

On the Positive Status of Thought-Entity in Kant: A Critique

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to illustrate a positive implication of Immanuel Kant's concept of "thought-entity," which has often been overlooked in previous studies. Specifically, the existent literature, such as Zoicher (1958) and Caimi (1995), has not fully dealt with Kant's claims of objective validity concerning the "deduction of ideas" but rather has regarded it as a confused argument. At any rate, they have refused to accept Kant's argument of "deduction of ideas" literally. However, this paper allows for a positive interpretation of Kant's claims about the "deduction of ideas" by adopting a moderate concept of objectivity called inter-subjective validity. It also enables us to explain the positive status of *ens rationis ratiocinatae* (correctly inferred thought-entity) as a genuine object of the "rational belief," which is closely related to Kant's theory of "holding-to-be-true." Although Kant himself boldly expressed the positive meaning of the idea in his argument of the deduction of ideas, this has not been appreciated properly because of the difficulty of the argument positing that the idea, which is a typical example of thought-entity, has positive aspects. My interpretation of "thought-entity" in the connection with the "deduction of ideas" and the theory of "holding-to-be-true" indicates that it is necessary to re-examine a conventional understanding of the "object" in Kant studies—namely, the view that the object is limited to appearances. These consequences allow us to interpret the Appendix of the Dialectic not as mere supplements but more as an evident bridge to Methodology. Considering these discussions of Methodology, it is also possible, for the first time, to read Kant's moral philosophy and *Kritik der Urteilskraft* as an extension layer of the deduction of ideas in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to illustrate a positive implication of Kant's concept of "thought-entity" (*ens rationis*), which has often been overlooked in previous studies. I will argue one positive aspect of thought-entity that is granted via correct reasoning, and its detail will be discussed in the last section. In the widely accepted Kant interpretation, "thought-entity" has been regarded as having no positive significance for several convincing reasons. The aim of Kant's major work, *Critique of Pure Reason*⁽¹⁾, as the title suggests, is the philosophical practice of "critique." He explains one of the tasks of the "critique" as determining the limits of the realm of possible experience (cf. A XII). This goal of critical philosophy is closely related to one of the three well-known questions that stem from the interest of speculative reason: "What can I know?" (A805/B833). If we could anticipate a conclusion from his invention of the "transcendental idealism," it is easy to assume that Kant would answer this question as follows. We can only recognize the "appearance" captured by our sensibility to the extent that our understanding predicates it in accordance with "categories." In this widely spread understanding of critical philosophy, it can be said that the "thought-entity," a type of object that exists solely in our minds, is worthless without an empirical sense of data.

(1) I will identify passages from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* by the page numbers of the first (A) and second (B) edition. All of Kant's other works are cited according to the volume and page numbers in *Akademie-Ausgabe*. As for all abbreviations, see the list of abbreviations rendered below. The translation will be based on those in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (1996-), from which I occasionally diverge slightly, and all translations of cited articles are my own.

Hence, many scholars have argued that “thought-entity” has a merely negative position in Kant’s theoretical philosophy.

However, Kant boldly argues the possibility or rather the necessity of “transcendental deduction” of the idea in the Appendix to the Dialectic (A669/B697-A671/B699). This discussion presumably justifies an “objective validity” of ideas (cf. A85/B117), thus is in head-on conflict with the standard Kant interpretation, that is, all three transcendental ideas are the representatives of the thought-entity, and that they cannot be admitted to our object of experience. Zocher (1958) discussed its problems at an early stage. His negative conclusions, which will be examined in the second section, had a major impact, and it has been common to assume that Kant’s argument of the deduction of ideas is somehow decisively flawed (cf. Horstmann 1998). Contrary to this negative interpretation, Caimi (1995) tried to bring a consistent view of this deduction. His argument should be highly appreciated in the sense that he succeeds in sewing up the Zocherian “breach” by distinguishing each of the argumentative processes in the two sections of the Appendix.

Regardless of their evaluation of this deduction, the researchers referred to above consistently agree that what Kant meant in this deduction is not a justification of the concrete object corresponding to transcendental ideas. As we will see, they understood that the deduction of idea justifies “quasi-object” at most. It is a sound and safe interpretation, explaining the status of this somehow deduced object of idea as a “quasi-object”; however, whether this reading provides a thorough explanation for Kant’s deduction of the idea or whether it is just withdrawn from textual evidence requires further consideration. In this paper, I would like to present a more robust theory for this deduction. The main difference from the previous studies lies in the following: the “object *in* the idea,” is justified as a genuine “object” of pure reason in the sense that it has a maximal inter-subjective validity for all human beings, and its objective sufficiency permits us to use it as the regulative idea. I think this goes beyond the conventional view that the deduction of ideas is, at best, a justification of “quasi-objects,” and there is an inevitable confusion. Rather, I will reveal that justified ideas are, in a certain respect, genuine objects of human reason.

To meet our goal, the present paper proceeds as follows. The first section identifies the basic meaning of thought-entity and its two extended implications in Kant’s theoretical philosophy through an examination of his account of the concept of *ens rationis ratiocinantis* and *ens rationis ratiocinatae*. In the second section, I will review some important previous studies of Zocher, Horstmann and Caimi, and identify the crucial problem of the deduction of ideas in Kant. The third section explains the argumentative structure of the “inter-subjective” rational justification implied in the deduction of ideas. It is important to emphasize that the discussion in the last section is closely related to Kant’s characterization of “belief” in his theory of “holding-to-be-true,” and that bringing the argument of “belief” into the problem of the deduction is the key element of this paper. Confirming this relevance allows us to show a new evaluation of the Appendix to the Dialectic in the entire course of KrV.

1. Meaning of Thought-Entity

Kant employs the concept of thought-entity throughout the KrV⁽²⁾. It may be possible to understand the Latin *ens rationis* and the German *Gedankending* or *Gedankenwesen*, and also *Verstandeswesen*, each as separate issues. Such an elaborate discussion would make a significant contribution to some Kant studies. However, for the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to handle these concepts in an interchangeable manner. The following two points are particularly important in this discussion. First, “thought-entity” is, in some classical sense, to be counted as “being,” yet it is typically held as “nothing” in Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Second, thought-entity has two subtly but importantly different meanings, which are expressed in Latin as *ens rationis ratiocinantis* and *ens rationis ratiocinatae*, respectively. Let us move on to the first point.

