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The Enlightened Reflection. Kant and the Philosophical Care for Reason

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Abstract. The paper intends to investigate the task that Kant assigns to reason to orient itself in thought. For understanding the meaning of this task, we utilize reflection as the means to carry forward as best as possible the self-reflective nature of reason. What status does reflection assume, then? And what function does it perform in determining especially the activity of philosophy and the philosopher? We therefore propose a reading in which reflection in transcendental philosophy cannot be separated from the practical use of reason, and indeed reason, insofar as it is reflective, primarily indicates a conduct of thought oriented toward the care of supreme ends.

Keywords. Orienting-in, thought, reflection, criticism, reason, boundary.

1. *To orient oneself with reflection*

If we cannot restrain the tendency to move beyond what is known, we have no choice but to rely on a need of our reason. Thus, in a footnote of the essay *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?*, Kant offers the general definition of the main issue of his essay. It is somewhat striking that what initially appears to be merely a

condition of reliance on reason – which is groping for footholds in the darkness of knowledge – transforms itself into the «right of reason's need» (Kant [1786]: 6). It is not just a need, but the right that arises from that need. And it is not just any right, but the supreme maxim of the enlightened reason and therefore of thinking on our own. For reaching this outcome – as always within the horizon of the critical philosophy – it is crucial to observe the method Kant uses. Therefore, we must not forget what relevance in this essay is assigned to analogy. Kant states: «By analogy, one can easily guess that it will be a concern of pure reason to guide its use when it wants to leave familiar objects (of experience) behind» (Kant [1786]: 5). Analogy is the compass for navigating when it comes to the orientation of thought. Therefore, regarding analogy, we must also remember some clarifications that Kant offers in par. 59 of the *Critique of Judgement*. First, the idea of purging language of the analogies contained within is futile. The standard of a completely technical language, free from any sensible characteristic and aimed solely at the purity of arguments, is totally in vain. Kant defines analogies as «indirect presentations of the concept» and provides a brief list of expressions that designate concepts only by «transferring the reflection upon an object of intuition to quite a new concept, and one with which perhaps no intuition could ever directly correspond» (Kant [1790]: 180). The main example that Kant provides is the monarchical state, which can be governed by constitutional laws as a living body or ruled by the absolute will of one alone, as a mere machine like a hand-mill.

There is no likeness between the elements of the analogy, but rather a proportion between the rules with which we reflect on both. These rules correspond to a method for orienting ourselves, just as in the case of the writing *What does it mean to orient itself in thinking?* They are partial, non-determinative viewpoints that serve to illuminate fundamental philosophical issues. When Kant describes geographic orientation, he argues that it must be considered a subjective standard as the guiding thread; in the same way, as he exemplifies, I orient myself at night: if I am to walk when I cannot right distinguish anything on the streets, through the mere feeling of a difference between my two sides, the right and left. If we turn to reason, it does not feel, but it reflects on its lack and «through the *drive for cognition* it effects the feeling of a need» (Kant [1786]: 8). Where there can be no intuition of objects, there is nothing to do but two kinds of operations. First, to verify if the concept is free of contradiction, and second, «to bring the relation of the object to objects of experience under the pure concept of understanding – through which [...] we do at least think of something super sensible in a way which is serviceable to the experiential use of our reason» (Kant [1998]: 6). This last operation seems very close to the act of reflection, as described in the *Critique*. Before highlighting this point, however, we must observe that

the need of reason is twofold: it has a theoretical use and a practical use. If the first one is conditioned, far more important is the use of reason in its practical use. What identifies a philosopher is a care inspired by conduct; its practical use of reason does not mark a range of duties but rather a moral destination for a rational world. Metaphysics and critical philosophy are joined together to orient this practical interest. For that reason, what Kant calls *pure rational faith* becomes the compass through which the thinker orients himself when he travels into the field of no sensible objects and each person with a healthy reason can mark out his path in accord with the end of his vocation. We are dealing with a cosmopolitan concept of thinking; the way Kant synthesizes it is not so much a wealth of cognitions to be learned and conveyed to others. Rather, it is a negative principle aimed at fighting against the solitude of thinking, the individual size of reasons, and at translating the consequences of what everyone can assume into a cosmopolitan dimension.

