Reason and Administration: revisiting some fundamental elements

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Abstract

Administrative actions and processes are seen as part of a post-rational era, in which rationality has become a misunderstood word, and rational action is commonly associated with scientism and technocracy. We assume that this stereotype may have a background of truth, but it is actually based on a fundamental misunderstanding that we attempt to clarify. Thus, the objective of this theoretical essay is to revisit the concept of reason, which is at the foundation of social science, based on the argument that 'reason' is one and indivisible, defined here as "lucid reason." After discussing the classical conception of reason and its trans-valuation to the modern period, we provide the basis for elucidating the following question: how can someone formulate a reason of praxis, capable of guiding their praxis along an entire rational procedure? We suggest that the answer lies in the lucid reason, which consists of the unity between prudence *(phrónesis)*, guided by a contextual and instrumental logic, and intentions, based on reason in its substantive sense. From this concept we can understand the tension experienced in organizations, inherent to the life of reason, through a parenthetic attitude. We conclude that reason as a human characteristic is unique, and likewise, the discussion of rationality in the context of organizations must also be guided by the non-literal separation between two or more rationalities, recognizing administrative action as rational, in its singular sense, with the multiple faculties that compose it.

Keywords: Reason. Rationality. Administration. Praxis. *Phrónesis*.

Razão e administração: revisitando alguns elementos fundamentais

Resumo

As ações e os processos administrativos parecem estar em um período pós-racional, no qual a racionalidade se tornou uma palavra mal compreendida, sendo a ação racional comumente associada ao cientificismo e à tecnocracia. Acreditamos que esse estereótipo pode ter um fundo de verdade, mas é, sobretudo, baseado em um mal-entendido fundamental que buscamos esclarecer. Assim, o objetivo deste ensaio teórico é revisitar o conceito de razão, base de toda ciência social, a partir da argumentação de que ela é uma e indivisível, sendo denominada aqui *razão lúcida*. Após um resgate da concepção clássica de razão e sua transavaliação do período moderno, essa contextualização forneceu bases para responder a seguinte pergunta: "como formular uma razão da práxis apta a guiar a própria práxis pelos caminhos de um procedimento racional?". Sugerimos que a resposta se encontra na razão lúcida, constituída pela unidade entre a prudência (*phrónesis*), pautada por uma lógica contextual e instrumental, e as intenções, baseadas na razão em seu sentido substantivo. É a partir desse conceito que podemos compreender a tensão experimentada nas organizações, inerente à vida da razão, por meio de uma atitude parentética. Concluímos que, assim como a razão enquanto característica humana é única, a discussão da racionalidade no contexto das organizações também deve ser pautada pela não separação literal entre duas ou mais racionalidades, mas reconhecendo a ação administrativa como racional, em seu sentido singular, com as múltiplas faculdades que a compõem.

Palavras-chave: Razão. Racionalidade. Administração. Práxis. *Phrónesis*.

Razón y Administración: revisando algunos de los elementos fundamentales

Resumen

Las acciones y procesos administrativos parecen estar en una era posracional, en la que la racionalidad se ha convertido en una palabra incomprendida y la acción racional se asocia comúnmente con el cientificismo y la tecnocracia. Suponemos que este estereotipo puede tener un trasfondo de verdad, pero, sobre todo, se basa en un malentendido primario que intentamos aclarar. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este ensayo teórico es reconsiderar el concepto de razón –base de todas las ciencias sociales– desde el argumento de que esta es una e indivisible, llamada aquí "razón lúcida". Después de discutir la concepción clásica de la razón y su transvaluación del período moderno, brindamos la base para dilucidar la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cómo formular una razón de la praxis, capaz de guiar la propia praxis a lo largo de un procedimiento racional? Sugerimos que la respuesta está en la razón lúcida, que consiste en el vínculo entre la prudencia (*phrónesis*), guiada por una lógica contextual e instrumental, y las intenciones, basadas en la razón en su sentido sustantivo. Es a partir de este concepto que podemos entender la tensión experimentada en las organizaciones, inherente a la vida de la razón, a través de una actitud parentética. Concluimos que, así como la razón como característica humana es única, la discusión de la racionalidad en el contexto de las organizaciones también debe guiarse por la separación no literal entre dos o más racionalidades, pero reconociendo la acción administrativa como racional, en su sentido singular con las múltiples facultades que la componen.

Palabras clave: Razón. Racionalidad. Administración. Praxis. *Phrónesis*.

