

## Research Article

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# The Faculty of Ideas. Kant's Concept of Reason in the Narrower Sense

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**Abstract:** In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant searched for a universal concept of reason different from the understanding and offered the short formula “the faculty of principles” (*KrV* A299/B356). I will argue that this is only one and not the most pertinent and general mark of the concept of reason. There are more compelling short expressions in Kant’s *Reflexionen*, the third *Critique* and/or in the reception of Kant’s works: “the faculty of ideas” (*Refl* 5553 18:228 and *KU* 5:269) or *reason in the narrower sense*. The latter narrows down the logical sphere of the concept of rational faculties, and the former contains reason’s most basic mark: *ideas*. The first part of this article will focus on preliminary remarks on Kant’s philosophical methodology and conceptual analysis. The second part will analyze the division of the logical sphere of the concept of reason by nine necessary and coherent marks. These marks are centered around the concept of ideas, which allows for an ideas-first understanding of reason and preference for the formulas *the faculty of ideas* and *reason in the narrower sense*. The article will end with an “imperfect definition” of reason based on those nine marks.

**Keywords:** ideas, faculty, reason, rationality, definition, logic, conceptual analysis, metaphilosophy

## 1 Introduction

For Kant, the division of the higher faculties of cognition is threefold, in concurrence with the division of the general logic (as well as the structure of his first *Critique* and, e.g., the *Jaesche Logic*): “**understanding, the power of judgment, and reason,**” with the corresponding elements “**concepts, judgments, and inferences.**”<sup>1</sup> These three faculties belong to one of the two stems of the cognitive power: reason as “the entire higher faculty of cognition,”<sup>2</sup> as the rational in contrast to the empirical. Kant’s use of the concept of reason is twofold: it designates either the sum of rationality (the totality of higher cognitive faculties) or a specific cognitive faculty. Kant scholarship sometimes refers to the former as to “reason in the broader sense” (Rb)

<sup>1</sup> *KrV* A130/B169. The *Critique of Pure Reason* [*KrV*] is quoted according to the usual A/B pagination. References to all other works by Kant follow the pagination of the *Akademie-Ausgabe*, excluding the abbreviation “AA,” i.e., I give volume and page numbers only. The cited English translations are from the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. I use the following abbreviations for Kant’s works: *FM/Lose Blätter* for *FM: Lose Blätter (Jottings for the Progress of Metaphysics)*; *GMS* for *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*; *KpV* for *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*; *KU* for *Kritik der Urteilskraft*; *Logik* for *Jaesche-Logik*; *Log-DW* for *Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1792 Logik Dohna-Wundlacken*; *Log-Wien* for *Wiener Logik*; *MS* for *Metaphysik der Sitten*; *Op. Post.* for *Opus Postumum*; *Pädagogik* for *Pädagogik*; *Prol* for *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*; *Refl* for *Reflexionen*.

<sup>2</sup> *KrV* A835/B863.

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and to the latter as to “reason in the narrower sense” (Rn).<sup>3</sup> Similar to expounding Rb as “the entire higher faculty of cognition,” Kant suggests a short formula for the universal concept of Rn: “the **faculty of principles**,”<sup>4</sup> which is different from the understanding as a lower mental faculty: “the faculty of rules.”<sup>5</sup>

Kant’s formula “the faculty of principles” in the passage *On Reason in General* at the beginning of the *Transcendental Dialectic* is his first attempt at a clear and short exposition of the concept of Rn. It does not accurately and deeply reflect the core set of theories regarding Rn – it is in a way a misleading, only partially valid formula and not the basic and persistent nominal exposition of Rn, for the following reasons: Firstly, “the faculty of principles” could be also a description of the understanding, as it is not only the faculty of rules, but also the source of empirical and pure *principles*.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, Kant establishes a shadowy implicit link between concepts and the formulation of principles based on them. “Principle” denotes both the concept (the *Grund*) and the corresponding sentence (the *Grundsatz*). A precise exposition of Rn requires a differentiation between different *kinds of concepts* – the theory of principles must be centered around the analysis of these different kinds.<sup>7</sup> And thirdly, following Kant’s own methodology, Rn is a set of theories developed throughout his works according to a certain revisable plan. Thus, its initial description can only be an element of an imperfect definition and not, as he claims, the “universal concept of the faculty of reason.”<sup>8</sup> Unlike mathematicians, philosophers do not start with definitions – they seek “to exhibit originally the exhaustive concept of a thing within its boundaries.”<sup>9</sup> But the discursive character of their enterprise (the hard work with concepts) does not allow for apodictic certainty regarding the completeness of the exhibition, especially when it comes to *a priori* given concepts. Rather, they deal with elements for “imperfect definitions, i.e., propositions that are not really definitions but are true and thus approximations to them.”<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of this article is to give a synoptic overview of the manifold elements for an imperfect definition of Rn, a picture of Rn that is more complete and more adequate to its complexity than is expressed by the initial formula “the faculty of principles.” The first part contains preliminary remarks on Kant’s methodology of philosophy and conceptual analysis. In the second part, nine elements for an imperfect definition of Rn are distinguished, analyzed, and interrelated.<sup>11</sup> They mark different perspectives on one and the same logical sphere, offering a multiperspectival image of Rn: a “division according to the variety of concepts of the same object (viewpoints).”<sup>12</sup> They can be grouped as follows:

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Rohlf, “The Ideas of Pure Reason,” 195; Hutter, *Das Interesse der Vernunft*, 36; Mohr and Willaschek, “Einleitung,” 14, 20; Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*; and Bunte, *Erkenntnis und Funktion*, 124–6, who agrees with Heimsoeth that the differentiation between reason in the narrower and wider senses is indispensable. Klimmek, *Kants System der transzendentalen Ideen*, 4, goes another way around, differentiating between the understanding in the wider and narrower senses. This implies that the understanding would be the more general concept under which reason would be subsumed (and that, in the narrower sense, is different from reason), which has no textual evidence, neither in *KrV* A835/B863 nor in *KrV* A130/B169. For examples in the early reception of Kant’s work (e.g., Schmid, *Wörterbuch zum Leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften*, 362), see Roelcke, *Die Terminologie der Erkenntnisvermögen*, 183–4.

<sup>4</sup> *KrV* A299/B356. See also *KpV* 5:119.

<sup>5</sup> *KrV* A299/B356.

<sup>6</sup> See *KrV* A158–9/B197–8.

<sup>7</sup> See part 2 (6) of this article. The specific kind of concept must decide about what kind of principle (of the understanding or of reason) is in use.

<sup>8</sup> *KrV* A302/B359.

<sup>9</sup> *KrV* A727/B755.

<sup>10</sup> *KrV* A731/B759. There is not much literature on Kant’s concept of definition. Beck’s, “Kant’s Theory of Definition” is still the most systematic article on this topic. For Kant’s doctrine of definition in his precritical phase, see Martinez, “La Doctrina Kantiana de la Definición en las Lecciones de Lógica.”

<sup>11</sup> The purpose of this article is not an in-depth analysis of each element and its large exegetical and historical context. It cannot be the purpose of the medium “article” in general. The focus is on some of the basic content of each feature in the system of interrelated elements that constitute the whole program of Rn. Their description will contain several results of my larger studies in a compact form.

<sup>12</sup> *Logik* 9:147.

- (I) basic features:
  - (1) faculty,
  - (2) rational (Rb in contrast to the empirical),
  - (3) the narrower sense (Rn in contrast to other higher faculties of cognition).
- (II) causal functional features:
  - (4) makes intermediate inferences,
  - (5) gives ideas (seven kinds of ideas),
  - (6) gives principles.
- (III) additional functional features:
  - (7) has uses,
  - (8) is the source of interests and ends,
  - (9) is unified.

