

Kant's Transcendental Ideal as Fiction

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Le fictif, en effet, n'est pas par essence ce qui est trompeur, mais, à proprement parler, ce que nous appelons le symbolique.

Jacques Lacan

What can be said, from the point of view of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, about Kant's relation to fiction? At first glance, the answer is quite ambiguous; if the Transcendental Analytic is taken as our starting point, it seems that Kant is one of the greatest opponents of fiction, but if we, contrariwise, accept the point of view of Transcendental Dialectic it seems that the answer should be precisely the opposite. Do we need to choose between the two apparently irreconcilable answers or is there something wrong with this option as such? In our opinion, the latter is true. One of the differences between Transcendental Analytic and Transcendental Dialectic is, that they are based on a different theory of truth: whereas Analytic is based on classical theory of truth which can be shortly summed up as *adequatio rei et intellectus*, the Dialectic does not concern the truth conceived as adequation of concepts to objects. In Dialectics the relation to objects has no role at all, because main relation is the relation of concepts to concepts. In other words, the basic premise of Analytic is that concepts, which are not related to sensible intuition, are »without sense, that is, without meaning« (B 299)¹, for, as famous Kant's dictum goes, »thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.« (B 75) Strawson in his *Bounds of Sense* summarized this thesis with the so-called *principle of significance*. »This is the principle that there can be no legitimate, or even meaningful, employment of ideas or concepts which does not relate them to empirical or experiential conditions of their application. If we wish to use a concept in a certain way, but are unable to specify the kind of experience-situation to which the concept, used in that way, would apply, then we are not really envisaging any legitimate use of that concept at all.«² In short, if the concept transcends the bounds of experience the illusion arises. Can we, from this point of view, give a straight and plain answer

¹ Kant's works are cited from: Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, Frankfurt am Main 1989. In the parentheses, the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited. All translations of Kant are mine.

² P. F. Strawson: *The Bounds of Sense*, Routledge, London 1975, p. 16.

concerning Kant's conception of fiction? In other words, is for Kant the term fiction equivalent to illusion? Our answer is negative. It is true that Kant uses numerous expressions for illusion (besides *Illusion* and *Schein*, illusion and semblance, there are also expressions like *Wahn*, *Blendwerk*, *Hirngespinnst*, *Täuschung*, *Geschöpf*, *Betrug*, *Chimäre*, *Erdichtung*, *Einbildung* etc.), but he never identifies, in the very strict sense of a word, illusion with fiction. Even more. He obviously differentiates between both terms since he reserves the term fiction for a very special concept, i.e., the idea. The only Kant's utilization of the term fiction in the *Critique of Pure Reason* links fiction with ideas, ideas, which are for Kant nothing but heuristic fictions, *heuristische Fiktionen*. (B 799)

Consideration of ideas, as is well known, belongs to the Transcendental Dialectic, which, incidentally, comprises almost a half of *Critique of Pure Reason*. But this half could be, from the point of view of Strawsonian principle of significance, easily cut off, since Dialectics contains, as it seems, nothing valuable for Strawson. This is in fact Strawson's authentic conviction, for he claims: »After construction, demolition; after the Transcendental Analytic, the Transcendental Dialectic. (...) The primary aim of the Dialectic is the exposure of metaphysical illusion; the primary instrument of exposure is the principle of significance.«³

Although it is accompanied by »natural, but inevitable illusion« (B 354), Transcendental Dialectic is, at least in our opinion, anything but pure exposure of error. One cannot just cut off the ideas and the dialectic of pure reason, as Strawson recommends. The problem is that »it is possible to tell reality from fictions (...) the legitimate use of transcendental categories in the constitution of reality from their illegitimate use which brings about 'transcendental illusion'; however, as soon as we renounce fiction and illusion, we lose reality itself; *the moment we subtract fictions from reality, reality itself loses its discursive-logical consistency*. Kant's name for these fictions, of course, is »transcendental Ideas«, whose status is merely regulative and not constitutive: Ideas do not simply add themselves to reality, they literally supplement it; our knowledge of objective reality can be made consistent and meaningful only by way of reference to Ideas. In short, Ideas are indispensable to the effective functioning of our reason.«⁴

To see more concretely what it means that for Kant ideas are something indispensable and that ideas are heuristic fictions, we will turn in this paper to the third chapter of Transcendental Dialectic, the chapter entitled *Ideal of Pure*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, Duke University Press, Durham 1993, p. 88-89.

