

## **“Pegasus’ Shoulders”: Tetens’ *Phantasie* and *Dichtkraft*. On the Way of Kant’s Anthropology**

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Zu seiner Vollendung und Reife ist dieser Begriff der  
Dichtkraft bei dem bedeutendsten Psychologen der Zeit, bei  
Tetens, gelangt, in dessen System er eine zentrale und beherrschende  
Stellung gewinnt.  
(Cassirer, II, 1922, 567)

Although Kant’s stature may seem more imposing, it is only because  
of his greater fame and influence deriving from the other subjects he treated.  
For on the nature of imagination, Kant stands largely on the shoulders of Tetens.  
(Engell 1981, 118)

### **Abstract**

In the last decades, scholars have aptly pointed out the limits of J.N. Tetens’ contribution to the rise of Kant’s critical theory of knowledge. Less attention has been paid to the possibility of recognizing a further, possibly more consistent, contribution by Tetens to Kant’s thought, namely, to the development of Kant’s anthropology. The present paper aims to test some possible research lines in this direction. After an overview on the observational method shared by Tetens’ gnoseological framework and Kant’s anthropological approach, we will more specifically dwell on some topics that seem to allow a continuity-claim between Tetens’ psychological analysis of the human cognitive faculties and Kant’s anthropological project. The main issues at stake in this investigation are the faculty of empirical productive imagination (*Dichtkraft/Dichtungsvermögen*), the figure of the genius, and the relationship between language and *Denkungsart*.

### **Keywords**

*Faculty of Representation, Productive Imagination, Anthropology, Genius, Language*

### **1. Methodological Premise**

The present essay originates as an answer to the proposal of the journal *Con-Textos Kantianos* of setting a discussion concerning one of Kant’s often undermined sources from

the so-called German Enlightenment. The period at stake approximately runs from Christian Wolff's death (1754) until the publication of the first edition of Kant's KrV (1781), a time frame whose main figures have also often been labeled as *Populärphilosophen*.<sup>1</sup> I considered taking advantage of this opportunity in order to raise some issues, which have long attracted my interest concerning Johann Nicolaus Tetens' work, and more precisely the terms of its influence on Kant's thought.

In what follows I will confine myself to a "collection" of impressions that seem to revolve coherently around a constant focus, namely, the presence of some relevant elements of Tetens' psychological description of the human knowledge in Kant's anthropological framework, rather than in his transcendental account of this process.<sup>2</sup>

As it is well known, one of the main impulses for Kant to begin to lecture on anthropology in the early 1770es is represented by the publication of E. Platner's *Anthropologie für Aerzte und Weltweise* (1772). Kant's dissatisfaction with Platner's "physiological" approach to the science of the human being has probably accelerated the process of elaboration of anthropology as a discipline that emerges from a reconsideration of the traditional empirical psychology, a reconsideration oriented by the establishment of an observational method. This represents a first assonance with the general framework of Tetens' *Versuche*, since Tetens too, although recognizing some merit in another physiology scholar like Bonnet, rejects the basically reductionist results of this theory<sup>3</sup> on the basis of a fundamental methodological consideration: "Hr. Bonnet nahm den Weg der Hypothese [...] Ich habe den Weg der Beobachtung gewählt".<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the first part of this essay will be devoted to the observational characterization of Tetens' psychological

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<sup>1</sup> In the essay of 1775 *Über die allgemeine spekulativische Philosophie* (hereafter AsP), Tetens argues that, although popular philosophy is useful to free the human understanding from prejudices, it cannot replace speculative philosophy (see: AsP, 5-15). This sense of the *Popularphilosophie* will also be kept by Tetens' pupil J.J. Engel, who will be one of the main representatives of this current. On these topics, see Böhr (2005, pp. 209-211).

<sup>2</sup> The limits of Tetens' influence on Kant's transcendental philosophy have been widely highlighted, among others, by de Vleeschauwer (1934, I, pp. 284-329; 1939, pp. 93-100), de Gelder (1975), Röd (1984, p. 281), Baumgarten (1992, e.g. pp. 142-143), Motta (2014, pp. 177-179). Kant himself is clear on this point, see Refl 4901 (1776-1778), AA 18: 23: "Tetens untersucht die Begriffe der reinen Vernunft bloß subjectiv (Menschliche Natur), ich objectiv. Jene analysis ist empirisch, diese transscendental".

<sup>3</sup> See: Bonnet, *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* (1760), *Considerations sur les corps organisés* (1762), *Contemplation de la nature* (1764).

<sup>4</sup> J.N. Tetens, *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung* [hereafter PV], 1 [original page number: 28-29], p. 29.

approach to the *Erkenntnislehre*, as well as to its affinity with Kant’s anthropological method.

One of the elements that have been mostly compared to the Kantian perspective are the different forms of the representative faculty [*Vorstellungskraft*] analyzed by Tetens, in particular, in his first *Versuch*. As mentioned, however, rather than denouncing once more the limits of Tetens’ proposal with respect to Kant’s transcendental project, my aim here is to pore over a specific meaning of this faculty, namely, the *Dichtkraft*. The analysis of this particular sense of the representative faculty—which will be carried on in the second part of this essay—, allows finding a fertile ground for comparing Tetens and Kant in the framework of Kant’s anthropology.

In order to do this, the third section of the paper will take into account the way in which the two authors deal with the figure of the genius [*Genie*], which they significantly characterize through the particular productive power of the *Dichtkraft*. This will lead us to outline some *en passant* considerations about the way Tetens’ views on language and literary expression falls into Kant’s anthropological conception of these same topics.

In the conclusion, summing up the results of this brief enquiry, I will try to provide some more evidences of Tetens’ presence in Kant’s anthropological project by emphasizing some explicit content convergences between Kant’s anthropology and some key passages of Tetens’ gnoseology.

It is here worth remarking that my approach to Tetens is also made possible thanks to a broader consideration of his philosophical works, one which looks beyond the well-known *Philosophische Versuche* and refers to both Tetens’ earlier and later production,<sup>5</sup> in order to draw a more comprehensive picture of his envisaged *Metaphysics*.

Given the relevance of the lexicon in the topics, it is worth also specifying that Tetens’ use of technical terms is often not strictly controlled. Since a complete and official English translation of Tetens’ works is still missing, I will quote his works in the original German version. Therefore, in order to make the linguistic assonances and dissonances more evident and effective, I will quote also Kant’s works in the original German, although English translations are available.

## 2. The Observational Method

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<sup>5</sup> In this sense, the interest on Tetens’ thought has been renewed thank to some recent editions of his texts: see Roth-Stiening (2014), Sellhoff (2015), Krouglov-Delfosse (2017).

## 2.1 *The Role of Observation in Tetens*

As far as I know, no scholar has listed Tetens among the sources of Kant's anthropology as explicitly as Foucault did in his introduction to Kant's *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*. Here he writes:

Working out how Kant's book [the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*] fits into the chronology and the network of influence amongst these anthropological texts is by no means straightforward. For two reasons: the first is that Kantian thought already had a hold over the science and, in particular, over the psychology and medicine of the time; the other is the delay in publishing the *Anthropology*, a delay which enabled the dissemination of his students' notes and textbooks—such as those that Starke would use some forty years later [...] On the other hand, the fact that certain texts were published earlier authorizes us to presume that Kant was aware of them and made use of them in his *Anthropology*. At the top of this list we should probably put Tetens' *Versuche über die menschliche Natur* (1777), Platner's *Anthropology* (1772), and of course Baumgarten's *Psychologia Empirica* (1749).<sup>6</sup>

These considerations are particularly keen if one thinks that, at the moment when Foucault wrote them, at the end of the 1950s, he did not have at his disposal the vast material represented by Kant's lectures on anthropology, which will be first published by the *Akademie Ausgabe* in 1997 (vol. XXV). These lectures confirm indeed the role played by Tetens in the elaboration of some central issues of Kant's anthropology. Foucault's remarks curiously seem to rely upon a common methodological thread between Tetens' speculative perspective and Kant's anthropological approach, which already emerges two years before Tetens' best known philosophical work, namely, the *Philosophische Versuche* (1777). By explicit admission of his author, the text *Über die allgemeine spekulativische Philosophie* (1775) should indeed represent the first *Essay* [*Versuch*]:

in einer Sammlung von mehrern zu seyn, die zu der beobachtenden Philosophie gehören, und sich mit einigen der erheblichsten Grundzüge der Menschennatur, mit dem Princip des Empfindens und des Denkens, mit der Selbstthätigkeit und Freyheit, mit der Seelennatur der Menschen und ihrer Perfectibilitaet und Entwicklung, beschäftigen.<sup>7</sup>

Tetens clearly refers here to the *Versuche*, which will see the light two years later, as the developed and accomplished expression of the “observational philosophy” only announced in the text of 1775. In these same pages, Tetens provides a valuable indication about the object of this observation, which is identified by him with those representations, through which the understanding represents itself:

Die Ideenreihen erscheinen uns als eine Scene in uns, nicht wie eine Reihe von Dingen ausser uns. Wir suchen ihr Entstehen in uns, ihren inneren Gehalt und Umfang zu erkennen. Dies letztere ist eine Beobachtung der Vorstellungen, und gehöret zu der Physic des Verstandes. Jenes gehöret zu der

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault (2007, pp. 109-110).

