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TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION IN KANT'S AND FICHTE'S PHILOSOPHIES: ARGUMENT AGAINST EMPIRICISM²

Abstract: The aim of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is to call into question the illusions of the great systems of *metaphysica rationalis* that preceded his philosophy. Through the doctrine of the transcendental dialectic Kant reveals the mechanism of transformation of the natural dialectic of the mind into a metaphysical illusion. This mechanism of transcendental illusion originates within the subject-object relation. It can be expressed as an (illegitimate) assertion that the mind enables objective knowledge. According to Kant, the metaphysical errors of his predecessors can be interpreted as manifestations of this fundamental mistake. Within Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Kant's teaching is transformed, and it seems to take aim at metaphysical systems of empiricism. In Fichte's view, transcendental illusion rests within the subject-object relation, but its origin lies on the side of the object, which is expressed through the assertion of the existence of immediate experience. The author will examine more closely the circumstances according to which the determination of the transcendental illusion changes in the context of Fichte's philosophy, highlighting the significance of this transformation for idealist arguments against empiricism.

Keywords: Kant, Fichte, Metaphysics, Empiricism, Transcendental illusion, Critique

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Philosophy of subjectivism argues that subjectivity is the condition of objectivity and objective cognition. The obverse of the argument is the problem of the possibility of error and self-delusion on the part of the subject. The subject can be deceived by the senses, she can make subtle errors of judgment. Descartes proposes a thought experiment in his *Meditations on the First Philosophy* in order to describe a scenario through which he can explore the way the subject becomes a victim of his own delusions. It is a mechanism that produces error in virtue of its nature, a certain *genius maligni*, which drives Descartes to search for a way out of a situation where everything can be subjected to radical doubt:

“I will therefore suppose that, not God, who is perfectly good and the source of truth, but some evil spirit, supremely powerful and cunning, has devoted all his efforts to deceiving me” (Descartes, 2008: 16).

Within the power of Descartes’ deceiver is the ability to seduce the subject into believing that what seems so obvious, so clearly perceived, is nevertheless false. Descartes relies on methodological doubt as a means to provide the subject with an efficient safeguard against illusions brought about by that which seems obvious or evident. The safeguard pertains to the one unshakable truth that remains even under the hypothesis of an all-powerful deceiver. Descartes maintains that the self-evident character of the proposition “I am, I exist” aims at something beyond doubt – *fundamentum incocussum* of our experience (Descartes, 2008: 18). He develops a methodological principle that can guide scientific endeavor and steer the subject away from obscurity.

The historical development of empiricist philosophy of subjectivity from the period of Locke to the period of Hume, drives Hume to attempt to formulate a skeptical objection to metaphysics, and the uncertainty of its status as a science.

“[O]bscurity in the profound and abstract philosophy, is objected to, not only as painful and fatiguing, but as the inevitable source of uncertainty and error (...) In vain do we hope, that men, from frequent disappointment, will at last abandon such airy sciences, and discover the proper province of human reason (...) The only method of freeing learning (...) from these abstruse questions, is to enquire seriously into the nature of human understanding, and shew, from an exact analysis

of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects” (Hume, 2007: 7 - 8).

Hume’s skepticism is aimed at the oft-unquestioned attitude of trust towards the epistemological authority of the subject. In the quoted passage, Hume’s reaction to the obscure nature of metaphysical principles, the abstract and obtuse character of metaphysical investigations, is to suggest that this is inevitable due to certain limitations of our rational capacities.

In accordance with this general aim of philosophy of subjectivism, the one regarding the limitations and legitimacy of epistemological authority of the subject, Kant poses the question of the conditions of possibility of illusion. According to Kant, parallel to reason’s capacity to critically investigate its own epistemological procedures, there exists an inexhaustible aptitude towards self-delusion in the quest for knowledge. In contrast to Descartes, Kant will argue that *spiritus maligni* as the mechanism that corrupts in virtue of its own nature, should be considered as being deeply seated within reason itself. Kant’s concept of critique intends to furnish a procedure for investigating reason’s very own ambition for knowledge, its claims and deliverables. Kant formulates his discussion regarding objective knowledge according to this concept of critique by asking what the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge are. Reason’s own ideas are very much in question with regard to their validity and import to our knowledge of objectivity.

Kant frames the discussion on illusions in the following manner: truth and fallacy, as well as illusions, are problems of rational thinking in general, and the faculty of judgment in particular, in opposition to sensory perception:

“[T]ruth, as much as error, and thus also illusion as leading to the latter, are to be found only in judgments, i.e., only in the relation of the object to our understanding” (Kant, 1998: 384; A 293/B 350).

