

V. Yermolayev

KANT
ON "LOGICAL OBJECTION"
TO ONTOLOGICAL
ARGUMENT:
FRAGMENT R 3706

This article is dedicated to the ideas, expressed in manuscript R 3706, where Kant criticizes traditional refutation of ontological argument, which is based on distinction of "ideal" and "real" judgments. The relation of this criticism to Kant's argumentation in "Nova dilucidatio" and the preceding polemic over ontological argument is analyzed.

Key words: ontological argument, pre-critical period, fragment R 3706.

1. On the term "logical argument"

In "The ontological proof of God's existence" [17] D. Henrich singled out three arguments against the ontological argument. The first one, according to his classification, denies the possibility of any meaningful conclusions from the characteristics of the concept to the existence of the conceived object, this argument was called by D. Henrich a *logical* one. According to the second argument, the existence can't be included in the concept of a thing, as it generally is not a predicate; D. Henrich called this argument an *empiricist* one. The third argument (the most radical one) is directed against the conception of an absolutely necessary thing; D. Henrich proposes to call this objection *critical* [17, S. 74].

The logical argument is usually based on the distinction between the two kinds of judgments: the ideal and the real ones [2, S. 56–58]. This reason cannot be equated with a rebuke for "quadrupling terms": a reference to *quaternio terminorum*¹ in this case is not exactly a good way to express the idea that the premise of the ontological proof is ideal, and the conclusion is real. However, this expression method is widely spread. So, for example, J. Schmucker formulates logical argument as follows:

Even if the concept of the ens realissimum² expressed some objective entity or a significant opportunity and included existence as an essential feature, it would be impossible to conclude that conceivable in this concept also exists in reality, but only that the existence is to be thought of as a certain sign of this. In other words, the argument conclusion contains an illegitimate transitus ad aliud genus³: although in the conceptual analysis of the assumptions the existence features as simply conceivable, in the conclusion it is interpreted and expressed as a real one [18, S. 16].

Similar thoughts can be found with W. Brugger:

The concepts of conclusion remain in the same field, to which the concepts of assumptions belong: a ban on metabasis eis allo genos⁴. <...> But the "existence" is taken as an assumption in a logical supposition of a conceptual feature, that is, as represented in thought, as so-called existentia signata, and in the conclusion – in a real supposition as the existence of some being (in this case God) in itself, as a so-called existentia exercita. Therefore, the argument proceeds from a logical supposition of assumptions to a real supposition in the conclusion [14, S. 207–208].

Such criticism of the ontological argument (a mistake of "quadrupling terms") is opposed to by a theologian C. Nink. In his opinion, the term "existence (to exist)" has the same sense in the assumptions and conclusion and means "real existence":

Real existence belongs to the essence of God. <...> In the notion (the meaning content) of the most perfect conceivable matter existence can't be just conceived (as included), but a real existence is contained [in this concept] as its essential feature [19, S. 135–136].

C. Nink, though, recognizes logical argument as right, indicating that the analytical judgment expresses the necessary connections of features (das Wassein) of a thing, but not the very fact of its real existence (das Daßsein):

The concept of God takes, however, a special place, because it means the essence with which real existence is given internally necessarily. Yet this concept simply means what God is, but it does not mean at the same time God's existence. <...> Purely logical analysis itself only leads to the proposition: "The essence of God involves the actual, real existence," but not to a significantly different proposition that God, along with whose essence a real existence is given, really exists [19, S. 132–133].

C. Nink repeats the argument, which is based on the distinction between ideal and real propositions. According to this view, the nature of analytical proposition depends on the nature of the analyzed concepts: if the analyzed concept is ideal (nominal) then the proposition will be ideal (nominal) as well, even if real existence is predicated.

Further by *logical objection* we will understand the argument coming from the distinction between ideal and real propositions.

According to the traditional interpretation of Kant's argument in the scholium to Theorem VI "Nova Dilucidatio"⁵, Kant uses a logical objection (in the

² The most real being (Lat.) – something that embraces everything real.

³ Transition to another class (Lat.).