<sup>7</sup> J.N. Tetens, AsP, p. 5.

Philosophie von den Objecten. Dieser Unterschied findet auch alsdann noch statt, wenn der Verstand selbst das Object seiner eignen Vorstellungen ist.<sup>8</sup>

The assonances between this programmatic declaration and its later realization are very clear, and in this sense, it is useful to analyze the *Preface* to the *Versuche*, in which the references to the observational method are not only resumed, but also deepened. At the very beginning of this *Preface*, Tetens claims that the method he is adopting is observational [*beobachtend*], the method “die Locke bey dem Verstande, und unsere Psychologen in der Erfahrungs-Seelenlehre befolgt haben”.<sup>9</sup> As Tetens points out at the beginning of the eleventh *Versuch* (*Über die Grundkraft der menschlichen Seele und den Charakter der Menschheit*), the nature of the soul is not illustrated by hypotheses (the same hypotheses he rejected by considering Bonnet’s method), but rather by observations. This process allows the definition of the soul as:

ein Wesen, welches mittelst gewisser Werkzeuge in dem Körper von andern Dingen verändert wird, fühlet, dann selbstthätig etwas in sich und außer sich hervorbringt, und von dem, was sie leidet und thut, Spuren in sich aufbehält, die sie hervorziehet, und bearbeitet.<sup>10</sup>

Based on this premise, Tetens poses a crucial question, which directs the entire research in the *Versuche*, and which is formulated here with the utmost clarity:

Was ist also nun die Grundkraft dieses Wesens, oder das ursprüngliche Vermögen, dessen Wirkungen innerlich immer dieselbigen einartigen Äußerungen sind, die nur nach der Verschiedenheit der äußern Umstände und der Objekte, auf die es sich anwendet, in verschiedenen Richtungen erfolgen, und dadurch als unterschiedene Wirkungen erscheinen?<sup>11</sup>

To answer this question, which is brought to our attention by an observational process, we can only resort once again to this same process, as indicated by Tetens in the *Preface*. Such a process is borrowed from the natural sciences, and it is the only one able to show us the acts of the soul as they really are [*wie sie wirklich sind*].<sup>12</sup> Recalling the reference to Locke mentioned above, this first description of the observational method cannot but suggest a certain influence of the “anatomical” method proposed by Lambert both in the *Neues Organon* and in the *Architectonic*.<sup>13</sup> Such a reference testifies to an undoubted

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<sup>8</sup> J.N. Tetens, AsP, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, Vorrede [III-IV], p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 11 [730], p. 383.

<sup>11</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 11 [731], p. 384.

<sup>12</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV Vorrede [IV], p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> J.H. Lambert, *Neues Organon*, in *Philosophische Schriften* I, Vorrede, p. 5; *Architectonic*, in *Philosophische Schriften* III, §7.

orientation of the German thought of these years to integrate an observation-based approach in the rationalistic framework of the school metaphysics.

Interestingly, Tetens accuses “die analytische, auch wohl die anthropologische Methode”<sup>14</sup> to fail in empirically verifying its own results. Since these analyses are not able to show the correspondence they claim between the modifications of the soul and those of the brain that cause them, they can rightfully be labeled as “metaphysical”.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Tetens aims to follow a completely different path, and claims a clear priority for the empirical-psychological analysis over the metaphysical perspective:

Wenn auch diese metaphysischen Analysen etwas reelleres lehrten, als sie wirklich nicht lehren, so darf man doch die Untersuchung der Seele mit ihnen nicht anfangen, sondern nur endigen. Die psychologische Auflösung muß vorhergehen. [...] Hiezu kömmt noch, daß, so weit man auch in der metaphysischen Psychologie fortgeht, die Richtigkeit ihrer Sätze immerfort durch die Beobachtungskennnisse geprüft werden müsse.<sup>16</sup>

The priority of the observational discipline defended by Tetens in these lines recalls what Kant claimed in the *Nachricht* (1765) for empirical psychology:

Ich fange demnach nach einer kleinen Einleitung von der empirischen Psychologie an, welche eigentlich die metaphysische Erfahrungswissenschaft vom Menschen ist; denn was den Ausdruck der Seele betrifft, so ist es in dieser Abtheilung noch nicht erlaubt zu behaupten, daß er eine habe.<sup>17</sup>

In this sense, it is worth remembering that, as regards the doctrines of the soul, its faculties and its expressive modalities—whether they are referred to as empirical psychology or anthropology—both Tetens and Kant, up to end of the 1770s, presuppose a doctrine of the soul intended as an immaterial substance. This, on the basis of the definition provided by Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica*, with which both are well acquainted.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, it is undeniable that Kant’s abandonment of this conception of the soul, in the context of the critical turn, represents one of the clearest premises for the divergence between the projects defended, respectively, by the two authors. On the other hand, it seems that many of Tetens’ theories, which remain excluded from the framework of the transcendental philosophy, consistently fall within Kant’s anthropological framework. Later on I will try to illustrate the reasons of this dynamics.

## 2.2 Kant’s Anthropological Observation

<sup>14</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV Vorrede [IV], p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV Vorrede [V], p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> J.N. Tetens PV Vorrede [XIII-XIV], p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> I. Kant, NEV, AA 02: 309.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, in particular §757.

In the *Nachricht* the priority of empirical psychology derives, at least partly, from Kant’s need for a rigorous *ordo expositionis*. Kant even claims that he must apply a “gentle pressure” [*eine kleine Biegung*] to the *ordo expositionis* of Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica*, which he follows for his own lectures on metaphysics, and whose section on empirical psychology he will use for his lectures on anthropology. However, in the same year, with the *Observations on the feeling of beauty and the sublime* Kant offers a more theoretically founded explanation of the meaning that he ascribes to observation within an empirical context:

Die verschiedene Empfindungen des Vergnügens oder des Verdrusses beruhen nicht so sehr auf der Beschaffenheit der äußeren Dinge, die sie erregen, als auf dem jedem Menschen eigenen Gefühle dadurch mit Lust oder Unlust gerührt zu werden. [...] Das Feld der *Beobachtungen* dieser Besonderheiten der menschlichen Natur erstreckt sich sehr weit und verbirgt annoch einen reichen Vorrath zu Entdeckungen, die eben so anmuthig als lehrreich sind. Ich werfe für jetzt meinen Blick nur auf einige Stellen, die sich in diesem Bezirke besonders auszunehmen scheinen, und auch auf diese mehr das Auge eines Beobachters als des Philosophen.<sup>19</sup>

This transfer of tasks between empirical psychology and anthropology is explicitly expressed by Kant in a course of the late 1770s devoted to the *Philosophical Encyclopedia*, in which anthropology is defined as the science dealing with the empirical treatment of the thinking nature.<sup>20</sup> The key to understand the passage from empirical psychology to anthropology is provided by Kant himself in a letter to Herz at the end of 1773. Here he explains that he intends to introduce anthropology at the university, and defines it as an “observational doctrine” [*Beobachtungslehre*].<sup>21</sup> The decisive gap between anthropology and empirical psychology consists precisely in the non-purely speculative nature and purpose of the anthropological observation. Indeed, the observation characterizing empirical psychology in the context of Wolffism, for example, aimed to reach a truth in the domain of a dogmatically conceived metaphysics. On the contrary, the goal of Kant’s anthropology is of practical-pragmatic nature, since anthropology aims to enlighten the empirical nature of the human being and, on this basis, to study the subject’s relations with other human beings.

