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Rediscovering the Boundaries of Pure Reason: An Archaeology of Kant's Critical Phenomenology

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Introduction

The investigation presented here is a return to the "island" of reason which Immanuel Kant mapped long ago [B295].[1] Kant uses the metaphor of an island for reason's dwelling place because his central claim is that there are limits, or shores, beyond which reason cannot go. In what follows I will try to retrace Kant's steps in surveying the island of reason, arguing that the boundaries of reason he discovered take two distinct forms: one which is at the level of the phenomenological object, which I will call the 'ontological' limit, and another which is at the level of our universal or public use of language about objects, which I will call the 'semiotic' limit.[2] Both limits are brought into being by the possibility, and the formal structure, of knowing the bare outside of our own finite activity: namely, the indeterminable unconditioned. Importantly, for Kant we do so from *within* that bounded space, not from *without.* It is knowing that there is something which we cannot, on principle, fully grasp which establishes the "boundaries" of finite human reason.

Why go back to Kant at all? If we consider the "island of reason" as the corpus of Kant's texts, it is now a somewhat neglected island. Many post-Kantian philosophers have already left its shores for the open sea of the metaphysical "unconditioned" which reason longs for [Bxx-xxii], claiming that there is nothing left to see on the island. In some cases it seems as if Kant's thought has been overcome by the discovery of a safe departure which lets us "part the air in free flight" [B9] in metaphysical aspiration; perhaps Kant's thought has been proved wrong. Perhaps Kant accidentally argued that the sea (that which is beyond determinate knowledge) does not exist at all, when the evidence of our own senses and hearts proves that it does; or perhaps he proved that the island itself does not exist (the terrain of our own knowledge), when that is clearly a self-canceling impossibility. However, when we consult the notes Kant left behind on the empty island, in the *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft - KdrV)* in particular, we find that Kant already

[1] In the dissertation I make use of Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, 29 vols. (Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1913), which is the official German-language collected works of Kant, known as the "Prussische Akademie Ausgabe" or *Ak*. I follow the standard academic convention of referring to all of Kant's works by their German-language titles, and Ak. volume and page number, with the exception of *KdrV,* which is referred to by the A and B edition page numbers, in square brackets in the text. I also employ English translations of most of Kant's works, the bibliographical details of which are given in the appropriate place. For *KdrV* I refer to Pluhar's English translation: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Hackett Publishing Company, 1996).

[2] 'Semiotic' is a technical term, which encompasses both language in terms of words and grammars and also the reflective level of thinking which Kant called "conceptual" – the term includes both of what de Saussure called the *signifiant* (signifier) and the *signifie* (signified), while excluding the *chose* (real thing). More on this in the appropriate place.

confidently predicted that the island of reason would be abandoned in future, due to an "unavoidable illusion" [A339/B397]. It is that strange confidence that has made me, before myself leaving the island of reason for the metaphysical sea, examine the deserted landscape of Kant's island one more time, to see if a mystery worth unraveling still lies in the island's interior.

For our task on the island, I have chosen the metaphor of 'archaeology' carefully, because I think it is a very exact comparison and a helpful one for the problem before us. Let us imagine, then, that at the center of Kant's island (the territory of all determinate objective knowledge) there stands the ruins of a structure: the abandoned outlines of Kant's "architectonic" project, the vantage point from which he took his measurements of the island, the heavens, and the sea beyond.[3] Archaeologists, when digging into a ruin, are confronted by arrangements of artificial objects, the identity of which is no longer complete or clear. Often, the clue to reestablishing those identities is purposive: because the ruin was the site of meaningful human activity in the past, we identify what things were, in large part, by identifying what they were used for. For example, a dug-up circle of stones could have been a cistern, an arena, or a temple altar. The choice between these identifications determines, and is mutually determined by, the meaning of the arrangement of other structures found nearby. Archaeologists will often use lines of string or flags as they work to mark out where they think the missing parts of structures should be located; these are then the visible structure of an interpretation laid over the dirt and stone of the ruin itself. While such interpretations can be totally in error, and are perhaps never conclusively demonstrable, the ruin is nevertheless there to be interpreted, and we could say that through a dialectic of interpretation against the stubborn facts, ultimately a reasonably plausible reconstruction may in time emerge. As Kant himself tells us, whenever we approach an unknown manifold, we always already have a governing idea with us, an assumption of what the manifold is within which we try and cognize it.[4] The manifold of the unknown and our preconceived idea of its purposes will mutually correct and stabilize one another as we proceed.

In exactly the same way, the problem of Kant's "transcendental idealism" [A369] is that it is a much worked-upon ruin. The layers of Kant's ideas, and of older influences which Kant himself built upon and transformed, are now overlaid by many philosophical reconstructions. The philosophers who have labored in the Kantian ruins in the past have marked out various plans of the

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3 Cf. Karin de Boer, *Kant's Reform of Metaphysics: The Critique of Pure Reason Reconsidered* (Cambridge University Press, 2020): 254.

4 "To discover something (that lies hidden either in ourselves or elsewhere) in many cases often requires a special talent of knowing how to search well: a natural gift for judging in advance (*iudicii praevii*) where the truth may indeed be found… for we must always first presuppose something here (begin with a hypothesis) from which to begin our course of investigation… ". Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, Günter Zöller and Robert Louden, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 328 [Ak. 7:223].

site, on various preconceived hypotheses. Some of these reconstructions are quite original and add many new rooms and towers to the visible Kantian remains (Hegel or Heidegger, for example); some are focused more narrowly on what is concretely available, but rely on a governing interpretation which never quite seems to fully fit the evidence, especially when the true underground scale of Kant's architectonic complex is taken into consideration (the pre-Critical writings, the second and third Critiques, the 'Anthropology', the 'Logics', the *Opus Postumum*, etc.). An unavoidable part of the archaeological task of rereading Kant, therefore, is to try and 'bracket', in whatever degree possible, the overlapping layers of these mediating interpretations and to allow the ruin itself, Kant's own writings, to stand forth anew, to be patient in mapping it as it gradually gives its own interpretation. That is obviously a daunting and perhaps impossible task. As Kant ruefully reflected, "This work is difficult, and demands a reader resolved to think himself gradually into [my] system...".[5] We must progress with caution, and allow our governing idea of Kant's purposes to be flexible and responsive to what we find in his writings. At some points, we may catch an illuminating flash of the whole which requires us to totally reconfigure our understanding of our own place within the structure. In entering Kant's labyrinth of thinking, we need to take hold of and preserve an "orientation", to avoid getting lost.[6] As explorers, our personal touchstones at the beginning of such a project will be, first, our own philosophical *sensus communis*, the instinctive reference back to the realities themselves which every philosopher uses to judge the plausibility of a hermeneutical structure, and second, a certain sympathy for the whole of Kant's thought, a feeling of balanced emphasis and of the consistent emergence of patterns in the repetition of certain details.

It is true that each individual reader must "think himself gradually" into Kant's system (or any complex philosophical system) in a series of descending spirals through the texts. However, for clarity, we must instead present the conclusions at the very beginning, starting with the governing idea or interpretation into which the accumulating material of Kant's philosophy, as we discover it, will be organized.

I argue, therefore, that we should make sense of the architectonic structure of Kant's thinking as serving the purpose of a metaphysical observatory, an instrument for orientation and navigation. In a much-discussed metaphor in *KdrV*, Kant compares his transcendental project to Copernicus' 'revolution' in astronomy [Bxvi-xvii]. Copernicus studied the observed motions of certain planets, and realized that mathematical models which assumed that the earth did not move

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5 Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science (Prolegomena)*, trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge University Press, 1997): §4 [Ak. 4:274].

6 Immanuel Kant, *Was Heisst: Sich im Denken Orientieren? (What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?)* [Ak. 8:133-147].

while the planets orbited it (a geocentric model) could not account for the astronomical data. Copernicus' revolution was to hypothesize that the earth was also in motion in space, his result being a 'table of corrections' for the observed motions of planets which gave mathematically accurate predictions of celestial motions by adding in the motion of the planet from which the observations were being taken. Copernicus' revolution was not only a scientific but an existential one, because it plunged the observer himself into a previously unrealized motion.[7] Although all the mundane and celestial appearances remained exactly the same to perception, they were radically reconfigured into a new cosmological frame, one which destabilized the frame itself, sending the earth and its tiny astronomers spinning and hurtling through the dance of the heavenly bodies.

Kant's is a parallel, but metaphysical, observatory. By taking careful observations of the (metaphorical) heavens and the horizons of knowledge, Kant realized that something very peculiar happens on the island of reason. The island itself is in motion, and yet no matter how much it moves, the other lands faintly visible on the horizon, where reason dreams its desires will find absolute rest, never come any closer to realization. Those who believe they have escaped the island of reason to go elsewhere in fact have fallen asleep, and are dreaming on the shore; Kant's island is in that respect like Circe's island.[8] Kant wrote that he himself once awoke from "dogmatic slumbers", and headed into the high interior of the island to set up his observatory [Ak. 4:260]. The deepest mystery of the island of reason, as we find from Kant's notes, is that even on its terrain we are still caught in a kind of dream. The "transcendental illusion" affects all our thoughts, like a fog that only thickens as we get closer to the truth. Kant built his architectonic tower to map a route through it that could be trusted, even when the illusion grows so thick that one must continue forward on faith. When we become aware of transcendental illusion enclosing us personally, Kant's thought becomes more than mere history – the Kantian problem of knowing where we are, and knowing how to correctly determine the latter ("orienting" ourselves), becomes immediate and intimate. It is only when we stand in the central chamber of Kant's observatory, and look through his instruments, that we can see for ourselves the nature of the dream, and Kant's method to wake from it. That method involves a particular kind of logical reasoning, a reasoning of navigation or 'orientation', of keeping landmarks aligned. "Deduction" and "transcendental inference" are tools

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7 The point here is not to claim that no one before Copernicus was aware of the earth's motion in space, which I do not think is correct, but to re-realize the destabilizing effect on the individual's sense of self of being in undetectable motion along with the earth, an effect parallel to the decentering effect of Kant's thinking.

8 "With this understanding we will view the various imaginary worlds of these air-architects which each one inhabits quietly to the exclusion of others. Behold, for example, him who inhabits the Order of Things as it was framed by [Wolff] out of but little building material obtained from experience … . Or … the world produced by Crusius out of nothing, by means of a few magical sayings about the thinkable and the unthinkable. And, as we find that their visions are contradictory, we will patiently wait until the gentlemen have finished dreaming." Immanuel Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, trans. Emanuel F. Goerwitz, ed. Frank Sewall (Macmillan Co., 1900), 74.

which allow us to take one step further into the mist than we can actually see, because we see that all our previous thinking was headed in the right direction. Trust in the inner compass of reason, which led us into disorientation in the first place, will rescue us again in the end.

Structure of the Thesis

The first task of the archaeological descent, as indicated above, is to begin by provisionally identifying and distinguishing various interpretations overlaid upon Kant's thought (Chapter 1). The purpose of doing so is twofold: first, I want to establish some broad philosophical problems in post-Kantian thinking which will serve us as guiding landmarks in our journey into the interior of Kant's thought. Second, in the process of doing so we will necessarily establish a preliminary working understanding of the structure of Kant's *KdrV* and the meaning of his key technical terms. In the "analytic" division of post-Kantian thought, I identify the broad problem of 'true knowledge', over against "Cartesianism": how do we know that what we know is real? In the "continental" division of post-Kantian thought, I identify the broad problem of 'mediation': how do we distinguish our subjective contribution from the objective contribution in what we know as experience or consciousness? I connect these two questions at a metaphysical level, the problem of the real grounds of being in the subject-object relation, and argue that the latter is Kant's true concern. Kant's problematic task is to determine how we can separate the contribution of the subject in mediated experience to preserve the independence of the object's real ground: thus the descent into Kant's architectonic ruins is a search for the true meaning of the "*Ding-an-sich*" or "thing in itself".

After Chapter 1, I begin my own reconstructive work of interpretation (Section I), starting with *KdrV* and then, at a treacherous point, referring to the pre-Critical writings leading up to it for 're-orientation'. Chapter 2 examines Kant's argument in *KdrV* concerning objective experience from the beginning of *KdrV* to the end of the Transcendental Aesthetic (the first three sections of the text). Kant asserts in the opening pages of *KdrV* that he is undertaking to demonstrate the possibility of "metaphysics" by showing the validity of "synthetic *a priori* judgments", which is somehow, by its nature, simultaneously a project to restrict metaphysical assertions "within the boundaries of possible experience" [B19-24]. Searching for an interpretive key for these notoriously unclear opening remarks, I set *KdrV* aside and turn to those of Kant's pre-Critical writings which concern his engagement with Leibnizian ideas on logic, metaphysics, and mathematics.

The results of that pre-Critical detour are as follows: in Kant's early lectures on logic, he distinguishes between an "analytic" judgment and a "synthetic" judgment on the basis of the

freedom of the will in determining the contents of the objects to which they respectively refer. However, *both* analytic and synthetic judgments involve the positing of a non-real object which is neither the real being described nor the concept of which the object is that referenced: I borrow Brentano's terminology in calling these "intentionally inexistent objects".[9] Thus, the act of (synthetic) 'judgment', which for Kant is equivalent to the act of consciousness itself, always consists of and brings into intentional being a dyadic concept-object structure. In parallel, throughout the pre-Critical period, Kant consistently maintains that the actual act of existing of any real being can never be included in the content of an object (the alternative would be "intellectual [i.e., Divine] intuition" [B72]). Hence actual be-ing, by the imitative nature of thought, escapes our intentional objectification. Kant then applies these reflections to a further puzzle about the respective structures of the sciences of mathematics and metaphysics. On a Leibnizian understanding, mathematical concepts invoke objects directly determined by the will, whereas metaphysical concepts describe objects the existence of which is determined over against the will (i.e., 'real' objects). However, Kant realizes that, on the account of the structure of judgment he accepts, that would mean (to paraphrase) that mathematics is made up and metaphysics does not exist. It is somewhere in this period that the famous "remembrance of Hume" awakens Kant from his "dogmatic slumbers" [Ak. 4:260].

At this point my argument returns from the pre-Critical writings to *KdrV*. Kant resolves all the above problems in one bold stroke by hypothesizing that the intentionally inexistent 'object' structure which grounds formal law-governedness, or roots the non-arbitrary quality of engaged thinking, is immanently presented to us within sensible perception of the world, but had to have *previously* been 'injected' into the appearing of the world by our own activity of perceiving. In other words, an 'object', even though ideal, is not a *thought* but a structure of perception given within the world itself, meaning that the 'mind'/'world' distinction of Cartesian skepticism is collapsed into the immanent surface of subject/object entanglement. These conclusions are not directly available to us, but are drawn in reflective thought concerning the irresolvable theoretical oddities of the ordinary world as it appears to be given: such indirect inference is Kant's "transcendental method" [A12/B25]. Kant's attempt to convince the reader of *KdrV* relies not on "transcendental arguments" but on the presentation of direct phenomenological evidence, of not only examples of non-actual objects which we think pseudo-spatiotemporally, but also the pure form of spatiotemporal objectivity emptied of all content, demonstrating that the form of objectivity cannot be merely a feature of the presence of a real being but is distinct from the latter.

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[9] See Franz Brentano, *Psychology from An Empirical Standpoint* (Routledge, 2009): 68.

Chapter 3 picks up the argument from the beginning of the next section of *KdrV*, the Transcendental Logic. Expanding his scope from immanent sensibility to reflective thought upon the contents of sensibility, Kant is able to show that the formal structure of sensibility is rendered intelligible as what I call 'passive synthesis' (borrowing Husserlian terminology).[10] The world has been prepared for cognition in advance by a pre-conscious activity of the subject, a 'passive synthesis' of the understanding's 'elemental' mood. Kant shows in the Transcendental Logic (particularly in the "Transcendental Deduction of the Categories" [A84/B116]) how, not only at at the level of sensible perception but at the level also of abstract and reflective thought, human consciousness is structured in terms of an 'always already given' division between subjective and objective, in which the objective displays invariant formal characteristics (the infamous "Categories") and the 'subjective' is given as a correlate universal affection of the objective particular. The outcome of Chapter 3 is a picture in which consciousness divides into a tripartite structure of the 'local reference frame' of subjectivity-as-inference, the 'absolute reference frame' of objects, and the 'outside' of pure immanence, which is not an empty nothingness but the indeterminate influx of existing, Being, as pure phenomenological perception (as in the early Merleau-Ponty).[11]

In Chapters 4 and 5, I set down the close reading of *KdrV,* and the examination of the singular object encountered in ordinary experience (thus transitioning to Section II). Springing from the conclusion of Chapter 3, the unveiling of the total sphere of consciousness in the Deduction as the subject-object dyad, Chapter 4 gives an overview of Kant's philosophical theory of objectivity at a broad scale, and Chapter 5 gives an overview of Kant's correlative philosophical theory of subjectivity. Chapter 4 argues that for Kant, the 'object' is an intentionally inexistent formal structure which is the end-point of the human power of intentional judgment, of being conscious. That structure governs not only empirical objects (real beings as perceived), but also inexistent, imaginary, and ideal objects. It permits the scientific mathematization/formalization of empirical reality because it is the pure form of spatiotemporal determination, but for exactly the same reason it gives rise to the "unavoidable illusion" that there are real correlates to that set of objects which are never empirically fulfilled. That is, our 'ideas' and imaginings are always necessarily given illusory spatiotemporal form: Kant's "transcendental illusion". I argue, particularly from the "Phenomena and Noumena" chapter of Kant's *KdrV*, that we should *not* thereby conclude that Kant holds that the real world is indistinguishable from imagination; rather, Kant holds that the "appearances" or "phenomena" of a real being are uniquely fulfilled by sensibility from the effect of

[10] Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic,* trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001): 39-43.

[11] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (Routledge, 2002): 255.

the ‘force’ exerted by the real being (the “noumena”), and that the relationship between the two is philosophically satisfactory when interpreted as analogous to the relationship between “accident” and “substance” given by Aristotle in the *Categories*.

However, the mechanism of Kant’s “transcendental illusion” also involves the level of reflective language, because every concept is *also* necessarily instantiated in a pseudo-object. For example, the difficulty with understanding Kant’s distinction between “phenomena” and “noumena” is that the word *noumena*, by virtue of its structural distinctness as a bare sign, implies the existence of a some *thing* to which it refers, separate from phenomena, leading to the unavoidable but mistaken inference of a “noumenal world” separate from the “phenomenal world”.[12] The fact that the duplication of pseudo-objects is an intrinsic product of the bare use of language itself makes the problem of “transcendental illusion” not only reflexive but recursive: the illusion is operative even in the very text of Kant which explains it, and we must continually hold open our own activity of thinking against falling into it again by a special act of ‘orientation’. Here I borrow Derrida’s linguistic/semiotic critique of Husserlian phenomenology as a close parallel for a set of radical philosophical difficulties which I see as also present in Kant.[13] *Systematically* uncovering the transcendental illusiveness of language, which Kant did not do, radically problematizes the possibility of theoretical philosophy itself in general, by showing that there is a ‘semiotic’ problem of public access to the referent of any concept which refers to the ‘outside’ of the ontologically determinate (to translate: how can we validly speak of the ground of the ‘thing-in-itself’?). That is, there is not only a problem of how to objectify non-objective ‘forces’ within Kant’s thinking, but there is a separate and farther-reaching problem of how to *say* that anything can be non-objective or indeterminate (since saying them implies objectifying them). Kant had already been criticized by Hamann and Herder for this “grounding problem” of transcendental idealism, but within a different archaeological framework of reading Kant.[14] The “grounding problem”, at the level of what I call the ‘semiotic’ within transcendental idealism, will become the final problem of the present investigation.

Chapter 5 examines the subjective as a correlate to the field of objectivity. I show here that Kant clearly argues that the subjective is not a ‘thing’ opposed to objects, which would unduly privilege a hypostatized ‘subject’ in a radical idealism. Rather, Kant holds that the implicit existence

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12 Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Harvard University Press, 1987): 10.

13 Derrida’s direct critique of Husserl takes place primarily in *Voice and Phenomena* [*La Voix et le Phénomène*] and in *Writing and Difference* [*L’écriture et la différence*]. In reconstructing his position I make use of the excellent exegesis given in Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Indiana University Press, 2002).

14 Cf. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 39-42.

of what must be called ‘me’ or ‘mine’ is identifiable only within the objective as the immanent traces of what cannot be assigned to the object. In particular, Kant develops in the later Critical texts the theme that such traces are the universal but impermanent colorings of ‘affect’ or ‘feeling’ (*Gefühl*); the presence or absence of will and imagination; and moral and teleological structures guiding possible activity. I reconstruct a broad picture of the relations between what Kant calls the ‘empirical’ (or evidenced) self and the inference of ‘transcendental unity of apperception’, referencing Kant’s anthropological writings. Here I also examine further Kant’s mathematical understanding of the formal operations of consciousness as the interplay between finitude and the indeterminate, important elements for defining both Kant’s agnostic theology, and the ‘realist’ advantages of Kant against later speculative idealism or ‘Identity philosophy’.

Chapter 6 is the beginning of a second transition (Section II to Section III), from the totality of objectivity to the outside limit of objectivity itself. On my reconstruction, Kant deliberately seeks an outer “ground” of both the old “metaphysics of nature” and the “metaphysics of morals”, as the price of securing his “empirical realism”. In Chapter 6 I investigate both of these divisions and Kant’s conclusions therein. The outer ground of the metaphysics of nature, grounding the system of theoretical objects, is the investigation of “dynamic forces” which Kant undertakes in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science (Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften – MAN)* and then in the *Opus Postumum (OP).* The unfinished and disorganized state of *OP* makes any definitive interpretation of its meaning quite difficult; relying on Howard and Förster, I attempt to isolate and reconstruct a single line of reasoning for my purposes which seems textually defensible. Kant argues that the derivation of empirical forces from the pure concept of a material body is ultimately dependent on my knowledge of my own body as a mechanism which exerts force, and therefore the categories themselves, and the original awakening of consciousness as the division between subjective and objective, are derived from the moment of self-actuation in which I become aware that I have the power to move my body (meaning that the condition of possibility of consciousness is pure motile force and resistance, aspatial at the contact boundary). I argue that if such is Kant’s argument in *OP,* it resolves the ontological problem of phenomenological contact with ‘forces’ as the non-objective basis of the object without violating the knowledge-conditions of transcendental idealism. Second, I examine the “supersensible” grounding of the “metaphysics of morals” in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*KdpV)* and the *Critique of Judgment (KU)*. In *KdpV,* Kant defines the object of practical reasoning as deferred through human freedom by the imagination. Freedom is established through an exploration of the non-sensible intuition of “inner feeling” or self-affection by the will’s auto-determination, an alternative path to a directly first-personal, or ontological, confirmation of the “forces” underlying

practical objectivity. With respect to *KU*, I make the argument that Kant's account of the beautiful as a "symbol" of the moral [Ak. 5:351] means that Kant's general remarks about the aesthetic, and judgment as such, are simultaneously an implicit theory of language; however, the conspicuous absence of prose from Kant's list of beautiful arts proves that Kant, while instinctively attuned to the general transcendental problem of language, failed to systematically pose and solve it. Simultaneously, however, Kant's hidden theory of poetics as the play between the finite and the indeterminate of human possibility gives the basic elements of a possible Kantian solution of the problem of language, my final task.

Finally, chapter 7 returns to fully pose the remaining problem of the transcendental illusion of language, the "grounding problem" at the semiotic, rather than the ontological level. I identify the "grounding problem" as the problem of determining how the "unsayable" object is possible as sayable, a puzzle or "antinomy" parallel to the ontological/metaphysical antinomies of Kant's first Critique. Following that, in a move exactly parallel to Kant's, it becomes necessary to develop an 'objective transcendental deduction', or justification, of the possibility of language-use as such, combining the conditions of possibility of both theoretical and practical language. I do so by joining both together under the pure form of the categorical imperative as the 'pure movement of universalization' or the form of judgment as such, and then offer a 'sketch of a deduction' in which the transcendentally necessary condition of the use of language is disclosed as a bipolar 'stance' or 'cast' which inflects the totality of the sphere of propositions as such as either 'openness' or 'closure'. These conclusions, while original, are in a constellation of post-Kantian reflection populated by thinkers such as Cassirer, Vaihinger, Ricoeur, and Derrida.[15] That deduction then permits the grounding of transcendental idealism (and all philosophical language) as a practical structure of anthropological self-extension, a 'possible anthropology' the truth or falsehood of which is determined by its practical result with respect to 'openness' and 'closure' as the poles of the pure movement of reason.

Significance of the Thesis: Justification and Limitations

The investigation carried out here is focused on a single theme, but one which had to be carefully balanced in a delicate movement between and through vast fields of philosophical research and commentary. The harmonics and overtones of the ideas that I find in Kant resonate

[15] I refer to Cassirer's "philosophy of symbolic forms", Vaihinger's philosophy of "as-if", Ricouer's notion of "text as act" and "act as text", and Derrida's basic critique of the "metaphysics of presence" which gives a different significance to the former three movements. More details are given in Chapter 7.

throughout modern and postmodern philosophy, and will everywhere seem familiar to the knowledgeable reader.[16] In terms of scholarship *on* Kant and on *KdrV* in particular, the general orientation of receptivity and plausibility that I take towards Kant's thought owes much to a 'rehabilitative' or 'metaphysical' school (loosely grouped) which has published much important work since Allison's seminal defense[17] and only continues to gather momentum.[18] A commentary on *KdrV* which tries to avoid getting excessively drawn into interpretive controversies is a dangerous task, a systematic overview of Kant's whole critical architectonic is doubly dangerous, and a systematic reading of Kant's corpus which makes Kant's thinking harmonize variously with (e.g.) Heidegger's, Husserl's, Fichte's, Merleau-Ponty's, Deleuze's, Derrida's, etc., is triply dangerous. To defend myself against the accusation that I am simply reading these later thinkers into Kant, and to keep the investigation narrowed enough to be possible, I have generally limited myself to analyzing Kant alone instead of engaging in comparisons with all of post-Kantian philosophy. What I think is my original contribution to Kantian scholarship, taken together, are the following points: 1) a definition of analytic and synthetic judgment on the basis of the phenomenological disposition of the will and through time-consciousness; 2) the necessary retention, against Fichte, etc., of the positive but empty transcendental intentional object, and its intimacy to Being, as the basis and motivating demonstration of the Critical philosophy; 3) the derivation of the subjective-objective field of reflexive consciousness as 'determining' or 'active' vs. 'elemental' or 'passive' consciousness; 4) the problem of the objectivity of language above and beyond ontological perception (the 'semiotic') as an essential feature and difficulty of Kant's philosophy.

Key Terms

Metaphysics – here means 'experiential contact with or propositional knowledge of real being as the activity of existence'. Kant reconfigures metaphysics by separating the layer of act-existing from

[16] If, as Pluhar states, constructing an exhaustive biography of direct commentaries on Kant is a "Herculean task" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 346 fn. 1), an exhaustive review of all the further ways post-Kantian philosophy has been influenced by Kant is certainly far outside the possible scope of the present study. On our journey into the island of reason I will sketch (Kantian) positions which will sound to knowledgeable readers surprisingly like Husserl, or Heidegger, Hegel, Fichte, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, etc. etc. My purpose is not to prove that Kant was the first to think of positions defended by these (post-Kantian) thinkers, and comparative analysis of their merits is beyond our present scope. However, I do want to affirm here that Kant has a much more sophisticated phenomenology and hermeneutic theory than he is nowadays often credited with, in my own experience defending him, and that to be a Kantian is a 'live' option in contemporary Continental philosophy.

[17] Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense (KTI)* (Yale University Press, 2004).

[18] I have found particularly useful de Boer, *Kant's Reform*; Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant on the Human Standpoint* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford University Press, 2007), and Sebastian Gardner, *Routledge Guidebook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason* (Routledge, 2002).

the layer of formal objectivity, the latter of which is transcendentally subjective in origin. The question of whether "metaphysics" can have a positive conceptual content, and what it would be, and whether Kant wrote it before he died, is an important guiding principle for the investigation.

Ontology – means 'the science of an object as such', what Kant originally knew as "general metaphysics". Heidegger likewise distinguishes between the "ontic" and the "ontological", but my distinction is unfortunately the opposite in meaning of Heidegger's.[19] I have chosen the reversed meaning because Kant himself employs "ontology"/"ontological" to refer to the system of transcendentally imposed formal objectivity, rather than to the underlying 'Being-as-such' [A845/B873].

Semiotics – I use 'semiotics' as a technical term to refer to the system of concepts and of language as the mode of expressing concepts, in its specific distinction from the 'ontological' part or layer of human phenomenological perception. Making a something into an object is a mediation introduced by subjectivity in experience, and making a conceptual proposition which describes or determines that object is a second and distinct mediation of the subject. The fact, pointed out by Derrida in particular, that making a proposition is itself a distinct second "deferral" or displacement of the phenomenological contact with being, displaced once already in the constitution of objectivity, is the specific problem I am thinking of when I speak of "semiotics" in the present context.[20]

Transcendental Idealism – refers to the hypothesis, advanced by Kant, that an "object" is a structure imposed into subjectively mediated consciousness by the original division into subject and object that is the dawn of consciousness as such. To fulfill the requirements of theoretical science and of "truthful" objective knowledge, such a structure is composite between the aesthetic and the logical: it is not only a conceptual structure held 'in a mind' (which is here an erroneous model of consciousness), but projected into-the-world-itself as the formal spatiotemporal manifold of an "*etwas*=X". On this theory, all objects, including imaginary and ideal ones, possess formal spatiotemporality *qua* objective, which Kant calls the "ideality" of absolute space and time.

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19 See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, 5th ed.,* trans. Richard Taft (Indiana University Press, 1997): 7.

20 See Lawlor, "The Test of the Sign: An Investigation of *Voice and Phenomenon*", *Derrida and Husserl,* 165-208, particularly 181-82. The problem identified by Andrew Bowie as the "problem of reflection" in German 'identity philosophy' is also closely akin: Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (Routledge, 1993): 157.

Transcendental Illusion – refers to the illusion, identified by Kant, in which a judgment about a 'non-empirical object' which is *not* fulfilled by the resistive force registering as sense-perception (i.e., an 'empirical' object) nevertheless carries with it the sense, given by the spatiotemporal form of pure objectivity, that it is a 'something' existing 'somewhere', distinct from the arbitrary determination of the imaginative expression of will. The illusory givenness of non-empirical objects is the basis of erroneous 'dogmatism' in traditional metaphysics.

Synthesis – means the activity of unification of some selection of what are, as such, multiple entities not necessarily connected in a unifying relation. Synthesis is the basic activity of human consciousness.

Judgment – refers to what, in the logical domain, is the parallel of synthesis: the formation of a new conceptual terminus for thought as the unification of a set of "marks". A synthetic judgment is therefore the formation of a joint conceptual-objective structure which is the constitution of experience itself as such.

Object – refers to the formal structure, both spatiotemporal and conceptual, which separates from the flat immanent field of perceptive awareness to give rise to consciousness, guided by the aesthetic structure of formal intuition and the conceptual structure of the categories.

Chapter 1: Kantian Scholarship – Background of the Dissertation

The present chapter will simultaneously serve as a literature review, and as a means of introducing the unfamiliar reader to the basic outlines and specialized language of Kant's original program and argument for "transcendental idealism". Kant thinks he is breaking totally new ground in philosophy [B19]; his preferred method for doing so is to invent a rigorous new library of technical terminology (e.g., "transcendental", "synthetic", "noumena", etc.), which must be deciphered and understood. The consequence is that before even starting to read Kant, we already need some idea of what Kant is trying to say – an orienting framework. The task of the literature review is to develop an intuitive and holistic sense, in mutual co-definition, of both some major shapes of philosophical response to *KdrV* and some parallel idea of what *KdrV* is about. I will place *KdrV* between the "analytic" philosophical problem of "Cartesianism", and the "continental" philosophical problem of 'mediation'. We will get closer to Kant by traveling backwards through the field of interpretations, and as we pass through the issues that Kant's successors were concerned with, they will alert us in advance to the difficulties we will find in Kant. Thus we will develop navigational 'touchstones' for our subsequent effort to go more directly into *KdrV* itself, in Chapters 2 and 3.

