

The concept of reflexion in Immanuel Kant`s *Critique  
of the Pure Reason*

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## THE CONCEPT OF REFLEXION<sup>1</sup> IN IMMANUEL KANT'S *CRITIQUE OF THE PURE REASON*

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### *Abstract*

The paper represents an attempt to understand Kant's view on the concept of reflexion (*Überlegung*) in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. After pointing out the difficulties faced by the existing readings, I try to give some support to the claim that if we regard *Überlegung* as a metatheoretical faculty, its concepts are precisely the concepts used by Kant to construct the theoretical system of the Critique.

**Keywords:** Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, reflexion, *Überlegung*, sensibility, understanding, matter, form.

This paper was written with the intention to produce an enlightening analysis of the concept of reflexion (*Überlegung*) that Kant employs in the *Critique of the Pure Reason*. It regards especially the chapter named *Appendix of the Equivocal Nature or Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflexion from the Confusion of the Transcendental with the Empirical use of the Understanding*<sup>3</sup> and also: *Remark on the Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflexion*<sup>4</sup>. I will try to find out what Kant means by *reflexion*, if this is a sort of cognitive faculty or, if not, to what kind of cognitive faculty does it belong. Some classical distinctions should be pointed out in order to achieve, or at least try to achieve, this purpose, some new ones will prove themselves helpful. Once the concept of reflexion is defined, I will briefly examine the *concepts of reflexion* that Kant introduces in this chapter, considering their role in the architecture of the kantian work and their relation with the concepts of understanding and the ideas of reason. Finally

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term *reflexion* instead of the more usual term *reflection* because this last term will be considered in my paper as having another meaning.

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<sup>3</sup> *Anhang von der Amphibolie der Reflexionsbegriffe durch die Verwechslung des empirischen Verstandesgebrauchs mit dem transzendentalen*; [B316; A260]. All references from Kant indicate the pages from (Königlichen Preußischen (later Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften, ed., 1900).

<sup>4</sup> *Anmerkung zur Amphibolie der Reflexionsbegriffe*; [B324; A268].

I will offer a rational reconstruction of the kantian concept of reflexion, considering a metatheoretical utilization of it, through its own concepts. My assumption is that one particular understanding of the term *reflexion* may offer important results for the understanding of the entire philosophical system that Kant produces in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The importance of the chapter I have mentioned is not entirely determined by those interpreters of Kant's book who have focused their attention on it<sup>5</sup>. Some of the interpreters have considered, because of the critiques raised by Kant in this chapter against traditional metaphysics, especially against Leibniz, that: "This section is, indeed, like the chapter on *Phenomena and Noumena*, wrongly located. [...] (it) ought therefore to found its place in the Dialectic,"<sup>6</sup> Other interpreters think that Kant's chapter about the amphiboly of the concepts of reflexion is "at the ending of his critical ontology,"<sup>7</sup> and some others have adopted an intermediate point of view<sup>8</sup>.

Although it is possible to invoke philosophers like Locke, Leibniz, Baumgarten or Wolff for establishing the understanding of the concept of *reflexion* in Kant's time, his own understanding is a little different from theirs. Traditionally it has been meant by reflexion the attention's focusing on the activity of one's own consciousness, on the subject, or ego (for Leibniz, *reflexive acts* "make us think of what is called I, and observe that this or that is within us [...]")<sup>9</sup> and on the means by which he or she thinks and/or knows something about one object<sup>10</sup>. Kant himself presents a kind of contiguity with these opinions in his thinking when he says, in his logic lectures, that by reflexion we would understand "the reflection on the mode of conceiving various representations in one single consciousness"<sup>11</sup>, though within his critical system the concept of reflexion is precisely redefined.

Thus, for Kant the reflexion "is not occupied about objects themselves, for the purpose of directly obtaining concepts of them, but is that state of the mind (*Zustand des Gemüts*) in which we set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which we obtain concepts. It is the consciousness of the

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<sup>5</sup> The *Amphiboliekapitel* is often neglected because of its misleading character and its ambiguousness.

<sup>6</sup> (Kemp Smith 1918, 419). See also (Ewing 1936), claiming that "this section should really belong to the Dialectic."

<sup>7</sup> (Heidegger, 1962, 30) writes that given Kant's project, "[Amphiboliekapitel ist] am Schluß seiner kritischen Ontologie".

