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The Mind and the Map Kant and the Image of Reality

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Abstract. This article aims to show the relationship between representation, subject and thing-in-itself in Kantian thought, in the light of a cartographic analogy articulated through the triad map, mind and territory. From this point of view, the mind is to be understood as a threshold, as a place of passage between the thing and the map. This leads us, on the one hand, to see in Peirce's semiotics a revival and reworking of Kantian thought. On the other hand, it leads us to the alternative between Grenze (bound) and Schranke (limit), which will be analysed in parallel with a pivotal problem in philosophy, namely that of the limit between being and not-being, as articulated in Plato's *Sophist*.

Keywords. Kant, Peirce, Plato, Map, Mind.

The heavy pewter lamp suspended in chains over his head, continually rocked with the motion of the ship, and for ever threw shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it almost seemed that while himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead. (Melville [1851]: 201-202)

In the essay *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Michel Foucault shows the analogy between Smith's metaphor of the invisible hand and Kant's transcendental dialectics (Foucault [1979]: 278-283): almost in the same years, following different paths, the two realised what we might call the "non-totalizable nature" of reality. Economic rationality is "based" on the fact that the totality of the economic process is unknowable by the individual players; similarly, in Kant's thought, the knowability of all phenomena entails the notion of totality, i.e. the idea of the entire series of phenomena. This totality is unknowable and, depending on how we consider it, is called soul, world or God. Rather than on a theoretical level, the problem can also be declined in moral terms: just as the collective good in Smith cannot be calculated, which coincides with the impossibility of an economic sovereign, so too in Kant the highest good – i.e. the connection between the actions of all individuals and the happiness of each (Kant [1787]: 679-680 [B837-839]) – remains just a regulative ideal.

On this very topic, there is a third name that could be recalled here, namely the mathematician and geodesist Carl Friedrich Gauss. In 1827 he published his *Disquisitiones generales circa superficies curvas* (Gauss [1827]), in which we find the *theorema egregium*, according to which surfaces with different curvature cannot be isometric to each other. Since the sphere has strictly positive curvature, while the plane has zero curvature, the sphere cannot be isometric to the plane. In other words, planispheres always involve some form of distortion: this is something known long before Gauss, who nevertheless offers a mathematical demonstration of it. The theorem can be read, in my opinion, as a further chapter in that novel written by many hands between the late 18th and early 19th century, and which could be titled *The "non-totalizable nature" of reality*.

The visualisation – but we should say better: the representation – of the sphere on the plane fails to "totalize" the sphere, i.e. to render all the characteristics of the sphere. To transfer the sphere onto a plane means giving up some of the characteristics of the sphere, and more generally, it means recognising an ineradicable difference between the sphere and *our* representation of it.

1. *The territory and the map*

Starting from Kant's definition of the transcendental (Kant [1787]: 149 [B 25]), we could call cartography that cognition that is occupied not so much with the object "sphere" but rather with our mode of cognition of the object "sphere" when we make a representation of it, reducing it to a plane¹.

The birth of the map – I mean: the map as a tool, as a product of a given cultural context – entails, first of all, a difference between a territory and its representation. In other words, «the world can never be apprehended in a single

synoptic gaze of the mapmaker's eye» (Brotton [2012]: 14). Kant's thought puts in perhaps the most radical terms the difference between a thing and its representation. Using Simmel's words, we can say that in Kant's conception «every thread by which the metaphysicians believed they were tying together thinking and being in arcane harmony is cut off» (Simmel [1899]: 151-152). There is a huge gap between the two: the bridge between the objective and the psychological was broken by Kant (Simmel [1918]: 26).

It is absolutely important to highlight that the map, or any other image of the world, in order to function at its best, must also attempt to *remove this difference* in some sense.