Placing Kant: Against Descartes

Before even properly beginning our archaeological expedition, we are already in real danger of losing our way in the "conflict of interpretations" (Ricouer). The field of 'post-Kantian' philosophy, including not only commentaries on Kant, but also attempts at 'overcoming' Kant, and even the unselfconsciously post-Kantian, is, frankly, bewildering in its variety and complexity. It is ironic that the major text of Kant, who delighted in characterizing philosophy as a "polemical battlefield" [A743-45/B771-73], is itself perhaps the most war-torn philosophical site of all. As Graham Bird has grimly noted, "Commentators have recognized that Kant deploys a complex apparatus to explain [his] position, but there is still no agreement about that apparatus or about the consequent understanding of his view".[1] To parse such uncertain terrain, we need a reference understanding of Kant himself, which is precisely what we don't have yet. To begin, then, we will consult only the opening pages of Kant's *KdrV,* noting that Kant quite clearly and repeatedly tells us

[1] Graham Bird, *The Revolutionary Kant: A Commentary on the Critique of Pure Reason* (Open Court, 2006): 2.

what his book is going to be about: “metaphysics”. We will keep that word as a talisman to get us through the conflict of interpretations and into Kant’s system proper.

We turn to open *KdrV*.[2] Kant’s opening question for the whole work, in the Prefaces, is whether metaphysics can be established as a science [A xii/B xv]. After some preliminary discussion, Kant asserts that the opening question is to be solved or restated in the form of a famous second question: “How is the synthetic judgment *possible a priori*?” [B19 – emphasis original]. Rendering a plausible account of the meaning of these two questions has therefore been widely accepted as the key to successfully understanding *KdrV*.[3]

In some way, *KdrV* is fundamentally about “metaphysics”: it is easy to lose sight of that point in the dense tangles of thought that follow, so we underline it here. Kant states that, as a metaphysician himself, his motivation in writing *KdrV* is the conviction that metaphysics must prove that it is not essentially impossible as a discipline [A ix-xi].[4] *KdrV* contains Kant’s answer to various challenges on behalf of metaphysics. Metaphysics, Kant ultimately argues, *is* possible; but the anti-metaphysical attacks of various early modern thinkers have clarified that it is only possible on certain conditions, or when understood in a certain way [A xx].[5] Future metaphysics will need to accept, therefore, a certain limitation in practice or a “critique” of its powers [A xii].

In order to make sense of this, it seems crucial to grasp exactly what Kant means by “metaphysics”. In much Kantian scholarship, particularly in the English language, there has been surprisingly little attention paid to defining the word “metaphysics” in trying to understand *KdrV*.[6] From 1781 onwards, Kant’s readers have often assumed that Kant’s project is to prove that metaphysics is not possible *at all*, but that is too hasty, as even the above references already show.[7]

As de Boer shows, what Kant means by “metaphysics” is the “general and special metaphysics” of the 17th and 18th centuries, which in the former division discusses “the concept of an object in general” and in its latter division discusses the unique objects “God, the soul, and the world-whole”.[8] What Kant thinks need justification, therefore, are not only the entities of God and the soul, but also the basic non-logical structures of objective being as such: substance vs.

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2 Kant’s *KdrV* was published in two editions, the A edition in 1781 and the partially revised B edition in 1787. I have not generally found that the differences between the two editions make a major difference to my reading. The text (both A and B) is divided into a Preface, an Introduction, and two major sections, the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements and the Transcendental Analytic of Principles. The Doctrine of Elements is further subdivided into the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic, and the Analytic of Principles is divided into the Transcendental Analytic, the Transcendental Dialectic, and the Transcendental Doctrine of Method.

3 Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*: 35-42.

4 “Metaphysics, with which it is my fate to be in love, although only rarely can I boast of any favours from her …”. Kant, *Dreams,* 112-113.

5 Cf. Kant, *Prolegomena,* §4-5 [Ak. 4:271-5, 4:277-8].

6 Cf. Karin de Boer, *Kant’s Reform,* 3-4.

7 See Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 4-5.

8 De Boer, *Kant’s Reform,* 23.

accident/property, existence vs. nonexistence, cause and effect, etc.[9] We take note of a hugely important initial result: Kant is trying to prove that it is *possible* to successfully employ "the structure of an object as such" in thought. Since the general concept of an 'object' would seem to be very basic to all conscious experience, we await with great interest Kant's explanation of why such knowledge is problematic, and why no previous philosopher has encountered this problem.

Here, however, I must interject to make a crucial point that will shape everything to follow. The point is both very difficult to explain and also a vast general preoccupation of contemporary philosophy, so I must simply briefly summarize it in my own words here. The point is that "metaphysics" is actually *two* things. It is the dogmatic structure of statements and theories about what is beyond the contingent or finite, but it is also the *content* of those statements/theories – metaphysics is both the description and the *site* of *Being*. Now, what do I mean by referring "metaphysics" to "Being"? Kant describes this also: human philosophers are not satisfied with "conditioned" knowledge, but "seek the unconditioned", because they can "rest" in it [B xx-xxi]. That is, "Being" is the point at which thinking stops because it grasps that it has reached the ground of thinking in the self-evident self-disclosure of that which thinking reflects, namely, existence. As Carl Sachs restates it, human thinking desires "transcendental friction", a 'grip' against the Real.[10] We want to know what things *really* are and not only what we *think* they are. We must remember that metaphysics expresses Being, and that Kant explicitly identifies as a second principle of his project the fact that human thinking *restlessly longs to reach Being in-itself* [A709-11/B737-39], as Heidegger correctly noted.[11] Kant's critique does not take place in a idle speculative vacuum, but against the unbridled and violent *desire* which moves reason, because reason cannot survive without touching Being. The negative, suspicious reaction to Kant's critique of metaphysics is at root the voicing of the longing Kant clearly identified: we fear the closure of our ability as concrete philosophizing persons to directly contact Being. But we must not allow that fear to constrict our patience with Kant's argument.

These reflections on metaphysics already give us the basis for making a threefold distinction in what is to come. First, we have the problem of language or concepts: the metaphysical statement.

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9 See *KdrV* A724/B752, where Kant describes substance, existence, relation, and causality as the basic determining activities of reason.

10 Carl Sachs, *Intentionality and the Myths of the Given: Between Pragmatism and Phenomenology* (Pickering and Chatto, 2014): 13.

11 Heidegger identified this clearly: "Heidegger urges that Kant did not intend his Critique of Pure Reason primarily to clarify the conceptual presuppositions of natural science. Rather, Kant's goal was to question the nature and possibility of metaphysics. According to Heidegger, this means laying out the ontological knowledge (knowledge of being as such) that is presupposed in all ontic knowledge (knowledge of particular entities). Kant's doctrine of the categories is precisely Kant's 'refoundation' of metaphysics, or his effort to find for metaphysics the grounding that his predecessors had been unable to find. This refoundation consists, according to Heidegger, in elucidating the features of human existence in the context of which human beings' practical and cognitive access to being is made possible." Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint,* 111. Cf. Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 8-9.

Even if God exists, can we *say* so? I will call that layer the 'semiotic'. Second, we have the layer of objects: Is God a 'thing' that we can determinately know? I will call that the 'ontological' layer. Third, we have the layer of *Being,* which is still, for now, entangled with the ontological: does God *exist*? We tuck these ideas away as notes on our map, and press forward into the Kantian site.

Cartesianism – Old and New

A reader new to Kant, searching for a foothold, will notice Kant's frequent claims to be responding to "skepticism", particularly that of Descartes.[12] Despite the fact that Kant's attempt to overcome skepticism with a "transcendental idealism" has on the whole been considered a cure worse than the disease, in the continuing passage of philosophical history, the problem of subjective idealism has survived many challenges, and Kant's explicit claim to be anti-skeptical has continued to attract attention.[13] In fact, with respect to the problem of the "self" in philosophy, Kant represents a sort of knot or watershed in philosophical history. As Michael Friedman notes, the two major divisions of contemporary philosophy, the "analytic" and the "continental", can be traced back to Kant through the Kantian interpretations of Carnap and Heidegger, respectively.[14] Both analytic and continental philosophers perennially return to Kant, fascinated by his explicit claim in *KdrV* that transcendental idealism overcomes the Cartesian problem of subjective idealism or "skepticism", and yet there is still no general consensus on how, exactly, "transcendental idealism" accomplishes the Cartesian overcoming or what, indeed, the former finally consists of.[15]

In the text of *KdrV* Kant says that transcendental philosophy will accomplish the refutation of Berkeleyan and Cartesian "idealism" [B274]. According to Kant, Berkeley and Descartes hold in common a belief in 'empirical' or "material idealism": the position that our sensory experiences are only illusory appearances [B274-275].[16] By contrast, Kant's project will guarantee 'empirical realism', or the ordinary belief in the reality of empirical entities [B68-71]. The most significant of Kant's changes in the revised Second Edition is a new section entitled the "Refutation of Idealism", which directly challenges Cartesian "idealism" and promises to refute it [B274-294]. Kant purports to offer a number of proofs, *contra* Descartes, that we are just as certain of the existence of appearances, *as* they appear to us, as we are of our own existence [B69-70]. Since, however, Kant

12 Cf. Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2001): 17.
13 Robert Pippin gives a kind of photographic-negative tracing of the post-Kantian problem of subjectivity: Robert Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge University Press, 2005): 2-40.
14 Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Open Court Press, 2000): 146-157.
15 See Fabio Gironi's introduction to Fabio Gironi (ed.), *The Legacy of Kant in Sellars and Maillassoux: analytic and continental Kantianism* (Routledge, 2018): 1-7.
16 Cf. Allison, *KTI*, 294-5.

insists that space and time are ideal, appearances are all we know, and even the self is an "inner appearance" [B430], Kant appears to be agreeing with Descartes that all we know are appearances, but that these appearances can be trusted to be formally consistent rather than subjective, or non-rule-governed, illusions.[17] It is not clear how that position is an improvement.

Descartes argued, in the *Meditations on First Philosophy* and the *Discourse on Method*, that most human knowledge, upon reflection, is much less certain than it seems.[18] Famously, Descartes suspends even our simplest knowledge of any objective content of consciousness: what if all our thoughts are moment-by-moment illusions projected into us by an "Evil Deceiver"?[19] In that case, all we can be certain of is the identity of our thinking with its own existence, and only *while* it is being thought: "*Cogito, ergo sum*".[20]

Such Cartesian skepticism has both epistemological and metaphysical components. Epistemological claims have to do with a subject's knowledge, and to what extent it can be described as true or false.[21] Epistemologically, Descartes proposes the possibility that we do not know anything with certainty about any object other than our own pure subjectivity: what comes to be called the "transcendental Ego".[22] Descartes suggests that, since certainty is a quality we instinctively desire of our knowledge, we should work from the certain knowledge of the transcendental ego to underwrite the certainty of other forms of knowledge.[23] When we speak of "Cartesianism" or of "perceptual skepticism", then, we are meant to understand the following theory: Ordinarily, I enjoy a native confidence in my own existence, and I also experience a 'world' of things and other persons which seem to be independent of me; they react to my actions or undertake actions which I did not anticipate or will. But Descartes raises the possibility that every 'independent' entity is only an *appearance*, meaning a kind of flat picture or phantasm that

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17 Kant argues thus at his long footnote to B xl, in his commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic at B69-70, and in the Refutation of Idealism at B274-294. It is, of course, difficult to see how Kant's position, thus described, is fully distinct from the "phenomenal idealism" of Berkeley, and many commentators from 1782 (the 'Feder-Garve review') onwards have concluded that Kant is also a "phenomenal idealist". Cf. Eckart Förster, *Kant's Final Synthesis: An Essay on the Opus Posthumum (KFS)* (Harvard University Press, 2000): 59-61, for a summary of the problem and Kant's reaction. Allison, *KTI,* 30-34, provides a good rejoinder to the charge of "Berkeleyan Kantianism".

18 René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences,* trans. Ian McLean (Oxford University Press, 2006); and René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: with selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. John Cottingham (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

19 Descartes, *Meditations*, 12-14.

20 Descartes, *Method*, 29. Cf. *KdrV*, B275 and A355.

21 Cf. Kenneth Westphal, *Kant's Critical Epistemology: Why Epistemology Must Consider Judgment First* (*KCE*) (Routledge, 2021): 137.

22 Descartes, *Method,* 17, 29. Early modern philosophy reifies the Latin "ego" of Descartes.

23 As Charles Taylor notes in *Sources of the Self*, Descartes' emphasis on the subject, and of working from the subject's self-certainty to 'found' the certainty of outer objects is actually a late ancient philosophical project, "profoundly Augustinian": Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Harvard University Press, 1989): 127-158. The "subjective turn" of modern philosophy should be contextualized within the tension of subject-object mediation which has always existed in Western philosophy.

transpires within my own senses or ‘mind’. ‘In themselves’, the ‘objects’ which these appearances seemingly give themselves as being ‘of’ could be anything, or might not exist at all.[24]

However, I think that continuing to use the framework of “epistemology” muddies the boundary between phenomenological and metaphysical concerns here. I propose that we turn to the metaphysical level of the assumptions of Cartesianism, below an ‘epistemological’ level. The key is the use of the word “appearance” or “illusion”, both of which, I suggest, indicate an image which does not actually exist in-itself. As Kant also says, the mere idea of “appearance” thus immediately conditions us to look for the *ground* of the appearance, that which the appearance is *of* or has been generated by - the explanation of its appearing in some existing *X* [A249]. In the subject-object relationship of consciousness we can model two possible poles of real being: the subject, the object, or both. Therefore, metaphysically, the claim of Cartesianism that an ‘appearance’ is equivalent to a ‘dream’ or an ‘illusion’ is actually to assign its ontological dependence, the existence-ground of its objectivity, to the subject. Descartes’ *metaphysical* postulate is thus that the only real being in the subject-object relation is the subject and that objects/appearances do not have real existence, thus assigning the cause of the existence of appearances by default to the subject.[25]

Kant, along with Descartes, is considered to inaugurate the ‘subjective turn’ in Western philosophy because, where Descartes first proposes universally that the subject is mediating all that is known as consciousness, Kant attempts to systematically document the contribution of the subject to the mediated field of consciousness and thereby disentangle it from the contribution of the object and the being behind the latter.[26] In other words, the “critique” of pure reason is the exposure of the illusion that what reason knows is identical to ‘the way things really are’, by documenting the structures of reason that have co-formed what we know objectively. The problem of subjectivism or Cartesianism persists in post-Kantian philosophy because one must accept, as Kant did, the premise that our way of knowing is mediated by our own subjectivity in some way (i.e., everything available to consciousness has by definition been mediated by consciousness), but it has not been clear how to demonstrate the independent real existence of objective being (which is what is required to overcome the assumption that the subject is the only real being) using only subjectively mediated language and perception, without claiming to know something which is *ex hypothesi* beyond

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[24] Daniel Dennett, in the context of more neuroscience-oriented philosophy of mind, coined the phrase “the Cartesian theater” to describe the resulting picture of consciousness (when it is assumed that all “objects” are merely “appearances” or “sense-events” *within* me). See Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Little, Brown, and Co., 1991): 105-7, and also Daniel Dennett and Marcel Kinsbourne, "Time and the Observer: the Where and When of Consciousness in the Brain”, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 15 (1992): 183-247.

[25] “The cogito is without any genuine philosophical signification unless its positing is invested with the ambition of establishing a final, ultimate foundation.” Paul Ricouer, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (University of Chicago Press, 1992): 4.

[26] Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 23-24.

knowledge (a problem sometimes referred to as the "myth of the given").[27] We can begin to see, however, how Kant's project of documenting the contributions of subjective mediation to the field of consciousness could simultaneously be the rescuing of the contributions of the *object* (the "limits of knowledge" which restrain reason and secure realism in a double 'metaphysical' movement).

With these ideas in mind, we now encounter the "analytic" school of post-Kantian thinking. The project of responding to Descartes' meditations has evolved into a "widespread preoccupation" for the "analytic" tradition of Western philosophy, as Westphal recapitulates.[28] While discounting Descartes' solution to his own perceptual skepticism (proving the existence of God after that of the self to co-underwrite the reality of 'the world'), analytic philosophy still accepts Descartes' epistemological model and his proposed methodology: the disjunction of 'mind' and 'world', the privileged self-certainty of 'mind', and the subsequent challenge of demonstrating how 'mind' can be certain of the truth of any given knowledge about 'world' – the 'mind-world problem'.[29] As shaped by Bertrand Russell and the 'positivist' school after Frege and the 'linguistic turn', analytic philosophy is the project of 'analysis' of concepts and propositions to determine how they validly formalize or refer to the objective identity of sensations.[30] Because "concepts" and "propositions" are thus ultimately permitted to join the self-certainty of "mind", as Westphal writes, the Cartesian problem becomes "global perceptual skepticism", or the doubt that any appearance is 'that which it appears to be'.[31] That is, "appearances" are not, by themselves, knowledge; an inverse way of stating the mind-world problem is as explaining the process by which 'appearances/objects' become 'concepts'.[32] We note here that the ontological model of Cartesianism has been accepted: the 'mind' is metaphysically real, self-securing, and isolated from 'the world', and so are its 'concepts', and

[27] Sachs, *Myths of the Given,* 157-161. See also Janicaud's essay "The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology" in Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": The French Debate* (Fordham University Press, 2000): 3-106, for a parallel criticism within the French-Husserlian phenomenological tradition.

[28] Westphal, *KTPR,* 2.

[29] Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant,* 31-33, and Westphal, *KCE,* 135. See also Bird's discussion of analytic Kantianism and Cartesian presuppositions in *Revolutionary Kant,* 10-13.

[30] On Russell, analytic philosophy, and Locke, see Westphal, *KCE,* 135. Compare Fabio Gironi, *Legacy of Kant,* 7-9, for a slightly different account of the origins of the analytic in neo-Kantianism. Cf. Michael Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy* (Harvard University Press, 1994): 4-7.

[31] Westphal, *KTPR,* 2.

[32] Some Kantian epistemologists have tried to surmount the difficulty of describing a transition between "concepts" and "sense-data" by arguing that the distinction could be overwritten in either direction: either we can know, in some sense, "non-conceptual contents", or on the other hand, we have no "sense-data" which is not already conceptualized. See John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Harvard University Press, 1996); Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Harvard University Press, 1997). See Willem De Vries, "Sellars vs. McDowell on the Structure of Sensory Consciousness", *Diametros* 27 (2010): 47-63, for a good overview of the issues at stake. The position on Kant I take is, I think, closer to McDowell's view than to Sellars', although I think the Sellars-McDowell debate runs at right angles to my reading for two reasons: first, the persistent tendency to reify 'consciousness' as a container-field in the use of the term "contents" is a mistake which renders understanding Kant's embodied phenomenology impossible; second, the lack of clarity regarding the distinctness of 'object' from 'empirical being' means that I would agree with Sellars that everything within the field of consciousness is already mediated by consciousness, but as an *object*, not as a *concept*. I understand Merleau-Ponty to be framing the same objection as myself in "The Phenomenal Field", *Phenomenology of Perception,* 60-74.

the problem is how to then prove that 'concepts' are equivalent to 'appearances' (or 'true'), using only 'concepts' as tools. Analytic epistemology's response becomes, more-or-less, the attempt to detail the logical or formal conditions under which any given piece of 'knowledge' about some reality other than formal logic itself or my thinking Ego (that is, empirical, sensory 'knowledge') can be 'verified' to be true – an 'infallible' certainty.[33] The analytic epistemological project, therefore, consists in searching for a conceptual proof, not dependent on any part of the contingent empirical experience of 'world' that is in question, that offers some indubitable link between "mind/concepts" and "world/sensations".[34] However, note that the metaphysical status of both objects and appearances has been made unclear: either such a project simply assumes that "appearances" are themselves objective and real beings, begging the ontological/metaphysical question against Descartes, or else is assuming that "appearances" are 'pictures' *in 'the mind'* – but how the latter could then transition from mental appearances to a public 'world' is quite unclear.

The reason for reviewing these preconceptions at length is that the analytic epistemological tradition, especially in the English language, has paid great attention to Kant's *KdrV,* particularly after Strawson's 1966 *The Bounds of Sense*.[35] From a certain perspective, *KdrV* appears to offer the sought-after "purely conceptual" argument against "Cartesian skepticism" or "global perceptual skepticism".[36] That is, many Kantian commentators have taken Kant's claim about 'refuting Descartes' in the "Refutation of Idealism" [B274-79] to mean that Kant, like themselves, is assuming the existence of a self-transparent subject, with access to the formal truth of logic, and undertaking to offer an account of the formal conditions under which that subject can be said to "know" something about the empirical, sensory world.[37] These conditions, on such an interpretation, are called Kant's "transcendental arguments", and the task of the interpreter is to find them in *KdrV* and evaluate their logical validity.[38]

In general, then, what seems to be the assumed analytic view of *KdrV's* structure is that Kant writes the Transcendental Aesthetic to give a brief account of the structure of empirical objects *as if they are received as objects* by a purely passive sensibility, and then turns to the Transcendental Logic to give a 'proof' of some kind that we have to be capable of telling the truth propositionally about the real world ("objectively", thus reading Kant's "object" to mean "thing-in-itself").[39]

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33 See Westphal's discussion of analytic infallibilism in *KCE*, 22-9.
34 Cf. Westphal, *KCE*, 22-9.
35 P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Methuen Ltd, 1966).
36 Westphal, *KTPR*, 1-3. Cf. Allen Wood et al., "Debating Allison on Transcendental Idealism", *Kantian Review* 12:2 (2007): 1-2.
37 Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 30-32.
38 Hilary Putnam is, I believe, the first to coin the phrase "transcendental arguments" in this sense. For a summary of such arguments, see Barry Stroud, "Transcendental Arguments", *Journal of Philosophy* LXV:9 (1968): 241-256.
39 For an example of these assumptions in operation, see Guyer, *Claims*, 24.

Clearly, on such a view Kant's claim that space and time have to be formally ideal in the Aesthetic is incomprehensible, what Strawson famously called a "disastrous model".[40] Within the Transcendental Logic, there are a handful of passages which have been generally selected as candidates for Kant's 'transcendental proof of empirical realism'. In textual order, they are the Deduction of the Categories, the Analogies of Experience (particularly the Second Analogy), and the Refutation of Idealism.[41] Unfortunately for the analytic interpreter, attempting to make any of these passages, or supporting materials taken from elsewhere in *KdrV*, fit the requirements of a 'purely conceptual proof' for the validity of logical statements about empirical experience has proven an arduous and unsatisfying project. Many interpreters, trying to read *KdrV* through the "analytic" lens, have concluded that Kant is self-contradictory or unintelligible.[42]

In recent decades, therefore, the Anglophone analytic attempt to fit Kant's arguments into a post-Cartesian epistemology (that is, to make Kant respond to Descartes by proving that Descartes' substantial subject can *logically* know 'other objects' to be more than merely appearances) has been increasingly evaluated as a failure.[43] Heidegger had already rejected a similar German-language 'epistemic' interpretation of Kant as early as the 1930s.[44] Besides a substantial violence done to Kant's text in picking and choosing passages rather than trying to comprehend the whole, there are significant problems of translation which have tended to compound certain misunderstandings.[45] In particular, the Anglophone tradition has relied for a long time on Norman Kemp-Smith's English translation of *KdrV*, which, among other difficulties, consistently renders *Vorstellung* as 'representation' rather than 'presentation': it is worth pointing out how 're-presentation' lends itself to a very phenomenalistic (in a Cartesian sense) construal of Kant's claims.[46]

Still, there are important lessons to be learned from the analytic tradition of Kantianism. Kant himself insists that subjective skepticism, the formal structure of propositions, and logic are essential elements in understanding transcendental idealism and the problem of metaphysics' possibility.[47] The analytic tradition's insistence on beginning an interpretation of *KdrV* from Kant's discussion of the synthetic *a priori* vs. the analytic *a priori*, as two classes of logical propositions, is correct in acknowledging the weight Kant gives to that discussion [B9-21]. Likewise, Kant *is*

40 Strawson, *Bounds of Sense*, 21.

41 For example, Strawson singles these passages out in the organization of *Bounds of Sense*, as does Guyer in Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge University Press, 1987).

42 Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, xiii, and Westphal, *KTPR*, 2.

43 Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 8-13; Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 20-23; de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 7-10.

44 Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 4 incl. fn.

45 For example, Westphal in *KTPR*, while himself pointing out the problems with the 'analytic' reception of Kant, bases an argument about Kant's position on 'noumenal causality' on a sequence of quotes from *KdrV* which are misconstrued or incorrectly translated, sometimes opposite in meaning from the original: Westphal, *KTPR*, 40-41.

46 There are a number of significant problems in Kemp Smith's translation, themselves conditioned by an analytic and Cartesian background, as noted by Werner Pluhar, "Translator's Preface," *Critique of Pure Reason*, xx and fn. 9.

47 See *KdrV* B vii-xxiii, B14-24.

(sometimes) talking about *concepts* and reflective, signifying thought rather than ontological/phenomenological structures of being, an abstract logical dimension that Heidegger, for example, minimizes in the *Kantbuch*.[48] In preserving these connections, analytic philosophy is therefore maintaining fidelity to a significant dimension of Kant's project. Likewise, Kant's project, as we have learned, *is* textually divided along a fundamental distinction between empirical sensibility and conceptual structuring, just as the analytic tradition is, and Kant *is* concerned with the interplay between the two, an interplay which is fundamentally tied up with the question of the nature of the human subject – so analytic Kantianism is not incorrect to emphasize these issues.[49] In disentangling the 'ontological' from both the 'metaphysical' and the 'semiotic', we will see how the issues of language and truth find their proper place in the *re*-presentational synthesis of the concept and the peculiar structure of "transcendental illusion".[50]

The shortcomings of the 'traditional/analytic' interpretation of Kant have led recently to the emergence of an alternative school, the 'revolutionary' or 'metaphysical' interpretation, which has many different variations but can basically be summarized as shifting the focus of Kant's point, within the model of Cartesianism given previously, from the 'epistemic' to the 'ontological' level. That is, rather than claiming that our 'minds' use 'transcendental arguments' to prove that appearances are *logically* not ontologically dependent on our mind, the 'metaphysical' school claims that Kant's point is that something invariant about either the constitution of our 'mind' itself or the constitution of 'objects' themselves is *ontologically* such that we perceive appearances spatiotemporally and categorially and in no other way.[51] Gardner gives a lucid account of that shift by saying that the new issue is what he terms "the problem of reality": we know that reality is 'out there', of course, but how does reality become "reality-*for-us*?"[52] That added directionality or entanglement is the mediation of the subject, the subject-object relationship.[53] We can combine that observation with an important result reached by Westphal: Westphal argues that Kant's Refutation of Idealism actually proves that the subjective ego must be *dissolved* into the world itself as

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48 Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 15-17: "All thinking is merely at the service of intuition".

49 There is an objection to Kant which consists in rejecting the validity of the essential distinction between the sensible and the conceptual, first extended by Salomon Maimon. I will reply to this objection in Chapters 2-3.

50 Note that Derrida's evolving understanding of both Husserl and his own project of the "metaphysics of presence" is based on the identification of a "Kantian Idea" operative in Husserlian phenomenology, which I take to be an attempt to think through precisely the same confused relation between first-order and second-order consciousness in the 'focal point' of objective consciousness as the 'infinite' or 'absolute' of pure form. Cf. Till Grohmann, "Infinity, Ideality, Transcendentality: The Idea in the Kantian Sense in Husserl and Derrida", *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (online, 2024).

51 Such a position is an 'epistemological' reading of Kant: the 'epistemic window' theory, according to which Kant claims that 'beings' are 'in themselves' outside our 'window', which is constituted by our senses and mode of knowing: objects may well exist either totally or partially beyond this window, but we will not know them. See Allison, *KTI*, 28-30, 60-63. See also Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 22-26, on the "problem of reality".

52 Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 22-24.

53 Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 28-29.

appearance, an undifferentiated meeting point similar to the immanent ground of perception, before the subject-object distinction, which was delineated by Merleau-Ponty.[54] Taking these two ideas together, we get a hazy picture of *KdrV* in which Kant claims we are immanently immersed in perceptual experience, and within that experience we can uncover the outlines of the past traces of the subjective mediation of objectivity – which is the position I will defend going forward.

In fact, with these (relatively) recent developments Kant's reputation (at least in English) has undergone a significant rehabilitation. It is now more and more widely acknowledged that, even if certain problems remain, transcendental idealism is a plausible and intriguing rather than obviously erroneous theory. In a space between the Kantian readings of Allison, Bird, de Boer, Gardner, Langton, Melnick, and Sgarbi, to give an abbreviated list of examples, I think a coherent and defensible account of Kant's thought is emerging.[55]

The major point of departure of my own project is to disagree with the emerging Kantian school in its deployment of variants of the phrase "descriptive metaphysics of experience" to describe the totality of Kant's aims in *KdrV*, a phrase which I think denotes what is actually a phenomenology.[56] An immanent phenomenology of experience is indeed one part of Kant's project, but, as noted above, 'metaphysics' is about *Being*. For example, Bird asserts, "My claim is that Kant is committed to no more than the conceivability and meaningfulness of references to things in themselves, and that he holds consistently that we can neither strictly affirm nor deny their existence".[57] The implication is that *Being*, as the Outside from within the immanent field of appearances, cannot be affirmed or denied. In my position, by emphasizing the phenomenological distinction of the formal 'object' from real being, and by paying special attention to Kant's 'pre-Critical' insistence on the failure of predication to encompass existing itself, I assert rather that the *positive* thing-in-itself is an artifact generated by thought, but that appearances are directly fulfilled through Being, which cannot be *affirmed* or *denied*. The subtle shift here is that it is not a question whether the metaphysical ground of objective appearing is *empty*, i.e., there is no Being at all; the question is whether it can be made *determinate*.[58] That emphasis on the act of reflective *knowing* as a distinct issue of double mediation gives rise to the second and broader contribution of the present

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54 Westphal, *KCE*, 143-46, 164-65.

55 Allison, *KTI*; Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*; de Boer, *Kant's Reform;* Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant;* Langton, *Kantian Humility*; Arthur Melnick, *Space, Time and Thought in Kant* (Kluwer Academic, 1989); Marco Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle: Epistemology, Logic, Method* (State University of New York, 2016).

56 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 2-3.

57 Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 210.

58 This is, once again, Derrida's question in *Voice and Phenomena*, but also the (problematized) structure of what is known in contemporary philosophy as the "unsayable": William Franke, *A Philosophy of the ~~Unsayable~~* (University of Notre Dame, 2014), 1-3.

investigation: to disentangle and follow the separate *linguistic* or semiotic critique which is the cause of the doubleness in Kant's use of "metaphysics".

Kant and Continental Philosophy, Loosely Considered

Referring again to the above Cartesian metaphysical model as our guide, the second post-Kantian 'branch' we can briefly discuss is what is known as "continental phenomenology".[59] Continental phenomenology is a complex field with many internal divisions. The only point that I wish to make here is a very general claim about a structure of repetitive excess that is visible in the texts of phenomenology, and the boundary which is apparently exceeded thereby.[60] In Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology, the limits of the philosophical field have been set by the original "epoche", the "reduction" of the problem of real being to focus on phenomena as events of consciousness.[61] That is a 'post-critical' move which for Husserl was originally explicitly determined by the limits set by Kant.[62] Post-Husserlian phenomenology repeatedly attempts to transcend these limits: for example, in the phenomenology of the "French theological turn", which attempts to find a supra-objective opening in the 'saturation', 'call', 'gift', 'excessiveness', etc. of the phenomenological object.[63] Janicaud has argued, I think persuasively, that such attempts violate the critical stricture of phenomenology as a discipline.[64] However, I am not deciding the dispute here, but identifying the dispute itself as background for our own project. Here, the disputants are trying to find a way to accept the phenomenological reduction of consciousness that Husserl pioneered, but from within it articulate an overcoming or opening which allows for direct contact with Being beyond mediated objectivity: the boundary is objectivity, and the attempt to exceed it is criticized for attempting to make objective the *ex hypothesi* unobjectifiable. Likewise, in a different strain of continental phenomenology, Heidegger's response to Kant is the attempt to articulate the 'clearing of Being' beyond the "ontic" structures of "beings", to reach for a "fundamental ontology".[65] The question here is, once again, how "Being" can be articulated without simply being

[59] By "Continental" I include here post-Husserlian and post-Heideggerian phenomenology and philosophy of language, but exclude political philosophy, aesthetics, feminist philosophy, and philosophy of technology/culture (not because they are not Continental nor not Kantian, simply outside of our possible scope).