Another text from Kant's *Reflexion* 903 offers a significant analogy for the rational *ethos* of knowledge. In this case, the figure chosen as a symbol of the distorted use of reason is the Cyclops, described as an egoist of science. What makes a cyclops a cyclops is its being monocular, not its strength. There are cyclops in literature, theology, law, medicine, and geometry. What each of them lacks is the second eye, which is on the one side «the self-knowledge of our human reason» (Kant [1923]: 395) and, on the other side, the inclination to humanity to confront each other. How much would we think if we did not do it as it were in community with others? Not too much, states Kant; what he calls *Lenkseligkeit* of the judgement is quite the opposite of a solipsistic vision. Rather, it is the ability to extend knowledge up to its widest relations with the ends. *Antropologia transcendentalis* is the Kantian name used to mark this self-knowledge of understanding and reason, with a definition that has much more to do with critical philosophy and metaphysics than with pragmatic anthropology (See Failla [2006]: 453-465). We could say that critical philosophy, in its role as both propaedeutic and metaphysics, is the way to coordinate two forms of vision, where one completes and compensates for the other. This issue occurs between intellect and imagination, as well as between the search for systematic unity and the focus directed towards the ends.

In a *Reflexion* dating back to the years of composing the *Philosophical Encyclopedia*, Kant wrote that «Alle philosophie hat zum object die Vernunft: die Maximen, die Grenzen und den Zweck. Das übrige ist Vernunftkunst» (Kant [1928: 52]). To dealing with maxims and ends defines what philosophy is: a practice, the highest rational form of life; this activity directs knowledge towards the idea from which stems the system of science and, for achieving this purpose, it needs to gather and address objective knowledge in the perspective of the whole. There is no method for reason that does not have to take on this task. This way of

comprehending self-knowledge is characterized by a specific reflexivity, which is not empirical introspection at all but instead takes on its full meaning within the enlightenment character of reason as a reflective state of character. Thus, it is stated very clearly the meaning of transcendental investigation which gives value to his method. It consists in addressing the *how* of reason by reflecting on the possibility of the rational form of thought. From this perspective, autonomy and reflection are the main traits of enlightened rationality.¹

What Kant means as the enlightenment ideal is a conception of the *originality* of thought. Enlightenment should be understood as a disposition to think for oneself, just like Kant declares in his most famous essay: «Have courage to make use of your *own* understanding!». Despite the juridical use of language, enlightenment is conceived as an end that man is inclined to adopt because of respect for one's own humanity. This concept of autonomy leads us towards the notion of spontaneity and to the way in which it should be understood. As Allison noted, Kant does not offer any «ontological conclusion regarding the absolute spontaneity of the self from his epistemological analysis [...] spontaneity functions in the technical Kantian sense as an idea in light of which the act of thinking must be conceived in order to retain its normative status» (Allison [1996]: 64). The spontaneity-claim does not improve a metaphysical inference to the absolute spontaneity of the “thing which thinks”, but it regards rather the way in which the thinking subject must be conceived as endowed with cognition.

After all, someone who has merely been trained, for example, by learning the principles and definitions of the Wolffian system, has not yet exercised «a capacity to produce», but only «a capacity to imitate»: he is «a plaster cast of a living human being» (KrV A 836/B 865). This passage appears in the *Critique's* Doctrine of Method as a preamble to Kant's description of the species of rational cognition. It is also an answer to the question about which kind of thinking we must describe as a spontaneous act. Kant suggests that originality is connected to the possibility of criticizing and rejecting what one has learned.² For Kant, to use reason means to be concerned with principles, for philosophy is a «cognitio ex principiis», and a principle is a universal proposition from which, as he further claims, it is possible to stem in a systematic order. We can take something to be a principle because we consider it to have a significant application; but on what basis would this assumption not be arbitrary? Only if «it has been drawn out of universal sources, or principles of reason from which also arises the criticism, indeed even the rejection of what has been learned» (KrV A 836/B 864). The only way to avoid considering Kant's answer a circle is to regard the «capacity to produce» as a practice that I can enact spontaneously, the capacity to appreciate the significance of what one has been thought as rules governing particular cases. Originality is nothing but the talent (*Talent*) of recognizing the relevance of a rule. It is a sort of free

imitation that is practiced through the observation of given attempts. They are, of course, examples for which the history of philosophy thus has a supportive value. What seems most significant is the reflective character of the intellectual activity in question, through which this talent is exercised.

