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Transcendentalism as the New Paradigm of Philosophy (philosophizing)

«Only the revival of Kant's transcendentalism can be an
[possible] outlet for contemporary philosophy»

Alexander Ogurtsov

Abstract. In the paper we have attempted to consider Kant's transcendental philosophy as a special type of philosophizing and the new transcendental paradigm, which differs from both the 'object' metaphysics of Antiquity and 'subject' metaphysics of the Modern Age (transcendent — *transcendental* — immanent metaphysics). For this purpose we shall introduce the methodological terms 'transcendental shift' and 'transcendental perspective'. The basis for such representation of transcendentalism is the cognitive and semantic reading of the *Critique* and theory of 'two aspects'. While in classical metaphysics cognition is interpreted as a relation between empirical subject and object, in transcendental metaphysics (perspective) 'possible experience' (*Erfahrung*) shall be understood as a relation between 'consciousness generally' (transcendental subject) and 'thing-in-general' (transcendental object). In this, Kant's transcendentalism, in contrast to classical contemplative metaphysics, acts as an 'experimental' metaphysics and the transcendentalism is defined as the intermediate between the immanent and transcendent ontological area (as a "instrumental" component of our cognition).

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In the second half of the XXth century the second (after Neo-Kantianism) 'discovery' of Kant, associated with conceptual change in the understanding of transcendentalism — the transition from the traditional *ontological* theory of "two worlds" to the theory of "two aspects" (Rohlf, 2010) based on epistemic reading of *Critique*, arises. In this regard, R.Hanna writes that the development of contemporary philosophy (in the face of two major traditions: analytic and continental) is largely predetermined by Kant's transcendentalism, and the XXth century may be named as the post-Kantian century (Hanna, 2007); M.Foucault echoes him and says that Kant "stands at the beginning of a new method of philosophizing" (inaugural lecture «L'Ordre du discours», 1970); The Russian philosopher A. Ogurtsov emphasizes in his book devoted to the contemporary philosophy of science (2011) that only the *revival of transcendentalism* (as the "removal" of the alternative of *naturalism/realism* («Back to things!») and *constructivism* («Nothing is given. All is our construction!») can be the outlet for the contemporary philosophy/philosophy of science (see *epigraph*; Ogurtsov, 2011).

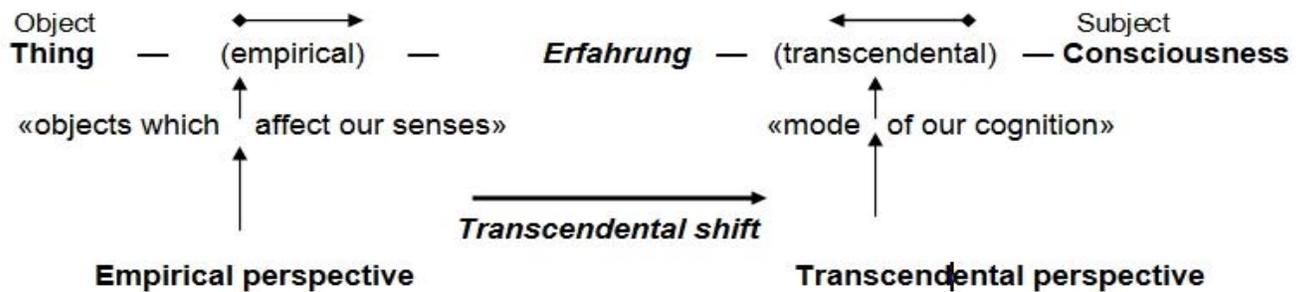
This allows us to consider Kant's transcendentalism not just as one of the particular philosophical theory, but as the basis of a new — *transcendental* — paradigm of philosophy (philosophizing).

Anticipating our subsequent exposition, let us say a few words about the methodology of our approach. It presents itself as meta-research of Kantian transcendentalism, the intention of which is aimed at not so much the detailed textual reproduction of Kant's thoughts themselves (concepts) "within," as much as on the reflexive influence of main passages of Kantian thoughts so as to identify and learn how to apply them, that is, we will follow the letter, but the spirit of Kantian thoughts. At the same time we will try not to consider Kant's transcendentalism from the point of view of some other philosophy, for example Hegel or Husserl, which treated transcendentalism as the precursor to their philosophy, that is, "built" Kantian transcendentalism in their own concept, but rather try to identify the main intentions of transcendentalism, cleansed of its particulars. By this, we claim to analyze the position of meta-transcendentalism].