[60] In *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor devotes an extensive discussion to the "repetitive" movement of modern art and philosophy in attempting to exceed the determinate structure of the self and the mechanistic grasp of culture, which includes the colonizing effect of language, only to find that the ecstatic or euphoric breakthrough into the "living reality" beyond language becomes itself again flat and repetitive, because it is brought within language and knowledge again. Taylor, "Epiphanies of Modernism", in *Sources,* 456-494.

[61] This is a simplification of Husserl's project; cf. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl,* 13-16.

[62] Cf. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 11-12.

[63] Janicaud et al., *Theological Turn,* 107-125.

[64] Janicaud et al., *Theological Turn,* 65-69.

[65] Cf. Heidegger, *Kantbuch,* 162-164.

another “being”, a problem Heidegger began to confront by using the word “Seyn” only with a strikethrough: “~~Seyn~~”.[66] The basic structure is the identifiable effort to prove, from within the presupposition of the enclosure of consciousness by its own mediating act, the possibility of knowing the presence of something *outside* that consciousness – a task which does not at all have clear prospects of theoretical succcess. The theoretical futility, and the *desire* which motivates the repeated return to the agreed-upon border of thought, is what we want to ponder. In yet a third division, I wish to especially note the critique at the level of language which Derrida developed against Husserl: Derrida argued that Husserl’s position requires not only phenomena available to consciousness but also *language* which describes phenomena, and that language is itself already a mediating repetition of and difference from being itself.[67] In searching to break through the phenomena to the ground of phenomena, Husserl ignored that in doing so, he had to *describe* the ground of phenomena (what Derrida calls the naive “metaphysics of presence” in the sign), which all by itself makes the content of the description unlike the being itself (Derrida’s countering “metaphysics of absence”).[68] In my view there is a very sophisticated and neglected implicit critique of language’s objectivity in Kant, quite similar to Derrida’s, which is double-edged and sharp enough to cut the unwary. Finally, I note that there are a handful of direct commentaries on Kant by “continental” thinkers, including *Kant’s Critical Architectonic* by Deleuze, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology* by Michel Foucault, Lyotard’s *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, and Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (the ‘*Kantbuch*’) which I have found very helpful in developing what I think of as the correct ‘spirit’ of Kantian interpretation.[69]

After the “continental”, I mention the school of “German Idealism”, which I take to include the reaction to Kant’s Critical writings in Kant’s own lifetime. The German reaction to Kant’s thought in his own lifetime and immediately afterwards is on the whole a sustained rejection of Kant’s claims about the ‘*Ding-an-sich*’. Kant’s philosophy seems to turn inside-out here in a double structure of unintelligibility: focusing on the ‘thing-in-itself’ renders the phenomenal-noumenal distinction unintelligible, and likewise the distinction renders the ‘thing-in-itself’ unintelligible. Kant’s peer Moses Mendelssohn offered a lengthy, but unpublished, critique of Kant’s previous argument for transcendental idealism in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, as reported by Marcus Herz.[70]

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66 Cf. Otto Pöggeler, “Heidegger’s Restricted Conception of Rhetoric”, in Daniel M. Gross and Ansgar Kemmann, eds., *Heidegger and Rhetoric* (State University of New York Press, 2005): 162.

67 Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 26, 32-33.

68 Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 201-203.

69 Gilles Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*: *the Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Athlone Press, 1984); Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*, trans. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (MIT Press, 2008); Heidegger, *Kantbuch;* Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant’s Critique of Judgment, Sections 23-29*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Meridian Crossing, 1994).

70 See Eva J. Engel, “Mendelssohn contra Kant: Ein frühes Zeugnis der Auseinandersetzung mit Kants Lehre von Zeit und Raum in der Dissertation von 1770”, *Kant-Studien* 95:3 (2004): 269-282.

Kant's friend Schulze anonymously rejected the "thing in itself" in *Aenesidemus* by arguing that Kant must assert that noumena *cause* appearances, when Kant also clearly argues that causality *only* applies to appearances – a criticism that becomes a standard objection to the '*Ding an Sich*'.[71] J.G. Hamann simply reduced Kantianism to satire in the *Metacritique of the Purism of Reason,* offering, however, the extremely important objection that transcendental idealism is not "self-grounding", or cannot explain its own metatheoretical 'place' within its model of reality.[72] That "grounding problem" will be a significant part of our ultimate task. Salomon Maimon rejects the doctrine of the "thing in itself" on the grounds that the distinction between intuition and understanding, and hence between phenomena and noumena, is insupportable.[73] These objections were based on the widespread initial conclusion that Kant was arguing that the world-as-it-appears is a private illusion, but more substantively on a rejection of the second, counterintuitive claim that there is something about which we can know only that we do not know it: i.e. the "*Ding-an-sich"* or "thing in itself".[74]

However, a curious element emerges in the further development of "German Idealism": Kant makes a division not only between worldly appearances and real being but also between the appearance of the *self* and the self's real being [A356-361], forestalling Cartesianism by making it impossible to ground appearances in the real being of selfhood. In trying to return to real being but also respect Kant's transcendental restrictions on knowledge, German Idealism begins to make a concerted search for knowledge of the "Absolute" or the "unconditioned" that Kant had said was beyond objective knowledge [A324/B381], following the clue of Kant's grounding of the suprasensible in will or practical reasoning.[75] Simultaneously, German commentators beginning with Reinhold claimed that Kant's "critical science" was too disorganized, and lacked a clearly defined hierarchical first principle.[76] Shaped by these commitments, the effort naturally returned through the locus of the hypostatized self that Kant had tried to close off forever. Thus, Beck and Schleiermacher both concluded that Kant was wrong about the inner division of selfhood and that one could reach a "transcendental standpoint" (*Transcendentale Standpunkt)* from which the unity of the self-as-appearance and the transcendental ego generating appearances was immanently self-evident.[77] Of the sequence of commentators who 'fixed' Kant by discarding the 'thing-in-itself' and

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71 See Westphal, *KTPR*, 39.

72 Johann Georg Hamann, "Metacritique of the Purism of Reason", *Writings on Philosophy and Language,* trans. Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 205-218.

73 See Brandon C. Look, "Maimon and Kant on the Nature of the Mind", in Corey W. Dyck and Falk Wunderlich (eds.). *Kant and His German Contemporaries, vol. I: Logic, Mind, Epistemology, Science and Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2018): 94-100. Cf. Pippin, *The Persistence of Subjectivity*, 34.

74 On the question of the "thing-in-itself" see Henri E. Allison, "Things in Themselves, Noumena, and the Transcendental Object", *Dialectica* 32:1 (1978): 41-76.

75 Bowie, *Schelling*, 16-18.

76 Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 242-45, 250-52.

77 For a detailed summary of Beck, see Nitzan, *Beck's Standpunctslehre*, 147-168; for Schleiermacher, see Thandeka, *The Embodied Self: Friedrich Schleiermacher's Solution to Kant's Problem of the Empirical Self* (State University

founding appearances on a hyper-subjective 'absolute I' or *das Ich*, the most incisive and coherent were Fichte and Maimon.[78] Hegel explicitly rejects the Kantian phenomenal-noumenal distinction in the very first pages of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, asserting that thought simply *is* "identical to Being", the 'thing-in-itself', and builds his criticism of Kant from there.[79] The problem that ensues, as Bowie has brilliantly summarized, is that first, the German Idealists could not ultimately figure out a way to validly use propositional language to capture or prove the existence of an Absolute, and secondly, because the characteristic method of 'absolute idealism' or 'identity philosophy' involved equating the absolute of consciousness with the Absolute beyond consciousness, they can easily be read as having committed – and criticized one another for committing – the mistake of accidentally swallowing God and the universe into the first-personal perspective, the very thing that Kant's critical method had tried to forestall.[80] Here again we see the repetition of the boundary-excess problem: having accepted the principle of subjective mediation, the attempt to demonstrate the independence of the supra- or sub-objective becomes both urgent and tremendously difficult.

Obviously, to summarize the vast fields of either continental philosophy or German Idealism in these paragraphs is inadequate, and many figures in both would take umbrage at being grouped in a "school" (with their enemies, no less). The success or failure of any of these projects in escaping Kant or Descartes on their own terms is far outside our present scope. What I would like the reader to identify in the above is a very general and instinctive consensus that the post-Kantian problem consists of finding a way back to real being without violating the critical restrictions, on both the linguistic and the ontological level, that have closed off real being in the first place. We cannot, furthermore, charge headlong back to real being with the propositions and ontological assumptions we have previously been using without breaking Kant's critical seal on Descartes' ontology, in which, when we touch real being, we appropriate it by objectifying and cognizing it, and become ourselves the God of a hermetically sealed micro-cosmos. That is the point of Kant's statement that "transcendental realists" are the true "empirical idealists" [A369-373]. As we proceed further, we want to keep these large and general ideas in the background.

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of New York, 1995): 83-87.

78 See G. Anthony Bruno, "From Being to Acting: Kant and Fichte on Intellectual Intuition", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy, (*online, 2022). Kant explicitly rejected Fichte's reading of his transcendental philosophy in an open letter [Ak. 12:370-1]. One line of disagreement between them, as Foucault notes in his commentary on the *Anthropology*, is that Fichte - and Beck - were concerned that Kant had created an unbridgeable dualism between the 'moral being' and the 'physical being' of the human person: a point that will be important later in discussing the question of Kant's 'hylomorphism'. See Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology,* trans. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs (MIT Press, 2008), 37-9. On Maimon, see the excellent analysis in Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 285-323.

79 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller and Findlay (Oxford University Press, 2004): §54-55.

80 Bowie, *Schelling,* 128-132.

To restate what has been done so far, we have developed a basic metaphysical model of mediation: we have a 'subject', an 'object', and a 'phenomenon' co-constituted between them. The question is: given that subjectivity has assisted in constituting the phenomenon, which gives itself as wholly objective in perception, what can be definitively determined of the contribution of the objective? The subjective and the objective are participating at two distinct layers: the layer of *being*, and the layer of *structuring*. The distinctions between these are not clear yet. For example, is an object *real* or is it a 'representation'? Is its appearance equivalent to its reality or are the two separable? Are the two separable, if they are, in actuality or only in thought? Likewise, the subjective is contributing structure doubly: once at the level of given perception, and once at the level of reflective thought (for example, I can perceive in an illusory way, without language, and also separately describe in an erroneous way). Kant is interested in *all* of these layers in issuing his 'table of corrections' for philosophy – this is our first result. I note here that the long-term trajectory of Kant's correction is to separate the direct contact with being, which will from now on be the only thing that I denote by 'metaphysical', from the objective and therefore knowable/perceivable structure of objects (the 'ontological' henceforth), which will therefore become the previous contents of "general metaphysics" restructured as "transcendental ontology" [A845/B873]. The separate problem of the reflective re-problematization of the separateness of metaphysics and ontology, the 'semiotic', is still, for now, in the background. We presently wish to see how the first separation makes sense to Kant, by first understanding why Kant thinks the distinction between 'phenomena' and 'noumena' is the indispensable basis of the systematic Copernican 'philosophical table of navigational corrections'.

As we saw, Kant's project is a metaphysical, rather than an epistemological one, although it is not itself metaphysics and it opens with an *aporia* regarding how metaphysics is even possible [B22]. Kant's reasons why the structures of general metaphysics need to be justified are complex, but can be initially summarized as follows. Kant is proximately responding to David Hume's proposal that 'cause and effect', in particular, is a formal idea that is imposed on the world by human observers, rather than being innately grounded in beings themselves [B5-6]. Assuming that non-conceptual, sensual "experience" gives rise to conceptual "ideas", Hume points out that our experience of the regularity of nature depends on our contingent experiences of events regularly taking place in a repetitively identifiable way, into which we read the concept of a "cause".[81]

[81] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding: and other writings*, ed. Stephen Buckle (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 58-59.

However, for Hume, ideas can *only* arise from experience. It is not theoretically possible, therefore, for the idea of a cause to be logically extended to *future* events as a prediction of the contingent (i.e., scientific induction). Hume agrees that scientific induction is practicable, but proposes that his argument shows there can be no pure logical ground for it – it is only our 'habit' of a "constant conjunction".[82] In other words, there is no reason for us to think that the sun will rise again tomorrow which is grounded in the formal and objective nature of the sun itself; rather, we are just used to seeing sunrise repeatedly happen and mistake that repetitive experience for a scientific law. Hume's "fork" or "paradox" consists in the twofold claim that causal necessity cannot arise as a necessary idea from either empirical, contingent reasoning or from abstract, theoretical reasoning.[83] Kant chooses to accept that causality cannot be empirical, and challenge Hume's position that causality cannot be abstract or *a priori* [B20]. Kant famously wrote that Hume "awoke [him] from dogmatic slumbers", or in other words, alerted him to the existence of an unsuspected problem.[84] That awakening pushed Kant into the 'silent decade', the ten years of meditation, culminating in *KdrV*'s publication, during which Kant wrote Marcus Herz to say he had formulated the question that contained "the key to all metaphysics".[85] As Kant explains further in *KdrV*, he has realized that Hume's criticism applies potentially to all other metaphysical categories (since perceiving cause and effect implies the distinction of substances/objects, for example), but also to the knowledge of the formal, mathematical sciences [B20]. A vast variety of influences and observations went into Kant's tremendous synthesis of response to his intellectual surroundings, but for understanding's sake here we can point out one piece of evidence for Kant's point: since by Kant's lifetime Kepler and Galileo (not to mention Newton's *Principia*) had mathematized the science of physics,[86][87] one implication of Hume's argument is that mathematics itself is also *subjective*, a mere interpretive system we place upon intrinsically disordered physical events. That is why Kant explains that the task of *KdrV* is to show the "*objective*", rather than merely "*subjective*", validity of our formal thought [A90/B122] – but the exact Kantian meaning of "objective" is a problem to be approached with caution, as we shall see.

What is Kant's solution? To declare that the necessity comes *from us*: that we are the ones who imposed it upon 'the world' by perceiving. This is the "Copernican reversal" of the structuring of objects [B xvi]. Along the way, Kant will also demonstrate how the same necessary knowledge,

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82 Hume, *Enquiry*, 75.

83 In the formulation of the *Enquiry*, Hume states that cause and effect is not an *idea*, but rather a "*feeling*" originating in repeated experience. Hume, *Enquiry*, 70-72.

84 Kant, *Prolegomena*, Preface [Ak. 4:260].

85 Kant to Herz, 1772: [Ak. 10:129-35]. Cf. Jennifer Mensch, "The Key To All Metaphysics*:* Kant's Letter to Herz, 1772", *Kantian Review* 12:2 (2007): 109-127.

86 See Peter Machamer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Galileo* (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 1-26.

87 See Rhonda Martens, *Kepler's Religion and the New Astronomy* (Princeton University Press, 2000): 4.

applied to the world in the form of causal determinism by Descartes and Newton, does not necessarily mean that human beings are not morally free to start causal chains of activity within that necessarily determined world [B561-586].[88] Since Kant holds that philosophy in the most universal sense is most properly about the ethical education of free will [A800-02/B828-30], philosophy itself has been rendered impossible or frivolous unless free will can be theoretically secured. The reason physical determinism is related to the problem of induction is that both are solved at once if necessity is a feature of our awareness of objects. If humans, by knowing, populate 'the world' itself (as appearance) with necessary causal chains, there is no need to hold that humans themselves, *as unknown* to themselves, are likewise determined [A353-7].

Thus it is generally understood that Kant's solution, somewhat resembling Leibniz', is to divide the world between "phenomena" or appearances, which we can sense, and "noumena" and/or things-in-themselves, which we cannot sense, and to insist very firmly that "we cannot know the thing in itself" [B295-308]. Metaphysics (and science) apply validly to 'appearances', but not to 'things-in-themselves', the latter including the human soul and God [B xxix-xxx]. Therefore, human freedom is preserved as a bare theoretical possibility within the empirical world, which is proved to be "objectively" graspable by formal systems of theoretical determination. The peaceful coexistence of what Kant calls "theoretical reasoning" or "understanding" (which grasps the mathematized, formalized empirical world of experience), on the one hand, and what Kant calls "practical reasoning", which uses the empirical world of experience as a necessary point of reference for thinking about our own free or ethical activity, on the other, is thereby secured [cf. *KU,* Ak. 5:175]. That is Kant's work insofar as it pertains to "general metaphysics". Kant's work with respect to "special metaphysics" takes a different form: in each of the three object-cases of "God", the "self" or "the immortal soul", and the "world" as a historical and cosmological totality,[89] Kant demonstrates that human thinking commits logical errors on the basis of the unconscious hypostatization of these three objects. Kant calls these failure points of thinking the "dialectical inferences" of reason [A339-40/B397-8].[90]

That twofold structure, proving metaphysics' success in the "general" and failure in the "special" mode, is the basis of Kant's subtle claim that he has simultaneously validated and championed metaphysics and also limited its aspirations forever, a "critique of reason's powers" which restricts reason by finding its "bounds" [B xxv]. A point that can be missed here is that Kant,

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88 While Newton opposed Descartes' relational spacetime with an absolute spacetime, both share a mechanistic, external view of physical causation and Newton read Descartes's *Principles* very closely. See Isaac Newton, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Andrew Janiak (Cambridge University Press, 2004): xvii-xxiv.

89 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 23-28.

90 On the significance of the distinction between "mathematical" and "dynamical" failures of reason in the B edition, see Ricouer, *Oneself*, 108.

despite his own strong dislike of organized or dogmatic religion,[91] does *not* say that the conclusion is that God positively does not exist, but that the logical possibility of simultaneously proving and disproving God's existence demonstrates that there is a kind of fault or failure in our abstract thinking at these remote limits, meaning that here we must leave our ordinary way of knowing behind and rely on "faith" [B xxx] to underpin our positive assertions about God. Kant likewise does *not* say that the limitation of pure reason, once it is generally assimilated, means that we will never again speak or write about what exceeds the domain of general or empirical metaphysics. Rather, Kant repeatedly insists that our thinking, not on some occasions but in its very essential structure, will *always* inevitably exceed the boundaries of what can correctly be thought [A297/B353], a peculiarly paradoxical state which Kant names "transcendental illusion".[92] Indeed, it is crucial to grasp that the shocking thing about Kant's discovery is that we have *already been doing* metaphysics, running off a cliff onto thin air like a cartoon character, not realizing we are supposed to fall. Kant's question, "How is this *possible*?" is thus to be understood in a internally doubled rather than extrinsic way: it is about the theoretical possibility of something we find already actualized in our own empirical past. The second important result, therefore, is that Kant's textual discussion of metaphysics and the boundaries of reason is not to be taken as ordinarily literal, but involves an ongoing hollowness or irony which we must investigate further.[93]

Kant claims that, in order to follow his demonstration of the peculiar doubleness of metaphysics, we first need to follow him in getting ourselves into an unusual perspective, which is another, parallel doubling. Reading Kant's text is thus also the process of learning to see like Kant sees, which is given a method by Kant's invention of a peculiar methodology, the "Copernican turn" of "transcendental reflection" [B xvi-xvii]. To see what Kant sees about metaphysics and its objects, we have to follow him in making a "turn" in our own thought. The doubling of our perspective is a split between the "empirical", which is our ordinary experience not only as immanent perception but *also* as uncritical reflective thought,[94] and Kant's new modality of the "transcendental". "Transcendental" reflection is a kind of "thought experiment" which takes as its goal certain realizations about the non-experienced *conditions* of experience [B xxv-xxxi].[95] In other words, in 'transcendental reflection' Kant tries to ask: what formal conditions had to already have been true, although I have no direct evidence of them, in order for me to have undergone, or to be conscious

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91 However, Stephen Palmquist has strongly defended an account of Kant as much more open to religion than usually thought: Stephen Palmquist, *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Ashgate, 2000).

92 Cf. Michelle Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge University Press, 2007): 1-10.

93 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 64-65.

94 Allison, *KTI*, 62-63.

95 On Kant's "thought experiments": Westphal, *KTPR*, 12-32.

of, an ordinary experience? We do not have direct access to these conditions, and the transcendental is not a second 'world' hidden behind the ordinary one.[96] Rather, we are looking at certain irregularities or logical fault lines in the immanent world we already know and asking, "What is the origin of these peculiarities, the object or myself?" Thus, the third point we initially take note of is that Kant's transcendental method is one of indirect inference: by saying what can correctly be said in language, about what can be experienced properly in experience, we can draw a kind of negative outline around what *cannot* be said or experienced properly, but is knowable only as the 'other' or 'outside' of what is available. To properly understand Kant, we need a firm grasp of the feeling of this movement: tracing in the available evidence the history of an event which is not itself available, but which we can conclude is logically necessary for the existence of the evidence.

Since Kant is looking for the source of our knowledge of the necessary, and has hypothesized that it lies within the structure of our own knowing, he will divide his search into sections corresponding to the early modern framework of 'knowledge': one for sensation and one for concepts, which together form 'knowledge' or 'judgments' for us. Kant, in reflection, realizes that we not only *think* necessary relations but also *perceive* necessary relations. It is an important part of Kant's systematic break with Leibniz to assert in *KdrV* that sensibility – the human power of sensory perception – and understanding – the human power of abstract, symbolic reflection – are irreducibly distinct modalities of human knowledge, and that sensibility has its own *formal* structure which is *neither* sensation itself *nor* logical or reflexive understanding.[97] So there must be an element of even sensibility which we 'put into' the world: Kant argues that this element is the "pure form" of sensibility, the framework or container of "space" and "time" [B34-7]. Space is the form of "outer sense", and time is the form of "inner sense". The doctrine of the ideality of space and time is perhaps the most challenging and misunderstood of all Kant's ideas, so we should take seriously Kant's warning that he does *not* thereby argue for subjective idealism [B69-72].

After his brief discussion of sensibility (the Transcendental Aesthetic), Kant turns to the question of necessary or *a priori* concepts (the Transcendental Logic). He argues that what he is pursuing is a form of logic, but not a formal logic [B76-82].[98] Rather, it is a kind of logic that makes *empirical experience* possible to comprehend as ordered and intelligible [B82]. Kant believes that he demonstrates there are only twelve concepts in this 'transcendental logic', arranged into four "moments" or groups, which are a modification of Aristotle's Categories [A81-82].[99] These pure concepts have no content in themselves, requiring some sensible content to become available to us

96 Cf. Allison, *KTI*, 45-49.
97 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 19-20.
98 Cf. Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*, 140-147.
99 Cf. Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*, 135-150, for an extremely important argument about the close relationship between Kant's and Aristotle's Categories.

through a "schematization" [A137/B176]. Kant offers an argument (the Deduction of the Categories) justifying that all, and only, these twelve categories are our stock of 'innate ideas' [A84-131/B116-170].[100]

In the Second Edition, Kant then also [B132-141] develops a very important and lengthy argument regarding the "synthetic unity of apperception" – the idea that there is a transcendental necessity, independent of any particular experience, of the oneness of our own 'frame' of perception in order for us to consider any experience as being 'ours'. The unity of apperception is in some way the demonstration both of the objectivity of the Categories and also of the real, though unknown, existence of our own self.[101] After the Deduction and the discussion of the unity of the understanding, Kant shows how exactly the concepts and 'sense-data' are joined together ("schematized") by imagination to issue in "experience" [B150-9, 176-87]. The culmination of the discussion is Kant's infamous distinction between "phenomena" or appearances and "noumena" or "things-in-themselves", and his claim that we know only phenomena and know nothing of noumena [A705/B884].

Finally, Kant turns back from the broader ontological project of establishing the 'Copernican hypothesis', and returns to the specific concerns of metaphysics, which as defined by Wolff are: God, the soul as simple substance, and the world [A293].[102] Kant claims that metaphysical debates about the existence and properties of these objects cannot be decisively settled because they are not objects we can experience discursively/intuitively [A299-310] - that is, they are noumena without phenomena. Kant devotes a section to each demonstrating that we think contradictory conclusions about each because - due to the structure of the mind Kant has just finished arguing for - we cannot help but think of them as phenomenal: the Paralogisms of Pure Reason (Ego/Soul), the Antinomies of Pure Reason (World), and the Ideal of Pure Reason (God). The final sections of *KdrV* are devoted to a general discussion of the new methodology appropriate to 'critical' metaphysics.

Taking all these ideas together, it seems that Kant's position is something like the following. If, he hypothesizes, we impose (in perception itself) space, time, mathematics and causality on a universe which is in itself unknown, and if we (in-ourselves) are unknown to ourselves in the same way, physical determinism can no longer actually endanger our freedom of agency *or* the reality of that agency's power to impact other real, "noumenal" beings (and this second clause could well be

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[100] An important clarifying note: Kant denies that the Categories are 'innate' in either a Lockean or a Platonic sense; rather, they are 'innate' in the sense that they are the *a priori* shape itself of any judgment whatsoever and are thus transcendentally necessary from within the point of view of consciousness.

[101] "...It can be shown that the unity of self-consciousness could not even be conceived unless that very unity functions as the point of departure for constituting a world of objects. With this, we can understand not only the origin of this world but also why this world is natural and indispensable to us and why our knowledge claims about it are justified." Dieter Heinrich, quoted in Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 21.

[102] On Wolff's "overhaul of Scholasticism" see de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 21-31.

an advance on Cartesianism).[103] However, we will never know any structures of the 'noumenal world' directly, because all we can perceive (and thereby subject to causal determination) are appearances. Descartes was wrong because even the *ego*, Kant argues, is not certain to me in-itself: awareness of my own existence depends on the appearing in time of outer appearances, and so 'I' am just as much an appearance as the outer world [B407-432].[104] Kant tells us that as human beings, our moral impulses and activity stand free of all the subjective structuring of experience described in *KdrV*: rather than "pure" or "speculative" reason, our "practical reason" allows us to know and do good [B431].[105] He has "annuled knowledge", we are told, "to make room for faith" [B xxx].

The difficulty with this theory, which clearly resembles the issue of the 'excess' or transcendence of a methodologically limited knowing, is the central but mysterious function of a thing which is known to be unknowable. Consider one sub-species of the problem, namely, "noumenal causality": how do these unknowable 'things' (including our true selves) exert effects in the phenomenal world if the causal link between the two cannot be validly attributed to noumena?[106] Historically, many Kantian interpreters have understood Kant to be saying that there are two 'worlds', the 'noumenal world' of unknowable things-in-themselves and the 'phenomenal world' behind which they are hidden.[107] Attempting to apply causality to the noumenal/phenomenal distinction gives rise to the theory of "double affection": the idea that 'noumenally', we cause 'noumenal' events and simultaneously cause 'phenomenal' events as 'phenomenal'.[108] 'Double affection', the idea that we *must* think causality as "transphenomenal" or also operative in a "noumenal realm", has of course been challenged, because it violates Kant's own explicit injunction that causality (and hence physical determinism) only applies to the phenomenal world [B565-570].[109] Leibniz had already posited a 'two-worlds' monadology with an unbridgeable divide between sensible bodies/appearances and intelligible 'monads', wherein the interactions of the monads cause the movements of bodies.[110] Kant's addition seems to be simply declaring that the 'monads' are 'unknowable in themselves', while still being necessary for thought and in some relation to appearances – but how is it possible for what cannot be known to be necessary to the

[103] See Westphal, *KTPR*, 54-63 and footnotes for an overview of the problem and a survey of the literature on noumenal causality.

[104] For an excellent overview of Kant on identity, see Béatrice Longuenesse, "Kant on the Identity of Persons", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series 107 (2007): 149-67.

[105] Kant unfolds the project of practical reasoning in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Hackett Publishing Company, 2002) [Ak. 5:1-164].

[106] Westphal, *KTPR*, 61-7.

[107] Allen Wood points out the frequency of the 'two-worlds', what he calls the "hypochlorite", interpretation in Wood et al., "Debating Allison on Transcendental Idealism", 5.

[108] Westphal, *KTPR*, 84.

[109] As pointed out by Westphal, *KTPR*, 39-40. See Graham Bird, "Kant's Transcendental Idealism", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures* 13 (1982): 71-92; and Strawson, *Bounds*, 38-42.

[110] See Lloyd Strickland, *Leibniz's* Monadology*: A New Translation and Guide* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014): 14-27.

entire domain of the knowable? As Jacobi first famously said, therefore, "one cannot accept the doctrine of the thing in itself, but one cannot remain in Kantianism with it".[111]

In response to such difficulties, Trendelenburg, in 1870, had already raised the popular possibility of the "neglected alternative": Kant says that phenomena are known to be what they are for us, and noumena are simply undetermined with respect to our knowledge. If so, why can't we say (in essence) that, unknown to us, noumena *are* in fact as they appear to be phenomenally?[112] Such a thesis allows us to reconcile the ideality of space and time with the phenomenal reality of space and time. Kantians can accept Kant's statement that we must "critique" the sources of our knowledge and that the subject contributes something to the structure of experience, while returning to a modified, "critical" metaphysical realism. Thus, the first project in our archaeological descent will be to examine the beginning of *KdrV,* from the opening pages to the Transcendental Aesthetic, attempting to decipher the reasons why Kant held that space and time *must* be ideal [A49/B66].

We now want to know why Kant insists that his project is impossible to undertake without assuming the ideality of absolute space and time. We further, however, want to know why Kant thinks that a deconstruction of the ontological/metaphysical self-presence of the ego will secure the metaphysical ground of *objects*, which does not seem to be a necessary consequence: we may well end up with no ontological ground of appearances at all! Perhaps our violence done to ontology to allow Being to come through will instead cause Being to vanish entirely. Why does Kant not opt for the much simpler position of "transcendental realism", in which the spatiotemporal forms of objects are given in and from other objective beings themselves?

In the text of *KdrV,* which devotes detailed responses to so many different types of questions and topics, it is very difficult to get a comprehensive grasp, to find the center point which seems to be absently hiding somewhere within. There is a school of Kantian interpretation, most notably advanced by Hans Vaihinger and Norman Kemp-Smith, which holds that there is no center of *KdrV*; rather, under professional pressure to publish something, Kant gathered together a bundle of incompatible ideas into a book (the "patchwork theory").[113] In my view, however, Kant clearly thinks that there *is* a center point, some original realization from which all these diverse consequences flow out into every field of human thought.

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111 See Westphal, *KTPR*, 39. Compare Richard Kroner, *Von Kant Bis Hegel, 1st. Bd.* (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1977), 308-315.

112 For an overview of the neglected alternative, see Andrew Specht, "F. A. Trendelenberg and the Neglected Alternative", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy,* 22:3 (2014): 514-34. Cf. also Allison's criticism of the 'neglected alternative' in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 111-114.

113 H.J. Paton, "Is the Transcendental Deduction a Patchwork?", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 30 (1929): 143–78.

I argue that that pivot point is the transcendental/phenomenological separation of formal objectivity from being in the thought experiment of the "transcendental object" or "*etwas*=X" [B6]. Thus Kant's 'transcendental idealism', in terms of the ontological structure of objectivity, should be understood through the lens of intentional phenomenology.[114][115] What do I mean by this? As developed by Brentano and the early Husserl, the structure of intention discloses that 'consciousness' is not a bare fact, but rather is always 'consciousness *of'* some object – a movement rather than a thing.[116] 'Phenomenology' is subsequently defined as the examination of the objects of consciousness in general, *as* objects, to indirectly uncover the structure of consciousness itself.[117] In *MAN*, Kant defines 'phenomenology' in the same way: "It is different in the doctrine of appearance [*Erscheinungslehre*], where there is involved the relation to the subject in order to determine according to this relation the relation of the objects" [Ak. 4:559, fn.].[118] In harmony with Brentano or the early Husserl, Kant develops an account of how the 'of' in 'consciousness *of'* is not merely an empty intending movement but the complex, formal, invariant structure of pure objectivity, a structure consisting of both pure intuitions (space and time) given in a 'passive synthesis' and active pure concepts (the Categories).[119]

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[114] Heidegger is the most prominent Kantian commentator to argue that Kant's *KdrV* should be understood phenomenologically (Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Indiana University Press, 1997): 13-17). However, Heidegger, we may say, means by this that Kant is a *Heideggerian* phenomenologist, Heidegger's infamous 'violence' of interpretation, which in the *Kantbuch* (137-140) takes the form of founding ontology on ultimate time-consciousness (the underlying structure which then informs *Being and Time*). Heidegger's minimization of *spatial* consciousness, which is the foundation of *difference* and also of transcendental illusion, avoids raising the problem of the second-order ontologization intrinsic to language which is the prominent feature of the present investigation.