2. Method as architectonic unity

While the idea of a doctrine of method (*Methodenlehre*) initially grows up for Kant within a general logic, also influenced by a tradition where Meier's *Lehrart* stands out, it assumes a conclusive arrangement only in the first *Critique*. In fact, Architectonic is the place where the theme of organizing knowledge and its original systematic structure indisputably prevails. Here, the method finds not so much its most significant illustration, but certainly the heart of its critical meaning; thus, the problem becomes again the one of the circularities between the construction and the design of the system. Opening the Transcendental Doctrine of Method, Kant defines this part as «the determination of the formal conditions of a complete system of pure reason» (KrV A 707-8/B 735-6). Therefore, only Architectonic states how a system might be understood starting from a relationship with the concept of idea. A systematic structure is «the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea» (KrV A 832/B 860) and this role comes to the forefront as a pivot of «the rational concept of the form of the whole, insofar as through this the domain of the manifold as well as the position of the parts with respect to each other is determined a priori» (KrV A 832/B 860). In this passage we find some significant claims. First, the architectonic unity of a science is founded on a priori idea that can establish the position of each part of the system and its link to the whole. Second, Kant states «the scientific rational concept thus contains the end and the form of the whole that is congruent with it» (KrV A 832/B 860). The idea operates as an end, because each part has the function to realize the whole. What Kant means for architectonic unity is not the coherence between a body of cognition and other existing sciences. Architectonic unity stems from the fundamental idea proper of that specific science. In this regards, mathematics and physics are examples of sciences even though a complete system of all sciences does not yet exist.³ It is possible that this kind of unity will be enough to set up a science, but it is by no means certain that access to this idea is guaranteed.

Nobody attempts to establish a science without grounding it on an idea. But in its elaboration the schema, indeed even the definition of the science that is given right at the outset, seldom corresponds to the idea: for this lies in reason like a seed, all of whose parts still lie very involuted and are hardly recognizable even under microscopic observation. (KrV A 834/B 862)

In this case, the idea is an operative principle; to realize its function, it does not need to be entirely brought to consciousness or expressed as a rule. On the other hand, the schema is not merely a product of the author. If it were, indeed, nothing could rule out the possibility that it is merely a technical attempt external to the content. There is, in fact, another way to design a schema. It involves starting from the primary end of reason, within which it is a product that possesses the systematic articulation and boundaries of science. What remains unclear, however, is how to bind these two moments together according to immanent necessity. In other words, there is no certainty – nor could there realistically be – of achieving full explication of the systematic principle. The question, then, is whether this could be potentially an obstacle, a kind of a misstep of knowledge, or whether, instead, this gap between the teleological idea and the relationship between the parts is the driving force to give metaphysics its highest reflective profile.

If we now look at the question concerning metaphysics and its possibility of becoming a science, it becomes particularly relevant the issue about philosophical method, and accordingly, about the access to the real idea of science. The distinction between the school concept and the cosmic, or *worldly*, concept of philosophy plays a central role in this sense. Both, each in its own way, achieve a certain systematic unity. In fact, we know that the name of metaphysics comprehends the whole of rational cognitions that can ever be cognized a priori (KrV A 841/B 869). If we adhere to this definition, nothing prevents philosophy from simply consisting of a system of cognition in which its end is the logical perfection of the cognition itself. In other words, this is what Kant calls the scholastic concept of philosophy (KrV A 838/B 866). What are its limits? Kant states them explicitly in a footnote: they are the limits of any discourse based on rational principles for which cannot be provided irrefutable proof. Whether a proof is refutable or not depends on the relationship with the power to establish it, that is, with reason. It would therefore be impossible to call a principle or a rule of conduct rational «regarded only as one of the skills for certain arbitrary ends» (KrV A 840/B 868). What must therefore be proven is the intrinsic link of the principle to the power of reason, from which every evaluation of rationality derives and that is characterized as a reason's self-knowledge.⁴