INTRODUCTION

*Scientists animated by the purpose of proving that they are
purposeless constitute an interesting subject for study.*

(A. N. Whitehead)

Reason and rationality are classical concepts that have been studied by countless authors throughout the centuries, in the most diverse fields of study. Thus, much work in Brazil has been dedicated to review these concepts in the field of Administration (PIZZA JUNIOR, 1994; SOUTO-MAIOR, 1998; SIQUEIRA, 2014; AZEVEDO and ALBERNAZ, 2015). In the sense of human faculty, which is the base of the ideas in this article, reason remains a unique and singular attribute of the human being – the essence of human nature – as defined by Aristotle (2009). In this way, it would be appropriate to use the term 'reason' when referring to the faculty of human kind and the term rationality when considering its practical expression.

This practice, or in the Greek term *prāksis*, is one of the domains in which reason can be exercised, conceived as 'reason of praxis' or 'practical rationality', the latter coined by Thomas Aquinas (PINTO, 2013). This practice relates to human actions – from the Latin *agire* – the domain in which the virtue of *phrónesis*, translated as practical wisdom or *prudentia*, is exercised. In addition to praxis, practical reasoning is also related to the domain of production – *poiesis* or to produce – by applying technical (*techné*) knowledge. According to Kavanagh (2013), one of the distinctions between *poiesis* and praxis refers to their purposes (*telos*). The first serves as a means to achieve a product or result, be it an artifact, product or technology. The second is not structured around a result; it is an end in itself, which has to do with the conduct of someone as a citizen of the *polis*.

Currently (supposedly postmodern time) negative connotation has been attributed to the word rationality and rational action is commonly associated with scientism and technocracy. Actions and administrative processes seem to enter into their post-rational period. In this sense, when related to a specialized knowledge, rationality seems to reject non-scientific or subjective knowledge: personal, social or human values; individual intuition and common sense; socially and culturally constructed cognition; and imaginative vision (ALEXANDER, 2000).

These are intriguing signs of narrowing, both in terms of extension and of depth, in the concept of reason and rationality in theories, which seem to confuse one of the forms of rationality (use and products) with 'reason' as human faculty. It is possible to say that the concept of instrumental rationality, for example, has a negative charge that detracts from the importance of such a capacity. Like some stereotypes, this may be based on truth, but it can also be based on misunderstandings and acquired prejudices. In this sense, Bolan (1999, p. 68) argues that several concepts related to administrative action have been worked under a concept that is "limited and truncated rationality".

Regarding the studies of rationality in the field of Administration in Brazil, several works have helped to build what is now called the "field of studies of rationality in organizations". Within this field, Serva, Caitano, Santos et al. (2015) highlight the emergence of two generations of work. In the first, the studies carried out a vast review of classical reason, modern reason and organizational studies, as well as attempting to identify the predominance of a "type" of rationality in organizations. The second generation of studies on rationality in administrative practice starts with the systematization of the lessons learned from the first works, recognizing their main contributions, challenges and methodologies and seeking to move forward by including new aspects and views on rationality, as is the case of the discussion on the tension and dichotomies between substantive and functional rationalities.

As for this separation between rationalities, Raz (2005) questions whether functional rationality is a distinct form of reason. According to the author, there are opinions that functional rationality is a perhaps simpler basic domain of reasons or rationalities. In order to argue and explain this conception, it is crucial to revisit the classic, modern and contemporary concept of reason, in order to clarify it from our point of view, in the attempt to make a small contribution to its reestablishment as a central concept of the Social Sciences in which Administration is inserted.

As Guerreiro Ramos (1989) and Souto-Maior (1998) already wrote in the 1980s and 1990s, we believe that the theme of rationality is far from being surpassed or overcome, since it remains central to the Administration and human emancipation. Therefore, we bring the discussion back to the context of Administration, to contribute to the understanding of how a reason of praxis is guiding one's own praxis along the paths of a rational procedure (VAZ, 1993). We argue that reason, despite the various existing denominations that have multiplied throughout the twentieth century, is whole and indivisible, which we

call *lucid reason*. These denominations are properties or functions of lucid reason, confused with this reason by means of a process that we call metonymic reductionism[1].

This article is set out in five sections. Following this introduction, the next section briefly revisits the concept of reason based on some authors from different periods who are fundamental to build an understanding. Then the discussion of the transformation and division of the concept of reason is explored. Considerations about rationality and administration follow, and, lastly, the final considerations are presented.

REVISITING THE CONCEPT OF REASON

In order to understand some of the possibilities of how reason has been conceptualized, it is crucial to revisit the concept of reason/rationality throughout the different periods, from classical antiquity, such as the effort already made and systematized by Alberto Guerreiro Ramos. Considering that there are already works devoted to this purpose, the idea here is to present an overview to clarify the main points of interest and discussion.