Reason, which is divided into seven sections. These can be, for the convenience of interpretation, separated further into three main parts: the first part deals with Kant's conception of ideal in general and the transcendental ideal, comprising the first and the second section, the second includes sections from three to six and it contains Kant's critique of traditional proofs for the existence of God, the third part is identical with the seventh section and it concerns some consequences of Kant's dealing with the idea of the supreme being for the rational and natural theology.

The only »part« which interests us here is the first one. It contains Kant's treatment of transcendental ideal⁵ and it also represents the clue for the second and the third part. The reason for that being the fact that the first part deals with the idea of *omnitudo realitatis*, whereas the other two parts deal with the link of this idea with the idea of absolutely necessary being. The reason for the link of both ideas lies in the fact that there is, of course, no difficulty in giving a verbal definition of absolutely necessary being, »namely, that it is something the non-existence of which is impossible. But this yields no insight into the conditions which make it necessary to regard the non existence of a thing as utterly unthinkable. It is precisely these conditions that we desire to know, in order that we may determine whether or not, in resorting to this concept, we are thinking anything at all.« (B 621) These conditions are another expression for the idea of *omnitudo realitatis* and Kant has convincingly shown that all proofs for the existence of God necessarily contain the following step: »The necessary being can be determined in one way only, that is, by one out of each possible pair of opposed predicates. It must therefore be thoroughly determined through its own concept. Now there is only one possible concept which thoroughly determines a priori, namely, the concept of *ens realissimum*. The concept of the most real being is therefore the only one through which a necessary being can be thought.« (B 633-634) In other words, all speculative proofs for the existence of the supreme being are based for Kant only on reciprocity of two concepts or ideas: the idea of the most real being and the idea of absolutely necessary being. (See B 816-817) But this reciprocity, we would like to add, is not mutual – although the concept of the most real being is the only concept through which a necessary being could be, but in fact cannot be thought, Kant tries to show that we *can* think the idea of *omnitudo realitatis* without linking it with *ens necessarium*. Namely, Kant's basic task is to develop the concept of transcendental ideal and to separate it from idea of

⁵ This section is closely related to Kant's pre-critical work *The Only Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763). For basic parallels and differences between the two works see: Dieter Henrich: *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis, Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1967², p. 137 ff.

absolutely necessary being to prevent every, even the slightest possible link between these two concepts. Furthermore, not only that there is no necessary link between the above mentioned concepts, there is also no necessary link, at least in our opinion, between transcendental ideal and theological idea of God. Although we cannot think the idea of God without the transcendental ideal, we can perfectly think, as we will at least try to show in our paper, the transcendental ideal without theological consequences. It is true that even the transcendental ideal itself originates some sort of illusion, but Kant emphasizes that this illusion is, although natural, not inevitable. This proposition of Kant is in apparent opposition to the usual description of illusion in *Critique of Pure Reason*, but this is due to the fact that for Kant, transcendental ideal is »based on a natural, not on a merely arbitrary idea«. (B 609)

But what is in fact Kant's conception of the ideal? Kant begins the section entitled *About the Ideal in general* with the distinction between concepts of understanding and concepts of reason, i.e. ideas. Basic difference between the first and the second concepts is that, to the latter, no corresponding object can ever be given in sense-experience, which is the primary reason why there can be no transcendental deduction of the ideas. But in spite of the fact that no object adequate to any transcendental idea can ever be found within experience, ideas are not arbitrarily invented. They are imposed by the very nature of reason itself. Reason needs ideas because they contain a certain completeness to which no possible empirical knowledge can ever attain. »In them reason aims at a systematic unity, to which it seeks to approximate the unity that is empirically possible, without ever completely reaching it.« (B 596) After this brief review of the term idea, Kant introduces⁶ the concept of the ideal: »By the ideal I understand the idea, not merely *in concreto*, but in *individuo*, that is, as an individual thing, determinable or even determined by the idea alone.« (B 596) It means that the *ideal* seems to be even further removed from objective reality than ideas and that is one reason more for Kant to prevent possible misconceptions. In order to do that, he emphasizes that: 1. we cannot realize any ideal; 2. ideal as such does not possess objective reality, however, it is not to be identified with the illusion and with products of imagination; 3. ideal does not have creative, but merely a certain practical power. But why reason needs ideals at all? There are two needs of reason, the first is a practical one: as the idea gives the *rule*, the ideal »serves as the *archetype* for the thorough determination of the copy; and we have no other standard for our actions than the conduct of this divine man within us, with which we compare and judge ourselves, and so reform ourselves, although we can never attain to the