If one seeks a short formula for Rn,<sup>13</sup> the most adequate candidates would be the ones that came up in Kant's *Reflexionen*, in the third *Critique*, and/or in the reception of Kant's works: "the faculty of ideas"<sup>14</sup> or *reason in the narrower sense*. Both formulas express the most important elements for an imperfect definition of Rn – elements (3) and (5) – that can be used in the sense of a *pars pro toto* for the complex research program, which can be delineated by the nine elements. The latter specifies the concept of Rn by narrowing down the logical sphere of the concept of rational faculties, the former contains its most basic mark: *ideas*. (5) Ideas, as certain kinds of concepts of (1)–(3), the faculty that is rational in the narrower sense, are (4) the products of intermediate inferences, (6) the grounds of the principles of Rn, the medium of Rn's (7) uses, (8) interests, and ends, and (9) the basis for the unity of the manifold associated with the concept of Rn. The coherent conceptual population of marks, by which we cognize and distinguish Rn from other mental faculties, is therefore centered around the concept of ideas. This is what is successively shown in the second part of the article.

The list of the nine elements found throughout Kant's works is not exhaustive, and it cannot be exhaustive if we follow his understanding of "exposition," which is never complete. They can be considered as the minimal marks necessary for a diversified picture of Rn, grouped – for presentation reasons – in three consecutive triads.<sup>15</sup> (I) *Basic features* frame the fundamental concept of the faculty in two steps. (II) *Causal functional features* detail the resulting concept of the rational faculty in the narrow sense, which is responsible for interconnected operations leading to and resulting from ideas. (III) *Additional functional features* specify the background, diversity, and unity of the functions of this faculty related to and resulting from ideas. The article ends with an attempt to give an imperfect definition of Rn as the faculty of ideas based on the elements within these triads.

<sup>13</sup> Rn is used here and in the following as the common title of the nine elements, as a possible *pars pro toto* that will be uncovered step by step. It is therefore an element of a hermeneutic circle. This element distinguishes reason from the understanding. I could also use the symbol "X" or the abbreviation "FI" (the faculty of ideas), which would be less suitable for my goals.

<sup>14</sup> *Refl* 5553 18:228 and *KU* 5:269. See also Kirchner, *Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe*, 678–9. Hegel takes the formula "the faculty of the unconditioned" (Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, 101 [§52, addition]) to refer to Kant's concept of reason in the narrower sense, which is right insofar as *the unconditioned* is the common title of all ideas – see *KrV* A324/B380. Hegel, however, does not consider the whole range of different kinds of ideas in Kant (see Section 2, point (5) of this article) and all the different marks (in Hegel's terms: *thought determinations*) that are needed to grasp the Kantian concept of reason in the narrower sense.

<sup>15</sup> Therefore, I therefore do not claim that there is an *a priori* given necessity within these triads or that they are derived from a common principle. The former would require – in Kantian terms – the logical structure of a *trichotomy*: "(i.) the concept as condition, (2.) the conditioned, and (3.) the derivation of the latter from the former" (*Logik* 9:148). But this is a "*principle of synthesis a priori*" (ibid. 147), which is not possible in philosophy that cognizes from concepts. The latter would require a Fichtean genetical approach, which would be interesting to consider in further studies, but which is not followed here. The division of the concepts in this article is, however, undoubtedly *a priori* in the Kantian sense. The analyzed concept is given *a priori*, and the method of conceptual exposition does not follow the formal or material guidelines of the sensibility and is necessarily based on the *a priori* principle of contradiction (e.g., rational faculty vs empirical faculty, logical vs real use).

## 2 Philosophical archeology: Rn in light of Kant's methodology of philosophy

There are different ways to approach Kant's work: some are mainly systematic and theory-based (technical) and only partially involve historical and text-exegetical clarifications; others are mainly text-exegetical and historical and only partially involve a systematic theoretical framework.<sup>16</sup> While both ways have perspectival advantages and disadvantages, methods must be aligned with the chosen knowledge goals and the specificity of the object of investigation. A focused exegetical and historical reconstruction of a text under a certain interpretative claim (as a suggested so-called "reading" among other "readings") is undoubtedly useful for many reasons, but an absolutization of this approach eliminates certain knowledge goals and conceals certain features of the objects of analysis, e.g., the broadness of Kant's concept of ideas, which is recognizable via a systematic conceptual reconstruction rather than via a proposed "reading" of one or several passages. It cannot always reveal the systematic theoretical diversity and complexity of a concept as well as the inner necessity of its logically interrelated components. This is especially true regarding the concept of Rn, which contains more elements by far than are analyzed in the first *Critique*, and which evolved along with Kant's development of the idea of transcendental philosophy. A synopsis of these elements for the sake of a systematic theoretical reconstruction requires the notions of logical necessity and coherence. The features that Kant ascribed to Rn in the course of his works must be associated with one concept without contradiction, overdetermination, and destabilization. The manifold of the conceptual content of Rn must agree without any eliminative contradiction – any disagreement in content must be elaborated and marked as problematic (as anomalies and problems that a theorist should solve in future). The purpose of such systematic exposition of the conceptual content of Rn could be, e.g., the justification of its inner diversity and applicability and the further development of Rn as a research program in contemporary contexts.

The method of the logical exposition of conceptual content is rooted deeply within Kant's metaphilosophy, which includes philosophical methodology and views of the history of philosophy.<sup>17</sup> In the *Jottings for the Progress of Metaphysics*, he differentiates between a *philosophical history of philosophy* and *historical knowledge of philosophy*. Only the former is *a priori*. As philosophizing is a gradual development of human reason by mere concepts, philosophy is concerned with the *necessity of the conceptual content* and not with the knowledge of things as they are. Although the analysis of historical positions "establishes facts of reason, it does not borrow them from historical narrative, but draws them from the nature of human reason, as philosophical archaeology."<sup>18</sup> A philosophical history of philosophy or *philosophical archeology* is therefore not concerned with the collection of different opinions regarding any topic, but with what has necessarily been thought and what one should necessarily think by such concepts as "world," "reason," "truth," etc. As there is only one human reason that develops itself through mere concepts,<sup>19</sup> "history of philosophy is of such a special kind, that nothing can be told therein of what has happened, without knowing beforehand what should have happened, and also what can happen."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> In German scholarship, one sometimes distinguishes between "systematic" and "historical" approaches to philosophical texts. But a historical interest can also be a systematic interest. One should seek better expressions and grounds for the distinction of methods. The perspectivist differentiation between knowledge goals that demand different kinds of methods can be helpful here – see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*.

<sup>17</sup> It is of course also rooted deeply in the Aristotelean tradition and can be traced back to modern doctrines of logic, to the Port-Royal Logic, to Leibniz, Wolff, Baumgarten, and Meier (whose "Excerpt from the Doctrine of Reason" was used by Kant as basis for his lectures on logic for approximately 40 years). According to the stated purpose of this article and the professional demand for purpose–method–alignment, I will not trace Kant's theories back to his philosophical predecessors. For a historical reconstruction, see, e.g., Lu-Adler, *Kant and the Science of Logic*; Conrad, *Kants Logikvorlesungen*; Hinske, *Tra Illuminismo e Critica Della Ragione*; and Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*. For an overview of Kant's metaphilosophy, see Lewin, "Kant's Metaphilosophy."

<sup>18</sup> FM/Lose Blätter AA 20:341.

<sup>19</sup> See MS 6:207, KpV 5:107 and 121.

<sup>20</sup> FM/Lose Blätter AA 20:343. This is the way in which Kant himself deals with concepts of Locke, Leibniz, Platon, etc. and how he reconstructs the history of philosophy.

The philosophical archeology (with Rb as the archeological source of concepts) that seeks to reconstruct concepts in their necessity as they have been and must have been thought is therefore different from history of philosophy that tries to restore what a particular person at a given time and under certain circumstances “really” meant and put into words. The latter leads to beneficial discussions of interpretative claims regarding passages that are hard to understand or that contain ambiguities. In its most radical form, historical knowledge of this kind leads to a perfect “plaster cast”<sup>21</sup> of a historical person, as Kant noted in the *Architectonic* chapter of the first *Critique*. How Kant as a historical person formulated his passages on Rn in four to five months in the first *Critique* is therefore not identical with what necessarily belongs to the concept of Rn. The conceptual development and exposition of elements of Rn must be archeologically reconstructed in their necessity, drawing on as many closely corresponding and widely related passages as possible.