In classical Greek philosophy, "rationalism" refers to the discovery that human beings have a faculty called "reason", providing them access to the structure of reality (MINOGUE, 2001). 'Reason' is a term that has its origin in two other Greek terms: *noûs* and *logos*. *Noûs* means "intellectual apprehension", "apprehending the reality of being", and possibly "meaning" or "purpose". The meanings of the term *logos* (and its corresponding Latin *ratio*) include "gathering", "collect", "measuring", "calculating", thus referring to thinking, orderly speaking, with measure, clearly and comprehensibly (MARÍAS, 1966; HARVEY, 1998). In other words, it is an attribute of individuals that enables them to perceive order and harmony in themselves, in civil life and in the cosmos, as well as to transpose such order and harmony into contemplative and practical life. Therefore, individuals are not mere products of their environment, but are capable of being aware of social determinants and judging them according to universal parameters apprehended by reason.

From this point of view, Aristotle (2009) considered the human being a rational animal – literally, "the talking animal" (MARÍAS, 1966) – who needed to train 'reason' not to be driven by the passions, through acquiring good operational habits (virtues). Its object would be wisdom, prudence of essentially human activity, exercised in the domain of praxis. By living under the ethical imperatives of reason and exercising its ethics in action, the human being becomes a political actor who thinks and acts (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989). He is able to establish abstract and practical criteria for a good life and a good society, aiming at human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) or, in other words, to the realization of the potential capacities as citizens. In this classical sense, reason "was understood to be a force active in the human psyche which enables the individual to distinguish between good and evil, false and genuine knowledge, and, accordingly, to order his personal and social life" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 2).

In its classical Greek version, this normative function of reason makes it possible to understand the structure of reality by ordering the priorities and values for itself and for the associated human life. The allegory of Plato's cave (chapter VII of his work The Republic) is one of the founding images of rationalism (MINOGUE, 2001). In presenting reality as being composed of two domains, Plato shows us that through reason it is possible to perceive the world of ideas (or forms), from which transcends the sensible (or material) world.

With Scholasticism (around 1100 to 1500 AD), the Greek ideology was rescued and incorporated into Christian theology, with due adaptation, through analysis and synthesis. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was the culmination of this period, having successfully completed a truly *sociological reduction*[2] of Aristotle's work by integrating it into medieval theology and philosophy. It was a moment of history that greatly supported reason, even in its classical sense: great theoretical foundations were set up that sought rational explanations for the revealed truth of Christianity. Stark (2007) explores this period and shows how reason shaped Western culture and institutions. This influence came from trust in reason and logic as fundamental tools for understanding religious truth. The author affirms that "the founders of the Church have always preached that reason is a supreme good, a gift from God, and the tool that enables a *progressive development* in the understanding of the Bible and Revelation" (STARK, 2007, p. 43, italic added).

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[1] For more information on metonymy please see Ceia (2017).
[2] For further information on sociological reduction see Guerreiro Ramos (1996).

Two examples can illustrate this support for reason. Anselm of Canterbury (1038-1109), known as the father of Scholasticism, was the author of countless works, one of the most celebrated being the *Proslogium*, which offers rational proof of the existence of God. It is considered a masterpiece of philosophy, to the point that Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) studied Anselm's work almost 700 years after it was published. The second example is, again, Thomas Aquinas. Known as the prince of Scholasticism, he had Islamic philosophers among his interlocutors. He believed that it would be possible to convert such philosophers to Christianity through rational debate and on the basis of respect for the free will of those involved. The debate used the famous "Disputed Questions" method, also known as scholastic dialectics, which consisted of the following logical structure: a topic is presented in the form of a question (or "research problem" as we would say today) and opposing arguments are exposed; such arguments are contested one by one by demonstrating their logical inconsistencies. Finally, the answer is presented as a proposed solution to the question raised, and then all the arguments opposed to the solution are answered, seeking to undo all the apparent contradictions.

This synthesis between faith and reason, however, began to crumble at the beginning of the Modern Age. The rationality of Descartes (1596-1650) and Hobbes' (1588-1679) and Locke's (1632-1704) empiricism were a kind of uprising against Aristotle and scholastic philosophy and its method. These methods had, at the background, the rejection towards the Christian revelation as a component of the research object, as well as having the exclusive adoption of the natural world as a phenomenon to discover. From the seventeenth century, the concept of reason is interpreted as a calculation forecasting tool and the argument put forward by the great rationalist and empiricist philosophers was that modern science was the model of excellence for understanding the world. Thus, the reason of seventeenth-century thinkers was less and less associated with human faculty, wisdom, and became concerned with the ends and values of what later came to be called *instrumental reason* (MINOGUE, 2001).

Thomas Hobbes used instrumental reason as a basis for proposing the principles upon which the state can be based. He went on to present "modern reason" for the first time in a clear and articulate way. In his book *Leviathan*, Hobbes (1979, p. 27) states that reason "is nothing but reckoning (that is, adding and subtracting) of the consequences of general names agreed upon for the marking and signifying of our thoughts". According to Guerreiro Ramos (1989, p. 3), "Hobbes intended to strip reason of any normative role in the field of theoretical construction and associated human life". In other words, what Hobbes did was a "metonymic reductionism", he took a specific part (instrumental rationality) and used to refer to the whole (lucid reason), assuming that this simplification had a real identity rather than mere figure of speech.