To put it roughly, Kant employs Latin in his argument because that expression is just what was widely accepted

(2) In KrV, Kant uses *ens rationis* three times (A290/B347, A292/B348, A337/B394), and both expressions *ens rationis ratiocinantis* (A669/B697) and *ens rationis ratiocinatae* (A681/B709) once each. In addition to Latin, Kant also uses German rephrases such as *Gedankending* or *Gedankenwesen*, and *Verstandeswesen* frequently (A292/B348, A337/B394, A431/B458Anm., A448/B476, A469/B497, A489/B517, A543/B571, A566/B594, A669/B697, A771/B799).

by his contemporaries. It looks very different from our intuition, but we should recall that *Lingua Franca* in his time was Latin. Concerning thought-entity, Kant equates it with a traditional expression which stems from medieval philosophy and is highly debated throughout history, i.e., *ens rationis* without explanation. It is remarkable, however, that Kant uses this concept in a completely different sense from what it was considered in the medieval age, even though the same expression is used in both the cases. The thought-entity or *ens rationis*, as the word itself indicates, was initially counted as a “being” in some sense. This notion is contrasted with *ens reales*, a being we can meet in the actual world of experience as a *res*. Both seemingly have the status as genuine objects, despite that the former is not actually sensitively captured but represented through “thinking.” It is interesting to notice that in pre-Kantian metaphysics, it was supposed that *ens rationis* was superior to *ens reales* in terms of its nature and completeness. It is not our purpose to explore this historical point in depth here, but if we consider Plato’s argument of the idea or otherwise the ontological proof of God in the early modern philosophy, we can easily get a rough picture of what is the case⁽³⁾. The point is that thought-entity or *ens rationis* was at least a kind of “being,” and was often taken to have a greater ontological status than real beings; nonetheless, it was not an object experienced through observation. This same tradition can be confirmed in Leibniz-Wolffian metaphysics⁽⁴⁾, which supposedly had a direct influence on Kantian thought. Thus, there is little evidence that would allow one to argue that Kant was unaware of that traditional concept of thought-entity or *ens rationis*.

In opposition to the traditional meaning of thought-entity, i.e., thought-entity as a type of “being,” the description of thought-entity in Kant is thoroughly negative. Rather, more radically, Kant counts thought-entity as a type of “nothing.” As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, as a consequence of the Aesthetics and Analysis of KrV, Kant limits the domain of our possible experience to the extent that both “appearance,” which is sensible given by the forms of sensibility (namely space and time) and “categories,” which are forms of understanding, can work with and correspond to each other. The shortest expression of this whole picture is the following dictum of Kant: “Thoughts without content are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind” (A51/B75). In other words, the establishment of “cognition” requires not only the process of “thinking” but also the sensory input of something “given.” For this reason, Kant argues that “thought-entity” is a kind of “nothing,” as “an empty concept devoid of an object” (A290/B346 ff.). Kant repeatedly states that objects such as “thought-entity” and “Noumenon” are not objects found in our possible cognition, and, therefore, they are meaningless for us. Such claims can be found in countless places, but it would not help our argument to enumerate them all; so, we will leave this task aside⁽⁵⁾.

Now we have confirmed that Kant’s theoretical philosophy leads to negative consequences concerning such non-sensible objects, and that this conclusion comes from the natural course of an argument. However, the following two statements raise the question whether this is the exact understanding of the thought-entity in Kant.

But if they [three ideas of pure reason] are to have at least some objective validity – even if only an indeterminate one – and they are not merely to present sophisticated thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, even supposing that it might deviate greatly from the deduction that one can carry out with the categories. (A669/B697)

However, reason cannot think of this systematic unity otherwise than by giving to its idea thereof at the same time an object. [...] Now this correctly inferred thought-entity (*ens rationis ratiocinatae*) is indeed a mere idea,

(3) Eisler’s (1904) dictionary, though classical, tells us a lot about the historical meaning of the concept of *ens rationis* (Eisler 1904: 217-8.). According to Eisler, this concept was inherited by Christian Wolff’s work through Scholastic philosophy. It is certain that Baumgarten and Meier, who were Leibniz-Wolffian philosophers and contemporaries to Kant, are also in this vein, at least in terms of terminology. Moreover, the mainstream philosophers before Kant, at least those Kant had in mind, also relied on the scholastic tradition for the concept of *ens rationis*. According to a list of Kant’s collection of books confirmed by Warda (1922), Kant possessed Descartes’ *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* (Warda 1922: 47). In the “Second Objection,” following the six “Reflections,” Descartes discusses the concept of *ens rationis* in relation to God. It is not clear how much Kant considered this fact, but there is no evidence that would permit us to conclude that Kant was unaware of scholastic terminology.

(4) See Baumgarten 1757: §62.

(5) In fact, one needs only to recall the section of Phenomena and Noumena to understand what this means.

[...] but we do this solely with the aim of basing on this idea the systematic unity that is indispensable to reason but that furthers the cognition of understanding in every way and yet can also never hinder it. (A681/B709)

It is essential to point out that these two texts are located precisely in the Appendix, where the “deduction of ideas” is discussed. However, before we approach this central question, we should begin with the explanation of the grammatical difference between *ens rationis ratiocinantis* and *ens rationis ratiocinatae*⁽⁶⁾. Kant made the following distinction quite early on in his *Dialectic*.