[115] Note that, as Richard Aquila summarizes, there is already a vigorous debate in Kantian studies between 'intentionalist', 'phenomenalist', and 'double-aspect' readings of Kant which take up similar issues to mine, and similar phrasings, with widely differing conclusions. See Richard Aquila, "Hans Vaihinger and Some Recent Interpretations of Kant", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41:2 (2003): 232-34, for an overview. However, although I agree with many of these positions on certain points, I find that the essential point in my reading of Kant hinges on consistently maintaining awareness of a fundamental equivocation in the meaning of 'object' between 'intentionally inexisting object' and 'empirical being', and that to my knowledge no one in the Kantian literature has defended *both* that an 'object' is intentionally inexistent *and* that it is the presentation as appearance of a real being composed of the dynamic forces of act-existing as pure substrate, or positive 'chaos'.

[116] By "phenomenology" I mean an examination of the structures of the intentional object as it is found in conscious awareness, although, as I will note shortly, for Kant 'phenomenology' does *not* necessarily include the 'bracketing' of real existence (the 'reduction' or 'epoche') which is found in Husserl's phenomenology. By "intentionality" I mean Brentano's formulation of the 'intentional relation': consciousness is always 'consciousness *of*', meaning that the presence of consciousness is disclosed through examination of the presence of the intentional object. On Brentano's intentional relation see Dummett, *Origins*, 28-29.

[117] "Kant had recognized that the facts of consciousness need not be exclusively about consciousness, just because they pertain to it. On the contrary, all conscious activities must be understood as in one way or another directed to an object which, if it is ever actually given, stands related to those activities as a distinct term. Hence, to reflect upon them and to establish their requirements is the same as to define the structure of a possible objective world in outline form." George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel: texts in the development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, revised ed. (Hackett Publishing Co., 2000): 4.

[118] *Erscheinungslehre i*s equivalent to "phenomenology" [Phänomenologie] in this section of *MAN*. Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, trans. James Ellington (Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970): 126.

[119] Here I note that there is significant contemporary effort devoted to rescuing Husserl from the accusation of being a 'Cartesian' phenomenologist, for example, Dominique Pradelle in French and Lillian Alweiss in English; I have

From that starting point, I will argue that Kant's position is as follows: Experience is the beginning of all knowledge, and the foundation of phenomenological reflection. In experience, objects are given, which are found to have features irreconcilable with the assumption that an *object* is equivalent to a *being* ("transcendental realism").[120] Rather, an *object* for Kant, through transcendental reflection, is revealed to have been constituted by the traces of the subject's past constitutive activity: 'object' is only the intentional terminus of the subject-object relation, generated by the subject prior to the subject's own awareness. However, I as subject am *never* directly available to myself; I only have access to the traces of my past activity given in the object.[121] In "empirical" experience the pure force of a being's act of existing and the formal structure of objectivity are overlaid and indistinguishable as both "objective"; it is only from the "transcendental" perspective that the two can be distinguished. What underlies or grounds objectivity, metaphysically, is the pure "dynamism" of "forces", the sheer act of a being-object's existing, which Kant has previously exempted from conscious determination: existence "cannot be a real predicate" [Ak. 1:394-95] (and hence freedom escapes determination also). As Schelling also stated, "For it is not because there is thinking that there is being, but rather, because there is being, there is thinking".[122] Therefore, "objects" do not exist separately from beings, but are beings as-given-towards-me empirically: beings-for-"possible experience", determined ontologically and causally in *perception* and only then *given* for *cognition*: a 'passive' and an 'active' synthesis. In other words, 'noumena' are (in one sense) the uncognizable act of existence of an appearance, which (the noumena) must always be *thought* as a distinct 'object' due to the inherent objectifying structure of human judgment itself. That is how Kant ultimately justifies 'empirical realism', or the absolute alterity to consciousness of the grounds of appearances. General metaphysics is reconfigured as 'transcendental ontology', the study of formal objective structure, which insofar as it is assigned to the dyadic and responsive event of the division of consciousness into the subject-object relation, is therefore a phenomenology of intentionality.

Thus Kant's phenomenology is not a Cartesian phenomenology, because rather than investigating appearances as ontological productions of a substantial 'transcendental Ego', the transcendental ego of Kant is only revealed indirectly, as the corollary trace in the shape of 'objects'

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avoided getting involved in that question and in any comparative evaluation of Husserl's and Kant's systems.

120 In general the 'myth of the given' is to claim that some presentation or 'intentionally inexisting object' simply is equivalent to ('given as') itself-in-itself rather than mediated (a "foundationalism"), which is to beg the question against the skeptical suspension of the connnection between the two: Sachs, *Myths of the Given*, 158-161.

121 Cf. Paul Ricouer, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (Fordham University Press, 1986): 69: "The person is still a projected synthesis that seizes itself in the representation of a task, of an ideal of what the person should be. The Self is aimed at rather than experienced. Indeed, the person is not yet consciousness of Self for Self; it is consciousness of self only in the representation of the ideal of the Self. There is no experience of the person in itself and for itself."

122 Cf. Bowie, *Schelling*, 13-14.

that are actually found in the world itself rather than in memory or imagination. A Kantian phenomenology will not be suspended between the two poles of the 'intentionally inexisting object' and the self-transparent 'transcendental Ego', as in a Cartesian phenomenology;[123] rather, Kant's phenomenology will be suspended between the two poles of the 'intentionally inexisting object' and a self-*absent* 'dissolved Ego' or 'wounded cogito' (Ricouer).[124] Rather than appearances finding their home 'inside' a 'mind', for Kant there is an event horizon of consciousness, a contact surface of immanent indifferentiation between the unnameable act of subjectivity and the unknowable event of being, which blooms at the boundary as 'perception', and which we know as *the world* [B153-55].

However, that is not all: because Kant's position is a phenomenology and not a "metaphysics of experience", proceeding from the discovery and examination of the intentionally inexisting object rather than an 'object as equivalent to a being', Kant discovers that human consciousness always makes objects of whatever it thinks, gathering their marks together not only under the categories but under the intuitive forms of space and time into the 'empty ontological container' of objective givenness. That means that human thinking *not only* makes objects of real beings in perception, but *also* continually generates *falsely spatiotemporal objects*, like the object of God as an old bearded man 'in heaven' and the soul as 'some-thing inside me'.[125] That, according to Kant, is the true explanation for the problematic and indecidable status of "special metaphysics".

Kant's answer to the question of metaphysics is therefore, essentially, that when it comes to real beings which can fulfill the empty structure of 'objectivity' through *force* against our bodies, which is then presented to us as sensible evidence, we are justified in possessing and using the peculiar type of knowledge (the synthetic *a priori*) which mathematizes and formalizes those beings into objects (i.e. general metaphysics/transcendental ontology), creating what we know as empirical experience. However, when it comes to God or the immortal soul, we have no sensible evidence (i.e. resistive *force*) from those beings, and so our use of objectivity here is hollow or unfulfilled. However, the use of objectivity is a principle that we cannot rip out of our thinking without destroying consciousness itself, and it is rooted in the formal structure of our *senses* as the ground

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123 "...[This] was the clear implication of [Kant's] often repeated claim that the possibility of the objects of experience can be established a priori through a reflection upon the requirements of thought, but that these objects must be given to thought in actual experience all the same. … [It] followed that although Kant could still accept the Cartesian principle that philosophy must begin with self-consciousness, he did not also have to accept the Cartesian conclusion that all knowledge consists in a reflection upon the ego and its content. On the contrary, the ego is for Kant an empty intention that needs an extra-conceptual content to have significance, just like any other thought." di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 4-5.

124 Paul Ricouer, *Freud and Philosophy*, trans. Denis Savage (Yale University Press, 1970): 439.

125 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 67-69.

of thought.[126] Kant therefore summarizes his whole project at the very beginning by saying 'the principles of sensibility overstep their bounds into understanding' [B xxv]. In other words, the problem is that, even when we are reminded that we can't see or touch the immortal soul, we will *always* continue to think of it and argue about it as if there is an 'it' there, an object that we could potentially sense. That is "transcendental illusion"; the critique of reason is a perpetually ongoing ascetic self-discipline which arms us against the trap of pseudo-objectivity [A293-298/B349-355].

However, the generation of false spatiotemporal objectivity intrinsic to human reasoning, the "transcendental illusion", bends back on *KdrV* itself, because in attempting to understand *KdrV* or explore phenomenological structures, we generate illusory spatiotemporal containers for concepts like "noumena", "self", "appearance", and "consciousness". That is the 'semiotic' problem I wish to mark as clearly emerging from Kant's approach: philosophical language, as unavoidably pseudo-objective, continually re-covers over the transcendental uncovering of the objectifying activity of thinking itself. Not only must we understand Kant, we must 'hold open' our understanding of Kant with an ongoing effort against our thinking's resistive effort to collapse into objectivity. Even if the details are not quite clear, the perceptive reader is probably already wondering how a philosophy which problematizes philosophical language as such can avoid simply imploding into itself. Indeed: examining the consequences of the semiotic dimension of Kantian transcendental idealism, and the degree to which Kant himself grasped it and successfully grappled with it, will gradually take over as our ultimate goal.

[126] Cf. Henry E. Allison, *Idealism and Freedom: Essays on Kant's Theoretical and Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), on the "discursivity principle": 5-7.

Section I – Kant's Theory of Intentional Objectification

Chapter 2: Pure Intuition and the Transcendental Aesthetic

At present we still stand at the very beginning of *KdrV,* a mysterious terrain before us. In the present chapter, we want to directly traverse the text of *KdrV* up to the end of the Transcendental Aesthetic and Kant's discussion of space and time as pure intuitions, covering roughly the first 100 pages of the book. We will start reading in the effort to answer our initial question: What is Kant's problem of "metaphysics"? We will follow Kant's recommendation to immediately transform that into a second question: "How is the synthetic judgment possible *a priori*?" Here we are stopped, because it is far from clear in *KdrV* what the second question means and how it is related to the first. To pass by, we will take a detour through another part of the ruins of Kant's system: his logic lectures. There, we will discover a definition of the synthetic *a priori* judgment which immediately leads us back into the question of the object of perception, and thus into the discussion of the Transcendental Aesthetic.

As we already know, Kant wants to explain how both general and special metaphysics, objectively applied, can be *possible*; in the face of the fact that we all naively practice both general and special metaphysics in thinking already, Kant's discovery is a kind of excavation – he has discovered that there is no foundation underneath what we assume is founded. Kant casts the project in his introduction in terms of what he calls "*a priori*" knowledge. In a relatively easy example, Kant points out that if someone's house collapses as a result of digging under it, we can say that he "should have known" in advance that such would happen, but that kind of advance knowledge is dependent on already experiencing what gravity does [B2]. Rather, we are interested in a kind of advance knowledge which does not depend on experiencing something happening according to empirical laws (a "pure" *a priori* [B2-3]): for example, formal logic (A=A) or mathematics (7+5=12) [B15]. What Kant is particularly interested in is a further division in such "pure *a priori*" knowledge: on the one hand, we can see that we have certain types of judgments or propositional outputs which obey only their own inner, formal laws, the laws of conceptual logic. For example, if I assert "this X is a Y", having previously defined "All X are Y", I am only relying on the structure of logic and the content of the idea to see that such a statement must be necessarily true (i.e. *a priori*). Kant calls these "analytic *a priori*" judgments [A7-8/B11].[1] However, there is another type

[1] Probably the most significant attack on Kant's fourfold of judgments is Quine's in W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in *From a Logical Point of View* (Harper Torchbooks, 1961): 20-46. Quine assumes implicitly that the

of *a priori* knowledge which is entangled with the reality of the material world. To use Kant's example, if I say "All bodies are heavy" (perhaps now it would be better to say 'All bodies have mass'), this statement applies necessarily in advance, but *to real things*. In order to see that the predicate "heavy" is necessarily conjoined with the subject "All bodies", we need to refer the copula "is" through a "something else (X)", the "experience" that the state of affairs is indeed so [A8]. Kant calls these latter "synthetic *a priori"* judgments.[2]

The above is an extremely provisional reading of one of the most highly contested parts of *KdrV*.[3] The controversy is because Kant refers the whole project of *KdrV* to the problem of the possibility of the synthetic *a priori* judgment: "...the proper problem of pure reason is contained in this question" [B19]. Kant says that we readers need to understand that there is a puzzle about how not only metaphysics [B18/B22], but also mathematics [B14-16], natural science [B18], and even our experience itself [B11] are theoretically possible, and that we can gather together that "multitude of inquiries under the formula of a single problem": "How are synthetic judgments possible *a priori*?" [B19].

Here I point out something important: in my view, although Kant does not think that the reader has understood his solution yet, Kant *does* think that here, in the first 20 pages, the reader has clearly understood the *problem.* "You must", Kant says to us, "won over by the necessity with which this concept of substance forces itself upon you, admit that this concept resides a priori in your cognitive power" [A2/B6]. In my reading, Kant thinks that the reader has already clearly understood the existence and nature of synthetic *a priori* knowledge drawn from experience [B1-8], admitted that the principles of all sciences and the structure of experience itself depend on synthetic knowledge [B9-20], and agreed that our task is to find the "unknown = X" [B13] which is operative in synthetic *a priori* knowledge. When Kant says that "much is gained already" [B19] by realizing that the synthetic *a priori*'s mechanics are the same hidden thread under the foundational puzzles of various sciences, we must understand this in the sense of the popular expression that 'formulating

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analytic is necessary through the law of noncontradiction (29), rendering the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction a question of whether experience is involved or not; but I hold that it is actually the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction which carries 'necessity': *a priori* judgments are necessary and *a posteriori* judgments are contingent. The synthetic/analytic distinction, which I will argue has to do with objectively constitutive vs. reflexive thought instead, is not Kant's invention, contra Gardner (*Guidebook*, 34), but is rather "new" as an extensive reworking of a widely used Leibnizian framework for distinguishing between the theoretical objects of metaphysics and mathematics. More on this just below.

2 Bird gives a good overview of the issues here in "Synthetic A Priori Judgments", *Revolutionary Kant*, 63-82.

3 The literature on the analytic/synthetic distinction, especially in English, is truly massive. Because that literature tends almost invariably to attempt an analysis of Kant's distinction through formal logic and particularly truth-conditions for analytic vs. synthetic propositions which have to do with 'empirical objects', I have not found it especially helpful. My own position, in which the synthetic is characterized by its reference through an intentional object presented as given, and the analytic is a reflexive operation subsequent in time to the constitution of objectivity in synthesis, was aided more by the phenomenological tenor of Deleuze's or Heidegger's reading, but mostly came about through trying to make sense of the *Vienna/Hechsel Logic,* discussed in the next section.

the right question is already half of the solution'. Thus we must not understand the Transcendental Aesthetic and Logic as *proofs* of transcendental idealism, but as *illustrations* of transcendental idealism. While I concur with Blomme that Kant's "argument for transcendental idealism" is given much earlier in *KdrV* than is traditionally assumed, I actually hold that the A/B Prefaces and Introduction already give Kant's argument.[4] The reader should be convinced as soon as the reader grasps exactly what a synthetic *a priori* judgment is, and what its unique mode of existence implies about the relationship between subjectivity and the objective world.

Obviously, however, we certainly do *not* already have half the solution to transcendental idealism, because we do not understand Kant's statement of the problem (the peculiar nature of the synthetic *a priori*). I have come to think that Kant's summary of the necessary background in *KdrV* itself is too abbreviated and incomplete. Kant perhaps presumed that the reader would be as familiar as himself with a set of peculiar logical/methodological issues that had deeply preoccupied Kant for almost thirty years. It was that assumption which hindered the reception of *KdrV*, and which Kant never quite rectified in the B edition and the *Prolegomena*. Furthermore, I find that Kant's choices of example, in the infamous passage in *KdrV* which defines the "synthetic/analytic" distinction, are unfortunately deeply misleading (I will show how shortly). The way forward is blocked here; in order to progress further, we must somehow find a workable understanding of what Kant means by "judgment" and "synthetic *a priori"*. I found the materials to do so in Kant's pre-critical engagement with Leibniz' philosophy and his notes on G.F. Meier's Leibnizian logic, given in Kant's *Lectures on Logic* [Ak. 24].[5]

To continue our investigation, then, we will pause with *KdrV* at roughly B23-24, and turn to some of Kant's published works and letters in the "pre-Critical" and transitional periods (1755-75).[6] Kant's major documented preoccupation in the pre-Critical period was the relationship between, and nature of, 'analytic judgments' and 'synthetic judgments', as defined in Leibniz's *New Essays*

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4 Henny Blomme, "On the Mediate Proof of Transcendental Idealism", *Studia Kantiana* 14:21 (2016), 11-26: 11-12.

5 A growing contemporary trend in Kant scholarship is to dig deeply into Kant's context and sources to identify the historical origins of ideas which Kant usually failed to cite (de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 10). While that is valuable, it is not really my purpose here to argue that Leibniz is more important than other Kantian influences (I will tend to minimize Hume); but rather to show one particular line of influence on Kant which is very well-documented in Kant's corpus and which leads to an overall interpretation of transcendental idealism (as intentional phenomenology) that I find profound and compelling. However, I will note that Kant asserted (polemically) that "the *Critique of Pure Reason* might well be the true apology for Leibniz": Immanuel Kant, "On a discovery whereby any new critique of pure reason is to be made superfluous by an older one" (1790), trans. Henry Allison, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781* (Cambridge University Press, 2004): 336 [Ak. 8:250].

6 For Kant's pre-Critical works I generally use Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755-1770* (Cambridge University Press, 1992). Many recent Kantian scholars have done significant work in reconstructing these pre-Critical events, e.g.: Beiser, *Fate of Reason*; Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*; *Kant and His German Contemporaries*, vols. 1 and 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Alexander Baumgarten, *Metaphysics: A Critical Translation with Kant's Elucidations, Selected Notes and Related Materials*, trans. Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers (Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

Concerning Human Understanding and the Leibnizian logic textbook of G.F. Meier.[7] The elements of that problem, for Kant, included the presence or absence of 'existence' as a predicate in judgment, the non-identity of cognition to the referenced object, and the problematic relationship between metaphysics and mathematics, particularly geometry.[8]

Kant and the Synthetic A Priori*: A (Leibnizian) Pre-Critical History*

We are about to embark on a rather lengthy detour through some abandoned rooms and sub-basements of Kant's system, but what we find along the way will be of great importance. We must begin by establishing some context in Leibniz's logical thought. Following G.H.R. Parkinson's reading, Leibniz' metaphysics is a 'two-world' metaphysics in which a system of simple and non-sensible substances, "monads", interact after God's act of creation establishes them; there is a separate system of physical and sensible "appearances" which are not themselves causally active, yet perfectly correspond to the activities of the 'monads' through God's act of 'synchronization' of the two, Leibniz's doctrine of the "pre-established harmony".[9] Unfolding within that metaphysics, Leibniz' logic relies on the ultimate principle that all true propositions are "analytically" true: i.e., the "concept of the predicate is contained within the concept of the subject".[10] It is important to note that for Leibniz, our sensible knowledge of appearances *directly* gives formal or conceptual knowledge, which is merely in a *confused* or *indistinct* state as sensed.[11] Logic's task is to separate, through analysis, the sensible particulars from the universal concepts co-given in appearance. The reader will observe, as Parkinson notes, that Leibniz is failing to distinguish clearly between the *concept* of something and the substantive denoted by that concept.[12] In other words, it is not necessarily clear in Leibniz how the analytic knowledge of something is different from the thing itself (as appearance, of course), particularly when God's knowledge enters the question. From a human logician's point of view, it is only possible to definitely determine Leibnizian 'analytic truth' for a small number of somewhat abstract propositions; when it comes to propositions referencing empirical realities, Leibniz holds that we humans would need to conduct an analysis of 'infinite

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7 G.W. Leibniz, *Concerning Human Understanding*, trans. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

8 The ideas referenced are found in, for example, *A New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition (New Elucidation* - 1755*):* Kant, *1755-1770*, 1-56 [Ak. 1: 387-416], *An Attempt at Some Reflections on Optimism (On Optimism* – 1759*)*: Kant, *1755-1770*, 67-84 [Ak.2: 29-35], and *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* (*Negative Magnitudes* – 1763*):* Kant, *1755-1770*, 203-242 [Ak. 2:167-204].

9 G.H.R. Parkinson, *Logic and Reality in Leibniz' Metaphysics* (Clarendon Press, 1965): 155-156.

10 Parkinson, *Logic in Leibniz*, 16.

11 See Kant's critique of Leibniz on these grounds in *KdrV* [B61-62].

12 Parkinson, *Logic in Leibniz*, 6-7.

length' to demonstrate that the concept of the predicate is contained within the concept of the subject.[13] However, God's power of analysis is equal to that task. For example, we mortals could not, on Leibniz' understanding, 'prove' that the concept of 'conquering India' is contained in the concept of 'Alexander the Great' and thus that the statement 'Alexander the Great conquered India' is analytically true; however, God's knowledge of all the possible predicates, historical and essential, contained in the concept 'Alexander the Great' is infinite, and thus God can analytically establish the truth of that proposition.[14] In Leibniz's model, then, one could draw the conclusion that the difference between God's knowledge and human knowledge is *quantitative* rather than *qualitative:* we are not Godlike knowers simply because we cannot live long enough to know absolutely everything about the world of sense. Kant took from Leibniz the model of a division between 'things-in-themselves' and 'phenomena', a reality which humans conceptually grasp in a discursively nonidentical, stepwise and limited way called 'analysis' which involves identifying, in propositions, the concept of the predicate as included in the concept of the subject. I draw attention here to the point that Leibniz gave Kant the image of human reasoning as an infinite process operating in steps according to the laws of Aristotelian formal logic, each of which is *not* 'the truth' of something as an exhaustive determination of its essence, but rather '*a* truth' about it [A655-56/B683-84].

In the *New Essays*, Leibniz introduces a second type of human cognitive activity called 'synthesis'; Leibniz argues (through his dialogue characters) that the synthetic works from known, empirically realized truths to an extended and abstracted general conclusion, whereas the analytic mode works from a set of assumed, abstract propositions, proving the current proposition from the previous ones by formal rules, until some independently verifiable known (empirical) truth is reached.[15] Thus, Kant shares with Leibniz the idea that synthetic thinking is a mode of argument which begins in, and is verified by, an experience, whereas analytic thinking begins in concepts which are then retrospectively verified by the real world turning out to be just the way that our conclusion was stated.[16] Finally, Leibniz also asserted that *metaphysics* is analytic and *mathematics* is synthetic, because mathematics begins from formal illustrations or intuitions and proceeds therein to proofs, whereas philosophy begins with abstracted concepts and distinguishes within them for

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13 Parkinson, *Logic in Leibniz*, 72-73.

14 See Parkinson, *Logic in Leibniz*, 11-12, 14, 53, 72-73 (on infinite analysis).

15 Leibniz, *New Essays*, 313, 383, 447. Leibniz calls the 'analytic' "practical" reasoning because it characterizes philosophical reasoning, which Leibniz (and Kant) understood to be primarily moral or ethical (directed toward an explanation and guide for human action), whereas Leibniz' 'synthetic' is "theoretical" reasoning because mathematics is a pure science of knowledge. While Kant does not continue to identify practical with analytic and theoretical with synthetic, that characterization of philosophy as ethically oriented is pervasive in Kant's whole philosophy (see *KdrV*, "Canon of Pure Reason", [A800-805/B828-833]).

16 See Kant's argumentation in *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (the "Prize Essay), for example: Kant, *1755-1770*, 250-251 [Ak. 2:278-279].

'marks', as Kant summarizes in 1763 [Ak. 2:277]. In my view, this conceptual structure of mathematics/synthesis and philosophy/analysis and their respective logical relations to their objects is a crucial puzzle piece in understanding what Kant was struggling with in the final years before the 'silent decade'.[17]

Leibniz had argued that the practice of philosophy is 'analysis', which involves examining concepts to show that other concepts are 'contained' within them in order to secure and augment human knowledge. In Leibniz' view, human 'analysis' is by nature incomplete: a total knowledge of an empirical object, sufficient to establish the analytic 'truth' of empirical propositions about it, is beyond our mortal power, and the best we can do is a limited tracing of certain concepts in the darkness of events. Kant, from his earliest professional publications (1755), agreed with that conception of his own work: "...Analysis...is made necessary for us by the night which darkens our intelligence" [by contrast with God's knowledge] [Ak. 1:391].[18]

Kant not only agreed with Leibniz about the fundamental limitation of human knowledge, he deepened it. Whereas Leibniz perhaps did not clearly distinguish between the 'concept' of a thing and that thing itself, Kant asserted in 1755 that the actual existence of a thing cannot be an 'antecedent ground' in logic, or, in other words, that actual existence is not predicable, but rather escapes predication and stands over against the whole human project of conceptual analysis [Ak. 1:394-395].[19] The claim is repeated in 1763, in *The Only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (*Only Possible Argument*).[20] Kant consistently holds from the beginning, therefore, that knowledge is nonidentical to the empirical beings which it represents or references on the ground that the act of existence precedes the totality of the reflective and receptive structure of thought. Even in the copula of the judgment, the verb 'to be' does not *establish* the real existence of the subject or the predicate, but *represents* that state of affairs.[21] This point is crucial. When we extend our knowledge through analysis, for Kant, we do not extend our knowledge of the *being*, but rather of our *concept* of the being, and the grounding link between the *concept* of the being and the actual existing being itself flows from the self-presencing of the actual

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17 Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 85.

18 Kant, *1770*, 10. See also *M. Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Programme of His Lectures for the Winter Semester, 1765-1766:* "Metaphysics...is *analytic*… For some time now I have worked in accordance with this scheme" (emphasis original). Kant, *1770*, 294 [Ak. 2:308].

19 "If anything, therefore, is said to exist absolutely necessarily, that thing does not exist because of some ground; it exists because the opposite cannot be thought at all. This impossibility of the opposite is the ground of the knowledge of existence, but an antecedently determining ground is completely absent. It *exists*; and in respect of the thing in question, to have said and to have conceived this of it is sufficient." Kant, "New Elucidation", in *1755-1770*, 14-15.

20 In *Only Possible Argument* Kant argues that "existence" cannot validly be a predicate of any real being but only of the *representation* or concept of that being [Ak. 2:71-73], and also argues that real existence is essentially impossible to define as a concept, only being nameable as the reference of the copula in a judgment [Ak. 2:74].

21 Cf. *KdpV,* Ak. 5:139.

being rather than the other way around.[22] In other words, one cannot prove that God exists from the mere idea of God, but one could use an encounter with God to expand one's concept of God's nature.

A further illustration of Kant's distinction between knowledge and empirical reality is his interest in 'negative' concepts and 'negations', mentioned in most of Kant's works between 1755-1763.[23] A characteristic example of Kant's position is in the 1759 *Reflections on Optimism*: Kant argues, in the context of Leibniz' 'best possible world' argument, that "reality cannot be compared to reality as such", because "reality as such" is "positive": any comparison relies on pointing out what is *not* present in one possible reality or the other, but 'negations' do not have actual existence [2:31-32]. Therefore, what we are really comparing must be the *idea* of one reality to the *idea* of another reality, since negations are only possible as a conceptual operation and not as actual existences [2:32].[24][25]

Now let us carry these reflections into Kant's *Lectures on Logic.*[26] Whereas in the *New Essays* Leibniz had defined 'analysis' and 'synthesis' as processes consisting of sequences of judgments, in Kant's reading of Meier the distinction reappears as being between two singular examples of those respective types: that is, *a* synthetic judgment vs. *an* analytic judgment. Here, 'analysis' and 'synthesis' are both human acts of 'judgment', which is the activity of asserting that a

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22 "The essence of our concept is not always the essence of the thing itself, indeed, it seldom is…. Infinitely more is contained in the real essence than in the logical essence. We cannot actually cognize the real or objective essence" Kant, *Logics*, 91 [Ak. 24:116-17].

23 The topic is mentioned in *New Elucidation* (1755); *The Employment in Natural Philosophy of Metaphysics Combined with Geometry, of which Sample I Contains the Physical Monadology* (*Physical Monadology*) (1756): Kant, *1755-1770*, 47-66 [Ak. 1: 475-87]; *On Optimism* (1759); *The False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures* (*False Subtlety*) (1762): Kant, *1755-1770*, 85-106 [Ak. 2:47-61]; and *Only Possible Argument* and *Negative Magnitudes* (1763) at least.

24 Kant, *1755-1770*, 73. Compare these claims to Hume's argument in the *Essay*, as discussed above, that "matters of fact" can be counterfactual. Since a "matter of fact" such as "the sun may not rise tomorrow" must be *compared* to the event of perception it is making a claim about, it therefore cannot be identical to that event of perception.

25 "[Kantian] logical negation can only take place within a judgement, where one concept is related to another. Negation therefore says nothing about the content of a concept: the concept of a not-something is only the privation of a something: 'nobody can think a negation determinately without having the opposed affirmation as its ground' (ibid. p. B 603 A 575). As such: 'All true negations are, then, nothing but limits, which they could not be called if the unlimited (the totality (All)) were not the ground' (ibid. p. B 604 A 576). This ground is the ground of the content of all thought about things: all negations (which, of course, single predicates are, whereby everything else can be distinguished from the most real being (Wesen)) are just limitations of a greater and finally of the highest reality; therefore they presuppose this reality and their content is simply derived from it. (ibid. p. B 606 A 578)". Bowie, *Schelling*, 103.

26 A hermeneutic note on the *Logic(s)*: Of the transcripts of Kant's logic lectures available, I have employed the four translated in Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic,* trans., ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge University Press, 1992): the Blomberg Logic from the early 1770s, the Vienna/Hechsel Logics from the early 1780s, and the Dohna-Wundlacken Logic (early 1790s) (I have not employed the Jäsche Logic from this text). In my view Kant's understanding of the synthetic/analytic distinction undergoes a complex evolution visible in these selections, as evidenced, for example, by the fact that the analytic *a priori* judgment originally exists as a fourth member of Kant's scheme of judgments. In the movement of Kant's thought towards the first Critique, the distinction between the four types of judgment is sometimes quite vague and confused. For reconstructing the considerations which *led up* to the Critique, I relied mostly on the Blomberg and Vienna Logic, as presenting an 'intermediate' account of the synthetic/analytic distinction which is intelligible but which does not simply reproduce the discussion of *KdrV.*

number of ‘marks’, whether empirical or *a priori*, are related within an object, establishing the copula ‘=’ or ‘is’ among them. The difference between analytic judgments and synthetic judgments is that ‘analysis’ takes a concept which is ‘given’, whereas ‘synthesis’ consciously establishes a semiotic or conceptual concept.[27] Since analysis relies on a given concept, which escapes the judgment itself, it is not exhaustive and can never be completed [Ak. 24:923]. By contrast, a synthetic judgment, because it establishes the existence of its object, is known to be complete and therefore offers indubitable or apodeictic certainty [Ak. 24:915].[28] To use Kant’s examples from the *Vienna Logic*, a synthetic *a posteriori* judgment such as ‘a spirit is a thinking being without a body’, or ‘a metal is any being which has the qualities such-and-such’, name and also define an object into conceptual existence, simultaneously giving an exhaustive list of relevant marks for a given purpose [Ak. 24:914-915]. The latter judgment does not define into existence real metals such as gold or lead, but the abstract entity ‘metal’. Kant thinks it would be absurd to claim that the judgment, ‘a metal is any object which has the qualities such-and-such’, is *false* because I am not describing ‘metal’ but ‘defining’ it.[29] If someone were to respond, ‘I disagree with you that a 'metal' is such-and-such’, one would not then be disputing the actual properties of gold or iron, but the definitional boundaries of one of the synthetic axioms of the science of geology.[30]

However, although analysis always begins with a vague idea given in our experience, whether it is *a priori* or *a posteriori*, it *also* depends on an implicit conceptual ‘object’.[31] That is because the analytic is always by nature open to further modification as I or others reflect further and add, subtract, or alter the 'marks' which make up my description of the referenced experience, but this requires an *extrinsic* comparison of the unified contents of the analytic judgment to that of which it is a description – i.e., ‘concept’ to implicit ‘object’.[32] The analytic can never amount to ‘self-evident’ or ‘apodeictic’ certainty: there is always, in principle, more that could be said.[33] Since that is the case, the concept which is being defined is “an attempt”, which must be attended to “with

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27 “In *synthesis* we produce and create a concept, as it were, which simply was not there before … If a concept is made distinct *per analysin* then it must already be given…” Kant, *Logics*, 102 [Ak. 24:131].