This is indirectly clear if one considers that Kant opposes anthropology to any speculative approach also in his lectures on metaphysics:

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<sup>19</sup> I. Kant, GSE, AA 02: 207.

<sup>20</sup> See I. Kant, PhilEnz, AA 29: 11, 44. For the influence of Baumgarten’s *Metaphysica* upon Kant’s anthropology, see: Hinske (2002).

<sup>21</sup> I. Kant, Br, AA 10 : 143-146.

Affecten, sind motus animi sensitivi welche den Menschen außer Stand setzen seiner selbst mächtig (sui compos) zu bleiben [...] Passion macht blind – und hebt ganz das Vermögen sich selbst zu beherrschen auf; – Diese Materie gehört zur Anthropologie.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, it is again starting from the characteristics of the observational method—as Tetens too conceives it—that emerge not only the limits of Tetens’ perspective as regards transcendental philosophy, but also its fruitfulness for a kantianly understood anthropology. Tetens writes indeed that the greatest difficulty of the observational method consists in dealing with a faculty of the soul, which, although essential to representations, can lead us to exchange mere suggestions for concepts derived from observations. These *Kräfte*, which have to be kept under control, are “die Phantasie, und noch näher die selbstthätige Dichtkraft”.<sup>23</sup> The authentic “spirit of observation” [*der wahre Beobachtungsgeist*] consists precisely in the ability to control these lively faculties/forces.<sup>24</sup>

Undoubtedly, at first glance, Tetens’ call for an imaginative faculty necessary for the very possibility of having representations (“und dennoch siehet man auch ohne eine starke Phantasie nichts”<sup>25</sup>) seems to allude to the role played by productive imagination in Kant’s *Transcendental Deduction*. Yet, from a transcendental point of view, the weakness of Tetens’ conceptual building consists precisely in his inability to provide a solid and convincing objectifying foundation for the subjective representative processes brought to light by the observational method.<sup>26</sup>

The premises of these problems are present since the *Preface*, in which Tetens indicates the “generalization of particular empirical propositions” [*Verallgemeinerung der besondern Erfahrungssätze*]<sup>27</sup> as one of the most important operations of the observational method. In order to provide a basis for this operation, he refers to an analogical method with the aim to transfer to the *objects themselves* the properties and relationships that the subject can grasp from the *representations* of those objects. Tetens is well aware of the problems that underline this position and he deals with them in paragraph XI of the first *Versuch: Eine Anmerkung über den Unterschied der analogischen und der anschaulichen Vorstellungen*. So Tetens:

<sup>22</sup> I. Kant V-Met/Dohna, AA 28: 679.

<sup>23</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, Vorrede [XVII], p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> On this topic, see the critical studies mentioned in the note 2.

<sup>27</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, Vorrede [XIX], p 7.



Die Analogie der Vorstellungen mit ihren Gegenständen macht diese aus jenen erkennbar. [...] [Indessen] beruhet der ganze Gebrauch, den die Vernunft von den Vorstellungen jedweder Art machen kann, lediglich auf ihrer Analogie mit den Gegenständen. Es muß sich Sache zur Sache, wie Vorstellung zur Vorstellung verhalten; und die Verhältnisse und Beziehungen der Vorstellungen gegen einander mit den Verhältnissen und Beziehungen der Gegenstände unter sich, einerley seyn.<sup>28</sup>

Besides the analogical representations, Tetens introduces the intuitive ones. He explains that the analogical representations are signs formed by reflection itself (either for necessity or for convenience), whereas the intuitive ones contain natural signs [*natürliche Zeichen*], which are either “Wirkungen auf uns von den bezeichneten Sachen” or “eben dieselbartigen Dinge”.<sup>29</sup> The intuitive representations are cognitively more useful than the *merely* analogical ones. However, their greater cognitive usefulness is based, once again, on a more complete analogy with the represented object.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the analogy remains an indispensable ground for the possibility of representing objects.

After grounding the representative capacity on the analogy between the representative signs and the designated object, the inevitable question arises about the foundation of the adequacy of a so conceived representation with respect to its object. It is even superfluous to underline the Kantian background of this question, with which Kant begins indeed to deal in the years immediately following the *Dissertation* of 1770.<sup>31</sup> Tetens poses the question in the following terms: “Wie ist es möglich, zu wissen, daß die äußern Gegenstände und ihre sinnlichen Bilder in uns einander entsprechen?”<sup>32</sup>

In order to answer this crucial question, at least when “von der Analogie unserer natürlichen Zeichen die Rede ist”, Tetens resorts to the “allgemeinen Grundwahrheiten der Vernunft, oder auf natürlichen Denkungsgesetzen des Verstandes”, according to which “wir über Gegenstände, Dinge, Sachen und Beschaffenheiten aller Arten urtheilen und urtheilen müssen”.<sup>33</sup>

Passages like this suggest once more assonance with Kant’s critical framework, since they seem to rule out any possibility of a direct access to the thing in itself, and rather identify the objective foundation of knowledge in the necessary and universal, that is, transcendental laws of reason. However, Tetens delays the deepening of this important

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<sup>28</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [87, 91], pp. 57, 59.

<sup>29</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [92], p. 60.

<sup>30</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [92], p. 60: “Die Analogie mit den Objekten ist bey den Anschaulichen völliger”.

<sup>31</sup> An analysis of the theoretical reasons that separate Kant and Tetens on this important point is provided, among others, by Laywine (2010, pp. 69-70).

<sup>32</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [93-94], p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [94], p. 61

passage to his subsequent treatment of *Denkkraft*: “Es ist dieß aber ein Geschäft der Denkkraft, die sich der Vorstellungen bedient, und nicht eigentlich der vorstellenden Kraft, die jene herbeyschaffet”.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, if one looks for this treatment in the following *Versuche*, any possible assonance with the Kantian solution fades. In fact, for Tetens “transcendental” remains a synonym of “transcendent”.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence, the ultimate foundation of the objectivity of knowledge is not identified in anything that can even vaguely be considered as an anticipation of Kant’s transcendental perspective. Tetens finally tackles the problem of the rational assumptions that should guarantee the adequacy of the representation with respect to the represented things in the seventh *Versuch*:

Die subjektivische Nothwendigkeit nach den allgemeinen Gesetzen des Verstandes zu denken, erkennen wir aus der Beobachtung. Wir empfinden es, daß wir keine viereckte Zirkel uns vorstellen, und kein Ding für unterschieden von sich selbst halten können. Auf diese subjektivische Nothwendigkeit gründen wir die objektivische: Die Unmöglichkeit, die Dinge anders zu denken, wird den Dingen außer dem Verstande beygelegt. Unsere Ideen sind nun nicht mehr Ideen in uns; es sind Sachen außer uns. Die Beschaffenheiten und Verhältnisse, die wir in jenen wahrnehmen, stellen sich uns als Beschaffenheiten und Verhältnisse der Sachen selbst vor, die diesen auch ohne unser Denken zukommen, und von jedem andern denkenden Wesen in ihnen erkannt werden mußten. So bringet der Instinkt es mit sich. Es ist dieß eine Wirkung des gemeinen Menschenverstandes.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, quite disappointingly—from a Kantian-transcendental point of view—Tetens grounds the transition from the representative subjectivity to the cognitive objectivity upon an instinct, which he puts into relationship with the *sensus communis* [*gemeiner Menschenverstand*]. Now, this marks its exclusion from the transcendental framework.

### **2.3 The Problematic Step from Representation to Thought**

In a sense, it is precisely the beginning of the path that we would like to follow in our analysis. Indeed, in its most general structure, Tetens’ *Erkenntnislehre* consists of 3 parts: *Gefühl*, *vorstellende Kraft* (or *Vorstellungsvermögen*), and *Denkkraft*.<sup>37</sup> The representative faculty consists in turn of three capacities, progressively closer to the sphere of thought: *Fassungskraft* (*facultas percipiendi*), *Phantasie*—to be understood as *Wiedervorstellungskraft*, that is as a reproductive imagination [*Einbildungskraft*],<sup>38</sup>—and

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> On this point see: Krouglov (2005) and Sellhoff (2015, XCVIII-XCIX, n. 244).