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⁵ "Principiorum primorum cognitionis metaphysicae nova dilucidatio" – Kant's thesis of 1755.

meaning described above). However, in our opinion this interpretation is incorrect [2–5]. In our opinion, in ND⁶ Kant considers the transition from assumptions to conclusion in an ontological argument to be correct and criticizes the argument for its "circular character." In a handwritten note R 3706, he explains in detail why the logical objection is untenable. According to the traditional interpretation, in this article Kant denies the very same argument, which he used in ND. But if you accept a "unifying interpretation" [5], then it turns out that Kant does not change his attitude to the logical objection: from the very beginning he considers it to be mistaken.

2. Criticism on "logical argument" in Note R 3706 (L. Bl. Kuffner 17)

Among Kant's handwritten heritage there is a note where the philosopher criticizes the logical objection to the ontological argument, that is, the very objection which he, according to the traditional interpretation, used in ND. The content of Note R 3706 suggests that it was written, most likely, before EmBg appeared (1763). Adickes dates the note back to the end of the 50s (1758–1759) or early 60s (1760–1764).

The note consists of two parts. In the first part Kant defends the assumption: "If the existence were a predicate, then the Cartesian proof would be true." In the second part of this note Kant puts forward another reason against the Cartesian proof: "The concept of an existing thing can never be converted into a proposition, where the thing becomes a subject and existence turns to be predicate".

We will consider the first part of the fragment, where Kant refutes the logical objection to the Cartesian proof.

If existence could be counted among various predicates that may be immanent to a thing, then, of course, one would not require any other proof of God's existence, more convincing and understandable than the Cartesian. Because of all possible things, there is only one in which all realities that can be assembled together are connected into one. These realities, i. e., true positive predicates, also include existence; therefore, the most real of all the entities in its internal possibility presupposes existence. It doesn't make much sense arguing that such a possible thing only assumes existence in one's mind, that is only because the very thing exists in thought rather than outside of it, the same could be said about all the predicates that are inherent in any possible thing: they are not present in reality but are assumed. The latter is indeed the case when something is randomly linked with a property, which is not necessarily connected to this particular thing, for example, if some horse is mentally attributed with wings to make it a Pegasus, the wings are inherent in some horse only mentally. On the contrary, where the connection of the predicate with a thing is not arbitrary, but is determined by the essence of the thing itself, the predicate is inherent in things, not because we assume it, but it is necessary to suppose this predicate as a part of this entity because it is inherent to it by itself. So I cannot say that the fact that the total sum of triangle's angles is equal to two right angles exists only in thought, but I must say that it is inherent to a triangle by itself. This feature is not disturbed by the fact that this possibility is only assumed by my mind: for it is something in itself, even when it is not conceived, the predicate would exist by itself anyway even

⁶ The following abbreviations are used here: ND for "Nova dilucidatio" and EmBg for "The sole possible proof for the existence of God".

⁷ The most common identification for the note Reflexionen 3706 (Lose Blätter Kuffner 1), i. e. № 3706 from "Manuscripts and drafts" ("Separate papers of Kuffner's collection", № 1).

though no one would make any connections between the two. The same is true of the existence, if it could be considered as a predicate of things. For it would have been inherent in the necessary manner to the single possible being, which contains all reality, that is the essence of most real being would exist necessarily, and its possibility would include its reality. And if without my or anyone else's thought the most real being didn't have inherent existence, the idea of this being would have been all false. For if it is correct, then it can't be of any other predicates, except for those that belong to this thing even apart from the thoughts of it. [AA, XVII, S. 240 – 241]⁸.

Obviously, Kant here expresses a point of view directly opposite to the one, which, according to traditional interpretations, he was sticking to in ND. There he (according to the supporters of this interpretation) argued that the transition from the ideal assumption to the real conclusion was not possible, but here he proves the validity of this transition and calls the attempt to prove the opposite (in terms of Cartesian reasoning) as "vain", "wasted" (vergeblich).

In addition to this argument, this fragment can demonstrate another one that has a direct relationship to the "unifying" interpretation. We will consider this argument later, and now we will discuss the Kantian critique of logical objection.

