattainable. Gödel's theorems show the limitations of any formal system. As Frey (1972) analyses, Gödel's first theorem establishes that in a sufficiently complete formal system it is not possible to formulate all the metalinguistic propositions about the system itself (which refer to itself), because if one tries to do so, one reaches undecidable propositions (p. 66).

Consequently, Nagel and Newman (1958) rightly conclude that the theorems show the creative power of reason (pp. 101-102), and therefore the human mind displays a very complex activity (pp. 101-102). For his part, Tarski (1944) imposes the condition that truth in the object language is predicated in the metalanguage (the latter containing the object language and other elements that give it the necessary richness). No formalised language can therefore establish its own truth.

Evident truth.

If unconditional foundation is not possible, the direct alternative is evidence, which Descartes resorted to as proof of indubitable certainty. Science is true and evident knowledge, affirms Descartes (1701/1996, Rule II)[6] . How can we recognise this evidence? Descartes' answer focused on qualities internal to perceptions: they must be clear and distinct (p. 49).

Now, if evidence is above all the feeling of obligation to recognise and not deny the truth, which prevents me from thinking the opposite truthfully, we are suddenly faced with an assertion of its own validity, given. Evidence is, therefore, the attempt to exchange self-foundation for self-affirmation. But then, in fact, certain propositions, perceptions, and perceptions of reasoning appear

[6] This is how Husserl (1931/1985) understands it: Descartes sought "absolute evidence" (p. 38).

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to our consciousness in this way, without it being up to us to make it happen. Others, on the other hand, do not possess that rare appearance of certainty. We are then faced with the given, the imposed, with a passive subject of knowledge, rather than a creative subject, a builder of method and a constituent function of itself and the world. Furthermore, like all inner perceptions, the obligation of truth does not have to be universal to all rational beings, but may be characteristic of some and not others.

Finally, science from the 19th century onwards dealt the final blow to evidence as a criterion of truth. The first and central element that initiated the abandonment of the principle of evidence was the emergence of non-Euclidean geometries in the 19th century, with a foundation that was not intuitive but based on the principle of consistency. Based on mathematical formalism and its definition of "mathematical existence" as coherence or non-contradiction (Frey, 1972, pp. 51, 145). Similarly, the non-evidence of quantum mechanics[7] or rational consumer theory[8] , among other scientific developments, does not seem to be, in any way, a principle that generates truth. Putnam (1975) points to the importance of "quasi-empirical methods" (p. 529), taking up the idea of Zermelo, who is quoted (Zermelo, 1908/1967, p. 187). This refers to the use of intuitive principles, due to their evidence. We then encounter the paradox presented by Zermelo (1908/1967): "No matter if this self-evidence is to a certain degree subjective -- it is surely a necessary source of mathematical principles, even if it is not a tool of mathematical proofs." (p. 187). Although important for the subject- t to form theorems and proofs, it is not, however, part of the proofs themselves. Furthermore, the object of Zermelo's (1908/1967) defence is the axiom of choice, which has been the subject of lengthy debate. In any case, it seems that, as Galindo and Alzate (2022) state, "as a consequence of Gödel and Cohen's results," affirming or denying the axiom of choice does not generate contradiction, but simply produces two different mathematics (p. 56).

Objective truth, real?

Consequently, modern reason seeks to establish truth from the subject and its method, postulating the universal validity of the latter, but it is deprived of unconditionality and evidence as foundations.

[7] "In the case of quantum theory, the meaning of probabilities is not evident" (Cassini, 2016, p. 26).
[8] For example, the quasi-concavity of the utility function and the mathematical consequence that Slutsky's matrix is symmetric and negative semi-definite (Barnett and Serletis, 2009, p. 9; Holt and Goodwin, 2009, p. 46): these do not appear to be results supported by evidence, but rather by mathematical deduction.

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Is it possible to rediscover apodicticity in the relationship between method and the world? That is, between man and reality. Can reason, operating by and for itself, find a direct way to base itself on what exists beyond any subject and its rationality? For if it finds no foundation and operates in the subject for itself, is the modern project then limited to failure and, with it, subjectivism? Modern reason therefore seeks to avoid what Arendt (1958/2022) analyses as confining man "to the prison of his own mind, to the limitations of the models he himself created" (p. 313). To achieve this, Descartes (1637/2008) resorted to the existence of God to guarantee the reality of the content of the truths reached by the method (e.g., pp. 54-55).

To break the deadlock, modernity constructs a new concept of objectivity: as a property of thoughts and statements. This concept is necessary because the application of the method produces a theory or theories of reality.