<sup>36</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 7 [531-532], pp. 279-280.

<sup>37</sup> Among the many—more or less implicit—formulations of this repartition, see J.N. Tetens, PV 9 [590], p. 311.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [24], p. 26.

*Dichtkraft*, a kind of imagination to which Tetens ascribes a *bildend*, namely, a productive power.<sup>39</sup>

If, on the one hand, imagination, and more specifically the *Dichtkraft*, is essential for the representations to rise, on the other hand, it must be kept under control, in order to make sure that what is produced does indeed correspond to what has been actually observed, and therefore does conform to the necessary laws of thought [(den) *nothwendigen Denkgesetzen gemäß*].<sup>40</sup>

Yet, the main difficulty lies precisely in the passage to the universal level of the necessary laws of thought, that is, in the generalization required by the observational method. From a Kantian point of view, this depends on the weak foundation of the objectifying power of thought with respect to perceptions and representations. In other words, if at the level of thought, as Tetens conceives of it, the objectivity is not consistently grounded and falls prey to a psychological withdrawal, this depends on the fact that the spontaneity of the understanding is not transcendently deduced. We must therefore assume that the sense in which Tetens considers the *Dichtkraft* as a productive imagination is not to be compared to the transcendental meaning of this concept in Kant’s *KrV*, but, instead, to the empirical meaning of this concept, as it is deepened by Kant in the anthropological field.

### 3. The *Dichtkraft*

#### 3.1 Pegasus’ Shoulders

There is no doubt that the expression appearing in the first part of the title of my essay would have sounded much less strange if it had referred to the “wings”, rather than to the “shoulders” of Pegasus. Yet, it is exactly by considering Tetens’ quick reference to the image of the horse’s shoulders that I understand how the faculty of *Dichtkraft*, placed at the apex of the *Vortellungsvermögen* and therefore at the threshold of *Denkkraft*, differs from the previous level, represented by the mere *Phantasie*:

Wir haben das Bild von einem Pferde aus der Empfindung, und das Bild von den Flügeln auch. Beyde sind reine Phantasmen, die von andern Vorstellungen abgesondert, und hier in dem Bilde des Pegasus mit

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<sup>39</sup> See e. g. J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [104], p. 66. It is here worth noting that Tetens employs different words and expressions to designate the *Dichtkraft*, for instance: “Dichtungsvermögen, [...] bildende, schaffende Kraft” (PV 1 [24], p. 26), “bildende Dichtungsvermögen” (PV 1 [26], p. 27), “selbstthätige Dichtungskraft” (PV 1 [57], pp. 42-43), “selbstthätige Phantasie” (PV 1 [107], p. 67).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [94], p. 61.

einander verbunden sind. In so weit ist dieses nichts, als eine Wirkung der Phantasie, die nur ihre empfängnen einzelnen Empfindungsvorstellungen, welche sie hie und daher aus andern Verbindungen herausgenommen hat, jetzo in einer neuen Lage bey einander darstellt, in der sie in der Empfindung nicht beysammen gewesen sind. Allein dieß ist nur ein Zertheilen und ein Wiederaneinandersetzen. Dieß ist noch nicht Entwickeln, kein Auflösen und Wiedervereinigen, kein Ineinandertreiben und Vermischen. [...] Die Flügel des Pegasus mögen in dem Kopf des ersten Dichters, der dieß Bild hervorbrachte, ein reines Phantasma gewesen seyn; und die Vorstellung von dem Pferde gleichfalls. Aber da ist eine Stelle in dem Bilde an den Schultern des Pferdes, etwas dunkler, als die übrigen, wo die Flügel an dem Körper angesetzt sind; da fließen die Bilder von des Pferdes Schultern und von den Wurzeln der Flügel in einander; da ist also ein selbstgemachter Schein, der sich verlieret, wenn man das Bild vom Pferde und das Bild von den Flügeln deutlich von einander wieder abtrennet.<sup>41</sup>

Pegasus' shoulders, and, more precisely, the exact points where wings are attached to the body of the horse, represent something that is not given in reality at all, unlike the wings and the horse, which, although not united, can be found in reality as isolated objects. The portion of the horse's body where the wings and the body are actually conjoined is a representation authentically created by our representative faculty in its highest expression. Soon after, Tetens makes clear that the sense in which the *Dichtkraft* is creative is not to be understood in the sense of the *creatio ex nihilo*. It rather means that its separation [*trennen*], decomposition [*auflösen*], joining [*verbinden*] and mixing [*vermischen*] give rise to a representation that is not only new for the subject, but which goes also beyond the mere juxtaposition of already present representations.<sup>42</sup> The new images produced by the *Dichtkraft* have the peculiarity of being *simple*, at least with respect to "our distinguishing faculty" [*in Rücksicht auf unser Unterscheidungsvermögen*].<sup>43</sup> This means that in such a kind of representation we cannot separate those parts that, on the contrary, remain clearly distinguishable at the level of the *Phantasie*.<sup>44</sup>

Back to image of Pegasus. What distinguishes the attachment of the wings to the body as a product of the *Dichtkraft* is exactly the non-measurable originality of this anatomical part, which, though formed by the composition of two previously known parts, acquires a new meaning for us. For this reason, it cannot be reduced to something that existed before. In real horses, there is no such bone articulation to connect shoulders to wings, and therefore we cannot decompose such an articulation into any simpler parts.

<sup>41</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [116-118], p. 72.

<sup>42</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [139], p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> This model of simplicity "for us", understood as a unity consisting of parts, which cannot subsist by itself, frequently returns in Tetens' analysis of the representation's components. A similar concept of "simplicity" characterizes the physical monads of Kant's 1756 *Monadologia physica*. Sarmiento (2005, p. 5) has highlighted the originality of this "simplicity". It would be interesting to reconstruct the history of the diffusion of Kant's 1756 dissertation on the physical monads, in order to understand whether and how this concept of "simplicity" somehow exerted an influence on Kant's contemporaries.

At the same time, we should not forget that here, it is not yet a matter of the faculty of thought, that produces ideas and not simply representations. We are still at the level of sensible representations, as Tetens emphasizes after having exposed the salient features of the *Dichtkraft*:

So viel von der dritten Wirkungsweise der vorstellenden Kraft. [...] Von den Ideen als Ideen, ihrer Form nach, in so ferne Bewußtseyn und Unterscheiden vorhanden ist, rede ich hier noch nicht; sondern nur von ihrer Materie, das ist, von den Modifikationen der Seele, die für uns die natürliche Zeichen der Objekte und ihrer Beschaffenheiten sind, und die es auch alsdenn sind, wenn sie gleich ruhig und ungebraucht unten im Gedächtniß verwahret liegen.<sup>45</sup>

As clearly emphasized by G. Stiening, this draws attention to the foundation of the unity of the entire *Vorstellungsvermögen*, that is to say, the whole of *Fassungskraft*, *Phantasie* and *Dichtkraft*. Let us dwell more particularly on the passage from *Phantasie* to *Dichtkraft*, and on the way in which they can be distinguished, even in the continuity within the same faculty. On the one hand, the *Dichtkraft* must be distinguished from the *Phantasie* in a qualitative sense, that is, with regard to the novelty and the simplicity of its products. But, on the other hand, the difference between them is exquisitely quantitative, namely, based on the increasing intensity of the process of analysis and synthesis. With Stiening’s own words (in commenting the passage on Pegasus):

The difference between the two faculties [*Phantasie* and *Dichtkraft*] is qualitative concerning their products (composite vs simple representations), and it is only quantitative as regards the causal levels of these faculties. [...] What Tetens means [...] by the *Dichtkraft* is clear: it conjoins the given moments of the original representations more organically into a new simple *just because* this faculty more intensively decomposes i.e. analyzes the original representations, and in the synthesis of many representations it comes even to overlook some moments of these examples”.<sup>46</sup>

To sum up: the highest degree of the representative faculty, which is the closest to the faculty of thinking, is constituted by an imagination that, although not creative in the sense of the *creatio ex nihilo*, is productive because it elaborates at the highest sensible level images *simple for us*, which we are unable to lead back to simpler elements. At this level, imagination is no longer merely reproductive, but becomes productive in a very peculiar sense, and this allows a confrontation with Kant’s treatment of productive imagination in the anthropological field.

