

Richard Burthogge's Theory of Cognition as a Prefiguration of Kantian Idealism¹

Bartosz
Żukowski

University of Łódź

The paper focuses on the theory of cognition developed by Richard Burthogge, the lesser known seventeenth-century English philosopher, and author, among other works, of *Organum Vetus & Novum* (1678) and *An Essay upon Reason and the Nature of Spirits* (1694)². Interesting as they may be, Burthogge's ideas had a minimal impact on the philosophy of his time. Nevertheless, his writings contain a highly original concept of idealistic constructivism, which, when seen from historical perspective, seem to anticipate the crucial points of Kant's idealism³. The main idea of this paper is to reveal the similarities between both theories by providing a detailed analysis of Burthogge's view of the act of cognition, as presented in his *Essay*. By doing this I hope to provide evidence for a bit provocative claim concerning the historical position of Kant's epistemology, namely, that rather than viewing it as a unique and isolated theory, we should consider it the most significant representative of the whole class of early modern constructivist-idealistic doctrines that emerged from the new epistemological framework created by Cartesianism.

General theory of cognition

The initial assumption of Burthogge's epistemology is not an original one. There

¹ This work was supported by the National Science Centre, Poland under grant number 2015/19/D/HS1/01013.

² Burthogge, R.: *Organum Vetus & Novum. Or a Discourse of Reason and Truth. Wherein The Natural Logick common to Mankinde is briefly and plainly described*. London: Printed for Sam. Crouch, at the Princes Arms a Corner-shop of Popeshead ally in Cornhil 1678; idem: *An Essay upon Reason, and the Nature of Spirits*. London: Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry 1694; hereafter referred to as *Organum* and *Essay*, respectively.

³ This point has already been noticed by, to mention only a few, Landes, M. W.: Richard Burthogge, His Life and His Place in the History of Philosophy. *The Monist*, 30 (2), 1920, pp. 253-266; Ayers, M. R.: Richard Burthogge and the Origins of Modern Conceptualism. In: Eds. T. Sorell, G. A. J. Rogers: *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005, pp. 193-194; Sgarbi, M.: L'epistemologia di Richard Burthogge. *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 3, 2012, pp. 493-521; Šoć, A.: *Locke's Anticipation of Idealism*, *Theoria*, 55 (3), 2012, pp. 99-112. For lack of space, I do not discuss these approaches here.

are three faculties or powers (he uses both terms interchangeably) by which man 'makes acquaintance with external objects', that is, 'his external *sense, imagination* [...] and *reason* or understanding' (*Essay*, p. 3). The first innovative aspect of his approach consists in the remarkable idea that all these faculties are similar, isomorphic, or even uniform in structure and function (*Essay*, p. 3-4). Consequently, each act of knowledge or cognition, regardless of whether it is intellectual or sensuous, includes three inextricable aspects: apprehensive, cogitative and conceptive (*Essay*, p. 3-4)⁴.

Of these three concepts, the first one, i.e. 'apprehension', or 'conscious perception', as Burthogge defines it (*Essay*, p. 4), is probably the least original, as a term was quite commonly used by seventeenth-century logicians and philosophers to describe a pure, that is, judgment-free, grasp of an object by intellect⁵. Accordingly, Burthogge's primary characteristic of 'apprehension' is that of 'act' (*Essay*, p. 22-25). Moreover, it is precisely the apprehension that forms the basis of the acts of cognition being acts. In other words, it is only owing to the act of apprehension that cognition gains the act-structure. At the same time, since knowledge can be characterised as 'apprehension' just because and only when it is considered 'in reference to the object which is known', apprehension is also, by definition, an object-directed act, with the external, outer thing considered a primary and proper object linked to it by this definition (*Essay*, p. 4). Since every cognition contains in its structure an object-directed operation of apprehending, it can, and should, be viewed as an intentional act in a broad phenomenological meaning of the term⁶. An observation which helps us to understand properly the meaning of the term 'perception' as used in Burthogge's definition of apprehension mentioned above. It must be interpreted in terms of activity, not of inert receptivity – as a dynamic act of the mind, and not as a passive reception. It consists in perceiving akin to 'seeing', as suggested by the parallel drawn explicitly by Burthogge himself (*Essay*, p. 23). In brief, it resembles Descartes' intellectual '*perceptio*' rather than Locke's 'perception'⁷.

⁴ Hereafter the terms 'knowledge' and 'cognition' are used synonymously and interchangeably.

⁵ The concept of apprehension as a first operation of the mind was firmly grounded as far back as the scholastic idea of *apprehensio simplex*, and rooted even further in the past, in Aristotle's philosophy, see Spruit, L.: *Species Intelligibilis. From Perception to Knowledge*. Vol. 1. Leiden - New York - Köln: E. J. Brill 1994, pp. 43-45; Wright, J. P.: The Understanding. In: *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. J. A. Harris. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 152-156.

⁶ Brentano, F.: *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Transl. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell and L. McAlister. New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 68 passim.; Husserl, E.: *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II. Transl. J. N. Findlay. London - New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 77-127.