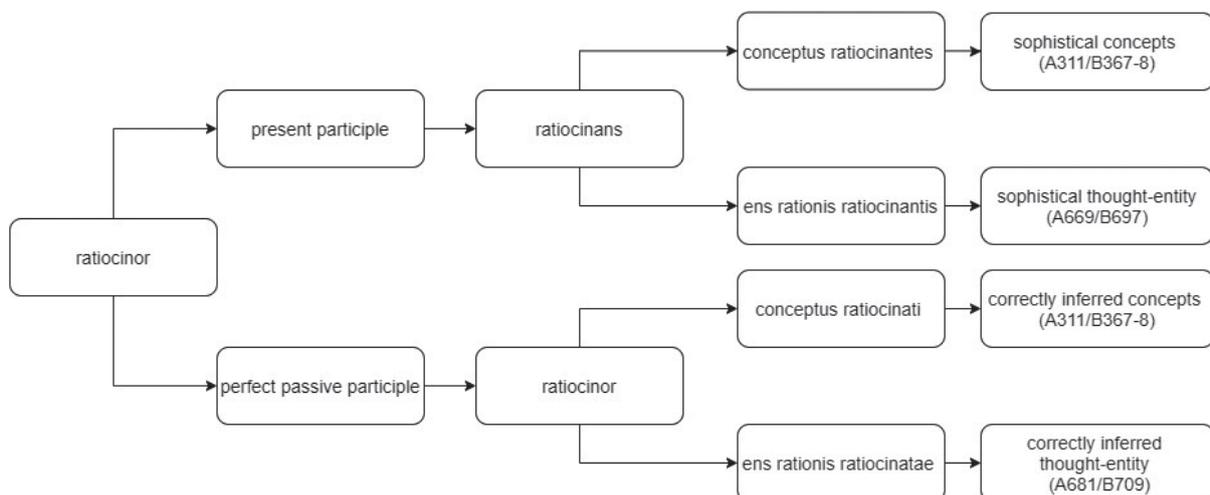
If they [concepts of reason] contain the unconditioned, then they deal with something under which all experience belongs, but that is never itself an object of experience; something to which reason leads through its inferences, and by which reason estimates and measures the degree of its empirical use, but that never constitutes a member of the empirical synthesis. Despite this, if such concepts have objective validity, then they can be called *conceptus ratiocinati* (correctly inferred concepts); but if not, they have at least been obtained by a surreptitious illusion of inference, and so might be called *conceptus ratiocinantes* (sophistical concepts). (A311/B367-8)

Both expressions are derived from the Latin word *ratiocinor*, which is a term associated with reasoning or proving. To be precise, the present participle and the past perfect passive form of *ratiocinor* fit with both expressions, respectively⁽⁷⁾. This grammatical analysis implies that at the core of the distinction between these two similar concepts is the question whether a given concept has been obtained through correct reasoning or not⁽⁸⁾. What is the “correctness” in the criterion for distinguishing the two extended meanings of thought-entity? If we are allowed to use a concept, what properties do we need to have in that concept? It appears that something more than non-contradiction of concepts is required to operate that concept in the inference with objective validity. As an intuitive answer, we can assume that we can only safely employ a concept if, and only if, it is justified or grounded, or at least that concept is somehow warranted as consistent with other empirical concepts. Isn’t this justification what Kant calls “deduction”?

(6) In conventional translations of KrV, *ens rationis ratiocinantis* is translated as “empty thought entity,” and *ens rationis ratiocinatae* is translated as “being of reason” or similar expressions. However, this is an interpretation and translation of the meaning of these words, concealing the contrasting relationship between those two concepts. Therefore, in this paper, I will take A311/B367-8 as a guide and translate them as “sophistical thought-entity” and “correctly inferred thought-entity,” respectively.

(7) In recent years, the investigation of the relationship between Baumgarten and Kant has been much investigated, and the publication of an English translation with detailed commentary on Baumgarten’s metaphysics has been particularly influential. According to the translator’s note attached to Baumgarten’s *Metaphysics* §62 (Baumgarten 2014: 111, fn. h), Baumgarten uses the term *ens rationis ratiocinantis* following the terminology of late Scholastic scholars such as Suárez (*Disputationes Metaphysicae*, Disputation 7, Paragraph 4-5). It is important to note that the term *ens rationis ratiocinantis* used in a negative sense is also consistent with the traditional terminology.

(8) We may illustrate this grammatical relationship of two types of *ens rationis* as followings.



Here we may turn our discussion to the nature of the deduction of ideas.

2. Problems in the Deduction of Ideas

For Kant, deduction means the “justification” of rights as is the case of legal argument. Thus, there is a firm motive to presume that a process of “deduction” amounts to the claim of soundness or justifiability of a certain concept in question. We can similarly assume that to “deduce” an idea, a kind of thought-entity, is to justify the idea as a rightful and indispensable argumentative item to some extent. Therefore, we might say that the two extended meanings of thought-entity mentioned earlier are derived from this “deduction of ideas.” However, since there are some problems in this bizarre “deduction” itself, which have bothered researchers for many years, we will first clarify the source of the problem.

According to Rudolf Zocher, the theme of the deduction of ideas has been treated as a surprising topic, or even in its existence, considered to be preposterous by superficial readers of KrV (Zocher 1958: 43). However, such a reading was widely accepted even by those who had been aware of Kant’s account of the “deduction of ideas”; they did not take this argument to be serious. In some cases, the metaphysically friendly-looking theory of the deduction of ideas has been taken as good evidence of the patchwork theory that was the topic of discussion at the time (Zocher 1958: 57). The key strategy of this interpretation is that the two parts of the Appendix for the Dialectic were written at different points in time: one of which is from the critical era, but the other is from the pre-critical period; therefore, each section has a very different goal. If we take this way, it is not necessary for us to expect any consistency in the two meanings of ideas that Kant argues at two sections of the Appendix, respectively.

Zocher’s (1958) most important achievement was to reveal, first, that Kant’s theory of ideas has a double meaning, and second, that his discussions stray between these two. Zocher’s analysis can be reformulated as follows.

1. *The Idea as Direction*: The idea being deduced is a regulative point toward which all rational unity is possible. It means mere *focus imaginarius*.
2. *The Idea as Quasi-Object*: The idea being deduced is still an object that has objective validity in some sense. This quasi-object is expressed as “schema.”