As the starting point for our interpretation of the transcendentalism we take the classical paradigm of epistemology, for which the main question is the relation of a subject to an object what can be represented in binary scheme **S**(ubject) — **O**(bject). On this scale, we also mark the result of our knowledge or the interaction between the subject (**S**) and the object (**O**) in the process of cognition – the *experience* (or *experienced knowledge*; Ger. ‘*Erfahrung*’)¹, which is located in the middle of the scale. In this case the binary scheme turns into a ternary one: **S** — *Erfahrung* — **O**.

Thing (Object) — Erfahrung/Erfahrung — Consciousness (Subject)

According to key [KrV, B 25] of *Critique*, where transcendental philosophy (*TrPh*) is defined as “...knowledge which is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible a priori”², the transition to **transcendentalism** is based on **transcendental ‘shift’** from [empirical] studies of the *objects* (things) to the right side of the scale in the direction to the *subject*, but rather into the intermediate between subject and object area of *experienced knowledge*³, — which is the area of the transcendental (as a specific ontological area).



The comparison of the transcendental with the empirical, which we define in the presented scheme as the distinction between empirical and transcendental *perspectives* (Palmquist, 1987; Allison, 2004) is crucial for the understanding of the transcendental. If the empirical perspective believes the knowledge we receive to be the result of affection of our sensibility, the *transcendental perspective* believes the knowledge to be the result of our faculty of cognition⁴.

However, transcendentalism (the transcendental perspective) does not negate the empirical approach, but sort of "builds" it into a more general position, based on the foundation of our (empirical) knowledge with the necessity of a priori components present. Accordingly, Kant characterises his concept (position) as the combination of empirical realism and transcendental idealism.

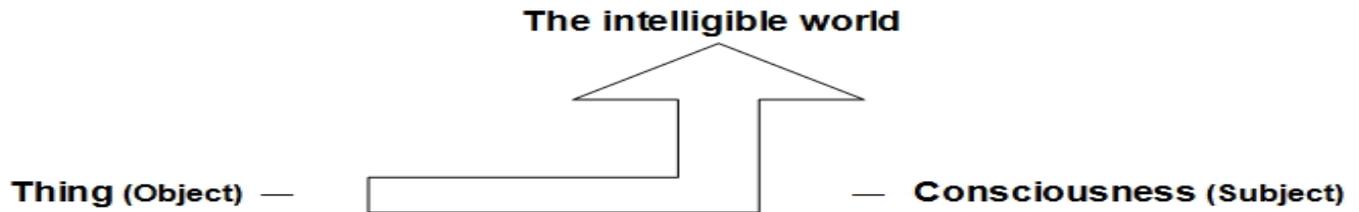
However, the transcendental shift Kant postulated is not fully defined and refers to the interval of the possible transcendental arrangement on the right side of the scale between *objective* experience and the *subjective* content of our consciousness. Accordingly, there may be distinct interpretations of the transcendental (resp. transcendental), among which we distinguish three main possible interpretations (see *Appendix-1*).

¹ Kant equates *Erfahrung* and *Empirische Erkenntnis* [KrV, B147–8].

² Or: "... but with our mode (manner) of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*".

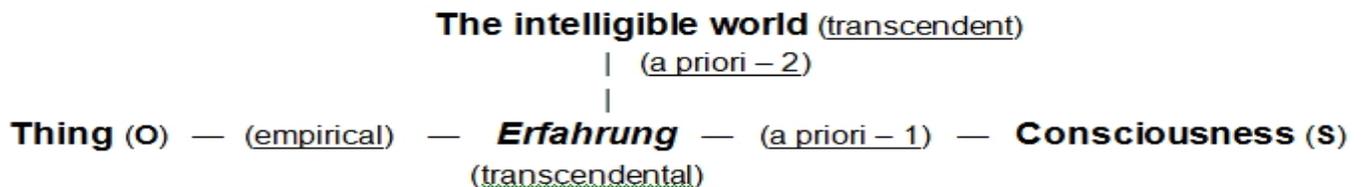
³ Also see Kant's notes from *Prolegomena*: «The word 'transcendental', which with me means a reference of our cognition, i.e., not to things, but only to the cognitive faculty...».

⁴ We note that we introduce the understanding of the transcendental perspective, which differs somewhat as the concept of "transcendental perspective" in the works of Allison (1) and Palmquist (2), although it corresponds with them. For us, the transcendental perspective is the transcendental shift towards study of the "mode of our cognition" (B25), the definition of the naive-realistic or empirical state point of view (perspectives) on cognition of the impact of the object (thing) on the subject (mind).



