

The Stages of Reason: R. Brandom's Hegelianism and the Historical Conception of Rationality

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R. Brandom in an earlier work *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (1994) presented his systematic program based on the normative pragmatics and inferential semantics. In *Tales of Mighty Dead. Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (2002), he shares his interpretations of those philosophers who belong to the tradition of continental philosophy such as Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. In the introduction to the latter work, he describes the five conceptions of rationality — the logical, practical, interpretative, inferential, and historical — in a progressive order in the sense of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

While Brandom interprets Kant's transcendental theory as one of normative pragmatics, he maintains that it carries more force alongside the inferential, social, and historical understanding of rationality presented by Hegel. In the development from Kant to Hegel, rationality becomes understood not only as pragmatic but also as inferential, social, and historical. Here, Brandom understands the Hegelian theses as the following: (1) Rationality has to be understood in inferential relations. (2) In these inferential relations, the rules of the language game, which enable the understanding of concepts, have to be understood as social. (3) These rules are historically formed. This historical conception of rationality does not lead to historicism in the sense of historical determinism, but in this conception, the rules are formed by the interpretation of the former judgments in the analogy of common law. In this understanding, the interpretations themselves are the activities that form new rules, which will be employed as resources for the judgments in future.

Additionally, in this progressive order of rationality, the first three conceptions that belong to the tradition of the analytic philosophy have to develop into the inferential and subsequently into the historical conception, and this historical conception includes the four other conceptions. Further, this development of rationality into the historical conception is to be understood as an inner overcoming of the analytical rationality which leads to a sort of Hegelian account of rationality.