⁶ The term ideal is, strictly speaking, used by Kant already before (see: B 398, 434-435), but it is here that Kant gives the definition of the term.

perfection thereby prescribed.« (B 597) The second need is a speculative one: »Reason, in its ideal, aims, on the contrary, at thorough determination in accordance with *a priori* rules. Accordingly it thinks for itself an object which it regards as being thoroughly determinable in accordance with principles. The conditions that are required for such determination are not, however, to be found in experience, and the concept itself is therefore transcendent.« (B 599)

The introduction of the ideal in general is followed by the introduction of the »*The transcendental Ideal*« or »*prototypon transcendentale*«, as the second section is formally entitled. The section begins with two principles which both consider possibility. The first one is called the principle of *determinability*, the second one the principle of *thorough* determination. The first principle is more or less self-evident and unproblematic. According to it »every concept is, in respect of what is not contained in it, undetermined, and is subject to the principle of *determinability*.« (B 599) Though the expression *contain*⁷ is very indefinite and at least disputable, it is quite clear that according to this principle, which abstracts itself from the entire content of knowledge and is concerned merely with its logical form, of *every two* contradictorily opposed predicates only one can belong to a concept. In other words, either *a* or *non-a* can belong to a concept, *tertium non datur*. This principle is based on the principle of contradiction, and is therefore a purely logical principle.

Although it would not seem so at first sight, the more problematic one is the second principle, the principle of thorough determination which Kant introduces here for the first time. The place alone of this introduction – Kant introduces it in the middle of the transcendental Dialectic, in the middle of the logic of apparition, *Schein* – and the fact that in spite of the place of its introduction the principle is something what is for Kant indubitably true, causes to the interpretation of this section – as far as interpretation finds it worthy enough to involve with it⁸ – some troubles. Principle is the following: »Every *thing*, as regards its possibility, is likewise subject to the principle of *thorough* determination, according to which if *all the possible* predicates of *things* be taken together with their contradictory opposites, then one of each pair of contradictory opposites must belong to it.« (B 599-600) This principle is not based, as the principle of determinability, merely on the principle of

⁷ Kantian vague expression »contain« is undoubtedly problematical. For the sketch of the problem see: Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London 1983, p. 74.

⁸ Bennett, for instance, says: »This is an unconvincing tale.« (*Kant's Dialectic*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1974, p. 282), Strawson (op. cit.) devotes a page to it in his book, etc. There are only two useful interpretations: Peter Rohs, »Kants Prinzip der durchgängigen Bestimmung alles Seienden«, *Kant-Studien* 69/1978, p. 170-180; Svend Andersen, *Ideal und Singularität*, *Kantstudien Ergänzungshefte* 116, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin & New York 1983.

contradiction, where we can chose between two contradictory predicates, but involves something more. Every thing is in relation to something third, »to the *sum-total* [Inbegriff] of all possibilities, that is, to the sum-total of all predicates of things«. (B 600) For that reason the principle of thorough determination needs »a synthesis of all predicates which are intended to constitute the complete concept of a thing, and not simply a principle of analytic representation in reference merely to one of two contradictory predicates.« (Ibid.) The principle of thorough determination concerns, therefore, the content, and »not merely the logical form«. (B 600)