With the development of empirical science in the seventeenth century, one of the bases of knowledge observation was developed in "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" by John Locke. He was skeptical of syllogistic reasoning and in particular denied the Cartesian doctrine that reason is innate in human beings. However, Locke's empiricist philosophy was not entirely free of rationalism, especially in its conception of the faculties of mind. Empiricism has been refined in the work of David Hume (1711-1776), in a philosophical development line that, for some purposes, culminated in the synthesis between rationalism and empiricism by Kant (1740-1804), when he argued that the world of the phenomena can be understood only in terms of the set of categories (substance, causality, etc.), previously established in the human mind, and it is impossible to know reality itself. The "epistemological subject" emerges, as an intermediating entity between reality "out there" and the knowledge acquired by the human mind.

In the following century many thinkers of the French Enlightenment, with Rousseau (1712-1778) as one of its greatest exponents, considered reason an instrument of criticism of Western culture. These movements of thought broke out in 1789 in the French Revolution, in which reason was confronted with experience in epistemology and with revelation in theology, as well as being confronted with tradition in politics. Reason was now a revolutionary principle for reforming social and political life. In the nineteenth century, rationalism influenced the understanding of history as a doctrine of progress. The positivist view of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was that humanity had changed from a theological stage, through a period of metaphysics, and was moving into a positivist era. Since humans had learned to control nature, should they not also learn to control society in the interests of human happiness? The practical aspects of this form of rationalism have instrumental reason as their criterion, in the sense that the thought is detached from the reflection and interpretation of the problem itself – disregarding the ethical-normative property of reason – and the greater objective becomes the scope of the problem's solution (MINOGUE, 2001), gathering the means (usually technical and technological) to achieve this goal efficiently and effectively.

Realizing the problem of distortion of the modern understanding of the concept of reason, which is unlike that discovered by classical Greek thinkers, Guerreiro Ramos (1989) immersed himself in the work of Max Weber (1864-1920). Webber was

considered the founder of functional analysis for having recognized the logic of market as a functional requirement of a particular episodic social system, in addition to rejecting British empiricism, naturalism, and historical determinism.

Weber tried, however with limited success, to qualify the notion of rationality, distinguishing the formal or instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) – oriented by calculated ends – from material, substantial or value rationality (*Wertrationalität*) – that is not characterized by human actions oriented by subsequent results (WEBER, 1991; GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989). Although Weber made such a distinction, Guerreiro Ramos (1989, p. 5-6) considers that "*Wertrationalität* is only a footnote in his work; does not play a systematic role in his studies" and thus Ramos concludes that Weber chose "resignation" as a methodological position in his studies of social life.

This immersion in Weber's work, led Guerreiro Ramos to use the work of Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), who relied on Max Weber to establish his distinction between substantial and functional rationality. Mannheim (1962) defined rationalities from an ethical point of view, since he believed that functional rationality could limit ethical qualifications, judgment, and individuals' critical capacity. Justifying his perception, the author argues that functional rationality, as seen from the development of industrialization in modern society, tends to encompass the totality of human life, limiting the autonomy of the individual. Guerreiro Ramos (1989) considered Mannheim's grounding as a means of acting against the state of modern industrial societies, but without offering a social science perspective in line with his own notion of substantial rationality.

The Frankfurt School was also concerned about the question of rationality, considering that "in modern society, rationality has become an instrument disguised as perpetuating social repression, instead of being synonymous with true reason" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 8). Based on this notion, the authors of the Frankfurt School "intend to restore the role of reason as an ethical category and, therefore, as a reference for a critical theory of society" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 8).

Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), one of the main representatives of the Frankfurt School, perceived modern human being as one who tends to become a shrunken ego about to evaporate, forgetting their rationalities that once made them transcend their position in reality (HORKHEIMER, 2002). The author justifies his position by stating that the modern individual has lost the ability to use their language to convey meanings and refuses to accept that people in modern society adopt the usual behavior as the basis for deciding the meaning of rationality.

The philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1929-) is considered one of the direct heirs of the Frankfurt School. The notion of rationality and the construction of a critical theory of society stand out in his works. Habermas relied on German idealism and the idea of the emancipation of the human being through the development of their potential for self-reflection. He argues that "a consequence of the dominance exercised by instrumental rationality over modern societies is that systematically distorted communication prevails among people" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 14). Thus, Habermas proposed a distinction between instrumental action and communication or symbolic action. The first would be subordinated to technical rules, demonstrated as correct or incorrect, and the second – symbolic interaction or communication action – is defined by the interpersonal relations free of external compulsion and having its norms legitimized "only through the inter-subjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 14).