As Denis Wood rightly points out, the map does not claim its impartiality simply by trying to hide this difference: if this were the strategy, it would always be possible to reply that we are still dealing with an image of reality, a mask, or, put in more radical terms, a lie (Wood [1992]: 66). The strategy is different: instead of presenting itself as a "record" of reality, the map presents itself as the image of a dream to which the world is forced to conform (Wood [1992]). In other terms, «the map creates this territory, the map ... brings it into being» (Wood [1992]: 68). This allows the map to claim absolute objectivity. The territory does not exist in itself, but exists only as a projection of a map. *This thesis coincides with the idea of transcendental knowledge as formulated by Kant.*

Thus in Kant we are dealing with both a *difference* between map and territory², but also with the *erasure of this difference*. And it is precisely this paradox that we must explain.

Let us now take the difference between territory and map, i.e. the separation between being and thought, in the strictest terms: we cannot say that things in the territory are already "connected" to each other, or even just "arranged" in *a certain way*, as if thought would only have to try to discover this connection later and adjust itself to that certain connection. We cannot refer to that "certain connection" as if it were something actually present and operating in the territory – as if this connection already existed before thought began its investigation. That "certain connection" – let us say for a moment: the true and the real connection in which things would be connected and arranged in being – is not *real* at all, but is already a *projection* of our thinking. We imagine things as if a configuration were already present in order to be able to trace it back to a model constructed by our mind: that "configuration", however, is part of the overall model through which thought tries to configure the relationship between itself and reality. The idea of a nexus between being and image, between territory and map, is already part of the image, part of the map. In Kantian terms, «The understanding therefore does not find some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but *produces* it, *affecting* inner sense» (Kant [1787]: 258 [B155]).

We have placed a distance between territory and map, that is, between being and thought. In the light of this difference, however, we will never deal with being, but only with the image we have made of it. Through mapping, a territory appears for the first time: it is no longer an issue involving the territory “in itself”, so to speak, since that is unapproachable, but rather the map is the only “way” in which the territory can be, i.e. the map is the way the territory appears to us, thus according to our way of mapping and knowing it.

The paradoxical result is as follows: the very awareness of a *difference* between territory and map leads to an *identity* between map and territory. In other words, Kant is the awareness of this inescapable gap between representation and thing (what we have called the “non-totalizable nature” of the real), but he is also the inventor of the transcendental (in the sense that he assigns the intellect a “total” role in representation, i.e. in the construction of empirical reality).

2. *The mind and the mapping of reality*

At this point someone might argue: «do you really want to deny that the river is already to the right of the mountain anyway, even when you have not yet mapped the area?». And the answer is: «yes, we deny that the river is to the *right* of the mountain *before* the mapping». Firstly because “right” or “left” already imply a reference to our way of knowing. If the realist were to demand a cartographic reference, we can say that “right” or “left” will depend on how the map is oriented, south or north. There is no point in asking what position the river occupies in relation to the mountain, in absolute terms, but only in what way the river appears to us, thus also assuming a particular position in relation to the mountain. As Kant puts it: «that our object is not the nature of things, which is inexhaustible, but the understanding, which judges about the nature of things» (Kant [1787]: 150 [B 26]).

Up to this point we have been dealing with two elements: being and thought. Otherwise we could say: the territory and the map. However, we have kept an ambiguity: thought has sometimes been presented as the actual map, as the image of being, but at other times as the activity of mapping the territory. This ambiguity must be cleared up precisely by looking at the cartography. We have seen how it is the map that brings the territory into existence – where the existence of the territory is not its absolute “being” (to which we do not have access), but only the way in which the territory appears to us, precisely because it is so and so mapped. This can happen because there is a widespread belief that the map should actually be understood as the externalisation of a *mental map*, as if it were «the consciousness of a pre-verbal, pre-signifying ... *pre-given* world» (Wood [1993]: 53). Of course, that “pre-given world” will remain inaccessible: we can only externalise the map that the mind has made of it.