<sup>8</sup> See (Lange, 1959) for instance.

<sup>9</sup> (Leibniz, 1714, §30).

<sup>10</sup> See (Locke, 1690), Book II, Chapter I, Paragraph 4: "By reflection then, in the following part of this discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding [...]"

<sup>11</sup> See (Kant, 1992).

relation of given representations to the different sources or faculties of cognition (*das Bewußtsein des Verhältnisses gegebener Vorstellungen zu unseren Erkenntnisquellen*), by which alone their relation to each other can be rightly determined.”<sup>12</sup> We may distinguish then between an exercise of reflexion for the comparison of our knowledge or our representations one to each other and its exercise for comparing our knowledge with its sources. Since these sources of our knowledge cannot be, for Kant, others than the sensibility or the understanding, the problem concerning them that has to be solved with the aid of reflexion is formulated as follows: “to what faculty of cognition do they belong? To the understanding or to the senses?”<sup>13</sup>

We have to notice here that our representations may be connected (*verknüpft*) by the senses or compared (*vergleichen*) by the understanding. This distinction between connection (*Verknüpfung*) and comparison (*Vergleichung*) seems to be important for the solution of the problem. In his notes Kant formulates it more explicitly, saying: “The thing which I'm thinking at through the concept A but I am also thinking at the same thing through the concept B is a judgment (of connection<sup>14</sup>). The concept which I have got in A and also in B is a judgment of comparison.”<sup>15</sup> This distinction between connection (of things) and comparison (of concepts) leads us to the difference between representations which have the sensibility as source (namely *phenomena*) and representations which have the understanding as source (namely *objects*). The two judgments entailed by these different activities can be related with *a priori* or *a posteriori* judgments like this: the judgments of connection are *a posteriori* while the judgments of comparison are *a priori*. So we can understand, for the beginning, why reflexion, through which we are supposed to distinguish between these judgments, is so important for Kant, when he says that it “is a duty which no one can neglect who wishes to establish an *a priori* judgment upon things.”<sup>16</sup>

Another distinction occurs, according to Kant, between a *logical reflexion* (*eine logische Reflexion*), which is “mere comparison, for in it no account is taken of the faculty of cognition to which the given conceptions belong, and they are consequently, as far as regards their origin, to be treated as homogeneous;”<sup>17</sup> and a *transcendental reflexion* (*eine transcendente Reflexion*), that is “The act whereby I compare my representations with the faculty of cognition which originates them, and whereby I distinguish whether they are compared with each other as

<sup>12</sup> [B316; A260].

<sup>13</sup> [B316; A260].

<sup>14</sup> Kant's addition.

<sup>15</sup> See (Kowalewski, 1924), Reflexion 3933: “Das Ding, was ich durch den Begriff A denke, eben dasselbe denke ich auch durch den Begriff B ist ein Urtheil (der Verknüpfung). Der Begriff, den ich in A denke, ich auch in B: ist ein Urteil der Vergleichung.”, quoted after (Bröken, 1970).

<sup>16</sup> The original text: “ist eine Pflicht, von der sich niemand lossagen kann, wenn er a priori etwas über Dinge urteilen will.” [B319; A263].

<sup>17</sup> [B318-319; A262-263].

belonging to the pure understanding or to sensuous intuition [...].”<sup>18</sup> According to this distinction the two manners of exercising the reflexion, as a comparison of our representations to each other and as a comparison of them with their sources, come in fact from the existence of two different activities of our thinking. These two kinds of reflexion are entirely different, as long as “the faculties of cognition to which they belong are not even the same.”<sup>19</sup>

We have now the first indication that reflexion has not to be considered a special faculty of knowledge, different from the sensibility, understanding or reason, but it must be regarded as belonging to one, or more, of these faculties. Even more, the two sorts of reflexion that Kant has distinguished appear to belong to different cognitive faculties.