In spite of these valuable approaches, Guerreiro Ramos identifies that only Eric Voegelin (1901-1984) argued that "modern reason expresses a deformed experience of reality", that is, the conception of modern reason is the fruit of an understanding of the deficient relationship with reality. Voegelin (1961, p. 284) made a striking criticism of the oblivion of the content of classical texts, such as Plato and Aristotle, and stated that this situation is reflected in human life as a symptom of the deformation of the psyche, leading to "systematic confusion of reason" perpetrated during the modern period.

Regarding rationality, Voegelin (1961) distinguishes between pragmatic and noetic reason, which correspond to the same types as presented by Weber and Mannheim. Voegelin's intention was to show that "the quality of a society can be gauged in the light of noetic reason. This quality is greater the more the noetic reason assumes the character of creative force and exerts influence on human life" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1983, p. 39).

Guerreiro Ramos (1989) indicates that both rationalities are fundamental categories of associated human life, in different conceptions. However, he denounces that modern social science presupposes the human being as a creature who only behaves from the calculation between means and ends, to the point that he does not distinguish between vices and virtues. Thus, the metonymic reductionism – perpetrated by Hobbes – still echoes in the Social Sciences today, when seeking the theoretical legitimation of a totally socialized vision of a human being that is not able to cross the boundaries delimited by the acquired cultural influence.

HAS SINGULAR BECOME PLURAL?

The recent interest in nature and in the assumptions of instrumental rationality was inspired by a considerable number of arguments showing that reason presupposes other forms or types of rationality (RAZ, 2005). The question is whether the classical understanding of reason has been divided into other concepts, considering that these other "concepts" of substantive and instrumental reasons are usually found in Brazilian Organizational Studies (SERVA, CAITANO, SANTOS et al., 2015).

On this dichotomy, Raz (2005) presents other questions, discussed here:

- Are instrumental reasons different types of motives, whose normativity differs in their underlying logic from moral reasons or other types of reasons?
- In the same way, *is instrumental rationality a distinct form of reason*?

According to Raz, there are opinions that instrumental rationality is a basic, perhaps simpler domain of reasons or rationalities that, for some, exhaust practical reasons and practical rationality, while for others, it constitutes the most elementary and theoretically less problematic part of reason – opinion with which we agree and defend. In other words, instrumental/functional rationality acquires meaning when it is "circumstantial", i.e., when one does something rationally in view of the circumstances of life.

Azevedo and Albernaz (2015) point out that due to the historical circumstances of modernity – when, what Ramos (1989) called *transvaluation* (*or transevaluation) of reason*) occurred – Guerreiro Ramos opted for an adjective for 'reason', coining the concept of 'substantive reason' in an attempt to avoid interpretive misunderstandings about the peculiarity of his meaning for the concept. Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, Eric Voegelin and Jürgen Habermas were important thinkers who, aware of the process of transvaluation of reason, also adopted, respectively, the terms substantive reason, substantial reason, noetic reason and communicative reason (AZEVEDO and ALBERNAZ, 2015), opposing the metonymic reductionism of reason. In this way, substantive rationality acquires meaning when it transcends circumstantial (or cultural) reality in search of its definition.

In the modern period it was possible to observe an intellectual effort to re-signify reason and its role in the conduct of individual and personal human life (AZEVEDO and ALBERNAZ, 2015). Thus reason ceased to be that "active force in the human psyche" and became, in Hobbes and after him, a kind of "capacity" acquired by the personal "effort" that "enables" the individual to "do the 'calculation utility of consequences'" (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 3).

The effects of viewing the individual this way (as one that only reacts and conforms to external circumstances), has been felt in various fields of science, but perhaps its greatest operational effects are felt in organizational theory such as the implications pointed out by Azevedo and Albernaz (2015, p. 601):

> [...] (a) downgraded human rational activity by disregarding the role of *noûs* and *logos* (and even *phrónesis*) in reason; (b) made it possible for reason to be articulated no longer from its capacity to enable transcendence, but as an exclusively immanent element, which (c) opened an opportunity for it to be redefined from the more operative aspects in the world, culminating in the exclusive meaning of instrumental or formal reason; (d) implied in the purging of the *psykhé*'s reason (that is, definitive loss of its anthropocentric character); and its (e) replacement on the level of social relations, social systems and history; resulting in (f) a conception of human nature defined from the human socio-behavioral dimension.

To return to the question presented at the beginning of this discussion – whether instrumental rationality is a distinct form or concept of reason – and searching for a possibility of justified understanding, the definition of "concept" is presented. Santos (2015, p. 53) points out that

> [...] we should not confuse the concept with the word that expresses it. The concept is the product of a mental operation; the word, only its utterance, a verbal signal. Therefore, we must avoid falling into verbalism, which consists in the excessive use of words, without precise content.