In the conceptual relationship such an interpretation does not take into account the Kantian differentiation between the a priori and transcendental, although the a priori also opposes the empirical, although in a different manner than the transcendental. In this regard it worth mentioning the change in the definition of TrPh: in the 2nd ed. of *Critique* not a *priori* concepts (1st ed.) but our *a priori mode of cognition* is the object of TrPh. Thus “late” Kant does not equate *transcendental* to a priori, but understands *transcendental* as the possibility of a *priori* [knowledge]⁹.

In this regard we should pay attention to Kant’s remark in [KrV, B80–1], which states that “not all a *priori* knowledge should be [included]” in the area of the transcendental, but only the knowledge of its (1) possibility and (2) use in the experience, i.e. objective significance of a priori. Although Kant understands *the possibility* of a priori, inter alia, as its *epigenesis* [KrV: B91, 118–9, 127–8, 167; or Kant’s ‘subjective deduction’ [AXVI - XVII], the essence of transcendental is associated with (2), i.e. with “objective validity” (Ger. *objektiv Gültigkeit*) to apply a priori in our [empirical] cognition (or Kant’s ‘objective deduction’ [AXVI - XVII]). Therefore, if a *priori* can be correlated with the non-platonic subjective realm of consciousness (Cartesian “innate ideas”; see above) or Platonic objectively existing Forms from the realm of the intelligible, the transcendental (as transcendentality) correlates with the area of *Erfahrung*: this is *trans-subjective* principles (as “instrumental” component of cognition), which constitute our “mode of cognition”.



Thus Kant's characteristic of transcendentalism as the research of our “mode of cognition” should be understood not *subjective-psychologically*, in terms of analysis of our faculties of cognition and/or solution of the problem of (epi)genesis of a priori¹⁰ and not objectively idealistic, but *cognitive-semantically* as a solution of the problem of *objectivity* of a priori representations, i.e. the possibility of their use in experience. Kant tells about the semantic orientation of transcendentalism in a letter to M. Herz (21.02.1772), in which he explicates the idea of his *Critique* as a response to the following ‘semantic’ question for the first time : “*What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call ‘representation’ to the object?*” Thus the Kant’s position or transcendentalism in the narrow sense is connected with the solution of “the main transcendental question” about the **objectivity** (“objective validity”) **of a priori representations**, which are located in the middle of the epistemic scale¹¹, while the metaphysics developed by Kant's appears as

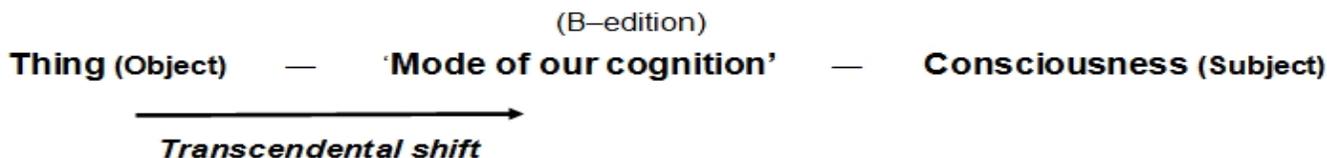
⁹ Agreeing with N. Hinske, the transcendental on the third stage of his evolution is understood exactly such (1787; the time of writing the second edition of *Critique*).

¹⁰ Cf.: 1) “I concern myself not with the evolution of concepts, like Tetens (all actions by means of which concepts are produced), nor with their analysis, like Lambert, but solely with their objective validity» (AA 18:23 (Refl. 4900); 2) “Tetens investigates the concept of pure reason merely subjectively (human nature), I investigate them objectively. The former analysis is empirical, the latter transcendental” (AA 18:23 (Refl. 4901).

¹¹ On one hand, this corresponds with the theory of “two aspects,” in which the Kantian things-in-themselves and things-to-us thing are viewed not as two different ontological essences, but as “two sides” or “dual methods” (in XXVII): the sensual and the rational [methods] consideration of the same subject.

On the other hand, the given position of the transcendental between the objective and subjective (mental) allows one to

metaphysics of possible experience (see about **possible** experience below).

