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«...noch bevor wir sie selbst erlangen». Remarks on Kant's Geographies of the Empirical

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Abstract. The objective of this article is to provide some insights into Kant's conception of the empirical with a view to a better understanding of Kant's presupposition of a plan "in advance" of it. The article is structured in three steps. The initial step involves a comparison between Kant's and Hegel's conceptions of reason, which serves to highlight the different status of Kant's a priori and "observative" reason from a theoretical point of view. The second step focuses on the *Introduction and Preliminary Mathematical Concepts* of his *Physical Geography*, in order to develop the problem indicated by the quotation in the title, namely that we must presuppose a plan of our empirical cognitions "even before we attain them". The third step, finally, attempts to prove that the dynamic underlying Kant's *Physical Geography* corresponds to the theory of the appearance of appearance formulated by Kant in the *Opus postumum*.

Keywords. Kant, Physical Geography, Space, Empirical, Opus postumum

1. *One or several reasons*

When reading the opening pages of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* on Reason, and then on Ob-

servative Reason from a Kantian perspective, it is quite difficult not to wonder which reason Hegel is discussing. Within his system, Hegel provides a clear answer to this question. His “reason” is self-consciousness that is finally «certain of itself as the reality [*als der Realität*]» (Hegel [1807]: 132; eng. 137), or, in other words, the thought that is finally aware that, in every experience, it is always the thought itself that *makes* it. In fact, Hegel is citing Kant. According to what can be considered *the principle of criticism itself*: «reason has insight [*einsieht*] only into what it itself produces according to its own design [*nach ihrem Entwurfe*]» (Kant [1787]: XIII; eng. 109)¹.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned question arises here. Particularly in its observative figure, the reason that sails – akin to the *conquistadores* –, that «strides forward toward a universal appropriation of its own assured property, and plants the signs of its sovereignty on both the high and the deep» (Hegel [1807]: 137 f.; eng. 142): this reason appears to be, indeed, at once, both the *pure* reason of the first *Critique*, sailing from the «land of truth» through the «broad and stormy ocean» of metaphysics (Kant [1781]: 235; 1787: 294 f.; eng. 354), and the “concrete” reason which concerns itself with the empirical. I.e. with man and the world *as they are*. The former is the transcendental and a priori reason, which constitutes only the pure objectivity of thought. The latter is the reason “on its journey” (see 1798: 120; eng. 232; 1802: 157 f.; eng. 446 f.), attempting to make order out of the «so disturbingly unbounded diversity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms» (1914: 209; eng. 14).

It is important to note that, according to Hegel, there is no distinction between these “two” reasons. If he can (and indeed must) address the observative reason immediately following the exposition of the simple category (see Hegel [1807]: 134; eng. 139), it is because, in his view, both are essentially *the same reason*: a unique movement in which the universal thought makes itself other to itself, makes a multiplicity of its unity – the whole and indefinite multiplicity of reality –, and, permeating and encompassing this multiplication, returns to itself (as Spirit and, finally, as Science).

To provide another example of particular significance for the comparison with Kant, it is always this reason why Hegel can and must discuss together the understanding and the relation between laws and forces (Ibid.: 82-102; eng. 79-101): because, from a dialectical point of view, there is no understanding outside the laws ascribed to nature, nor indeed any law outside the effective relations between the given forces.

The primary objective of Hegel’s philosophy is to “fluidify” and to “put in circulation” (within “the body of reality”) the transcendental. As to say that his objective is to resolve the truth into «the movement of itself in its own self» (Ibid.: 35; eng. 29), and therefore to completely translate the understanding (in Kant’s sense, as *Verstand*) into the *process* of the understanding (in general, as *Vernehmen*). – A stark contrast to Kant’s approach.

If the relationship between force and understanding is a significant example, it is because, from a critical perspective, the same immediate translation of the “laws” of the understanding into the balance of the forces presumed by Hegel necessitates at least another “passage”, through which the fundamental principles of the understanding are *applied* to a given intuition.

Although this is not immediately evident, Kant draws a fundamental distinction between the Analogies of experience (*Grund-Sätze*: Kant [1781]: 182, 189, 211; eng. 299, 304, 316)² and the mechanical laws (*Lehr-Sätze*) of the *Metaphysical Foundations* (see 1786: 541, 543 f.; eng. 249, 251 f.). The former are the conditions of possibility of the existence *in general* (as it were, “merely as such”), while the latter are the laws of configuration of a *particular* existence in space-time – or *of space-time* in a particular existence (see *Ibid.*: 469 f.; eng. 185; on the topic, see also Branca [2024]: 237-251). The former are transcendental, the latter metaphysical (see Kant [1790]: 181; eng. 68), and therefore they are distinct also from the physical laws that we formulate to mathematically define that configuration.