From this clarification, instrumental reason as presented here, in the sense attributed by modern thinkers and pointed out by Guerreiro Ramos when referring to the transvaluation of reason, is nothing more than a word (set of words) that enunciates the socio-morphic vision of the human being that was established in the modern period. However, the concept

of reason – as advocated by Guerreiro Ramos and other authors – is accompanied with the adjectives 'substantial', 'noetic' and 'communicative' in order to refer to its original, as understood in the classical view.

In this way, the concept of instrumental rationality is contained in the concept of reason (such as *noûs* and *logos*), just like that of substantive rationality. The unit of reason is called (in this study) *lucid reason*. From this point on, it is possible to answer the question: *Has singular become plural*?

We consider that singular remains singular, although the concept of reason remains linked to its origins, while the possibility of speaking of "plurals" is due to the "transvaluation" of the singular from the modern period.

RACIONALITY AND ADMINISTRATION: POINTS TO CONSIDER

In Social Sciences, the concept of rationality is multi-semantic. However, rationality is a value exhibited by desirable types of behavior and accepted by most social scientists, although they may doubt that the ideal can be achieved (Kekes, 1979). One sign of this is that rationality is used in many different ways by social scientists.

For the theory of Administration, Souto-Maior (1998, p. 968) clarifies that the concept of rationality is used to

> [...] explain how individuals and organizations behave in general, and make decisions in particular, to make judgments about these behaviors, to design organizations and evaluate them, to understand and predict interorganizational interaction ... and finally, most important of all, to understand what it means and how we can move towards true emancipation as human beings.

However, Kekes (1979) considers a theory of rationality to be necessary because from this theory it is possible to analyze and criticize the use of rationality. The situation becomes even more complex considering the fact that the theory of rationality is not only normative. It is also empirical, for the prediction and explanation of human behavior, which makes it even more difficult to understand.

The possible existence of a contemporary theory of rationality has been highlighted by Spohn (2002). The author says that the theory of rationality has become extensive and rich because of the search for its more general principles, although many questions are still far from answered. For Spohn, the theory of rationality has actually grown into a science of its own, but many details have become so special that philosophical relevance has been lost. However, Spohn (2002) argues that the general theme is genuinely philosophical.

Kekes (1979) realized that rationality has been the subject of academic analysis since the time of the great Greek philosophers, but largely underlies ethics in its concern with goals, reasoning, and logic. The empirical study of human rational behavior is quite recent, although it can also be found in important precursors, such as Nicholas Machiavelli (1469-1527) and Adam Smith (1723-1790).

Social sciences, with the exception of neoclassical economics, generally incorporate explicitly human cognitive limitations and social influences into their theories, using some version of limited rationality formulated mainly by Simon (2001). On this approach in Organizational Theory, Guerreiro Ramos (1989) indicates the need to re-examine, since the conception of limited rationality is inserted in the discussion of human rationality in economic theory and is, therefore, an instrumental rationality.

This idea expresses the notion that people make decisions seeking to satisfy their aspiration levels in a sufficient place to feel comfortable, but not necessarily to achieve an optimal outcome. March and Simon (1975), began with the critique of the concept of maximizing rationality, since it gives the individual the unrestricted ability to maximize and achieve goals in the best way. In this sense, the authors affirm "the concept of limited rationality presupposes the existence of an objective one, in which the real alternatives, the real consequences and the real utilities are present" (MARCH and SIMON, 1975, p. 194).

Guerreiro Ramos (1989) clarifies that in this theory the criteria of economicity appear as the only criteria of rationality, without any limit between which spheres this concept (rationality) has validity. This theory, therefore, differs from the classical concept of rationality, which refers to Aristotle, who expressed the recognition of a human being or society faithful to an objective standard of values placed above any economic imperatives.

Based on this same recognition pointed out by Guerreiro Ramos (1989), authors such as Lapintie (2002) and Alexander (2000) discuss a broader view of rationality for administrative functions, such as planning, from a so-called "post-postmodernist perspective".

Alexander (2000) argues that there are different types of rationality and advocates that it is broader and more diverse than the dimension known as instrumental rationality, which has been associated with organizational planning, for example. In order to defend his thesis, the author elaborates an integrating framework that associates complementary paradigms of planning with several forms of rationality. From the identification of these different paradigms, Alexander (2000) suggests that different types of rationality can be associated with different types of planning and shows that planning, in principle, can be nothing other than rational, in its singular sense, but with multiple parts that compose it.