⁷ Descartes, R.: *Principles of Philosophy*. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 1. Transl. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. London - New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, P. I, 32-35, pp. 204-205; Locke, J.: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, B. II, Ch. I, pp. 104-118, esp. §25, §1-7; B. II, Ch. II, §2, pp. 119-12.

Similar though it may be to the traditional view of apprehension as an act of grasping the object, there is at least one feature that makes Burthogge's position unique, especially when compared with those of the most prominent philosophers of his time. It consists in his deliberate and systematic extension of the considered concept to cover also sensuous and imaginative operations (*Essay*, p. 4). As a result of this step, essentially the same act-structure, object-direction and intentionality were assigned to the intellectual and sense cognition.

Every cognition is not only apprehensive, but also 'cogitative' (*Essay*, p. 3-11). The term 'cogitation' (which as such can be considered an allusion to Descartes' philosophy) is used by Burthogge in two meanings. In the broad sense it is synonymous with the cognition as such (e.g. *Essay*, pp. 58-60, 70-74, 79-80, 84). In the narrow sense, it emphasises the essentially conscious nature of every cognitive act (*Essay*, pp. 4-8).

In order to explain the third and the most important of the above-mentioned notions ('conception'), some attention must first be paid to the empirical aspect of cognition. For, in fact, the activity of the mind, though essential, appears only at the second stage of cognition. The first step always belongs to the external object, as it is emphasized in the initial definition of 'knowledge' or 'cogitation' (broadly taken) as 'conscious affection', that is, 'affection with consciousness of that affection' (*Essay*, p. 4). The term 'affection', in its epistemological meaning, refers to an impact made by the external object on the sense organs (*Essay*, pp. 5, 7, 152), on the faculties (*Essay*, p. 5-6), or simply on the mind (*Essay*, pp. 7-8) or person (*Essay*, pp. 5, 71) – with the latter two (or three) expressions being merely a shortcut for the first one, for the organs are always the first, proper and inescapable recipients of affections (*Essay*, p. 152). Understood in this way, 'affection' involves two semantic aspects. Firstly, as indicated by its very grammatical form (verbal noun), the term connotes an affective action of the object. However, as a cognitive category, the notion of affection makes sense only within the conceptual framework of object-subject interaction. Therefore, secondly, and more importantly from the epistemological point of view, the term describes also a cognitive stimulus provided by the object for the mind and the subjective (mental) effect of this stimulation, that is, the mind's being affected in some way.

This point is to be interpreted cautiously, though, with the whole content of Burthogge's epistemology in mind, for as a result of the second connotation just mentioned, an affection might be erroneously assumed to provide the mind with some cognitive content, ready to be directly incorporated into knowledge. This assumption is even more strongly suggested by the word 'impression', a term used by Burthogge as a synonym of 'affection' (*Essay*, pp. 5-10), which can all too easily be interpreted as some kind of raw material to be cognitively processed or even

merely absorbed into knowledge. In fact, an affection/impression itself is not a constituent of cognition, neither does it provide nor produce any data able to be directly used as such constituents. It is a pure stimulus, the only role of which is to 'excite' (*Essay*, pp. 70, 73) a modification in the mind or, more precisely, to activate the mind (by way of the sense organs) so that it can 'make' (*Essay*, p. 59), 'form' (*Essay*, pp. 52, 56) or 'frame' (*Essay*, pp. 64, 93) certain modification⁸. The modification of the mind (and the knowledge conveyed by it) is, therefore, a reaction, an active response of the mind to the affective stimulation by the object, and not a passive absorbent of affection or any content provided by it (*Organum*, 8).

Here we reach the heart of Burthogge's epistemological revolution. Obviously, there is nothing inventive in defining cognitive acts ontologically in terms of modifications, which is a recognisable Cartesian theme. What is truly original about his approach is the scale of the mind's participation in the creation of modifications. Some degree of the mind's intervention must, of course, be taken into account by any doctrine explaining knowledge in terms of mental modifications. They are the mind's modifications, after all – they belong to the ontological realm of the mind. The consequences of this affiliation can, nonetheless, be minimised by limiting its effects only to the formal aspect of cognition. The Cartesian theory of intellectual knowledge provides a paradigmatic example of such practice in early modern philosophy⁹. According to this approach, the entire mental aspect of knowledge consists in a specific mental form by means of which the object is grasped and made present within the mind. It can be identified as 'an idea' (when regarded as a structural component of knowledge), or as 'a modification' (when considered from an ontological point of view). When viewed in this way, an idea/modification never affects the content of knowledge. Its role in cognition is limited to that of a mental *vehiculum* – it is a transparent instrument for internalisation of the external object into the realm of the mind¹⁰. This is literally so, since idea, so understood, can easily be considered one of the object's ways of being,

⁸ Technically speaking, the passages are about making conceptions. However, 'conception is modification of mind' (*Essay*, pp. 6), when considered from an ontological point of view.