Indeed, the question of objectivity is clearly present in Kant's thinking (1781/2007), in which the paradox reached by modern reason is highlighted. On the one hand, Kant argues that the objective value of reason depends on the concepts of understanding (Kant, 1781/2007), since these achieve 'objective use' only when applied to 'sensible intuition'. Without this, thought does not refer to objects (Kant, 1781/2007, B 342, A 286, p. 292). On the other hand, the 'pure concept of reason' is explained 'as the concept of the unconditioned' (Kant, 1781/2007, B379, A322, p. 315). In other words, objectivity is formed in the subject from forms or elements conditioned in consciousness, but reason seeks an unconditioned foundation for the totality of that experience. However, given the previous point, this search for the former cannot be successful , since "the absolutely unconditioned is not found in experience" (p. 488). Such "pure concepts," without objective experience, adds Kant (1781/2007), act as "projects" toward that ideal of the unconditioned (B380, A323, p. 316). Without specific validity, they guide the functioning of understanding. In other words, they do not serve to prove, only to imagine how one can advance towards broader and more accurate knowledge. These concepts are not arbitrary, as they are universal to reason, but they have no object in experience (Kant, 1781/2007, B383-5, A326-8, pp. 317 ff.). Now, what use is the use of regulatory principles without a basis in truth to those who seek absolute truth? Suppose I use the concept of cause in this sense as an 'as if'; is its affirmation as a metaphor a use of the concept 'cause'? Otherwise, am I not using 'cause' as a counterfactual? Just the opposite of what I intended.

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Furthermore, the problem is deepened by Kant's concept of noumenon. On the one hand, Kant (1781/2007) argues that the (a priori) forms of sensible intuition, space and time, refer to 'objects considered only as phenomena' and not to 'things in themselves' (A39, B56, p. 80). In other words, they are the basis of the a priori synthesis that forms our experience, and do not refer to something external. On the other hand, this raises the problem of the relationship between this objective reality and reality as such or the 'thing in itself', a question in Kant (1781/2007) that generates a series of seemingly unsolvable conceptual problems, since we are dealing with a general, "universal" concept that must refer to a specific case or "individual" (B 604, A 576, p. 490), among other paradoxical issues.

It is a dramatic moment, as reason seeks what it already knows it cannot achieve. Suddenly, the desired objectivity is attainable but useless, as ideas are affirmed whose universality refers to subjects, but not to objects. Why, in the search for absolute certainty (since Descartes), is reason led to the loss of reality? But reality is what we cannot deny, for it is everything that is imposed on us and that we cannot dispose of. It is what confronts our desires in order to deny or modulate them.

As Frey (1972) analyses, Kant's demand that all true science must have "apodictic certainty" can no longer be upheld with regard to any empirical science (p. 133), since the applicability of mathematics to empirical reality is limited and confined to a small part of the knowable (p. 139). But mathematics itself has been affected by Gödel's incompleteness theorems. Thus, the operational-constructive is an open set of truths that can be debated, and it is a system of order and relation that does not capture everything that exists. We do not even know to what extent it captures it.

Subsequent attempts to bridge the gap between objectivity and reality modify the starting point of modern reason to add something given, present, in a primary way and, therefore, not subject to Cartesian doubt. Three examples of thought in the modern age are taken. As we have seen, Spinoza (1677/1988) already asserted that the order of knowledge and being coincide, generating certainty. Husserl (1931/1985) will assert that evidence is already "experience of the existence and essence of things" (p. 52), the respective things and objective facts are presented to me (p. 54). Presence that is a fact, a given, just as it is that I am sitting here writing. We approach this giving of being, achieving the longed-for absolute truths, in an "infinite horizon of approximations" (Husserl, 1931/1985, p. 53). Hegel, for his part, Kojève (1947/2016) points out, had argued that absolute Knowledge, of "Being as a whole" (p. 207), is already present in him. That is, in a present from which history is considered.

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Why in history? Habermas (1984) points out that, in the early Hegel (1806/1984), from the lectures "in Jena during 1804-1805 and 1805, 1806" (p. 11), the spirit is formed in the systems of mediation of language, work and family or interaction (pp. 12 ff.), without which any movement of consciousness would not be possible. Truth would not be realised. I interpret that from this point on, the evolution of Hegelian thought naturally leads to phenomenology, since by nullifying the condition of truth defended by Descartes and Kant, among others, the origin becomes the determinant of truthfulness and demonstration. In fact, in phenomenological reflection, reflection itself would be another reflection and would participate in history, and its letter of truth would be its own existence. But then history comes to dominate as a reference point, since it is the origin of what we think. However, history is what is constructed in time as we are aware of it, a gift.