The basis of this criticism, apparently, is the following provision: the possible things are *something*, even if they are thought by no one. The issue of the correctness of the ontological argument is connected to the issue of the ontological status of the possible: if the possible exists by itself, regardless of the thought of it, then the argument must be true. But what does Kant understand as a possible thing? Does every possible thing exist objectively, that is, beyond thought? Would this mean the world of eternal ideas (in the spirit of Leibniz), or something else (e.g., the potential existence by Aristotle)? How does the thesis of independent existence of things correlate with the ontology of ND? How does this idea relate to the problem of logical correctness of the ontological argument?

We start with answering the first question: what does Kant understand by a "possible thing"? The text of the R 3706 does not explain this, but Kant's reasoning seems to show that consistency of the concept is not the only criterion of the possibility of things: Kant, apparently, refuses to give a winged horse the status of an objective possibility. If such a horse existed among possible things, the "wings" would be intrinsic to him, regardless of anyone's thought about them. Since Kant denies it, he is likely to exclude the "winged horse" from the objective possibilities. The question of legitimacy and the criteria for such exclusion is important for the analysis of the ontological argument, we will consider it in the 4th section of this article.

How can a more accurate description be given to the ontological status of objective possibilities implied in R 3706? Is any objective possibility foregrounded in a "possible world"? Or is it the ability of *something actual* to produce something that does not yet exist (i.e., the potential existence in the Aristotelian sense)? Comparison of R 3706 with the passage from "An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism" (1759) and EmBg (1763) shows that it more likely means the actualized possibilities in the sense of Leibniz. For example, "An Attempt" states that "out of all possible worlds that God knew he had chosen just this one world" [6, p. 47], and that the idea of possible worlds exist in the divine mind [6, p. 42]. In EmBg Kant argues in a similar way, speaking of "the millions of things that do not exist in reality [and will not]," but which the supreme being cognizes as "possible things" [8, p. 401].

⁸ Translation form German.

In R 3706 Kant emphasizes the independence of the existence of possible things from *anyone's* idea: a possible thing is something, even if nobody conceives it, and necessary predicate is inherent in it, even if *no one* connects them. Does it suggest that this possibility is ontologically independent even from the mind of God? If so, Kant rejected the theory of Leibniz, according to which the existence of the eternal truths (ideas) is determined by the divine mind. We have, however, no other evidence in favor of this interpretation. In his published works Kant always argued that the possible was based on the real. It is therefore unlikely that in R 3706 he was referring to the ontological independence of all possible worlds from God (Leibniz criticized this viewpoint in his "Théodicée" [9, S. 260–261]). The best approach, perhaps, is to assume that the ontological status of objectively possible is not fully defined in R 3706. For Kant, it is only important that the necessary truths are independent of thought and that a priori proposition of the existence of God can acquire a real meaning. The same uncertainty can be found Fifth Meditation by Descartes, where he talks about the entities that are independent of the mind [1, p. 52–53].

We now turn to the question of relationship between ontological concepts of ND and R 3706. This question is important not only for the analysis of Kant's critique of proofs of God's existence, but also for understanding Kant's entire philosophical evolution. Therefore, we will give it a more detailed consideration.

In ND Kant speaks of the nature of the possible in different ways. On the one hand, he uses the concept of logical possibility, "the possibility is narrowed down to the statement that connected concepts do not contradict each other" [7, p. 278]. On the other hand, talking about freedom, he suggests that the only possible is something that has some pre-existing foundation in reality [7, p. 286–88]. Apparently, Kant uses two concepts of the possible, not considering it necessary to clarify this.

The distinction between the metaphysical (logical) and physical possibilities is quite traditional. Aristotle already distinguished possibility as "the beginning of movement or change in a thing, being in a different state" and, at the same time, the possibility as denying the necessary fallacy of the contrary ("Metaphysics", Vol. 5, Ch. 12). We find a similar distinction in Leibniz and Crusius [15, § 56, 59], who, however, differ as to what should be considered a *real* possibility, that is really capable of accomplishing. Crusius admits only real physical possibility: "The real component in a thing that does not yet exist, is the cause for this considered thing" [15, S. 99–100]. Leibniz, on the contrary, believes that "when talking about the possibility of a thing, it is not about the causes leading to or preventing its actual existence..." [9, p. 293]. He considers that the sole criterion of reality for a possible thing is the consistency of its notion.