### 3.2 Two Meanings of Productive Imagination by Kant

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<sup>45</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [138-139], pp. 82-83.

<sup>46</sup> Stiening (2014, pp. 335-336) (my translation).

Much has been written about the status of imagination *tout court* in Kant's philosophy. This is certainly not the place to deal with such a huge problem. Our preliminary assumption in this domain is much more modest and consists in affirming that since the beginning of Kant's critical project there is a transcendental (and therefore a priori) meaning of imagination. In this sense, imagination expresses the spontaneity of understating, and cooperates to determine the object of a possible knowledge. This excludes the possibility of relating such a concept of imagination with the one at stake in Tetens' empirical *Vorstellungsvermögen*.

Without mentioning the well-known passages of the two editions of the *KrV*—which are usually compared to each other—it will suffice to mention here the *Loses Blatt B12*, dated 1780 and therefore upstream of both editions of the *KrV*. This annotation allows us to notice that, in the critical framework, also the empirical determinations of imagination are to be understood as framed within an investigation on the a priori conditions of knowledge:

Die transscendentale Synthesis der Einbildungskraft liegt allen unsern Verstandesbegriffen zu Grunde. Der empirische Gebrauch der einbildungskraft beruht auf der synthesis der Apprehension der empirischen Anschauung die denn auch reproducirt werden kan oder nach deren analogie eine andere gemacht werden kan. Im letztern Fall ist es die productive Einbildungskraft. Die productive Einbildungskraft ist entweder rein oder empirisch. Die reine. Die Einbildungskraft ist eine synthesis theils eine productive theils reproductive. Die erste macht die letzte möglich denn haben wir es nicht vorher in Vorstellung durch die synthesis zu Stande gemacht so können wir diese auch nicht mit andern in unserm folgenden Zustande verbinden. Die productive Einbildungskraft ist 1. empirisch in der apprehension 2. rein aber sinnlich in Ansehung eines Gegenstandes der reinen sinnlichen Anschauung. 3. transscendental in Ansehung eines Gegenstandes überhaupt die erstere setzt die zweyte voraus u. die zweyte die dritte. Die reine Synthetis der Einbildungskraft ist der Grund der möglichkeit der empirischen in der Apprehension also auch der Wahrnehmung.<sup>47</sup>

At the second of the three levels of productive imagination listed here, Kant significantly defines productive imagination as pure [*rein*] but sensible [*sinnlich*] with reference to an object of pure sensible intuition. Besides all the assonances with the structure of the *Transcendental Deduction* (especially in the A-version), this passage clearly shows that, within the critical project, Kant conceives of an imagination such that, even when it refers to the empirical dimension of knowledge, it does so from the point of view of its a priori conditions of possibility.

Yet, Kant reaches this concept of imagination after a decade of troubled conceptual elaboration. Beyond the imagination operating at the transcendental level, Kant considers

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<sup>47</sup> I. Kant, *Nachträge zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1. Aufl.), AA 23: 18.

indeed a further meaning of it that is concerned with the empirical/a posteriori plane, and which is therefore likely to be perspicuously compared with Tetens’ framework. This hypothesis is strengthened if we consider that this empirical sense of imagination produces something new and is openly identified with the term *Dichtungsvermögen*. It is worth here following the thread of Kant’s argument as it appears in *Metaphysik L1*, namely, a course on metaphysics dated from the second half of the 1770es:

Ich reproducire die Vorstellungen der vergangenen Zeit durch die Association, nach welcher eine Vorstellung die andere herbeizieht, weil sie mit ihr in Begleitung war. Dieses ist das Vermögen der Imagination. Es wird sonst falsch das Einbildungsvermögen genannt, welches aber von ganz anderer Art ist; denn das ist ganz was anders, wenn ich mir einen Pallast, den ich ehemals gesehen habe, einbilde, und wenn ich mir *neue Bilder* mache. Das letzte ist das Einbildungsvermögen, wovon hernach Meldung geschehen wird.<sup>48</sup>

Here we can find not only a difference between the *Einbildungsvermögen* as a faculty to create something new, and *Imagination* as a faculty to recall a past representation associated with another. We can also observe a differentiation between such an *Imagination* and a faculty to represent something that is not placed within reality, not because it belongs to the past, but rather because it simply does not *belong* to reality: this is the case of *Phantasie*:

Das Vermögen der Einbildung ist das Vermögen, Bilder aus sich selbst, unabhängig von der Wirklichkeit der Gegenstände hervor zu bringen, wo die Bilder nicht aus der Erfahrung entlehnt sind. Z.E. ein Baumeister fingirt sich, ein Haus zu bauen, was er noch nicht gesehen hat. Dies Vermögen nennt man das Vermögen der Phantasie, und darf nicht mit der Imagination verwechselt werden.<sup>49</sup>

However, a house, although it is not yet built, requires nothing more than the juxtaposition of elements that are known to us, and which we can assemble in our *Phantasie*, just like the wings and the body of a horse. Differently—adds Kant: “Die Einbildungskraft ist eine sinnliche Dichtungskraft, obgleich wir auch noch eine Verstandes-Dichtungskraft haben”.<sup>50</sup>

The definition of the *Einbildungskraft* that Kant had promised a little above is now outlined in the form of a sensible *Dichtungskraft*. Yet, Kant identifies also another *Dichtungskraft*, which belongs to the understanding: the *Verstandes-Dichtungskraft*, in which one can easily grasp a reference to the transcendently determined meaning of productive imagination. Finally, a few lines later, Kant accomplishes the definition of the

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<sup>48</sup> I. Kant, V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 236 (emphasis added).

<sup>49</sup> I. Kant, V-Met-L1/Pöhlitz, AA 28: 237.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

*Einbildungskraft* by pointing out as follows: “Das willkürliche Einbildungsvermögen ist das Dichtungsvermögen”.<sup>51</sup>

Kant’s debt to Tetens in these passages has been recognized to the point that W. Carl employs Kant’s reading of the *Versuche* as a reference to date these lecture-notes after 1777.<sup>52</sup> However, what seems even more relevant here is that Kant’s convergence towards Tetens concerning the *Dichtkraft/Dichtungsvermögen*, understood as an empirical productive imagination, occurs in the anthropological field. The quotations from *Metaphysik L<sub>1</sub>* undoubtedly show with clarity these convergent approaches, but it is in the anthropological field that we find the more significant confirmation. Indeed, with the establishment of the critical framework, the definition of the boundaries between the empirical and the transcendental meaning of imagination, especially in its productive sense, becomes increasingly clear. For the sake of brevity, here we will just confine ourselves to mention that, starting with the lectures on anthropology of the critical period (the so-called *Menschenkunde*), the references to the *Dichtungsvermögen* in the context of the treatment of the *Phantasie* become explicit and formalized.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, we cannot avoid considering Kant’s anthropological *summa*, namely, the *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. Here the framework of the comparison between Kant and Tetens is enriched by a further element of assonance, which is linked to the particular productive nature of empirical imagination. Kant states indeed that imagination is “dichtend (productiv)” and not creative [*schöpferisch*],<sup>54</sup> like Tetens ruled out the possibility of a *creatio ex nihilo* for the *Dichtkraft*. Then, in the paragraph *Von dem sinnlichen Dichtungsvermögen der Bildung*, Kant refers to the artistic fiction as an expression of the *imaginatio plastica*. This is defined as a capacity to “compose” [*Composition, Erfindung*]<sup>55</sup> something, which can be either an imitation of nature or something that does not exist in nature. In the same vein, some pages later, the talent of the genius is defined as the talent “to invent [*zum Erfinden*]”.<sup>56</sup> From this point of view, imagination can be even considered, in a very peculiar way, to be “creative”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>52</sup> See: Carl (1989, pp. 117-118).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Menschenkunde* (1781-1782): V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 981-994; *Anthropologie Mrongovius* (1784-1785): V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1277-1282; *Anthropologie Busolt* (1788-1789): V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1464-1467.