There is no doubt that Kant leaves passages supporting both. The former explanation is broadly corresponding to the first half of the Appendix “on the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason,” and the latter to the second half “on the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason,” respectively. The question, however, is whether these two meanings are compatible and consistent or not. For, it is trivially true that an idea has a meaning as a “direction” in the regulative use of reason, which can be analytically and logically derived from the conception of reason itself; “quasi-object,” however, means more than a mere *focus imaginarius*, and is not self-evident. Rather, it is a claim about something outside of the concept (idea), and, in the sense that it is object-relational; it is the case of something that requires a “transcendental deduction.” Thus, the very fact that Kant argues for the two possible implications of the ideas presented above violates, at least superficially, Kant’s famous claim about two sorts of possibilities, namely, that we should have a sharp distinction between “logical possibility” and “transcendental possibility” (i.e. the possibility of real entities outside of mere concept)⁽⁹⁾.

As for Zocher’s conclusion, the deduction of an idea requires us to put an idea as a “quasi-object,” but this argument goes beyond the explanation of the meaning of an idea as a “direction,” and these two meanings are incompatible. Thus, Zocher argues, only the meaning as “direction” is defensible as an appropriate interpretation of Kantian critical philosophy. Rolf-Peter Horstmann (1998) takes a similar line, concluding that if the “deduction of ideas” in Kant is meant as a justification of the “quasi-object,” then it suffers from a fundamental dilemma (Horstmann 1998: 535). On the other hand, both agree that the idea as a “quasi-object” can be explained affirmatively in a different context of Kantian philosophy. That is, in relation to the theme of “postulate” in practical philosophy and

(9) See A244/B302, A596 Anm. /B624 Anm..

with respect to the discussion of “the purposiveness of nature” in KU. They suggest that it is still possible to objectify the ideas in such different contexts. Whatever it may be the case in such contexts, they identify a crucial problem in or “breach” of Kant’s theory of ideas in that the two meanings of ideas are of essentially conflicting nature, and that he argues both as his claim. However, in my opinion, such leaps should be reduced as much as possible, and if KrV is regarded as a coherent system of theories, it is necessary to explain the idea as a “quasi-object” in KrV solely by means of the conceptual tools of theoretical philosophy.

Mario Caimi (1995) attempted a comprehensive interpretation of Kant’s accounts without patchwork theory or some sort of the *ignoratio elenchi*. Let us give an overview of Caimi’s argument. The deduction of ideas in his interpretation does not directly justify the objective validity of a concept, but means an assertion of the a priori “necessity” of the rational unity provided by the ideas in relation to understanding as a matter of *quid juris* (Caimi 1995: 308). This deduction of ideas as a direction is distinguished from that as quasi-objects on the ground that it is not a claim about the content of ideas as objects in any sense, rather a presumption about the relation of the ideas to understanding.

However, the deduction of ideas is generally understood to be the “realization” of ideas as schematic⁽¹⁰⁾; therefore, the validity of Caimi’s interpretation may be called into question. Kant describes this supposedly deduced idea as not an object to be presumed “absolutely” (A676/B704), i.e., an “object absolutely” (A670/B698)⁽¹¹⁾, but as a “schema” (A670/B698)⁽¹²⁾, i.e., an “object *in the idea*” (A670/B698 f.), which is assumed “relative” (A676/B704) to the appearance. In other words, the goal of the deduction of ideas is not to represent its object directly as an ordinary sensible object, rather to represent the necessity of a certain objective in relation to concrete, first-order cognition. Kant is attempting to pose this objective in terms of controversial phrases such as “schema” or “analogue of schema⁽¹³⁾.”

This distinction is undoubtedly something that, as Kant puts it, makes a “big difference” (A670/B698). This is also the point that Zoicher has highlighted and has interpreted the deduction of ideas as a justification of “quasi-objects.” However, since his interpretation would lead us to the conclusion that Kant commits a contradiction, Caimi rather tries to reconsider this deduction to be a justification of the direction. Although Caimi does not take this deduction as “quasi-objects” but “direction,” his theory does not conflict with Zoicher’s argument of the double meaning of the idea, and it makes Caimi’s view much more attractive. He says, “for the ‘directional sense’ of the idea evenly requires the quasi-object as a schema that enables the application of the rule conceived in the directional sense” (Caimi 1958: 319). Here, it is possible to explain why Kant leaves both explanations for ideas by understanding as follows. The primary aim of the deduction of ideas is to justify the idea as a “direction,” but it is the idea as a quasi-object that Kant called “schema.” Caimi argues that the schematic theory of idea gives concrete exemplification to the rational unification which is enabled by an idea as the direction. This schematism, as many have pointed out, is not to be construed as an ordinal terminology that implies a sensibilization (*sinnlich zu machen*)⁽¹⁴⁾ of a concept, but it should be viewed as a rationalization of all concepts (Caimi 1995: 318). Through this discussion above, Caimi succeeds in stitching the Zoicherian “breach.”

(10) See Allison 2004: 438. “[T]o posit an object in the idea is equivalent to “realizing” the idea, that is, providing it with an intentional object, as contrasted with hypostatizing it, which consists in attributing a real, extra-mental rather than a merely intentional existence to its object.”

(11) The original language is *Gegenstand schlechthin*, which could also be translated as “object *per se*.” To maintain the correspondence with A676/B704, I have translated the word “absolute” here, but what it means is to take the idea as an existential thing like an ordinary object.

(12) A more accurate description is the “analogue of schema” (665/B693). This is because this schema is not between sensibility and understanding as it usually is, but is in the relationship between reason and understanding, and, therefore, does not have the intuition that is a necessary part of the schema. This lack of intuition makes it impossible for reason to produce a schema by itself. Rather, reason can be related “relative to the sensible world” with which understanding is concerned, as an “analogy” (677/B705 f.). Hence, Henry Allison and others have named this non-standard position of schema as a “schema of schema” (Allison 2004: 438).

(13) The major point of controversy is the very expression “schema.” As I noted in note 12, Kant uses the word “schema” quite loosely here, and interpreters did not understand this to be schematic in the regular sense. Moreover, in the context of KpV, this argument is to be consistent with a theory of “typology” (AA. V 67 ff.), not schematics in KrV. Thus, there are several interpretive difficulties with Kant’s terminology here.