For Kant, philosophy is discursive cognition from concepts such as universal or reflected representations, created by the logical acts of abstraction, comparison, and reflection.<sup>22</sup> As such, it does not start with complete, unproblematic, and well-defined concepts, for otherwise we would not need philosophy. It also does not start with intellectual intuitions that would survey the whole conceptual content with a single mental act. Philosophy is hard discursive work with concepts, and it can be happy to have at least an “imperfect definition”<sup>23</sup> at the end of a thoroughgoing analysis of the logical content of a concept and its component parts. What – following Kant’s methodology – can be philosophically achieved regarding the concept of Rn and in which way?

As is the case with “substance, cause, right, equity, etc.,”<sup>24</sup> Rn is an *a priori* given concept.<sup>25</sup> For Kant, to define means to “exhibit originally the exhaustive concept of a thing within its boundaries.”<sup>26</sup> However, as no object in experience corresponds to *a priori* given concepts, there is no safe criterion for the completeness of their exhibition. The many appropriate examples by which a concept can be elucidated lead only to a probable, not an apodictic, certainty – the concept still contains many obscure representations. At the beginning of the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant states in relation to Rn: “Since I am now to give a definition of this supreme faculty of cognition, I find myself in some embarrassment.”<sup>27</sup> As he clarifies in the *Doctrine of Method* of the first *Critique* and his lectures on logic: in case of *a priori* given concepts, the notion of definition should be abandoned – or, as some say today, “conceptually engineered” – in favor of a humbler notion of *exposition*.<sup>28</sup> In case of Rn or any other *a priori* given concepts, the definition remains “only the idea of a logical perfection that we must seek to attain.”<sup>29</sup> An exposition is an incomplete analysis, a true

<sup>21</sup> KrV A836/B864.

<sup>22</sup> For the corresponding passages, see Lewin, “Kant’s Metaphilosophy,” and *Logik* 9:90–4.

<sup>23</sup> KrV A731/B759 fn.

<sup>24</sup> KrV A728/B756.

<sup>25</sup> Kant does not give a detailed explanation of what he means by “given.” I agree with Cicatello, “Der Seltsame Fall der ‘Gegebenen Begriffe’ bei Kant,,” that it would be wrong to charge Kant with innatism. Givenness (like in case of categories or ideas of reason) is a result of a previous unconscious synthesis. They are not consciously arbitrarily made (which involves any kind of addition of the cognizing subject). Additionally, I would consider Kant’s doctrine of the *nature of reason* (see, e.g., KrV AVII, A298/B354, A339/B397, A669/B697 and *Prol* 4:328, 331, 353) in this context. Kant seems to believe that the formation of some concepts is necessarily predetermined by reason’s natural predisposition that is not further explainable (the explanation would belong to the domain of anthropology – see *Prol* 4:362–365). Examples of such concepts are categories and ideas of reason.

<sup>26</sup> KrV A727/B755.

<sup>27</sup> KrV A299/B355. The translators of the first *Critique* in the *Cambridge Edition* (1998) have rendered *Erklärung* with “definition,,” which is not a good choice considering that *Erklärung* (explanation) is a less demanding subtype of definition.

<sup>28</sup> KrV A729/B757.

<sup>29</sup> *Logik* 9:143. I will relate, in the following, especially to the *Jaesche Logic*. As Kant did not check this manuscript after it was prepared by Jaesche based on his own attendance of the course as well as Kant’s manuscript (see AA 16) and Kant’s copy of Meier’s *Excerpt*, my analysis has only a relative certainty. My criterion for certainty is the coherence of passages (coherence both between passages of diverse content and in the sense of identity of content) within the *Jaesche Logic*, other transcripts of Kant’s logic lectures in his critical phase, and the logical remarks in the first *Critique*. I will not discuss each single passage against the backdrop of this criterion, as the main goal of this article is a synoptic conceptual reconstruction and not a justification of one reading against other readings. To do the latter in one single article would require focus on one of the many elements of an imperfect definition of Rn.



and useful but imperfect prototype of definition. Exposition is a step-by-step *analytical* unfolding of the logical content of a concept – the elements or marks that constitute a concept – to make it as precise and clear as possible. It is different from *a priori* construction (mathematical concepts, e.g., triangle) or *a posteriori* synthesis (empirical concepts, e.g., the tree, or arbitrarily invented and declared concepts, e.g., a chronometer), which yield *synthetically* made concepts. We do not create the concept of Rn by a synthesis of heterogeneous elements imported from empirical or pure intuition, we analytically expound what must necessarily be contained within it.

Each concept has a logical *sphere* (its content or meaning) and consists in its relation to other concepts; taken together, they constitute common conceptual or logical *spheres*. Concepts, as parts of these spheres, are members of *codivisions* and *subdivisions*. A codivision is a “division according to the variety of concepts of the same object (viewpoints).”<sup>30</sup> The conceptual members of what must be necessarily thought of Rn are members of a codivision. The nine features – (I) basic features: (1) faculty, (2) rational (Rb in contrast to the empirical), (3) the narrower sense (Rn in contrast to other higher faculties of cognition); (II) causal functional features: (4) makes intermediate inferences, (5) gives ideas (seven kinds of ideas), (6) gives principles; and (III) additional functional features: (7) has uses, (8) has interests and gives ends, (9) is unified – are marks of what was tentatively called Rn. One could say that they are marks of the sought for concept “X,” as Rn is only one mark among others that can be used in the rhetorical form of a *pars pro toto*. The X (I will proceed by calling it Rn in the following) and its sphere filled out by (1)–(9) is also determined by subdivisions: “Every concept contains more possible concepts under itself and contains that which is common to various representations of several things.”<sup>31</sup> In the following section, I examine the division of the logical sphere of Rn and analyze the manifold associated with it. This analysis will additionally reveal several other features of Kant’s conceptual analysis.

### 3 Exposition of the conceptual content of Rn

#### 3.1 (I) Basic marks of the concept of Rn

##### 3.1.1 (1) Faculty

Rn is only one of several faculties of mind. The concept “faculty” is a ground of cognition of several mental abilities, such as reason, understanding, imagination, judgment, and sensation. As such, it is *contained within* these concepts as their common mark. They, however, are *contained under* it as its varieties (a genus–species relation).<sup>32</sup> The concept of a mental faculty (German: *Vermögen*, from *ver-mögen*, being capable of doing something) has a long philosophical history, starting with Aristotle’s concept of force (*dynamis*, *potentia*) and culminating in modern philosophy (e.g., in Descartes, Port-Royal Logic, Spinoza, Locke, Wolff, Meier, Kant, Fichte, and Hegel’s *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*). Any philosophical research program that uses the notion of mental faculties as a *terminus technicus* within its heuristics, analyzes their possibility, division, functions, and products, and draws wide consequences from this analysis can be characterized as “ability” or “faculty psychology.”<sup>33</sup> Although this – and the closely related notion of *disposition* – has attracted several critics from the nineteenth-century philosophy onward, its benefits

<sup>30</sup> *Logik* 9:147.

<sup>31</sup> *Log-Wien* 24:910.

<sup>32</sup> “In” and “under” the concept signify “the various relations of the same concept, which can quite well be at the same time part and ground of something” *Log-DW* 24:753.