Accordingly, Kant’s doctrine of transcendental illusion comes after the investigation of transcendental aesthetics, which is concerned with the senses, and the first part of transcendental analytic, which is concerned with the categories of understanding. Transcendental dialectic addresses this aptitude for delusion within the metaphysical thinking of Kant’s predecessors, mainly the Leibnitz-Wolff philosophical school of rational metaphysics. Kant refers, furthermore, to transcendental di-

alectics as a *logic of illusion* [Schein] (Kant, 1998: 384; A 293/B 349) and questioning of the logical structure of illusion opens the whole discussion.

What seems at first glance to be a mere error on part of philosophical judgment, as well as the teaching of his rationalistic predecessors, becomes a manifestation of something more profound. Beyond its logical structure, Kant argues in favor of a transcendental principle that hinges upon the very nature of subjectivity. In his view, transcendental illusion agitates reason towards the realm of metaphysics, prompting the development of rational theology, cosmology and psychology. This state of agitation has a “transcendental ground” in human reason, and Kant rarely fails to mention how this illusion has an unavoidable character.

Anticipating what will be discussed in more detail in this paper, transcendental illusion is a negative effect of the deeply rooted subjective mechanism of consciousness that brings systematic order and conceptual articulation to our experience. Similarly to the critical distinction between the constitutive and the regulative use of reason – which Kant employs to delineate instances of their metaphysical misuse – in the case of transcendental illusion we also deal with a regulative principle of our experience, one that is even easier to misinterpret. The negative effect of this mechanism arises precisely when this articulation of our experience is meant to represent reality itself, as if its subjective origin is forgotten. It is easy to assume that this doctrine snubs many claims of traditional rationalist metaphysical discussions, however it also has less obvious repercussions for the basic framework of empiricism.

The basic notion that supports the whole edifice of empirical philosophy of Kant’s predecessors is the idea that there is immediate consciousness of objectivity. Whether we call it a sensation or an impression, this “lively perception” coming from our senses, as Hume puts it, represents a ‘building block’ of our experience and:

“[C]reative power of the mind amounts to no more than the faculty of compounding, transposing, augmenting, or diminishing the materials afforded us by the senses and experience” (Hume, 2008: 13).

Following Kant’s path, Fichte develops and argues against this very notion of immediacy and directness of the relation between subject and object. In his interpretation of subject’s limitations and conditions of illusions, he insists that the empiricist standpoint maintains a naïve and

unquestioned belief in this sphere of immediacy³. Having developed Kant's insights into the conditions of possibility of experience even further, Fichte takes a more radical standpoint, according to which the negative or illusory effects of transcendental illusion arise precisely when the subject's fundamental mediating function is 'forgotten'. As is the case within empiricist philosophy, sensory data is taken as direct, immediate consciousness of objects, and regarded erroneously to be pure of any discursive or rational element. It is used to provide our rational apparatus with material for objective cognition. Fichte claims that every subject's cognition, including the one that seems to have an immediate and direct relation to the object of cognition, stands ultimately under conditions of possibility of experience, i. e. the subject's self-consciousness. The insight that transcendental illusion arises even more prominently within the realm of 'immediacy' of the subject-object relation prompted Fichte to intercede in favor of the original claim of philosophy of subjectivism, even more radically than Kant.

KANT'S DOCTRINE OF TRANSCENDENTAL ILLUSION

Transcendental illusion is not a mere logical fallacy or a material error that we can resolve and be done with. The domain of transcendental illusion rests, as its name suggests, beyond the empirical realm and its evidence:

“[T]ranscendental illusion influences principles whose use is not ever meant for experience, since in that case we would at least have a touchstone for their correctness, but which instead, contrary to all the warnings of criticism, carries us away beyond the empirical use of the categories, and holds out to us the semblance of extending the pure understanding” (Kant, 1998: 385; A 295/ B 352).

Furthermore, logical fallacy consists of, as Kant puts it, “the mere imitation of the form of reason”, which can easily be discovered by closer inspection of the case in question (Kant, 1998: 386; A 296/B

3 “Where for Kant the natural illusion lay in believing that reason yielded objective knowledge, for Fichte it lay in believing that immediate experience did” (Di Giovanni, 2021: 36). This is the thesis of George di Giovanni, from his book *Hegel and the Challenge of Spinoza*, that we tried to develop in the context of Fichte's refutations of empiricist and sceptic concerns.