So we would have not two, but three elements: the territory, the map and the mind. The *lectio facillior* imagines that first there is a territory and then the mind produces a map of the territory. The very wording of this sentence allows us to question this process: we – so we have written – *imagine* that territory exists first. But we should ask ourselves: “where do we imagine this?”. Or better: “where do we *imagine* that very difference between territory and map if not within our own mental map?”. This is also the right place to point out that Gauss’ theorem itself is not about the difference between the earth itself and its map, but rather depends on the difference between the curvature of the sphere and the curvature of the plane. Obviously, the concept of curvature is a notion built by the intellect. Here we can clearly see how we have already brought the earth within our own representation: we speak of the curvature of a sphere – a concept that is constructed by our way of knowing – and in fact we are able to compare it with another concept which is the curvature of the plane.

You cannot say that there is first the territory and then the mind invents the map. The territory only exists when the mind produces the map: the territory takes on certain characteristics because it is in some sense drawn on the map. On the other hand, we have to take into account the fact that the production of the map does not leave the mind as it was before. The moment the mind manages to project its “map” outside, the mind also begins to understand the territory differently: for the first time the river will really appear to it to the right (or left) of the mountain. By doing so, the mind will be able to better control the territory; thus it will enrich the map with new details, and thus bring new details to exist in the territory (Siegert [2011]: 13-16). This is a decisive point: territory, mind and map are to be understood as maximally concrete, in the sense that mind, map and (awareness of) territory literally grow together (*cum-crescere* in Latin, from which we derive “concrete”) and support each other. No element can claim precedence over the other two.

We are faced with these three factors: the territory, the mind and the map. While the territory and the map are things, the “nature” of mind here remains ambiguous. By “mind” we do not mean the brain, nor can we mean a simple psychological dynamic. If this were the case, the mind would be reduced to a thing or a representation respectively, but we know that Kant has broken the bridge between the objective (the supposed object in itself) and the psychological (the representation of the object occurring in the mind)³. The mind here can only be considered a *threshold*, a transit from territory to map and from map to territory⁴. Mapping is the gesture that continuously brings into dialogue the two. With good approximation it can be said that this gesture actually constitutes the heart of what Kant calls transcendental schematism.

The schema is not an image, but a «rule of synthesis» (Kant [1787]: 273 [B 180]), a «pure synthesis in accord with a rule of unity» (Kant [1787]: 274 [B 181])

through which images first become possible – we might say it is that “gesture of the mind” through which all maps first become possible. On the other hand, this rule of synthesis must be understood as «the rule for the determination of our intuition» (Kant [1787]: 273 [B180]), in the sense that this synthesis «has as its aim no individual intuition, but rather only the unity in the determination of sensibility» (Kant [1787]: 273 [B 179]). The schema is a sort of mechanical belt between the territory and the map: the schema constructs images that help to unify and make the territory comprehensible in a certain sense. Schematism is the activity that connects what we called “a pre-given world” within an image by offering a unitary vision that we have called territory and so it is the activity of «procuring meaning» (Kant [1787]: XXX 224) by connecting the territory with its sign (its map).

Since the schema is a transit, we cannot describe it in a single step, but need two steps.

a) First, we can say that the schema is the transit from a pre-given world to a map. However, we know that we do not have access to the pre-given world, but only to its reconstruction through a rule of synthesis.

b) So we must say: the schema is the consolidation of a certain rule of synthesis. In the light of this rule, the pre-existing world is unified and configured, giving rise to something we call territory. This same rule therefore entails the concept that makes the territory comprehensible in a conceptual key.

Thus the schema constructs images that help to unify and make the territory comprehensible in a certain sense. Schematism is the activity of «providing concepts with a relation to object» (Kant [1787]: 276 [B185]). This can only take place through a “rule” that on the one hand allows the unification of the pre-existing world and on the other produces its comprehensibility on a conceptual level as a territory mapped on a map, i.e. its transformation into a sign (Krämer [2016]: 254-259).

3. *Semiotic triangle*

In this sense, the schema could be seen as “something” very similar to the third vertex of Peirce’s semiotic triangle, the territory being equivalent to the thing and the map to the sign. Let us take the proposition 2.274: «A *Sign*, or *Representamen*, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object» (Peirce [1902]: 156). Instead of what would later become, during the 20th century, the classical theory of signifier and signified, Peirce shows the need for a third element: the third is actually only a rule of conjunction between the first and the second, which brings us back to Kant’s rule of synthesis.