Now the difference between the two principles seems to be more or less clear: the first one involves both concepts and things, whereas the second one is reserved for things only. In other words, the first principle involves logical and the second one real possibility⁹. But – what is supposed to be the specificity of the second principle compared to the first one? The central point of the second principle is undoubtedly the claim that every thing presupposes the sum-total of all predicates. The relation of things and *us* to this sum-total is said to be that what assures to the second principle the character of syntheticity. But – what relation precisely has Kant in mind? It is said that this principle is »the principle of synthesis of all predicates which are intended to constitute the complete concept of a thing, and not simply a principle of analytic representation« (B 600) To put it differently, if we would have to deal with a complete concept, concept given as some sort of a Whole from which everything would then be derived, this would be nothing but a mere analytic representation. However, this sum-total, as Kant warns, can never be completed or even given, existent. The reason for that is that »the conditions that are required for such determination are not to be found in experience« (B 599). It means that we must add new predicates to the sum-total always anew and this process never ever ends. Maybe we should stop here for a moment since it seems that we have to deal with the same old Kantian song, which Hegel called bad infinity (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*). It seems that Kant regards the concept of sum-total as something somehow completed and perfect which stays forever somewhere beyond, or to use precise Kantian term – transcendent. The clue to this undoubtedly paradoxical concept of sum-total of all predicates brings up the following question: where are all this predicates which are supposed to determine the concept of sum-total taken from? Obviously from our experience. And it is experience or synthesis which assures the principle of thorough

⁹ In order to clarify the matter, Kant introduces another distinction: Whereas the *determinability* of every *concept* is subordinate to the *universality* (*universalitas*) of the principle of excluded middle, the *determination* of a *thing* is subordinate to the *totality* (*universitas*) or the sum of all possible predicates. (See: B 600)

determination the *relation* to the sum-total of all predicates and the character of syntheticity. In other words, »the existence of this synthesis is identical to the existence of multitude of predicates«. ¹⁰

Although synthesis plays decisive role in the second principle, the difference between the two principles is not to be simply understood as the difference between the logical and the transcendental principle. It is true, of course, that the first principle concerns only the form and is therefore analytical, logical principle, and it is also true that the second principle involves something more, things, reality, content. It would be a mistake to think that the only reason for Kant's introduction of these two principles is to emphasize how separated are form and content, concept and reality. That there is a certain difference between them is as plain and self-evident as the claim that a thing is a thing, and a concept – a mere concept. But, is all that really so self-evident? It is true, of course, that a thing is a thing, a reality, and concept, fiction something different. But it nevertheless does not mean that there should be nothing but a sharp distinction between them. So, purely hypothetically, let us pose some questions. First, is it really so necessary that the two principles are simply separated? Is it really so clear what is the distinction between the two principles based upon, in other words, if the decisive mark of the principle of thorough determination is the character of syntheticity, it is still not clear *what* is this sum-total of all predicates and *how* to think it? Furthermore, is there any possibility that one single concept would fulfill the conditions of the second principle? In other words, is a thoroughly determined concept possible or only things and empirical intuitions can be thoroughly determined?

It seems that Kant has already given the answer for he introduces first principle in the following manner: »every concept is, in respect of what is not contained in it, undetermined.« (B 599) A concept can – as Kant numerous emphasizes – never be thoroughly determined, since, as Kant very exactly posits above, concept as such is always undetermined. There always exists something what is not contained in it. Even more – not only that a concept is not, but for Kant also cannot be thoroughly determined – otherwise it would cease to be a concept and it would become an empirical intuition. It is the empirical intuition, and not the concept, which always relates to a single object, to a certain thing. A concept cannot relate to a singular object, for it is a general representation or a representation of what is common to several objects, in other words, a concept contains common marks of several objects. Their generality enables that they can be repeatedly used. From their generality follows their irrealty, that is, the more one concept is general, the lesser

¹⁰ Peter Rohs, *op. cit.*, p. 171-172.

number of marks or features it contains, for it leaves open – this is the consequence of its general validity – what are further features and attributes of these things. The more a concept is general, the wider is its sphere, the lesser amount of reality it contains. And for all these reasons, no concept can be thoroughly determined. But, we could ask, if this is true for the concepts of reason, concepts which literally demand their relatedness to objects, what is then true for concepts which are not and cannot be related to any object of experience, i.e. with ideas and ideals? Since it is the ideal which interests us here, let us recall Kant's definition of it: ideal is not idea »merely *in concreto*, but in *individuo*, that is, as an individual thing, determinable or even determined by the idea alone.« (B 596) From this definition follows that ideal is determinable, not with objects, but with an idea and it can even be determined by the idea. Again, this Kant's definition raises some questions. Does it mean that ideal as such can be thoroughly determined? And if the answer is negative, if the ideal as such, ideal in general, cannot be thoroughly determined – is there *at least* one ideal which can be? Does at least one mean only one? And, if this single thoroughly determined ideal is possible, which ideal is it and under what conditions this may be true? If such ideal *is* possible, is it in any relation to the concept of thorough determination and consequently with the sum-total of all possible predicates? Last but not least – does it mean that our two principles are not so strictly separated as it seemed at first glance?