353). However, the logical structure of transcendental illusion is not reduced to this mere semblance of the procedure of inference. It produces an illusory effect even though the formal logical rules are satisfied. Kant explains this illusory effect in the following manner:

“The cause of this is that in our reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition) there lie fundamental rules and maxims for its use, which look entirely like objective principles, and through them it comes about that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves” (Kant, 1998: 386; A 297 / B 353).

How should we understand the logical structure of this illusion that Kant nevertheless calls “natural and unavoidable” (Kant, 1998: 386; A 298 / B 354)?

According to the quote above, transcendental illusion is sustained by the unifying function of reason. According to Kant, reason is one of two rational faculties (alongside understanding), and it is defined as *faculty of principles* (Kant, 1998: 387; A 299 / B 356). Simply put, ideas unify representations via the logical structure of inference. This much can be said for categories as well, for they are defined as rules for the unification of representations. This similarity of function serves as a base for similar methodological approach to ideas of reason. This is why Kant proposes an analysis similar to the deduction of categories, believing that the *logical form of rational cognition* (Kant, 1998: 403; A 329 / B386) should elucidate why we consider determination according to the principles of reason as a type of objective determination.

In the case of categories of understanding, deduction shows how the objectivity of categories stems from their application in experience. Since the ‘object’ of rational cognition, according to the main intention of Kant’s critique, cannot be given in experience, the objectivity of reason’s ideas cannot be demonstrated in the same manner as the categories of understanding. However, Kant allows for a subjective, metaphysical deduction that shows how categories of reason have a place within the structure of human subjectivity. According to the preface to the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, the subjective deduction of categories puts at the forefront their relation to cognitive faculties and their functions. Accordingly, subjective deduction of reason’s ideas should focus on their relation to cognitive faculties.

Looking from this perspective, Kant argues that the logical function of ideas is a “rational” unification, which should be distinguished from the “intellectual” unity of understanding (Kant, 1998: 389; A 302 / B359). Intellectual or discursive articulation of sense data is similar to, but also very different from the rational articulation of generalized structures of our experience. Rational unification:

“[N]ever applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity a priori through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called ‘the unity of reason’” (Kant, 1998: 389; A 302 / B 359).

The key to understanding the illusory effect of rational unification lies in the very logical structure of reason’s operations. In its logical use reason is identified with the faculty of syllogistic inference. An inference is not simply the result of reflection, but rather of cognition: “I would (...) call a ‘cognition from principles’ that cognition in which I cognize the particular in the universal through concepts. Thus, every syllogism is a form of derivation of a cognition from a principle” (Kant, 1998: 388; A 300 / B 357). The dialectical, error-prone character of reason’s inferences persists, in spite of the fact that these inferences are formally and logically correct!

Let us investigate Kant’s core argument in more detail. According to the structure of syllogisms in general, we need to have premise *major*, premise *minor* and, naturally, *conclusion*:

“In every syllogism I think first a *rule* (the *major*) through the understanding. Second, I *subsume* a cognition under the condition of the rule (the *minor*) by means of the power of judgment. Finally, I determine my cognition through the predicate of the rule (the *conclusio*), hence *a priori* through reason” (Kant, 1998: 390; A 304 / B 361).

Reason seeks to establish a certain condition for judgment by deriving it from the major premise, that is, from a universal rule, by means of something particular (the minor premise)⁴.

Kant’s understanding of the logical function of reason rests upon *the logical principle of completeness* of reason. He claims: “The proper

4 Dieter Henrich highlights the fact that, for Kant, syllogisms in general represent “secondary, merely organization of knowledge already acquired” (Henrich, 1989: 41). He also reminds the reader that in this Kant shares Descartes belief.

principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed” (Kant, 1998: 392; A 307/ B 364). However, at this stage, this only has the meaning of a formal, logical principle, an insight common to Kant predecessors. Can this logical principle be a key to understanding Kant’s whole argument on the transcendental use of reason? Kant states that a logical maxim represents a principle of pure reason, and is therefore a condition of the possibility of experience, provided we acknowledge the following ‘supposition’: “When the conditioned is given, then so is the whole series of conditions subordinated one to the other, which is itself unconditioned, also given (i.e., contained in the object and its connection)” (Kant, 1998: 392; A 308 / B 364).