Overcoming an inadequate conception of rationality seems, for authors like Alexander (2000) and Lapintie (2002), essential for the development of new tools for the reflective professional. However, Lapintie (2002) argues that the transition from the instrumental rationality of rational planning to its dialogical and substantive alternatives is often a difficult task because it goes beyond setting goals. The sense of action, of personal relationships and of life itself is not exhausted in the definition of goals. For Lapintie, there is no reason to suppose that the unformulated meanings (more subjective) are less important than the formulated objectives, reflecting the existence of a constant tension and existence of both rational dimensions in administrative theory and practice.

As for this tension, Guerreiro Ramos (1983) dedicates a chapter to explore the themes "ethical problems in the organization" and "ethical tensions in organizations". In these texts, the author presents the Weberian terms "ethics of conviction" and "ethics of responsibility", in which the first – also called absolute value ethics – is implicit in actions concerning values, while the second is contained in actions for purposes. Such ethics are closely related to the rationality that guides the action of individuals, however, not necessarily in an antagonistic way. Box 1 presents the synthesis of these Weberian categories.

Box 1

Synthesis of main Weberian categories

Social Action	Criteria	Process	Ethics
Rational action related to ends	Funcional Rationality	Adaptation means/ends	Ethics of Responsibility
Rational action related to value	Substantive Rationality	Valuation orientation	Ethics of conviction or absolute value

Source: Serafim (2001).

Max Weber (2002) perceived the existence of a kind of dilemma between ethics of conviction and principles linked to the ethics of responsibility in his study of the vocation and *éthos* of political agents. For him, the person with a political vocation shows to have the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility in a complementary and not directly opposed way (ENDERLE, 2007). It is possible to observe the author's suggestion that the tension is in the encounter of ethics in praxis and not in the encounter of the so-called substantive and instrumental rationalities, because, as previously shown, reason is not a dichotomous concept, but it is observed from different perspectives brought with modernity.

In this sense, Freund (1970, p. 28) also observes that "however theoretically the two morals may be clearly differing typical constructs, but in practice it is perfectly possible to act with both conviction and a sense of responsibility in working for a cause" Guerreiro Ramos (1983, p. 43) seems to agree when saying that in organizations:

> [...] congruence between the two ethics can be admissible to the extent that the qualifications and nature of the work are consistent with the values of the individual. Consequently, except in extraordinary cases, no individual organizes conduct under the exclusive species of either ethics.

Therefore, there is,

> [...] a continuous tension between the planned organizational systems and the actors, and affirm that the individual must strive to eliminate this tension, thus arriving at a condition of organic equilibrium with the company (example of cognitive policy that a psychology motivational advocates, on supposedly scientific grounds), *corresponds to recommending deformation of the human. Only a deformed being*

> *can find in the planned systems, the medium suitable for their own updating* (GUERREIRO RAMOS, 1989, p. 99, italic added).

On this tension in the organizational environment, Enderle (2007) describes how the business ethics of today can be based on a new and different conception that seeks to overcome the "profound antithesis" (so called by the author), between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility, without neglecting the tensions between internal attitudes and results of external actions. Ethical standards can either be based on convictions or responsibility, without an ethic of conviction being the same as irresponsibility or an ethic of responsibility being guided by indifference to convictions. The ethic of conviction is not only a matter of internal conviction and attitude, but necessarily relates to action that is also external in nature, as ethically justified political goals (ENDERLE, 2007). To that extent, the two ethics are complementary rather than diametrically opposed.

Souto-Maior (1998), in his study of rationalities, considered that the rational action referred to ends, that is, strictly related to the ethics of responsibility as presented in Table 1. There is a distinction between individual and collective rationality. According to the author,

> [...] the notion that in the calculation of means/ends of instrumental rationality no altruistic objective is included. This misconception comes from the identification of this rationality with economic rationality. [...] But instrumental rationality only demands that action be based on the calculation of the means adequate to attain the ends of the individual, be they selfish or altruistic. [...] Thus, middle-purpose calculus may be ethical, and a more responsible method, than the choice made entirely based on intrinsic value (SOUTO-MAIOR, 1998, p. 971).

The author also believes that it is perfectly accepted for the two dimensions of rationality to coexist in a greater or lesser degree of conflict, reinforcing the argument presented here for the existence of a single definition of reason with different intrinsic dimensions. He concludes that both substantive and instrumental rationality, as we know it today, are limiting cases. They are located at the extremes of a continuum that includes an infinity of intermediate positions, where *lucid reason* is found.

In order to illustrate Souto-Maior's (1998) thoughts, we conducted a research on works produced by Brazilian authors about rationality and adding new elements that help to understand reason in the context of organizations and offering alternatives to the debate. Some of the elements portrayed in the works researched are the concept of *phrónesis* or practical wisdom, in the researches by Caitano (2017) and Domenico and Pimentel (2017); dilemmas and moral development in the researches of Costa (2015) and Ames, Costa and Serafim (2016); and intuition and decision making by Andriotti, Freitas and Martens (2014). In addition, there are theoretical-historical discussions found in the review by Costa, Fragoso Júnior, Alves et al. (2017) and in the systematization of three generations of works on studies of rationality in organizations, presented by Serva, Caitano, Santos et al. (2015).