If we want an answer to some of these numerous questions, we will first have to specify *what* is Kant's conception of thorough determination. Let us start with Kant's proposition which represents some sort of example for the principle of thorough determination: »*Everything which exists is thoroughly determined.*« (B 601) This Kant's example is, certainly, anything but coincidentally chosen. As Dieter Henrich¹¹ points out, in Wolf's school existence is a supplement of essence or inner possibility of things. And maybe this possibility was alluded to in Kant's claim that »every *thing*, as regards its possibility, is likewise subject to the principle of *thorough* determination ...« (B 599) However, there is a crucial difference between Kant and Wolf. For Kant, thorough determination is not supplement of essence but »the criterion of existence.«¹² A certain number of predicates belongs to everything what exists, to every existent thing. But it does not mean merely that only one of *every two* contradictorily opposed predicates *can* belong to a certain concept, it means that one of each pair of all contradictory opposites *must* belong to it. For example, our task is to determine a certain object. The object – and it does not need to be always an object or a sensual object at all – can either be red or not

¹¹ Henrich, *op. cit.*, p. 155-156.

¹² *Ibid.*

red, either blue or not blue, either black or not black etc. It can also be either round or not round, either square or not square, etc. etc. In other words, we are not comparing the predicates only logically, but also transcendently, with regard to the sum-total of all possible predicates. Kant's proposition that everything what exists is thoroughly determined in fact meant the following: in order to know one thing completely, *volständig*, we need to know all and everything that is possible and determine it either positively or negatively. »The thorough determination is thus a concept, which, in its totality, can never be exhibited *in concreto*. It is based upon an idea, which has its seat solely in the faculty of reason – the faculty which prescribes to the understanding the rule of its complete employment.« (B 601) It seems to be the proper reason, as Rohs emphasizes¹³, for Kant's placement of the principle of thorough determination in the Transcendental Analytic. This principle requires, as it seems, *complete* knowledge and not knowledge *as such*. But complete knowledge is for Kant something impossible since only things in themselves are thoroughly determined, whereas we, we as human beings, have nothing but appearances at our disposal. For that reason alone we can never attain to all predicates, yet we must always try. The insistence of reason on that task, although the conditions that are required for such determination are not to be found in experience, could be described as some sort of demand, perhaps – why not? – in its strongest, Lacanian sense of the term, demand which we can never fulfill. Thus, we are in an untenable position – although we *cannot* know all what is possible, reason demands that we *must* always try to attain it. This position could be described as some kind of ethical position, as far as we can talk about position at all, since each position is already always a non-position. And its fundamental claim: you cannot, but you must, is even more demanding and frantic than notorious claim of Kant's categorical imperative.

If a certain impossibility is inherent in Kant's conception of thorough determination, is therefore a thoroughly determined concept possible at all? But – the thorough determination itself is already a concept, an ideal, which as every ideal presupposes a certain idea, in our case the idea of the sum-total of all possibilities. This idea has been, strictly speaking, undetermined until now. It was thought merely as the sum of all possible predicates and if we would succeed to determine it, we could, perhaps, have a thoroughly determined concept. Now – how do we proceed from this undetermined idea of the sum of all possible predicates to the thoroughly determined concept *a priori*? Under closer scrutiny, claims Kant, »we yet find, that this idea, as a primordial concept, excludes [*ausstoße*] a multitude [*Menge*] of predicates which as derivative are already given through other predicates or which are incompat-

¹³ Rohs, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

ible with others; and that it does, indeed, define itself as a concept that is thoroughly determinate *a priori*. It thus becomes the concept of an individual object which is thoroughly determined through the mere idea, and must therefore be entitled an *ideal* of pure reason«. (B 601-602)