While Hegel’s reason is “diachronic” (or, more correctly: “dialectical”), Kant’s reason is “synchronous” (see Vitiello [1983]: 130 f.), “symphonic” (see Scaravelli [1980]: 17 f., 135), for even Kant’s *Vernunft überhaupt* is nothing more than the overall interweaving of the different faculties that, *in their cooperation*, constitute our experience. It is thus evident that these faculties cannot be subsumed, so to speak, “the lower within the upper”, and then into one, into «a first principle» (Fichte [1798/99]: 5; eng. 80; in Hegel, the unity of the movement of truth in itself), since each of them presides as *Vermögen* over different functions that cannot be “suppressed” (in Hegel’s sense of *Aufheben*) into those with which they co-operate³.

As Kant himself stresses in a confrontation with Christian Wolff, from a critical point of view, even the distinction between a “universal” and a “particular” reason (or existence) is not merely logical. In Kant’s own words, such a distinction is not based on a higher or lower «rank in regard to universality», that is on a «mere degree of subordination». Logically, the *Lehrsätze* are as universal as the *Grundsätze*. Rather, that distinction is based on «the complete heterogeneity and difference of origin» (Kant [1787]: 871 f.; eng. 697) of the functions at work in and on it (Pecere [2007]: 161 f.). The *Lehrsätze* are therefore a “specification” of the *Grundsätze* only and exclusively in a *transcendental* sense. That is, only for they are a sensible translation (*Versinnlichung*) of the latter in occasion of the «*figurative synthesis (synthesis speciosa)*» (Kant [1787]: 151; eng. 256) operated by *imagination*.

From a critical standpoint, reason can be “specified” only in the sense of “shaping” it. Of “*giving it a figure*”: firstly, through the pure mathematical delineation of space-time, whereby it makes itself *an* object; secondly, in the reflect-

ing distinction between the various configurations (*species*) of things, whereby it is “recognised” in *this or that* being.

According to Kant, there is thus a difference *in principle* between the pure and a priori reason, which concerns itself with the constitution of the mere possibility of experience, and the «reasoned curiosity» that explores the empirical (Hegel’s observative reason). A difference that Kant highlighted already in the first *Announcement* of his lectures on physical geography, where he denied to the future *Welterkenntnis* the «completeness and philosophical precision» that he would later claim for transcendental philosophy in the *Critique*, describing rather the “empirical reason” as «a traveller who everywhere looks for the noteworthy, the strange, and the beautiful, compares the observations he has collected, and revises his *plan* accordingly [*und seinen Plan überdenkt*]» (1757: 3; eng. 388).

While the pure and a priori knowledge is to be complete, “round” and systematic, as the a priori reason is a whole that can be measured from within (1787: 89 f., 790; eng. 201, 654 f.), when reason “goes around the world”, it must adopt a *heuristic* form. It must accept, in effect, the infinite task of describing things and events as they occur and adjust its comprehension, its understanding (in the sense of *Vernehmen*) in response to the cases it encounters⁴.

It is evident from the third *Critique* that all this is only possible thanks to the reflecting use of the power of judgment (see Malpas, Zöllner [2012]: 154 f.). As Kant explicitly states in the *First Introduction*, the ability to orient oneself within the empirical, «to observe nature and to hold its forms together» (1914: 205; eng. 10; on the orientation in Kant, see Desideri [2003]: 17-66), depends on the transcendental assumption of the principle of *Zweckmäßigkeit*, that is to say, of a formal «purposiveness of nature in behalf [*zum Behuf*] of our faculty for cognizing it» (Ibid.: 202; eng. 8). This affords us to “map out” a «Gesetzmäßigkeit» within the chaos (of cases) of experience, a «lawfulness in itself contingent (in accordance with all concepts of the understanding)», and yet sufficient «in order to seek for particular experiences the general rules in accordance with which we have to arrange them» (Ibid.: 204; eng. 10). The question that I would like to pose in this contribution is: *how?* How does reflection operate in this seeking and *arrangement* of the empirical? How does the process of comprehension of the «noteworthy, the strange, and the beautiful» (1757: 3; eng. 388) articulate itself? Moreover: how can comprehension “adjust” itself on these cases?

Although not immediately evident, the examination of these questions raises one of the most profound problems in Kant’s philosophical system. As previously cited in dialogue with Hegel, the principle of criticism itself asserts that «reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design [*Entwurf*]» (1787: XIII; eng. 109). It has not previously been observed, however, that this principle entails a *subsumptive* logic (see Vitiello [2013]: 78-80). In other words, a logic that requires a *preliminary* concept, form or *plan* to which the giv-

en must be subsumed. With regard to a priori concepts (categories and ideas) and mathematical constructions (pure concepts), reason itself ensures the “preliminary presence” of such forms. The former are, in fact, its own structures, while the latter are a *pure* product of its own activity on the formal intuitions of space and time (see Kant [1800]: 93; eng. 591). In contrast, the question arises with regard to empirical forms. If, from a purely *logical* point of view, this issue appears to overlap with that of the genesis of empirical concepts (for a clear position of the problem see Cassirer [1923]: 249-252; for a comprehensive elaboration of it, La Rocca (2003: 79-119), by focusing on Kant’s empirical studies, particularly his *Physical Geography*, it is possible to gain a more “concrete” and direct translation of this question. It is possible to shape it specifying the “general” problem of how reflection arranges the empirical, in reference to the above-cited quotation from the *Announcement* of 1757. The question then becomes: where did we draw *the plan* we must (in a subsumptive logic: *always*) *already have* in order to make experiences, and through these, to *überdenken*, to revise or *think over* it?