⁹ See esp. Descartes, R.: *Objections and Replies*. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 2. Trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 74-75, 113-14.

¹⁰ Ibid. For this reason, one of the influential schools of interpretation of Descartes's epistemology opts to consider it direct realism, see e.g. O'Neil, B. E.: *Epistemological Direct Realism in Descartes' Philosophy*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974; Nadler, S. M.: *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989; Costa, M. J.: What Cartesian Ideas Are Not. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (4), 1983, pp. 537-549; Cook, M.: Descartes' Alleged Representationalism. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 4 (2), 1987, pp. 179-195. See also Żukowski B.: Realitas formalis/realitas obiectiva. Paradoxs Kartezjańskiego reprezentacjonizmu. *Studia z historii filozofii*, 2 (4), 2013, pp. 127-137.

namely the one in which it appears and exists in the mind. Accordingly, as stated explicitly by Descartes, it is the external object itself that exists in the mind in the form of idea (which, by the way, makes knowledge perfectly adequate)¹¹. At the same time, since the mind's activity in cognition does not go beyond its formal aspects, an act of cognition can be seen as a pure grasp of the object, and thus can be reduced to a mere act of apprehension (with an idea as its proper form), as indeed it is, not only by Descartes, but also in *The Port Royal Logic*¹². Even though different in some crucial respects (reevaluation of sensation, strictly causal account of perception), Locke's epistemology is inspired by the same belief in the transparency of cognition, as is clear from his theory of adequate ideas as kinds of lossless transmitters, so to speak, of the content placed in the stimulus by the primary qualities of the external things¹³. Similarly, the inadequate ideas are so not because of the impact made on them by the mind, but because of the special properties of their external source¹⁴.

What is truly revolutionary about Burthogge's epistemology (or rather, what could have been truly revolutionary, if it had been recognised by his contemporaries) is that he categorically rejects this line of reasoning. The mind's interference in cognition of any kind, intellectual as well as sensuous, is never limited merely to its formal aspects. Quite the contrary, the mind's activity is always holistic, affecting the content of knowledge as much as its form. None of cognitive acts is, therefore, a pure grasp of the object – a mere act of putting the objective content into an existential frame proper to the realm of the mind. In short, no knowledge is pure apprehension (*Essay*, pp. 3-4, 57).

Conception. *Modus concipiendi*

The mind stimulated by the external thing responds by forming a 'conception' (*Essay*, pp. 4-7) – a term being used by Burthogge to describe both the product of this process and the process itself, that is, an 'act of conception' (*Essay*, p. 5). It is precisely this aspect of cognition that Burthogge has in mind when he writes that all sorts of human cognitive acts are not only apprehensive, but also

¹¹ Descartes, R.: *Objections and Replies*, *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

¹² Arnauld, A., Nicole, P.: *Logic or the Art of Thinking*. Transl. J. V. Buroker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 23.

¹³ See e.g. the following passage: "Our Senses [...] do convey into the Mind, several distinct Perceptions of things, according to those various ways, wherein those Objects do affect them [...] which when I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from external Objects convey into the mind what produces there those Perceptions" (Locke, J.: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. *Ibid.*, B. II, Ch. I, §3, p. 105; see also §1-7, pp. 104-107, §24-25, pp. 117-18 and B. II, Ch. II, §2, pp. 119-120).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* B. I, Ch. VIII, pp. 132-143, B. II, Ch. XXXI, pp. 375-384.

'conceptive' (*Essay*, p. 3). It is also at this point that his epistemology begins to most clearly anticipate those of Kant. Since, far from being only an element of the ontological realm of the mental – which is the case in almost all post-Cartesian doctrines – Burthogge's conception is a true creation of the mind. Admittedly, its content is partly determined by the external thing (*Essay*, pp. 5-6, 9-10, 59, 71-73, 152, 253-256), however, not directly, but by stimulating the mind to form the appropriate conception. Such an approach enables Burthogge to notice the problem largely ignored by thinkers viewing the content of cognition as a kind of ready-made datum (external or innate) waiting only to be discovered or thought about; for when a conception is identified as a product of the mind, it seems more likely to be subject to the conditions imposed on it by the structural-functional properties of the mind. It is precisely this observation – stated firmly and turned into a founding principle – that underlies the whole Burthogge's epistemology. Since a conception is formed by the mind, there must be some profound and indelible mark of a 'producer' left on it, and, what is more, it must be the kind of influence that affects not only the ontological form of conception, but also, and more importantly, its content. In brief, all knowledge is inescapably subjective just because of its mind-dependence. This is Burthogge's epistemological creed, the implications of which are systematically drawn and discussed throughout his theory of knowledge.