This is the decisive point. »The idea of an *omnitudo realitatis*« (B 604) is not just an idea, but a very special idea. It is this idea that serves as some kind of basis for the transcendental ideal. This ideal is also not just *an* ideal, but a *very special* ideal. It »serves as basis for the thorough determination that necessarily belong to all that exists. This ideal is the supreme and complete material condition of the possibility of all that exists – the condition to which all thought of objects, so far as their content is concerned, has to be traced back. It is also the only true [*eigentliche*] ideal of which the human reason is capable. For only in this one case is a concept of a thing – a concept which is in itself universal – thoroughly determined in and through itself, and known as the representation of an individual.« (B 604)

At this point, everything seems to be clear for Kant. However, some of the problems still remain unsolved. But before we would draw any jumpy conclusions, a few misunderstandings should be cleared up. First of all, Kant's language and conceptual apparatus which he uses repeatedly should not deceive us. Kant describes transcendental ideal as »transcendental presupposition, namely, that of the material *for all possibility*, which in turn is regarded as containing *a priori* the data *for the particular possibility* of each and everything.« (B 600-601) Moreover, though this ideal should not be conceived as given, for Kant to represent means »to represent everything as deriving its own possibility from the share which it possesses in this sum of all possibilities.« (B 600) Consequently, ideal is described as *Urbild*, *prototypon*, original of everything, on the other hand, things are described as mere *ectypa*, copies, which are derived from it.¹⁴ But all these repeatedly used terms are not, as Kant himself warns, »to be taken as signifying the objective relation of an actual object to other things, but of an *idea to the concepts*. We are left entirely without knowledge as to the existence of a being of such outstanding pre-eminence.« (B 607)¹⁵ Although Kant repeatedly uses terms such as matter,

¹⁴ Although Kant constantly uses the term derivation, there is, strictly speaking, no derivation at all. This applies, on the one hand, to two kinds of predicates – the first expresses a content, a reality without restraints, the second a certain degree of this content, a limited reality; although the second kind of predicates can be thought under the presupposition of the first, there is no derivation in the literal sense of a word, because both kinds of predicates are the result of the same synthesis and are produced simultaneously – and on the other hand, to the two kinds of negation, i.e. to the logical and the transcendental negation and their relation to the purified concept of transcendental ideal.

¹⁵ There is another Kant's notice: »although in our first rough statements we have used such

substratum, material etc., the transcendental ideal remains what it is, the idea of totality, the idea of reality, i.e. merely an idea: »It is obvious that reason, in achieving its purpose, that, namely, of representing the necessary thorough determination of things, does not presuppose the existence of a being that corresponds to this ideal, but only the idea of such a being.« (B 605-606)¹⁶

However, if the transcendental ideal is to be understood strictly as an idea which is in the ultimate analysis nothing but a concept – how then to think it, since Kant obviously left us more or less in the dark? Perhaps the parallel between the transcendental ideal and the Kantian concept of space, the parallel, which is proposed by Kant himself,¹⁷ would be of some help at this point. The transcendental ideal is, i.e. as space, not the concept which contains all predicates under itself, *unter sich*, but the concept which contains them within itself, *in sich*.¹⁸ What is the difference? The concept, for Kant, contains infinite number of possible objects, infinite multitude of representations as their common mark. It contains them therefore under itself, *unter sich*. »But no concept, as such, can be thought as containing an infinite number of representations *within* itself. However, space is thought in this latter way...« (B 40) Space is single, infinite and divisible – we can divide only one single space, because there exists only one such space. But the trouble with the parallel between the transcendental ideal and space lies in the fact that, for Kant, space is an intuition, while the transcendental ideal is just a concept. As is well known, concept and intuition are strictly separated for Kant, which brings up the following question: is there any common ground for the parallel between

language« (B 607) In German: *ob wir es gleich anfänglich im ersten rohen Schattenrise so vorstellten.*