In order to have the power of understanding apply its categories in a legitimate manner, it requires a general perspective, one that the phenomena themselves permit: a certain sameness, but also a variety, within a group of similar phenomena, as well as a possibility of continual transition and gradual variation. These are the principles of homogeneity, specification and continuity of forms (Kant, 1998: 598; A 658 / B 686). They are logically necessary and, of course, methodologically beneficial to scientific understanding of natural phenomena. Scientific methodology relies on transcendental illusion, since it is propping up our general perspective on nature as systematic unity. Conclusions guided by such laws or principles are evidently sane in terms of logic. In the background of these principles there is a modus of systematic unity – each is grounded in the transcendental principle of systematic unity of reason which functions as a “horizon” or “standpoint”, and they cannot be formulated on empirical grounds. Universal claims such as: ‘there is a continuity of phenomena of the same kind among manifold of phenomena in nature’, or that ‘nature does not leap’, or even that ‘there is no vacuum in nature’, each manifest the stance of pure reason, with respect to its relation to faculty of understanding. From the point of view of science, these principles “carry their recommendation directly in themselves, and not merely as methodological devices” (Kant, 1998: 600; A 661 / B 689). Therefore, against the backdrop of the immense pragmatic and methodological value of these logical rules, Kant concludes that they should be considered as grounded in a similar way to the transcendental forms of reason, that is, as ideas aiming at manifoldness, affinity and unity (Kant, 1998: 601; A 662 / B 690).

“What is strange about these principles, and what alone concerns us, is this: that they seem to be transcendental, and even though they contain mere ideas to be followed in the empirical use of reason, which reason can follow only asymptotically, as it were, i.e., merely by approximation, without ever reaching them, yet these principles, as synthetic propositions a priori, nevertheless have objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule of possible experience, and can even be used with good success, as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating it; and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas” (Kant, 1998: 601-2; A 663-4 / B 691-2).

The objective nature of reason’s ideas, in contrast to categories of understanding, does not stem from their constitutive role, since they do not determine something empirical, phenomena itself. They do, however, “indicate the procedure in accordance with which the empirical and determinate use of the understanding in experience can be brought into thoroughgoing agreement with itself” (Kant, 1998: 602; A 665-6/ B 693-4).

For Kant, these principles are under the influence of the interests of reason, especially its speculative interest: “Reason has in fact only a single unified interest, and the conflict between its maxims is only a variation and a reciprocal limitation of the methods satisfying this interest” (Kant, 1998: 603; A 666 / B 694). The possibility of conflict between these principles of systematic unity in their *modi* can arise if they are not treated as what they are, namely maxims, but are instead taken to be objective insights in the nature of phenomena. This is what Kant claims in regards to the famous and respected law of the “ladder of continuity” purported by Leibniz, for example: “The method for seeking out order in nature in accord with such a principle, on the contrary, and the maxim of regarding such an order as grounded in nature in general, even though it is undetermined where or to what extent, is a legitimate and excellent regulative principle of reason, which, however, as such, goes much too far for experience or observation ever to catch up with it; without determining anything, it only points the way toward systematic unity” (Kant, 1998: 604; A 668/ B 696).

Transcendental illusion manifests itself, within the context of rational metaphysics, as an effect of three kinds of necessary rational operations: paralogism, antinomy and the ideal of pure reason (Kant, 1998: 409; A 340 / B 398). In each of these cases, the unavoidability

of illusion is conditioned by the correct logical procedure. However, this logical procedure is misused by systems of metaphysics when they attempt to apply it in a transcendent fashion, i.e. when they claim that things in themselves are determined in such manner. However, this unity of universal rules could be considered as a transcendental principle, if it is obvious that its status is not simply logical or subjective necessity. Kant's follows the line of persuasive arguments from the standpoint of the possibility of scientific knowledge, which benefits greatly from the opportunity of setting up a universal rule to synthesize the manifold of rules provided by experience or experimental inquiry. If we look more closely at scientific evidence, there is no confirmation of the objective reality of notions such as 'pure air', 'absolute space', 'species/genera' etc. Many traditional conceptual devices (and even contemporary ones such as the classification of biological phenomena) are not established as merely hypothetical or problematic, but are rather taken to be apodictic principles: "The parsimony of principles is not merely a principle of economy of reason, but becomes an inner law of its nature" (Kant, 1998: 594; A 650 / B 678).

The unity of reason is not just a transcendental, *a priori* principle in the sense of logical and methodological necessity, but is rather essential for the functioning of reason itself and its conformity with nature. Transcendental illusion permeates our scientific and philosophical efforts alike: "For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary" (Kant, 1998: 595; A 651 / B 679).