2. Steps

In order to attempt an answer to the “general” questions posed in §1, what follows will be divided into two steps.

The first step will delve more deeply into the “specific” question posed in §1, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the general problem from within Kant’s *Physical Geography*. In this regard, our focus will be on the *Introduction* and *Preliminary Mathematical Concepts* of Rink’s edition, wherein we will develop the paradox indicated by the quotation used as the title of this contribution, namely, the paradox that from a critical perspective, «we should divide our knowledges» – or, more radically: *order* our empirical experiences – «*even before we attain them*» (Kant [1802]: 156; eng. 445). In this “before” we will identify the problem hidden in the *temporality* of all mapping and organisation (always *spatial*: in German, to make order is *Aufräumen*) of experience. For how might it be possible to have *before* an order that can only be attained *after*? What are the conditions of such an *anticipation*? And is there, in fact, a “before” and a “after” – a “plan”, and the “empirical” “outside” the plan?

In order to identify a “plane” from which attempt an answer to these questions, the second step will jump (perhaps sharply, but not without reason) to some sheets of *Konvolut X* of the *Opus postumum*, in which Kant is grappling with the formulation of his theory of the appearance of appearance (*Erscheinung von der Erscheinung*). The thesis that will be defended is that every empirical comprehension depends on this same dynamic, which was unfairly limited by Kant himself to physics, as it grounds rather the entire reflecting movement.

3. *To know the world*

Let us commence anew with a further exposition of the issue that arose at the conclusion of §1.

Prior to examining the *Physical Geography*, it is noteworthy to ascertain in the *Preface to Anthropology* whether the presupposition of a plan is a requirement for the entire *Welterkenntnis*. In this text, Kant makes, indeed, a significant observation regarding the systematicity and completeness of the latter. He states that although anthropology offers only «occasions and invitations to make each particular [moral quality of man] into a theme of its own», the possibility «to place it in the appropriate category» is ensured not only by the fact that anthropology is, in his words, «systematically designed [*systematisch entworfene*]», but also by the fact that «through this means [in German we find: *wodurch*], the works end up divided by themselves [*sich von selbst*] [...], and to be gradually united [once more, by themselves] into a whole through the unity of the plan [*durch die Einheit des Plans*]» (1798: 121 f.; eng. 233).

In this passage, two elements are of a particular importance. The first element to be noted is the recurrence of the same *Entwurf* and *Plan* that were previously observed in the *Announcement* and *Critique*. The second are, instead, the expression “through this means” and “by themselves”. *Sich von selbst*: that is, *spontaneously*. *Wodurch*: thereby. But “spontaneously”, “thereby” – *how?* We cannot really assert that the observations of anthropology end up organised by themselves *spontaneously*. Indeed, they are collected according to a «general knowledge [...] ordered and directed by philosophy» (Ibid.: 120; eng. 232). It thus follows that such a “spontaneity” must be, in a sense, “inner” to this general knowledge. In comparison to §2 of the *Physical Geography*, the articulation of anthropology must be more akin to the “immediacy” of the derivation of the parts from the idea of the whole (1802: 158; eng. 446) than to a self-organisation of the particular knowledges by themselves. Once more, however: where did we draw such an idea? From where the “unity of the plan” «in the absence of which all acquired knowledge can yield nothing more than fragmentary groping around» (1798: 120; eng. 232)?

If the problem raised in §1 is of such significance within Kant’s philosophy, it is because it pertains to *all* empirical knowledge. For every empirical knowledge must “go around the world” (Kaulbach [1966]), not only geography (for an analysis of the difficulty of a strict distinction between geography and anthropology, see Loudon [2011]).

From this point of view, Hegel’s comparison of Kant’s reason to the *conquistadores* is an accurate one. The metaphor of the traveller plays a pivotal role in Kant’s conception of the empirical as such, and more crucially it represents the fundamental schema through which Kant “*give a figure*” to rea-

son. As Farinelli repeatedly stressed (1996; 2004: XXI-XXV; 2012: 380-382), the critical philosophy is wholly permeated by a cartographic set-up, through which Kant articulates his entire reconstruction of reason: from the pure and a priori plane, down to its most empirical applications (on the geographical character of the critical project, see also Malpas, Thiel [2011]; Loudon [2014]: 453 f., and Morawski [2024]).