Only now some of the difficulties that had made the interpreters to pass silently over this chapter from Kant’s *Critique* are showing up. For the sensibility does not seem to be this faculty, neither for the transcendental reflexion, nor for the logical one, since it can apply through its pure intuitions only to the empirical intuitions and it certainly cannot determine the way in which the concepts are linked together in a “state of mind,” as the reflexion can do. Nor can the understanding serve as a support of the transcendental reflexion’s activities, since it cannot apply to itself, as Kant says: “[...] the understanding which is occupied merely with empirical exercise, and does not reflect on the sources of its own cognition, may exercise its functions very well and very successfully, but is quite unable to do one thing, and that of very great importance, to determine, namely, the bounds that limit its employment, and to know what lies within or without its own sphere.”<sup>20</sup> This way, the understanding cannot know what a particular representation consists in, and also if it is the understanding itself the one which gives that representation or not<sup>21</sup>. In spite of this, the understanding may be the faculty of the logical reflexion, because “When we reflect in a purely logical manner, we do nothing more than compare concepts in our understanding [...]”<sup>22</sup> It remains that only the reason can be the faculty of the transcendental reflexion.

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<sup>18</sup> [B317; A261].

<sup>19</sup> [B319; A263].

<sup>20</sup> [B297; A238]. In German: “daß der bloß mit seinem empirischen Gebrauche beschäftigte Verstand, der über die Quellen seiner eigenen Erkenntnis nicht nachsinnt, zwar sehr gut fortkommen, eines aber gar nicht leisten könne, nämlich, sich selbst die Grenzen seines Gebrauchs zu bestimmen, und zu wissen, was innerhalb oder außerhalb seiner ganzen Sphäre.”

<sup>21</sup> The case of the transcendental apperception, as a faculty of consciousness to be self-conscious, though belonging (as usually considered) to the understanding, might be viewed as a counterexample to this affirmation. Yet, the source of this transcendental apperception is an empirical apperception, that is a grasp of an internal sensuous intuition of the thinking subject through the concepts of the understanding, which gives us the unity of consciousness in the transcendental apperception and with this the unity of any possible knowledge.

<sup>22</sup> [B335; A279]; in the German text: “Wenn wir bloß logisch reflektieren, so vergleichen wir lediglich unsere Begriffe unter einander im Verstande [...]”

Nevertheless, our difficulties do not end here. For, although the two sorts of reflexion, logical and transcendental, are completely different, one belonging to the understanding and the other to the reason, it seems that for logically reflecting on the relation between our representations we will have to take account of these representations' relation "to the different sources or faculties of cognition." It becomes problematical, then, to determine the very manner in which the reason, through transcendental reflexion, would offer assistance to the understanding for its logical reflexion.

This dependence of the logical reflexion on the transcendental one, some times accepted<sup>23</sup> and several other times rejected<sup>24</sup>, seems to become even more clear when the concepts of reflexion (*Reflexionsbegriffe*) are presented. These concepts of reflection are those of *the identity and the difference* ("der *Einerleiheit und Verschiedenheit*"), *the agreement and the opposition* ("der *Einstimmung und des Widerstreits*"), *the internal and the external* ("des *Inneren und des Äußeren*") and finally of *the determinable and the determination* ("des *Bestimmbaren und der Bestimmung*"), or *matter and form* ("Materie und Form"). Yet, they apply differently to the relations between our representations, depending on whether these prove themselves to be objects of the pure understanding or phenomena of the sensibility. In what concerns, for instance, the identity and difference, Kant says: "When an object is presented to us several times, but always with the same internal determinations (*qualitas et quantitas*), it, if an object of pure understanding, is always the same, not several things, but only one thing (*numerica identitas*); but if a phenomenon (*Erscheinung*), we do not concern ourselves with comparing the concept of the thing with the concept of some other, but, although they may be in this respect perfectly the same, the difference of place at the same time is a sufficient ground for asserting the numerical difference of these objects (of sense)."<sup>25</sup> We could think then, taking this example as a starting point, that the relation between transcendental reflexion and logical reflexion is as follows: the determination, made by transcendental reflexion, of the understanding as the source of our given representations is the condition for the possibility of one mere logical reflexion, considered as a comparison of the intellectual concepts (since having the understanding as a source means for our representations that they are nothing else but intellectual concepts). Thus, we may be justified to admit there is not a univocal relation between the application of one or another from these concepts of reflexion (identity or difference) and the establishing of those representations, as given by understanding or sensibility, to which these concepts do apply, because it might be the case that "the concept is logically

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<sup>23</sup> See the initial definition of reflexion quoted from Kant's *Critique* in this paper.