28 “Synthetic definitions, insofar as they have a fabricated object, can never err”: Kant, *Logics*, 358. It is worth emphasizing this point: for Kant, the only type of judgment it is possible to have complete certainty about is the one in which you yourself have completely determined the object beforehand. Cf. de Boer, *Kant’s Reform*, 53.

29 While these terms are applied in a somewhat confused manner in the *Logics* themselves, Kant gives my use of “definition” for the analytic and “description” for the synthetic in *KdrV* B756-7.

30 Cf. *KdrV*, [A721-22/B749-50].

31 Analysis is thus contrasted with synthesis, which always establishes an idea which is distinct from the beginning, whether *a posteriori* or *a priori* (note that in Kant’s early logic lectures, all four operations are possible). The question of resurrecting “analytic a posteriority” has received some attention, notably by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* – Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Harvard University Press, 1980). Palmquist contributes and provides an overview of the history of ‘analytic a posteriority’ in Stephen Palmquist, “Analytic A Posteriority and its Relevance for Twentieth Century Philosophy”, *Studia Humana* 1:3/4 (2012): 3-16.

32 Kant, *Logics*, 357-58 [Ak. 24:915-916].

33 Kant, *Logics*, 364-365 [Ak. 24:923-924].

fear and trembling" (Kant, *Logics*, 364 [Ak. 24:923]); but that which is being attempted must be, because it is known to be incomplete, neither identical to the gathering of marks as a process nor identical to the real object being described.

It takes Kant some time to become clear about the hidden objectivity of concepts, but what it is absolutely essential to establish here is that *both* the 'analytic' and the 'synthetic' judgment that Kant details in the *Logics* are operations upon and within a conceptually linked pseudo-'object', correlated to the concept, which is theoretically distinct from both the actually existing referenced, if one exists, and also from the concept that is the outcome of the judgment.[34] Neither judgment directly modifies or operates upon an empirical being-in-itself.[35] Rather, as Kant continues to agree with Leibniz, all human thinking, as – ontologically - a system of representative signs, is a conceptual model of the world built up from experience but distinct in being from the world. Therefore, when Kant says in *KdrV* or elsewhere that the "object" of an analytic judgment is 'given', that *does not mean* that a real being is present to the observer who is judging.[36] Rather, an "object" for Kant is the sense (in a Fregean meaning), *as such*, of a judgment – that is, abstracting from any particular content of 'sense', it is the fact *that* a judgment refers predicates *to* an intentionally inexistent some-thing, a 'something' formally differing from predicates by virtue of its quality of substantiveness or 'in-itself'-ness.[37] That something is also distinct from the concept, in my reading, because the concept is the semiotic or linguistic structure (capable of taking "expression" [B369] in various formulations) which refers to a 'container' in which the marks of the concept's meaning have been unified. It is that container which makes the concept "objective".

The crucial reason why the 'object-container' must also be distinct from the *concept* is because the difference between concept and 'object-container' is what gives rise to the difference between *given* knowledge (what I am describing) and *spontaneous* concepts (what I just made up).[38]

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[34] Cf. J. Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition Between Kant and Carnap: To the Vienna Station* (Cambridge University Press, 1993): 12-13.

[35] "An empirical concept can also be defined analytically. In this case not merely is the concept given, but also the object. If, e.g., one wished to define *water*, then one would <only> define one's concept of it, not the object itself. It is the same with all other concepts of experience. One can of course define them themselves, but not the object, because we cannot find *all* the marks." Kant, *Logics*, 490 [Ak. 24:757].

[36] While Kant's discussion of these issues is a bit vague and confused in the *Logics*, he clearly asserts the existence of *empty* objects of negative analytic concepts (e.g., 'freedom' is 'the lack of restraint to the will') (Kant, *Logics*, 291 [Ak. 24:836]); the possibility of truth relations for empty concepts or concepts of reason implicitly requires the availability of a non-empirical 'given object' for comparison. It is precisely Kant's slow realization of this fact that is the 'leading thread' into the Critical turn which I am lifting out.

[37] Here is a good place to note that Kant was severely criticized by Frege and post-Fregean philosophers on the basis of Frege's new foundation of formal logic: cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 107. The question of whether Kant's architectonic interest in the union of formal logic and transcendental logic could be reconstituted following the developments in modern logic, while worthwhile, is outside our scope; I note here only, alongside Longuenesse (*Human Standpoint*, 89 fn. 14), that Kant's transcendental logic is oriented towards a phenomenological aim which is independent of formal logic.

[38] There is a similarity here with Heidegger's distinction between "predicative synthesis" [my 'intentional object'] and "apophantic synthesis" [my 'concept']: Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 20.

In the *Logics* Kant argues that the actual ground of the difference between "analytic" and "synthetic" judgments is the disposition of the will [Ak. 24:918-919]. In a synthetic judgment the will is not constrained in determining the boundaries of the judgment's object: I determine it through my "faculty of choice".[39] In an analytic judgment we take an object which is 'given', but because the 'logical essence' has been distinguished from the 'real essence', Kant implicitly defines the meaning of 'givenness' phenomenologically rather than metaphysically – it is the disposition of the will in which we feel *not free* to alter the boundaries of the concept's object.[40] This issue of the disposition of the will is of the first importance in deciphering *KdrV*. We might assume that 'givenness' is equivalent simply to the presence of an actual empirical being (the very problem which makes Kantian interpretation so difficult, and confuses the meaning of "object"). But instead, for Kant 'givenness' stops short of actual being at its phenomenological correlate*:* the feeling/mode of relation to a concept in which we feel not *free* to alter its content-reference, because the arrangement of its marks depends on a ground *in-itself* rather than a ground *from-us* (as in synthesis). That is because the awareness of the incompleteness of the analytic concept depends on an implicit comparative reference to the *logical essence*, the "clear and distinct" concept, neither of which is equivalent to the *real essence.*[41] Thus, for example, 'freedom' or 'virtue' are metaphysical *a priori* concepts which I analyze in the effort to define without *either* a.) ever becoming confident that my definition is equivalent to the real essence, the 'thing-itself'; or b.) deciding that I am 'making up' the meaning of 'freedom' or 'virtue'. The stubborn sense of 'there-ness' preventing b.) which is nevertheless irreducibly distinguished through 'fear' and uncertainty in a.), i.e., the supposed 'logical essence', is the hidden doubled 'object' of analytic judgments. Thus both types of judgment, synthetic and analytic, are the act of gathering together marks into an *ontologically inexisting* container, an about-something or 'object' which is delineated through the sense of 'otherness to the activity of my will', which is in turn denoted by 'givenness'.

Now, the obvious question is *where* and *what* that logical 'object' is. Making the phenomenological move of establishing intentional inexistence leaves one with the problem of explaining the metaphysical/ontological status of the 'inexistent' object, an issue Brentano therefore struggled with.[42] For the moment, Kant's 'intentionally inexistent' logical object is likewise floating

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39 Kant, *Logics*, 356-357 [Ak. 24:914-915]. Thus, in my reading, the idea that some judgments' objects are not constrained by the will becomes important in Kant's final expression of the distinction between perception and imagination, but the fact that an intentional object is part of the judgment is true of both analytic and synthetic judgments. Kant's position becomes much clearer as the intentional object emerges as the central feature of the synthetic *a priori*, discussed below.

40 Kant, *Logics*, 294 [Ak. 24:839-840].

41 Kant, *Logics*, 360-364 [Ak. 24: 918-923].

42 See Dummett, *Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, 31-35 on Brentano's troubles and the general issues at stake.

without a place. It does not seem to me that Kant really decided the issue until his troubled history with metaphysics as analysis reached a crisis, which we therefore now turn to examine.

Metaphysics vs. Mathematics

In Kant's initial understanding (~1755-1764), metaphysics analytically examines vague experiential concepts in the effort to reach toward a totally clarified, 'God's-eye-view' analysis of all possible predicates of a concept (impossible to human cognition, but not inconceivable as a limit); such analyses, in essence incomplete, are not apodeictically certain and always in theory open to further revision.[43] Metaphysics is thus in contrast with mathematics, in which mathematicians synthetically define their terms and their corresponding ideal objects at the outset of their argument, and then demonstrate consequences which are already distinctly contained within the idea, but only become apparent through reference to the intuitive 'image' of the object. To offer examples, metaphysics would begin with 'Suppose that the soul is not a simple substance', and then proceed by inferences to show *ad absurdum* that ordinary experience would not be possible if that initial assumption were true.[44] In this case the 'soul' is not defined synthetically, but referred to as the experientially present object of analysis: other metaphysicians already somehow know what we are discussing when we say 'soul', in a vague pre-given way which is to be clarified. Mathematics, on the other hand, would begin, 'Construct a circle, *defined* as the set of points equidistant from a central point', and then proceed via concrete operations, either in imagination or with physical instruments, to modify the circle and demonstrate some final result.[45] In this case the 'circle' is explicitly and completely defined (at some point) and the results are self-evident (apodeictically certain) in the sense that we, when we comprehend them, perceive *in* the intuited figure that they must follow from the starting conditions.

Kant declares his discontent with the above model in the *Inquiry Concerning the Distinctness of the Principles of Natural Theology and Morality* (the "Prize Essay") of 1764. In violent language, Kant condemns Leibnizian/Wolffian philosophy for its state of "wretched discord", dealing with nothing "other than words", leading to masses of useless "unanalysable concepts" [Ak. 2:277-2:281].[46] Kant is unhappy because the practice of philosophy in his time has boiled down (in Kant's view) to a series of interminable exchanges between atheist radicals and

[43] Cf. *Inquiry*, [Ak. 2:284-287].
[44] For example, see Baumgarten, *Metaphysics*, 198.
[45] Cf. *Inquiry*, [Ak. 2:278-279].
[46] Kant, *1755-1770*, 249-251.

dogmatic conservatives.[47] Proving the existence of God by an analytic argument does nothing to forestall the appearance of the next 'skeptic' who then proves by analysis that God doesn't exist.[48] In the *Prize Essay*, Kant claims that the true reason for this frustrating situation is that metaphysics has actually been pretending to be a *synthetic* science on the model of mathematics: i.e., beginning with artificial definitions of an object (i.e. the soul or God) and attempting to show that certain consequences follow from the complete, distinct intuition of that object [Ak. 2:290]. Since, in this game, everyone can simply bring their own initial synthetic definition (of 'God' or 'the soul') to the table, Kant reasonably thinks that metaphysicians are simply talking past each other. As a remedial measure, Kant suggests that metaphysicians return to their own proper analytic method: simply describing the marks of our vague knowledge of metaphysical objects in an iterative, non-ultimate way. A sufficient description will allow, in time, for a definition to be advanced as the end result, rather than the first step, of a philosophical argument [Ak. 2:288-90], which, however, cannot 'prove' any metaphysical postulate (as we have seen).[49]

However, in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (1766), Kant claimed that there would be no vague empirical evidence at all for the existence of a 'soul' in itself, and in *Only Possible Proof* that there was only one kind of (ultimately methodologically inadmissible) empirical evidence for the existence of God.[50] That vague evidence is exactly what is supposed to ground an 'analysis' on the Leibnizian model. When Kant realizes that metaphysical 'analysis' is in fact impossible, he will be forced to the conclusion that metaphysics must actually be synthetic after all, which requires the complete overhaul of Leibnizian logic and indeed, of everything Kant knows. Thus, we reconstruct the process by which Kant enters the "silent decade".

However, there are actually two problems hidden in Kant's pre-Critical logic. Besides the above problem with analysis, there is a second problem with Leibnizian synthesis, which the reader may already have noted: how is it possible for synthetic judgments to, at the same time, apodeictically constitute their own objects and *also* apply to real empirical beings? For example, a synthetic judgment defines a circle, but for Kant, only as inscribed in a physical example of a circle [B176/A137], and mathematical proof proceeds by modifying the circle through sensible operations

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47 On the battles between Pietists, Crusians, Wolffian-Leibnizians, and 'skeptics' in which Kant was constantly immersed, see Manfred Kuehn, "Student and Private Teacher" (1740-1755)" and "The Elegant *Magister* (1756-1764)", in *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2002): 61-143.

48 The futility of these disputes obviously left a deep impression on Kant's turn to Criticism: cf. "The Discipline of Pure Reason in Regard to its Polemic Use", *KdrV,* [A739-769/B767-797].

49 Kant, *1755-1770*, 261-63.

50 *Dreams*: [Ak. 2:317-73]; in *Only Possible Proof,* Ak. 2:159, Kant argues that we can prove the existence of God from the contingency evident in empirical things, which will be placed into question when Hume rejects the derivation of causality from empirical things.

‘constructed in intuition’. What is the relationship of the formally ideal circle to the physical instantiation of the circle? Which one is the synthetic judgment about?

Kant’s First Critique - A/B Introduction: How is the synthetic a priori possible?

We have now found a place to scramble back onto the main path from our detour. Here we come out at the point where Kant emerges from the other side of the “silent decade”, picking up *KdrV* where we previously left off. Our digression into Kant’s logic and metaphysical woes will now illuminate a way forward past our previous stopping point: what *is* the “synthetic *a priori”* that apparently contains the “key to all metaphysics?”. We will first expand upon the problem of the objective validity of the synthetic *a priori* in *KdrV*, then turn to the nature of the new Critical definitions of synthetic and analytic, and then show how Kant’s ‘transcendental’ turn is an expansion of, and realization of, the true significance of the intentionally inexisting object-function in the logical judgment – the last point leading us directly into the Transcendental Aesthetic.

First, Kant fully accepted Hume’s claim that ‘all cognition ultimately arises from experience’ [B1] - that is, all our ideas ‘require some [sensible] impression’.[51] On that basis, Kant finally realized that metaphysics can’t possibly be analytic because we have no direct perceptual experience of its objects – which are “beyond sensation” [A vii/B xx], and hence possess no ‘vague’ concepts amenable to analysis. We have never experienced God or the soul sensibly.[52] Therefore, Kant had to completely reject the Leibnizian characterization of metaphysics as ‘analytic’. However, the issue is more lingering and subtle than that. The first, Humean, question, is, ‘where is the sensible evidence for the soul?’ Upon the negative answer, the second, Kantian, question is: ‘Then *how* did we gain the concept of soul in the first place?’ We have not suddenly proved, positively, that any actual soul doesn’t *exist;* rather, it is suddenly unclear where the objective concept ‘soul’, which we certainly possess, has been grounded in experience – i.e., what is the basis of the disposition of the will to consider the object-reference of this concept as falling outside the fiat of imagination? [A104-105].[53]

Therefore, Kant’s first problem in *KdrV* is to explain the origin of metaphysical concepts. However, Hume’s fork alerts Kant to a much broader and separate problem: the possibility of any objective necessary knowledge. Hume's argument in the *Enquiry* challenges, as an example, the

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51 Hume, *Enquiry*, 15-16. Cf. *Prolegomena,* Preface [Ak. 4:260-1].

52 See *KdrV* B xxxii.

53 Confusing Kant’s claim that we do not know the experiential grounds of a metaphysical object with the claim that that object does not exist in itself is the issue that has given rise to the perennial claim that Kant is a “subjective idealist”: cf. Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 353.

presumed link between the experience of caused events and the supposedly 'analytic' philosophical description of 'causation': the *a posteriori* experience cannot be the origin of the *a priori* description because the two are exclusive of each other, as Hume insists.[54] For Hume, 'synthetic' judgments can only be *a posteriori* and yield genuine knowledge, which, however, cannot be apodeictic. 'Analytic' judgments can only be *a priori*, and while universally necessary, yield no genuine knowledge of reality.[55] Kant needed to reestablish that principles such as causality could bridge Hume's 'fork', and he found a way by realizing the peculiar way in which such principles are present in experience.

As Kant explains in *KdrV*'s Introduction, the principle of causality, important to both metaphysics and physics, has a peculiar nature which is also present in, and perhaps more easily illustrated by, fundamental principles of arithmetic and geometry [B13-B15]. The idea of 'cause' gives itself as being trans-temporally necessary, and thus ideal and *a priori*, as Hume held.[56] However, 'cause' only occurs as an idea in the context of objects interacting, and it only has meaning as instantiated in experiential events.[57] Therefore, 'cause' is simultaneously a 'pure' *a priori* idea and an element of an empirical experience. Kant is faced with the riddle: how is it possible that there is a non-empirical idea which is universally necessary and yet only encountered within perceptual, and hence contingent and non-necessary, experiences? In the other direction, how is it possible that there can be perceptual, contingent experiences which nevertheless contain a necessary, trans-contingent idea?

Kant hopes to help the reader grasp the problem of 'causality' through more concrete examples from mathematics [B15-17]. The peculiarity of mathematics, as Kant understood it, is that it refers back to an empirically instantiated object which contains within itself or serves as the ground for an *ideal* object (since mathematics is synthetic and defines an object for itself, but not the *real* particular object): the ideality of the synthetic object is what makes mathematics possible as a science. When mathematicians draw a circle and then construct a proof of some property of the circle, the proof does not merely apply to *that* circle but to *the* circle, to *circles as such*. Without that leap transcending the particular, there could be no necessary science of geometry. The real peculiarity is in the other direction: the ideal circle is *in* the empirical circle, and in order to derive ideal conclusions, the mathematician must carry out empirical operations. In that context the importance of Kant's examples of a geometer and a mathematician are to show cognitive agents

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54 Hume: see *KdrV* B714-6.

55 Hume, *Enquiry*, 29-30, 41-46. It is likely under Hume's influence that Kant deleted the analytic *a posteriori* from his original fourfold system of judgments.

56 Hume, *Enquiry*, 32. Hume, of course, holds that 'cause' *seems* to be *a priori* but is in fact *a posteriori* in origin.

57 While Kant says at B13 that we cannot look for the explanation of 'cause' in experience, he means to contrast it only with the immediately preceding example of heaviness, which is synthetic *a posteriori*. At B18 Kant makes clear that synthetic *a priori* judgments of physics are based in empirical bodies, while also transcending them.

performing an activity in which a necessary and ideal concept is encountered in, and through, a physical and unnecessary movement in empirical spacetime: Kant emphasizes that the geometer *draws* the circle, and that the arithmetician *counts on his fingers* [A715-17/B743-45].[58] Kant realized what Hume had not: in all 'scientific' (necessary but empirically predictive) knowledge, there is a peculiar overlap or intimate relationship between the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*.[59] That overlap between ideality and empirical instantiation is the immediate ground of Kant's great problem: the realization that our scientific knowledge, as scientific, is ideal in the sense that it possesses trans-temporal predictive necessity, while also being empirical in the sense that it only occurs as instantiated in empirical examples, and it is predictive *of* contingent empirical reality. We have, and regularly use, a *third* kind of knowledge, which crosses over the boundary between 'mind' and 'world': the synthetic *a priori*. The explanation of the possibility (but not of the *actuality* – we already possess it) of that knowledge is Kant's famous problem: 'How is the synthetic *a priori* possible?' [B19].

The specific failing that Kant identified during the transition to *KdrV* is that neither the Leibnizian nor the Humean account can explain how any given synthetic definition of an object is not arbitrary, but rather has necessary grounding in empirical reality, or 'objective necessity'.[60] In the *Inquiry*, Kant had already stated the problem: he claimed that metaphysicians synthesizing 'private objects' was the reason why they perpetually disagreed in a systematically irresolvable way, but in the same work argued that mathematicians supposedly synthesized objects that were necessary and intersubjectively self-evident [Ak. 2:283-284]. When Hume pointed out that ideal, necessary knowledge cannot be justified *a posteriori* and then claimed that such knowledge is conventional or 'merely habit', Kant would have realized that if mathematical ideas were established by synthesis, there was no explanation for why every mathematician necessarily agreed on the principles of their science: why isn't Euclidean geometry also a Humean 'habit' of "constant conjunction"?[61] That is why Kant specifically says that Hume did not realize how his paradox would cripple mathematics as well as dogmatic philosophy [B20]. The "ground of the relation between that within us which we call the presentation and the object", or the objective necessity of all scientific synthetic *a priori* knowledge, is missing.[62]

Now, if we integrate the peculiar incarnateness of the synthetic *a priori* with our previous discussion of Kantian logic, we can not only trace the shift of the meanings of

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58 However, the intuition which fulfills the concept is always 'figured' but not necessarily 'drawn': cf. *KU*, Ak. 5:193.

59 Cf. again the discussion of the *Prolegomena*: [Ak. 4:260-1]

60 Despite that formulation, Kant still is not equating "objectivity" with "empirical reality". Such a reading is in my view incompatible with Kant's clear and frequent references elsewhere to *non*-empirical objects: see *KdrV*, [A96].

61 Hume, *Enquiry*, 69.

62 Letter to Herz, 1772: [Ak. 10:129-130].

"analytic"/"synthetic" in the Critical turn but also disclose a much deeper level of the problem of objective knowledge. "Analytic" knowledge in the *Logics*, as we saw, originally means reflective knowledge which responds to some vaguely held experiential concept as its object; in the Critical turn, "analytic" knowledge keeps its position as reflective knowledge, operating according to the laws of formal logic, but it is taken out of direct contact with experience by the separation of sensibility from understanding[63] (thus taking over the 'abstraction' originally belonging to synthesis.) "Synthetic" knowledge originally meant knowledge which was formally and deliberately created, which is distinct from and yet applies to empirical experience (i.e. as a scientific or mathematical law). In the Critical turn, Kant realizes that we must have originally created, or "synthetically" established, not only the logical object of a synthetic judgment, but *objectivity itself*. The place where Kant puts the intentionally inexistent object-reference of judgment is *in the world*. The formal objectivity we find in experiential objects-in-the-world has to have been overlaid on their very empirical being as appearance in order for science to "objectively" apply. Thus synthesis is extended down into the roots of perceptual experience itself; it is of the highest importance that Kant emphasizes: "*Experiential judgments are one and all synthetic*" [A7/B11].

We can return to Kant's example judgments in *KdrV*: "all bodies are extended" (analytic) and "all bodies are heavy" (synthetic) [A7/B11]. Kant's presentation lends itself to the interpretation that the analytic and synthetic judgments are distinguished on the basis of two different types of *contents*, contents which are purely conceptual (extension) and contents which are experiential (weight).[64] While it is true that the universal claim that bodies are extended is derivable solely from the definition of body as extended, I think something else needs to be pointed out to make full sense of Kant's position: at some point, the concept of 'body' itself had to be formed as a judgment. The original development of the concept of body would have been, in my view, a *synthetic* judgment, the constitution of objective experience according to the categories. "All bodies are extended" is analytic, therefore, because it is a reflective operation upon a concept-object which has already been given by a *previous act* of *synthetic* concept-formation, and does not refer outside that concept-object, whereas synthetic judgments involve a return to the floor/boundary of concept-formation

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[63] Historically speaking, Kant sees that sensibility is available as the ground of the synthetic *a priori* through Baumgarten's development of 'aesthetics'. Baumgarten had proposed that the 'logical' relation between sensible experiences and ideas is complicated by the independent contribution of *sensible* factors which hinder or help our understanding. Kant adopts these ideas and Baumgarten's meaning of 'aesthetics' for his Critical enterprise. Thus, throughout Kant's commentaries on logic we find that ideas are presented to us in a matrix, not only between 'vagueness' and 'distinctness' on the formal side, but also between 'ugliness' and 'elegance' on an aesthetic scale. These materials gradually develop, for Kant, into the idea that the sensible or aesthetic contribution to knowledge has a structure of its own which can be investigated independently of the formal structure of symbolic logic. See *KdrV,* [A21/B36 fn.].

[64] See James O'Shea, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: An Introduction and Interpretation* (Acumen Publishing, 2012): 42, for a good summary of this common view.

itself, a renewal of contact with the forces which first affected perception.[65] Thus *time-consciousness* is intimately involved also in the synthetic/analytic distinction.[66]

As I have been illustrating it, Kant's project in finding his way to the transcendental turn was trying to figure out where to place the intentional pseudo-object in both the analytic and the synthetic judgment. An analytic judgment attempted to describe some object like 'soul' which presents itself as given, i.e. 'extramental', but without sensible evidence. A synthetic judgment attempted to describe a formally defined object-function (the circle) and also claim that it applied directly to an objective real being (the Colosseum), but the explanation of the necessary connection between these two is missing. The obvious answer, for synthesis, is for Kant to place the intentionally inexistent object *in direct experience*. It is *in* the real plate, 'out there', that the formal circle appears [A137/B176]. That is what makes science 'objectively' possible as an applicable model of reality. However, such a model could still be *either* 'transcendental idealism' or 'direct realism'. One of the questions we have been most immediately pursuing, from Chapter 1, is why Kant chose "transcendental idealism", assigning the construction of both types of formal pseudo-object to subjective activity, rather than "transcendental realism", which would assign the formal pseudo-object to the self-disclosing activity of the being that is objectively formalized.

The reason is that transcendental realism leaves unexplained the ghostly status of the non-object of analytic *metaphysical* judgments. The soul is not in the sensibly experienced world, so why is it still an object 'over-against' my thinking? Kant's remaining move is to simply ask himself: 'upon what could a phenomenological/intentional sense of otherness to the mind be *objectively* grounded?'[67] Kant could then come up with the answer, 'formal, ideal sensibility'.[68] That is, I think of *all* objects as being distinct from myself, and my consciousness splits into subject and object at all, because 'objectivity' as such is bound up with the embodied analogy of distinctness as distance and the appearance over-against of a separable 'surface'. The disposition of the will to respect the autonomy of the object of the judgment, to consider it an "object of possible experience", would then be equivalent, or co-present, with the formal imagining that it was distinct from me spatially. Both non-empirical and empirical objects can be *objective* if objectivity is *ideal*.

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65 Cf. *Reflexionen* 4472, ~1771. As we will learn shortly, we did not learn extension from experience in Kant's view, because extension in space is part of the formal *a priori* pre-structuring of empirical experience: [B6, B12].

66 This model, I think, resolves the difficulties that Quine raised against the analytic/synthetic distinction in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism": the reason the boundary between analysis and synthesis seems indefensible is that analysis is, of course, always operating on concepts which have already been established through synthesis. Even if it is clear that 'bachelor' includes 'unmarried' in its definition, at some point I had to learn what the sequence of syllables 'bachelor' is describing. The hard distinction is based simply on the *reflexivity* of analysis, its passive stance towards its conceptual materials. The model likewise resolves Kant's original vagueness in the early *Logics* about what exactly the 'given' of an *a priori* analytic judgment *is.*

67 [Ak. 10:129-130].

68 For reasons of space, I will pass over the argument of the *Inaugural Dissertation* [Ak. 2:387-419] for the ideality of space and time, jumping forward to the version given in the Transcendental Aesthetic.

Beyond that inference, however, there is a stronger positive reason why Kant felt that transcendental idealism was the only possible explanation of the synthetic *a priori*. In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, Kant channeled his frustration about the elusive objects of metaphysics into responding to what must have seemed like a very similar project: ghost-hunting. Kant pokes fun at séances, prophecies of the future, and other concrete forms of *Schwärmerei* inspired by the mystic Swedenborg, but the more serious philosophical line of argument in *Dreams* is that, if such a thing as a spirit exists, we will only know about it through empirical evidence.[69] In a thought-provoking passage of *Dreams*, Kant asks himself and the reader: what, strictly speaking, could an isolated disincarnate spirit, a 'spirit-in-itself', be? If we abstract from the moving furniture, the sounding footsteps, and the sheet covering the ghost, the ghost itself under the sheet would be nothing, but a *positive* nothing: nothing but the feeling of active presence, the feeling that a *will* is co-present in the room with us.[70] Kant compares that definition to a parallel example from metaphysics: How do we really know what an extended thing is? Answer: the impenetrability of the space that the body takes up, which is the result of its inner force expanding to fill its limits. Kant's discussion relies on the implicit point that without the force registering against our body, we would never know that objective matter was there either.[71] Conversely, the philosophical concept of an enclosed space, abstracted from real force, emerges from Kant's musing as an inexistent emptiness, hovering but not instantiated. Like the spirit-in-itself, then, an object-in-itself, separate from its empirical effects and presentations, is nothing: nothing but a kind of non-presence.[72] *Dreams* has historically been read by Kant scholars as just a cynical joke about Swedenborg and the paranormal craze in Europe, but Kant's letter to Mendelssohn on the subject indicates that he was taking the topic a bit more seriously than he let on in public.[73] Spiritualism aside, Kant does not indicate that the above-referenced passage about the metaphysical essences of will or body is a joke; rather, the metaphysician's phenomenological thought experiment of a 'pure body' as an emptiness defined by force appears in Kant's serious professional writing three years earlier.[74] As far as I have been able to tell, however, it is in *Dreams* that Kant for the first time abstracts the thought of an empirical

[69] Kant, *Dreams*, 42.

[70] Kant, *Dreams*, 47.

[71] "That this is so, experience teaches us, and the abstraction of this experience produces in us the general conception of matter. But this resistance which something makes in the space in which it is present, is in that manner indeed *recognized*, but not yet *conceived*. For this resistance, as everything that counteracts an action, is true force, and, as its direction is opposed to the prolonged lines of *approach*, it is a force of *repulsion* which must be attributed to matter and, therefore, to its elements. Every reasonable man will readily concede that here human intelligence has reached its limit." Kant, *Dreams*, 46.

[72] "… the substances which are elements of matter occupy space only by the exterior effect which they have upon others. But for themselves alone, where no other things can be thought of as being in connection with them, and as they contain in themselves nothing which could exist separately, they contain no space. This applies to corporeal elements. The same would apply also to spiritual natures." Kant, *Dreams*, 48.

[73] Kant, *Dreams*, 162: the letter quoted there is of Feb. 7, 1766.

[74] See *Inquiry*, [Ak. 2:286-287] (Kant, *1755-1770*, 259-260).

body all the way down as far as the removal of extension itself, the reduction of body to nothingness.

I believe that Kant's re-orientation, at some point in the silent decade, occurred when the positive significance of what he had been joking about finally struck him: Kant already knew how to directly access the pure form of objectivity itself, the "structure of an object as such" of general metaphysics, in phenomenological reflection, isolated from all empirical evidence of sense. The pure form of objectivity is the *presence of otherness*, the locus point that gathers consciousness together as intention. That presence of otherness is experienced as the division between the flat immanence of consciousness and a "something else = X", a division that is given for us as spatial. The pseudospatial or analogously spatial differentiation between objectivity and subjectivity is a formal structure that governs not only empirically fulfilled objects, but also the objects of imagination and the objects of special metaphysics: God, the soul, and the cosmos.[75] Our thinking about these non-empirical objects, likewise, also takes place in time. Since we have examples of synthetic *a priori* knowledge which take non-empirical objects, and more than this, direct access to the pure form of objectivity as such, the ideality of space and time is a necessary conclusion.