Kant's reasoning on the problem of freedom (ND, *Theorem IX*) shows that he is close to Crusius' viewpoint. Like the latter, he did not attach much importance to the logical possibilities: "They will say that what is contrary to an event, which is considered by itself, can still be conceived and therefore it is possible. So what? After all, this opposite can't happen because there are already sufficient grounds predetermining impossibility for it ever to become a reality" [7, p. 286]. Kant's position is even more radical than the position of Crusius: Crusius admits that the event, which is logically (but not really) possible can still be carried out by God (because of his freedom), and Kant believes that all the actions of God, and consequently, all the events of the world, were originally predetermined by his essence.

Generally speaking, Kant's point of view of in ND is no different from Spinozian. Here are some arguments in favor of this opinion. In ND Kant de-

fends the principle of sufficient (pre-defining) reason. The traditional objection to this principle is that it restores "the unchangeable necessity of all things and the fate of the Stoics," as well as "shakes all freedom and morality" [7, p. 285]. "Eloquent", "clear and convincing", according to Kant, this objection is expressed by Crusius. Therefore, in *Theorem IX* Kant recounts Crusius' arguments, trying to make it "more comprehensible without undermining its [arguments] strength".

Comparing Kant's reasoning (in general) to Crusius' one, it is easy to see that Kant sets out the argument even more eloquently and with evident sympathy. Coming to the "elimination of difficulties that seem to be inherent in the principle of determining the base" ("Removing doubt"), Kant expressly acknowledges that he agreed with Crusius that "conventional distinction [between conditional and unconditional necessity] reduces the force of necessity and the accuracy of a definition only slightly" [7, p. 287]. The events of the world are defined as if the opposite was excluded by their mere concept. In God "the act of creation of the world is not something unstable, and is determined, of course, so that something opposite to it would be unworthy of God, that is, could not be inherent in it" [7, p. 288]. These statements are fully consistent with the statements of Spinoza:

Things could not have been produced by God in any other way and in no other manner than they have been made [13, p. 390].

Since in God there's no inconstancy and change, he had to decide to produce everything out of eternity. <...> If he [the one who denies that the "possible and random are nothing but the shortcomings in our mind"] draws attention to the nature and its dependence on God, he will find nothing accidental in things, i.e. nothing that in fact there may or may not exist. <...> In all things created from eternity there was the necessity of their existence. <...> God did not exist before these decisions so that he could decide otherwise... [12, p. 277].

According to Kant, a supreme being is deprived of the opportunity of choice, since all the possibilities depend on him not only for due to their existence, but also due to the nature. This is precisely the essence of Kant's theological physics in ND. The same is also mentioned in the reflections on optimism (R 3703–3705). Kant states here: "...everything that is possible exists, and... either in the chain of beings or in a variety of changes there's nothing missing capable of existing" [AA, XVII, S. 235]. God created everything he could create, and the endless evolution of the Universe accomplishes any possibility out of the number of those, which should be attributed to the reality. (This point of view on possibility has been known from Diodorus' time, and Leibniz criticizes it in the chapters of his "Théodicée": § 168–171.)

So, in ND Kant, apparently, distinguishes between the ideal and actual possibility (according to the terminology of Crusius, see [16, § 56, 59]). The *ideal* option is the consistency of notion and is represented by a *mental ability*, or the *ability in thought*. The *real* possibility, or the opportunity *beyond thought* in Kant's view coincides with the reality of a thing: the concept is really possible if the corresponding thing is actual at some point in world history. As for Note R 3706, Kant seems to transit to Leibniz' point of view, accepting the concept of "possible worlds." He stated this new position clearly a few years later in EmBg:

... Who can deny that millions of things that don't exist in reality are only possible by all the predicates that they would have possessed if they had existed; that in a view that the supreme being shares about them there are no missing definitions, though existence is not among them, for the supreme being conceives them as merely possible things... If God wanted to create a different set of things, another world, then this world would exist with all of the definitions (and no more) that God cognizes in it, even though it is just a possible world [8, S. 401].