This is the reason why Kant can be considered a «geographer of reason» (Casirer [1918]: 40, but see also Hohenegger [2012]), and even his doctrine of faculties can be defined as a «transcendental geography» (Lyotard [1987]: 21). If these definitions are indeed true, however, his *physical geography* (in a broad sense: as discipline) deserves greater attention – not only because of the well known difficulties related to the lack of a text from Kant’s own hand⁵. Kant’s physical geography merits greater attention particularly in a theoretical sense, since, in examining it, one must always be accompanied by at least the doubt whether what one is dealing with could be the very “matrix” of Kant’s thought.

It could be of the greatest interest to undertake a theoretical examination at the same time both of the philological state of “Kant’s” geographical texts and of the theoretical issue constituted by such a matrix. It may be surprising to see (now, *im Voraus*, tempting to say) that the fact of being transmitted *fragmentarily* and *by others* is essential to the same matrix. Or even more: that on this at once historical and theoretical corruption (of the “texts” that deal with the empirical more than any other) hides the very issue of the relationship between the transcendental and the historical. I.e. the very *dissemination* (the evident reference is here to Derrida [1972], the not so evident one to Benjamin [1925]: 226) of the former into the latter.

Nevertheless, pursuing this line of enquiry would lead us too far from the central focus of our investigation. In regard to our present objective, it is sufficient to note, indeed, that, although none can «read a certain text that can properly be called “Kant’s Physical Geography”» (Stark [2011]: 69), it is beyond doubt that:

1. From a philological point of view, – to continue quoting Stark – «fortunately we have sufficient manuscript material to satisfy our requirements both in terms of Kant’s lectures and of the two historical editions», for «all we need is a mere comparison of texts to discover what the facts of these editions are» (Ibid.: 83).

2. From a theoretical point of view, such a comparison easily demonstrates that the structures and issues developed both in Vollmer’s and Rink’s editions are, if not directly “of Kant’s own hand”, at least fundamentally *Kantian* in nature.

To finally move to the analysis of the *Introduction* and *Mathematical concepts* in Rink’s edition (Kant [1802]: 156-183; eng. 445-467), a comparison with the *Prolegomena* in the Kaehler and Messina manuscripts (respectively, 1775b: 299-321 and 1776?: 621-629) is more than sufficient to prove, net of Rink’s additions, that the first two Chapters of his edition respond to a genuinely Kantian

problem. That is, the question of how to define geography in a systematic manner, differentiating it from other forms of human knowledge according to their source and origins, and then according to «the plan of their arrangement, or [to] the form – that is, to the way how they can be ordered» (1802: 156; eng. 445; see also 1775b: 299, in reference to the above-quoted 1787: 871 f.; eng. 697). The problem with which we are concerned already emerges at this juncture. Indeed, as *both* the texts assert (but see also the Pillau manuscript 1783?: 1), we should provide such a classification of our knowledges «even before we attain them» (1802: 156; eng. 445; 1775: 299).

In *all* editions and manuscripts, the geographical knowledge is part of «a *propaedeutic* for knowledge of the world» (1802: 157; eng. 445), or a «*Vorübung*», a «preparatory exercise» (Ibid.: 158; eng. 447; 1776?: 621) that aims to provide a «preliminary concept [*Vorbegriff*] of everything» (*ibidem*; 1802: 158; eng. 447) to be used to orient oneself within the whole of human experiences, that is to say, within the world (see 1802: 158; eng. 447; a sum of these expressions, this time of *Kant's own hand*, recurs in 1775a: 443; eng. 97).

In order to articulate such a system of human cognitions, §§2-4 of Rink's edition begin with the distinction between rational and empirical knowledges, before moving on to the articulation of the latter in accordance with the duplicity of the sensibility, as outer and inner sense. In so doing, Kant can describe the world in a perhaps not so clear but still *dynamic* manner (see *contra* Malpas, Zöllner [2012]: 158-160), as the presupposition and, at once, the result of the *interplay* between the environment and human practices. In Kant's own words: as «the stage [*der Schauplatz*] on which the play of our ability is performed» (Kant [1802]: 158; eng. 446, see also [1775b]: 301, and [1776?]: 622).

Given the whole of such a *Schauplatz* – whose “wholeness” is ensured by its encompassing both the sources of sensibility (see 1802: 162 f.; eng. 450) –, Kant is then able to differentiate, according to the same distinction between the inner and outer sense, a “plane” on which *the whole* of the world is observed “internally”, that is to say, the anthropology as pragmatic and yet *cosmological* cognition of man (see Ibid.: 157; eng. 446 and 1798: 120; eng. 231 f.), from a “plane” on which *the same whole* is described “externally” as the place (*Platz*) in which the human abilities literally take place.