Transcendental illusion appears when we take the logical principle of synthesis of appearances as an existential claim. Insight into this fallacy is possible only from the standpoint of critique of pure reason. The critical standpoint therefore does not imply eradication of this fallacy in its possibility. Rather, it remains as an enlightened illusion:

"Thus there will be syllogisms containing no empirical premises, by means of which we can infer from something with which we are acquainted to something of which we have no concept, and yet to which we nevertheless, by an unavoidable illusion, give objective reality" (Kant, 1998: 409; A 339 / B 397).

The critical standpoint or perspective cannot change the way phenomena appear to us. Rather it can only supply us with reflexive instructions to maintain a distance from appearances. It is very important to note that, even if Kant could not ground the doctrine of ideas of reason with an objective deduction, such as the one provided for the categories of understanding, he will later claim that finding a way to establish objective validity for ideas, even if it remains undeveloped, is the ultimate aim of the whole project of critique of pure reason:

“The ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories; but if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, granted that it must also diverge quite far from the deduction one can carry out in the case of the categories. That deduction is the completion of the critical business of pure reason” (Kant, 1998: A 699-70 / B 697-8).

The philosophical importance of transcendental illusion lies in its distinctly anti-positivistic character. Reality is not a perfect semblance of truth, there is always a necessary and subtle distortion of perspective, which enables us to perceive the real. Kant treats this regulatory character of the ideas of reason in much greater detail. The ideas of reason give us focus, even though they operate only as a ‘figurative’ unifying framework. They are indispensable if we aim to break through the cordon of the familiar and the immediate in our experience, “if besides the objects before our eyes we want to see those that lie far in the background, (...) the understanding wants to go beyond every given experience” (Kant, 1998: 591; A 644-5 / B 672-3). This anti-positivist stance is also characteristic of Fichte’s understanding of transcendental illusion.

FICHTE’S CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE ILLUSIONS

The primary task of the critique of pure reason was to provide a critical apparatus for dealing with the natural dialectical tendencies of our reason. However, the problem arises with historical evidence suggesting that there remains a mode of transcendental illusion on which Kant’s critique did not explicitly assert enough pressure. In Fichte’s opinion, this illusion appeared in the works of so-called Kantians.

This is what Fichte claims in the second introduction to his *Wissenschaftslehre Nova methodo*: “No dogmatist claims to be immediately conscious of things in themselves”. However, they, particularly “those Critical dogmatists (...) consider the material of representations to be something given” (Fichte, 1992: 91). *Prima facie*, Kant’s very own distinction between matter and form of sense representations, in the opening section of his *transcendental aesthetic*, lends some credence to the interpretation of “critical dogmatists”. These thinkers do not endorse going beyond the sphere of consciousness as a way of explaining anything, instead placing heavy emphasis on ‘facts of consciousness’ to furnish them with needed argumentation regarding epistemological limits of Kantian position. The letter of Kant’s philosophy gave space for empiricist concerns to arise, and as early as his *Aenesidemus*, Fichte worked on rebuking them. In this review, he critiqued both Reinhold’s principle of consciousness, which was based on a well-intentioned attempt to interpret Kant, and Schultze’s empiricist objections to this interpretation. Reinhold gives compelling argument in favour of articulating a unifying principle of the whole of Kant’s critical project⁵. Schultze’s critique of this principle correctly shows, in Fichte’s opinion, that it represents an abstraction of empirical self-observation of consciousness (Breazaele, 2013: 35). His critique clearly showed Fichte that the highest principle of philosophy should be conceived completely free of empirical grounds. Otherwise, there will always remain some plausibility to the claims of empirical subject as opposed to transcendental standpoint.

Let’s get back to the text of *Nova methodo*, where Fichte further rebukes the supposed immediacy within the sphere of the subject: “[R]epresenting subject is not an immediate object of consciousness either (...) Ordinary consciousness is always preoccupied with representations of things outside of us. If a representation of the representing subject is to arise, this must first be produced by an act of self-reflection (...) All that can appear within consciousness is a representation of the representing subject, not the representing subject itself” (Fichte, 1992: 92). According to these passages, both positions on possibility of immediate consciousness operate with the same naivety, albeit dif-

5 The concept of Reinhold’s Elementary philosophy is dedicated to this discussion and Schultze’s *Aenesidemus* is devoted to the analysis of Reinhold’s philosophy.

ferently. The second case is, however, in a much better position to dispel the illusion of immediacy within the subject-object relation. Both positions show that there is a need to move beyond the consciousness, or experience, in order to explain their foundations. In Fichte's opinion, this move is constitutive for both philosophical standpoints: "[B]oth idealism and dogmatism go beyond consciousness. The dogmatist begins with a lack of freedom and ends with the same thing. For him, representations are products of things, and the intellect or subject is something merely passive" (Fichte, 1992: 92). However, idealist too has to be very aware of inescapable illusion that stems from the dialectical character of the original act of subjectivity, which conditions the possibility of consciousness.