<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, how Kant defines the logical reflexion in which "no account is taken of the faculty of cognition to which the given conceptions belong."

<sup>25</sup> [B219; A263].

different from another when it contains indeed some, but not all of the other one's predicates."<sup>26</sup> We may ask, indeed: 'By the reflexive exercise of which faculty would we apply the concept of *difference*, for instance, to sensible objects?' This is a very puzzling question. In fact, we may doubt even the possibility of using reflexion in the case of sensible objects, since Kant himself had said that "Reflection (*reflexio*) is not occupied about objects themselves [...]"<sup>27</sup> On the other side, as the logical use of concepts like *identity* and *difference* or *agreement* and *opposition* can be almost easily explained if we notice that "Before constructing any objective judgement, we compare the conceptions that are to be placed in the judgment, and observe whether there exists identity (of many representations in one conception), if a general judgment is to be constructed, or difference, if a particular; whether there is agreement when affirmative; and opposition when negative judgments are to be constructed, and so on,"<sup>28</sup> the way in which the other pairs of concepts (*internal* and *external*, respectively, *determinable* and *determination*) might be used mere logically for reflexion is still undetermined. With respect to the first pair of concepts we have the possibility of representing the relations between the intellectual concepts through: (a) the total comprehension of all the characteristics of one concept *into* another concept (this particular relation is to be expressed by a categorical judgment); (b) the partial comprehension of some characteristics of one concept *in* the other one (this can be expressed by a hypothetical judgment); (c) all the characteristics of one concept existing *out* of the other concept's sphere (using the two concepts we will formulate a disjunctive judgment). Anyway, this possibility seems quite different from the one which Kant offered for the comparison of the intellectual objects<sup>29</sup> with the phenomenal substance<sup>30</sup> from this point of view. Similarly, it is obvious that even in the latter case – that of the second pair of concepts – there is a difference between the comparison of concepts through the logical reflexion and the connection of things through the transcendental reflexion (which we have to suppose that is possible to exist). And this remains so, in spite of the former separation between transcendental and logical reflection made with respect to their different use – for determining the sources of our representations or for considering these representations in mutual relation. We will know this way, for instance, that "In a judgment one may call the given concepts logical matter (for the judgment), the relation of

<sup>26</sup> (Kowalewski, 1924), 1.c., 534: "der Begriff ist von dem anderen logisch verschieden, wenn er zwar einige, aber nicht alle Prädicate desselben enthält" – quoted after (Bröken, 1970, 81).

<sup>27</sup> Original text: "Die Überlegung (*reflexio*) hat es nicht mit den Gegenständen selbst zu tun [...]"

<sup>28</sup> [B317-318; A262].

<sup>29</sup> "In an object of the pure understanding, only that is internal which has no relation (as regards its existence) to anything different from itself." – [B231; A265].

<sup>30</sup> "On the other hand, the internal determinations of a *substantia phaenomenon* in space are nothing but relations, and it is itself nothing more than a complex of mere relations (*ein Inbegriff von lauter Relationen*)." – [B231; A265].

these to each other (by means of the copula), the form of the judgment.”<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, we will find that “In respect to things in general, unlimited reality was regarded as the matter of all possibility, the limitation thereof (negation) as the form, by which one thing is distinguished from another according to transcendental concepts.”<sup>32</sup>

We are facing this way – by taking into account the possibility for the transcendental reflexion to apply itself even to things, for comparison, and not only for establishing the faculty of knowledge which gives us the things' representations – the necessity of providing a suitable reformulation for the kantian distinction between logical and transcendental reflection initially offered. This is not the proper thing to be urged, anyway. We will distinguish then, following the suggestion present in “Remark on The Amphiboly of the Concepts of Reflexion”, a *transcendental topic* (*transzendente Topik*), which “contains nothing more than the above-mentioned four titles of all comparison and distinction [...], “<sup>33</sup> but which requires “a determination of the place to which the representations of the things which are compared belong [...].”<sup>34</sup> Now we have, for this transcendental topic to work, a transcendental use of reflexion for determining the sources of our representations but also, let us say, an empirical use for the comparisons and distinctions between our sensible representations as well as a logical (yet not purely logical) use of reflexion for another kind of comparisons of our representations given by understanding. The last one must be very carefully distinguished from the pure logical use of reflexion, since this reflection is supposed to find its place in a *logical topic* (as the *Topic* of Aristotle was). However, our difficulties do not disappear, but multiply themselves, with all these distinctions. Even if we accept the existence of some sort of ‘*empirical*’ reflexion, by which we will be able to compare through the above-enumerated concepts the sensitive phenomena, we would have to accept the existence of some special devices, like the schemes which endorse the intellectual categories’ application to the phenomena are. Once compared by the ‘*empirical*’ reflexion – which can exist only as an intellectual capacity – those things would become intelligible objects, capable of a new comparison, this time through the logical reflexion. But, since these intellectual