Such is the rationale behind the idea of *modus concipiendi* (*Essay*, p. 56), a term that in Burthogge's technical language refers to that particular form or manner of conceiving which is specific to human cognitive powers due to their internal structure¹⁵. Every act of conceiving affection (and, through it, the external thing) is performed in a manner and with the means determined by the

¹⁵ He was probably influenced in this respect by the reinterpretation of Aristotelianism offered by Jacopo Zabarella and Paduan school (especially, by their concept of *modi considerandi*), as well as by a special kind of Anti-Aristotelian criticism developed by Arnold Geulincx, whose ideas (in particular, the concept of *modi cogitandi*) not only stand in striking similarity to those of Burthogge, but presumably had also directly inspired them, since it was precisely in Leiden, that Burthogge studied and received his medicine doctorate in 1662 (Nuchelmans, G.: *Judgment and Proposition. From Descartes to Kant*. Amsterdam - Oxford - New York: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1983, pp. 117-119; Ayers, M. R.: Richard Burthogge and the Origins of Modern Conceptualism. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194. For the impact made on British empiricism and Kantianism by Aristotelianism see Sgarbi, M.: *The Aristotelian Tradition and the Rise of British Empiricism*, Dordrecht - Heidelberg - New York - London: Springer, 2013; idem: *Kant and Aristotle: Epistemology, Logic, and Method*, Albany: State University of New York 2016. See also Pozzo, R.: Res considerata and modus considerandi rem: Averroes, Aquinas, Jacopo Zabarella and Cornelius Martini on Reduplication. *Medioevo*, 24, 1998, pp. 151-176. For Geulincx see idem: *Metaphysica ad mentem Peripateticam*. In Ed. J. P. N. Land: *Arnoldi Geulincx Antverpiensis Opera Philosophica*. Vol. 2. The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1892, pp. 199-265 and Aalderink, M. J. H.: *Philosophy, Scientific Knowledge, and Concept Formation in Geulincx and Descartes*. Ridderkerk: Ridderprint Offsetdrukkerij BV, 2009, pp. 317-349.

structural and functional properties of the human mind. Far from being a pure grasp of the given data, the creative (re)activity of the cognitive faculties in response to an external stimulus consists always in interpretative assimilation of affection on their own ontological, that is, structural and functional, terms. In short, every conceiving is active conceptualising, and every conception is conceptualisation. Thus, the external object, being always conceptualised through and in the conception, is presented to the mind not directly, as it is in itself, but under the subjective mode of human conceiving, that is, under

modus concipiendi, a certain particular *manner* of conceiving; a manner of conceiving things that corresponds not to them but only as they are *objects*, not as they are *things*; there being in every conception some thing that is purely *objective*, purely notional; in so much that few, if any, of the ideas which we have of things are properly *pictures*; our conceptions of things no more resembling them in strict propriety, than our words do our conceptions, for which yet they do stand (*Essay*, p. 56).

It is crucial to understand Burthogge's view properly. As we will see below, there are two general modes of conceiving that the human mind has at its disposal, that is, reasoning and sensation. But this is not what Burthogge's has in mind when he writes of *modi concipiendi*. What he means by this is in fact some subset of intellectual and sensuous conceptions of unique origin and special purpose. Thus, although, admittedly, they are conceptions, unlike other conceptions they are not determined in their content by the external thing, but, on the contrary, they are purely mental creations. At the same time, they are inherently involved in the formation of all other conceptions (we can call them the empirical ones) – serving as a primary and inescapable instrument for any (empirical) conceptualisation, which is the principal reason for describing them as 'manners' or *modi* (*Essay*, p. 56). Thus, much like Kant's pure concepts, *modi concipiendi* have two aspects: a nominal one and a functional or instrumental one¹⁶. They are constituents of each empirically produced conception, thereby providing it with some 'purely notional' (*Essay*, p. 56) content. At the same time, though purely mental in nature, they are not ready-made, innate concepts, but rather (and again in remarkable agreement with the later Kant's view) virtual ones that exist only through and within the particular acts of conceiving¹⁷.

Since every cognition, apart from being an act of apprehension, is also es-

¹⁶ Kant, I.: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transl. W. S. Pluhar. Indianapolis - Cambridge: Hackett 1996, A 65-130, B 90-169, pp. 118-203.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

entially the active conceiving¹⁸, which, in turn, involves unavoidably *modus concipiendi*, no knowledge or cognitive content is simply given, but is always constructed. Furthermore, the *modus concipiendi* always affects the entire structure of knowledge. Consequently, not only the form, but also the content of cognition is determined or, more precisely, codetermined by the mind. Thus, ultimately, knowledge is the result of interaction between subject and object, in which both of them play their part – which is yet another recognisably Kantian motif:

Every cogitative faculty, though it is not the sole cause of its own immediate (apparent) object, yet has a share in making it (*Essay*, p. 59).

To summarise, the human mind is always active and creative in cognition, which, accordingly, is an active and creative operation, and it is so – something worth emphasizing – not accidentally but essentially, that is, by

the very nature of cogitation in general, (as it comprehends sensation as well as intellection,) since that the understanding doth *pinn* its notions upon objects, arises not from its being *such* a particular kind of cogitative faculty, but from its being cogitative *at large* (*Essay*, p. 58).