This parallel we observed could be taken as a way to explain logically sound but not less illusory conclusion of the dogmatist. The idealist begins from the mediate (reflexive) experience of subject's activity, its self-activity of reflection and determination. The dogmatist does the same. However, for the dogmatist, this self-activity is illusion: "The idealist thus adopts as his foundation something that actually occurs within consciousness, whereas the dogmatist's foundation is something { = the thing in itself } that one can merely think of as lying outside of all consciousness" (Fichte, 1992: 94). The idealist standpoint is an "immanent" one, but not immediately given in the consciousness itself. It is a product of subject's free activity and in order to recognize this one requires a critical or philosophical apparatus: "In the course of ordinary consciousness, one encounters no concept of the I, no self-reverting activity. Nevertheless, one is able to think of one's I when a philosopher calls upon one to do so; and then one discovers this concept by means of free activity, and not as something given" (Fichte, 1992: 95). The only immediate 'matter' of consciousness is a presupposed self-positing, activity, or more generally, the consciousness of freedom. In his *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte was clear on this point: "We certainly do require a first principle which is material and not merely formal. But such a principle does not have to express a fact [Thatsache]; it can also express an Act [Thathandlung]" (Fichte, 2021: 202). The principle of idealism is not something immediate, or "given", something that manifests passivity, rather, it is discovered through a free exercise of activity (the free action of self-positing):

“According to the Science of Knowledge, all consciousness is determined by self-consciousness, that is, everything that occurs in consciousness is founded, given and introduced by the conditions of self-consciousness; and there is simply no ground whatever for it outside self-consciousness” (Fichte, 1982: 50).

We see now that for Fichte there is another source of transcendental illusion which persists – one that even Kant’s critical project fails to address explicitly enough. Furthermore, this source of certain uncritical naivety of ordinary consciousness infiltrated even the allegedly enlightened minds of the Kantians⁶. We could argue that the transcendental illusion that Kant described must be understood as a necessary articulation of our experience into a scientific *point of view*. The negative effect arises from the naiveté of ordinary consciousness, or the nature of reason itself, which then seeps unquestioned into metaphysical systems. However, in Fichte’s view, this naivety of ordinary consciousness that infiltrates uncritically into philosophy, relates to the supposed experience of subject’s passivity⁷. It should be obvious that immediacy, which is undeniably the element of certain experiences, is the transcendental illusion that was overlooked by Kant’s explicit critical apparatus. Following the testimony of our everyday and ordinary experience, the “immediacy” of experience in whatever form is only historically *prius*: “The human species, as well as the individual, begins with the feeling of constraint. We all begin with experience, but then we are driven back into ourselves, where we discover our own freedom” (Fichte, 1992: 94). The experience of our passivity may

6 See also discussion on this in his *Second Introduction to Science of Knowledge* (Fichte, 1982: 54 - 55). For example, Fichte claims how this Kantianism “indeed consists in a reckless juxtaposition of the crudest dogmatism, which has things-in-themselves making impressions upon us, with the most inveterate idealism, which has all existence arising solely out of the thinking of the intellect, and knows nothing of any other, is something I know only too well” (Fichte, 1982: 56).

7 Angelica Nuzzo suggests that: “Fichte, who famously takes Kant to hold a strict dualism of sensibility and understanding, rejects such dualism and rejects, in particular, the presence of receptivity (and irreducible passivity) within the I. Through this, he unifies the two meanings of determination (conceptual and intuitive) in one and the same activity, consequently merging them into one concept of *Bestimmung*. For him, determination is at once an activity that is logical and real, conceptual and intuitive, universal and individual, theoretical and practical” (Nuzzo, 2018: 36).

have come first, in Fichte's view, but this must be shown to be only an illusion by consistently developing Kant's original project of critique.

In Fichte's view, postulating the principle of self-grounding activity of subject and recognizing its certainty depends strictly on an idealist mindset. This principle is necessary, Fichte claims similarly to Kant, on the basis of the very nature of reason. In order to articulate reality not as a mere aggregate of representations, but rather as a system, philosophy needs to presuppose a grounding principle. However, the way in which Fichte presents the effects of the employment of this principle is particularly revealing. It is framed as a discussion on a particular instance of syllogistic inference that Kant named *paralogisms* of pure reason.