Kant turned this 'thought experiment' into, in my view, a key element of *KdrV*. Here is Kant's description of the experiment from B6: "If from your experiential concept of a *body* you gradually omit everything that is empirical in a body – the color, the hardness or softness, the weight, even the impenetrability – there yet remains the *space* which was occupied by the body (which has now entirely vanished), and this space you cannot omit [without destroying the intuitive presence of 'body' as the concept you are entertaining] … the property through which you think the object … as a *substance*" (emphasis original). The quoted passage, the "thought experiment", is immediately followed by the previously-referenced line where Kant tells the reader "you must be convinced", leading me to think that Kant considers *this* to be the trump card in his hand, the fulcrum of persuasion. Kant refers again to the same thought experiment of the 'empty object' at A8, B12, and B35, at least. The frequent reappearance of the experiment leads me to believe that it has much greater significance in interpreting *KdrV* than has generally been acknowledged.[76]

What is Kant saying here? If we take an 'experiential concept', meaning some memory of an empirical encounter with a body, we hold it in awareness 'before us' as the object-end of the intentional relation – that which consciousness is 'of'. It is not real, meaning really present, since this is a thought experiment; but nevertheless it is 'present' in some sense since it is the

[75] A problem with Allison's "discursivity thesis" (Allison, *IF*, 6-7) is that Allison, like many other Kant scholars, does not make clear whether he is discussing "sensibility" that is *empirical* or that is *intentional*. I am trying to sharply underline the distinction by speaking of *pseudo*spatiality to extend cognitive distinctness to *imaginary* objects.

[76] At B35, Kant in fact asserts that the isolation of pure extension as formal spacetime is the justification for the transition to the Transcendental Aesthetic.

'experiential concept' I am currently thinking of as opposed to, say, what I will make for dinner.[77] Kant continues: if we delete in sequence everything that makes that 'body' an *empirical* body – the weight, the color, the texture, the environment in memory, etc. - there is still a transition between being aware of the same presence, or being aware of remaining within the boundaries of the same thought experiment, and on the other hand *no longer* practicing that thought experiment [B35].

In the flickering of transition at the end, while everything empirical has been removed, and yet we remain briefly in the thought experiment, what is left? Only two things: the indeterminate field of 'space', in which that body *was*; and the determinate space which the 'body' has just been taking up. We are still "left with...extension and shape", which belong to pure intuition "even if there is no actual object of the senses or of sensation" [B35]. Kant's bold claim is that the *spatial extension* is "the property through which you think the object … as a *substance"*: it is *spatial distinction* even in *imagination* that underwrites the consciousness that something is a 'some-thing' distinct from my own awareness *of* it, or that constitutes the 'object-end' or terminus of the intentional relation [B6].[78] In other words, spatial distinction is now the ground of the conceptual 'sense of givenness'.[79] Since spatial distinction is present even in imagination and in the cognition of non-empirically actual objects, absolute space *must* be ideal.

In my reading, then, Kant's joke from *Dreams* reappears as the hinge of the introduction of *KdrV*: Kant tells the reader at B6 to carry out the experiment for himself, abstracting from the thought of some empirical body everything empirical about it. What remains, at the very edge of the boundary between still thinking about the same body you've abstracted everything from and changing over to thinking about nothing at all, is the pure *presence* of objectivity. Kant says that the reader will be won over by this demonstration and be forced to admit for himself that substance is a concept "residing a priori" in consciousness. Kant chooses substance, rather than cause and effect, the issue previously under discussion vis-a-vis Hume, because the pure structure of objectivity is supposed to directly convince the reader of the ideality of space and time, and consequently of the necessity of the Copernican revolution.

The above reading explains the peculiar fact that the Transcendental Aesthetic is actually a very brief passage, and it does not in any sense provide a 'proof' that space and time have to be

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77 Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 74.

78 Note that Sellars, in *Science and Metaphysics*, 54-55, also 56 fn. 1, agrees with me that Kant does, and is right to, identify an 'ideal space' applying to mathematical and scientific ideal objects but (on Sellars' view) is wrong to argue that 'ideal space' also applies to empirical objects. My response would be that for Kant, the *same* ideal space must apply to mathematical and to empirical objects because that identity is part of what guarantees the necessity of categorically ordered cognition when applied in empirical settings – i.e. an ideal space distinct from 'empirical space' would be arbitrary and not possess *a priori* necessity in empirical application.

79 "The spatial metaphor of orientation in space is even at the source of the idea of the subject as the center of perspective itself not situated in the space occupied by the objects of discourse…" Ricouer, *Oneself*, 53.

ideal, proceeding instead as if Kant thinks the proof has already been given. In my view, Kant *does* think that he has already convinced the reader at B6 of the necessity of the ideality of spatiotemporal objective form, through sharing the direct phenomenological experience that convinced Kant. The purpose of the Transcendental Aesthetic is only to address lingering difficulties with the idea that *empirical* space and time have to be ideal, but the reader is meant to come to that discussion supported by the conviction that the space and time of *formal objectivity* are, and must be, ideal. I mention here also that the discovery of the pure phenomenological presence of formal objectivity, the discovery of the formal ideal object, opens up the possibility of two radically different readings of *KdrV* depending on one's construal of the word "object". For example, Kant repeatedly restricts categorial knowledge to "objects of possible experience". On the assumption that "object" is equivalent in meaning to "empirical being", this phrase means "something which will be an object for us once we encounter it in experience";[80] but on my reading we should interpret it as "the objects, whether real or imaginary, which obey the rules of formal objectivity and thus which we *might* encounter in experience some day". That alteration expands the scope of Kant's discussion to fields of objects which Kant clearly indicates are included in his topic, such as imagination, hallucination, and dreaming.[81] My major point of departure from the rehabilitative school of Kantian scholarship, with which I otherwise agree, is the basically universal neglect of Kant's clear and repeated assertions that *imaginary objects are equally objective*, which is rooted in the central unity of the formal transcendental object as the structure of conscious thought/perception as such. The answer to Kant's question, "How is the synthetic *a priori possible*?" is that the synthetic *a priori* judgment establishes the formal structure of determinable spatiotemporal objectivity which is the structure of human consciousness itself, the instrument through which we are aware *of* anything at all, even our own self-presencing. The synthetic *a priori* judgment is possible because it is necessary, because without it we would never have come to consciousness at all.

Kant's First Critique - Transcendental Aesthetic: the question of "pure intuitions"

Here I re-emphasize that we are *not* talking about a formal feature *reflectively thought* back upon the world, but a formal structure *directly perceived in* the world. As we have seen, not only theological abstractions are at stake in *KdrV*; part of 'metaphysics' is the fact that even the most

[80] In my view, this is another formulation of the basic problem with the "metaphysics of experience" reading. Longuenesse is the author I have found who comes closest to consistently 'bracketing' the word 'object' in the intentional sense I think is necessary.

[81] *KdrV* , [A96].

ordinary and sensual awareness of some ‘real thing’ involves perceptual structures which are formal and ideal that serve to delineate the ‘edges’ of an essence from other essences and simultaneously extend its possibilities beyond its concrete, spatiotemporal boundaries in/during the event of perception. Kant’s question about the synthetic *a priori* is how we *perceived* these possibilities. If we *thought* them into the object, we would be saying that objects in the world did not behave objectively until we reflected upon them, and we would thus fail to explain how science is “objectively valid”. Rather, the formal structures of objectivity are directly entangled, in the given appearance, with the being itself. In completing the movement of finding a home for the pseudo-object of the judgment, then, the last part of Kant’s great hypothesis is to assert that there is a formal and ideal structure not only of understanding, the reflective power of thought, but also of sensibility: that *sensibility* formally organizes itself spatiotemporally. As Kant explains, that marks his major break with Leibniz and a dominant epistemological tradition of his time.[82]

Here, the possibility of a “transcendental realism”, in which the formal structures of objectivity are derived from the occasion of a being’s appearance, is already foreclosed. The reconfiguration of general metaphysics as transcendental/phenomenological ontology has been carried out by the thought experiment of the “pure object”, but *only* at the level of intuition. That is, at this point in *KdrV* we can see for ourselves what Kant is getting at, but we do not yet fully understand it. We can, however, now incorporate and grasp Kant’s discussion of the structure of *non*-empirical objects.[83] The two types of non-empirical objects Kant discusses in the Prefaces and Introduction(s) are ‘special metaphysical objects’ and the thought experiment of the ‘pure object’ or ‘empty object’.

First let us consider what we can call ‘special metaphysical objects’ (which Kant will eventually call the ‘ideals/ideas of pure reason’ [B391/A334]). Let us take the example of ‘God’. For Kant, discussion of ‘God’ cannot be equivalent to discussing the actually existing Divinity; one reason, as discussed earlier, is that it is possible to negate propositions about God, which obviously cannot entail negating features of the actual God. Another reason, following Leibniz, would be that we obviously lack total knowledge of God which would be required to employ ‘the’ concept of God and are thus working only with *our* or ‘a’ concept of God.[84] Following the realization that we cannot identify in empirical experience the origin of the concept of God, we nevertheless see that we still possess it, a non-empirical concept, as part of our conceptual ‘furniture’ which is available to be predicated of. But the concept God is an ‘object’ and not just a ‘concept’ because ‘God’ is *given* to

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82 Cf. KdrV [B61-62].

83 Kant regularly refers throughout the Critical period to ‘empirical’ as opposed to ‘ideal objects’: see *Reflexionen* 4923 (found in Baumgarten, *Metaphysics,* 49).

84 Parkinson, *Logic in Leibniz,* 12.

our understanding rather than being *created* by that understanding – we do not predicate of the concept 'God' arbitrarily, but *as if* the concept bears reference to a real referenced (whether or not that referenced exists).[85] The same is true of the 'soul', which for Kant is identified precisely by stripping away every empirically detectable feature of an 'ensouled thing', the result being that we know nothing about it. Even so, we do not feel free to modify the meaning of 'soul' but rather understand ourselves to be defining some publically *given* entity, even if we ultimately deny its existence.

However, if, as Kant claims, we natively operate upon non-empirical concepts like 'God' and 'soul' as if they could be true in a non-private way, that means for Kant that they must have been 'given' somehow. Since those concepts have no empirical reference, 'givenness' *cannot* simply be a production or property of the fact that something is *empirically* 'there' (which, incidentally, is precisely why Kant does not commit the "myth of the given").[86] I find that Henry Allison's distinction between what we would understand by 'illusion' and what we mean by 'error' captures that sense of presence which Kant holds is distinctive of 'object' very well.[87] An 'illusive object', of course, does not exist; what Kant is interested in is detailing what, therefore, besides existence, contributes to our sense that 'illusion' invokes a 'something-there' whereas 'error' does not.[88] What we now see clearly is that the problem with 'non-empirical objects' is explaining where their 'ground' originally came from, since it is not empirically sensible. Kant will ultimately derive it from *Gefühl* as objective consciousness of the transcendental ground of the moral law, but we are some distance from that result.

For now, we turn to a direct review of the Transcendental Aesthetic, to close the present chapter. As a further point, it is crucial to grasp that Kant's thesis is that space and time are pure *intuitions* distinct both from empirical intuitions and from concepts, as at A22:

> "… in the transcendental aesthetic we shall, first of all, *isolate* sensibility, by separating from it everything that the understanding through its concepts thinks [in

[85] To further clarify the rather subtle point at stake here, the point is *not* that we cannot arbitrarily populate the concept 'God' with content, as in 'God can fly', 'God lives on Mount Olympus', 'God died at Calvary'; the point is that we *feel as if* when we modify the contents of the concept 'God' we are comparing our activity with an *external reference,* that we *owe* something, as it were, to 'God' and can check if our attributions are *true* or *false*.

[86] Kant's problem, the reader will note, is now the opposite: to show in what way besides 'givenness', therefore, we *do* know that something is empirically 'there'. I assert that the answer to that question is given first in the Anticipations of Perception (see Ch. 4.) and finally in the *Opus Postumum* (see Ch. 6).

[87] Allison, *KTI*, 404-408. See also an excellent article by Daniel J. Smith on Kant's 'Table of Nothing' which, expanding on Allison's idea, claims that Kant is creating a 'Table of Empty/Null Objects' rather than just a 'Table of Meaningless Concepts' – an interpretation which fits very well with my reading of the Transcendental Dialectic. Daniel J. Smith, "How is an Illusion of Reason Possible? The Division of Nothing in the Critique of Pure Reason", *Kant Studien* 114:3 (2023): 493-512.

[88] There was probably also an influence on Kant's thinking on this topic from Hume's discussion of the 'feeling of belief' in the *Enquiry:* Hume, *Enquiry,* 47-48.

> connection] with it, so that nothing other than empirical intuition will remain. Second, we shall also segregate from sensibility *everything belonging to sensation*, so that nothing will remain but pure intuition and the mere form of appearances, which is all that sensibility can supply a priori" (italics added).

Pure intuitions occupy a third place, between singular sensation and universal reflective understanding, which makes it possible to place the problematic ground of the logical pseudo-object corresponding to the concept. Kant likewise says clearly at B34 that empirical intuition refers to an object through sensation, but that sensation is *distinct* from sensibility, which is the "*form* of appearance" rather than "*matter* [empirical sensation]". The ordering of sensation into a manifold, Kant says, cannot itself also be sensation, and so sensibility (meaning pure intuitions) is distinct, and also "a priori" [B34/A20].[89] The significance of Kant's insistence on the existence of pure intuitions is that it breaks out of a post-Humean (and also perhaps post-Cartesian) assumption that there are only the 'mind' and 'concepts' on the one hand and 'the world' and 'sensible givens' on the other. Despite Heidegger's famous 'violence' to Kant in the *Kantbuch*, in my view Heidegger is quite correct to assert that Kant argues for 'pure intuition' and that the importance of pure intuitions for Kant is that they establish the ground of possibility of nonempirical objects.[90]

The Transcendental Aesthetic itself is divided into two sections: one concerning space and one concerning time. Each is further subdivided into what Kant calls a "metaphysical exposition" of the concept, and a "transcendental exposition" of the same. "Now, by *exposition (expositio)* I mean clear… presentation of what belongs to a concept; and such exposition is *metaphysical* if it contains what exhibits the concept as *given a priori*" [B38]. In other words, the metaphysical expositions of space and time will be a brief survey of what we actually experience when we phenomenologically examine the pure phenomena of either (i.e., the "exhibition" of the concept as "given").[91] The transcendental expositions will then be a discussion of what must actually be the case, in a logical deduction toward the outer limit of our own mode of consciousness, for the exhibition-as-given to be as it presents itself to us. Kant concludes these discussions, in the B edition, by responding to some criticisms.

In the case of space, Kant says that space must "already lie at the basis" of our experiences "in order for certain sensations to be referred to something outside me (i.e., referred to something in a location of space other than the location in which I am)" [B38]. In understanding that, it is crucial to see that for Kant sensation as such is a purely immanent phenomenon, an undifferentiated contact

89 Cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 8.
90 Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 38, 42-43.
91 Cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 15-18.

surface of affection.[92] If I did not already have a formal spatial framework in which to assign sense events to 'the world', I would be undifferentiated from the world and sense would be a play of tonalities 'on' my surface. The basis for arguing thus can be found in the Aesthetic: Kant calls space "outer sense" and time "inner sense", and claims that "Time cannot be intuited outwardly, any more than space can be intuited within us" [B37-38]. Although it is easy to read Kant as saying that "outer sense" responds to and discloses a real 'outside', and "inner sense" responds to and discloses a real 'inside', we can leverage our newfound grasp of the non-empirical spatial object to give a more radical interpretation: "By means of outer sense… we *present* objects *as* outside us" [B37, emphasis added]. There is no such thing as 'inner space' at all, on Kant's view.[93] Indeed, the conceptual model of an inner space wherein our appearances are spatially distinct from one another as a 'set' of events 'on' a timeline is a figure already mediated through *outer* sense by objective understanding: "And precisely because this inner intuition [time] gives us no shape, do we try to make up for this deficiency by means of analogies" [B50]. The persistent idea that "inner sense" senses 'inner space' wherein "appearances" play is itself, in fact, evidence of the irreducibly pseudospatial structure of human discursive thinking! If we must abstract from all visual and spatial metaphors in trying to determine "inner sense", that means that time-consciousness, or subjective consciousness, is nothing more than the immanent, flat play of a sequence of sense-impressions, which are spatialized both in empirical experience *and* in imagination as being 'outside' the pure reference point of the 'I'. In objective understanding I spatialize both the intended object and my own projected interiority.

Kant formally restates the conclusions that have to be drawn from the phenomenological thought experiment of the 'pure body' or 'pure object': that space is an infinite, undifferentiated field without which the objective consciousness of separation between the surfaces of myself and the object would not come to pass at all [A24/B39-A27/B43]. Kant also seeks to emphasize that space, in the sense we are trying to get at it, cannot be a "universal concept" but must be a "pure intuition". We are not talking about the dimensionless signifiers that can be included "under" the concept; rather, we are talking about the corresponding, dimensional *objects* which serve as "exhibitions" of the signifiers, for example, in the geometrical or modelling thinking of geometry or

[92] The defense of this position comes from, first, the Anticipations of Perception, where Kant asserts that sensation is an intensive and not an extensive magnitude, meaning that it lacks 'place', and second, the discussion of 'figurative synthesis', where Kant asserts that in order to cognize 'inner sense', which includes the events of sensation, we must exteriorize these events by analogously spatializing them, *and* spatializing the *time* in which they occur (implying that they lack any spatiotemporal difference 'in-themselves').

[93] Cf. Lucy Allais, *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and his Realism* (Oxford University Press, 2015): 105-110. Allais defends a similar view of Kant's ideas on direct perception, what she calls "relational perception", to mine.

engineering [B39].[94] Every dimensional object or division within the field (for example, a hypothetical division between 'the space inside my head', which contains 'the image of the apple', and 'the space outside me', which contains 'the apple itself'), we are able to *recover* as a deliberate and distinguishable act of limitation, which discloses in reverse the original existence of the infinite, indeterminable and seamless 'formal first space' out of which these divisions have been made [B39/A25].[95] As displayed in the thought experiment of the 'empty object', we can't inwardly intuit 'no space': even if we totally delete the 'empty something=X' from our experiment, 'space' remains present as the indeterminate non-conceptual field in which, or from which, the object has been *drawn*. Indeterminate space *can*, phenomenologically, be intuited in Kant's example as the *background* upon which a line, plane, or figure appears [B39].[96] Richard Aquila is reaching toward a similar conclusion, in my view, when he argues that there must be an 'intentionally objective field' of intuition within which "actions of understanding" are directed toward "sub-states" of that unifying field.[97] Because, as Kant points out in the "Transcendental Exposition", thought-objects and ideal objects are also occupying divisions within 'space', we must (transcendentally) conclude that the absolute space which contains both spatial sense-objects and spatial thought-objects is formally ideal [B41]. Westphal rejects 'psychologistic' or 'introspective' interpretations of the Aesthetic, but Kant's claim, in my view, is not psychologistic but phenomenological in the Husserlian sense – as an examination of the formal structures of consciousness.[98] If no experience of any kind of object is possible without spatial distinction appearing as the medium of the distinction between 'self' and 'object', the traversing of the intentional relation, then spatial distinction, even though discoverable in imaginative representation, is still genuinely formal and *a priori*. Kant himself claims that indeterminate space as the condition of intuitive presentation is not a question of empirical psychology, because indeterminate space is the formal condition of the possibility of intuitive aspects of any object being given in appearance, whether they are imaginary, previously encountered in experience, ideally necessary, or even totally impossible [A96]. Kant's thought experiment should not be caricatured as a crude 'picturing'; on the other hand, it is vital that

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94 Allison, Schwarz and Melnick have defended a similar interpretation: Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 94-95.

95 Cf. O'Shea, *Kant's Critique*, 88-89.

96 Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 75.

97 Aquila, "Vaihinger and Intentionalist Readings of Kant", 244-45.

98 Westphal, *KTPR*, 20. See again Aquila, "Vaihinger and Intentionalist Readings of Kant", 244, where he argues that the "unifying field" must not only be a part of any mental state directed at any specific part of that field but *also* must be able to *appear within* that field, which is exactly what I am claiming regarding the pure form of space and time: it is both the structure of all intuition and a possibly intuitable object, because the structure of intentionality is reflexive, but the 'object' spacetime is not the same as the indeterminate field spacetime because they bear the relation to one another of 'foreground' and 'background', respectively, in Merleau-Ponty's terminology.

the pure form of intuition be grasped as *intuitive* rather than *conceptual* to avoid a reductively binary 'mind/world' dualism which renders the synthetic *a priori* unintelligible.

As a counterbalance, Kant emphasizes that space is "empirically real" [B44/A28], and we should not think of its presentation as an "illusion" [B69], because an "appearance" is not an illusion: "But in asserting this I am not saying that the bodies merely *seem* to be outside me, or that my soul only *seems* to be given in my self-consciousness" [B69-B70]. Kant gives an illustration: on the ordinary or "empirical" plane, when we see a rainshower producing a rainbow, we call the rainbow an "appearance" and the rain "the thing in itself" [B63/A45-46], and are right to do so because we mean that the rainbow does not have its own substantive/objective properties in the way that the rain does, but is the mere effect of light upon a certain region of the raindrops. On the transcendental plane, by contrast, we will also call the raindrops "appearances" because even though their roundness, clarity, wetness, etc. remain invariant for every human who perceives them, thus comprising an "empirical something as such", those features are the "mere modifications, or foundations, of our sensible intuition" and "nothing in themselves" [B63]. It is obviously very difficult to visualize, at this point, what Kant means. But let us try to hold all of his statements together under tension and see what emerges.

To save the reader confusion and close the present chapter, here I will have to offer a provisional explanation which jumps ahead to some ideas we have not yet retrieved from *KdrV*. As we go deeper into the text, we will recover the further pieces of the puzzle we need to justify the following claims (Chapters 3-5). If Kant insists that the world as we experience it is quite real for what it is, and does *not* seem to be saying that the raindrops cease to exist, or behave differently, when no one is looking at them, then the "appearance" we are talking about is *not* a Cartesian appearance. Kantian appearances cannot be *images* [B69]; they are in-the-world-itself. As Kant says, the "empirical something as such" *does* present "the rain drops": that is taken for granted [B63/A46]. What we are asking is whether they also present "an object in itself", a phrase which we do not yet clearly understand [B63/A46]. If we keep in mind that objectivity is the structure of the process of human thinking itself, as I have tried to show Kant claiming, then when we try to *think* about what Kant is saying, without being cautious, we are going to generate a second pseudo-object as a placeholder for the meaning of "in itself" or "noumena" [A250-53]. We are going to picture a world of sense, transpiring 'in us' or 'at the edge' of our sensibility, and 'behind' it or 'beyond' it a duplicate world which is also objective and spatiotemporal, but different somehow. Sensation is 'interiorized' to us only when we make it the *object* of our thinking transcendentally, but empirically, sensation appears to us to happen *outside of ourselves*: the boundary between subjectivity and objective being is *at the surface of the object*, out 'in the world'. Because Kant's

whole purpose is to alert us to that activity of object-making in coming to consciousness, we must remember that such pseudo-objective structures of thought, as products of synthetic judgment, are also themselves object-appearances. These confusing complications are the problem of "transcendental illusion", a reflexive deception with which we are not yet prepared to deal comprehensively.

Remaining on the ontological level for now, let us recall that Kant's task is metaphysical: his quarrel with dogmatic metaphysics is that it has confused objectivity with being. We have not yet seen Kant disclose that his real interlocutors in this argument are Plato, Aristotle, and Heraclitus, figures who were asking about the structure of being-itself when isolated from its instantiations.[99] I offer the reader the provisional hypothesis that what we are really talking about here is what was once called "form" or "essence". The question we are asking, I suggest, is not 'what would be the material properties of a raindrop if we abstract from the ways in which our senses mediate its presentation?', but 'What *is* a raindrop?'. Is there a pure Platonic form or an *essence* of raindrop-ness? This is a metaphysical question, and if we reconfigure the problem of the noumena or "in-itself" at the level of metaphysics, at the level of *being*, what Kant will be saying is that we do not know, and cannot decide, theoretically, whether the *being* of the raindrop is distinct from the being of the cloud, and whether either is distinct from *my* being.[100] Beyond objectivity, since objectivity is what constitutes definable *things*, there is by definition no-*thing* "in-itself"; only the intimate entanglement of being with and in being. What we *do* know about the structures of Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysics is that we generated them in objective thinking. What lies beyond that, Kant will ultimately assert, the true ground of the existence of matter as such, must be decided not theoretically but morally: in a teleological explanation of the existence of existing.[101] Thus an 'appearance' is in-the-world (and perception is in direct contact with it, not removed into a 'mind'); but it hides, while also disclosing, the be-ing shining through its formal ontological structure.

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99 Aristotle: A80/B105; Heraclitus: A364; Plato: A314/B370.

100 In this context, consider: "...for Kant … there is reason for regarding objects as subject-dependent only to the extent that they are conceived in terms of the conditions under which objects for us are possible at all, i.e. only with respect to those of their features by virtue of which they conform to the structure of experience; we are justified in regarding as subject-dependent only whatever in objects pertains to the possibility of their being objects for us at all. The writ of idealism runs no further. Crucially, it therefore does not extend to the existence of objects: 'representation in itself does not produce its object in so far as existence is concerned' (A92/B125)." Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant,* 28.

101 While I agree with Heidegger that Kant's 'questioning of the possibility of ontology' [i.e., 'objectivity' in our sense] must be understood as taking place against the border of the disclosure of being, rather than in an abyss devoid of metaphysical ground, I disagree with Heidegger that the 'possibility of ontology' is the revelation of reason's *knowledge* of Being, which I think is a confusion on Heidegger's part between Kant's senses of 'transcendental' and '*transcendent*', and ignores Kant's insistence on the fact that being cannot be known: Heidegger, *Kantbuch,* 10-12.

In my view it is only by reference to the metaphysical layer of being-itself that we can make sense of the parallel problem of the ideality of time, which is why I have left the latter until now.[102] As Kant notes, the ideality of time proves more difficult to understand than the ideality of space, because we get stuck on the obvious objection that "...changes are actual" [A37/B53]. Time has to be actual, because changes require time. Kant says: "There is no difficulty in replying to the objection. I concede the whole argument" [A37/B54]. Here is another place where Kant's enigmatic confidence indicates that we must tread carefully. Kant claims that time attaches directly to objective *appearances,* which, as we have hypothesized, are not *inner images* but objects as in-the-world [A35/B51]. As Kant notes, the reason why the ideality of time is harder to understand than the ideality of space is that philosophers are now accustomed to the Cartesian claim that appearances are illusory, and also to the complementary claim that we are certain of the existence of our own inner states [A38/B55]. But what they have failed to take into account is that an appearance is both a reference to the possibility of removing the limitation of objective form (i.e., to contact the 'essence' of something presented) and simultaneously the consideration of the mediating properties of that intuitive form [A38-39/B55-56]. "Time has objective validity only with regard to appearances, because these are already things considered as *objects of our senses* [emphasis original]. But time is no longer objective if we abstract from the sensibility of our intuition, and hence from the way of presenting peculiar to us, and speak of *things as such* [emphasis original]" [A35/B51]. In other words, following my hypothesis, time is valid in the space of appearance, between the subject and the object: time is an actual condition of 'the material world', because our perception is blended with what is given as the *exterior* world-as-appearance. But time does not apply to being 'in itself' – existing as such is outside of time because being-as-such cannot intrinsically change. Arising and passing away are modifications of what are already objects [analogies on substance]. "Suppose, on the other hand, that I could intuit myself without being subject to this condition of sensibility… in that case the very same determinations that we now present as changes would provide a cognition in which the presentation of time, and hence also that of change, would not occur at all" [B54]. If I could intuit myself outside the condition of time and change, I would have collapsed all the alterations of my being into a single determination. I would understand the narrative of my whole life all at once as a kind of unitary word, in which the beginning could be seen through the superimposition of the end and thus *teleologically*, in terms of the *cause* or reason which unites all these changes as marks of a single concept, 'my identity' or 'personhood'. I think it is clear, on this view, why Kant attributes such "intellectual" intuition to

[102] de Boer gives an important argument on the necessary ideality of time-synthesis: e.g. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 57, 59, 63-64.

God, (and, incidentally, how closely it resembles Leibniz's old position), and why it seems obvious to him that finite beings do not have it [B71-72].

While hopefully we have received a flash of insight which has reconfigured our awareness of direct perception, the relationship between the ontological and metaphysical layers of Kant's system, we are still lacking much. By reviewing the history of Kant's logical and metaphysical investigations, we have been able to reconceive the opening of *KdrV* in terms of the logical pseudo-object that is the 'sense' of a judgment, and Kant's development of that idea into the phenomenological object which is the formal product of sensibility and hence irreducibly spatiotemporal. We have the *intuition* of this reconfiguration, but we do not yet fully understand it conceptually, and we are lacking a broader explanation of the structure of human thinking. To go further, we turn now to the reflexive light that understanding shines on the immanence of pure perception, in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Structuring the Object: The Transcendental Logic

We have now crossed through the threshold of *KdrV* and the antechamber of the Transcendental Aesthetic [A49/B73], and the Transcendental Logic is the next part of Kant's ruins that awaits us. In beginning our journey with "experience", we have determined that the direct "experience" we are within has been constituted by a "synthetic *a priori* judgment". Our analysis of Kant's *Logic* forced us to conclude that the intentional object of the judgment had to be placed in-the-world itself in perception, and in a flash we ourselves glimpsed Kant's metaphysical 'ghost'. When we look out at our surroundings, we *see* formal objectivity there in the objects themselves, their empirical reality somehow shimmering through their formal objective structure; we can *see* the very same formal objectivity in our objective memories and imaginings, and we can now *see* pure objectivity, empty of empirical content, as a kind of 'retinal afterimage' in phenomenological reflection.[1] A judgment is composed of an 'object' and a 'concept'. If the object in direct experience is the objective field, out in-the-world, the corresponding experiential concept will be our reflective awareness that we are experiencing, the subjective correlate of the objective. That is what we now turn to explore, stepping into the vast chamber of the Transcendental Logic.

There is still much we don't know. The vision of the form of objectivity is only aporetic: it is a flash of mute disclosure which we still need to reflectively articulate. "The senses…do not judge at all", as Kant says [B350]. Sensibility can only 'give' a manifold as a field; it cannot 'speak for itself' or 'speak of itself'.[2] We need a second-order return to the material of the Aesthetic, at the level of language, to describe what we have undergone. That is precisely why Kant transitions between the Transcendental Aesthetic and Transcendental Logic with the famous claim that "all judgments require both intuitions and concepts", that "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" [B75-76]. We can see by following Kant's choice of words that pure thinking according only to the laws of formal logic will abstract from any concrete reference or givenness for our thought: it would be an "empty" game with non-signifying signs [A292/B348]. Likewise, pure intuition without a reflexive act of awareness which puts some 'distance', as it were, between us and our object will be totally immanent, too entangled with the object to grasp it: i.e., "blind". "Empty thinking" would be like the void of a sensory deprivation tank; "blind perception" would be an animal immanence in the world.[3]

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1 Reinhold was, in a way, right: Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 250-254.

2 Cf. Kant, *MFNS*, 120 [Ak. 4:555].

3 Cf. Benjamin Décarie-Daigneault, "The anonymous temporality of animal life: Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze on the passive syntheses of the organic", *Continental Philosophy Review* (2025), online.

In turning to the Transcendental Logic, we need another pause to reorient ourselves. By comparison with the Aesthetic, the Logic is vast: more than 650 pages [A50/B74-A704/B732]. To cover all that ground in detail would be a massive work exceeding our present aims. Rather, I will discuss the textual structure and theoretical function of the Transcendental Logic, and then we will only develop a few points that further the present investigation: first, we will establish that there is a 'passive' objective synthesis of sensibility; second, we will establish that the Transcendental Logic is an objective rather than a formal logic; third, we will discuss the methodology of the Deduction of the Categories; and finally we will discuss the structure of apperception as fundamental unity and the question, in summary, of the logical/conceptual structuring of an empirical object.