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<sup>31</sup> [B322; A266]. The original text: “In jedem Urteile kann man die gegeben Begriffe logische Materie (zum Urteile), das Verhältnis derselben (vermittelst der Kopula) die Form des Urteils nennen.”; This case seems quite different from the other cases because the form and the matter seem not to apply any longer directly to the concepts for their comparison but rather to give the entire structure of this comparison. Yet, Kant will say somewhere else that through matter and form we are still comparing two concepts, searching for “which of the two is given, and which is merely a mode of thinking that given.” – [B335; A279].

<sup>32</sup> [B322; A266-267]. Even here the matter and the form seem to be meta-concepts by which the real comparison of things becomes possible.

<sup>33</sup> [B325; A269].

<sup>34</sup> [B325; A269].

objects are obtained through the concepts of reflection (and, eventually, some reflexive schemes or other devices) the application of the logical reflexion for their comparison will be different from the same application of the logical reflection to those intellectual objects obtained through the categories of the understanding and their schemes. This would lead us to distinguish again between two kinds of logical reflexion, considering the two differently constituted intellectual objects which they apply to, but we might find ourselves very far from Kant's systematic intention in this case.

Given the necessity to distinguish between concepts of reflexion, as titles of the transcendental topic, and categories of the understanding, a new range of difficulties is coming up, forcing us to renounce to solve the previous ones. At the first sight such difficulties should not find their place here, Kant saying clearly enough about the concepts of reflexion that they “differ from categories in this respect, that they do not represent the object according to that which constitutes its conception (quantity, reality), but set forth merely the comparison of representations, which precedes our conceptions of things.”<sup>35</sup> This probably means that, since the comparison of representations precedes the conception of objects, the concepts of reflexion, at their turn, precede the categories of understanding. What happens then in the case of the pure logical reflexion, where, as we have seen, the concepts of reflexion have to apply precisely to the concepts of the understanding for creating judgments? In this case it seems that the concepts of the understanding must pre-exist to those of reflexion, otherwise their application not being possible. On the other hand, if the transcendental reflexion is exercised through the pure reason, the concepts of (the transcendental) reflexion should find their place near the ideas (or the concepts) of the pure reason and so their separation from the concepts of the understanding will become useless.

All these difficulties, as I believe, led the kantian interpreters which did not avoid the analysis of the chapter on the amphiboly of the concepts of reflexion to the conclusion that this chapter has no importance for the system of the *Critique*, but in fact it is an isolated part of the book devoted to the critique of Leibniz's metaphysics. It has been suggested even that the necessities of the critique against Leibniz have created the sistematization existing in the mentioned chapter. But it was often forgotten that Kant's critique was directed against Locke as well. Kant considered that Leibniz had situated all the representations within the understanding because he did not distinguish their sources, but he also considered that Locke misunderstood the very same problem, since he has “sensualized” the concepts of understanding. Thus, the

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*; The original (about *Reflexionsbegriffe*): “die sich dadurch von Kategorien unterscheiden, daß durch jene nicht der Gegenstand, nach demjenigen, was seinen Begriff ausmacht (Größe, Realität), sondern nur die Vergleichung der Vorstellungen, welche vor dem Begriffe von dingen vorhergeht, in aller ihrer Mannigfaltigkeit dargestellt wird.”

critiques addressed directly to Leibniz could be doubled by those addressed to Locke. In the case of identity and difference, for instance, Kant reproached to Leibniz that he was expressing the principle of indiscernables “which is valid solely of concepts of things in general”<sup>36</sup> as applying also to the objects of sense. In the same way he would be able to reproach the same thing to Locke, who was using the space and the time – considered by Kant pure intuitions of the sensibility – for the identification of intelligible objects such as *the substances*<sup>37</sup>, which are for Kant intelligible objects obtained by the application of the categories of inherence and subsistence, due to the permanence scheme (accordingly to the first analogy of the experience), to the sensible intuitions.