Thus, by the end of the 50's – early 60's (R 3706 dates back to this time) Kant's metaphysical views changed significantly. He departed from Spinozian point of view towards Leibniz' concept of "possible worlds" (the reasons for this change are still not known).

3. Historical review

J. Schmucker notes the extraordinary clarity of R 3706⁹ [18, S. 24–25]. This observation can be accepted, if we consider the first part of the fragment only, where Kant defends the ontological argument (assuming that the existence is a predicate). However, we must bear in mind that Kant here reproduces well-known Descartes' arguments of his *Meditationes*. The first part of R 3706 is merely a paraphrase of a few paragraphs of "Fifth Meditation" [1, p. 52–55]. To verify this, it is worth just placing the thoughts of Descartes in the same sequence in which they are found in Kant's work.

Kant: "If existence could be counted among various predicates that may be immanent to a thing, then, of course, one would not require any other proof of God's existence, more convincing and understandable than the Cartesian. Because of all possible things, there is only one in which all things that can be assembled together are connected into one. These realities, i.e., true positive predicates, also include existence; therefore, the most real of all the being in its internal capabilities presupposes existence".

Descartes: "...each time I happen to think of a first and sovereign being, and to draw, so to speak, the idea of him from the storehouse of the mind, I am necessitated to attribute to him all kinds of perfections, though I may not then enumerate them all, nor think of each of them in particular. And this necessity is sufficient, as soon as I discover that existence is a perfection, to cause me to infer the existence of this first and sovereign being".

Kant: "It doesn't make much sense arguing that such a possible thing only assumes existence, that is only because the very thing exists in the mind rather than out of it, the same could be said about all the predicates that are inherent in any possible thing: they are not present in reality but are assumed. The latter is indeed the case when something is randomly linked with a property which is not necessarily entailed by this particular thing, for example, if some horse is mentally attributed with wings to make it a Pegasus, the wings are inherent in some horse but just mentally".

Descartes: "Indeed such a doctrine may at first sight appear to contain more sophistry than truth. <...> I cannot conceive God unless as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from him, and therefore that he really exists: not that this is brought about by my thought, or that it imposes any necessity on things, but, on the contrary, the necessity which lies in the thing itself, that is, the necessity of the existence of God, determines me to think in this way: for it is not in my power to conceive a God without existence, that is, a being supremely perfect, and yet devoid of an absolute perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings..."

⁹ R3706 – fragment of Kant's manuscript heritage, published in AA, XVII, S. 240–243.

Kant: "On the contrary, where the connection of the predicate with a thing is not arbitrary, but is determined by the essence of the thing itself, the predicate is inherent in thing, not because we assume it, but it is necessary to suppose this predicate as a part of this entity because it is inherent to it by its nature".

Decartes: "For indeed I discern on many grounds that this idea is not factitious depending simply on my thought, but that it is the representation of a true and immutable nature: in the first place because I can conceive no other being, except God, to whose essence existence [necessarily] pertains..."

Kant: " So I cannot say that the fact that the total sum of triangle's angles is equal to two right angles exists only in thought, but I must say that it is inherent to a triangle by itself. This feature is not disturbed by the fact that this possibility is only assumed by my mind: for it is something in itself, even when it is not conceived, the predicate would exist by itself anyway even though no one would make any connections between the two".

Decartes: "And what I find of most importance is, that I discover in my mind innumerable ideas of certain objects, which cannot be esteemed pure negations, although perhaps they possess no reality beyond my thought, and which are not framed by me though it may be in my power to think, or not to think them, but possess true and immutable natures of their own. As, for example, when I imagine a triangle, although there is not perhaps and never was in any place in the universe apart from my thought one such figure, it remains true nevertheless that this figure possesses a certain determinate nature, form, or essence, which is immutable and eternal, and not framed by me, nor in any degree dependent on my thought; as appears from the circumstance, that diverse properties of the triangle may be demonstrated, viz, that its three angles are equal to two right ones..."