In this way, *phrónesis* has been considered as an alternative to the limits of the concept of reason and as a methodological approach, by Caitano (2017). For Domenico and Pimentel (2017), *phrónesis* was considered as the practical wisdom for managing change. Regarding intuition and decision making, Andriotti, Freitas, and Martens (2014) suggest that intuition cannot be placed in opposition to the rational decision-making process, but rather as complementary, and that reason and intuition are always present in the decision-making process. In the same way, Medeiros and Souza (2011) find this aspect of complementarity between the instrumental and substantive reason.

Costa, Fragoso Júnior, Alves et al. (2017) find theoretical-historical approaches – especially due to the centennial celebration of Guerreiro Ramos in 2016. Their review of articles indicates a reduction in the average number of publications compared to the analysis of production conducted by Serva, Caitano, Santos et al. (2015). On the other hand, Costa, Fragoso Júnior, Alves et al. (2017) affirm that Guerreiro Ramos (1989) proposes a substantive organization[3] as an alternative to economic organizations, in establishing the delimitation of the market enclave and its domination over other spheres of life. In this case, it is necessary to reinforce the assumption of Guerreiro Ramos (1989), based on Aristotle, that reason is an attribute eminently of the individual, and not something belonging to the organization or to a social group.

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[3] In this case "substantive organizations" is a figure of speech. In fact – and being coherent with Guerreiro Ramos' approach, there is a "substantive theory of organizations".

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on an initial question that brought several other types of concerns discussed throughout this article, we sought to present possible answers a) that would lead the reader to reflect on the configuration of reason in administrative action; and, more particularly to b) individuals within organizations.

This article did not intend to reveal an innovation in the field of rationality studies, but to bring to the surface a discussion that has sometimes been forgotten or neglected in works on a possible dichotomy around the conception of rationality. In this sense, we argue against separating between two or more reasons – since, as a human characteristic, it is unique – and recognize that, as rational beings, we live with *dimensions of reason* (which constitute lucid reason). These dimensions are formed by the union of prudence (*phrónesis*), ruled by a contextual and instrumental logic, and intentions, based on reason in its substantive sense.

Thus, the argument developed here rescues the classical conception of rationality and how this conception is present and related to the studies of organizations and the individuals within them. As Alexander (2000) warned, the understanding of rationality in organizations reveals that it is broader and more diverse than the dimension known as instrumental rationality, and thus, administrative action is rational in its singular sense, but formed by multiple faculties.

The contextualization on the rationality presented here provided the bases to draw some possible conclusions on "how is it possible to formulate a reason of the praxis able to guide its own praxis by the ways of a rational procedure?". The answer to this question seems to rest on "lucid reason", which is the unity between prudence – guided by an instrumental logic (*logos*) – and intentions, based on reason in its substantive sense (*noûs*). This prudence is related to the concept of *phrónesis*, that is, to practical wisdom and the right measure to withstand the tension inherent in the life of lucid reason by means of a parenthetic attitude[4].

This meaning of reason restores a fundamental question: What is the purpose of the Administration?

The search for efficiency/effectiveness and survival of the organization becomes a means to a more noble end: human emancipation and search for meaning. The theory of organizations and its practice, in fact, consider the individual as a multidimensional being in search of not only the fulfillment of their physical and social needs, but also the meaning of life, which is possible only considering that the human being bears lucid reason. In this way, problems and dilemmas can be equated differently on this basis. An example is the ethical problems faced by individuals in organizations: a correct analysis and practical propositions about these issues is only possible from the perspective of the tension between the ethics of responsibility and conviction, which requires the understanding of reason as a whole, as portrayed in this article.

This article focus on the descriptive aspect of the theme. A suggestion for future research is to address explanatory aspects regarding the roots of metonymic reductionism or transvaluation of reason. Here are three topics to guide future research:

1. The suppression of the *final cause* in science, based on the theory of the causes of Aristotle;
2. The emphasis and adoption of *nominalism* - as opposed to the realism of Aristotle and Scholasticism – as the main metaphysical assumption; and
3. The epistemological assumption of *polylogism*, the belief that there is an irreconcilable multiplicity of logical structures of mind (*logos*) that depend on the characteristics of a nation, group or body.

These three topics become some of the latent foundations of modernity and are adopted by much of today's Social Sciences. Guerreiro Ramos, in formulating his substantive theory of organizations, sought an approach that did not presuppose these three topics. This will be the subject of a future article.

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4 For more on parenthetic attitude, see Guerreiro Ramos (2001).

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