Caimi's view is consistent and convincing, but if one reads the original text straightforwardly, what Kant is deducting is exactly "object *in* the idea" which can be called as "quasi-object" like Zoicher, not *focus imaginarius* (A644/B672). As already mentioned, the meaning of idea as a "direction" is a self-evident consequence logically derived from the idea, and it does not bear the serious title of "transcendental deduction." Rather, the core of this problem is how the idea as a "direction," which is metaphysically deduced so to speak, can be justified transcendently as an "object *in* the idea." In the next section, I will discuss the further implications of "object *in* the idea" (A670/B698 f.) once again. Through the following discussion, it will be possible to understand the deduction of the "object *in* the idea" without finding an inconsistency (Zoicher and Horstmann) or modifying it (Caimi).

3. Subjective/Objective Justification of Ideas

The following points are clear through our consideration in the previous section. First, previous studies have struggled to identify whether Kant's deduction of ideas is to be understood as a justification of ideas as "directions" or as "quasi-objects." Second, the deduction of ideas as "quasi-objects" has been understood as an inconsistent argument; that is, we cannot defend this line in its full-fledged sense of Kant's critical philosophy. As for Zoicher and Horstmann, who regard the meaning of deduction as a "quasi-object" of ideas, they suggest a weakness in Kant's theory of idea because of inconsistency of this deduction. Whereas the interpreter more favorable to Kant, like Caimi, he understood the "deduction of ideas" as a justification of rational "direction"; it is not an accurate interpretation of this deduction, because his argument does not fall in the same line with Kant, the deduction of ideas is a justification of "objects *in* ideas," not *focus imaginarius* (A644/B672) nor even "object absolutely" (A670/B698).

I do not disagree that one of the positive outcomes of this deduction consists of the function of the idea showing us a "direction" of the rational unity of all empirical unities. In fact, it appears sufficient to justify the idea as a *focus imaginarius* for this purpose. However, the main interest of this paper is the ground of this outcome. Kant apparently mentions that when we use the ideas which are nothing but thought-entity originally, it must be justified through a "transcendental deduction." In short, the question is how thought-entity can be justified as an object in Kantian theoretical philosophy, given that it solely has a negative status (i.e., counted as a type of "nothing"). What exactly does "object *in* idea" mean, especially when considered in the framework of Kantian theoretical philosophy?

3.1. Thought-entity and "Holding-to-be-true"

What Kant says in the §. 91 of KU gives us a breakthrough for this problem. Here Kant talks of something that is held in our "Opinion." The main claim in this passage is that the matter of opinion must exist in the field of our experience; thus, we must not make any opinion on the ideas of reason⁽¹⁴⁾.

To assume rational inhabitants of other planets is a matter of opinion, [...] But to have the opinion that there are pure, bodiless, thinking spirits in the material universe [...] is fiction, not a matter of opinion at all, but a mere idea left over if one takes everything material away from a thinking being but still leaves it the power of thought. But whether in that case thought remains [...] we cannot determine. Such a thing is a sophistical thought-entities (*ens rationis ratiocinantis*), not a correctly inferred thought-entity (*ens rationis ratiocinatae*) – for the latter of which it is still possible adequately to establish the objective reality of its concept, at least for the practical use of reason, because the latter, which has its own special and apodictically certain principles *a priori*, even demands (postulates) this. (AA. V 468 f. emphasis by A. S.)

(14) "It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under Concepts)" (A51/B75). I take the first half to imply "schematic" and the second half to imply a theory of "a system of principles of understanding" in KrV.

(15) The context of the first half of this citation is as follows: "Objects of mere ideas of reason, which cannot be represented for theoretical cognition in any sort of possible experience at all, are to that extent also not cognizable things at all, hence with regard to them one cannot even have an opinion, [...] Thus matters of opinion are always objects of an at least intrinsically possible experiential cognition." (AA. V 467).

It is clear from this quote that if the idea is taken as the object of opinion, i.e., if it is held to be the object of a scientific hypothesis (such as the existence of extraterrestrial life), then the object of idea is nothing but a fiction. Furthermore, it is important to note that the latter half of the quote discusses *ens rationis ratiocinatae* (correctly inferred thought-entity) in relation to ideas. This entity of reason is not a mere fictional object, but rather an object that is considered possible to possess objective reality. Since this quotation comes from KU, Kant also implies a practical solution to this objective reality. However, this does not necessarily imply that the accounts of KrV are to be resolved solely in practical philosophy. What we can conclude here is that, first, Kant has in mind a theory of “holding-to-be-true” (divided into Opinion, Belief and Knowledge. cf. A820/B848) when he divides *ens rationis* into right and wrong meanings (*ens rationis -ratiocinatae* and *-ratiocinantis*); and second, that this correct status of an “entity of reason” is to be supposed in some other mental attitude than “opinion.” Therefore, we must take this object either as that of “belief” or “knowledge.”

In the following paragraphs, we will examine how the theory of “holding-to-be-true” affects the deduction of ideas. My basic understanding is that the deduction of an idea means a justification of the “object *in* the idea” as the object of “belief.” The first rationale is, as confirmed above, Kant excluded ideas from the object of “opinion,” but he also excluded them from the object of “knowledge.” At least, the ideas of “soul” and “God” cannot, in any sense, be objects of knowledge for Kant’s theory⁽¹⁶⁾. This reason can be derived by logical elimination, albeit indirectly, from the fact that the concept of “holding-to-be-true” is connected to the discussion of the deduction of ideas.

On the other hand, we have another reason that seems to compel us more directly to interpret that the deduction of ideas is to justify the object of belief. The second reason is that the instability of the terms “subjective” and “objective” in the deduction of ideas is identical to that of the sufficiency of beliefs. Kant made the distinction between subjective and objective deduction. Briefly, “objective” deduction is an argument that category is objectively valid towards objects. On the other hand, “subjective” deduction is to argue the necessity of the category from the human transcendental faculty of “thinking” as such (cf. A xvi-xvii). The crucial difference is that subjective deduction is not directly object-relational, but this argumentative path goes into one’s intrinsic cognitive abilities. It is certain that both are of equal value in terms of arguing for the possibility of experience, however, at least understood as different questions (Carl 1992: 45). The idea that triggers the following discussion is that the “deduction of ideas” is a task analogous to “subjective deduction.” It was Zoher (1958) who pointed this out, and his argument is further supported by Eisler’s Lexicon and commentaries on Kant’s philosophy proposed by his contemporaries (Zoher 1958: 44, fn. 3).