As we have shown, Kant's presented transcendental illusion as based on logically a correct conclusion of reason. In the first case of the *paralogism*, the illusory effect depended on taking of subjective conditions of thinking in general as determination of a particular thing. In Kant's own words: "The logical exposition of thinking in general is falsely held to be a metaphysical determination of the object" (Kant, 1998: 447; B 409).

At this juncture, it is very helpful to how look at the way Fichte employs a formula of syllogism in *Nova methodo*, which may suggest that there is a connection to the structure and effect of Kant's transcendental illusion. Fichte's syllogism starts from the following statement as its *propositio major*: "[T]he representing subject is a consciousness of manifold representations/ is a consciousness". Fichte than adds: "The most important thing is not to misunderstand the *propositio minor*: 'the representing subject is whatever it is only by means of self-activity'" (Fichte, 1992: 96). *Propositio minor*, in Fichte's case, states objective conditions that are transcendently grounded. *Conclusio* could be that consciousness is self-activity or that I is consciousness of this self-activity. Furthermore, we think that Fichte formulated implicitly similar conclusion of this syllogism later on in the argument: "The representing subject can posit its own self-activity only in a certain manner, which is demonstrated within consciousness" (Fichte, 1992:99)". Additionally, there is another formulation that could be taken as a result as well: "[T] he I is what it is through and by means of itself" (Fichte, 1992: 99).

The *propositio major* states in general terms that all representing subjects are consciousness. We should guard against sophistic or dogmatic influence on the way we understand the terms of the statement. It

should not be interpreted as a proposition that attributes a property of consciousness to the particular thing that is a subject. Here, consciousness is not a predicate of the subject as a thing, in a sense of being a quality, a state, or ‘an accidental property of the I’ (Fichte, 1992: 97). Furthermore, copula ‘is’ should be understood as an expression of identity: subject is nothing other than consciousness, and consciousness is nothing else than a subject as an activity. It is important to maintain a clear distinction between these two understandings of consciousness. Premise minor does not, Fichte insists, “suggest any creation of representations, or the presence of some sort of substrate; it asserts merely that the I posits itself, i.e. that a self-reverting activity is the essence of the I” (Fichte, 1992: 96 - 7). Similarly, the key to solving the paralogism in *Critique of Pure Reason* depends on a correct understanding of the I. Kant develops this example in the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* as follows: “In all our thinking the I is the subject, in which thoughts inhere only as determinations, and this I cannot be used as the determination of another thing. Thus everyone must necessarily regard himself as a substance, but regard his thinking only as accidents of his existence and determinations of his state” (Kant, 1998: 416; A 349). We take our forms of thinking and ascribe them to every thinking being in general: “Thus such objects are nothing further than the transference of this consciousness of mine to other things, which can be represented as thinking beings only in this way” (Kant, 1998: 415; A 347 / B 405). Kant’s critique of this first paralogism develops in a direction similar to that of Fichte’s. Statement that our I could be regarded as a substrate represents a false claim that rests on an incorrect argument that “constant logical subject of thinking” is “the cognition of a real subject of inherence” (...) Apart from this logical significance of the I, we have no acquaintance with the subject in itself that grounds this I as a substratum” (Kant, 1998: 417; A 350).

The first thing to note regarding Fichte’s choice to structure the argument in the form of syllogism is the fact that it links the whole topic directly to the question of reason’s principles and the meaning of their transcendental. Fichte strongly argues in favour of one absolute principle of idealism in order to establish scientific, systematic, consistent and complete philosophy of it. If this principle is to be an idea of reason – transcendental idea as such – which in certain cases misleads human beings towards illusory metaphysical musings, it

should be understood against the background of a detailed account of the nature of this reason. The term “nature of reason”, which features prominently within Kant’s arguments around the inevitability of transcendental illusion, is taken here to be meaningful only if it pertains to subject’s self-positing, as stated by the first principle of *Wissenschaftslehre*⁸. If Kant believed that taking subjective conditions of thinking as objective determinations is a negative effect of transcendental illusion, Fichte views this as a misdiagnosis. If we follow Fichte in his endeavor to explicitly deduce logical principles from transcendental ones, then transcendental illusion would be actually wrongly accused in the case of paralogism.