<sup>33</sup> For historical overviews see Sachs-Hombach, “Vermögen; Vermögenspsychologie;” Hessbrüggen-Walter, “Vermögen;” and Perler, *The Faculties: A History*.

and heuristic function remain widely unquestioned in Kant.<sup>34</sup> The concept of mental faculties belongs to the fundamental conceptual apparatus of transcendental philosophy. Reason, as its basic object and as the enabler both of its own critique and critical metaphysics, is itself a faculty among other faculties. Kant uses (as compared to, e.g., Wolff) the notion of faculty interchangeably with the notion of force: “reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition)”<sup>35</sup> is “the supreme force of cognition.”<sup>36</sup> Both concepts must therefore, when applied to mind (*Gemüt*), have the same logical sphere. *Force* is one of the *praedicabilia* (along with *action* and *passion*) that can be derived from the category of causality.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the concept of a faculty, such as the understanding or reason, must analytically contain any notion of causality and action within it, otherwise it would be empty. A *Vermögen* that would not *ver-mögen* is a contradiction. The mental faculties are therefore *per expositionem* causal, and they act. As such, they have specific unexchangeable *functions* (Lat. *fungor* = to perform): *receptivity* or *spontaneity*.<sup>38</sup> Kant does, just a few pages later, narrow down the concept of function to stress the active side of all higher rational faculties:

By a function, however, I understand the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one. Concepts are therefore grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions.<sup>39</sup>

The concept of a mental faculty does not only analytically contain the concept of causality (and with it such derivable notions as force, action, effect, function, receptivity, and spontaneity), but also necessarily any concept of mental content as their medium upon which they have power. One cannot think of causal mental faculties without a medium of their operations. In the first *Critique*, following the paradigm of modern European philosophy,<sup>40</sup> Kant calls this medium “representation,” which designates mental content that is articulated within the faculties. Striving for a concrete and specified theory of mental faculties, he suggests a “transcendental reflection, through which ... every representation is assigned its place in the faculty of cognition.”<sup>41</sup> At the beginning of the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant gives a progression of the concept of representation:

The genus is **representation** in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A **perception** that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a **cognition** (*cognitio*). The latter is either an **intuition** or a **concept** (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the object and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things. A concept is either an **empirical** or a **pure concept**, and the pure concept, insofar as it has its origin solely in the understanding (not in a pure image of sensibility), is called *notio*. A concept made up of notions, which goes beyond the possibility of experience, is an **idea** or a concept of reason.<sup>42</sup>

The notions of causality and medium (e.g., representation) are not the only ones that are analytically contained within the concept of mental faculty. Faculties must also fulfill concrete operations, have certain purposes according to their inner constitutions, and contain certain formal rules and principles of their execution.

<sup>34</sup> For five possible objections against the concept of mental faculty and Hegel’s logification of the concept of force that justifies its use see Lewin, “Hegel’s Logic of Forces and the Faculty Psychology.” For the use of the concept of faculty in Kant and German Idealism see Haag, “Faculties in Kant and German Idealism.”

<sup>35</sup> KrV A297/B353.

<sup>36</sup> My translation for “obere Erkenntniskraft” KrV A299/B355. The translators of the first *Critique* in the *Cambridge Edition* (1998) did not consider this passage carefully and rendered it as “faculty” without any remarks.

<sup>37</sup> KrV A82/B108.

<sup>38</sup> KrV A51/B75.

<sup>39</sup> KrV A68/B93.

<sup>40</sup> See Haag and Perler, *Der Repräsentationalismus in der Frühen Neuzeit*; and a study by Rumore, *L’ordine Delle Idee*.

<sup>41</sup> KrV A295/B351.

<sup>42</sup> KrV A320/B376–7.

### 3.1.2 (2) Rational (Rb in contrast to the empirical)

The concept of rational faculties narrows down the logical sphere of the concept of faculty, which is subdivided into the two stems of cognitive powers: rational and sensible.<sup>43</sup> It is the common mark of “higher” intellectual abilities – of reason in the broader sense, consisting of the understanding, judgment, and Rn – and is contained within them. For Kant, “all rational cognition is either cognition from concepts or cognition from the construction of concepts.”<sup>44</sup> The latter is mathematical and based on reason’s ability to construct concepts (e.g., a triangle) with the help of pure intuition – synthetically *a priori* made concepts which can be defined. The former is discursive work with concepts via such logical acts as comparison, abstraction, reflection, analysis, synthesis, explication, exposition, declaration, definition, specification, homogenization, continuation, judgments, and inferences.

The notion of concept is therefore analytically and necessarily contained within the logical sphere of the concept of rational faculties and, at the same time, is crucial for *demarkation of rational from sensible cognition*. While sensations and intuitions are singular and immediate representations, concepts are “mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things.”<sup>45</sup> The concepts are *per expositionem* reflected representations, unities of a multitude of representations. Any mental operations that lead to concepts or work with concepts are carried out by rational faculties.

### 3.1.3 (3) The narrower sense (Rn in contrast to other higher faculties of cognition)

Rn, in contrast to the understanding and judgment, is contained under the concept of Rb and can be called a *narrower concept* following the corresponding distinction in the *Jaesche Logic*.<sup>46</sup> “Reason in the narrower sense,” if it were to be authorized by Kant himself, could be the name for the faculty he introduced in the *Transcendental Dialectic* in contrast to the understanding. There is no reason in an even narrower sense than Rn. And there is also no reason in a higher sense:

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.<sup>47</sup>

(3) Reason in contrast to the understanding is therefore the endpoint of the subdivision of (1) mental faculties in general and (2) mental rational faculties, “the entire higher faculty of cognition.”<sup>48</sup> (1) and (2) are at the same time contained in the concept of Rn as marks, just as in the concepts of the understanding and judgment. What then distinguishes Rn from other rational faculties? And why is there, in the concept of Rb, a part that is higher than others?

Rational cognition is cognition from concepts or from construction of concepts. But there are different kinds of concepts: some of them are given, others are made, some are *a priori*, others *a posteriori*, some of them contain less multitude of representational content, others more, some of them are purer than the others. Common to all concepts is that they are functions, unities of acts based on the spontaneity (Lat. *sponte* = free)<sup>49</sup> of thinking, performed by Rb. But the thinking can be more or less spontaneous depending on the multitude of representations that may require more or less effort for its processing and unification. The thinking can *ver-mögen* more or less. The concept of a change of physical condition (e.g., ice–water–steam) is easier to grasp and requires some acts of comparison, abstraction, and reflection. The pure

<sup>43</sup> KrV A835/B863.

<sup>44</sup> KrV A837/B865.

<sup>45</sup> KrV A320/B377.

<sup>46</sup> *Logik* 9:98. The distinction between reason in the broader and reason in the narrower sense can therefore – in addition to a textual and argumentative reconstruction – be justified by recurrence return to the conceptual analysis as it was taught by Kant.

<sup>47</sup> KrV A298/B355.

<sup>48</sup> KrV A835/B863.

<sup>49</sup> Kant is referring to the Latin meaning of *sponte*, e.g., here: *Prol* 4:344.



concept of causality contains far more concepts under itself. It can be the common mark of such concepts as faculty, power, action, effort, passion, disposition, and energy and is harder to articulate. The concept of absolute determinacy by the laws of nature from the third antinomy, however, as a maximum and a totality of causal interrelations, overstrains the power of imagination and leaves the sensibility without any object in experience. The thinking is in the state of the highest performance here: it is the highest rationalization, conceptualization, and – independent from particular sensible data – most spontaneously acting. Its products are the purest (regarding the independence from the experience) and highest (regarding the unity of representations) concepts. According to the above-mentioned “transcendental reflection,”<sup>50</sup> Kant calls this type of concepts “ideas” and distinguishes the corresponding faculty, Rn, from other higher faculties of cognition. I will not go into detailed analysis of different criteria (such as the degrees of purity and spontaneity, judgments/inferences, understanding/comprehension) that help distinguish Rn from other rational faculties here, although I will treat some of them in the following sections of the article. Instead, I will give a quote that summarizes several points that I have brought up:

Now, a human being really finds in himself a capacity by which he distinguishes himself from all other things, even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects, and that is *reason*. This, as pure self-activity, is raised even above the *understanding* by this: that though the latter is also self-activity and does not, like sense, contain merely representations that arise when we are *affected* by things (and are thus passive), yet it can produce from its activity no other concepts than those which serve merely to *bring sensible representations under rules* and thereby to unite them in one consciousness, without which use of sensibility it would think nothing at all; but reason, on the contrary, shows in what we call “ideas” a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it, and proves its highest occupation in distinguishing the world of sense and the world of understanding from each other and thereby marking out limits for the understanding itself.<sup>51</sup>

One should draw the following conclusions at this point: (i) Any confusion of the types of concepts and corresponding higher faculties or absence of differentiation within Rb is against Kant’s intentions and the progress he made in distinguishing the faculties and their functions. (ii) The use of concepts of rationality or reason in Kant scholarship without any relation to their common mark of “faculty” leads to their underdetermination. (iii) The use of concepts of rationality or reason in Kant scholarship without any differentiation blurs the difference between the concepts of Rb and Rn and their distinct functions.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> KrV A295/B351.