Kant: " The same is true of the existence, if it could be considered as a predicate of things. For it would have been inherent in the necessary manner to the single possible being, which contains all reality, that is the essence of most real being would exist necessarily, and its possibility would include its reality. And if without my or anyone else's thought the most real being didn't have inherent existence, the idea of this being would have been all false. For if it is correct, then it can't be of any other predicates, except for those that belong to this thing even apart from the thoughts of it".

Decartes: "But, nevertheless, when I think of it more attentively, it appears that the existence can no more be separated from the essence of God, than the idea of the equality of its three angles to two right angles, from the essence of a [rectilinear] triangle; so that it is not less impossible to conceive a God, that is, a being supremely perfect, to whom existence is a wanting..."

Even more similarities (even up to the order of presentation) can be found between the reasoning of Kant and Spinoza's remarks on the first chapter of the "Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being." Thus, in the second note Spinoza says:

From the definition which will be given in Chapter 2 and according to which God has infinite attributes, we can prove his existence as follows: everything that we clearly and distinctly discern as belonging to nature of things, we can truly say of a thing itself, but the nature of a being with infinite attributes, also includes an attribute that indicates the existence; therefore, the objection that such a statement is true only about the idea, but not the thing itself, would be false, because the idea of an attribute belonging to a thing does not exist, and therefore the mentioned above assumption of an idea has nothing to do with either a thing or what is told about it; then there is a big difference between an idea and its object, that is why the opinion about the object is not applicable to the idea and vice versa [20, S. 17 – 18]¹⁰.

¹⁰ Translation of this part in [11] is mistaken.

In the third note Spinoza discusses the question whether the idea of God is fictitious. His reasoning is based on the distinction between the ideas that are created by our mind, and those that exist independently of our thinking (Kant's reasoning is based on the same distinction).

Suppose, however, that this idea of [God] is a fiction, but then we have to consider all our other ideas as fictions.

If that were the case, then why would ideas differ so greatly? For we see some [ideas], the existence of which is impossible to suppose, for example, all the monsters [mythical animals], which seem to consist of two natures, such as, for example, an animal that represents a bird and a horse, and similar creatures that do not exist [whose existence is impossible] in nature, which we find arranged quite differently.

In addition to these there is a third idea, and, moreover, the only one: it embodies the necessary existence in a different way compared to the previous one, which can only exist, because it was only essence that was necessary but not existence; this one needs both existence and essence inseparably.

Thus, I see that neither truth, nor essence or existence of a thing depend on me; for as it has been proven for the second group of ideas, they are what they are, regardless of me, either by their essence alone, or by their essence and existence together. Even more it holds true to the third, only idea, namely: not only does it not depend on me, but on the contrary, God alone should be the subject of what I'm saying about him. So, if it did not exist, I couldn't state anything about him, as it is still possible about other things, even if they did not exist [11, S. 80, revised].

** For other ideas existence is possible, though it is not absolutely necessary, while their essence is always needed, whether they exist or not, just like the idea of a triangle and the idea of love in a soul separated from the body, etc.; so, even assuming first that they are invented, I then will be forced to admit that they, nevertheless, have the essence, even if neither I nor any other person has ever thought of them. That is why they are not created by my imagination, but beyond me they should have a subject that is not me, and without which they can't exist.

This comparison clearly shows that supporting the Cartesian argument, Kant does not state anything new. His reasoning is completely consistent with the arguments of Descartes, and the sequence of presentation is very similar to the one we find in the "Short Treatise" by Spinoza.