The latter is the physical geography, which is defined therefore on account of its articulating the spatial dimension of the world (see 1802: 160; eng. 449; 1792: 1119). Here, however, it is necessary to note two things. The first point is that, in insisting on the *dynamic* nature of Kant's definition of the *Welterkenntnis*, both anthropology and physical geography remain two distinct yet necessarily related «parts» or *perspectives* on a single, “organic” world. As Kant himself states in the essay on the human races, to consider both “cosmologically” means to consider them «with respect to what we can observe of *their relation within*

the whole in which they stand, and in which everyone [of them] takes his place» (1775a: 443; eng. 97). – The second point to note pertains, instead, to the distinctive character gained to physical geography. As Kant stresses in §3 confronting history and geography (for an analysis of this confrontation, see Marcuzzi [2011]: 117-123), it is only possible to articulate the spatial dimension of the world by *describing* it (see Kant [1802]: 159; eng. 447; 1775b: 302, and 1776?: 623). In other words, the only means of articulating the spatial dimension of the world is “to take place” within it, and then to *re-construct* the place itself into «a general outline [*einen allgemeinen Abriß*]» (1802: 157; eng. 446, 1775b: 300, 1776?: 621) which serves as a plan, as a “map”: *a.* for measuring the space itself in its extension (but we could even say: for *drawing*, for “*opening up*” the world); and *b.* to be used in order to «allocate to every experience its class and its place within the whole» (1802: 158; eng. 447).

Now, it is tempting to compare such an “outline” with the «ideal background», made up of subjective «beliefs», «hypothesis and theory», from which, according to Ritter (1852): 25 f., the geographer must begin «in order to reach a natural system». From this point of view, Kant’s *Abriß* would be nothing more than the “preliminary assumption”, the hermeneutical “preconception” of the world that we have constructed for ourselves in order to act within it. The results of the *Physical Geography* would be comparable to an Aristotelian *pros hemas* of experience, reflecting an endless endeavour to achieve a correspondence between our knowledge with what is *te physei* (endless since, as Ritter stresses, we do not proceed “from observation to concept”, but, always anew, «from observation to observation»: Ibid.: 27)⁶. And to some extent, this is the case.

The reflecting nature of any empirical comprehension implies, even for Kant, that an ultimate knowledge of the world will never be attained. Kant’s physical geography is as *pragmatic* as his anthropology, in that it is based on the fact that we will always continue “to make experiences”. Nevertheless, this does not imply that Kant’s *Abriß* can be reduced to Ritter’s ideal and theoretical background of beliefs. And this for, on the contrary, what Kant outlines in his *Physical Geography* with regard to the whole of the *Welterkenntnis*, bears closer resemblance to the very articulation or “opening” of what we may call, in accordance with Farinelli (2009: 11, 25, 108 f.), the “Table” of experience. That is to say, to that structure or “matrix of order”, which corresponds to the original assumption of an isomorphic yet differentiated space.

As Marcuzzi stressed in his seminal contribution, the significance of the *Preliminary Mathematical Concepts* (and particularly of §9: Kant [1802]: 170-177; eng. 457-462; identical to 1775b: 314-320) lies precisely in the fact that: «Here, the object “Earth” is *constructed* as a *pure geometrical object* upon which we engender points and lines, cut out spheres and circles, put bluntly, that we can construct *in pure intuition*» (Marcuzzi [2011]: 215). And even more, since, in

(actively) *constructing* the pure isomorphic *figure* of the Earth, Kant describes the same *process* of the *disclosure* of space. As previously mentioned, the *Auf-räumen*, or the *operation* of “making order” (within the empirical) through the pure (yet also tempting to say: *transcendental*) “making space”.

Indeed, – by making a simple addition to Marcuzzi’s account – the *mathematical* construction of the *physical* object “Earth” begins from its *movement*. In consequence of the articulation of the relations of this object with the *movable* observer (the subjects) on its surface (“from within”) and with the *fix* point, the Sun, around which the Earth turns (“from outside”), such a construction draws then the poles line, the equator, and the meridian (in its infinite possible variations), and finally the tropics and the polar circles. In so doing, this process provides a primary “description” of the Earth, which corresponds to the delineation of the *geographic grid* on its surface. In turn, this grid enables the differentiation of places, the measurement of distances, and the identification of various zones. – It is important to note, however, that this is not the full picture. Indeed, due to its relation to the Sun, the Earth, as a *physical* object, is exposed to different degrees of *light* and *heat*. This entails a primary range of fundamental alterations, such as the change of the seasons, the different length of the days (see Kant [1802] 174 f.; eng. 460 f.), which “materially” begin to further determine the Earth’s “zones” as different environments (ivi §10: 177 f.; eng. 463).

In a description that undergoes a progressive downgrade of objective value, it is solely thanks to (and within) such a “preliminary opening” of the «theatre of nature» (Ibid.: 160; eng. 448; 1775b: 303; 1776?: 625) that the following sections of the *Geography* are able to “describe”, next, «the differences of quality between the elements [...] in relation to their situation», and finally «the places where all manner of remarkable things can be seen» (Marcuzzi [2011]: 125).

In relation to the increasingly contingent nature of the objects to be ordered (which can be merely “allocated” due precisely to their contingency), the *Preliminary Mathematical Concepts* provide – in a strictly cartographic logic – the “basis”, or “table”, on which the “map” is to be drawn. That is to say, on which the elements must be arranged, and the particular phenomena can find their own place.