<sup>51</sup> GMS 4:452.

<sup>52</sup> These points identify the *negative heuristic* that can be concluded from the previous analysis. These paths are to avoid if one wants to understand and develop the Kantian program further without changing its hard core. However, they have been chosen by some scholars. For example (regarding (ii)) Lenk, “Vernunft als Idee und Interpretationskonstrukt,” suggested that the use of such terms as “mental activities” and “faculties” in Kant and Kant scholarship is outdated and wrong, because they belong to a paradigm that was overcome by the critical philosophy and the analytic philosophy. I have engaged in discussion of this argument here in Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 307–17. Points (i) and (iii) refer to the fact that prior to the re-discovery of the “other,” non-destructive side of the *Transcendental Dialectic* (see for this narrative Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*), there was no need to systematically distinguish the different functions of Rn in contrast to Rb. This has changed with recent work on the *Transcendental Dialectic* and other ideas of reason – see, e.g., among others, Neiman, *The Unity of Reason*; Rescher, *Kant and the Reach of Reason*; Hutter, *Das Interesse der Vernunft*; König, *Autonomie und Autokratie*; Grier, *Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*; Klimmek, *Kants System der Transzendentalen Ideen*; Pissis, *Kants Transzendente Dialektik*; Kreines, *Reason in the World*; Anderson, *The Poverty of Conceptual Truth*; Bunte, *Erkenntnis und Funktion*; Meer, *Der Transzendente Grundsatz der Vernunft*; Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*; and Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*. The cognition that ideas, as the product of the highest form of spontaneity, i.e., of reason in its highest sense, have multiple functions in different areas of human activity, must lead to a radical change in the understanding of Kant’s theory of the highest faculties of mind. A radical change presupposes the development of a systematic conceptual network regarding the concept of *ideas* (How are they produced? How many types of ideas are there? What are their concrete functions? How should we understand the unity of Rn? How do ideas relate to principles? How do they relate to ends and interests of Rn?), which is also the purpose of this article. In this concrete perspective, the radical change in the understanding of Kant’s theory of the highest faculties of mind has not yet been fully made in the Kant scholarship. This is perfectly reflected in the 2017 revised version of the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry by Williams, “Kant’s Account of Reason.” Kant’s systematic account of ideas and their manifold functions, their relations to ends and interests of reason is scarcely touched. Several work on the unity of reason in

## 3.2 (II) Causal functions of Rn

The previous conceptual exposition of Rn could be summed up as: reason is the highest rational faculty, which implies that it is the origin of the purest acts of spontaneity and ideas or, more accurately, the acts of spontaneity that result in ideas. In the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant articulates this unity of acts as an interplay between the “formal” or “logical use” and the “transcendental” or “real use” of Rn.<sup>53</sup> The formal use “abstracts from all content of cognition”<sup>54</sup> and consists in a certain logical operation (intermediate inferences). The real use consists in the production of pure concepts of reason (ideas and principles). Both uses (Kant also speaks of faculties in this respect) are comprehended in a higher concept, which, as the next paragraph seems to suggest, can be called “the **faculty of principles**.”<sup>55</sup> The concepts “Rn” and “the faculty of principles” share the same logical sphere: they express the searched concept X. “Rn” points at the specificity of a faculty, and “the faculty of principles” expresses the specificity of its concrete functions: formal and real. But is the latter the best and correct most accurate name for X?

### 3.2.1 (4) Draws intermediate inferences

Kant argues that the logical function of Rn has for a long time been understood

by the logicians as that of drawing inferences mediately (as distinct from immediate inferences, *consequentis immediatis*); but from this we get no insight into the second faculty, which itself generates concepts.<sup>56</sup>

Rn is not *just* a faculty of intermediate inferences: this mark *alone* does not lead to the concept of Rn. It is so not only because it must be completed by the concept of the real use (Kant follows here the same division as in case of the understanding, which has a logical use and – as the origin of concepts – a real one). There is a much more pertinent reason: inferences can lead to different kinds of concepts, and not all concepts are pure concepts of reason. Inferences of reason (syllogisms) – subdivided, as in the logic handbooks, into categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive – have the following form:

1. a universal rule, which is called the *major proposition* (*propositio major*),
2. the proposition which subsumes a cognition under the condition of the universal rule, and which is called the *minor proposition* (*propositio minor*), and finally
3. the proposition which affirms or denies the rule’s predicate of the subsumed cognition: the *conclusion* (*conclusio*).<sup>57</sup>

The categorical syllogism<sup>58</sup>

1. Major: All humans are mortal,
2. Minor: Caius is a human,
3. Conclusio: Caius is mortal

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Kant scarcely distinguishes different types of spontaneity – see, e.g., Prauss, “Kants Problem der Einheit,” 295; Klemme, “Spontaneität und Selbsterkenntnis,” 212; and Krijnen, “Kants ‘Kategorien der Freiheit’ und das Problem der Einheit der Vernunft,” 324 – and does not ask the question how this unity is to be thought of regarding the ideas of reason (see for more on this point Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 82–92). The situation is not different with articles that deal with Kant’s theory of rationality, see, e.g., Schafer, “A System of Rational Faculties;” and O’Neill, “Kant. Rationality as Practical Reason.”

<sup>53</sup> KrV A298–299/B355–6.

<sup>54</sup> KrV A299/B355.

<sup>55</sup> KrV A299/B356.

<sup>56</sup> KrV A299/B355. For an attempt to reconstruct the seemingly inconclusive history of the concept of reason, see Wildfeuer, “Vernunft.”

<sup>57</sup> Logik 9:120. See KrV A330/B386.

<sup>58</sup> See KrV A322/B378.

does not contain any pure concepts of Rn (ideas). The concepts of Caius being mortal as well as of humans and of the mortality of all humans are empirical concepts (regular concepts of the understanding). The latter is more universal and contains a mark that is common to all humans. The drawing of intermediate inferences alone does not qualify Rn for being the highest, most spontaneous faculty that creates the highest unities in the purest form of representation.