Both Descartes and Spinoza emphasize that the possible things exist and possess some properties independently of our mind. This argument is a logical response to the objection, stating that although the proposition "God exists" is a priori true, it is such only because of an imagined concept of God and therefore has only an ideal meaning. Such a response (in connection with the issue of judgments emanating from arbitrary definitions) is clearly articulated by Leibniz in his letter to Fouché:

First of all, it is undeniable that the very truth of hypothetical propositions is something outside of us and independent of us. For all hypothetical proposals assert what would be or would not be, if something or its contrary were posited; consequently, they assume two things at the same time which agree with each other, or the possibility or impossibility, necessity or indifference, of something. But this possibility, impossibility or necessity (for the necessity of one thing is the impossibility of its contrary) is not a chimera which we create, since all that we do consists in recognizing them, in spite of ourselves and in a consistent manner. Thus, considering all existing things, this very possibility or impossibility of their existence becomes primary. In its turn, the opportunity and the need form and compose what is called essences or natures, and make up the truths, which are commonly referred to as eternal. And they

deserve this name, because nothing is ever as eternal as the necessary. For example, the nature of a circle with its properties is something real and eternal. In other words, there is some permanent cause outside of us, which operates so that anyone who thinks about it, find the same. It is not a simple coincidence of thoughts, which could be explained by the nature of the human spirit... [10, p. 268].

The logical objection, as it is already mentioned, is also given by Leibniz in the article on the Cartesian argument ("De la démonstration cartésienne..."). Thus, the first part of fragment R 3706 does not contain any new reasons in favor of the Cartesian argument. Kant simply reproduces the line of thought, known since the time of Descartes. And, most likely, this explains why the wording of the first part of the fragment is so clear unlike the wording of the second part.

4. The problem of "true" and "imagined" essences

Apart from criticism of logical objections, there is another line of reasoning in the text of R 3706. It concerns the issue of the "true" and "fictional" ideas. From the point of view of the "unifying" interpretation this issue is the main one in ND argument¹¹. In the scholium to *Theorem VI* Kant points to the need to justify the validity of the concept of the most real thing. Moreover, the truth here is understood as the correspondence of the actual (objectively) possible instance to the concept rather than a match to something actually existing. In Kant's argument (in this viewpoint) distinction between "apparent" and "true" possibility plays a crucial role. In ND Kant does not explain this difference, limiting himself to the evidence that the rationale of true possibilities of the most real thing depends on the proof of its existence.

In 3706 R Kant views another argument against the truth (in this sense) of the concept of the all-real being. This argument refers to M. Cather, first reviewer of Descartes' "Reflections." It is to indicate to the random nature of concept of the perfect being, and to oppose it to other concepts, all the elements of which are necessarily connected to each other. Kant rejects this argument insisting that the concept of the most real thing represents a unity.

Before continuing the analysis of Kant's argument, let us recall the debate around this issue at the time of Descartes.

Playful (as recognized by the author) remark by M. Cather is in fact one of the most serious objections to the Cartesian argument. According to M. Cather, following Descartes' reasoning, we can prove a priori the existence of anything, such as the existence of a lion:

...let me just make a little joke: a complex concept *existing lion* includes, and includes essentially, two parts, namely, the lion and the mode of existence; and if we withdraw any of these parts, it would cease being a complex concept. Then: did God understand clearly and distinctly this compound word? Did the idea of this complex concept – being difficult in itself – include essentially the both components? In other words, does existence have anything to do with the essence of this word-combination – the *existing lion*? [1, p. 81].

This seems to lead to the fact that the existing lion certainly exists, and if the existing lion exists then a lion also exists.

¹¹ ND – Nova dilucidatio

Descartes replied that such ideas (a winged horse, an existing lion) do not contain a "true and immutable" essences, but only "imaginary and created by intellect", according to him it proceeds from the possibility to mentally dismember such ideas, unlike the ideas of a triangle or a square [1, p. 94–95].

The issue of the complex (composite) character of the idea of God was also raised in conversations between Descartes and Gassendi. While criticizing the idea of the perfect being, Gassendi observed that "the idea of these [divine] perfections that you have got was not revealed to you by God, but was perceived by you from perfect things and then increased... It is thus the way to represent the Pandora as the goddess adorned with all the gifts and perfections as well as a perfect republic, perfect speaker, etc. [1, p. 239]. Descartes objected to this, that "the idea of God is not constructed gradually by us on the basis of increasing perfection of creation, but is formed at once by the fact that we touch mentally the infinite being, which doesn't allow any increase" [1, p. 290].