3. *From method to reflection*

Already in his famous 1770 work, *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis*, Kant intends the method as an instrument for avoiding metaphysical errors, without therefore doing away with the possibility of a metaphysics *tout court*. Regarding the real use of the intellect, Kant uses the

term *ontology* to define the discipline that, together with rational psychology, provides the general principles of the intellect, those that are originally acquired by means of the intellect itself.⁵ Partly by connecting it to the preliminary function that this discipline has for metaphysics, in part returning to the objective of the work as stated at the start of the first section, Kant opens the fifth and last section of the *Dissertatio* introducing the topic of the *method* of metaphysics. He does this first by distinguishing between the sciences whose principles are laid by means of intuition, as natural science and geometry, in which *usus dat methodum*, and pure philosophy, such as metaphysics, where «method precedes all sciences» (Kant [1770]: 406). The discriminating element is provided by the different kind of origin between sensitive principles and «concepts of things and of relations, and the axioms themselves» (Kant [1770]: 406). If the space of metaphysics is the real use of the intellect, which prevents it from proceeding like all the other sciences by empirical trial, it is, therefore, necessary that «the right use of reason» be that which «sets up the very principles themselves». In other words, the exposition of the laws of pure reason is the genesis of science. In this perspective, the method of metaphysics and the real use of the intellect coincide.⁶ These assertions give a precise approach to the problem of method. In the first place, according to Kant, philosophy and method belong to each other in a more original way than that for the other sciences. If philosophy does intend to present itself as a science, it needs a method, meaning a specific way of acquiring its knowledge. Lacking that, what could confer determination, meaning and destination to philosophical knowledge? But while the problem of method presents itself in this way, we come to something of a stumbling block that concerns philosophy alone. Only metaphysics – though it would apply as well to critical philosophy as a preparation for metaphysics – cannot assume an already fully constituted method, nor allow that it be obtained by the mere accumulation of empirical results, i.e., through use. For having a method endowed with truth, and therefore capable of leading us where and how it purports to do, it must already in a sense belong to the true knowledge that is, however, its objective. Because of this point, a possible solution may be coinciding the real use of the intellect with the method of metaphysics; this makes it possible to avoid the split between the exposition of knowledge and its production which causes the circularity between the scientific claim of philosophy and method. This theme is indeed one that returns decisively in the first *Critique*; the reason is very likely because in 1770 there was still too much ambiguity about the status of the *intellectualia* to be able to critically develop and deconstruct the theoretical structure of the real use of the intellect. What we see in the *Dissertatio* gives an interesting suggestion of what would determine the object of the transcendental method: «the infection of sensitive cognition by cognition deriving from understanding»; the risk is not only pertaining to

those who will be fooled «in the application of principles» but also that which is at the origin of «spurious principles themselves in the guise of axioms» (Kant [1770]: 407). We must, therefore, avoid principles of sensitive knowledge from going beyond their limits and invading the field of intellectual knowledge. It is indeed possible that a sensitive concept, regarding the sensitive conditions of knowledge, from a logical point of view takes a position to prove the condition of an intellectual concept [*intellectualis*]. The example is given by the common axiom, «*Whatever exists, is somewhere*», in which the predicate that expresses the sensitive conditions of knowledge is *illegitimately* enunciated by a subject of the judgment that expresses any existing entity («anything whatsoever which exists») (Kant [1770]: 408). Another important point is now stated. What understanding does concerning the construction of experience and its form, although still exclusively logical, has a specific reflective quality. He writes on this point:

In the case of sensible things and the phenomena, that which precedes the logical use of the understanding is called appearance, while the reflective cognition, which arises when several appearances are compared by the understanding, is called experience. Thus, there is no way from appearance to experience except by reflection in accordance with the logical use of the understanding. (Kant [1770]: 386)

It should, therefore, be noted that we can see within the logical use of the understanding two theoretical principles coexisting and connected to one another: one that subordinates sensitive cognitions and the other cognitions of the same type or shared concepts, and the other consisting in comparing different aspects of the understanding.