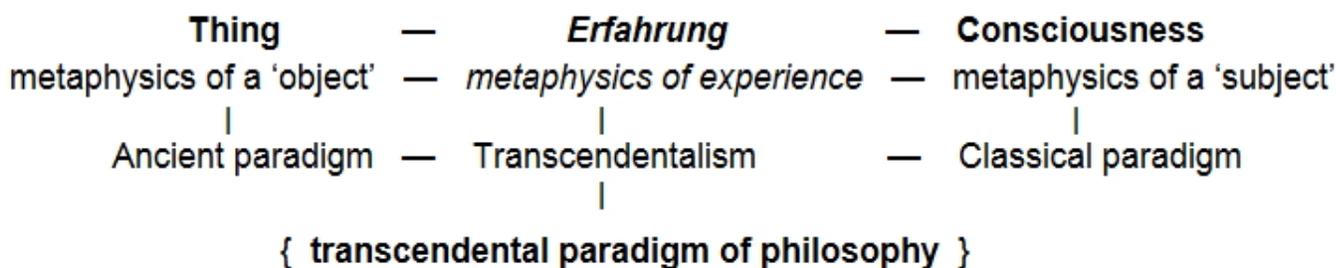


However, the described first phase of the *transcendental shift* does not yet characterize the specifics of Kant's transcendentalism, but sets a range of *à la* transcendental concepts. This “withdrawal” of subject and object in favor of some primary in respect to the subject and object of the given occurs, for example, in Empiricism, Marxism, Popper’s three-worlds-theory and other non-classical philosophical systems. Thus, Kant stands at the origins of the *transcendental paradigm of philosophizing*, the transition to which is connected with overcoming both *objective* (Antiquity) and *subjective* (Modern Era) points of view and moving the intention of research to the middle between object and subject area which Kant associates with *experience/Erfahrung*.

It worth noting that the concept of the mature Plato is the first ancestor of this type of philosophizing, where Forms are postulated as a necessary component of cognition without which a person “will have nothing on which his mind can rest; and so he will utterly destroy the power of reasoning” [Parmenides, 135c].

Husserl further develops this intention, as Kant’s *transcendental shift* can be interpreted as a return to some pre-reflective state of mind in the act of cognition, in which neither the subject nor the object opposing it differ yet, and although the intention of our [intentional according to Husserl] consciousness is directed on an object, but the phenomenal given experience, which is the inception of our knowledge, is the primary given for it¹². Accordingly, subject and object presumed by the classical paradigm as primary appear as secondary entities in transcendental paradigm of philosophizing.

If the *thing* appears to be the main object of the study of the ancient paradigm of philosophy, i.e. the metaphysics of a thing/object is developing (transcendent metaphysics; meta–physics), and the consciousness/cogito appears to be the object of the classical paradigm of Modern Era (respectively, the metaphysics of a ‘subject’ [immanent metaphysics; meta–psychology] is developing), then the middle area of ‘*Erfahrung*’ is the object of the transcendental type of philosophizing, which appears in the transcendentalism (= transcendental metaphysics) of Kant:



{Note on transcendental ontology} A feature of this type of philosophizing puts forth that that which correlates with its ontology (the realm of the transcendental or the realm of experience) is neither subjective nor objective. The metaphor of a telescope conveys the nature of transcendental ontology well (G. Frege). Suppose that we observe a star with the aid of a telescope; the star itself will have an objective (real) status (which corresponds to the Kantian thing-in-itself). Our existing mental image of it will already be subjective. Let us ask the question: what status will the star have on the lens of the telescope (that can correlate with the Kantian thing-for-us), which is basically as if between the objective (real) star itself and its subjective (mental) image of our consciousness?

speaks of its special ontological status.

¹² Accordingly, the Kantian shift could be called the transcendental-phenomenological, and Kantian *Erfahrung* can be correlated with Husserl’s “intentional reality”.

Our answer will be that this "image (telescope)" will have a specific intermediate ontological status — a transcendental status (compare with Husserl's *intentional reality* or Popper's *third world*).

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We now proceed to further analysis of Kant's transcendental shift, to the analysis of his second — metaphysical — phase, with which the specifics of Kant's own transcendentalism should be linked. This specifics are largely predetermined, on one hand, by Kant to build his "experimental" metaphysics (by analogy with the experimental science of Modern Era) "new method of thought" (B XVIII), or *transcendental* method (Cohen, Natorp). And on the other hand, that by which Kant inherits and develops passages, dating back from the ontology of Wolf, which is directed at the analysis of the possible, and not actual, object/subject. What important here is the definition of TrPh from the A–edition of *Critique* [A11-2], where Kant defines the object TrPh in the quality of study of "objects in general"¹³.