Karl Otto Apel had already pointed out the deep connection between Kant and Peirce⁵ more than fifty years ago: «Peirce’s philosophical approach may be understood as a semeiotical transformation of Kant’s transcendental logic» (Apel [1972]: 94). Taking advantage of the parallelism already proposed by Kempski (Kempski [1952]: 57-63), Apel says that «thirdness as a mediation by signs or representation of something to an interpretant is in Peirce’s language something like an analogue of Kant’s objective unity of ideas in a selfconsciousness» (Apel [1972]: 95). Apel also points out that Peirce attempts to structure thirdness within a semiotic dimension that replaces the consciential horizon still present in Kant: in other words, Peirce would root the rule not in the “I think”, but in a sort of connection between signs, capable of overcoming any psychologism and anthropocentrism, since the mind on the one hand is the instigator of correlations between signs and things, but the mind, when using these same laws of correlation, itself becomes a sign. Peirce imagines an interesting prosopopoeia in which words are addressed to man (see propositions 5.313-314):

But since man can think only by means of words or other external symbols, these might turn round and say: «You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought». In fact, therefore, men and words reciprocally educate each other; each increase of a man’s information involves and is involved by, a corresponding increase of a word’s information.

Without fatiguing the reader by stretching this parallelism too far, it is sufficient to say that there is no element whatever of man’s consciousness which has not something corresponding to it in the word; and the reason is obvious. It is that the word or sign which man uses *is* the man himself. (Peirce [1868]: 188-189)

From a certain point of view, we can say that Kant himself had already perfectly overcome any risk of anthropomorphism or psychologism when he stated, with regard to the so-called “I think”: «Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x , which is recognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and about which, in abstraction, we can never have even the least concept» (Kant [1787]: 414 [B404]). In this sense, we will see that the formula used by Kant – «Ich, oder er, oder es» – has much in common with the following formula: «*Quod statim patet quia quicumque hoc pronomen, “ego”, vel “tu”, vel “ille” vel quodcumque audit, aliquis permanens apprehendit, tamen non ut distinctum vel determinatum nec sub determinata apprehensione, sed ut determinabile est sive distinguibile per alterum unumquodque, mediante tamen demonstratione vel relatione*» (De Marbasio [1995]: 64). We are quoting Michael de Marbasio, a Parisian master active in the 13th century. We are not suggesting that Kant could have read this passage, which we translate here: «What is immediately clear is that anyone who hears this pronoun, “I”, or “you”, or “he”, or anything else, permanently apprehends it, yet not as distinct or determinate, nor under a determi-

nate apprehension, but as being determinable or distinguishable from each other, by means of demonstration or relation». What we are saying, however, is that the definition of “I think” – which could just as well be “he thinks” or “the thing thinks” in the sense that through these different “formulations” we only intend to refer to a transcendental subject of thought – is tremendously similar to a definition of a pronoun given by an exponent of medieval scholasticism.

This passage through medieval scholasticism should help us see a connection with Peirce’s semiotics: Kant simply made explicit the presence of a transcendental support that remained, so to speak, unthematized, or at least implicit in the scholastic tradition, whereas Peirce traces this same substratum back to an intersubjective dynamic. Indeed we can say that transcendental subject of thought is exactly equivalent to the entire semiotic process and thus founded on the intersubjectivity of communication by an infinite community that underlies Peirce’s speculation.

What matters most, in fact, is the way in which the mind is understood. On the one hand, in using signs that have already been instituted, the mind merely respects the law of their connection, in the sense that it is totally absorbed in the chaining of signs: it is itself a sign. On the other hand, however, the mind is also such a gesture that it is able to construct, or reconstruct, the link between a sign and a thing: in this respect it is clearly neither a pure thing (a territory) nor a pure sign (a map), but it is the capacity to transit from one to the other. In this transiting, the rule of synthesis that Kant spoke of with regard to schematism works and is consolidated into meaning (*Bedeutung*).