¹⁶ We have to admit that we are on very slippery grounds, at least as far as the level of language is concerned. It would suffice to understand the derivation as »a limitation of its supreme reality« (B 607), i.e. to conceive the *Einschränkung* as *Teilung*, and the manifold of things in the world would be understood as the effect of the supreme being. We could then easily proceed with the determination of such being in its unconditioned completeness and also succeed in determining it through all predicates. But such use of transcendental ideal would trespass the bounds of its legal employment »for reason, in employing it as a basis for the thorough determination of things, has used it as the *concept* of all reality without requiring that all this reality be objectively given and be itself a thing.« (B 608) But, »we have no right to do this, nor even to assume the possibility of such an hypothesis« (B 608). However, Kant knows very well that it »does not suffice merely to describe the procedure of our reason and its dialectic; we must also endeavor to discover the sources of this dialectic, that we may be able to explain, as a phenomenon of the understanding, the illusion to which it has given rise. For the ideal, of which we are speaking, is based on a natural, not on a merely arbitrary idea.« (B 609)

¹⁷ Kant's example is: all figures presuppose different kinds and ways of limiting infinite space. (See: B 606).

¹⁸ For Kant's distinction between *unter sich/in sich* see also, *Logik* (Jäsche) Werkausgabe, Bd. VI., p. 526 (§ 7), 529 (§ 13).

concept and intuition? Has not Kant himself already given an answer to this question claiming just few lines above that no concept as such can be thought as containing an infinite number of representations *within* itself? However, there may be a way out of this impasse if we do not search for their common ground, but only their common features. As Philonenko emphasizes¹⁹, space and the transcendental ideal are both *forms*, nothing but empty forms, and they are both something, not real, but ideal.²⁰ This may be the reason why Kant characterizes the transcendental ideal as »simple [*einfach*]« (B 607) And the simplicity of form could be – why not? – understood, as Hogebe proposes, as »universal register, shrunk on a single one concept«²¹. This register, however, would be a paradoxical one: in fact empty, but always *already* fulfilled with content; nothing but empty form, and at the same time apparent substratum; and finally, transcendental condition, yet not as real, as given. This paradoxical status of the transcendental ideal can also be formulated in the following way: although it seems that the transcendental ideal *already* contains all possible predicates, although it appears to be some sort of an All or a Whole, it is actually not so – it can never be such a whole, it can never be Whole, for it can never be completed or accomplished. The reason for that is that the transcendental ideal does not have analytical, but synthetical character and it is the synthesis, the experience which confers upon the ideal its character of syntheticity. Not surprisingly, this synthesis is also paradoxical – we are actually never ever in the position to add a missing, lacking, new or uncontained predicate to the sum-total of all predicates. It is due to the fact that it is impossible to find out whether a certain predicate is or is not contained in the transcendental ideal. Why? We would need to compare this predicate with *all* possible predicates and since there is an infinite number of possible predicates, there is no guaranty or Guarantor, which could ensure that the comparison would not last – infinitely long. In other words, such comparison would very probably last endlessly.

If this is true, the transcendental ideal would represent a very inconvenient and thereby unneeded support. However, the time in question, i.e. the time needed for finding out the desirable predicate, is not such time to be characterized as *logical* and not as real time, since it is only with logical time that we can explain the immeasurable moment which passes between empty form as not-yet fulfilled with content and always already fulfilled transcendental ideal as thoroughly determined? But as soon as we accept that the time which passes

¹⁹ Alexandre Philonenko, *L'Oeuvre de Kant*, 1. part, Paris 1989, Vrin, p. 316.

²⁰ That the form is a common feature of both space and transcendental ideal was already pointed out by Kant himself. See, for instance, R 6290, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 18., p. 559.

²¹ Wolfram Hogebe, *Prädikation und Genesis. Metaphysik als Fundamentalheuristik im Ausgang von Schellings »Die Weltalter«*, Frankfurt/M 1989, Suhrkamp, p. 62.

between not-yet and always already is the logical time, such time can also be, as immeasurable, characterized as infinite, for who can tell how long it takes to come to the conclusion from, for instance, the first and the second premise? How much time does it elapse during the logical operation, for example: if p then q ? Therefore, the time which is needed for the thorough determination of transcendental ideal can be nothing but logical. Another reason for that lies in the fact that *we*, as human beings, are simultaneously on both sides. It is our experience which is identical with the transcendental ideal and it is merely an illusion that ideal itself »excludes [*ausstoße*]²² a multitude of predicates » (B 601). It only appears that the transcendental ideal produces this multitude at the same time as it excludes the predicates. It is the same illusion which produces a semblance of the transcendental ideal as thoroughly determined.