{General note to this paper} We started our interpretation of transcendentalism with the exposition of the transcendental shift, based on the definition B–edition, and not we move to the exposition of the second of its stages — the metaphysical shift, based on the definition A–edition. This logically justified, but historically we had to change the order of expositions and start from definition A–edition. Then the scheme of the talk (shift) would be such:

[empirical] **Thing (O)** — [possible] **Thing** — [possible] **Experience/Erfahrung**
(Thing-in-general)

* * *

Like any metaphysical method, the transcendental method is in the universalization of the empirically given by its liberation from particular conditions. Actually beginning from Antiquity (Plato, Aristotle, etc) any field of science (meta–physics) deals with the kind of "overcoming of empirical", but the specific of "scientific" *transcendental metaphysics* comparing with the previous "school" metaphysics¹⁴, is largely (though not completely) predetermined by the fact that the object of its generalizations is not a thing or consciousness, but *experience*. Transcendentalism acts as *metaphysics of experience*, or (more precisely) *metaphysics of possible experience*.

However, the determining thing for the 'new method of thought' of the Kantian transcendentalism that distinguishes it from traditional metaphysics is that this is not only the subject which changes, but also *the style of philosophizing* and foremost, the way of introducing metaphysical abstractions. Traditional metaphysics, being traced back to Aristotle, is a doctrine about *essence*, which is positioned as something meta-physical, i.e. as fundamentally unobservable underlying-ness in the base ('sub–stance') of the sensuously given. For Kantian "experimental" metaphysics the methodological differentiation of 'real — possible' is the essential. The transcendental, unlike the empirical-actual-ness, acts as *possible*. Kant, accordingly, is building new metaphysics — the metaphysics of *possible experience* which acts as the transcendental generalization of empirical experience and in the result of which the structure of "**transcendental O — transcendental S**", encompassing the empirical relation **O — S**, is formed:

transcendental O — { empirical O — empirical S } — transcendental S

Transcendental-metaphysical, unlike essential-metaphysical, acts as a "horizontal" functional generalization of given empirical pattern. It is based on the transition of the *transcendental perspective* if an object of empirical perception acts as an appearance (phenomenon) or

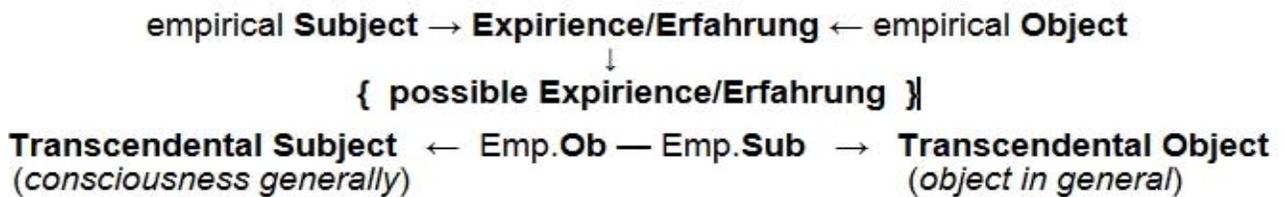
¹³ We note that in this definition of TrPh two thought "centers" can be defined: 1) «objects in general», and 2) "the system of a priori concepts (about objects in general)," which determine the two main ideas («parts») of Kant's concept of the "transcendental" (see: (Katrechko, 2014)). In this case, it is important for us to pay attention to the first of them, coming from Ch. Wolff — "object in general." Cf. «A *science of things in general* really abstracts from all differences and determinations of things as objects (*Gegenstände*) and concerns therefore only pure reason: *Transcendental philosophy*» [Kant, Reflexionen, R5129, in: Kants gesammelte Schriften, vol. 17].

¹⁴ "Critique stands in the same relation to the common metaphysics of the schools, as chemistry does to alchemy, or as astronomy to the astrology..." (Kant, *Prol*).

empirically given in the appearance of the thing, which by the thing of transcendental perspective act as an abstract *thing-in-general*, which Kant identifies with the *transcendental object* [KrV, A250].

On this subject Kant writes: “The transcendental use [of a conception]... is this, that it is referred to things *in general* and to *itself* [= thing-in-itself], but the empirical use, when merely to *phenomena* [= empirical things, or things-as-it-appears-to-us]” [KrV, B298]¹⁵.