Therefore, it becomes clear that it is impossible to set an order of priority between any of the three factors: territory, map and mind. The territory only takes shape in the light of the map, and the map in turn is formed around a “rule” for reading the territory that is based on the mind. The mind, is only the forming of this rule, through which the territory is determined, is mapped on the map. This was well understood by Schelling:

The schema is not a presentation determinate in all its aspects, but merely an intuition of the rule whereby a specific object can be brought forth. The nature of the schema can be explained most clearly from the example of the craftsman, who has to fashion an object of specific form in accordance with a concept. [...] In the commonest exercise of understanding, the schema figures as the general link (*das allgemeine Mittelglied*) whereby we recognize any object as of a certain sort. (Schelling [1801]: 136)

When we read that the schema is “*das allgemeine Mittelglied*” (which we could translate “the universal medium”), through which an object is determined, Peirce’s words come to mind. According to Peirce (see proposition 8.332) «the essential function of a sign is to render inefficient relations efficient, – not to set them into action, but to establish a habit or general rule whereby they will act on

occasion» (Peirce [1904]: 390, ita 191). The schema is configured here as a true *gesture of the mind*, indeed the gesture par excellence: a transiting from the thing to its image thanks to a rule of synthesis that is itself formed in this continuous transiting that gives form to both the map and the territory⁶.

4. *Bounds and Limits*

The mind is not a thing, nor a representation, but rather that movement, that gesture that happens around the threshold between the two, thanks to which a representation of the thing is constructed and which at the same time allows a representation to be applied to the thing. In this sense, the distinction between limit (*Schranke*) and bound (*Grenze*) proposed by Kant is inescapable: «Bounds (in extended beings) always presuppose a space existing outside a certain definite place, and inclosing it; limits do not require this, but are mere negations, which affect a quantity, so far as it is not absolutely complete» (Kant [1783]: 79). As an example we can say that mathematics, physics and the other sciences only recognise limits, those limits that determine the perimeter of study of the various disciplines: these disciplines may know that something else lies beyond their own sphere, but they have no tools with which to reach and analyse it. Metaphysics, on the other hand, knows only bounds. It stops at no limit: each discipline only deals with its own phenomena, whereas metaphysics aims at the unconditional (Sini [2012]: 9-10).

Our thesis is as follows: *becoming aware of the difference between the bound and the limit is, in fact, to turn every supposed limit into a bound*. It is true that, from the point of view which belongs to the different disciplines, a single disciplinary field will remain enclosed within definite limits. However, alongside the strict disciplinary view we are now able to place that of metaphysics, which – where all disciplines see rigid limits – is able to see that limit as a bound⁷. Consider Kant's example: if I take the earth as a plate, I continue to experience new "pieces of the world", but from time to time my knowledge of the earth will be closed within limits. If, on the other hand, I think of the earth as a sphere, then I will be able, even starting from a small part of the surface, to know the diameter and surface area of the whole sphere (Kant [1787]: 653 [B787]). We can say that once the idea of earth as a sphere is introduced, it will no longer be possible to consider it only as a plate. The moment the notion of bounds arises, as capable of marking the threshold between a "here" and a "beyond", no limit could maintain its rigorous closure. The limit establishes the closure of a territory, or of a thing as separated from another; the bound, on the other hand, involves the awareness that each thing is in relation to the other. Once the concept of a bound is exhibited, it even becomes difficult to really think of a limit: the determinacy of the

thing will not be a moment of closure of the object in itself, but even a “*locus of openness*”, implying the relationship between one thing and all the others.

The transformation addressed by Kant with the distinction between bound and limit –with the effect of reducing every limit to a bound – could be clarified by a similar case. I am referring to the Platonic innovation concerning the way of conceiving the concept of “not-being”, invented to overcome the Parmenidean impasse related to a sharp opposition between being and not-being. As is well known, instead of maintaining the strict opposition between the two, Plato distinguishes two types of “not-being”: the “not-being” as absolutely other than being (the so-called Nothingness) and the “not-being” which is simply something else, something different: «not as something contrary to being (ἐναντίον), but merely different (ἕτερον)» (Plato, *Soph.*: 258 b3-4).