Without discussing any longer the possibility of explaining all these obscurities using different terms from those which Kant himself proposed, I am going to propose another understanding of this chapter, considering once again its systematic relevance. This particular understanding extends beyond the interpretation of the text and, even if almost all the places from the Kantian work justifying it will be indicated, some necessary suppositions will be formulated only with the hope that they will justify themselves by their intuitive character. A real evaluation of the reconstruction that I am giving has to refer then to the conceptual clarification which this reconstruction could initiate.

Let us return to the initial definition of reflexion which Kant gives in the *Critique*, before he distinguishes between a logical reflexion and a transcendental one. We are first told that reflexion “is not occupied about objects”. But we saw latter that as reflexion about our representations which can be given by the understanding or by the sensibility it has something to do with the objects, either intelligible or sensible, and this is just for determining the condition of their intelligibility or sensibility and for comparing them as well. Also, in the initial definition of the reflexion as a “state of mind” it appears rather like a distinct faculty than as being dependent on some other faculty. Yet, the pure logical reflexion provides us with propositional knowledge by itself. If we are to consider somehow from exterior the Kantian system we may regard this reflexion, by which “we set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which we obtain conceptions,” as a metatheoretical enterprise, first of all. For, as the impossibility of the reflexion’s application to objects has, in the initial paragraph of the chapter, no determined sense, so the obtaining of concepts may be regarded, generally speaking, as critical knowledge. This knowledge is of the same kind with the knowledge obtained by Kant himself when he introduces, for instance, the distinction between the concepts of sensibility and understanding. Considered as such, like a metatheoretical faculty or disponibility, reflexion will have to be distinguished from a mere theoretical

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<sup>36</sup> [B328; A272].

<sup>37</sup> See (Locke, 1690), Book III, Chapter XXVII, Paragraph 2.

device. In what concerns the terms, this thing may be considered to happen in Kant's writing when he is passing from the initial explanation of reflexion (*Überlegung*) – which we consider to be a metatheoretical faculty – to the distinction between the logical reflexion (*logische Reflexion*) and the transcendental reflexion (*transzendente Reflexion*). Even if the distinction between *Überlegung* and *Reflexion* is not constantly made at the level of the current use of the German terms<sup>38</sup> and this fact led to the impression that the two terms would be synonymous, only the former seems to fit the usual understanding of reflexion<sup>39</sup>. In this sense the term is closer to another term used by Kant, when he writes: “Within an enquiry of the pure elements of the human knowledge I have succeeded only after a long reflection (*Nachdenken*)<sup>40</sup> to distinguish and separate the pure elementary concepts of the sensibility (the space and the time) from those of the understanding.”<sup>41</sup> In any case, the separation of reflection as a metatheoretical disponibility necessary for the construction of the *Critique of the Pure Reason* from a mere theoretical reflexion, either a pure logical one, or one which is used within the transcendental topic, seems to be helpful for solving some of the above-mentioned difficulties<sup>42</sup>.

Taking this supposition as a starting point we are to search for the limits of the reflection's application, through its concepts (regarded this time as metatheoretical concepts, with respect to the suggestions from the Kantian text which were initially ignored), within the critical system. The first place where this use of reflection becomes obvious is in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, where Kant writes: “That which in the phenomenon corresponds to the sensation, I term its matter; but that which effects that the content of the phenomenon can be arranged under certain relations, I call its form.”<sup>43</sup> We may say therefore that, reflecting under the manner in which we achieve at knowledge, Kant comes to distinguish between a matter of the phenomenon, which is given by empirical intuition, and its form, given by the pure intuitions of the sensibility, namely the

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<sup>38</sup> This can be seen, for instance, in the use of the phrase *transzendente Überlegung*, as in: “Diese transzendente Überlegung ist eine Pflicht, von der sich niemand lossagen kann, wenn er a priori etwas über Dinge urteilen will.” [B319; A263] (Yet, this kind of expression also appears to be rather a metatheoretical one, since the entire *Critique of the Pure Reason* pretends to offer an *a priori* knowledge.)