After all, this is the reason why Kant can claim that «before we move on to the discussion of physical geography proper, we must necessarily first have a preliminary concept of mathematical geography» (Kant [1802]: 165; eng. 453; see 1775: 311): for only such a “concept” (which, as mathematical, is at once, a concept and the *construction* of this concept, i.e. an *intuition*)⁷ allows us to assume the Earth as a whole. The mathematical construction of the physical object “Earth” may therefore be regarded as the *spatial pre-conception* of the «general outline [always *Abriß*] of nature» (1802: 164; eng. 451). In a broad sense, it can

be considered as the “a priori” of any description of the world. This is to say that it represents the *pre-disposition* through which alone the space becomes available for the proper empirical plan of its own ordering. “Pre-” of any presupposition, this construction is what makes possible to «project already in advance [*schon im Voraus*] a plan» for our experience, and thus to «not regard the world merely as an object of the outer sense». However, this brings us back to our initial questions. How is it possible, indeed, such an “advance”?

In Kant’s own words, «what this instruction and general outline [the physical geography] does, is to *anticipate* our future experience in the world» (Ibid.: 157; eng. 446; same in 1775: 300, and 1776?: 621). The plan, the propaedeutic and the preliminary concepts or exercises merely represent *a form of anticipation of the empirical*, rooted in the pre-construction of space. The question thus arises as to this latter can make possible the former. Once more, it must be asked how the mere “making space” allow us to project *in advance* an order, or a *plan* of what we can only encounter *after* – in the most proper sense *a posteriori* – within the world. Furthermore, given that we have been “forced” to assume an extremely broad sense of the a priori: what is the relationship between this (still *empirical*) preconstruction of space and the transcendental constitution of it?

4. *The empirical – zum Behuf*

In order to finally try to address the questions we have raised, I propose to “jump” to certain fragments of the *Konvolut X* of the *Opus postumum*, in which, as it were, Kant is engaged in the formulation of his theory of the *Erscheinung von der Erscheinung*. The motivations for such a “jump” may not be immediately apparent. Nevertheless, it could prove useful, as – in short – I am convinced that the dynamic Kant is attempting to formulate here is the same that underlies the entire physical geography, particularly its *Mathematical Concepts*.

The main “implicated” fragments are the pages 2 of the (halb-)sheets VI and VIII of the *Konvolut X* (1938: 333 f., 343-345; only the latter has been partially transl. by Förster and Rosen: eng. 112 f.)⁸. These can be dated with reasonable accuracy to the period between the end of 1799 and April 1800, and occur immediately after the aether proofs (the so-called *Übergänge* 1-14; see Förster [1993]: XXVII). Now, without give a complete account of Kant’s *Übergang-projekt* (which would be however impossible within the limits of an article)⁹, this final clarification is crucial, as the concept of “appearance of appearance” depends directly on such a proof. As is widely acknowledged, the issue that the projected *Transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics* was designed to address is the problem of the dynamical determination of matter. Kant initially believed that this could be achieved on a purely physical plane

through the identification of a topic (in the previously discussed geographical terms, a *map*) of the moving forces of matter. However, as he proceeded in his work, he realised that this solution depended in turn on the transcendental plane, and thus required a foundation in it. The aether proof represents the “turning point” of Kant’s attempts, in which the “fundamental alteration of matter” from which to provide such a topic is proved as necessarily corresponding to the simple existence (for an example, see Kant [1936]: 215-217; eng. 67 f.; for a wider reconstruction, see Branca [2024]: 347-365). However, the assertion of this correspondence gives rise to two distinct but complementary problems within Kant’s framework. The first, transcendental issue – which Kant addresses through the doctrine of self-position (see Förster [2000]: 75-116) – pertains to the integration of this new dynamic within the a priori process of constitution of experience (i.e. within the *Critique*). The second, “physical” one (insofar as it corresponds to the question: “how is physics possible?”) is instead that of the same topic of moving forces. For, even if the existence in space is demonstrated to be always dynamical, physical, and even if this dynamic nature is proved to be grounded in the very self-position of the transcendental subject, as it affects itself in making itself into an object (the empirical “I”) – it remains unanswered the question concerning the status that we ascribe to the moving forces, and in general to the concepts of physics. I.e. the question of how they must be integrate within the same transcendental constitution of experience (see Pecere [2007]: 674-684).

The concept of “appearance of appearance” is designed to address this question. For, as all “implicated” fragments assert, once we have recognised that *in general* (not only on the a priori plane) «we can extract nothing other from our sense-representations than that which we have inserted in them for the empirical representation of ourselves with the consciousness of its exhibition [*mit dem Bewußtsein seiner Darstellung*]», even the empirical concepts turn out to be produced «by the understanding» (Kant [1938]: 343; eng. 112; see also *Ibid.*: 334).