### 3.2.2 (5) Source of ideas (seven kinds of ideas)

The concept of Rn must therefore contain other crucial marks, such as the unconditioned, purity, maximum, and perfection. It must also have a “pure use.”<sup>59</sup> The inferences must lead to concepts beyond which there are no higher, purer, and universal ones. Kant calls such concepts – “to which no congruent object can be given in the senses”<sup>60</sup> – “ideas.” All concepts require the logical acts of comparison, abstraction, and reflection. Ideas of reason are not an exception: “All ideas of pure reason are ideas of reflection (*discursivae* and not *intuitus*, as Plato maintained).”<sup>61</sup> They are, however, “not merely reflected concepts but inferred concepts.”<sup>62</sup> Reflection is needed to cognize what many things (when being compared) have in common.<sup>63</sup> The representations of a spruce, a pine, and a cedar have a common mark, the concept of needles. I reflect on the singular representations and recognize what is common to them. The concept of total determinacy by the laws of nature, however, cannot be a result of a mere reflection. I can recognize that things that happen have causes and put forward a synthetic proposition *a priori* (the law of causality: all that happens must have a cause), but I cannot, by means of the reflection alone, come to the concept of absolute determinacy. I would need to reflect on an indefinite number of cases to claim that. Reason, to shorten this way, spontaneously leaps to a conclusion, claiming that absolute determinacy is a common feature of all objects in the world:

- (1) If something happens, it does so because of a cause (the rule of the understanding),
- (2) A, b, c et ad indefinitum have concrete causes (judgments),
- (3) Therefore, anything in the world is absolutely determined and freedom is impossible (conclusion of reason).<sup>64</sup>

Reason, via intermediate inferences, produces pure concepts that are not given by the senses. This interplay between the logical and the real pure use of reason must be – if they are necessary marks of the concept of Rn – a general source of ideas of reason. Kant claimed that explicitly in the context of the transcendental ideas of soul, world, and God. But are all the following ideas of reason that he analyzes throughout his works inferred concepts?<sup>65</sup>

Type of ideas	Ideas	Functions
Postulates	Freedom	Condition of the moral law
	Immortality	Conditions for the realization of the highest good
	God	(morality and happiness)
Simple practical ideas	Duty	Necessary auxiliary concepts for moral self-determination
	Personality	
	etc.	

<sup>59</sup> KrV A305/B362.

<sup>60</sup> KrV A327/B383.

<sup>61</sup> Refl 3917 17:342. Cf. Refl 230 15:88.

<sup>62</sup> KrV A310/B366.

<sup>63</sup> See Log-Wien 24:909. Cf. Refl 2876 16:556.

<sup>64</sup> As in the case of the third antinomy.

<sup>65</sup> This is an excerpt. For a more detailed overview, see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 104–5. I mention the functions of ideas for the sake of completeness at this point and to offer a picture of the manifold tasks that they have. To complete the tasks, reason must formulate maxims and principles (see the next point).

	Virtue Witness, etc.	Ends for hypothetical imperatives and judgments
/Political ideas	International law Social contract, etc.	Concepts for legal and political views and decisions
/Religious ideas	Rational religion The realm of God, etc.	Concepts for practical regulative tasks
Aesthetical ideas	The beautiful The sublime, etc.	Conditions for aesthetical judgments and artistic pursuits
Transcendental ideas	Soul World God	Heuristic suppositions for ordering of the cognitions of the understanding
Simple theoretical ideas	Pure air Pure earth, etc.	Heuristic suppositions for particular research in the natural sciences
Architectonic ideas	Jurisprudence Philosophy, etc.	Heuristic suppositions for research, learning, and knowledge transfer
Concepts of reason of reason	Pure self-activity Pure thinking Pure will Freedom Actual I, etc.	Conceptual articulation of the concept of reason of itself as the condition of ideas

The marks common to the concept of idea are the unconditioned, purity (independence from sensual content), maximum, and perfection.<sup>66</sup> No reflection on multiple objects can result in concepts with such marks. An inference is necessary to spontaneously leap over the gap between the experience and the idealized presuppositions. There may be many examples of wise persons, but witness, as the archetype that one strives toward or that one judges others by, is not given *in concreto*.<sup>67</sup> There may be many philosophers and philosophies, but the one and true philosophy as the archetype of all philosophizing cannot be merely a result of a comparison, abstraction, and reflection – it must necessarily involve an inference. The inference could look as follows: (1) philosophy is a system of philosophical cognitions; (2) there are many different philosophical systems; (3) but there is only one human reason responsible for cognitions; (4) ergo: there must be only one true philosophy – all the different systems are merely imperfect

<sup>66</sup> See KrV A324/B380, A313–20/B370–7. *Pädagogik* 9:444. One should consider if the concept of the unconditioned takes different shapes dependent on the kinds of ideas. For example, the unconditioned in the theoretical sense that goes beyond the series of the conditioned and the unconditioned in the practical sense as an absolute and indispensable condition of (moral) actions. Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*, 91, suggests even a considerable distinction regarding the former. He recognizes (ibid., 167–70) that the transcendental ideas form a system with the concept of the unconditioned as their common mark. It would be, however, interesting to inquire, if this mark is common to all types of ideas and which other marks (like purity, maximum, and perfection) are needed, to think and analytically expound the concept of ideas. As far as I know, König, *Autonomie und Autokratie*, was one of the first to ask what makes up a general concept of idea in Kant and to consider these different marks (how does reason produce the concept of pure will?). See also Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*.

<sup>67</sup> Wisdom.

ectypes, attempts to grasp the archetype of philosophy.<sup>68</sup> One sees from these examples that Kant's theory of an interplay between logical, real, and pure uses of Rn that results in ideas must also hold at least for the major part of other different kinds of ideas. It can be deduced and further developed from his arguments and can become an object of an extended study.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.2.3 (6) Source of principles

Why do we infer (logical use) and create (real use) not only general, but even (pure use) pure concepts, such as the infinity of the universe, virtue, duty, international law, and jurisprudence? Kant believes that we have – via the faculty of Rn – a natural predisposition for it, which can be examined in the domain of anthropology.<sup>70</sup> Transcendental philosophy can only extrapolate its inner principle. The supreme principle and “demand of reason”<sup>71</sup> is “to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed.”<sup>72</sup> This principle is synthetic as it represents the unity of unequal concepts: *the unconditioned* becomes related to the manifold of *the conditioned*, which does not analytically contain it. The idea of philosophy is an unconditioned unity of diverse ectypes of philosophy, wise persons partially represent the idea of witness, but do not embody or condition it, and the idea of the absolute determinacy is the highest inferred unity of natural causal chains – neither a singular cause nor a chain of causes and effects leads to this idea. From this angle, “a pure concept of reason in general can be explained through the concept of the unconditioned, insofar as it contains a ground of synthesis for what is conditioned.”<sup>73</sup> The unconditioned is “the common title of all concepts of reason.”<sup>74</sup> Rn strives for the unconditioned – this explains why it does not end with intermediate inferences that render empirically verifiable concepts (like the mortality of humans), but seeks, *per prosyllogismos* (on the side of the conditions) or *per episyllogismos* (on the side of the conditioned),<sup>75</sup> the highest possible unity.

Rn also contains other theoretical and practical principles, such as the logical principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity, and the categorical imperative.<sup>76</sup> The supreme principle builds upon the concept of the unconditioned. Similarly, the logical principles require the idea of logical perfection of cognition, and the categorical imperative requires the concepts of freedom (Rn qua pure will), duty, and universal law. What was first, the ideas or the principles? What is the relation between the ideas and principles? And what is a principle?

That the formula “the **faculty of principles**”<sup>77</sup> as the universal concept of Rn is misleading can be concluded simply from the fact that for Kant, the pure understanding, just as Rn, is a source of principles. Pure understanding

is not only the faculty of rules in regard to that which happens, but is rather itself the source of the principles in accordance with which everything (that can even come before us as an object) necessarily stands under rules, since, without such rules, appearances could never amount to cognition of an object corresponding to them.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Idea of philosophy. See Lewin, “Kant’s Metaphilosophy,” especially 303–6.

<sup>69</sup> This study would have to consider the exceptional case of aesthetic ideas, which, as Kant claimed, can be called ideas only in analogy to pure concepts of reason, as their source is twofold: both the imagination and reason. See *KU* 5:313 and 342.

<sup>70</sup> See *Prol* 4:362–5.

<sup>71</sup> *KrV* A305/B362.

<sup>72</sup> *KrV* A307/B364. For a systematic analysis of this principle against the backdrop of the regulative function of transcendental ideas, see Meer, *Der Transzendente Grundsatz der Vernunft*.

<sup>73</sup> *KrV* A322/B379.

<sup>74</sup> *KrV* A324/B380.

<sup>75</sup> *KrV* A331/B387–8.

<sup>76</sup> For an attempt to order these principles, see Willaschek, “The Structure of Normative Space.”

<sup>77</sup> *KrV* A299/B356.