Secondly, the entire argument represents Fichte’s definition of transcendental subject – the I – which is ultimately the condition of possibility of reality and objectivity. He is unambiguous: “Nothing can exist for us except insofar as we possess a consciousness of it” (Fichte, 1992:97). In any case of immediate consciousness, whether, empirical or ‘pure’, this immediacy is always already a result of mediating activity of the I. For Fichte, transcendental illusion is an “infant illness” of philosophy in its metaphysical mode – whether rational or empiricist – with a basis in naïveté of immediacy. From the standpoint of transcendental idealism, we bravely “observe that experience in its entirety is nothing but an acting [Handeln] on the part of a rational being” (Fichte, 1992: 105).

CONCLUSION

One of Kant’s earliest commentators, Johann Sigismund Beck, offered his account on the standpoint from which to evaluate Kant’s deduction. As Henrich puts it, he “[H]ad come to the opinion that the structure of the book promoted a false estimate of Kant’s doctrine” (Henrich, 1969: 648). Beck concluded that it should have established explicitly the productive activity of understanding as a starting point.

8 Here, we are not discussing simply one of the higher rational faculties here, alongside understanding. In discussing our subjectivity in general, Fichte prefers the concept of intelligence, intellect in general, or I itself. In the *First introduction to the Science of Knowledge*, for example, he defines intelligence as an activity (Tun) and nothing else (Fichte 1982: 21).

Kant did not accept this as an official commentary – a position he would later reiterate in Fichte’s case. If we consider Henrich’s argument, in which he aligns with Beck, that consciousness in the framework of Kant’s philosophy should be understood as activity, we can interpret it as an activity of making conscious of something that was given “before all consciousness” (Henrich, 1969: 646). The spontaneous activity of making conscious, should be coupled with something akin to a blind state – the passivity of our “receptive faculty”, that provides us with a manifold of representations “before consciousness”. Thus, the idea of consciousness as an activity, of bringing to light the blind senses or dark regions of our mind (*Gemüt*), is already outlined in Kant’s philosophy. Fichte’s attempts to delineate this activity and its self-referential nature, therefore, can be seen as a natural elaboration of what are essentially Kant’s ideas. He formulates the difference between himself and other Kantians, explicitly on the line of what we have discussed, as follows:

“[C]ertainly our knowledge all proceeds from an affection; but not affection by an object. This is Kant’s view, and also that of the Science of Knowledge. Since Herr Beck, if I understand him rightly, has overlooked this important circumstance, and Herr Reinhold also pays insufficient attention to that which conditions the positing of a not-self, and alone makes it possible” (Fichte, 1982: 60).

As we have seen, illusions in Kant’s critical philosophy have a ‘merely’ regulative function, which presupposes that they fundamentally fail as constitutive principles. Another one of Kant’s famous successors, Hegel, insists on examining the conditions of possibility for these illusions themselves, analysing how they are generated within consciousness and serve as a constitutive element of certain experiences of consciousness. This is why Comayand Ruda rightly claim that, from the standpoint of Hegel’s philosophy, “we encounter reality as the objective truth of these illusions” (Comay and Ruda, 2018: 50). In this respect, he is Fichte’s follower.

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NEVENA JEVTIĆ

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TRANSCENDENTALNA ILUZIJA
U KANTOVOJ I FIHTEOVOJ FILOZOFIJI:
RASPRAVA PROTIV EMPIRIZMA

Sažetak: Cilj Kantove *Kritike čistog uma* je da se ispitaju iluzije velikih sistema racionalne metafizike njegovih prethodnika. Putem doktrine o transcendentnoj dijalektici Kant otkriva mehanizam na osnovu koga prirodna dijalektika uma postaje metafizičkom iluzijom. Ovaj mehanizam transcendentalne iluzije ima svoje poreklo unutar subjekt-objekt relacije. Ona se može izraziti kao (nelegitimna) tvrdnja da um vodi ka objektivnom saznanju. Prema Kantu, metafizičke zablude njegovih prethodnika mogu se interpretirati kao manifestacije ove osnovne greške. U Fihteovoj *Wissenschaftslehre*, Kantovo učenje biva transformisano, te se čini da cilja ka metafizičkim sistemima empirizma. Iz Fihteove perspektive, transcendentalna iluzija počiva unutar subjekt-objekt relacije, ali je njeno poreklo na strani objekta, što se izražava tvrdnjom da postoji neposredno iskustvo. Autorka će istražiti pobliže okolnosti s obzirom na koje se transcendentalna iluzija menja u Fihteovoj filozofiji, ističući značaj ove transformacije za idealističku raspravu protiv empirizma.

Ključne reči: Kant, Fihte, metafizika, empirizam, transcendentalna iluzija, kritika

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