<sup>54</sup> I. Kant, Anth, AA 07: 167-168.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ivi*, AA 07: 175.

<sup>56</sup> *Ivi*, AA 07: 224.



[*schöpferisch*]: “Das eigentliche Feld für das Genie ist das der Einbildungskraft: weil diese schöpferisch ist und weniger als andere Vermögen unter dem Zwange der Regeln steht, dadurch aber der Originalität desto fähiger ist”.<sup>57</sup> And again in a *Randbemerkung* commenting the paragraph on the *Einbildungskraft*: “Die Einbildungskraft ist entweder schöpferisch (productiv) oder wiedererzeugend (reproductiv)”.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, with a remarkable Tetensian accent, the very peculiar way in which the imagination of the genius is productive—to the point of being defined as “creative”—consists in composing the elements at his disposal in such a way as to give rise to something that did not exist before.

This drives the confrontation between Kant and Tetens to a domain in which their convergent conceptions of the empirical *Dichtkraft/Dichtungsvermögen* find further confirmations: the concept of “Genius”.

### 3.3 *The Case of the Genius*

As it has been widely noted, on the definition of genius and his properties Tetens and Kant share an important source, whose influence is quite important in both the authors as regards the nature of the productive imagination: this is the 1774 *Essay on Genius* by the Scottish philosopher A. Gerard.<sup>59</sup>

In the first part of this work, Gerard states that the genius is characterized by the “faculty of invention”, defined as the faculty of “making new discoveries in science”, or “producing original works of art”.<sup>60</sup> When he subsequently asks *To what faculty of the mind genius properly belongs?*, he answers by listing *Sense, Memory, Imagination, and Judgment*.<sup>61</sup> In this context, the productive power of imagination is indicated as the most qualifying for the activity of genius:

Imagination is much less confined [than sense and memory] in its operations. Even when it exerts itself in the simplest manner, when it seems only to present ideas unattended with remembrance, it in some degree displays its creative power. [...] Imagination is therefore a source of invention.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ivi*, AA 07: 402 (Randnotizien).

<sup>59</sup> While Tetens was able to read English, Kant read Gerard’s *Essay* in the German translation by C. Garve (1776), which was praised for its accuracy by the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, 1776, I, p. 736. On Gerard’s influence on Kant see: Giordanetti (1991), Guyer (2011), Beckenkamp (2015, 2016). However, with the partial exception of Giordanetti, none of these studies consistently underlines the impact of Gerard’s positions on Kant’s anthropological reflection.

<sup>60</sup> Cfr. A. Gerard, *Essay on Genius*, p. 8. On these themes see also Fabian (1966, pp. XXVIII-XXXIV; 1967, pp. 36-39).

<sup>61</sup> A. Gerard, *Essay on Genius*, pp. 27-36.

<sup>62</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 29, 32.

However, although it remains clear that the true source of genius is imagination, the other mental functions work together to accomplish what the former creates. Without the cooperation of the other functions, imagination remains indeed at an incomplete level, which Gerard designates with the word *fancy*:

From these observations, it would appear, that genius of every kind derives its immediate origin from imagination. Mere imagination, it is true, will not constitute genius. If fancy were left entirely to itself, it would run into wild caprice and extravagance, unworthy to be called invention. It is imagination that produces genius; the other intellectual faculties lend their assistance to rear the offspring of imagination to maturity. It is also true, that in matters of speculation, imagination resigns its discoveries into the hands of reason, sooner than in the arts, and leaves it more to finish.<sup>63</sup>

Tetens explicitly refers to Gerard's work in the first *Versuch*, precisely when, introducing the *Verschiedene Thätigkeiten und Vermögen der vorstellenden Kraft—Das Vermögen der Perception. Die Einbildungskraft. Die bildende Dichtkraft—*, he dwells on the third activity of the representative power:

Diese Verrichtungen gehören dem Dichtungsvermögen zu; einer schaffenden Kraft, deren Wirksamkeitssphäre einen größern Umfang zu haben scheint, als ihr gemeinlich zuerkannt wird. Sie ist die selbstthätige Phantasie; das Genie nach des Hrn. Gerards Erklärung, und ohne Zweifel ein wesentliches Ingrediens des Genies, auch in einer weitem Bedeutung des Worts, die das Genie nicht eben allein auf Dichtergenie einschränket.<sup>64</sup>

In a note added shortly after the quoted passage, Tetens deals with the “bildende Kraft der Seele” and once again, he refers to Gerard by defining him as an “acute observer of the genius”:

Hr. Gerard, der scharfsinnige Beobachter des Genies, – und dieß ist bey ihm das Vermögen, das hier die bildende Dichtkraft genennet wird – hat vielleicht am vollständigsten die besondern Regeln angegeben, nach welchen neue Ideenassociationen durch die Dichtkraft gemacht werden.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, Tetens proves again that he conceives the analysis of the *Dichtkraft* in the context of the observational method that Kant recognizes as the mark of the anthropological domain. This holds also for the case of the genius, which—as Tetens points out since the *Preface* to the *Versuche*— allows to skip many of the analytical steps required by the ordinary representative faculty.

Of course, we know that Kant devotes important pages to the theme of genius also in the critical framework, in particular in the third *Critique*.<sup>66</sup> However, it is not surprising

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<sup>63</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>64</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [107], p. 67.

<sup>65</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [1119], p. 73 n. 7.

that Kant’s explicit reference to Gerard concerning the relationship between genius and productive imagination is to be found in his anthropology lectures, in particular from the early 1780s. In the *Menschenkunde* (1781-1782), for example, we can read what follows:

Dieses Wort [*Genie*] wird sehr gemißbraucht, und hat Veranlassung zu Untersuchungen gegeben, die sehr vergeblich sind, und durch die man es ganz genau zu entziffern gesucht hat, was man damit meint. Gerard, ein Engländer, hat vom Genie geschrieben, und darüber die besten Betrachtungen angestellt, obgleich die Sache sonst auch bei anderen Schriftstellern vorkommt.<sup>67</sup>

Kant goes far beyond this formal recognition and demonstrates to be well acquainted with Gerard’s concept of productive imagination and its relationship to the genius:

Gerard, ein Engländer, sagt die größte Eigenschaft des Genies sey die productive Einbildungskraft; denn Genie ist vom Nachahmungsgeiste am meisten unterschieden, so daß man glaubt, der Nachahmungsgeist sey die größte Unfähigkeit, sich dem Genie zu nähern. Das Genie gründet sich also nicht auf die reproductive Einbildungskraft, sondern auf die productive und eine fruchtbare Eibildungskraft in Hervorbringung, der Vorstellungen giebt dem Genie vielen Stoff, darunter zu wählen. Dieses Productionsvermögen wird eingetheilt in die willkührliche und unwillkührliche Imagination. Die willkührliche besteht darin, dass der Mensch die Thätigkeiten seiner Imagination nach Belieben ausüben, sich Bilder darstellen und verschwinden lassen, sie nach seinem Belieben machen kann. Die unwillkührliche heißt die Phantasie, und ob zwar viele Schriftsteller beide verwechseln, so giebt doch schon die Redegebrauch Anlaß, sie zu unterscheiden.<sup>68</sup>

Here Kant does not confine himself to admit a general interest in Gerard’s *Essay*, but indicates with precision—and in consonance with what he had already affirmed at the end of the 1770s—the points that he shares with the Scottish philosopher. The most salient one is represented by the properties of imagination, insofar as it is to be distinguished from the “spirit of imitation” [*Nachahmungsgeist*].

As P. Giordanetti rightly points out, Tetens probably reinforced Kant’s reception of those elements in Gerard’s *Essay*, which allows him to look at the productive power of the genius as an outcome of the observational method, a method that, according to Kant, belongs to anthropology. This productive power should not be regarded as a faculty among the others, but rather as a particular way of coordinating and associating representations, in which it is possible to grasp a series of rules,<sup>69</sup> the same rules identified by Tetens in commenting Gerard as “besondere Regeln [...], nach welchen neue Ideenassociationen

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<sup>66</sup> See e.g. KU, AA 05: 317. For the relationship between the treatment of genius in the lectures on anthropology and the KU, see: Giordanetti (1991, pp. 663-664, 670 n.21, 671-673).

<sup>67</sup> I. Kant, V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 1055.