Thus negation ceases to be merely excluding, rather it becomes the general form of the relation between different entities. Each individual entity is distinguished from every other entity, but not in the sense that it denies them *in toto*, but rather insofar as each individual thing is simply different from the others. Negation discloses the mutual relation between entities, insofar as they are all different from each other, without being excluding. Heidegger writes, «Hence Plato understands the “not” and negation as disclosive» (Heidegger [1992]: 387). The strict opposition between being and not-being is succeeded by a relationship of *mutual otherness* between different entities, indeed between entities that are now thought of as *different* from each other.

But here is the analogy to the Kantian operation: when we start to think of “not-being” as “something different”, it becomes almost impossible to keep thinking “not-being” as absolutely opposed to being. Once we have conceived negation as something that discloses a relation, how can we go back to thinking of it as excluding? Let us immediately give the decisive example, taken from the fourth book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*: «that is why we assert that even what is not is a thing that is not» (*Metaph.*: 1003 b10-11). It is no longer possible to really think of “not-being” as absolutely nothing, in the sense of a “not-being” which is really the absolute opposite of being, without any relation to it. For even of “not-being” we are forced to say that it *is*, in the sense that it somehow *exists*. So it falls into the sphere of being in a certain way: since we express it, by this act we bring it, so to speak, into the realm of being. If we want to use Kant’s language, we can say that there is no longer a strict limit, but only a bound between being and “not-being”. Nor can we imagine “non-being” as something that is so absolutely opposed to being that it does not reveal itself in some way even in relation to being itself⁸.

So “not-being” becomes something “else”, and we only have a remote memory of nothingness as that which is absolutely opposed to being: we are now in the condition whereby even of nothingness we must say that it *is* nothing. The

same applies to the relationship between map and territory: the map is so powerful that it includes the territory in itself. And what about that territory in itself, that *pregiven* world? We only have a remote memory of it, but we can no longer access it ... except through our maps.

5. *The map of the mind. The mind as a map*

We started from a precise thesis, however paradoxical: *the very consciousness of a difference between territory and map leads to an identity between map and territory*. Kant sets up the absolute difference between being and its image, and it is precisely this difference that gives him access to the transcendental, that is, the awareness that any image we make of being is our own image and has nothing to do with real being.

We have said that in Kant every limit is destined to turn into a bound: think of the famous image of the “land of truth” set against the “vast and stormy ocean” – a page dedicated to the foundation of the distinction of objects into *phaenomena* and *noumena* (Kant [1787]: 354 [B295]). On that page, actually, the strictest possible limit, the one that marks the difference between land and sea, is transformed into a bound: in spite of the fact that we feel safe on the land of truth, i.e. the realm of phenomena, and in spite of the fact that the sea deceives the voyager with false promises of new lands, nevertheless we are pushed to embark «to search through all its breadth and become certain of whether there is anything to hope for it» (Kant [1787]: 354 [B295]) and moreover to try to find out «by what title we occupy even this land, and can hold it securely against all hostile claims» (Kant [1787]: 354 [B295]). Not even the sea can propose itself as a limit that cannot be crossed: it too becomes a bound.

Out of metaphor, starting from the difference between being and image (between territory and map) Kant discovers the notion of the transcendental: we do not have access to being itself, but only to the image we make of it. In this sense, “being” will always appear only within that “image”, so that being will turn out to be identical with that image. In cartographic terms: we start from the difference between the territory and the map (or between the sphere and the plane), but since the only way we can study the territory is to map it, everything we will know about the territory will be “on the map”, and therefore the territory itself will turn out to be *identical* to the map. Here is the contradiction to think about: *the map is different from the territory, but the territory – since it can only appear on the map – ends up being identical to the map*.