As Kant highlights in the sheet I of the same *Konvolut X*, «although *invented* [*obgleich gedichtet*]», (*Ibid.*: 282; eng. 100), these concepts (of the moving forces, organic bodies, as well as of aether) are indeed *presupposed* to our experiences – «since we would not otherwise understand them as such» (*Ibid.*: 291; eng. 101). Within the transcendental self-affection of the subject – that is to say, throughout the *Darstellung* of representations and as corresponding to the *Bewußtsein* of such an exhibition (see 1787: 66-69, 152-156; eng. 188-190, 257-259) – these concepts become the “phenomenal manner” in which the subject organises, *coordinates* the empirical givens in order to comprehend them. If the latter are to be considered appearances in the strictest sense, «in turn, such a coordination (*Zusammenstellung*, *coordinatio*) is itself only appearance, consequently nothing more than an *appearance of the appearance*, i.e. the representation of the formal how the subject affects itself according to a principle and is itself as spontaneous

object» (1938: 333 f.). As Kant states in sheet V, empirical concepts are thus the forms in which «the subject is mediately affected», or «metaphysically how the subject makes itself into an object» (Ibid.: 326; eng. 109).

How does all this help us to solve, however, the problem posed at the end of our §3?

The answer to this question can be found in the same aforementioned fragments. For, while the latter stresses that these forms “mediating the affection” are presupposed «*in order to realise space through empirical representation [den Raum durch empirische Vorstellung zu realisieren]*» (*ibidem*), the half-sheet VIII points out that «this exhibition [...] produces a cognition of the outer sense-object, as *appearance*, by composition of the manifold of the moving forces of matter in appearance, *for the sake of the possibility of experience [zum Behuf der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung]*» (Ibid.: 343; eng. 112). Within the overall process of transcendental constitution of experience, physics is possible – the *Konvolut X* concludes – only because it corresponds to a “pre-formation”, or a form of subjective «*anticipation quoad materiale*» (Ibid.: 345) of the empirical. This enables us (we, the empirical subjects) to «indicate a priori the object of this latter, namely *matter*, and *its specific, in advance* of the experience [*vor der Erfahrung*], in accordance with the concept of it as the movable in space» (Ibid.: 362). The physical concepts rely on such an anticipation. They represent the manners in which we tentatively shape, invent, and “physically” *project* the pure form of space (and, in space, the a priori form of time) *in behalf, zum Behuf* of the same empirical experience.

In light of these considerations, it is inevitable to draw the ultimate conclusions of the *Opus*, which state that, *as such*, «experience cannot be received as a representation which comes to us, but must *be made*» (Ibid.: 322; eng. 108), as well as that, in this “making”, «both *observation* and experiment are only *methods* to extract from the sensible representation what we have tentatively inserted» (Ibid.: 318; eng. 105).

In fact, when the principle of criticism itself is assumed in its most radical form, it becomes evident that nothing remains outside reason, for even the empirical forms must be invented *in advance* by reason in order to anticipate, as their appearance, the same appearances. At the most, it is therefore possible to distinguish between different levels of articulation and “constitutiveness” (a priori, pure, and then also empirical) within the overall reason. As Kant himself concludes: «We make everything ourselves» (Ibid.: 82; eng. 189). And he goes even further, stating that: «It is all transcendental. Pure idealism» (1936: 90). Once more, however, these conclusions raise further questions. What does all this mean, indeed, for what we have seen about the physical geography?

Despite the fact that the majority of literature (including Kant himself) has reduced the concept of appearance of appearance to a mere physical plane, namely

to the topic of the moving forces and at the most to the presupposition of the teleological form of organic bodies (see, for example, Mathieu [1991]: 143-166 and Pecere [2007]: 775-794), the general conclusions of *Konvolute* VII and I allow to claim that the dynamic of anticipation *quoad materiale* described thanks to the concept of appearance of appearance can – and indeed *must* – be extended to the entire process of reflecting comprehension of the empirical, and particularly to the *Vorbegriffe* that the “observative reason” projects and presupposes to its “journey”.

The plan that we must «project already in advance [*schon im Voraus*]» (1802: 157; eng. 446) in order to arrange our experiences within the world precisely functions in the same manner as the topic of the moving forces: as a “material” anticipation of the empirical which precedes its occurrence “in behalf” of it. From a geographical and anthropological perspective, this anticipation corresponds to the effective realisation of human space in a broad sense, whereby we pre-dispose (make and then arrange) the space in order to move into it.

Therefore, we can answer to the question of how it is possible for the geographical plan to be “in advance” of the empirical, that this is because such an “advance” corresponds to the manner in which the subject “projects” its space in taking place into it. In this sense, the mathematical preconstruction of space makes it possible to order the empirical, since the empirical forms are invented in the same act through which the subject “opens up” the world. As Farinelli (2009: 11) asserts, the “Table” also possesses a material nature and is in “material” interplay with the arrangement of the map that is drawn on it. The empirical entirely constituted by the forms we invent to anticipate it.