Understood in this way, the conceptualisation is a spontaneous process – an automatic reaction of the mind. There is, therefore, no sign of voluntariness, let alone arbitrariness, in its operating mode. As an immanent instrument of the cognitive faculties (*Essay*, p. 3-4), it is nothing but an organic way of functioning of the mind – a manifestation of its internal mechanics or ‘natural logic’ (*Organum*, title, 59), which is best demonstrated by its unconscious character. Admittedly, the created conceptions are usually (and always in the case of cognitive acts, *Essay*, pp. 4-6) brought into consciousness, but only subsequently to the very process of their formation, which is prior to any possible awareness:

for as we are conscious that we have a perceivance of objects under certain images, and notions, so we are *not* conscious of any action by which our faculties should make those images or notions (*Essay*, p. 71).

The reason for this is a structural one, since, according to Burthogge's view, it is a diversity of conceptions that provides the very basis for the arising of consciousness (*Essay*, p. 4-6).

The content formed in the course of conceiving affection (that is, image or notion, made by sense or intellect, respectively), is considered by Burthogge to be

¹⁸ “Conception and cogitation, really are but one act, and consequently, all conceptive are cogitative powers, and cogitative powers conceptive” (*Essay*, p. 4).

an ‘immediate object’ of this act: ‘conception properly speaking, is of the image, or idea’ (*Essay*, p. 4). Thus, ‘conception’ in a nominal sense of the term is both a product and a direct object of ‘conception’ considered in its participial sense – a twofoldness closely resembling that ascribed by modern phenomenology to the so-called ‘purely intentional acts’, whose characteristic feature is that they are both cognitive and creative operations¹⁹. Since conceiving, so understood, is inherent in every act of cognition, the latter also refers to the conceptions as to its ‘immediate objects’ (*Essay*, pp. 60, 70, 73). Moreover, as a result of the object-direction or intentionality lent to the knowledge by apprehension, each conception is also automatically referred to the external object or, what is the same thing, an external, objective reference is assigned to each cognitive content (*Essay*, pp. 4, 66-75). Hence, apart from all other aspects discussed, every cognition is always also the conceptualisation of the external object ‘by means of [...] idea, or image’ (*Essay*, pp. 4, 58-60, 68). In short, for Burthogge, just like for Kant, cognition is nothing else but the conceiving of the external things under the subjective conditions of the human mind.

The difference between the two lies in the different views they have of the cognitive faculties, since, as we have seen above, Burthogge, unlike Kant, is a strong proponent of the structural and functional isomorphism of sense and reason. Ultimately, however, their respective views turn out to be only two different ways leading to the basically similar conclusions. Let us see how it happens.

Conception, for Burthogge, is a universal *modus operandi* of human cognition – a natural way of functioning of each cognitive faculty:

It is as proper to say, that the sense and imagination do conceive, as that the reason or understanding doth; the former does as much conceive images and sentiments, as the latter does ideas and notions (*Essay*, p. 4).

This functional unification represents a crucial point of Burthogge’s unitary theory of cognition. That is not to say, however, that all three faculties are to be considered strictly identical. They are indeed identical in their essential structure, that is, they are isomorphic realisations of the same structural scheme. Nevertheless, they represent different variants of this structure. Thus, the category of ‘conception’ serves as a basis for both unification and differentiation between the various types of cognitive powers:

Sense, (by which I mean the power of seeing, of hearing, of tasting, of smelling, and of feeling,) is that by which we make acquaintance with external objects, and have knowledge of them by means of images and

¹⁹ Ingarden, R.: *Spór o istnienie świata*. Warszawa: PWN, 1987, Vol. I, pp. 87-91, Vol. II, pp. 162-211.

apparitions, or (which is a better expression, as being more general and comprehensive,) by *sentiments* excited in the external organs, through impressions made upon them from objects (*Essay*, pp. 9-10).

Reason or understanding, is a faculty by which we know external objects, as well as our own acts, without framing images of them; only by *ideas* or notions (*Essay*, p. 10).

As for imagination, it is essentially

internal sense, or an (after)representation of the images or sentiments (that have been) excited before in the sense (*Essay*, p. 10).

Therefore, sensation and imagination are basically (that is, apart from any 'accessory' operations) one and the same cognitive power, namely the power of conceiving by means of 'sensible representations' or 'images' (*Essay*, p. 10). Thus, properly (and etymologically) speaking, every 'sensation' is 'imagination, for every sense imagines', that is, conceptualises by forming images (*ibid.*). The only difference between them is that while the sense imagines in response to being affected externally, the imagination is (directly) stimulated from within the mind. However, as a power of 'recollection' relying on the images previously formed by sense, it is also subject to the external factors, albeit indirectly (*ibid.*).

Thus, when defined as including the respective imaginative acts²⁰, all human cognitive powers 'may be reduced to *two*, to *sense* and *reason*', which, in turn, are nothing more than two different forms of conceiving – in imaginative or notional way, respectively (*ibid.*)²¹. In other words, and taking into account the ultimate object of reference of any knowledge (as lent by apprehension), the images and notions (ideas) are simply two formally different manners of presenting the external object to the mind.