Experience, therefore, is the result of these operations that describe a reflective activity of the understanding. As such, it is significant that within the lectures on logic from the early 1770s Kant gave a definition of experience [*Erfahrung*] as «Eine reflectirte Empfindung» effectively confirming the direction of the *Dissertation* (Kant [1966]: 446). This meaning of *reflection* seems to give the general characteristic of a thought that can operate with data by connecting and organizing them but without being a productive source of data. In this sense, reflection is the operation that corresponds to the logical generality and the discursive character of a thought in general.⁷ It should be added, however, starting from those same years, that reflection took on decisive importance in the lectures on logic, and especially later at a critical level in the appendix about the *Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflection*. Transcendental reflection is put into play in the conclusion of Transcendental Analytic and has its root in the idea of *Überlegung* that Kant explains in his lecture notes on logic. According to a dictation seemingly unchanged from *Logik Blomberg* (1771) to *Logik Busolt* (1789-1790), reflecting means «comparing a cognition with the power of cognition from which it is supposed to arise (sensitivity or the understanding)» (Kant [1800]: 579). In

this regard, in *Logik Blomberg* we can note a clear distinction between the two activities, both tied to the spontaneity of the intellect, reflection and investigation (*Untersuchung*):

Reflecting is distinct from *investigating* and *investigation*. *To reflect* is to compare something with the laws of the understanding. *To investigate*, however, is actually to reflect mediately. Concerning many things we can quite well cognize without investigation what is true, what false. But *reflection*, on the other hand, is always necessary for any judgment, and for the distinction of the true from the false, even if it be in general, or in a [particular] cognition, etc., in all cases indispensable. (Kant [1992]: 127).

Reflection does not concern the ground for a judgment; rather, the problem is whether and how a judgment is connected to objective principles and, therefore, whether it can represent an objective validity; in short, it is a question of the possibility of bringing a judgment within the faculty of the intellect or not.⁸ On this matter Dieter Henrich emphasized especially the nature of reflection which Kant presents as a precondition of conscious rationality; in this perspective, reflection is something distinct from and that precedes the critical investigation (*Untersuchung*).⁹ This is Henrich's argument. Our cognitive faculties form a mixture and are not spontaneously reduced to only one intellectual operation with a defined domain of application; because of that, for achieving a genuine cognition, we must have a preliminary control that brings these operations within the bounds of their own domain. This is the task of reflection. This reading has the advantage of shedding light on the operational context of reflection, identifying it in a perspective that comes before, or at least "lateral", to that of the transcendental judgment. Henrich is, therefore, right in emphasizing the importance of this *metacognitive* function taken on by reflection in itself; in a sense, this already alludes to a "topic" of the intellect, as it operates on the level of provisional judgments, impeding them from turning into definitive judgments.

4. *The role of reflection as sense of bearing*

To reflect is the operation that connects knowledge to its faculty. At the opening of the *Amphiboly* Kant writes: «Reflection (*reflexio*) does not have to do with the objects themselves, in order to acquire concepts directly from them, but rather it is the state of mind in which we first prepare ourselves to find out the subjective conditions under which we can arrive at concepts» (KrV A 260/B 316). We must be careful not to interpret this reflection as empirical introspection, as an individual and inner mental state. Kant intends to focus on the subjective conditions of judgment rather than the determining capacity of the judgment itself. Specifying the definition of transcendental reflection already provided at the beginning of

the Appendix, Kant continues: «The action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition, I call transcendental reflection» (KrV, A 261/B 318). Not every judgment requires an «investigation» (*Untersuchung*), but any judgment needs an act of reflection that consists in distinguishing the cognitive power to which the given concepts belong. By investigation Kant means «an attention to the grounds of truth» (KrV A 261/B 316), which is unnecessary when a judgment is endowed with immediate certainty, as is the case with the postulates of Euclidean geometry. However, if all judgments require reflection, it is primarily because there is not just one way in which these concepts can be connected. Thus arises the request for a reflective act, even at the transcendental level: to establish how these concepts must be considered, it is necessary to trace back to the place where each of them should be assigned. Indeed, the relation between concepts is one thing; the relationship these concepts maintain with the faculty to which they belong, when related within judgment, is another. The former depends on the latter; in other words, how things relate to each other depends on their placement in relation to the kind of knowledge, whether sensible or intellectual. In other words, the question Kant raises is whether the objects are to be treated as phenomena or noumena.