However, before leaving, I would like to stop here for a moment to talk about the concept of “subjective deduction” because there are serious problems in this conception, especially in relation to the deduction of categories, and there is a vast body of previous research on that. The problem is that Kant states in his Preface that subjective deduction is not relevant to the essence of the argument (A xvi-xvii). From this, we can assume that it is an argument that is entirely independent of, or, at best, supplementary to the objective deduction of categories. This supremacy of objective deduction is also found in MAN’s Preface (AA. IV 474 Anm.), and is discussed by Förster (1998: 44-5). In contrast to Preface, in §14 of the A-edition of the deduction of categories, subjective and objective deduction can be understood as mutually indispensable arguments (A97). For example, Hoppe points out a textual disagreement between the two texts (Hoppe 1998: 164-5). In this regard, interpretations are divided on whether to give priority to the position of the Preface or to the A-edition of the Deduction. For many commentators, these two statements are puzzling; thus, it has often been regarded that Kant committed an “imaginary subject of transcendental psychology” (Strawson 1966: 32).

In contrast, Wolfgang Carl’s (1992) study revealed that what Kant meant by subjective deduction was a discussion of the “transcendental constitution” of the cognitive sources of subjects, which is distinct from empirical psychology⁽¹⁷⁾. In this vein, Henry Allison (2015) argues persuasively that Kant’s description of the primacy of objec-

(16) In contrast, Kant counts “freedom” as a matter of “fact” (AA. V 468). In other words, we can, in some sense, form an objectively necessary knowledge of the idea of freedom. This argument cannot be discussed here as it relates to the problem of “facts of reason” (AA. V 31).

tive deduction in his Preface is specific to the general goal of KrV, i.e. “Critique”, and that the subjective deduction is as essential as the objective one for the argument about the “deduction of categories.” To rephrase his analysis simply, the intention of Kant’s Preface is to show “the larger message of the *Critique*” at the expense of “glossing over the lesser” details (Allison 2015: 199).

I cannot delve deep into a discussion on the deduction of categories in this paper; however, in relation to the deduction of ideas, the following points are important. First, since Zoicher, there has been a consensus that the deduction of ideas cannot be an objective deduction in the sense that is expected for categories, but can only be a subjective one. Second, even if the deduction of ideas is subjective, this does not imply that we are committing empirical psychological research. In other words, as I will discuss in more detail later, my central claim that the deduction of ideas is not based on “empirical interest,” but is based solely on reason, that is, on the “pure interest of reason,” thus it is consistent with Carl and Allison’s view. Now let us look back at how Kant argued about the deduction of ideas. Kant already refers to the deduction of ideas as a goal at the beginning of the Dialectic, and mentions how it differs from the deduction of categories as follows.

No *objective deduction* of these transcendental ideas is actually possible, such as we could provide for the categories. For just because they are ideas, they have in fact no relation to any object that could be given congruent to them. But we can undertake a *subjective introduction* to them from the nature of our reason, and this is to be accomplished in the present section. (A336/B393, emphasis by A. S.)

If Kant follows the same terminology in this passage as he does in the Preface to the A-edition, it can be interpreted that what he was aiming at in the deduction of ideas is not the justification of the “objective validity” of a concept to an “object.” rather the justification of the “object *in* the idea” within reason itself. However, things are not that simple. At the very beginning of the deduction of the idea, Kant says as follows.

One cannot avail oneself of a concept *a priori* with any security unless one has brought about a transcendental deduction of it. The ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories; but if they are to have the least *objective validity*, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely sophisticated thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, granted that it must also diverge quite far from the deduction one can carry out in the case of the categories. That deduction is the completion of the critical business of pure reason, and it is what we will now undertake. (A669/B697 f. emphasis by A. S.)

If we agree with the following two conditions, then there is an apparent contradiction: (1) An idea is a kind of a concept. (2) The objective validity of a concept means that concept semantically has its extension, i.e. valid for at least one object. Then, it leads that through the deduction of ideas, Kant was trying to justify the possibility of cognizing an object of the idea in its absolute sense. Namely, on the one hand, he says that the deduction of an idea belongs to “subjective deduction,” but on the other hand, he says that the goal is a proof of “objective validity” of transcendental ideas. Such acrobatics can only be done by eliminating the main body of Kant’s theory of deduction, which is unacceptable to us. The key question is, what is the “indeterminate objective validity” of the idea that this deduction is supposed to bring?

3.2. A Solution of the problem: IS-validity

The solution to such inconsistencies is to interpret the deduction of ideas as a justification of the object of “belief.” Importantly, Kant leaves a similarly ambiguous account of the subjective/objective status of “belief.” We

(17) I want to be accurate on this point. According to Carl, Kant’s subjective deduction aims to elucidate the “transcendental” construction of cognitive subjects and not an empirical psychology (Carl 1992: 52-53). In addition to this, Allison made explicit that it cannot be understood in relation to analytical philosophy or philosophy of mind (Allison 2015: 201-202).

will eventually resolve this ambiguity through the following discussion. Let us start by looking at how Kant describes the beliefs. As mentioned earlier, belief is one of the three stages of the “holding-to-be-true”, although I cannot explain the whole and detailed picture of the problem concerning Kant’s “holding-to-be-true” in this paper⁽¹⁸⁾. It will be sufficient for our purpose to keep in mind that “holding-to-be-true” is closely related to the “modality” of judgment. In other words, the three stages of “holding-to-be-true” – opinion, belief, and knowledge – coincide with “problematic,” “assertoric,” and “apodictic” judgments, respectively (A70/B95)⁽¹⁹⁾.