As a result of such *transcendental generalization* the empirical subject and object are converted to, respectively, the *consciousness generally* or a/the (*?^{16*}) **transcendental subject** (transcendental unity of apperception; TUA) and the (*?*) *object-in-general* or the **transcendental thing/object** (TO), the relation between which predefines the **possible experience**. Or, considering the primacy of experience, *the possible experience* is conceptualized by Kant as the “interaction” of transcendental object and subject. In this case TUA and TO are introduced by Kant in a correlative manner: «the transcendental unity of apperception that all the manifold, given in intuition is united into a conception of the [transcendental] object» [KrV, B140]¹⁷:



{Note on Kantian doctrine of “transcendental object”} The development of the Kantian doctrine about the “transcendental object,” which conceptually may identify with “object in general” is quite interesting. In fact, the very category of the “transcendental object” is the first transcendental condition of our recognition of things (experiences) and lays in the basis of all remaining categories. Unfortunately, Kant does not develop this doctrine, and even “blocks” it in B–edition].

{Note on Kantian distinction ‘*transcendent vs. transcendental*’} However, Kant’s “subjective” and “objective” things-in-themselves, which act as kind of left and right limits of the epistemic scale, should be distinguished from transcendental subject and object. The thing-in-itself and noumenal ‘I’ are not *transcendental*, but *transcendent*. According to Kant, their function is negative and is to specify all the cognitive scale the same way as a numerical scale is given through marks “plus” and “minus” of infinity (+∞ and –∞), i.e. to mark the *limits* of our possible cognition. At the same time they are inaccessible for cognition. Transcendental subject (TUA) and object (TO) as the constitutive elements of the possible experience on the scale are between empirical-phenomenal (immanent) and transcendent. Considering this (distinction ‘*transcendent vs. transcendental*’), the Kantian transcendental shift may be represented as follows:

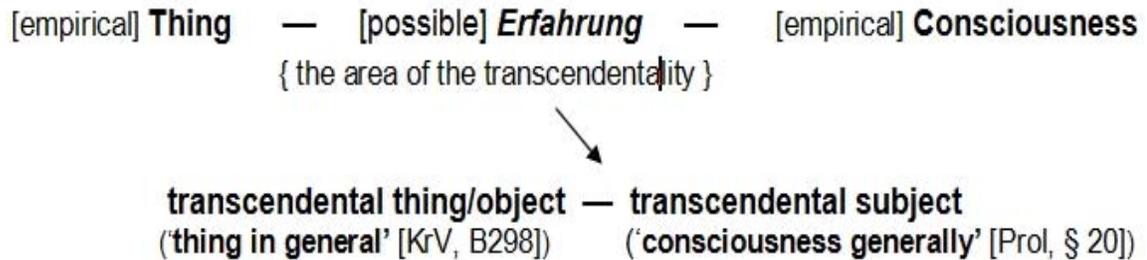
¹⁵ Comp. with *TrPh*– definition in the A–edition: “I call all cognition **transcendental** that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our a priori concepts of **objects in general**” [KrV, A11-12].

¹⁶ In english vesion of this text grammatically with the word “*object-in-general*” (resp. “*consciousness generally*”; see below) had to be used the definite article «the», but *object-in-general* are non-real and abstract objects (our mind’s abstraction), or *ens rationis* (Kant even calls *transcendental object* (as ‘something as such’) “= nothing”) and so on (philosophical) sense here is more suitable indefinite article “a”.

¹⁷ Comp. with characteristics [KrV, A 250–1]. Let us note that the Kantian *transcendental object* stands as objective function of our representation of the world and lies (together with categories) as a base of the *transcendental ontology*, the essence of which can be expressed by the thesis: “*We know not [physical] objects, but we know phenomena objectively [‘thing-ly’].*” (E. Cassirer).

{ transcendent { transcendental { empirical } transcendental } transcendent }
 noumenal 'I' — { TUA — { emp. S — emp. O } — T|O } — thing-in-itself
 (empirical experience)
 { the area of the *transcendentality* as possible experience }

Conclusion. A schematically whole shift has two phases: its *own displacement* and the *transcendental generalization* and may be represented as follows:



Post scriptum. As we have already said, our goal was not to literally expose Kantian transcendentalism, but to expose his (transcendentalism) in general, passing the (general) spirit of the Kantian approach, to expose his soul, and not the letter (of course, based on his texts). Therefore, to present the concept of Kant as a general paradigm and style of philosophizing based on the approach of Kant and Husserl, to develop a modern transcendentalism.

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