<sup>68</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 945-946.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. I. Kant, Refl. 949, AA 15: 420-421: “Genie ist nicht, so wie Gerard will, eine besondere Kraft der Seele (sonst würde sie ein bestimmt object haben), sondern ein *principium* der Belebung aller anderen Kräfte durch ideen der objecte, welche man will. Erfindung setzt eine Belebung der Erkenntniskräfte voraus, nicht bloß die schärfung der Lernfähigkeiten. Aber diese Belebung muß durch die Erzeugung einer idee auf einen Zweck gerichtet seyn; sonst ist es nicht Erfindung, sondern zufällige Entdeckung”.

durch die Dichtkraft gemacht werden".<sup>70</sup> These rules, unlike the laws of pure understanding, determine the productive empirical imagination, which is found in the genius.

#### 4. Final Remarks: Carrying on the Discussion

##### 4.1 *Tetens within the Wolffian Tradition*

At this point, we can try to draw some conclusions from the analysis conducted so far and take stock of the elements that speak in favor of an effective influence of Tetens both on the general approach and on some specific contents of Kant's anthropology, thereby testing also the limits of this influence.

In doing so, one should not forget that Tetens' own philosophical project did not aim to ground a discipline like Kant's anthropology. On the contrary, he distances himself from an anthropology, which, at that time, he could not but conceive in medical-physiological terms, as it is testified by his points of disagreement with Bonnet.

Tetens' entanglement in the framework of the Wolffian metaphysics has been aptly pointed out, for instance, by A. Krouglov. The issues of the Wolffian metaphysics remain indeed crucial for Tetens since his 1775 work *Über die allgemeine spekulativische Philosophie*. Here he deals with the principles of ontology—defined as “allgemeine transcendente Philosophie” and as “Grundwissenschaft”—and aims at the *Realization* of these principles.<sup>71</sup>

Even in the *Versuche*, where the reference to the ontological problems emerges in a less explicit way, this does not cease to orient Tetens' reflection. Here he looks for the fulfillment of the tasks of the “Vernunftlehre” and of the “Grundwissenschaft”: the former deals with *how* [„das *Wie*“] and the latter with *what* [„das *Was*“] can be thought [*gedacht*], reflected [*überlegt*], and investigated [*erforschet*].<sup>72</sup>

This reflection on the possible concrete realization of the concepts and principles of ontology continues to engage Tetens well beyond the publication of the *Versuche*, when Kantian criticism has already broken into the German and European philosophical scene. Tetens still opens his lectures on metaphysics of the late 1780es with empirical psychology

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *supra*, n. 65.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. J.N. Tetens, *AsP*, p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> J.N. Tetens, *PV* 14 [402], p. 611. On this point see also: Krouglov (2009, p. 279).

and aims to find out the “erste Grundsätze des Verstandes”.<sup>73</sup> Thus, in a sense, he takes up the challenge of Kant’s Criticism, but the close apriority that he claims for these “erste Grundsätze” is attenuated by the unavoidable permanence of empirical elements in the demonstrations, which makes the project of a complete *Vermittlung* between speculation and experience fade.

#### **4.2 Denkungsart: Character and Language**

As mentioned, if on the one hand Tetens tried to purify metaphysics from the legacies of an anthropology that he basically conceived in physiological terms, on the other hand—in Kant’s eyes—he provided instead excellent methodological insights for an alternative conception of anthropology. Yet it is undisputed that Kant developed these insights in an absolutely original sense. Among the reasons for this originality, one is represented by Kant’s concept of “character”, which no other author (Tetens included) worked out as Kant did in the anthropological domain.

Since his first courses on anthropology, Kant defines the character as a „obere[s] princip [...] aller der Fahigkeiten und Triebfedern sich zu bedienen; Empfindungen aufzuopfern und zu hemmen“,<sup>74</sup> or as the faculty to make use of all the “Kräfte, Vermögen, Talente”<sup>75</sup> of the human spirit [*Gemüt*]. In the first pages of the *Anthropologie Parow*, we read: “Man kann hier die Quelle aller Menschlichen Handlungen und Charactere der Menschen im Zusammenhange erlernen”.<sup>76</sup> W. Stark draws attention to the proximity of the terms “source” [*Quelle*] and “characters” [*Charactere*] and claims that, in the perspective adopted by Kant in these lectures, the characters have to be understood as the source of human actions.<sup>77</sup>

In the *Anthropologische Charakteristik* Kant defines the character as *Denkungsart*, and famously associates to this concept the determination of what the human being makes of himself, without being necessitated by nature.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the goal of the anthropological observation in studying the empirical manifestations of character is the identification of the modalities that make possible to relate the subject’s behavior to specific rules. Yet Kant’s

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<sup>73</sup> J.N. Tetens, *Metaphysik*, pp. 87-93.

<sup>74</sup> I. Kant, V-Anth/Collins, AA 25: 227.

<sup>75</sup> I. Kant, V-Anth/Parow, AA 25: 437.

<sup>76</sup> *Ivi*, p. 244.

<sup>77</sup> Stark (2003, p. 28).

<sup>78</sup> I. Kant, Anth, AA 07: 292; see also OP, AA 22: 545.

crucial reference to the *Denkungsart* in the definition of the character interestingly recalls another peculiar aspect of Tetens' thought, namely, the theme of language.

Tetens first shows attention to the theme of language in two essays of 1765 and 1766: *Über die Grundsätze und Nutzen der Etymologie* and *Über den Nutzen der Etymologie*.<sup>79</sup> He comes back to this issue at the beginning of the 1770es with another essay: *Über den Ursprung der Sprache und der Schrift*. At the bottom of Tetens' interest for the theme of language lies the question about the usefulness that the philosopher can draw from the knowledge of the naming-ground of a thing.<sup>80</sup> This question presupposes a fundamental conviction, namely, a harmony between *Denkungsart* and language.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Tetens believes that, besides the expressive function of language, which is perceived more immediately, there is a further function consisting in "designating" [*Anzeigen*] and naming [*Benennung*] the objects. This function allows reaching the dimension in which the objects are actually thought.<sup>82</sup> In this sense, "naming" comes to be synonym of "conceptualising": "Die Ähnlichkeit in den Gegenständen war die Ursache, warum sie unter einen Begriff, und unter einen gemeinschaftlichen Namen verbunden worden".<sup>83</sup>

As further evidence for the continuity between language and thought defended by Tetens, in these same pages, he contends: "Die Regel, daß ähnliche Dinge mit ähnlichen Tönen benennet werden, ist in der Natur der Einbildungskraft gegründet".<sup>84</sup> The normative rooting of the relationship between language and *Denkungsart* in the imagination expresses a continuity between these two elements that can be found with analogous clarity also in Kant, despite the absence of a specific thematization of language in his thought. In the lectures on the *Philosophical Encyclopedia*, we read:

Da die Form der Sprache und die Form des Denkens einander parallel und ähnlich ist, weil wir doch in Worten denken, und unsere Gedanken ändern durch die Sprache mittheilen, so giebt es auch eine Grammatic des Denkens.<sup>85</sup>

Yet, a passage of the *Anthropologie* is even more explicit:

<sup>79</sup> Both these essays were published in the *T. Gelehrte Beyträge zu den Mecklenburg-Schwerinschen Nachrichten*: the former essay was published in the issues 14, 15, and 16 of April 1765 (pp. 53-56, 57-60, 61-62), the latter essay appeared in the issues 35, 36, and 37 of September 1766 (pp. 139-140, 141-144, 145).

<sup>80</sup> J.N. Tetens, *Über den Nutzen der Etymologie*, in *Sprachphilosophische Versuche*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>81</sup> *Ivi*, p. 20: "Denn es ist eine Harmonie zwischen der Denkungsart und der Sprache, wie bei einzelnen Personen, so bei einer ganze Nation".

<sup>82</sup> On this point, see Heinz (2014, in particular pp. 372-374).

<sup>83</sup> J.N. Tetens, *Über den Ursprung der Sprache und der Schrift*, in *Sprachphilosophische Versuche*, p. 69.

<sup>84</sup> *Ivi*, p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> I. Kant, *PhilEnz*, AA 29: 31.