<sup>78</sup> *KrV* A158–9/B198.

In the first *Critique*, the analysis of reason is construed in analogy with the analysis of the understanding. This includes the expounding of supreme principles (analytic and synthetic) of the pure understanding, followed by the system of all synthetic principles as rules for the objective use of the categories. The principles are derived from the pure concepts of the understanding. For example, the second analogy of experience – “[a]ll alterations occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect”<sup>79</sup> – is built upon the relational category of causality and dependence (cause and effect).<sup>80</sup> A principle is a proposition based on a concept as the foundation of all further cognition. As in the German word for *principium*, *Grundsatz*, principles presuppose both a *Grund* (ground) and a *Satz* (proposition), “they contain in themselves the grounds of other judgments.”<sup>81</sup> But what are the *grounds*? The grounds, in rational cognition from concepts, are the concepts.<sup>82</sup> The concept of causality and dependence is the ground for a principle of pure understanding (second analogy). The same applies to the level of Rn: “*objective grounds*, which are themselves ideas,”<sup>83</sup> determine this faculty, “a connection that is expressed by *ought*.”<sup>84</sup> Of course, the “grounds of reason provide the rule for actions universally, from principles”<sup>85</sup> – one does not act from a concept alone, but from the principle that is derived from this concept. The supreme principle of pure Rn is itself based on “the concept of the unconditioned, insofar as it contains a ground of synthesis for what is conditioned.”<sup>86</sup> To find the unconditioned is a demand based on “the necessary rational idea of the **unconditioned**[...]”<sup>87</sup> What he actually means is that the idea of God is a ground leading to the principle “to regard all combination in the world as if it arose from an all-sufficient necessary cause.”<sup>88</sup> Just as the transcendental ideas of reason formulate regulative principles, all other kinds of ideas have certain functions. They are tasks of reason and lead to principles in different domains of reason.

Either Kant should have disambiguated the concept of principle or he should hold to the short formula for Rn in the *Reflexionen* and the third *Critique*: “We can call reason the faculty of ideas.”<sup>89</sup> The concept of ideas as the highest representations or concepts (in the gradation of representations) is a more central mark of Rn – the logical, real, and pure uses of Rn are directed at pure concepts as grounds for principles due to the supreme principle of Rn, which is itself based on a pure concept, the idea of the unconditioned.<sup>90</sup>

79 KrV B232.

80 This analogy can be extended – as in example I offered above – to an inference of reason, according to which there is absolute determinacy by the laws of nature and no freedom is possible.

81 KrV A148/B188.

82 On the concept of principles in Kant, see Messina, “Prinzip.” I agree with Hebbeler, “The Principles of the First ‘Critique,’” that the concept of principle in Kant implies an analysis of different *grounds*. But these grounds are different concepts that are used as foundations of various principles. We are in the domain of rational cognition from concepts. Hebbeler’s distinction between material, formal, efficient, and final causes (ibid. 578) that serve as principles seems to miss this point. He claims, e.g., that “part of Kant’s goal in the first *Critique* is to identify the distinct “interests” of various faculties of theoretical reason as genuine principles of reason” (ibid. 567). Hence, we should “account for Kant’s designation of interests or demands as principles of reason, which can otherwise be overlooked especially if we assume that the foundational principles of the *Critique* are to be found solely in formal rules of cognition or even in mere cognitive forms” (ibid. 569). I think this claim goes too far. Interests are not principles, and they are not efficient causes. Interests are based on certain principles, which, in their turn, are based on certain concepts of pure reason.

83 *Prol* 4:345.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 KrV A322/B379.

87 KrV Bxxi fn.

88 KrV A619/B647.

89 *Refl* 5553 18:228, see *KU* 5:269.

90 Schafer, “A System of Rational Faculties,” 6–7, expounds reason as “aiming at either: (a) cognition from principles or (b) comprehension,” without referring to the logical (inferences) and real (source of ideas) uses of reason that are entailed by the concept of principles. The notion of idea seems to be brushed aside as a non-important mark of the concept of reason. This is just one recent example of how Rn is often treated in Kant scholarship (conscious or unconscious “cancel culture” regarding the concept of ideas); more examples are given in Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*.



### 3.3 (III) Additional functional features of Rn

The exposition of the concept of Rn has shown that it is a mental faculty, more specifically a rational faculty in the narrow and highest sense. As a rational faculty, it creates concepts and works with concepts. As the highest rational faculty, it is not only the source of concepts via the acts of comparison, abstraction, and reflection, but also via inferences. It is, in its pure use, guided by a natural predisposition and the principle to seek the unconditioned in the conditioned cognition of the understanding. Rn's inferences therefore lead to the purest concepts: ideas. There are multiple kinds of ideas which serve as grounds for different principles, including the supreme principle of Rn. They have different functions in several domains of Rn.

#### 3.3.1 (7) Has uses

“Faculty” and “use” are sometimes used interchangeably in Kant. Rn, as a faculty, has a logical faculty and a real faculty. Rn is also a theoretical and a practical faculty. It has a pure, hypothetic, regulative, problematic, architectonic, etc. use. The concept of highest rational faculty therefore contains a manifold under itself. It includes several “subfaculties” that make up Rn. A complete exposition of the concept of Rn must lead to an analysis of each of these faculties (which will not be offered here).<sup>91</sup> It is important to note that they all circle around the concept of *ideas*. It is their common mark that makes it possible to attribute different functions to one multifaceted faculty. The logical and real uses lead to ideas, the regulative use (transcendental ideas) enables transcendental heuristics, the transcendent use results in hypostases and other exuberant dogmatic assumptions. While it sounds plausible at the first glance that there are different functions in relation to ideas, it seems to overstrain and overload the concept of Rn. Can one faculty have as many functions as Rn? Does this theory really hold?

#### 3.3.2 (8) Has interests and gives ends

The problem of the unity and coherence of the multitude of conceptual content attributed to Rn gets even more weight if one considers that Rn should also be the source of interests and ends.

To every faculty of the mind one can attribute an *interest*, that is, a principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted. Reason, as the faculty of principles, determines the interest of all the powers of the mind but itself determines its own. The interest of its speculative use consists in the *cognition* of the object up to the highest a priori principles; that of its practical use consists in the determination of the *will* with respect to the final and complete end.<sup>92</sup>

If one takes the statement “every faculty” seriously, each faculty (and corresponding use) of Rn must have an interest (logical faculty, real faculty, regulative faculty, theoretical and practical Rn, etc.). Furthermore, to have an interest means to have a principle that contains the condition for the use of a faculty. As explained above, at the level of Rn, the grounds of principles, the unconditioned conditions, are the ideas. Ideas have a certain causality in relation to Rn, they are tasks of Rn.

What I am suggesting can be called an *ideas-first account* of Kant's principles of Rn, uses, interests, and ends, not in the sense that ideas are their origin, but in the sense that they are the main signifiers that determine the content and form of principles, uses, interests, and ends. In analogy to the formation of principles, each interest and end of Rn is determined by an idea. An interest, to be a specific interest, must have an object, i.e., an end. A necessary mark of the concept of interest in Kant is “dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason.”<sup>93</sup> Unlike in the case of inclinations and needs,

<sup>91</sup> See Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*.

<sup>92</sup> KpV 5:119–20.

<sup>93</sup> GMS 4:414 footnote. For passages that clearly interlink the concept of interest with the concept of end, see KrV A798/B826 and A832/B860.

an interest arises when reason provides ends. An end can be something achieved via an act or the act itself.<sup>94</sup> Each end requires necessary means and anyone who wills an end must also will – “insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions”<sup>95</sup> – the corresponding means. The ends can be either empirical (richness, health, etc.) or pure (morality, wisdom, complete system of knowledge, etc.). The latter make up the system of ends and corresponding interests of Rn – and are nothing other than the ideas as grounds.