Being directly dependent on the structural-functional properties of the cognitive faculties, *modus concipiendi* also bifurcates correspondingly into two formal modes²². Thus, 'light and colour' and 'sound' serve as model examples of a specifically sensuous manner of conceiving (*Essay*, p. 57). It is not difficult to discern the general idea underlying this approach – the sensuous mode of conceiving (or rather the whole class of modes corresponding to the particular senses) is

²⁰ The imagination, understood as above, has also its intellectual counterpart (*Essay*, pp. 10-11).

²¹ Consequently, the term 'image' denotes the formal category of representations and as such does not imply any similarity to the object imagined, as opposed, for example, to the term 'picture', see e.g. (*Essay*, 56, 60).

²² The following interpretation significantly differs from that of M. W. Landes: Richard Burthogge, *His Life and His Place in the History of Philosophy*, *Ibid.*, pp. 262-265.

to be identified with one particular class of sensible qualities, namely the ones classified as secondary by early modern philosophy²³. More precisely, *modus concipiendi* of the sense defines the specific frame conditions for (and consequently a possible spectrum of) the perceivable qualities, whereas the external affection determines which particular quality from a given range actually appears in the mind. Thus, it is due to the visual mode of conceiving that ‘the eye has no perception of things but under the appearance of light, and colours’ (*Essay*, p. 57), while seeing this or that particular colour (yellow, green etc.) is dependent on the external stimulus (*Essay*, pp. 69, 71-72). An immediate consequence of this account for the sensible qualities is that all of them must be secondary and inadequate. At this point, it is worth adding that the explicit view that the sensible qualities are inadequate for subjective, and not objective, reasons, is one of the key novelties of Burthogge’s epistemology. His explanation of the inadequacy of sensible qualities in terms of structural properties of the cognitive faculties can be seen as the first non-mechanistic, and more generally, non-objectivistic interpretation of this issue, and consequently as a turning point in the early modern process of gradual subjectivisation of sense perception. This issue, however, exceeds the scope of this article and will be discussed in another paper.

The extension of the above account of the secondary qualities to cover intellectual cognition is another notable innovation. The foundation for this step was laid by the structural-functional unification of sense and reason, implied in the notion of ‘conceptive cogitative faculties’ (*Essay*, pp. 3-4). As a result of this assumption, Burthogge’s theory of the intellectual *modus concipiendi* postulates the existence of some mind-dependent, subjective (‘purely notional’, *Essay*, p. 56), yet universal (because founded on the very nature of the mind) constituents of any intellectual cognition. In consequence, his account strikingly anticipates the Kantian idea of categories²⁴:

the *understanding* apprehends not things [...] but under *certain notions* that neither have that being in objects, or that being of objects, that they seem to have; but are, in all respects, the very same to the mind or understanding, that colours are to the eye, and sound to the ear. To be more particular, the understanding conceives not anything but under the notion of an *entity*, and this either a *substance* or an *accident*; under that of a *whole*, or of a *part*; or of a *cause*, or of an *effect*, or the like; and yet all these and the like, are only *entities of reason* conceived within the mind, that have no more of any real true existence without it, than colours have without the

²³ Or as ‘inadequate ideas’, if we follow Locke’s terminology, which reserves, though not consistently, the term ‘quality’ for the properties of the external things. See Locke, J.: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ibid., B. I, Ch. VIII, pp. 132-143, B. II, Ch. XXXI, pp. 375-384.

²⁴ Kant, I.: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ibid., A 65-130, B 90-169, pp. 118-203.

eye, or sounds without the ear (*Essay*, pp. 57-58).

At this point an additional remark must be made. The sense and the reason being defined as two different modes of conceptualisation, one might expect them to be independent, parallel sources of knowledge. In this case, however, considerable doubt would be cast on the unity of the world to be known by different faculties. In other words, a legitimate question could be raised about whether it is one and the same external thing that is being known by both sense and reason (conceiving it independently and in different ways), or, perhaps, as in Platonic epistemology, each faculty has its own domain of reference – the sensible one and the intelligible one respectively. In fact, the latter solution is not an option in Burthogge philosophy, since he clearly speaks against treating the two types of cognition as parallel and unrelated operations:

the understanding converses not with things ordinarily but by the intervention of the sense (*Essay*, p. 60; cf. *Organum*, 24, 74).

It is, therefore, only the sense that receives stimuli directly from the external things. The intellectual conceptualisation, by contrast, is a second-order operation – the conception of the conception, for all intellectual sentiments 'are framed only by [...] occasion, and only wrought out of' the 'sentiments of sense' (*Essay*, p. 60). In other words, Burthogge's reason, much as that of Kant, works only with the material obtained from and processed by the senses. Ultimately, therefore, and again like in Kant, Burthoggean cognition turns out to be sequentially, organised²⁵.