Alle Sprache ist Bezeichnung der Gedanken, und umgekehrt die vorzüglichste Art der Gedankenbezeichnung ist die durch Sprache, dieses größte Mittel, sich selbst und andere zu verstehen. Denken ist Reden mit sich selbst [...], folglich sich auch innerlich (durch reproductive Einbildungskraft) Hören.

The reference to the capacity of language to designate thoughts, which is the very object of the paragraph—*Bezeichnungsvermögen (facultas signatrix)*—, as well as the reference to imagination, seem to be affected by influences that are at least *also* Tetensian. Tetens deals indeed with these topics in the appendix to the eleventh *Versuch*, titled *Einige Anmerkungen über die natürliche Sprachfähigkeit des Menschen*. Beyond Tetens’ specific goals in this appendix, he conceives of language as a *Bezeichnungskunst*,<sup>86</sup> and takes for granted the structural link between human reason and language:

Die Verbindung der Vernunft und der Sprache mit einander, ihr wechselseitiger Einfluß in einander, und die Art, wie die Grundkraft des Menschen unter der Voraussetzung, daß sie aus innerer Genügsamkeit sich Ideen und Begriffe verschaffe, auch zugleich auf Wörter kommen müsse, und wie diese wiederum die Begriffe befördern, ist, wie ich meine, völlig ins Helle gesetzt.<sup>87</sup>

We can now try to draw some overall considerations in the light of element collected so far.

#### 4.3 Diverse Ways to Observe

In the confrontation between Tetens’ *Erkenntnislehre* and Kant’s anthropology, we have followed diverse paths. First, we deepened the assonances concerning the general framework of the observational method. Then, we analyzed the systematical indications coming from the role of the *Dichtkraft/Dichtungsvermögen* in the theoretical constructions of the two authors. Thirdly, we looked for some historical confirmations of our hypothesis by reconstructing Tetens’ and Kant’s common reference to Gerard concerning the genius’ productive imagination. Finally, we collected some more indirect clues on the way in which both the authors seem to conceive of the bond between language and *Denkungsart*.

Now, let us just mention what is little more than a suggestion. In the *Preface* to the *Versuche*, Tetens states:

Es giebt in den einzelnen Beyspielen allgemeine Gründe der Analogie; und es giebt besondere. Solche mit einiger Vollständigkeit zu übersehen, dient die Spekulation des Metaphysikers als das *Eine Auge*, und die Beobachtung der Natur als *das zweyte*; wenn gleich dieß letztere das fertigste ist, womit man am öftersten allein siehet.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, An. 11 [777], p. 407.

<sup>87</sup> In the appendix to the eleventh *Versuch*, Tetens explicitly refers to his previous works on these topics: [769], p. 403 “Hier will ich nicht wiederholen, was andere, und was ich selbst darüber in einer besondern Schrift gesagt habe”.

<sup>88</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, Vorrede [XXIII-XXIV], pp. 8-9 (emphasis added).

A few years later, in the well-known *Reflexion* 903, Kant defines as a “Cyclops” the “egoist der Wissenschaft”. This egoist needs in turn a second eye,

welches macht, daß er seinen Gegenstand noch aus dem Gesichtspunkte anderer Menschen ansieht. Hierauf gründet sich die humanitaet der Wissenschaften, d.i. die Leutseeligkeit des Urtheils, dadurch man es andrer Urtheil mit unterwirft, zu geben. [...] *Das zweyte Auge* ist also das der Selbsterkenntnis der Menschlichen Vernunft, ohne welches wir kein Augenmaas der Größe unserer Erkenntnis haben. Jene giebt die Standlinie der Messung. [...] Es ist auch nicht gnug, viel andre Wissenschaften zu wissen, sondern die Selbsterkenntnis des Verstandes und der Vernunft. *Anthropologia transcendentalis*.<sup>89</sup>

We are not interested here in venturing into a definition of a discipline that Kant designates (here for the only time) as “transcendental anthropology”.<sup>90</sup> Kant’s *Reflexion* looks instead like a sort of ideal integration of Tetens’ previous words, almost as if Kant would take a step further than Tetens, thereby outlining the main characteristics of his nascent anthropology. Both Kant and Tetens warn against the risk of looking at the world with only one eye, namely, that of a too specialized knowledge. Even if this eye is the one that sees better, it is also necessary to make use of another eye that, although more blurred, allows to share and generalize what the particular knowledge has ascertained. Whether we call this broader view “metaphysical speculation” or “transcendental anthropology”, it does not matter here. What looks quite significant is that both Tetens and Kant feel the need to extend the observational method from the natural sciences to the subject itself.

Thus, the image of the Cyclops brings us back to the more general picture of the observational method, which is common to Tetens and to Kant’s anthropology. In this sense, the “phenomenology of the gaze”—so to speak—that is linked to this observational exercise, provides a very last, quite suggestive, element of confrontation between Tetens and Kant’s anthropology. In the *Anthropologie* Kant defines the sense of sight as the less “affected” and he maintains that this is what makes it the noblest among the senses. However, this does not automatically ascribe to the sight a cognitive primacy over the others senses:

Der Sinn des Gesichts ist, wenn gleich nicht unentbehrlicher als der des Gehörs, doch der edelste: weil er sich unter allen am meisten von dem der Betastung, als der eingeschränktesten Bedingung der Wahrnehmungen, entfernt und nicht allein die größte Sphäre derselben im Raume enthält, sondern auch sein Organ am wenigsten afficirt fühlt (weil es sonst nicht bloßes Sehen sein würde), hiemit also einer reinen Anschauung (der unmittelbaren Vorstellung des gegebenen Objects ohne beigemischte merkliche Empfindung) näher kommt.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> I. Kant, Refl. 903, AA 15: 395 (emphasis added).

<sup>90</sup> On this fascinating topic a special issue of the *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* edited by F.V. Tommasi is forthcoming.

<sup>91</sup> I. Kant, Anth, AA 07: 156.



It is hard not to be impressed by the assonance of Kant’s passage with the following one by Tetens:

Die Vorstellungen des Gesichts haben große Vorzüge vor den Vorstellungen aus den übrigen äußern Sinnen, wodurch vielleicht einige Philosophen in ihren Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Verstand verleitet worden sind, gegen die letztern ungerecht zu seyn. [...] Nun ist es zwar offenbar, daß der Vorzug der Gesichtsvorstellungen in mancher Hinsicht allein sehr groß ist; das Gesicht ist der Sinn des Verstandes.<sup>92</sup>

The assonance becomes even clearer if we consider that both Tetens and Kant acknowledge this advantage of sight to be only quantitative, namely, a matter of intensity-degrees. Tetens adds indeed: “Aber diese Vorzüge [those of the sight] bestehen doch nur in Graden, und nicht im Wesentlichen, in so ferne sie nemlich Vorstellungen für uns sind”.<sup>93</sup>

Likely, in the *Anthropologie Friedländer* Kant clarifies what he means by the attribute of “nobility” [*edel*] referred to the sense of sight: “Die Sinne sind edler je mehr Menschen einen Antheil an ihnen nehmen können, und je mehr sie uns die Gegenstände gemeinschaftlich machen, und die sind auch die gemeinschaftlichsten z. E. Das Gesicht ist der gemeinschaftlichste Sinn”.<sup>94</sup>

If, on the one hand, one could go on for a long time in following these theoretical threads, on the other one, it is not superfluous to note that many of the indications that we have provided are just working hypotheses. These hypotheses must be verified through a further study of the texts, but they may perhaps represent a research direction that could complement the valuable works published in recent years on Tetens.

Our final image comes from the beginning of the *Preface* to the *Versuche*. Here Tetens defines humanity as a mine from which every researcher can still expect a good profit.<sup>95</sup> Undoubtedly, this image pleased Kant very much, and fits well in the broad conceptual constellation that constitutes the rise and development of his anthropology.

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<sup>93</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV 1 [41], p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> I. Kant, V-Anth/Fried, AA 25: 495-496.

<sup>95</sup> J.N. Tetens, PV, Vorrede [III], p. 1: “Die Menschheit ist noch lange eine Grube, aus der sich jeder Forscher eine gute Ausbeute versprechen kann, und ich möchte hinzusetzen, auch dann sogar, wenn er nur die schon oft bearbeiteten Gänge von neuem vornimmt”.

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