The crucial point for the present chapter is the doubleness of understanding in reflexivity. The Transcendental Logic turns from the input of "intuitions" to that of "concepts", and thus from "sensibility" to "understanding", in the two-fold structuring of an object-as-such, as we have just noted. However, to understand the Logic it is important to see that the operation of the understanding is reflexive,[4] and therefore it has two layers: a layer at which a concept is an "element" in a judgment, or 'passive' to thinking, and a layer at which a concept is the *outcome* of the process of judging, or 'active' within thinking. The process of thinking is the unfolding not only of direct awareness but also of *self*-awareness or *reflexive* awareness, meaning that the Transcendental Logic likewise is a description not only of the direct contribution of conceptual or abstract structuring as the "doctrine" of concept-"elements" of given objectivity, but also a description of conceptual activity's "principles" as it structures the relationship *between* concepts-as-elements and intuitions-as-elements. Thus the Transcendental Logic is significantly broader and more intricate than the brief Transcendental Aesthetic. It is here (in the Transcendental Logic) that we find the account of what makes "real" things, "imaginary" things, and "ideal" things phenomenologically distinct, since to the immanence of sensible intuition they are not clearly distinguishable.[5] We are also going to see the disclosure not only of the conceptual dimension of awareness of objectivity but also of the co-presencing of subjectivity as a trace in objective consciousness, and the pseudo-objective structure of *subjectivity* in reflexive "reflection".[6] Since Kant's 'transcendental' method is a meta-reflection on the ordinary perspective, Kant is well aware of these metatheoretical complications, pointing out that thinking about pure concepts and their role in objectification both introduces a previously unseen problem of language (how can we turn to reflexively objectify the very process of objectification itself? [A245]) and also retrospectively problematizes space and time all over again [A88/B120]. It is also at this level that Kant must

4 Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 92.
5 Cf. Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 107-109.
6 Cf. Lyotard, *Sublime*, 14-15.

provide the account of the distinctness of the contributions of objectivity and subjectivity to immanent empirical experience, which was our original goal.

The introduction of the "concept" in the Logic allows us to *know*, and also to know *that* we know. Here, in terms of our model, we will not only go back to illuminate the mute plunge into the ontological/metaphysical layer of direct perception from the Aesthetic via description, but we will also double back again to describe that describing. We cannot avoid the immediate introduction, in other words, of the 'semiotic' layer of Kant's thought, and in introducing the semiotic we are also unavoidably entering the territory of the 'ghost' that haunts the higher levels of Kant's ruins: "transcendental illusion". We had a brief and confusing encounter with transcendental illusion at the end of the previous chapter; between now and chapter 4 we will become much more familiar with the mechanism of its deception.

Keeping all these ideas in mind, then, I will propose to the reader that the Transcendental Logic should be understood as follows. First, Kant defines what a "transcendental logic" is, and why it is *not* the same as what is already called "formal" logic [A50-64/B74-88]. Like "formal" or "general" logic, however, transcendental logic will be divided into a discussion of the *correct* use of logic ("analytic") and the *incorrect* use of logic ("dialectic"). In keeping with the issue of reflexivity discussed above, the Analytic is further subdivided into the Analytic of Concepts, or the materials of objective logic [A65-130/B90-169], and the Analytic of Principles, or the activities or functions of objective logic *upon* those logical materials (and also, of course, sensible intuitions) [A131-338/B170-396]. The activities of objective logic are then further subdivided into the correct use of objective logic for *understanding*, which concerns only the finite determinate, and for *reason*, which reflects upon understanding by summarizing the totality of finite operations through a limiting reference to the infinite, or unconditioned. Understanding's use of objective logic, it will turn out, is transcendentally correct in the empirical context, finite mapping to finite [B166]; reason, by contrast, generates infinite ideas which are necessary to consciousness but strictly speaking only negative (they serve merely as an outer boundary to the sequentially infinite series of the finite, or are "regulative"), but the spatiotemporal structure of pure objectivity, intrinsic to human judgment as such, generates the *illusion* ("transcendental illusion") that there is a positive determinate object corresponding to the infinite regulative idea, a point Kant explains clearly in the transitional "Appendix On the Amphiboly [i.e. conflation] of Concepts...through the Confusion of the Empirical with the Transcendental Use of the Understanding" [A260-292/B316-349]. Next, the Transcendental Dialectic [A293-704/B349-732] shows the inner hollowness of each of what Kant considers the three "regulative ideas": God, the self as simple substance or "immortal soul", and the cosmological totality of the World.

By “hollowness” I mean that we cannot avoid generating the *conceptually* positive idea, which comes bundled with a phenomenological object-reference; however, the object-reference is empty or negative, leading to a kind of perpetual flickering between presence and absence analogous to an optical illusion [B354]. Just as with an optical illusion, we can resolve to our satisfaction through reason the truth about the regulative ideas, as far as we can know it, which is that they exist positively only to the degree that they structure all the rest of our knowledge; however, even when we know the truth of the illusion it will continue to play upon our senses and our objective, immanent understanding [B354-55].[7] The illusion, importantly, merely concerns the fact that we do not have a *theoretical* or empirically sensible ground that fulfills the objects of special metaphysics, not that they are *never* fulfilled at all; for Kant they *are* ultimately fulfilled through the special ground of the moral will, or ‘practical reasoning’ [A828/B856], a point with far-reaching significance that we will begin to turn to explore from Chapter 5 onwards.

General Logic vs. Transcendental Logic

The basic root of the Transcendental Logic is Kant’s distinction between a passive principle in experience and an active principle in experience, which in part corresponds to the distinction between sensibility and understanding. We sense what is “given” to us [B33/A19], whereas we “spontaneously” [B130] contribute concepts to experience or build concepts as abstractions of experiential events. The intuitive division between passive sensing and active conceptualization is quite general to the whole history of Western philosophizing about consciousness: for example, the real possibility of being in error about the nature of an experience indicates that somewhere in the process of consciousness there must be not only a reception but also a response. Kant is in agreement with this tradition.[8] However, Maimon challenged Kant on the grounds that the “dualism” between sense and concept is unsupportable, and the “speculative idealism” of Maimon and later German Idealists joins the two together in pure consciousness.[9] We will review in the present chapter why Kant has good reason to divide understanding and sensibility.

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7 “This is an illusion that we cannot at all avoid any more than we can avoid the illusion that the sea seems to us higher in the center than at the shore because we see the center through higher light-rays than the shore; or-better yet-any more than even the astronomer can prevent the moon from seeming larger to him as it rises, although he is not deceived by this illusion” [A297/B354].

8 “For truth and illusion are not in the object insofar as it is intuited, but are in the judgment made about the object insofar as it is thought. Hence although it is correct to say that the senses do not err, this is so not because they always judge correctly but because they do not judge at all” [A293/B350].

9 The influence of Maimon on subsequent German thought is very important; see Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 286. Cf. Kroner, *Von Kant Bis Hegel, 1st. Bd.*, 356-361.

On the other side, there is an interpretive assumption about *KdrV* which has been quite common in the history of Kantian reading, conflating what Kant calls "general logic" with "transcendental logic".[10] We must avoid this pitfall at all costs. Kant also clearly sees the danger here, because he devotes the opening pages of the Transcendental Logic to a careful distinction between the two [A56/B81]. We *might* assume that sensible objects independently structure themselves separately from the response of understanding ('extra-mentally'), and possibly furthermore that a 'mind' is a subjective substance existing independently among those self-formed objects. On the assumption that a 'mind' is a substance existing in-itself over against a 'world' existing in-itself, it is easy to read *KdrV* as being divided into a discussion of how the 'world' uses sensible features to aesthetically impress itself upon conscious observers (the Aesthetic), who respond by applying 'logic' to abstractly structure it as 'true' propositional responses (the Logic). In doing so, 'presentations', 'concepts', and 'intuitions' peel away from 'objects' and have to be housed in some sort of distinct phenomenological container, consciously or unconsciously. The emphasis I placed in the previous chapter on insisting that first-order objective perception is *in the world* in the Aesthetic is to avoid at all costs the hypostatization of 'consciousness', which hopelessly confuses Kant's point and drives the metaphysical layer of the Real far out of contact with the ontological layer of objectivity. First-order 'consciousness' is the world around my body, not my reflective responses to that world.[11]

On the (erroneous) model, Kant's task in the Logic would to show what fundamental set of concepts are the basis of all other conceptual structures (a kind of 'logical grammar'/'universal characteristic') and secondly to prove that 'concepts' or 'mental objects', built from that foundation, can be shown to correspond to 'sensible objects' truthfully.[12] Kant's own language tends to encourage such a misunderstanding because, first, he asserts that his table of Categories, the foundation of a 'transcendental logic', is 'consistent and complete' [A65/B90] and second, he asserts that the purpose of the Deduction is to prove that 'subjective categories' have 'objective validity' [A90/B122]. If we construe 'object' to refer to the structure of an empirical thing-in-itself and then consider concepts as being, in some vague sense, 'formed mental referential objects', which we then apply in 'mental acts' of comparison to those empirical objects, it is obvious to ask how Kant's twelve categorial concepts are not arbitrarily chosen and how Kant can claim that they

[10] For example, see J. Michael Young, "Functions of thought and the synthesis of intuitions", in Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1992): 102; or Jean Cavaillès, *On Logic and the Theory of Science*, trans. Robin Mackay and Knox Peden (Sequence Press, 2021): 10-12. Cf. James Ellington, "The Unity of Kant's Thought in His Philosophy of Corporeal Nature," 152-153, in Kant, *MFNS*.

[11] Cf. Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 117; cf. also Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 5-6, 79.

[12] The 'universal characteristic' was Leibniz' project: for a simple discussion with sources, see Letter L of the Leibniz-Bouvet correspondence (28 July 1704): https://leibniz-bouvet.swarthmore.edu/letters/letter-l-28-july-1704-leibniz-to-bouvet/. Cf. Westphal, *KCE*, xx-xxx.

are provably a complete and exhaustive set, which are therefore both long-standing controversies in Kantian interpretation.[13]

The 'logic' in question on the above view is *formal* logic: rules for the arrangement and coordination of propositions considered in abstraction from their contents. Kant, however, is quite clear in *KdrV* that he does *not* mean 'transcendental logic' in the above way. He explicitly identifies the above 'mathematical' version of 'logic' as "general logic" [A52-A62].[14] General logic "abstracts from all contents of cognition" in order to concern itself solely with the formal rules by which the understanding operates, and general logic is *not* the same as transcendental logic, which deals with the conceptual dimension of *objects* [A53-57]. Kant, on the other side, likewise makes a distinction between pure logic and *applied* logic [B78-79]: pure logic deals with the empty, formal rules of the operation of understanding, whereas applied logic deals with what Kant knew as the "aesthetic" element of logic: "attention; ...the origin of error; ...doubt, ...conviction, etc.", or, in other words, the details of logic when used "in concreto" [B79]. The relations between concepts and empirical objects in determining the empirical 'truth-value' of propositions, and other popular issues like questions of 'belief', 'certainty', etc., are therefore also *not* the concern of transcendental logic.[15]

Rather, the discovery of pure intuitions has alerted us to the possibility that some features of objects (both empirical and *non*-empirical) may be *a priori*. Thus, the path is opened for the possibility of a kind of logic that investigates the spontaneous or responsive *a priori* elements of cognition dealing with all objects *qua* objects: that will be "transcendental logic" [B80-81]. Transcendental logic (as content) will not consist in the "analysis" of concepts in the Kantian/Leibnizian sense nor the modern sense; rather, Kant says, it will consist in the "dissection of the power of understanding itself" [A65].[16] Thus, transcendental logic does not deal with the purely formal relations between concepts or symbols, which Kant considered to be a closed system

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13 Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 100.

14 Longuenesse also makes this point: *Human Standpoint*, 91.

15 Both of these themes are based on an attempt to drive *through* the *ontological, objective* 'subject'-ness of the concept to the *metaphysical* 'in-itself' act-existence. Kant's (semiotic/hermeneutic) realism consists precisely in the fact that he refuses to countenance that move: acts of existing, which alone escape predication, structure *language* as a *response* rather than *language* creating existences by departure from the surface of language.

16 Di Giovanni provides a useful summary of J.S. Beck: "The biggest mistake that one can make in interpreting the Critique is to think that its categories are only 'concepts'. This is what its commentators have done, according to Beck; and as a result they have forced upon it the impossible task of demonstrating that the categories actually apply to a presupposed content of experience. Kant himself is partly to be blamed for this unfortunate development. He separated too sharply the Transcendental Aesthetic from the Transcendental Analytic, and treated sensibility as if its content were given in consciousness prior to any activity of synthesizing on our part [I disagree with di Giovanni here, as this chapter will show]. Thus he gave the impression that experience is a process by which we formally superimpose a network of concepts upon a ready-made content. And once this assumption is made, we are faced by such questions as where the material and the content come from, and why we are justified in referring the concepts to the material, none of which we can answer. In raising these questions 'we do not really understand ourselves,' as Beck puts it." di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 37.

completed by Aristotle,[17] nor with the relations of a language-system of signs and grammar to empirical 'reality', nor with the rules governing the psychological activities of a subject who thinks: transcendental logic has to do with the set of *a priori* concepts which the understanding employs in the active part of constituting any *object*-as-such.[18] Transcendental logic is *objective* logic: it is the logic which is presenced in, and grows out of, the formal dimensions of objects in-the-world. It is the conceptual, rather than intuitive, half of transcendental ontology or general metaphysics.

In narrowing the possible domain of transcendental logic in such a way, note that we can already presume there will be a close relation between the concepts which form the elements of transcendental logic and the intuitively given structure of an object as such. In fact, we can almost expect already, and Kant's language encourages us to do so, that the concepts in question will do no more than "determine" [B128], or fix and abstract, the *very same* relations which are already perceptually available in indeterminate appearances as objective: their existing or lack thereof, their relations to each other, their ontological priority (substance or property), their rate of change, etc. That is precisely why Kant always insists on the close coordination of the understanding and sensibility: they are no more than two modes of the *same* formal structure, objectivity. We can plausibly guess that what we will be working on here will be the transition from first-order conscious attention, in which a rule-governed object is in the "background" of perception, to second-order conscious attention, in which we are explicitly aware and attending to the rule-governedness of a particular object. There will be a limited number of such concepts, and it is already possible to wonder whether there is some clear underlying link between the number and arrangement of concepts and the ontological disposition of the world as indeterminate appearances.[19] In other words, what we are expecting is the ideal (i.e. conceptual) structure of 'an object as such'.

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[17] There is a fairly common idea that Kant rejected Aristotelian logic entirely (see J. Michael Young, "Translator's Introduction", Kant, *Logics*, xv), but I disagree, despite Kant's sometimes disparaging remarks about Aristotle. In *False Subtlety of the Four Syllogistic Figures* [2:45-61], Kant does *not* reject Aristotle's three syllogistic forms from the *Prior Analytics* but only the "*fourth*" form which appears in Crusius. In fact, curiously, Kant argues that the second and third figures are 'imperfect' and offers a proof that the second and third forms can be converted into the first, apparently unaware that Aristotle had already attempted the same in the later sections of the *Prior Analytics:* Aristotle, *Prior Analytics I*, 29a30-29a40.

[18] This is quite close to Husserl's discussion of a "formal ontology" in mathematics; cf. Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijhoff, 1969): 76-80, 268-271.

[19] Kant explicitly claims that his own Table of Categories are a modification of the Categories of Aristotle, the latter of which are specifically concerning the relationship of empirically objective substance, which 'is not known directly', to accidents, 'which do not exist of themselves': Aristotle, *Categories* §5: 2a13-2a18, 2a35-2b7, in Jonathan Barnes, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation, vol. 1* (Princeton University Press, 1991). Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint*, 81-83. Cf. also Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*, 147-150.

What is a concept, and what is a category?

If we keep firmly in mind that transcendental logic is an objective logic, we already have a vague idea that we are looking for the set of concepts which are present in the experience of a substantive or "given" phenomenological object. However, before diving into Kant's search for concepts, we ought to ask ourselves what exactly a 'concept' is. What are we looking for? The concept of a concept requires concepts to be formed, and so perhaps it is impossible here to plunge beneath the surface of language, along which we are skimming, in order to grasp 'concept' all the way round.

'Concept', we might say, indicates an item or entity which is known as not identical ontologically to an experienced being, and which is essentially characterized by being referential. For example, a 'concept' might be a universal - the signifier of a *class* of real beings - such as 'cat', or a name such as 'Paris', or an abstract, non-experienceable entity such as 'trillion' or 'empiricism'.[20] These reflections bring in a set of associations: that concepts are 'mental', that they are 'ideal' or 'ideas', that they are 'subjective' and/or 'abstract'. The distinction here between active formation of signs and the given ground to which they refer seems indispensible. As Sellars summarizes, the 'concept' is the instrument of mediation across that distinction between 'mind' and 'world', whatever the latter terms might signify.[21] However, 'concept' is therefore under significant tension at the heart of an opaqueness about the relation between 'mind' and 'world'. Properly clarifying the essence of a 'concept', particularly on the basis of the model that "the mind" is abstracted from the spatial manifold of the "world", and therefore that concepts "dwell" inside the former, runs into significant difficulties, as can be seen in Brentano's struggle to define the ontological status of an intentional object.[22]

However, we have already seen, in Chapter 2, that Kant has a clear and incisive definition of 'concept' which by its formulation requires suspending the 'mental theater/mental contents' model of consciousness entirely. For Kant the deepest and most primary ground of 'concept' is the phenomenological distinction between what is given and what is chosen or imposed in the act of judging, as previously discussed. The "concept", as the instrument of the subjective or spontaneous

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20 On the concept of 'concept', see Kant, *Logics*, 348-349, and 350-351 [Ak. 24:904-909]. What connects the traditional definition of a concept as a 'universal' or 'general' perception and my phenomenological definition of 'concept' as 'the subjective reference frame of consciousness'? Judgment as the movement of universalization as such: see chapters 6-7.

21 Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics*, 31.

22 Dummett, *Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, 30-35.

understanding, is nothing other than *the subjective field* of objective consciousness. The "category", as a subset of concept, is nothing other than the *subjective dimension* of *empirically objective consciousness*, in the synthetic *a priori* judgment which "experientially" establishes consciousness from the beginning. Just as the observer 'orients' himself in an outer, absolute reference frame of 'north, south, east, west' by extending an inner, relative reference frame of 'left, right, forward, back', so the concept is the subjective orientation within the absolute of the objective given.[23] To justify these claims, we press on, into the Deduction.

The Deduction of the Categories

We now find ourselves in the deep mechanism of the Deduction of the Categories, the heart of the Logic and one of the most notoriously difficult passages in Western philosophy. Kant himself, even in writing the A edition, is well aware of the danger of losing the reader here [A88/B121]. The present Chapter 3 is not long, and I am going to treat the Deduction of the Categories as if it does not really bear the structural weight of justifying the entirety of *KdrV* or of transcendental idealism as a theory. The reader who is familiar with the immense edifice of Kantian scholarship on the Deduction will find such casualness shocking.[24]

However, doing so lines us up with another textual oddity in *KdrV*. As has been noted in the literature, Kant's use of the word 'deduction' is not logical but legal – it means giving a retrospective demonstration of the legal right of some event that is already a fact, e.g. proving a legal claim to a piece of land [A84-85/B116-117].[25] In defining the task of the Deduction, then, Kant is actually, if we read carefully, *taking for granted* the specific existence of the twelve categories, and the reader's consent to the same, and instead only attempting to prove our right to apply them to *empirical* objects: [A89-92/B122-125].[26] Such an approach is disconcerting. Just as we were confused about the self-evident necessity of the problem of the synthetic *a priori* judgment because we still didn't know what it was, we are now confused about the obviousness of the Categories because we still don't know what they are.

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23 Cf. *Negative Magnitudes*: Kant, *1755-1770*, .

24 There is no easy way to summarize the massive effort devoted to these passages: I have found Ellington's discussion in his essay in Kant, *MFNS*, esp. 150-169, which draws heavily on Klaus Reich's *Die Vollstandigkeit der kantischen Urteilstafel* (Richard Schoetz, 1932), particularly helpful.

25 Cf. O'Shea, *Kant's Critique*, 118-119.

26 "Thus we find here a difficulty that we did not encounter in the realm of sensibility: viz., how subjective conditions of thought could have objective validity, i.e., how they could yield conditions for the possibility of all cognition of objects" [A89/B122].

Keeping that peculiarity of the text in mind, I will now write down the three correlated tables for the Transcendental Logic: the Table of Logical Functions of Judgments, the Table of Categories, and the Table of Schemas, so that we have them handy. I present these below:

Judgment Functions		Categories	Schemas
			Axioms of Intuition[27]
Universal		Unity	Intuitions extensive magnitudes
Particular	Quantity	Plurality	
Singular		Allness	
			Anticipations of Perception[28]
Affirmative		Reality	Real is intensive magnitude
Negative	Quality	Negation	
Infinite		Limitation	
			Analogies of Experience[29]
Categorical		Inherence – Subsistence	Permanent substance
Hypothetical	Relation	Causality – Dependence	Successive causality
Disjunctive		Community (Agent-Patient)	Simultaneity of interaction
			Postulates of Empirical Thought[30]
Problematic		Possibility – Impossibility	Formal conformity *possible*
Assertoric	Modality	Existence – Nonexistence	Material coherence *actual*
Apodeictic		Necessity – Contingency	Universally determined coherence w/actual is *necessary*

To get started, let us work through a concrete example. When we focus on and perceive something as a thing, we have to be able to pick it out as a 'this' against the background of other things in the world. The bare distinction of a 'this' requires a certain set of formalizing decisions or 'position-fixing' observations: for example, the decision in perception that the end of 'this's bodily surface is *here* and the surface of 'that' begins immediately adjacent. As Merleau-Ponty also pointed

27 "All intuitions are extensive magnitudes" [B202].
28 "In all appearances the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, i.e. a degree" [B207].
29 "Experience is possible only through the presentation of a necessary connection of presentations" [B218].
30 "1. What agrees (in terms of intuition and concepts) with the formal conditions of experience is *possible*.
2. What coheres with the material conditions of experience (with sensation) is *actual*.
3. That whose coherence with the actual is determined according to universal conditions of experience is *necessary*" [B266].

out, the awareness of a 'this' is co-constitutive with the awareness of 'everything else' or 'the background': perception is of a dyadic relation between objects standing forth and their background.[31] That means that we do actually immediately perceive substances or 'this's, their modalities, and their relations to one another, both spatial and causal, and that these determinations cannot be separated from the dawn of awareness as such without destroying it, which is precisely what Kant is claiming for the necessity of the categories. Furthermore, since Kant holds the classical view that a judgment is composed of a subject and a predicate, corresponding to a substance and a quality, the categorial constitution of objectivity, by assigning the ontological and semantic roles of substance/subject and quality/predicate, does in fact found the possibility of propositional logic and conceptual thinking generally.[32]

Since Kant holds that thinking is a distinct activity from perceiving, objects given in the world around us are obviously not already *thought* (reflexively) in perception, which would make subjective ('I'm looking at X') and objective consciousness ('X') indistinguishable. In trying to understand what the difference would be between the categorial structure of perception and the categorial structure of thinking, I have found illuminating Kant's last preparatory remark at B129: "[the categories] are concepts of an object as such whereby the object's intuition is regarded as *determined* in terms of one of the *logical functions* in judging" (emphasis original). If we take that term *determination* as having a certain technical weight, and combine it with Kant's frequent use of the idea of a "phenomenological" 'frame of reference' for the perception of motion, a certain picture emerges.[33] As an observer, I am always surrounded by objects which are in a certain relation to each other but also to myself. Although the objects were already there and possessed, as 'given', a certain 'potential directionality', it is only in conscious focus on them, in the aware stage of cognition, that I *orient* myself and decide that 'the book' is *before* me, *on* 'the table', in 'the room', which is laid out along the 'east side' *of* 'the building', etc. These '*determinations*' abstract from and idealize the living relationships of these beings, turning them into ideas, but do so in particular by taking away the possibility of change in space and time, 'fixing' the relationship as the unchanging content of the concept.[34] In other words, I think the overall drift of Kant's argument in *KdrV* tends to support

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31 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 4.

32 Cf. Ellington, "Unity", in *MFNS*, 151-152.

33 cf. *MAN* [Ak. 4:559-560] and *Negative Magnitudes* [Ak. 2:173-177]. In the present investigation I have not really made use of Kant's realization of the importance of incongruent shapes in space (e.g., the left and the right hand) against Leibniz' 'principle of identity of indiscernibles', although that should also be incorporated into a Kantian phenomenology of embodied spatial navigation.

34 Di Giovanni summarizes Maimon's succinct grasp of this Kantian point: "...consciousness consists in the direct presentation in sensation of an object which is then partially presented in the imagination once more; and in being thus re-presented, it is also determined (for the subject, presumably) as the particular object that it is. The original presentation of the object is intuitive. There cannot be in it any distinction between the object and its presentation, for if there were, it would only be a representation; since it would then require an external term of reference, we would be forced into an infinite regression from representation to representation. As an original presentation,

the interpretation that ‘determination’ is a contentful technical term for categorial cognitive activity, which in particular carries the impression of ‘freezing’ the continuous flow of real changing events into an atemporal, ideal form, the “timeline” of personal memory.[35] Since Kant holds further that we are confronted in the empirical perspective with not only ‘real’ objects but also ‘ideal’ objects, we also require a basic determinative ability between ‘reality’ and ‘ideality’ in terms of possibility, impossibility, existence, non-existence, etc. I do not only meet real things in my empirical world, but also ghosts, hallucinations, myself, and God. Deciding which of these things were, in fact, ‘real’, is a basic activity of my experience.[36] Since that distinction is also part of the fact of experience, we can deduce that our objects will require these potential determinations and we will require the ability to cognitively determine them in cognition. With that, we have more or less shown that all of the categories that Kant chooses as fundamental are, in fact, basic to our experience of the presence of an object.

The pure form of objectivity is pre-structured as given through the pure form of the faculty of sensibility: i.e., as a delimitation within absolute spatiotemporality as a field. Objects already exist for us in a certain invariant way: the way that makes them *objects*. From that starting point, the Categories are nothing more than deciding on a *name,* or making a concept, for each of the field lines or boundary modalities which are already invariably present in objectivity in intuitive givenness. These concepts are not the beginning but the end point of reflective thought about the immanent experience of encountering an object, drawing out of the finished object the layer or dimension which is abstract and “spontaneous”. As Marco Sgarbi points out, the (conceptual) Table of the Categories [B106/A80] is prefaced by a neglected Table of the Logical Functions of Judgments [B95/A70], and the intervening argument [B96-105/A71-A79] is to the effect that the understanding, in the synthetic constitution of experience, completes a set of *acts* regarding the presence of objects which conceptually determine one of a precise and limited number of relations between the observer and the object.[37] As Sgarbi argues, the Categories are simply the conceptual residue left over from straining to signify the human *acts of judgment*, which are dynamic and personal.[38] The effort to turn the categories into determinate, “analytic” concepts strips them of so much of their value and the way we actually experience them that they are almost with no meaning whatever without reference to an object [A139/B178]. Likewise, as is only made clear at the end of

intuition can only present itself.” di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel,* 33.

35 See [A215/B262]: “Rather, the rule of understanding through which alone the existence of appearances can acquire synthetic unity in terms of time relations is what determines for each appearance its position in time, hence doing so a priori and validly for all and every time.” Cf. [B253-54].

36 Compare to Kant, “Essay on the Maladies of the Head”, trans. Holly Wilson, *Anthropology,* 63-77 [Ak. 2:259-271].

37 Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle,* 141.

38 Sgarbi, *Kant and Aristotle*, 142-143.

the Logic, for Kant it is “imagination” which actually synthesizes an object by having combined the inputs of sensibility and understanding, meaning, respectively, ‘first-order attention’ or formal spatiotemporal perception and ‘second-order attention’ or reflexive abstraction of the elements already present in formal perception. When we encounter an object, the first reflection we are actually given is a “schema”, a combined sensible-conceptual framework through which an object is presented as spatiotemporally *law-governable*, a kind of empty ‘transcendental form’ or ‘transcendental essence’ within which the empirical particulars of essence, and the specific scientific laws applicable, are then determined through sensibility and *a posteriori* judgments.[39] Thus the Categories are isolated from the schemas, not the other way around [A146/B185].

The primary and original act of determination is to determine ‘an object’ and therefore establish the subject-object relation and conscious awareness itself: hence, Kant’s reasoning for identifying the twelve Categories, the fundamental set of object-concepts, is simply identifying the minimum necessary set of conditions to establish ‘an object’, to structure the end-terminus of the intentional relation. Since human intuition is spatiotemporal, the Categories as the form of understanding follow and complement the pure form of sensibility by determining objects in terms of spatiotemporal presence, ontological priority, and relation. “The a priori conditions for a possible experience as such are at the same time conditions for the possibility of objects of experience. Now I maintain that the *categories* set forth above are nothing but *the conditions of thought in a possible experience*, just as *space and time* embody *the conditions of intuition* for that same experience” [A111, emphasis original]. What that categorial unification is *of* is spatiotemporal manifolds (whether pure or empirical), which are given as other to concept-making activity, and for human beings the only way that otherness is communicated is through pure intuition (‘space’ is the form of grasping that an idea is distinct from me and ‘time’ is the form of grasping that I have completed a Leibnizian, stepwise judgment).[40] The root of objective logic is the conceptual determination of objectivity, which is represented by the Table of Categories. The activity of cognitive determination, it is hopefully also clear, does not add anything to objects other than what was already in them as potential or as given, but just *notices* it and makes it precise and clear as a concept. On that last point, note also that the inseparable affinity or identity between the passive potentialities in the synthesized object and the active determinations in the cognition of that same object is what I hold

[39] “Many laws are indeed learned by us through experience. Yet these laws are only particular determinations of still higher laws. And the highest among these laws (those under which all other laws fall) issue a priori from the understanding itself” [A126}.

[40] Cf. de Boer, *Kant’s Reform*, 57-59.

Kant means by the 'objective validity' of the categories: determinations aren't about anything other than objects, and objects have no form other than the categorial form.[41]

However, there is one further twist here: what makes possible the close unity of the passive and the active is the fact that in the given manifold are present both sensibility *and* understanding *as passive*. The pre-operation of understanding to make the manifold determin*able* is a delicate, but necessary, point, because Kant is quite emphatic that sensibility does not judge on its own and thus cannot *gather* a manifold for further cognition, only *present* it in its diversity. For Kant's critics, like Maimon, it was unintelligible how the manifold of sensibility, utterly divided from the independent operations of understanding, could be "deduced" to exactly coincide.[42] This objection is quite correct, but that is not what Kant argues. The mystery of the "unknown root" from which sensibility and understanding both spring [A15/B29] is not necessarily the fact that we think and also sense, but the fact that the *given object* is simultaneously sensible and intelligible *already*, a unification which has been achieved by imagination before our conscious awareness arrives in reflection [B181].

Support for these claims can be found in Kant's discussion of the Transcendental Logic.[43] Kant considers the objectifying activity of consciousness to take place in a two-layered way like this, the first layer being the *un*self-conscious activity of "synthesis of a manifold of intuition", in which the understanding acts as an *element*, which presents an object to the 'consciously aware' activity of the 'synthesis under concepts', in which the understanding acts as a reflective *principle* of organization. As Kant says,

> "...bringing the *pure synthesis* of presentations *to* [*auf*] concepts is what transcendental logic teaches. The first [thing] that we must be given a priori in order to cognize an object is the *manifold* of pure intuition. The second [thing] is the *synthesis* of this manifold by the imagination. *But this synthesis does not yet yield cognition* [my emphasis on this sentence]. The third [thing we need] in order to cognize an object that we encounter is the concepts which give *unity* to this pure synthesis and which consist solely in the presentation of this necessary synthetic unity" [A79/B104].

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41 Two notes – the fact that the categories are neatly organized is not, as such, a reason to be suspicious, if the self-organization of human thinking is in fact an organic dialectic. Second, the fact that Kant organizes everything in terms of the categories is sometimes taken as suspicious – but if the categories determine objects-as-such, then it is perfectly intelligible to begin the analysis of any particular science by taking an object-as-such first and then determining the specific difference of the objects of the science in question.

42 Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 291-292.

43 The same argument has been made by Longuenesse in *Kant on the Human Standpoint*: cf. 67-68.

In this passage Kant is very clear: what is brought to conscious understanding for determining cognition under concepts is *already* an object, though an indeterminate one [B34], objectified by the prior synthesis of the manifold of intuition.[44] I quote again:

> "The *same function* that gives unity to the various presentations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of various presentations *in an intuition*. This unity-speaking generally-is called pure concept of *understanding*. Hence *the same understanding*-and indeed through the same acts whereby it brought about, in concepts, the logical form of a judgment by means of analytic unity-also brings into its presentations a transcendental content, by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold *in intuition as such*" [B105, emphasis added].