Concepts to which Kant refers are those from which any kind of comparison can be derived; they are identity and diversity, agreement and opposition, external and internal, matter and form. But – as Kant himself specifies – these are not mere concepts of comparison (*conceptus comparationis*), for they are not compared with each other on the ground of their relations of identity, opposition, inclusion, and implication, as it would be the case if we were dealing with their logical form. Instead, it is about determining whether objects are identical or different, in agreement or in opposition; what comes into play is therefore the transcendental reference of the concepts to a sensible manifold. There is a transcendental species of reflection because Kant points to it as a requirement of judging *a priori* just as he points to reflection as an appraisal of the empirical judgement. On the other hand, it would be a grave misunderstanding of Kant's intention to reduce reflection to a mere frill in contrast to the objective field of judgment. This passage leaves no doubt: «one could therefore say that logical reflection is a mere comparison [...] transcendental reflection, however, (which goes to the objects themselves) contains the ground of possibility of the objective comparison of the representations to each other and is therefore very different from the other» (KrV A 263/B 319).

First, it is so clear that no comparison is possible by reflection regardless of the domain in which transcendental reflection establishes it. If the latter is the condition of the objective comparison, this serves as a reference to the possible experi-

ence. This means that the *a priori* nature of the concepts of reflection does not correspond to that provided by the logical comparison.¹⁰ Secondly, once the cognitive-transcendental and not merely logical capacity of reflection has been defined, it must be understood the reason why it does not reduce to the level of determining judgment. Here, it is due to revisit the sense of the anteriority of reflection as noted by Henrich. At the same time, however, its significance in the realm of transcendental judgment must be emphasized more strongly. In fact, whether the way in which a concept is developed through reflection is not the same as that through which pure concepts determine an object, this does not imply a duplication of the faculty of judgment at all. Rather, it indicates an extension of the faculty of judgment toward a transcendental *practice* concerning the *a priori* judgments related to experience in general (Analytic of Principles) but not reducible to it. Transcendental concepts of reflection express this kind of activity; while it always remains within the field of the empirical understanding of phenomena, it expresses possible forms of relationships between the objects. These are not alternative forms to those defined by pure concepts; in this sense, the concepts of reflection do not produce a previous comparison to which the synthesis of pure *a priori* judgments would then follow; nor do they identify a different portion of the world from that reserved for the empirical object. What reflection emphasizes, rather, is the possible character concerning the conceptual relationships of experience. We have seen this before: there are different possible ways in which a concept can be thought. But to account for this statement, according to Kant, it is necessary to trace back to a logical-cognitive space that precedes the pure *a priori* judgment. From this need arises the anteriority of reflection as a prior operation that is presupposed by judgment. Therefore, it is not a folding back of the conscious subject onto itself, but rather a «transcendental topic» (KrV A 268/B 325) as it is defined in the «Remark to the amphiboly of the concepts of reflection». The transcendental place of representations is the space where their cognitive capacity is established. In the realm of transcendental reflection, the act of comparing occurs between these concepts we have yet mentioned earlier; reflection acts on these concepts, by bringing them not to a generic place of origin, but to that transcendental place from which the *how* of their possible relationship depends. It is therefore correct to draw a parallel with the schematism of pure concepts. Through its connection to time, schematism determines the conditions under which the pure concepts have their meaning, by restricting it to empirical use. Similarly, reflection does not simply distribute concepts on the map of faculties, that is, the sensible and the intellectual; it cannot be painted as highly general assessment of human cognition, neither as the achievement of the whole Transcendental Analytic;¹¹ rather, it promotes the production of a conceptual fabric endowed with a meaning that overturns the merely logical; by doing so, it delineates a transcendental horizon of meaning that is even broader than that of pure *a priori* judgment.

5. *Metaphysics of spontaneity*

There is another element that the comparison between schematism and reflection allows us to observe. Both, in fact, present an intellectual function that, at least in the case of reflection, is not always adequately recognized. We have already mentioned the definition according to which reflection is a state of the mind (*Zustand des Gemüts*) where the conditions through which one arrives at concepts can be discovered. It contains a somewhat veiled reference to the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, as a horizon that makes possible the synthesis of the manifold in the object. This element of *spontaneity* belongs to reason more than to the understanding. In fact, Kant identifies the difference between logical and transcendental reflection in the fact that the cognitive capacity to which they belong is not the same (See: KrV A 263/B 319). As for the former, it pertains to the understanding; for the latter, it pertains to reason. What is meant here with the spontaneity of reflection? It indicates a signification of itself, with no possibility for a rule to be abstracted from it. In other words, the way used by transcendental reflection for building its typical rational structure, as we observed, should be considered as a reflexive signifying of itself. It thus becomes clear not only that transcendental reflection is a spontaneous element that belongs to reason, but also that it fully falls within the task belonging to the rational conduct of the philosopher, as clarified in the Architectonic. This outcome of philosophical criticism goes through the investigation of the different faculties included in the pure synthetic principles. From this, a twofold development of transcendental philosophy emerges. On the one hand, it presents the system of pure concepts and the constitutive principles of knowledge, as required by an ontology directed toward the concepts of substance, causality, and necessity. On the other hand, however, the inquiry into the sources of these concepts and principles is also part of the transcendental philosophy. In this sense, the self-reflexive element of critique is identified with «the negative use of metaphysics» which is greater because «it consists in the prevention of the imperfection» (Kant [1997]: 284).