Based on all of the above, it can be concluded that modern reason places us in three conceptually constructed worlds before consciousness:

A) The world of objectivity ("obj") constituted by the result of propositions or theories produced by the method. Among them, fundamentally the mathematical theories of science.

B) The world of perceptions and common sense ("sco").

C) What we philosophically think of as reality ("rea"), depending on whether we consider it knowable or unattainable. What we would call the "WORLD" in capital letters.

In other words, we have methodically constructed theories in conceptual-mathematical science that describe and predict phenomena to an unimaginable degree of accuracy (Penrose, 2006), so that in this *obj* world, objects are defined by equations (2006). Similarly, models of rational demanders who maximise satisfaction or utility do not correspond to real human beings, but to equations that describe and predict behaviour. Based on the results obtained, the world is transformed by technology, or the creation of artificial things, produced by the same scientific activity incorporated into instruments. From the selection of fruit or cereal varieties to their genetic modification, and even to the current massive data centres on which artificial intelligence is intended to be created.

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On the other hand, there is the *sco* world, which we know is an interpretation of our brains, but in which we live our daily lives. When we have breakfast in the morning, we do not abstract ourselves from elementary particles, etc., but live in the world of tastes and sensations. We do not talk to other people thinking about the atomic molecular components that make us up, but as actual people. Furthermore, in our constant evaluation of existence, if something is beautiful, good, true, we place ourselves in the *sco* world.

On the one hand, it is from the *sco* world that we evaluate the rest: from it we think the true. On the other hand, this *sco* world is reduced to the *obj* world in modern reason, in what Descartes understood as the application of the universal method. Theories that effectively seem to reduce our daily lives to mathematically described objects that do not correspond to our perceptions and ideas in our ordinary lives.

And what about the *real* world? The philosophical controversy centres on this question and its relationship with the other two worlds. Modern reason desperately wants to interpret it as equivalent to *the* obj[9] .

Therefore, the relationship they have with reality as such, which is now also presented conceptually, becomes problematic: the subject of endless debate. If the leap could be irrefutably resolved in such a way that objectivity and reality maintained, at least, a close and reliable relationship, a certain basis would be achieved. In this way, modern reason returns to the question of the adequacy between thought and reality.

The successes of technology as a product of science can hardly be exaggerated. Need has been combated, diseases have been tackled, life expectancy has increased, as explained, for example, by Deaton (2013)[10] . And yet, in the context of this study, what exists as real beyond the method and

[9] The Platonic-modern theory of mathematics brings together two ideas. The modern idea of the existence of theoretical mathematics and, as a result, applied mathematics. The latter is applied to what exists, which was unthinkable in Plato (Arendt, 2022, pp. 293-294). The second idea, Platonic, is the identification of the reference of mathematics with ideal objects, supported, for example, by Penrose (2006), so that it describes something that really exists. Then, necessarily, a Platonic-modern conception must unite the ideal and physical worlds, or at least equate them in some way.

[10] On the one hand, "The greatest escape in human history is the escape from poverty and death" (Deaton, 2013, p. 23), which has occurred since the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment and "the germ theory of disease" (Deaton, 2013, p. 23). On the other hand, we are in a process that continues because we live in an unequal world and a large part of the population has not reached the levels of the richest part of humanity (Deaton, 2013, pp. 23-24). Deaton develops both theses at length in that book.

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its cognitive and technological results? This is a problem that is conceptually present in modern reason, which nostalgically wonders about what exists and is not the object of knowledge.

Ultimately, if truth is formed entirely in consciousness, in the search for a universal method of reason developing for itself, if truth starts from the inner foundation for veracity as the basis of the subject's own activity, the question necessarily becomes what is real beyond the subject. Even everything that has been transformed contains a certain separate existence that escapes us. So the more science knows and transforms the world, the more aware we become of what lies beyond[11] . With the contradiction of thinking what is not possible to conceive, despite being the object of the intention to be so. "Distance from the facts" that places the subject "in an even more remote, solitary and silent place, alone with the certainty of their own existence, their knowledge, their action and their technical activity of transformation" (Escañuela, 2025).

5. Conclusion. Now.

Modern reason in its development is deprived of unconditionality, evidence and realism. However, unredeemed, it continues to pursue unshakeable certainty. But, between the experience of successes and failures, and the self-demanding impulse, it now knows the conditions that determine the results, as well as the necessarily limited nature of the successive achievements obtained.