Here, the following objections may be brought up. That is, Kant’s *ens rationis* as a kind of “nothing” is classified as “quantity” in relation to the table of categories, and to interpret it as a matter of “modality” is less plausible and rests on a confusion of categories. A crucial reason why our argument is not the subject of this refutation is that Kant gives a peculiar position to “modality.” This is because Kant explains that the concept of modality does not define propositional content, but expresses the “value of the copula” (A74/B99 f.). In other words, it is possible to add a modal value to a singular judgment about the quantity; for instance, we can rephrase “there is one apple” as “it is contingent that there is one apple” without changing its truth value. Since such an attachment of modal values is logically possible, the previous rebuttal misses the point. Rather, what we should consider is how this modality works within the process of the deduction of ideas.

Let us turn our discussion back to the deduction of ideas and its relationship to “belief.” “Holding-to-be-true” can be “conviction” (*Überzeugung*) only if it is “communicable” (A820/B848-A821/B849). In other words, the convincing proposition must have the same validity to more than one person at least, and it must be worthy of telling someone else. Otherwise it is nothing more than a “mere persuasion.” In this conviction, “assertoric” judgement is to be classified as “belief,” as “merely subjectively sufficient holding-to-be-true” in the words of Kant. Therefore, “belief” has some “objectivity” by the definition of its upper categories (i.e., conviction), but Kant explains that it is merely “subjectively sufficient.” The confusion described above is generally formulated as “the distinction between the subjective/objective insufficiency/sufficiency of an assent (or, in short, the SOIS-distinction)” (Höwing 2016: 202), and has been discussed intensively until now. The key to the solution is to take “objective sufficiency,” especially in the sense of “communicability,” in a slightly broad sense, as distinct from objectivity in a narrow sense, “universality in the strict sense.” This properly modified objectivity is called “inter-subjective validity”⁽²⁰⁾. This concept was developed through Chignell (2007: 326) and Pasternack (2014: 48), but here I would like to specifically highlight the formulation in Nicholas Stang’s work. According to Stang (2016), being “inter-subjectively valid (IS-valid)” means that:

(18) For a detailed discussion, see Shigeta, Ayumu (2020): “Kant on the Concept of ‘Fürwahrhalten,’” In: *Philosophy (Tetsugaku)*, 71, 149-158.

(19) This fact can be confirmed from such works as Jäsche’s *Logic* (1800, AA. IX) and Meier’s *Auszug der Vernunftlehre* (1752, AA. XVI), in which the direct relationship with Kant’s thought is well established, as well as Kant’s own manuscripts.

(20) Perhaps the emphasis on intersubjectivity may arouse the suspicion from Kant scholars. This is because to admit such weakened objectivity would seem to imply a withdrawal from Kant’s critical philosophy, which emphasizes universality and objectivity of our cognition. So, I want to briefly explain here why this is not the case. The first thing to stress is that what is called “intersubjective validity” only means that a certain opinion is “communicable.” We can find this idea in Kant’s distinction between the holding-to-be-true form the mere persuasion. For instance, Kant says that “the touchstone of whether taking something to be true is conviction or mere persuasion is therefore, externally, the possibility of *communicating* it and finding it to be valid for the reason of every human being” (A820/B848, emphasis by A. S.). Moreover, Kant insists that we need to test on the communicability of belief to distinguish the holding-to-be-true form the mere persuasion: “the experiment that one makes on the understanding of *others*, to see if the grounds that are valid for us have the same effect on the reason of *others*, is a means [...] for revealing the merely private validity of the judgment, i.e., something in it that is mere persuasion” (A821/B849, emphasis by A. S.). The reason why we introduce the idea of intersubjectivity here is that if we understand communicability as objectivity in a strong sense, then Kant’s account will be inconsistent altogether. Thus, to avoid this problem, “intersubjectivity” as an appropriate strength validity has been discussed. Secondly, introducing this concept does not reduce Kant’s argument to an Egoism. This is because intersubjectivity assumes a plurality of cognitive subjects as its pre-condition. Also, this is true even for the special theme of “pure interest of reason.” The point to consider here is that, if we are finite rational beings, we are interested in an object independent of our sensible environment and circumstances. Therefore, the conclusion that there exists only one such subject cannot be concluded.

(IS-valid) S's judging that p is intersubjectively (IS) valid if and only if $\exists g$ such that (i) S bases her judging that p on g , and (ii) g is an epistemic ground (reason) for S and other rational agents to judge that p . (Stang 2016: 282)

We must note that the range of "rational agents" for which g is a ground to judge p can vary. So, this allows that there is a different "degree" of IS-validity. At one extreme is to be a judgement based on grounds which is valid for all finite rational beings (i.e., all humans). Stang refers to this as "maximal IS-validity" (ibid.)⁽²¹⁾. The key element of the present argument is the concept of maximal IS-validity. This is because IS-valid beliefs are to be held subjectively, but still have an objective validity in a broader sense⁽²²⁾.

Let us recall, Kant said that the deduction of ideas is "objective validity, even if it is only *an indeterminate one*" (A669/B697 emphasis by A. S.). Therefore, the idea for which transcendental deduction takes place certainly needs some kind of "objective validity," but this "objectivity" means just broader objectivity in the sense of the maximal IS-validity mentioned above. Thus, the deduction of an idea is merely a "subjective" deduction, but because the scope of the "object *in* the idea" is maximally inter-subjective, we can justify its "objective validity" via transcendental deduction. Nevertheless, it remains "indeterminate" by itself because it does not have a determinative relation to the object, as is the case with ordinary concepts.

3.3. Case study: How deduced ideas work

I will confirm at the end that this understanding of ideas is consistent with a theory of what Kant calls "rational belief." A "rational belief" is a belief that is grounded in "pure reason alone"⁽²³⁾ and thus has "the maximum IS-validity." Kant specifically refers to God and the soul as objects of rational belief. These rational beliefs can be either "dogmatical" or "moral," each relying on the speculative and moral interests of reason⁽²⁴⁾. Kant postulates the reality of "ideas" as the object of rational belief through his explanation about "rational belief." It has become somehow a convention in the Kant scholars that the reality of the object of rational belief is established in the moral philosophy. What about the dogmatical one? Although it is often overlooked, Kant does acknowledge the justification of ideas in his theoretical beliefs too.