<sup>39</sup> We might distinguish here, in English, between *reflexion* and *reflection*, the latter term being more appropriate to render the sense of *Überlegung*.

<sup>40</sup> For instance, in (Eisler, 1910, second volume, 657) reflection is defined as “das daran anknüpfende Nachdenken”.

<sup>41</sup> (Kant, 1783, §39, par. 4).

<sup>42</sup> This hypothesis was advanced by other exegetes too. See, for example, (Kopper, 1975, 10).

<sup>43</sup> [B34; A20]. The German text: “In der Erscheinung nenne ich das, was der Empfindung korrespondiert, die Materie derselben, dasjenige aber, welches macht, daß das Mannigfaltige der Erscheinung in gewissen Verhältnissen geordnet werden kann [A: 'angeschaut wird'], nenne ich die Form der Erscheinung.”

space and the time<sup>44</sup>. In the same manner, Kant will use the concepts of matter and form to distinguish sensibility from understanding. The object is thought by the understanding through the application of its concepts (as forms), with the help of the schemes given by imagination, to the sensible phenomena (which constitute the matter). In what concerns the pure forms of space and time, these are distinguished with the aid of the reflection's concepts of the internal and external, as follows: "By means of the external sense<sup>45</sup> (a property of the mind), we represent to ourselves objects as without us, and these all in space. [...] The internal sense (*der innere Sinn*), by means of which the mind contemplates itself [...] is [nevertheless] a determinate form, [...] so that all which relates to the inward determinations of the mind (*zu den inneren Bestimmungen*) is represented in relations of time."<sup>46</sup> We may represent similarly the concepts of understanding as externally determined, since they apply to the sensible phenomena, and the concepts of the pure logical reflexion as internally determined, since they apply to thinking through concepts. Within the metaphysical deduction of the categories of understanding, that is the systematic construction and presentation of their table with the intellectual faculty of judgment as a starting point, Kant will reflect about the agreement or the opposition between judgments and categories. This thing does not become manifest until the author realizes some systematic difficulties, in the second edition of the *Critique*: "With respect to one category, namely, that of community (*Gemeinschaft*), which is found in the third class, it is not so easy as with the others to detect its accordance (*die Übereinstimmung*) with the form of the disjunctive judgment which corresponds to it in the table of the logical functions."<sup>47</sup> In what concerns the transcendental deduction, the reflection on the possibility of deducing the concepts of the understanding as being related *a priori* with the objects is led by the idea of analytical or synthetical identity or unity<sup>48</sup> of apperception<sup>49</sup>. Even more: "This fundamental principle of the necessary unity of apperception is indeed an identical, and therefore analytical, proposition; [...]"<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> See, for instance (Buchenau, 1914, 83), for the idea that the pure intuitions does not succeed to what-is-given because the matter and the form, as concepts of reflexion, are about a single object in itself ("über den an sich einheitlichen Gegenstand").

<sup>45</sup> "Vermittelst des äußeren Sinnes", in original.

<sup>46</sup> [B37; A22-23].

<sup>47</sup> [B111-112].

<sup>48</sup> The kantian concept of '*Einerleiheit*' being in fact intermediate between 'Identität' and 'Einheit', I shall consider that both are its particular notes.

<sup>49</sup> It must be noted that for Kant the synthetic unity of the apperception, on which the analytical identity of the apperception is founded thereafter, is somehow originally set. Yet, "Synthetical unity of the manifold in intuitions, as given a priori, is therefore the foundation of the identity of apperception itself, which antecedes a priori all *my* determinate thought (*meinem bestimmten Denken*)." [B135].

<sup>50</sup> [B136].

The use of the reflection and of its concepts can be easily detected in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* as well as in the *Transcendental Analytic*<sup>51</sup>. We should see now whether the *Transcendental Dialectic* is also elaborated through a similar use of reflection and of its concepts.