The crucial aspect of modernity is thus revealed as that method of multiple forms, of universal and apodictic aspiration, organised in one way or another around formal structures. A method constructed from the human being. It has produced the set of theoretical and technical achievements in which we live. In one way or another, we are all necessarily heirs to Descartes, Galileo and Newton, among many others.

There are two partial solutions to the crucial problem of foundation, which have slipped through the sieve of the search for foundations. On the one hand, as Frey (1972) points out, the limitations of formalisation show that we need the empirical (p. 140). Starting with the fact that numbers need content. It is true that data do not generally allow us to assert unshakeable and

[11] Through mathematics, we can only approximate phenomena that can be ordered and measured (Frey, 1972, p. 141). Everything that is not can be left out.

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absolutely certain truths, but it is also true that, as a partial product of technical means and conceptual formulations, they are the best approximation to the world and to ourselves, and allow for continuous progress towards truth[12] .

On the other hand, imagination and complexity are consubstantial with reason. Without this ability to think about what is not present, as Arendt (1970/1992) explains Kant's thinking, "Imagination, Kant says, is the faculty of making present what is absent" ["Imagination, Kant says, is the faculty of making present what is absent."] (p. 79), man would lose crucial activities: understanding himself (having history), understanding others, understanding the world and transforming it. In short, creativity. In some ways, modernity has struggled to recognise the central position of imagination in human thought and, on that basis, the possibility of complex and dynamic advances. Doubt and uncertainty have been revealed not only as moments in the progress towards truth, but also as processes inherent to reason. From them, the very possibility of freedom arises. Consciousness exists because it is nothing more than the recognition of doubt.

Thus, the asceticism of certainty remains the driving force of modernity. It destroys in order to build and rejects all authority, not only that of supposed guardians (Kant, 1784/2018)[13] , but also that of the senses, instincts, emotionality, and even acquired reason itself. It is an asceticism that posits itself as freedom, understanding truth as liberation. The basis is the will to think for oneself: the motto of the Enlightenment according to Kant (1784/2018): *Sapere Aude*[14] (p. 17).

However, modern reason needs to recognise the historical and real person[15] , the existing human being: for who is the subject if not the person? Not the correlate of their conceptions and their desire to transform, but the existing being endowed with freedom. Only the person, recognising themselves in the process, persists .

Postscript

[12] "Man can always devise something new and appropriate to continue the process" (Frey, 1972, p. 144).
[13] "Those guardians who have so kindly taken upon themselves the task of supervision..." (Kant, 1784/2018, p. 18).
[14] Alternatively, see the complex reflection of the character Marlow in relation to the idea, as presented by Conrad, 2015, p. 23.
[15] An initial note on the dynamics between modernity and personal identity can be found in Escañuela Romana (2022): "The rule, the property of universal adequacy to an established regularity,
studied and established, erased local and family identities, as well as personal ones."

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If the anguished search for absolute certainty, amid universal doubt, is characteristic of the modern age. If, in demanding compliance with the rules postulated by conscience, the latter deposits salvation. If, in order to achieve this, it is necessary to reject everything that has gone before, to annul everything that has been given, in order to conquer the principle of truthfulness. If the unconditional foundation of knowledge is pursued in order to fall into impossible circles. If evidence is not the solution, nor does reality offer an apodictic foundation. If we are, then, in a revolution for the obligation of freedom. If we inhabit that tireless rush, and conscience cannot find a harbour in which to rest.

Then, modern reason, Theseus, enters the labyrinth to free man from his chains of necessity, killing the Minotaur[16] . Theseus is the hero who carries the flame of truth, and under his demand he longs for liberation. The Minotaur is the concrete, historical and real man, burdened with needs and emotionality, contradictory and complex in his dual human and animal nature, inhabitant of the place of uncertainties. Can the labyrinth be unravelled through calculation, thus raising universality above the specific, the founded above the given, the evident abou r the unclassifiable, the formal above emotions, calculation above impulse, logical chess above consciousness and intuition?

But if the rational subject destroys the person, what remains? And what would real man be without the processes of liberation unleashed by modernity? Only if Theseus recognises himself in the Minotaur as his alter ego and reconstructs himself from his own imagination, not as a completed task, but as an unfinished story that moves forward, can he escape the labyrinth, which is his own construction.

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[16] See, for example, the story of Theseus and the Minotaur in Apollodorus (1st-2nd century AD/1985).

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