According to Kant, accepting God's real existence, which must be solely outside of the empirical world (A677/B705), as something worthwhile to believe in, is an indispensable guide for natural science⁽²⁵⁾. Kant says:

But I know no other condition for this unity that could serve me as a clue for the investigation of nature except

(21) Some would question how maximal IS-validity differs from something like normal objective validity or universality. A detailed discussion is not possible here, but what is important is the criterion for the distinction between belief and knowledge. Beliefs are IS-valid, and if they are rational beliefs, they have maximal IS-validity. However, beliefs do not have objective validity (OV). Knowledge is not only IS-V, but also OV; OV must have a ground from which a certain consequence (this consequence itself can be either *a priori* or *a posteriori*) is necessarily derived. Thus, IS-validity certainly implies that its beliefs are actual for a set of subjects. However, they do not have a necessity so strong that other sets are not allowed to have the possibility of having other beliefs.

(22) One may consider introducing new concepts in this way to be an extremely ugly method of Kant interpretation. In my opinion, however, such a rebuttal would be unacceptable unless they presented a plausible alternative explanation for SOIS-distinction. Kant argues for a "strict" meaning of objectivity; making a distinction between this kind of objectivity, which is synonymous with universality, and loose objectivity, which is not, was effective in organizing a confusing discussion.

(23) See following passage from WDO: "a rational belief is one grounded on no date other than those contained in pure reasons" (AA. VIII 141).

(24) For this discussion, see also Shigeta (2020). Briefly, the "speculative interest" is an interest in "what there is" and the "practical" one is an interest in "what ought to do." Both are "pure" interest in the sense that they arise solely by virtue of the natural mechanism of reason.

(25) Rather, it can be said that the deduction of ideas in KrV and the positive significance of thought-entity arise only in the context of "the inquiry of natural science." This is consistent with the interest of speculative reason in "what can I know?" In contrast, the theory of postulates in KpV, a similar positive significance of God and the soul is mentioned in the different context and purpose, i.e. "Supreme Good." It is not possible in this paper to argue all the impact of the deduction of ideas on the whole Kantian critical philosophy.

as far as I presuppose that a higher intelligence has arranged everything in accordance with the wisest ends. Consequently, the presupposition of a wise author of the world is a condition of an aim which is, to be sure, contingent but yet not inconsiderable, namely that of having a guide for the investigation of nature. (A826/B854)

In order to fully explain the “purposive unity of nature” as we have seen here, it is an inevitable theoretical assumption to assume God to exist “outside the world” relative to the inside of our world of experience (A677/B705). By saying it serves only as a “clue” for the development of the natural sciences, Kant expresses the “heuristic” nature of ideas in regulative use (A671/B699). Furthermore, Kant makes clear that the idea as the object of this belief is “subjective,” and it has a regulative effect:

The word “belief,” however, concerns only the direction (Leitung) that an idea gives me and the subjective influence on the advancement of my actions of reason that holds me fast to it, even though I am not in a position to give an account of it from a speculative point of view. (A827/B855)

The reality of an idea is justified as something which is worthwhile to believe in, and its actual effect can only be recognized in the subjective, i.e., regulative use of the internal influence of reason itself. The above concrete functions of reason are the arguments that Kant wanted to defend or justify through the “deduction of ideas.” For Kant, “one cannot avail oneself of a concept *a priori* with any security unless one has brought about a transcendental deduction of it” (A669/B697). Through the discussion so far, it would have been appreciated that Kant justifies *ens rationis* as an object of belief through the deduction of ideas, making it *ens rationis ratiocinatae* that is sufficient and well-warranted to be used as a “regulative” principle of reason.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper with a summary of the results. First, the present study is distinguished from the previous ones in that it has more positive consequences for the “deduction of ideas.” The previous body of research has not dealt seriously with Kant’s claims of objective validity regarding the deduction of ideas, rather has interpreted them in some withdrawn ways. However, this paper allows for a positive interpretation of Kant’s claims by adopting a moderate concept of objectivity called IS-validity. Second, I think I have succeeded in explaining the positive status of *ens rationis ratiocinatae* as an object of belief. It is literally a sort of thought-entity, which is why its positive meaning has not been fully captured in previous studies of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Moreover, although Kant himself expressed the positive meaning of the idea in his argument of the deduction of ideas, it has not been appreciated properly because of the difficulty of this argument that the idea, which is a typical example of thought-entity, has positive aspects as *ens rationis ratiocinatae*. This interpretation indicates that it is necessary to re-examine a conventional understanding of the “object” in Kant studies, i.e., the view that the object is limited to appearances. These consequences make it possible for us to interpret the Appendix of the Dialectic not as mere supplements, but more as an evident bridge to methodology. Considering these discussions of methodology, it is also possible, for the first time, to read Kant’s moral philosophy and KU as an extension layer of the deduction of ideas in KrV.

Finally, I would like to mention the developmental issues of this paper. First, this study makes sense that the deduction of ideas could at least serve as an object of “rational belief”; however, this paper does not consider the impact of regulative ideas on a type of belief that has a limited range of empirical validity: “historical belief.” Kant’s discussion of “hypothesis” and the theory of “science” are presumed to be the reason for the potential influence of ideas on this empirical type of belief. Second, I mentioned in the text that the “holding-to-be-true” argument relates to the modality attachments, but the logical form of this argument needs further consideration. That is to say when we change “thinking that *p*” into “believing that *p*,” the latter is implied that *p* is “actual” for the subject, we will notice that there is a change in “intentional relations,” rather than the neutral addition of a “modality.” The “regulative idea” is clearly an intentional object, and it requires further reflection⁽²⁶⁾.

Abbreviations

AA	<i>Akademie-Ausgabe</i>
KrV	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i>
KpV	<i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</i> (AA. V)
KU	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft</i> (AA. V)
MAN	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft</i> (AA. IV)
WDO	<i>Was heißt sich im Denken orientieren?</i> (AA. VIII)

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