In the first *Critique*, the crucial point of reflection is built around its relationship with judgment. As we have seen, Kant makes this point in the opening remarks of the Amphiboly. To judge realizes a determination about the object, but to reflect is an appraisal of subjective conditions of a possible judgement. Reflection does not concern the conditions of an objective state of things, and it is not directing attention to the grounds of the truth of judging (KrV A 261/B 317). Reflection is very clearly distinguished from determinative cognitive activity and is presented as an evaluation of whether one is in the right position to be making cognitive determinations about the objects. In other words, we can consider reflection as an attitude of self-determination of thought con-

nected for Kant to the notion of spontaneity. The point is thus about living life in a properly reflective way. Inevitably, after what we have said, we encounter again the cosmic concept of philosophy. It is connected to the idea of philosophy as *theologia rationis humanae* and personified in the ideal model of philosopher. An ideal – Kant states – and not a mere example. In fact, the ideal is the idea not only in a concrete mode, but in the individual one. The idea gives the rule and as such, by being a standard for what is to be realized, it has ontological consistence and practical value. The same goes for the idea of philosophy; it is the idea of a possible science for which there are not yet concrete cases. There is no chance of realizing ideas, for they cannot be presented in concrete manifestations, just as a geometric figure is presented in intuition. The ideal serves rather as an archetype «for the thoroughgoing determination of the copy». There is no other standard for the philosopher's actions than «the conduct of this divine human being» (KrV A 569/B 597), with which we can improve ourselves. Philosophy – indeed: the ideal model of the philosopher – expresses the reflective activity of thinking on his own (*Selbstdenken*), without claiming to reach the standard. To think on his own then means the awareness of reason's finitude: knowledge of its boundaries. The boundary given by being a rational nature, a living life on the verge of placing its own destination beyond itself.

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Notes

- 1 See Desideri [2003]: 27-28.
- 2 M. Merritt has stressed this passage, especially in Merritt [2009]: 986.
- 3 Recently, several scholars have addressed the issue of method in transcendental philosophy, giving particular emphasis to the Architectonics, see Willaschek [2020]: 21-46, and Gava [2023]: 15-64.
- 4 See Ferrarin [2015]: 98-103 and Barale [2009]: 11-38.
- 5 About a recognition on the concept of ontology from the pre-critical period see Rivero [2014]: 139-148.

- 6 For an in-depth discussion of this point, see Lorini [2017]: 188-89.
- 7 See Refl. 2834, Kant [1928]. It is possible to connect this general meaning of reflection to the logical reflection by considering it as one of the acts that make up the process of forming concepts. Concerning some studies that have become classics on the subject, see Liedtke [1966]: 207-16, Reuter [1989]; especially about this point see Malter [1981]: 284-301.
- 8 In addition to this meaning of reflection, we can also see one, also found in the *Corpus* of Kant's logic that refers mainly to the faculty of cognition (*Erkenntniskraft*); on this distinction see Heßbrüggen-Walter, [2004]: 156.
- 9 See Henrich [1989]: 43.
- 10 B. Longuenesse does consider the transcendental reflection presented in the Amphiboly as «an expansion of the meaning of “logical comparison”»; she calls logical comparison in the broad sense a comparison of concepts (and thus a logical comparison), but under sensible conditions; see Longuenesse [1998]: 127; for a different reading see De Boer [2020]: 191-210.
- 11 The primacy of reflection seems to be the thesis supported by Westphal (Westphal [2004]: 47-51; the reading offered by La Rocca seems more convincing to us, see La Rocca [1999]: 160.