The whole reflection of so-called German idealism will be a way of assessing whether and how the transformation of every limit into a bound also applies to the distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena*. To put it with the precision we

can find in the latest Fichte, we have “being” on the one hand and on the other the “knowledge of being”, which is an image. We will call this first image “a”. «There is absolutely no other difference between being and a, except that the latter is not essence itself» (Fichte [1812-1813]: 213). However, the awareness that there is a difference between being and the image of it, which we have called “a”, is a new content of knowledge, thus a new image, which we shall call “b”. Thus “b” contains the awareness of a difference between being and “a”, although in every other respect being coincides with “a”. If we assume the viewpoint of “a”, then we see only identity with being, whereas in the light of “b” we can say that the two turn out to be indistinguishable from each other, even if they are not *the same thing*.

It is easy to see how this approach has decisive implications on the cartographic level: we place a difference between the territory and the map. But in turn this difference can only appear on a new map: the role played by this “second map” is exactly equivalent to that transiting from one to the other, from being to image and from image to being – that constitutes the original gesture of the mind. Only through this transiting, moreover, the establishment of a correlation between territory and map – the connection between objects and concepts that Kant calls meaning – becomes possible (Kant [1787]: 276 [B185]).

Unlike intellect and reason, which rule over a territory, imagination does not insist on a territory, precisely because it is a continuous transit from thing to knowledge: on this also depends the ancipitous nature of imagination itself, which at once belongs to sensibility but is also presented as an act of spontaneity. Inevitably Kant simultaneously defines imagination as «determining» and yet at the same time as «determinable» (Kant [1787]: 257 [B 151]).

A contradiction that emerges even more explicitly in the first edition of the Critique: «Both extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must necessarily be connected by means of this transcendental function of the imagination» (Kant [1781]: 241 [A 124]). This function is exactly the art hidden in the depths of our soul (as we have seen, Schelling will speak, by analogy, of a craftsman). How territory can generate a map (a map through which for the first time a territory becomes “visible” and further analyzable and mappable)? We might ask: How does matter become a body (a body that can get an idea of what matter is)? In logical terms we should say: how do we manage to identify two different things? How does that synthesis happen in which the very difference between being and image is overcome?

Of this art – as Kant punts it – we will never be able to fully unravel the real operations (Kant [1787]: 273 [B 181]). This is not a matter of a lack of faith in science, but rather the awareness that every answer, gradually more precise as research progresses, will always be written *on a map*: ever more evolved, ever more detailed maps in which for a moment we will have the illusion of having

grasped the authentic essence of the territory (this is the identity between the territory and the map), until the moment when the differences between map and territory, between image and being, will re-emerge, forcing us to invent new maps and new models.

And this is the reason why science announces itself as an endless task.

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Notes

- 1 See Kant (1787): 149: «I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*».
- 2 On this topic see Morawski (2024): 207-237.
- 3 On this problem concerning the relationship between image and thing in itself, on which depends also the refutation of idealism within the first critique, see Desideri (2023): 165-172.
- 4 The expression that best renders the idea of the mind as threshold is perhaps to be found in the third Critique, when Kant speaks of «*reflectirte Wahrnehmung*» (Kant [1790]: 25 [A 191]). On this topic see Desideri (2011): 73-74.
- 5 At least partially in favour of a semantic conception of the transcendental, but completely against such a parallelism between Kant and Peirce, as illustrated by Apel, is Hogebe (1974): 162-164.
- 6 By imparting this direction to our argument, we clearly downplay the role that Kant assigns to the concept. In Kant, the concept is a kind of supply that the intellect has always possessed (Kant [1787]: 150 [B 26]): here, on the other hand, moving from German idealism and American pragmatism, we understand the concept itself as a meaning that has been constructed by the very activity of the mind.
- 7 This statement is to be understood in the following way: whenever the mathematician, economist, or jurist ventures into areas that belong to other disciplines, their speculation ceases to be purely scientific, that is, related to the study of its specific field of phenomena, and takes on a metaphysical perspective. In this sense, the metaphysical perspective is the one that each individual scientist tends to adopt whenever he or she enters into dialogue with other disciplines.
- 8 It is here that all the aporias related to the relationship between being and nothingness arise: Platonic invention no longer allows us to think of nothingness as absolutely other than being.