Idealism

It is hardly surprising, given what has been said above about Burthogge's philosophy, that the overall conclusions drawn from his principles lean towards epistemological idealism. It is a specific version of idealism, though; for, in contrast to, for example, Berkeley or Collier, and again in agreement with Kant's position, Burthogge has no intention of denying the existence of the external reality, as clearly evidenced by his multiple references to 'external' things or objects (e.g. *Essay*, p. 3, 9-10, 73)²⁶. Instead, his form of idealism is based on two claims. First, the

²⁵ Kant, I.: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ibid., A 19/B 33, pp. 71-72, A 235-260/B 294-315, pp. 303-322 passim.

²⁶ Ibid., B 274-294, pp. 288-302; idem: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Transl. G. Hatfield. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 44-45. On the two kinds of idealism see Guyer, P., Horstmann R-P.: Idealism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2015. Retrieved January 30, 2019, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/idealism/>.

identification of some purely mental constituents of each cognitive act enables him to reject the purely materialist and mechanistic explanation of sense perception in favour of the extensive mentalisation of cognition:

sense and imagination, as well as the understanding and reason, are mental and spiritual, not merely mechanick and material powers (*Essay*, p. 8-9; see also p. 1, 3).

Accordingly, the contents or the immediate objects of cognitive acts must also be considered mental entities or, to put it in Burthogge's own terms, *entia cogitationis* (*Essay*, p. 60).

The second and more important claim concerns the inadequacy of knowledge. Since all cognitive entities are in essential part codetermined by the faculties' *modus concipiendi*, none of them can be a 'picture', 'resemblance' or 'representation' of the external thing:

It is certain that things to us men are nothing but as they do stand in our *analogy* that is, in plain terms, they are nothing to us but as they are known by us; and as certain, that they stand not in our analogy, nor are known by us, but as they are in our faculties, in our senses, imagination, or mind; and they are not in our faculties, either in their own *realities* {as they be without them}, or by way of a true *resemblance* and {proper} *representation*, but only in respect of certain *appearances* or sentiments {*phaenomena*}, which, by the various impressions that they make upon us, they do either occasion only, or cause, or (which is most probable) concur unto in causing with our Faculties (*Essay*, p. 59; the passages in brace brackets are from *Organum*, sect. 9).

Thus, ultimately, Burthogge anticipates Kant's claim that the external reality is unknowable in itself, being accessible to the human mind only under the 'masquerade' (*Essay*, p. 64) of phenomena that the mind itself co-produces²⁷:

we apprehend not any [thing] at all, just as they are, in their own realities, but only under the top-knots and dresses of notions, which our minds do put on them (*Essay*, p. 64).

In sum, the *immediate objects* of cogitation, as it is exercised by men, are *entia cogitationis*, all *phaenomena*; appearances that do no more exist without our faculties in the things themselves, than the images that are seen in water, or behind a glass, do really exist in those places where they seem to be (*Essay*, pp. 59-60; see also *Organum*, 9-12).

²⁷ Kant, I.: *Critique of Pure Reason*. Ibid., A 235-260/B 294-315, pp. 303-322.

Since the self-knowledge is no exception to the structural-functional principles imposed on cognition, the mind can also be known only under the subjective conditions of human conceiving (*Essay*, p. 106). It can be, therefore, self-interpreted at most indirectly – as it manifests itself by its faculties, powers or acts (*Essay*, pp. 2-3). But is just as unknowable in itself as the external things are. Thus, the situation of Burthogge's subject is very similar to that of Kant – in between the two noumenal realities, one external and the other internal.

All in all, it turns out that almost a century before Kant, Burthogge's idealistic constructivism anticipated basically the same conclusions as those of transcendental idealism²⁸. The further examination of this coincidence of ideas can not only deepen our understanding of early modern British philosophy, but may also throw new light on the internal dynamics and the inner logic of the development of the whole post-Cartesian epistemological thought.

Bibliography

- Aalderink, M. J. H. (2009). *Philosophy, Scientific Knowledge, and Concept Formation in Geulincx and Descartes*. Ridderkerk: Ridderprint Offsetdrukkerij BV.
- Arnauld, A. & Nicole, P. (1996). *Logic or the Art of Thinking*. Transl. J. V. Buroker. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ayers, M. R. (2005). Richard Burthogge and the Origins of Modern Conceptualism. In T. Sorell & G. A. J. Rogers (Eds.): *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 193-194.
- Brentano, F. (1995). *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*. Transl. A. C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell and L. McAlister. New York: Routledge.
- Cook, M. (1987). Descartes' Alleged Representationalism. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 4 (2), 179-195.
- Costa, M. J. (1983). What Cartesian Ideas Are Not. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (4), 537-549.
- Descartes, R. (1984). *Objections and Replies*. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 2. Trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Descartes, R. (1985). *Principles of Philosophy*. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Vol. 1. Transl. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch. London –

²⁸ That is not to say that Burthogge is always consistent in his idealistic views. In fact, there is a deep inconsistency or duality running throughout all his work. While the epistemological theory presented in the first chapters of the *Essay* anticipates Kantian idealism, the remaining part of his book (Ch. V and onward) represents frequently a dogmatic point of view.