Let us notice first that even for the characterization of reason the same concepts of matter and form are still operational, because the reason, like the understanding, has “a formal use”, and processes “the matter of the intuition”<sup>52</sup>. Once with the distinction between a regulative and a transcendental use of the pure reason the reflection about the agreement or the opposition between its ideas, namely on the opposition between the internal idea of subject and a subject considered as a determinable object, on the opposition (or discordance) between the assertions made about the cosmological ideas – in which the unconditioned, either as absolute beginning or as a whole of the conditions’ series – is represented as determinable (*bestimmbar*), or the reflection on the opposition between the ideal of an absolutely necessary being (as completely determinable concept) and the completely determinate object (that is existent) which should correspond to it, become essential for the grasp of the reason’s errors in its transcendental use.

After we briefly identified various places from the Critique where the use of a metatheoretical faculty of reflection (*Überlegung*), through its concepts, for the examination, the conception and the exposition of the system of knowledge, have appeared, we might be able to conclude, in what concerns the limits of the reflection’s use within the *Critique of the Pure Reason*, that there are no such limits, and that reflection is used in its quality of a metatheoretical faculty along the entire Kantian book. This conclusion is entirely compatible with the considerations about reflection developed by Kant in the *Critique of Judgment*, when he says that: “To think (to reflect) means: to compare the given representations, either with other, or with their faculty of knowledge with respect to a concept which we made through this possible. The reflective faculty of judgment is that which is also called faculty of estimation (*facultas dijudicandi*)”<sup>53</sup>. The faculty of judgment, conceived by Kant like a sort of intermediate faculty between understanding and reason is “the faculty of thinking the particular as included in the general.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, it is a determinative faculty of judgment which is exercised only when the general is given and the

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<sup>51</sup> An analysis of the combined use of the reflection’s concepts for the fundamental distinctions from the system of the *Critique* might be interesting, from this point of view. Such distinctions, as those between analytic and synthetic or between *a priori* and *a posteriori*, seem to appear in the Kantian thought from a much profound reflection wherein the reflection’s concepts are developed together. Nevertheless, such an investigation would require a special effort and, first of all, would interrupt the argumentative line of the present paper.

<sup>52</sup> See [B355; A298].

<sup>53</sup> (Kant, 1790), *The First Introduction*.

<sup>54</sup> (Kant, 1790), *The First Introduction*.

particular has to be determined from a reflective faculty of judgment which is in fact the reflection, the main function of which is to determine the general in which one given particular is somehow included. This faculty is the one by which the universals are given in our thinking and our knowledge is systematically produced. It “deals therefore with the given phenomena for grouping them under the empirical concepts of some natural determined objects. It proceeds not systematically but technically; somehow not just mechanically like an instrument standing under the leadership of the understanding and the senses but artistically by the general, yet undetermined, principle of the finalistic organization of the nature into a system.”<sup>55</sup> The leading principle of this faculty is: “the nature specifies its general laws into particular laws according to a logical system which satisfies the interest of the faculty of judgment.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, if we are to understand the external phenomena, but also, and especially our mind as a part of nature, the philosophical reflection focused on them has to develop as a system. The *Critique of the Pure Reason*, conceived by the use of the reflection in the analysis of the natural reality constituted in our knowledge, is such a system.

There is only one thing that stops us from giving a complete answer to the question: “What kind of faculty has Kant used when he was writing the *Critique of the Pure Reason*?”, or, in other words: “Which one of the cognitive faculties is such that allows us to use it for the other faculties’ analysis as well as for its own from those that Kant has mentioned?” We already know that reflection, as a metatheoretical faculty or disposition, is explicitly used for the construction of the Kantian system within the *Critique*. What we still do not know is whether the reflection is the only faculty of this kind. Yet, it is not very probable that another faculty from those distinguished by Kant himself might be seen as capable of such a metatheoretical use. The understanding, as we already saw, can not apply to itself and in no case can it apply to reason for ascertaining its limits. The reason, in its turn, does not supply any knowledge. Therefore to accept that reason might be such a metatheoretical faculty is to accept that the Kantian system brings no knowledge, which would be in contradiction with Kant's own claims. Thus the reflection remains the only metatheoretical faculty used for the entire critique of the pure reason.

Although the use of the reflection and of its concepts for the constitution of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a system has not been entirely described, but only illustrated in this paper, I do not doubt the possibility of such a description to be made from the perspective of the reconstructive hypothesis which I have been given support here. This has to remain a task for the future inquires of all those interested.

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<sup>55</sup> (Kant, 1790), *The First Introduction*.

<sup>56</sup> (Kant, 1790), *The First Introduction*.

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