Obviously, Descartes' answers do not provide a clear distinction criterion between "true" and "imaginary" entity. As for Spinoza, he, as we have seen, declares the concept of a *winged horse* inconsistent, but says nothing about the concept of an *existing lion*; apparently, there is no room for this concept in his classification of the ideas, the problem is thus avoided and not solved.

It is worth mentioning that Crusius is extremely detailed in discussing the problem of complex and non-complex concepts proceeding to distinction between accidental and necessary essences [15, p. 62–75, 530, 548–549, 756–757]. From his point of view, it is only the idea of infinite substance (God) which turns to be really inseparable; the essences of finite things contain logically independent features, and are therefore accidental. However, Crusius' reasoning seems to have little relevance to the issue of the Cartesian argument, because it denies the existence of the "eternal and immutable" essences beyond the real world.

I must admit that none of the above mentioned authors has given a clear definition to this metaphysical distinction of whole (indivisible) entities and complex entities (arbitrarily created by our imagination). From a logical point of view of a triangle is as much a complex idea as the idea of Pegasus, when cutting off the property of triangularity, we will get the idea of a closed shape, which can be seen as completely independent. For a polygon three angles can be seen as a random feature. Therefore, it is difficult to catch any logical (and metaphysical) distinction between the ideas of a triangle and Pegasus.

Going back to Kant's argument, we note that the text of the R 3706 allows us to properly interpret the expression "true concept" from the scholium to *Theorem VI* in ND. Thus the "true concept" is the concept that expresses a whole, indivisible entity. In such an interpretation the argument in ND takes the following form: we form the concept of the most real thing, but we do not know in advance whether an essence, expressed by this notion is "true", "necessary", "eternal", or if it is "artificial", existing only because we built it due to the power of our imagination. In the first case ("if any [possible] being assembles [as required, regardless of our thoughts] all the gradations of reality") the Cartesian argument appears to be true, in the second ("if they only appear to assemble") it should be considered invalid.

We can see that the text of R 3706 confirms "unifying" interpretation of Kant's argument in the scholium to *Theorem VI* ND. He contrasted being-in-the-mind and objectively possible-being (beyond thought). In the first case, Kant speaks of supposing "in mind" (im Verstande) or "thought" (in Gedanken); in the

second case – supposing “beyond thought” (außer dem Gedanken) or “due to the essence of the thing itself” (durch das Wesen der Sachen selbst). In ND these two ways of supposing are defined as *idealiter* and *realiter*.

It is noteworthy that, saying “it makes little sense to argue that such a possible thing includes only existence in mind, that is only because the very thing that is perceived only in thought, but not beyond mind...”, Kant was originally going to use the expression “in the real sense” (im Realverstande) instead of “beyond mind”. In our view, the crossed out word can serve as evidence in favor of the “unifying” interpretation, explaining the use of the term *realiter* in ND.

Finally, we can directly compare the key phrase in the scholium to *Theorem VI* to the beginning of Fragment R 3706.

ND: “...if some being unifies without any gradation all realities, it exists...”

R3706: “If existence could be counted among various predicates that may be immanent to a thing, then, of course, one would not require any other proof of God's existence, more convincing and understandable than the Cartesian. Because of all possible things, there is only one in which all entities that can be assembled together are connected into one”.

The meaning of these fragments, in our view, is the same (with the exception of mentioning the predicate interpretation of existence).

It's hard to say why in ND Kant didn't add the definition “possible” to the word “being”. This can be attributed to negligence or general brevity of the text. But to someone who learnt the argument of ND after having read R 3706, it seems natural to interpret this argument in the spirit of the latter. And only the reference to some secondary works can offer another (less convincing) interpretation.

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About the author

Vladimir Yermolayev, MPhil, postdoctoral graduate of the Department of Philosophy, University of Latvia, e-mail: vla-erm@yandex.ru