In spite of its paradoxical and illusionary status, the transcendental ideal is nevertheless thoroughly determined. How? We have to determine repeatedly, whether a certain predicate belongs to it or not. However, it does not happen in real, but in logical time. Logic, i.e. the operation of disjunction, is crucial here. If a certain predicate is added to a particular thing, its opposite must be excluded. For example, if a thing is white, it is not red, blue, black etc., in short, non-white. In accordance with »either-or« of the upper premise of disjunctive syllogism, one predicate of each pair of contradictory opposites must belong to everything what exists. The upper premise in disjunctive syllogism contains logical division of concept or the division of sphere of a universal concept, the lower premise limits this sphere to the part, with which conclusion determines the universal concept. But the universal concept of reality cannot be divided *a priori*, for without experience we cannot know any kind of reality. The first or the upper premise is therefore nothing but representation of the sum-total of all predicates, i.e. the transcendental ideal.

Where does the illusion that the transcendental ideal is identical to all reality have its origin? The answer is self-evident for Kant, and it lies in Transcendental Analytic. The possibility of objects of our senses is based in their relation to our thinking. We can think space and time *a priori*, but what makes out the content, the matter, the reality in the appearances (what corresponds to feeling), *must* be given as real. If that condition is not fulfilled, if there's no content, no reality, we cannot think at all, and we cannot represent anything, because there is nothing to be thought or represented. Without the real there is also no thorough determination. »The material for the possibility of all objects of the senses must be presupposed as given in a sum-total [Inbegriff]; and it is

²² German verb *ausstoßen*, which Kemp-Smith translates with the verb »to exclude«, can also mean: to extrude, to force out, to launch, to emit, to produce, to articulate, to express, to outlaw, to discriminate, to ostracize, to segregate, to separate, to except.

upon the limitation of this sum-total that all possibility of empirical objects, their distinction from each other and their thorough determination, can alone be based« (B 610), although we know that »as a matter of fact, no other objects, besides those of the senses, can be given to us, and nowhere save in the context of a possible experience; and consequently nothing is an object *for us*, unless it presupposes the sum [Inbegriff] of all empirical reality as the condition of its possibility« (Ibid.) But this possibility should be understood as a purely empirical principle, which is valid for appearances only, not for things in themselves. If we would demand of this principle to be valid for things in themselves too, we would sooner or later return to the old theological path, but that does not concern us here.

Let us resume the result of our examination of Kant's concept of the transcendental ideal. Its most notable feature seems to be its paradoxical status: in fact empty form, but never presented as such, i.e. pure and empty, for it is always *already* filled with content; the apparent substratum and transcendental condition, but not in the sense of something real. Though it is thoroughly determined, it is never a Whole, it is never completed or accomplished. This thorough determination of the transcendental ideal is paradoxical and illusionary, which is due to the fact that it does not have analytical, but synthetical character, that it is the synthesis, the experience which confers upon it its character of syntheticity. This syntheticity is paradoxical as well – we are in fact never in the position to add a missing, lacking, new or uncontained predicate to the sum-total of all predicates since this predicate is always already contained in the transcendental ideal. It could be said, therefore, that the transcendental ideal is some kind of non-existing surplus, fiction, and yet as such the basis for every determination of things. As thoroughly determined concept, as a register of all possible predicates and as fiction which is the basis for our thinking and knowing, it resembles, with certain reservation, the conception of big Other of Jacques Lacan: that, too, is a universal register which is always already here, but not as existent. This Other is the Other of universal discourse, the Other which contains all what was said and what can be represented, it is the Other of Borges' total library, the treasure of signifiers. This Other has fictional status, too, it is pure symbolic order, but without it, in a very certain sense of the word, we could not even disagree... Of course, Lacan's concept of the Other has a broader meaning than the one presented here, but as a mere hint, it suffices at least to illustrate the fact that, although not fully developed by Kant himself, the concept of the transcendental ideal as presented here allows us to claim at least that, for Kant, fiction is certainly not just illusion.