- New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Burthogge, R. (1694). *An Essay upon Reason, and the Nature of Spirits*. London: Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry.
- Burthogge, R. (1678). *Organum Vetus & Novum. Or a Discourse of Reason and Truth. Wherein The Natural Logick common to Mankind is briefly and plainly described*. London: Printed for Sam. Crouch, at the Princes Arms a Corner-shop of Popeshead ally in Cornhil.
- Geulincx, A. (1892). *Metaphysica ad mentem Peripateticam*. In J. P. N. Land (Ed.), *Arnoldi Geulincx Antverpiensis Opera Philosophica*. Vol. 2. The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 199-265.
- Guyer, P. & Horstmann R-P. (2015). Idealism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved January 30, 2019, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/idealism/>.
- Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations*. Vol. II. Transl. J. N. Findlay. London – New York: Routledge.
- Ingarden, R. (1987). *Spór o istnienie świata*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Kant, I. (1996). *Critique of Pure Reason*. Transl. W. S. Pluhar. Indianapolis – Cambridge: Hackett.
- Kant, I. (2004). *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Transl. G. Hatfield. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Landes, M. W. (1920). Richard Burthogge, His Life and His Place in the History of Philosophy. *The Monist*, 30 (2), 253-266.
- Locke, J. (1975). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nadler, S. M. (1989). *Arnauld and the Cartesian Philosophy of Ideas*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Nuchelmans, G. (1983). *Judgment and Proposition. From Descartes to Kant*. Amsterdam – Oxford – New York: North-Holland Publishing Company.
- O’Neil, B. E. (1974). *Epistemological Direct Realism in Descartes’ Philosophy*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Pozzo, R. (1998). Res considerata and modus considerandi rem: Averroes, Aquinas, Jacopo Zabarella and Cornelius Martini on Reduplication. *Medioevo* 24, 151-76.
- Šoć, A. (2012). *Locke’s Anticipation of Idealism, Theoria*, 55 (3), 99-112.
- Sgarbi, M. (2016). *Kant and Aristotle: Epistemology, Logic, and Method*, Albany: State University of New York.
- Sgarbi, M. (2012). L’epistemologia di Richard Burthogge. *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 3, 493-521.
- Sgarbi, M. (2013). *The Aristotelian Tradition and the Rise of British Empiricism*,

- Dordrecht – Heidelberg – New York – London: Springer.
- Spruit, L. (1994). *Species Intelligibilis. From Perception to Knowledge*. Vol. 1. Leiden – New York – Köln: E. J. Brill, 43-45.
- Wright, J. P. (2013). The Understanding. In J. A. Harris (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 152-156.
- Žukowski, B. (2013). Realitas formalis/realitas obiectiva. Paradoks Kartezjańskiego reprezentacjonizmu. *Studia z historii filozofii*, 2 (4), 127-137.

Abstract

Richard Burthogge's Theory of Cognition as a Prefiguration of Kantian Idealism

The paper focuses on the theory of cognition developed by Richard Burthogge, the lesser known seventeenth-century English philosopher, and author, among other works, of *Organum Vetus & Novum* (1678) and *An Essay upon Reason and the Nature of Spirits* (1694). Although his ideas had a minimal impact on the philosophy of his time, and have hitherto not been the subject of a detailed study, Burthogge's writings contain a highly original concept of idealistic constructivism, anticipating Kant's idealism. Therefore, a closer examination of his philosophy can not only deepen our understanding of early modern British thought, but may also shed new light on the internal dynamics of the development of the whole post-Cartesian epistemology.

Keywords: Richard Burthogge, Immanuel Kant, idealism, cognition, *modus concipiendi*

Abstrakt

Teória poznania Richarda Burthogga ako predzvesť kantovského idealizmu

Príspevok sa zameriava na teóriu poznania rozvinutú Richardom Burthoggom, menej známym anglickým filozofom zo sedemnásteho storočia a autorom diel ako *Organum Vetus & Novum* (1678) a *Esej o rozume a povahe duše* (1694). Hoci jeho myšlienky mali minimálny vplyv na filozofiu svojej doby a doteraz neboli predmetom podrobnej štúdie, Burthoggeove spisy obsahujú vysoko originálny koncept idealistického konštruktivismu, ktorý predvída Kantov idealizmus. Preto bližšie skúmanie jeho filozofie môže nielen prehĺbiť naše chápanie raného

Bartosz Żukowski

moderného britského myslenia, ale môže tiež vrhnúť nové svetlo na vnútornú dynamiku vývoja celej post-karteziánskej epistemológie.

Kľúčové slová: Richard Burthogge, Immanuel Kant, idealizmus, poznanie, *modus concipiendi*

dr. Bartosz Żukowski

Department of the History of Philosophy

University of Łódź

Łódź, Poland

bartosz.zukowski@uni.lodz.pl