Rn has a *theoretical interest* in systematic completeness of cognitions: “to grasp the whole chain of conditions fully *a priori* and comprehend the derivation of the conditioned, starting with the unconditioned.”<sup>96</sup> Such completeness is of course never given *in concreto*. It is a mere *focus imaginarius*, an imagined unity point.<sup>97</sup> Rn seeks

the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle. This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to the others. Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding’s cognition, through which this cognition comes to be not merely a contingent aggregate but a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws.<sup>98</sup>

The theoretical interest of Rn is governed by the idea of the systematic whole of cognition (which is split into three unities: soul, world, and God). It is its highest end in theoretical perspective. The means to this end are the logical principles of homogeneity, specificity, and continuity. The theoretical interest entails an “architectonic interest,”<sup>99</sup> which can be realized in terms of architectonic as “the art of systems” or “the doctrine of that which is scientific in our cognition in general.”<sup>100</sup> The science, the sciences, and their parts require an idea of the whole of cognition.<sup>101</sup> It takes concrete shapes in the form of the ideas of the whole of human knowledge, philosophy, jurisprudence, transcendental philosophy, etc.<sup>102</sup>

Accordingly, Rn has ends that constitute the cornerstones of morality and religion and therefore the practical interest of reason. In the practical perspective, the highest end of Rn is morality and the corresponding degree of happiness, which is the *idea* of the highest good.<sup>103</sup> This idea, as a necessary condition of the postulates of immortality of the soul and God, governs the prevalent interest of Rn. It is also a necessary condition of philosophy, as it determines in which direction the search for wisdom should go.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.3.3 (9) Is unified

Although the searched concept X that I referred to using “Rn” as *pars pro toto* seems to be overloaded by multiple marks, the manifold that is contained in and under it seems to agree in several respects. First, it is a faculty, and the elements (2)–(8) do not contradict this mark. They constitute the conceptual framework of philosophy of mind within the modern paradigm since Descartes, which Kant adjusts and diversifies.

<sup>94</sup> See *GMS* 4:414 footnote.

<sup>95</sup> *GMS* 4:417.

<sup>96</sup> *KrV* A467/B495.

<sup>97</sup> For an extended discussion of the function of Kant’s concept of *focus imaginarius* see Meer, *Der Transzendente Grundsatz der Vernunft*.

<sup>98</sup> *KrV* A645/B673. Cf. *Prol* 4:349.

<sup>99</sup> *KrV* A475/B503.

<sup>100</sup> *KrV* A832/B860.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> On the subdivision of the idea of science, see Lewin, “The Universe of Science.” The sciences are ordered according to the highest ends of reason, which are themselves ideas (the highest good, wisdom, etc.). For a discussion of the order of highest ends in the sciences, see Gava, “Kant’s Definition of Science;” Sturm, “Kant on the Ends of the Sciences;” and Lewin, “Kant’s Metaphilosophy,” 299–301.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. *KpV* 5:108.

<sup>104</sup> See Lewin, “Kant’s Metaphilosophy,” 299–301.

Second, all the elements are elements of a rational faculty. This also appertains to Kant's concept of interests, which seem to naturally adhere to Rn. Interests, unlike inclinations and needs, are based on rational cognition from concepts<sup>105</sup> – the concepts (such as wisdom, virtue, highest good, etc.) serve as ends and condition Rn's activities.

Third, the marks (4)–(8) expound and specify the conceptual content of (3), the rational faculty in the narrower sense. Their *tertium comparationis* and necessary copula is the concept of ideas. The narrow and highest sense of rationality implies a higher universality and purity of concepts and a higher degree of spontaneity needed to operate with them. Both are guaranteed by the combination of the logical, real, and pure uses that result in ideas. The concept of idea contains multiple marks, such as the unconditioned, purity, maximum, and perfection, which are common to various examples of representations that can be bundled into different kinds of ideas. The ideas are the medium of Rn and have multiple functions.

Kant did not directly ask the question about the unity of marks of the concept of Rn. He nevertheless claimed that there is only one reason that has several different appearances, the theoretical and practical Rn and its uses, principles, and interests.<sup>106</sup> As I have shown, the claim that there is only one Rn makes sense if there is something common to all the appearances, and this is the medium: ideas.<sup>107</sup>

## 4 Conclusion

The concept of Rn contains a manifold that must agree. There must be no contradiction within the logical sphere of a concept. This is especially necessary if the concept in debate is given *a priori*. Any additional synthetic predicate in cognition from concepts *a priori* would lead to *a priori* made concepts. Such concepts are being declared, just as any product of the imagination. Kant's concept of Rn, however, can be only expounded. The archeology of reason, applied to Kant's thinking of Rn, leads to analysis of several marks that can result in an "imperfect definition." These marks must have necessity and logical coherence and altogether make up an organic functional unity. This is the side I try to stress in this article by pointing at the concept of idea as the most important mark for a coherent theory of Rn – all the other marks either lead to it or result from it. (5) Ideas, as a certain kind of concepts of (1)–(3) the faculty that is rational (i.e., responsible for cognition from concepts) in the narrower sense (i.e., responsible for ideas as the highest concepts in the gradation of representations), are (4) the products of intermediate inferences, (6) the grounds of the principles of Rn, the medium of Rn's (7) uses, (8) interests and ends, and (9) the basis for the unity of the manifold associated with the concept of Rn. The short formulas *the faculty of ideas* and *reason in the narrower sense* are therefore the most suitable to express what is meant by the set of theories (i.e., research program) that starts with the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the first *Critique*, even though they were not yet mentioned there. The latter specifies the concept of Rn by narrowing down the logical sphere of the concept of rational faculties, and the former contains its most basic mark.

Despite the seemingly coherent structure of marks associated with this program, there are nevertheless some "anomalies" that need to be solved. Among them are the questions, whether the discursive and intuitive capacities of pure reason are members of subdivision of a higher concept of reason<sup>108</sup> and whether the aesthetic ideas fit the gradation of representations in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. Of course, I also did

<sup>105</sup> GMS 4:414 footnote.

<sup>106</sup> See MS 6:207, KpV 5:107 and 121.

<sup>107</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (see Lewin, *Das System der Ideen*, 82–92), the majority of Kant research does not sufficiently distinguish between Rn and Rb and does not reflect on the broadness of the concept of ideas. It would entail a more differentiated analysis of different "unities" of reason.

<sup>108</sup> This also remains unquestioned in Willaschek, as I have mentioned elsewhere (Lewin, "Marcus Willaschek" [review]). Kant claimed that an *intuitive use of reason* (via construction of concepts) (A719/B747) is possible in mathematics. Therefore, it does not operate solely discursively (Willaschek, *Kant on the Sources of Metaphysics*, 36–7). I did not try to solve this problem in this article (is there a higher concept of reason that is subdivided into an intuitive and discursive faculty [but than the manifold

not expound all the marks in detail and not all the marks – this would require the length of a book and even then it would not be sure if all the marks were expounded to full extent. As Kant stated, one cannot know this regarding *a priori* given concepts. Hence, only incomplete imperfect definitions of them are possible. Such a definition, built of nine elements that constitute the research program of Rn and revolve around the mark “ideas” as their common gravitational center, could look as follows:

Reason in the narrower sense is the highest rational mental faculty. As such, it represents the highest degree of spontaneity and operates with a specific kind of concepts, which are produced not only by abstraction, comparison, and reflection, but also via intermediate inferences. Following its supreme principle, reason in the narrower sense leaps from the conditioned cognition of the understanding to the unconditioned, spontaneously generating ideas as concepts with such marks as “the unconditioned,” “purity,” “maximum,” and “perfection,” to which no congruent object can be given *in concreto*. Different kinds of ideas serve as grounds for different principles, determine the uses and interests, and represent ends of reason in the narrower sense. Reason in the narrower sense is itself an idea of one causal faculty with multiple functions based on or related to ideas.

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contained under the concept of reason would disagree], or should Kant have found a different word to denote the former?). This problem must be faced in the future (and maybe Marcus Willaschek has a suggestion on how to solve it?).

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