

Transcendental Logic

Second Part

Transcendental Dialectic^f

Introduction^a

I

Transcendental illusion.

Above we have called dialectic in general a **logic of illusion**.^b That does not mean that it is a doctrine of **probability**;^c for that is truth, but cognized through insufficient grounds, so that the cognition of it is defective, but not therefore deceptive, and so it need not be separated from the analytical part of logic.² Still less may we take **appearance**^d and **illusion** for one and the same. For truth and illusion are not in the object, insofar as it is intuited, but in the judgment about it insofar as it is thought. Thus it is correctly said that the senses do not err; yet not because they always judge correctly, but because they do not judge at all. Hence truth, 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^e of the object to our understanding. In a cognition that thoroughly agrees with the laws of the understanding there is also no error. In a representation of sense (because it contains no judgment at all) there is no error. No force of nature can of itself depart from its own laws. Hence neither the understanding by itself (without the influence of another cause), nor the senses by themselves, can err; the first cannot, because while it acts merely according to its own laws, its effect (the judgment) must necessarily agree with these laws.³ But the formal aspect of all truth consists in agreement with the laws of the understanding. In the senses there is no judgment at all, neither a true nor a false one. Now because we have

^a "We have previously proved that we can think only through categories and the concepts derived from them, but that our cognition (*a priori*) with them can reach no farther than to objects of possible experience. Now sciences come forward – psychology, cosmology, theology – that promise this." (E CLII, p. 46; 23:38)

^b *Schein*

^c *Wahrscheinlichkeit*

^d *Erscheinung*

^e *Verhältnis*

no other sources of cognition besides these two, it follows that **error is effected only through the unnoticed influence of sensibility on understanding, through which it happens that the subjective grounds^a of the judgment join with the objective ones, and make the latter deviate from their destination*.^b just as a moved body would of itself always stay in a straight line in the same direction, but starts off on a curved line if at the same time another force influences it in another direction.** In order to distinguish the proper action of the understanding from the force that meddles in, it will thus be necessary to regard the erroneous judgment of the understanding as a diagonal between two forces that determine the judgment in two different directions, enclosing an angle, so to speak, and to resolve the composite effect into the simple effects of the understanding and of sensibility; in pure judgments *a priori* this must happen through transcendental reflection, through which (as already shown) every representation is assigned its place in the faculty of cognition proper to it, and hence also the influence of the latter is distinguished from it.

Our concern here is not to treat of empirical (e.g. optical) illusion, which occurs in the empirical use of otherwise correct rules of the understanding, and through which the faculty of judgment is misled through the influence of the imagination; rather, we have to do only with **transcendental illusion**, which 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**. We will call the principles whose application stays wholly and completely within the limits of possible experience **immanent**, but those that would fly beyond these boundaries **transcendent** principles. But by the latter I do not understand the **transcendental** use or misuse of categories, which is a mere mistake of the faculty of judgment when it is not properly checked by criticism, and thus does not attend enough to the boundaries of the territory in which alone the pure understanding is allowed its play; rather, I mean principles that actually incite us to tear down all those boundary posts and to lay claim to a wholly new territory

* Sensibility, subordinated to understanding, as the object^c to which the latter applies its function, is the source of real cognitions. But this same sensibility, insofar as it influences the action of the understanding and determines it to judgments, is the ground of error.

^a In the first edition: "that subjective grounds."

^b *Bestimmung*

^c *Object*

B 353 that recognizes no demarcations anywhere. Hence **transcendental** and **transcendent** are not the same. The principles of pure understanding we presented above should be only of empirical and not of transcendental use, i.e., of a use that reaches out beyond the boundaries of experience. But a principle that takes away these limits, which indeed bids us to overstep them, is called **transcendent**. If our critique can succeed in discovering the illusion in these supposed principles, then those principles that are of merely empirical use can be called, in opposition to them, **immanent** principles of pure understanding.

A 297 Logical illusion, which consists in the mere imitation of the form of reason (the illusion of fallacious inferences) arises solely from a failure of attentiveness to the logical rule. Hence as soon as this attentiveness is focused on the case before us, logical illusion entirely disappears. Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism (e.g. the illusion in the proposition: "The world must have a beginning in time"). 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. [This is] an **illusion** that cannot be avoided at all, just as little as we can avoid it that the sea appears higher in the middle than at the shores, since we see the former through higher rays of light than the latter, or even better, just as little as the astronomer can prevent the rising moon from appearing larger to him, even when he is not deceived by this illusion.⁴

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A 298 The transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with uncovering the illusion in transcendental judgments, while at the same time protecting us from being deceived by it; but it can never bring it about that transcendental illusion (like logical illusion) should even disappear and cease to be an illusion. For what we have to do with here is a **natural** and unavoidable **illusion**^a which itself rests on subjective principles and passes them off as objective, whereas logical dialectic in its dissolution of fallacious inferences has to do only with an error in following principles or with an artificial illusion that imitates them.⁵ Hence there is a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason, not one in which a bungler might be entangled through lack of acquaintance, or one that some sophist has artfully invented in order to confuse rational people, but one that irremediably attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage^b it will still not cease to lead

^a *Illusion*

^b *Blendwerk*

our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed. B 355

II

On pure reason as the seat of transcendental illusion

A.

On reason in general.

All our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking. Since I am now to give a definition^a of this supreme faculty of cognition, I find myself in some embarrassment. A 299
As in the case of the understanding, there is in the case of reason a merely formal, i.e., logical use, where reason abstracts from all content of cognition, but there is also a real use, since reason itself contains the origin of certain concepts and principles, which it derives neither from the senses nor from the understanding. The first faculty has obviously long since been defined by the logicians as that of drawing inferences immediately (as distinct from immediate inferences, *consequentis immediatis*); but from this we get no insight into the second faculty, which itself generates concepts.^b Now since a division of reason into a logical and a transcendental faculty occurs here, a higher concept of this source of cognition must be sought that comprehends both concepts under itself, while from the analogy with concepts of the understanding, we can expect both that the logical concept will put in our hands the key to the transcendental one and that the table of functions of the former will give us the family tree of the concepts of reason. B 356

In the first part of our transcendental logic we defined the understanding as the faculty of rules; here we will distinguish reason from understanding by calling reason the **faculty of principles**.^b

The term "a principle" is ambiguous, and commonly signifies only a cognition that can be used as a principle even if in itself and as to its own origin it is not a principle.^c Every universal proposition, even if it is A 300

^a *Erklärung*

^b *Principien*; in section II of this introduction, "principle" always translates *Princip* unless otherwise noted. In addition to the German term *Grundsatz*, Kant employs not only the Latin derivative *Princip*, but also occasionally the even more Latinate *Principium*, whose occurrence will be noted; the plural of both terms, however, is *Principien*, which will therefore be translated as "principles" with no note. Outside the present section, "principle" (without a note) always translates *Grundsatz*, and the Latin terms are always noted.

^c *Principium*