If this is indeed the case, however, two new problems arise. Let us now return to the “general” question posed at the conclusion of §1. This question concerned the manner in which reflection operates in the seeking and arrangement of the empirical. It is now evident that this operation constitutes a form of anticipation that reason itself makes in behalf of the appearance of an “empirical”, the possibility of which “is contingent upon this anticipation”. Nevertheless, it remains not clear what precisely is meant by such a “temporality”. If the pure and a priori form of time appears to be merely linear, a pure succession that proceeds from 1 to 2, and then to 3, and so on, the fact that the empirical given must be always anticipated and only after its (*tempted*, hypothetical) anticipation it can be found in the world means that the possibility of what is before depends on the after, since the after is before of itself, as its own presupposition.

As Lyotard stressed, reflection is a form of *Nachträglichkeit*: a process that he describes as «a generativity with, if possible, no set-up [*dispositif*] other than the absence of set-up» (Lyotard [1988]: 60; eng. 54), and in the functioning of which there is no «“first” and “second”», neither “before” nor “after”, for any «first blow [...] was not recorded and only comes back as second blow» (Ibid.: 61; eng. 56).

In Kant's terms, the (illegitimate) assumption of an empirical outside our anticipations is solely due to an «amphiboly of reflecting judgment» (Kant [1938]: 326; eng. 110), because of which «what belongs to the subject (which is affected) is attributed to the represented object» (Ibid.: 320; eng. 107). In fact, there is only the continuous projection of the empirical made by the operation of the a priori. To put it another way, there is solely what Kant defines as «the schematism of the concepts of reflection in a system» (Ibid.: 490; eng. 139), through which the empirical is anticipated – and nothing other than this schematism.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile to recall Kant's own words: «It is all transcendental. Pure idealism» (1936: 90). If this is indeed the case, however, it becomes evident that not only is our own examination of reflection far from sufficient, but even Kant's. This leads to a second question, namely how the new presumed «schematism of the power of judgment» (1938: 494; eng. 142) should be understood. Indeed, in what way does this schematism cooperate to the overall transcendental constitution of experience? The aforementioned fragments of the *Opus* provided an initial account of its functioning. However, this account remains only “hypothetical”. The actual issue moves itself to the plane of the *Critique of the power of judgment*. Given that precisely such a “schematism” appears to be everything but developed by it, can we still rely on the third *Critique*? What remains of the *Critique of the power of judgment*, as it were, after the *Opus postumum*?

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Notes

- 1 In accordance with the established custom, I will cite Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* providing the page numbers of the original editions. In the event of a coincidence between the text of the first and second editions, I will quote the latter. With regard to the English translations, I wish to note that they have all been verified and, when necessary, modified.
- 2 I cite the first edition of the *Critique* for the difference is more evident there, particularly in the formulation of the Second Analogy, which claims that «Everything that happens (begins to be) presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule», without further determination of this rule. Without further specification, for instance, whether the effect follows its cause in a linear or cyclical form, in a mechanical or a teleological way (see Garoni [1986]: 76 f.).
- 3 For a broader comparison between Kant's and Hegel's conceptions of reason, consult at least Lugarini (1981), Longuenesse (1981), and, more recently, Ferrarin (2016).
- 4 For an analysis of the general problem of the understanding (as *Vernehmen*) in Kant, see the linguistic interpretations by Høgrebe (1974) and La Rocca (1999), as well as the *lato* and *stricto sensu* "cognitive" ones by Longuenesse (1993), and Hanna (2001). These interpretations are of significant value for reconstructing the *hermeneutical* dimension of the concrete understanding in Kant, although especially the latter tend to suppress the distinction between the a priori *Ver-stand* (the "simple" stabilisation of objectivity) and the reflecting process of *Vernehmen*, of which *the power of judgment* is in charge, due to their same hermeneutical assumptions. For further insight into the limitations of any "hermeneutical" interpretation of Kant, see Branca (2023; 2024: 67-97).
- 5 On the philological issues depending on the corruption of Rink' and Vollmer's edition, as well as of the manuscripts, see Elden (2009) and Stark (2011); for a reconstruction of the events behind Rink's edition, instead, see Farinelli (2004: I-XIII).
- 6 For an analysis of Ritter's geographical method, see *Ibid.*: 23-29, and Farinelli (1992: 120-133, 266 f.). For what I know, there is still a lack of a comprehensive study comparing Kant's geography and Ritter's *Erdkunde*.
- 7 In so doing, I provide an explanation of the (only apparent) paradox pointed out by Marcuzzi (2011: 130), according to which geographical knowledge is «for one part of a conceptual order, but also, as we have seen, of the order of spatialisation in the sense of a nonconceptual disposition of the object of geography in space». As highlighted in the text, this depends on the fact that, in dealing with (and indeed in *making*) space, the "matrix" of every physical-geographical knowledge remains mathematical.
- 8 I completely avoid here to give notice about the history and composition of Kant's *Opus postumum*. On the topic, see Mathieu (1991: 62-90), and Förster (1993: XVI-XXXVIII).
- 9 Net to the different perspectives, the most comprehensive attempts of reconstruction remain Mathieu (1991), Förster (2000), and Pecere (2007: 667-794).