As a summary example, suppose that there is an apple before me. On my understanding, the apple is already sensibly organized within the formal intuitions of both absolute and local space and time as, say, 'a patch of red', but is not yet 'appearance'. After the contribution of sensibility, understanding contributes *twice*: first, understanding (as imagination) transcendentally synthesizes the manifold of intuition in the *passive* formalization of experience.[45] "...All experience, besides containing the senses' intuition through which something is given, does also contain a *concept* of an object that is *given in intuition*, or that appears" [A93/B126, emphasis added]. The apple is now there as a constituted object subject to scientific laws, even if I am not paying attention to it. It is present within the objective order of time-consciousness. When I turn to focus upon the apple, understanding again synthesizes the apple actively, in which the apple joins – as image within memory – the *subjective* categorial order of time-consciousness, governed by the psychological "law of association" [A121]. Within the subjective categorial order is contained full awareness as the *potential* to assert 'This is an apple' and also the act of thinking or saying 'This is an apple'. The imagination's production of the 'schema', which formally 'energizes' both the empirical object and the image through time-consciousness, is what transcendentally bridges and unites these two objective structures [A138/B177].

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[44] This is my explanation of a tricky passage at B34, which is one of the only times that Kant refers to an *in*determinate object: the "indeterminate object of an empirical appearance".

[45] The exact details of this point are of huge importance. The identification of the passive role of the understanding is the move which leads to subjective idealism, or the total enclosure of consciousness within itself, in Reinhold, Fichte, and Maimon: see Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 286-287. Here, the same identification does *not* lead to subjective idealism, because the sensible manifold *as intuition*, which is distinct from the conceptual as "exhibition" is distinct from "definition", is still independent in the given object. Nevertheless, it is crucial that understanding operates as both passive and active, because only this can explain how objects can have a "form" identical to the "form" of a concept, allowing the truth-relation to come into being: cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 16-17.

These reflections allow us to make full use of two prominent and otherwise mysterious features of Kant's Deduction of the Categories. First, Kant insists that the "unity of the act of judging" or the "unity of transcendental apperception" is the explanation for the Table of Categories' completeness and arrangement [B91]. Second, the force of Kant's argument in the Deduction of the Categories depends on the fact that there is no alternative to a categorially ordered empirically objective experience except 'transcendental chaos' [B143/B150].[46]

For the first, when Kant says that the deepest level at which to understand the Transcendental Logic is in terms of the "unity of the understanding", the unity of the understanding consists in the fact that the sole or unitary act of consciousness is *to unify* a manifold as objective, as a "this" rather than a collection of unrelated marks [A68/B93]. As Kant says, "synthesis" as the recombinative act of understanding is the signature of spontaneity's distinction from the immanence of the world [B130]. Wherever 'synthesis' appears within our phenomenological experience, that proves that there understanding has passed through. The experience of an object is unified *doubly*, once as a 'given' object in structured perception and once as the 'active' object of spontaneous subjective reflection. It is precisely the (transcendental) fact that "the *same* function" has carried out the unification twice which makes possible our *re*cognition of objects. In the empirical perspective, we don't see that what appears 'given' to further reflective thought, out in-the-world, was *already synthesized* by understanding's passive or 'elemental' modality. It is only in the transcendental perspective that the bridging function and the underlying unity of the "transcendental synthesis of apperception" is disclosed.[47] That is precisely why Kant says that the old correspondence problem of truth ('how can a subjective presentation be compared to a real object?') is now reframed and easily explained as a comparison of *presentations*: the comparison of the *passive* presentation of understanding's synthesis of the manifold of intuition with the *active* presentation of understanding's synthesis of cognition [A59-63/B83-88].[48]

Secondly, Kant's argument depends on showing, quite simply, that in experience we are in fact always already aware of objectivity, and that both the objective and the subjective orders of time-consciousness are always already present, as the judgment establishes both simultaneously. The only possible alternative, as Kant repeatedly insists, lacking the basis of the fundamental sorting out between substances and their qualities, spatiotemporal and causal relations, and real and

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46 "Transcendental chaos" is Westphal's term: see Westphal, *KTPR*, 25.

47 "It can be shown that the unity of self-consciousness could not even be conceived unless that very unity functions as the point of departure for constituting a world of objects. With this, we can understand not only the origin of this world but also why this world is natural and indispensable to us and why our knowledge claims about it are justified." Dieter Heinrich, quoted in Gardner, *Guidebook to Kant*, 21.

48 "Through the Copernican Revolution, the "old" concept of truth in the sense of the "correspondence" (*adaequatio*) of knowledge to the being is so little shaken that it [the Copernican Revolution] actually presupposes it [the old concept of truth], indeed even grounds it for the first time." Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 8.

ideal existences, would be, essentially, that everything would be everything else, all at the same time, and all that would be also me: 'transcendental chaos' is the limiting boundary of the complete loss of perceptual and cognitive difference which the categories, structuring the subject-object relation, prevent in normal experience. The boundaries of all objects would flow into one another, the distinction between my 'inner sense' of self and 'outer sense' of the world would collapse, and no 'where' would be a 'where' other than anywhere else. Since that does not in fact happen, the categories are "objectively valid".[49] It is only in *thought* that it is possible to project the categories as having an 'empty' outside of nothingness; in direct perception the breakdown of the categories is the *positive* outside of the inflowing of pure indeterminacy.

I will here turn to offer a deeper discussion and demonstration of the position I have taken above, ranging through the Deductions and supplementary remarks. The orienting principle for the investigation of understanding is what Kant variously calls the "unity" [A65/B90], "synthetic unity" [A78/B104], "transcendental unity" [A108/B140], or "unifying function" [A146/B185] of understanding. Kant argues throughout the Transcendental Deduction as if the mysterious idea of "unity" is somehow the explanation of the entire section, which allows us to systematically unfold the operations of understanding and show how their divergent forms are all related to an underlying common function. Rather than assembling and analyzing some set of concepts from among those we already have [A64/B90], which Kant rightly notes would be unscientific and arbitrary [A64/B89], we need to attempt the "*dissection of the power of understanding itself*" [A65/B90, emphasis original]. We need "an *idea of the whole* of understanding's a priori cognition" [A64/B89, emphasis original] – in other words, we need to develop a definitional grasp of what understanding as such is. Kant chooses to take the approach of defining understanding by developing its distinctness from sensibility (at least initially). Sensible intuitions are "affections" [A68/B93], but the concepts of understanding "rest on functions" [A68/B93]. That is, the definition of understanding is that it is a *function* of unification, "by which… I mean the unity of the act of arranging various presentations under one common presentation" [A68/B93]. We have, on the one hand, presentations, which for the moment are only sensible intuitions. However, Kant's point is that on the other hand we have a "reflective" and "discursive" function which gives the unity to presentations that do not in themselves have any necessary relation to one another, but are isolated entities. For example, 'blackness' and 'furriness' are, as such, totally disjunctive. The association of these two properties as related to a single object is a higher-order function which has organized

[49] The two formulations of the point that Kant gives are first, that if appearances were not objectively ordered they would not appear to me at all, being "less than a dream" [A112]; and second, that if my corresponding states were not organized according to the transcendental unity of apperception I would be "as many-colored as presentations" [B134].

those presentations by establishing a relation between them that is not itself the property of either [cf. B118]. This is a repetition of Kant's move establishing the form of sensibility in the Aesthetic by pointing out that the spatiotemporal organization of presentations is an operation *upon* presentations, which is therefore distinct from those presentations themselves [A20/B34].[50] Understanding is provisionally defined as "a power of judgment" [A69/B94], which Kant later revises to "the power of rules" [A126]. The signature of the activity of understanding in our experience is therefore the presence of *synthesis* as such, or of "combination" [B130]. Trying to explain more clearly in the B edition, Kant says,

> "The manifold of presentations can be given in an intuition that is merely sensible, i.e., nothing but receptivity… . But a manifold's *combination (coniunctio)* as such can never come to us through the senses; nor, therefore, can it already be part of what is contained in the pure form of sensible intuition. … [A]mong all presentations, *combination* is the only one that cannot be given through objects, but – being an act of the subject's self-activity – can be performed only by the subject himself" [B129-130].

The formal distinctness within experience of synthesis as the only absolutely non-receptive element of experience, and tracing the transcendental unity of the various places in which that identical activity reappears, is the basis upon which the entire Transcendental Deduction is built.

Kant has previously said that intuitions without concepts are "blind", and that the "indeterminate object of an empirical intuition is called an appearance" [B34]. He employs the word "blind" again in an important passage defining synthesis: "Synthesis as such… is the mere effect produced by the imagination, which is a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition whatsover, but of which we are conscious only very rarely" [A78/B103]. I think we must rely on Kant's insistence on "blindness" when reading his explanation of the necessity of the Deduction. There Kant says that we need to prove that the "*subjective conditions of thought* could have *objective validity*", because "appearances can indeed be given in intuition without functions of understanding" [A89-90/B122]. Appearances in that sense, however, are not even indeterminate but merely chaotic [B126]. That allows us to say that the appearances purely given in intuition, abstracted from the contribution of understanding, would be *blind* appearances. They would be pressing in against our separate senses but we would not *perceive* them

[50] "Pure intuition (space and time) is the only thing which sensibility *presents a priori.* Strictly speaking, intuition, even if it is *a priori*, is not a *representation*, nor is sensibility a source of representations. The important thing in representation is the prefix: *re* – presentation implies an active taking up of that which is presented; hence an activity and a unity distinct from the passivity and diversity which characterize sensibility as such." Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 8.

at all, because to be perceived as a *something* they require combination in a manifold, both a spatiotemporal manifold and a formally universal manifold, which is, as combination, distinct from its elements in both domains. As Kant states shortly after, in actual fact "...all experience, besides containing the senses' intuition through which something is given, does also contain a *concept* of an object that is given in intuition, or that appears" [A93/B126]. In other words, Kant immediately establishes that awareness of a pure appearance is not really possible as what we call 'conscious', and establishes later on that a purely conceptual operation, without intuition, is not really possible either; these are limit cases or counterfactual cases.[51] The point of the Transcendental Deduction is to immediately prove that the "subjective conditions of thought" have "objective validity" because it is *not possible* for them *not* to, i.e., they are necessary to empirical experience. Outside our own consciousness, we cannot be conscious, because consciousness is the absolute form constituting *us* as points-of-view at all.

In my understanding, Kant then identifies the distinct emergence of the activity of unity in various sub-stages of perception and re-cognition, divided also between the subjective and the objective, and makes the argument that these various repetitions of the moment of synthesizing unification are *themselves* unified in a hierarchy which issues ultimately in an *absolute unity*, the "transcendental unity of apperception", which simultaneously makes *both* the subject and the objective domains of experience possible as we know them.[52] Kant's argument takes two different forms in the A and B edition, which has been sometimes used as justification for speaking of an "objective" vs. "subjective" deduction.[53] I think, instead, that both the A and B deductions derive *both* the objective and the subjective order from the transcendentally necessary original unity of apperception. Kant returns repeatedly to the idea that "the 'I think' must be capable of accompanying all my presentations" [B132]. However, as he clarifies, that does not refer to the *empirical* self, but to "transcendental apperception", which, as the term "transcendental" signals, is *not* available directly to us, but as an inference from within the available contents of the empirical self [B158-59]. In other words, whenever I am confronted with an object, it is the object that discloses to me the presence of my own consciousness by the fact that the presentation is directed – it is an object "for-me". From the midst of the realization of that fundamentally dyadic and relational nature of the unity of consciousness, Kant argues that both the object and the subject are grounded in that original unity.

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51 The intentional inexistence of these 'null cases' is the purpose of the 'Table of Nothing': [A292/B348].

52 Cf. B150-52 and B155, and Ellington, "Unity", *MFNS*, 141-143.

53 "The A deduction has subsequently come to be called by Kant scholars the "subjective" and the B deduction the "objective" deduction." Pluhar, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 175 [B 129], fn. 184.

On the objective side, all objects of possible experience must be pre-structured by the categorial determination of object-relations because the object must have been made an object-for-me in order to appear to me at all. That is the point of realizing the presence of the possible reference to the "I" in every objective presentation: if the presentation was not already oriented toward me, I would never have known the presentation was there at all. As Kant argues, perception would then be a purely immanent process, below the level of awareness entirely: "they would be nothing but a blind play of presentations… less than a dream" [A112]. Everything in the world-towards-me is already *in* consciousness, and the fact that I can then *become* fully aware of it is the demonstration that it is already objectively constituted. Kant asserts that that claim demonstrates how "all attempts to derive those pure concepts of understanding from experience and to attribute to them a merely empirical origin are, therefore, entirely idle and futile" [A112]. The pure concepts of understanding cannot be *a posteriori* because the frame of experience, the empty structure of the object-I dyad, must exist for any specific object to fill it.[54] Without that frame, I would be blindly immanent, absorbed fully in the seamless fabric of existence. We have not experienced anything at all before the categories structure it, which means that from *within* the inner, phenomenologically absolute point of view of reason, the categories are formally ideal conditions of the possibility of all experience. We can thus understand Kant's otherwise surprising claim that the necessary transcendental unity of apperception is an *analytic* principle, i.e. tautologous [B134-136]: the only and the exclusive contents of consciousness are always already objects-for-me, meaning that any object which is not an object-for-me would be outside consciousness, either direct (indeterminate) or reflexive (determined), entirely. I would not know that I did not know such an object. Likewise, then, the proof that *empirical* objects must also be subject to the categories is simply that if they had not become, at some point, objects-for-me, I would never know them at all.[55]

On the subjective side, Kant's argument is that there is a field of subjective consciousness which has become objectified and reflexively available: time-consciousness is divided into two as awareness of the objective order and awareness of the empirical self. The empirical self is, as such, only available as the reference within the presentation of each discrete object of which I become aware [B133]. It is not *one* self; it is the collection of 'self-references', the 'for-me', which are the affective and responsive elements of each distinct *objective* experience I undergo. The transcendental inference here is that there must have been an *invisible* but *necessary* unity of subjectivity in order to coalesce the as-such disjunctive succession of empirical selves into *my*

[54] That does not mean that the frame of objectivity is an innate idea, existing *before* objects, which Kant denies []. It is the Real which calls both objective and subjective time-consciousness into existence simultaneously.

[55] Although I disagree with Falkenstein's overall evaluation of Kant, his discussion of "blindness" is useful: Lorne Falkenstein, *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic* (University of Toronto Press, 2004): 55-58.

experience.[56] "For otherwise I would have a self as many-colored and varied as I have presentations that I am conscious of" [B134]. The necessary ordering of time-consciousness towards transcendental apperception is the fundamental operation that discloses *both* subjective and objective experience *as* experience-for-me, that deposits me as a point-of-view *within* both a world and a private awareness. That is the reason why the schematization of experience, which is the bedrock structure of conceptualization in direct experience, is not a spatial ordering but a temporal ordering [A145/B185]. Without temporal organization, I would have neither an inner narrative of selfhood nor an awareness of an independent objective order passing around me.[57]

To summarize the complex theoretical constellation of the Transcendental Logic, let us work through another example. Let us imagine that I am petting a dog. The real dog is co-present with me and I can feel it through our physical mutual contact. Simultaneously, however, I am remembering a past occasion on which I petted a different dog. The effective cause of my experience is the immanent contact surface along which my senses are being affected by the dog's empirical co-presence. However, from my inner point of view, there is an absolute 'event horizon' of reason, the perceptual formalization of the immanent, which I am always already spilled into insofar as I am conscious and which I then 'explore' reflectively, in which both I and the dog have been constituted as objective being. The dog has been schematized through the categories, for me, as a being which is persisting in 'outer' time alongside my own 'inner' time of memory and thought. Absolute space and time, as the formal structure of my intuition, have allowed me to 'place' the dog in the environment where we are co-present, an organization that the Transcendental Logic has revealed was actually contributed by the 'passive' or 'elemental' understanding. The real dog is lying both to the 'north' of me (absolute) and 'to my left' (local), in a distance which has been made discrete and therefore measurable by passive understanding's determinability. In direct perception the dog appears to me as a sensuous X, a unified self-disclosing manifold full of inner life; in reflective awareness I am aware that the dog is an X falling under the concept 'dog'. "The concept *dog* signifies a rule whereby my imagination can trace the shape of such a four-footed animal in a general way, i.e., without being limited to any singular and particular shape offered to me by experience" [A141/B180-181]. The synthesis of imagination through the schemas has both yielded

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[56] It is worth pointing out that this structure is Kant's adoption and modification of Descartes' argument in the Meditations. Where Descartes argues that the "I think" establishes the immediacy of the (empirical) self, and the reality of God is required to establish the permanency of the (transcendental) ego, Kant argues that what Descartes thought was the reality of God as the outcome of the ontological argument is the self-feeling of the infinitude of reason. Förster documents Kant's transcendental modification of the ontological argument in Förster, *KFS*, 78-85. See also Ricouer, *Oneself*, 4-11.

[57] I disagree with Heidegger's reconstruction of 'metaphysics' as time-consciousness on the basis of the fact that spatial determination operates in pure thinking also, and therefore it is not possible to have a pure ontology of time which is not already spatialized, dwelling therefore in difference rather than in Being.

an image for me and made the real dog an object which is formally subject to ideal laws *as such*; the *particular* laws of a dog's presentation and behavior, as determined by the contingent factors of a dog's nature, this dog's personality, gravity, the seasons, etc. etc., are 'empirical laws' which Kant sees as unproblematically learned *a posteriori* within the empty transcendental frame of 'a law as such'.[58] The *image* of the past dog and the *intuition* of the present dog are both 'energized', as it were, as formal, as universalized, by the schemas. "A schema...is a monogram of the pure a priori imagination through which… images become possible in the first place", and without which the images would remain "never completely congruent with the concept" [A142/B181]. The blank schema allows me to universalize the shape in memory and the real being before me as both *dogs* despite their sensible differences. Alongside all that, I become aware of *myself* as being affected by the dog's presence and our physical co-contact, all of which is organized as an object for me as my 'empirical self'. The past dog I am imagining is, in terms of the bare phenomenology of *direct* perception, nowhere different from the real dog; the distinction between the two is that the intensive magnitude of the intuition of the remembered dog is faint and pale compared to that of the real dog, and that the remembered dog is a member of a time-sequence which is causally ordered according to the psychological "law of association" [B152], whereas the real dog is a member of a time-sequence which is causally ordered according to an entropic and *a posteriori* sequence of behaviors [B234] (since it is only the causal ordering of a time sequence *as such* which is transcendentally necessary, it is unproblematic to then populate it with empirically acquired understanding of events).[59] On those grounds I have *reflectively* placed the remembered dog into an 'inner space' which is part of the transcendentally illusory process of conceptualizing my empirical self as a distinct object.[60] Nevertheless, the subjective-objective experience of 'being there' is the absolute boundary of my awareness as such. Working backwards from that experience, I can identify within it the common formal structure of the real and imagined dog as the structure of an object-as-such, and my own activity in realizing that the dog and I exist as the "logical functions of judging", the specific names of which are the categories.

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58 "However, all empirical laws are only particular determinations of the pure laws of understanding. Under these pure laws, and according to their standard, are empirical laws possible in the first place, and do appearances take on a law-governed form; just as all appearances as well, regardless of the variety in their empirical form, must still always conform to the conditions of the pure form of sensibility" [A127-28]. Cf. Eric Watkins, "Kant on the Unity and Diversity of Laws", in Michaela Massimi (ed.), *Kant and the Laws of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 2019): 19. Cf. also Michael Friedman, "Causal laws and the foundations of natural science", in *Cambridge Companion*, 173-174.

59 On "frames of reference", see Ricouer on "calendar time", *Oneself*, 53.

60 Compare Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations vol. II*, trans. J.N. Findlay (Routledge, 2001): 340-345.

To see why these arguments do not simply lead to "transcendental realism", I think it is necessary to recall the context of, and especially the introduction to, the Deductions, where Kant has clearly indicated that what he means by "object" and what he means by "possible experience" are *not* limited to the empirically and physically real, but to any locus of intention considered as distinct from myself. At [A96], Kant clearly indicates that we are discussing not only objects as "empirical in appearances", but also objects that are "perhaps...impossible" (a griffon, a chimera), and objects that "perhaps in themselves are possible but cannot be given in any experience" (God, a spirit). On the strength of that evidence, it cannot be reconciled further with my overall interpretation of Kant's work as showing how an *object as such* is structured, which includes both general and special metaphysical objects. Thus the field of conscious experience and of time-consciousness also includes my thoughts and imaginary objects.[61] The idealistic drift of that argument is then checked by Kant's fundamental assumption that thinking is secondary to being, meaning that at *some* ultimate level, the internal reality of empirical beings fulfilling empirical objectivity is the occasion for the arising of conscious objective awareness at all [B14-149]. That is also, on my reading, the proper interpretation of the "Refutation of Idealism": "It does not follow, from the fact that the existence of external objects is required for the possibility of a determinate consciousness of ourselves, that every intuitive presentation of external things implies also these things' existence; for the presentation may very well be (as it is in dreams as well as in madness) the mere effect of the imagination" [B278]. Kant never disputes the basic reality of reality on the fundamental ground that the structure of judging consciousness discloses that its own nature is secondary to, and brought into existence by, the provocation of the real [B xl, fn.]. However, the phenomenological or direct perception of objective events does not as such differentiate the real from the imaginary, because the imagination is involved even in perception in the synthesis of objectivity [B151-52]. It requires *reflection* to distinguish the real.

The distinction between real objects and imaginary objects, in my view, is given in the Anticipations of Perception. There Kant states that "In all appearances, the real that is an object of sensation has intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree" [B207]; essentially, the claim is that the varying pressure of sensation over time, as a kinaesthetic affection detectable within the body, is the

[61] As Smith argues in "Division of Nothing", the purpose of the 'Table of Nothing' in *KdrV*, during the transition to the Dialectic, is to show that there *are* intentionally inexistent 'null objects' rather than just 'meaningless concepts' and thus open the possibility of 'transcendental illusion': 493-95.

ultimate basis of distinguishing our imaginary objects or hallucinations from real objects.[62] Although Kant employs the point in the opposite direction, we can add that in the Anticipations Kant asserts that while the understanding can "anticipate" *a priori* that sensation will have a degree, the event of sensation itself is purely *a posteriori* [A175-6/B217-8]. In other words, the real is whatever we could not have anticipated in our experience. I note also, as mentioned above, that the organization of empirical time-consciousness is in terms of an *a posteriori* causal order, whereas the organization of the empirical self is according to the law of association, meaning that imaginations can be distinguished from reality on the basis that anything can follow anything else in imagination. A further counter-objection to that claim will be dealt with more neatly in the next chapter.

To deal with Maimon's objection from the beginning of the chapter, the basic problem of idealism is how to determine the outer boundary of consciousness, or the subjective mediation of experience. Maimon, Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel all acted on an intuitive grasp of Kant's transcendental idealism, akin to the one I am mapping here, when they saw that the understanding has to structure *both* the 'given' and the 'reflective' of objectivity.[63] The question is then how it remains possible to preserve the independence of the Real from the generative activity of the *das Ich* or Absolute I. To do so, it is actually imperative for Kant to preserve a 'dualism' between understanding and sensibility, to save the independence of sensible intuition from the spontaneity of the understanding.[64] There must be something within consciousness which consciousness *knows* that it did not create. This is a clue as to the real significance of the 'thing-in-itself', that irritant within idealism, hiding just a little deeper within Kant's ruins. These issues will be discussed further in the next few chapters.

Here we conclude, for the most part, our exploration of the Transcendental Logic. Obviously there is much that Kant says of importance in these long passages that I have left unexplored. What I really wished to uncover in the Deduction of the Categories is the vision of the totality of the field of consciousness, both the subjective and the objective, as an *event*, a dawning, outside of which there is absolute nothingness. It is not, however, a *void*: it is a living nothingness, full of color and

[62] "The reason why they are no dreams while the dreamer pursues them awake, is, because he then perceives the dreams as in himself, but other objects as outside of himself; consequently he considers the dreams as effects of his own activity, but the perception of objects as part of his received impressions from the outside. For in this situation everything depends upon the relation which man assumes the objects to have to himself as a man, and, consequently, also to his body. Thus, the same pictures can indeed occupy him very much in his waking state, but they cannot deceive him … . For although he has then, too, in his brain a fictitious impression of himself and his body, which he puts in relation to his fantastic pictures, nevertheless the real sensation of his body, by means of the external senses, establishes a contrast with those chimeras, or distinction from them, which goes to show the ones as self-created, the other as perceived." Kant, *Dreams*, 76.

[63] Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 286-287, 293-295.

[64] Sensibility must organize sensations into a manifold which is still sensuously given, while understanding must organize the manifold into the *possibility* for thought. For example, the sensible unity in perception of a tree is different from the *possibility* of *measuring* the tree or of knowing the type of plant it is, the latter two of which are also, however, given simultaneously rather than reflectively cognized.

‘chaos’, the undetermined frenetic energy of Being. Subjectivity and objectivity are both mediations which depend on one another to be determined as themselves. The trace of their origin is in the reference backwards to an ultimate unity of synthesis, but that ultimate transcendental unity is first, never directly accessible as experience, and also, is not, as being itself neither subjective nor objective, anything determinate at all. In my view, the force of the argument of the Deduction is only to be found in a double realization in direct intuition. First, consciousness as such always consists of the formal structure of an-X-present-towards-me, thus including and conditioning the subjective and the objective towards one another, and that the only explanation of the mutually dependent co-presence of these formal structures is their derivation from a prior unity, the transcendental unity of apperception. The second, crucial, realization that Kant is clearly relying on is that *outside* consciousness there is absolutely no-thing whatsoever that can *appear* to consciousness, and yet the outside of consciousness is nevertheless *positive* (because existence is exempt from predication). The immanent field of pure perception is, as indeterminate, still within the field of consciousness; appearances are appearing to me but I do not know what they are. It is possible for me to have boundary experiences in which my own point of view and even the indeterminate objective collapse into indifferentiation (‘chaos’), but I can only know that as ‘an event that happened to me’ within a field in which time-consciousness, and subject-object division, have been restored. If I *never* returned to objective time-consciousness, I would never know anything at all. Nevertheless, however, the outside of consciousness is not a void of *nothing*, which only appears as an artifact of reflective thought (trying to think through what the interior of the ‘thing-in-itself’ would be speculatively); rather, the outside of consciousness is an overflowing of *Being*, a difference which becomes clear at the direct, ontological level and yet is obviously in need of justification at the reflective, philosophical level. Continuing these themes, we turn in the following section (Chapters 4 and 5) to a broader-level examination of that object-subject dyad as such, with the ultimate aim of seeing how far we can go towards its outside, the ‘ground’ or ‘outside limit’ of indeterminacy.

Section II – The Object/Subject Dyad as Totality of Experience

Chapter 4: The Transcendental Object

The conclusion of Chapter 3, in determining the meaning of Kant's reference to the "transcendental unity of apperception", gave us an image of the subjective and objective conjoined as the whole of the enclosed sphere of consciousness. The totality of consciousness, as seen from within the direct perspective rather than from the detached perspective of thought, is not enclosed against an empty outside but against a colorful 'chaos' pressing in blindly on intuition. But how can we articulate that point further? We will develop our investigation of that sphere as a totality, and of its possible outside, towards a specific problem with which we will be concerned in the remainder of the investigation: the semiotic overlap with objective nothingness and the transcendental possibility of non-objective signification.

We will now ascend from the consideration of a single object given in experience, and the aesthetic and logical traces flowing from it, to the superstructures inferred or constructed from those traces, the interior of the sphere of consciousness: objectivity in general and subjectivity in general. The present chapter (4) will give a general overview of the objective dimension of the inner surface of consciousness. We will discuss the double structure of the objective as ontological/semiotic from the object/concept link of judgment; the 'empty' object as phenomenon and as positive and negative noumenon; and the traces of the object-as-such leading into the infinite or indeterminate roots of objectivity. Then we will have to deal with the growing problem of "transcendental illusion".

Kant's Transcendental Ontology: A Review

For Kant, the 'ground zero' of philosophy is 'experience'. As David Carr points out, there are a number of different senses in which 'experience' can be meant.[1] It is important, for example, that Kant does not clarify, as far as I know, whether pure cognition by itself counts as "experience". However, Kant's examples of, say, walking around a house [A190/B235], being on a ship in a river [A192/B237], and doing mathematics by adding on one's fingers [B15] make clear that what Kant generally means by 'experience' is ordinary, embodied and aware encounters and interactions in-

[1] David Carr, *Experience and History: Historical Perspectives on the Phenomenological World* (Oxford University Press, 2014): 8-9.

the-world with other physical existents. In experiencing, we are without realizing it in the 'empirical' perspective: as the word 'empirical' indicates by its meaning of '*a posteriority*', the empirical perspective involves taking for granted that experience is something we passively *undergo* when objects strike us or move us.[2] Within the empirical perspective, there is already, however, a distinction between undergoing experience and reflecting on experience, in thinking, dreaming, hypothesizing, and so forth. For Kant, all our reflection begins *with* experience, but perhaps not all of our reflection begins *from* experience. While, as we have seen, Kant used that idea to chase the contribution of pure formal subjective elements to experience, here I point out that Kant is also saying that philosophy does not begin with itself; rather, the whole structure of thinking as reflective is always secondary to, and brought into activity by, a preexisting ground which is other to thinking – as we saw, that is not an exclusively Kantian idea, but a general philosophical problem of the post-'subjective turn'. Therefore, we can say that Kant holds that beginning philosophy by thematizing pure consciousness and consciousness' productions in memory as theoretical objects is the wrong place to start; the complex and finished layering of actual experience is the origin point from which philosophical structures are to be lifted out and extrapolated.[3]

Taking experience as our beginning, then, the immediately given is the object. The beginning of philosophy is thematizing an object *as* an object-as-such and thus beginning metaphysics, within its division of ontology: distinguishing substances from accidents, causes from effects, and so forth. For Kant, that rational activity from within the ground of the empirical perspective quickly reaches a theorizing impasse, because general metaphysics (or transcendental ontology) and special metaphysics are not separate but intertwined: reason reasons, apparently successfully, from objects to a set of mutually incompatible conclusions.[4] Those troubles concern the infinitudes invoked as the closure, and thus also the definition/disclosure, of the set of finite ideas of understanding: the objects of 'special metaphysics', God, the self, and the world as a totality [A334-5/B391-2]. These "special" objects are reached via, and implied in, reasoning starting from ordinary, general objects: from Kant's perspective, we can see that Descartes raises the problem of global skepticism when he relates ordinary objects to the object of the self as its 'dreams' or 'illusions', and Berkeley raises the problem of rational idealism when he relates ordinary objects to the object 'God', as His 'thoughts'.[5]

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2 Carr, *Experience and History*, 10-12.

3 Merleau-Ponty, of course, insists on this point, but consider also Bergson's discussion of matter in Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (Zone Books, 1991): 21-32.

4 Cf. Grohmann, "Derrida and the Kantian Idea", 4. The position Grohmann attributes to Husserl, contra Kant, is the one I am giving to Kant here.

5 See *KdrV,* A491/B519/A497/B525.

In puzzling through these difficulties, Kant finally realizes, as I argued previously, that the thought experiment of the 'pure body' is evidence that we have direct access to a non-empirical object which is nevertheless given; not only that, it is the general form of any object whatsoever, the traditional subject-matter of 'ontology', isolated by itself in phenomenological awareness. With the realization that it is possible to isolate the general form of objectivity in awareness, which is *given* but not *real*, Kant is empowered to theoretically secure a previously hidden distinction between the *act-existing* of a being and the *givenness* of its objectivity. In the empirical perspective, these two are blended into one; they are superimposed on one another and their difference is invisible. By distinguishing the givenness of formal objectivity and provisionally assigning it to the production of the subject, Kant opens up the previously unsystematized field of the 'transcendental perspective', which continues to look at objects, but separates itself from the empirical perspective by always keeping in mind that formal objectivity is not absolute but relative alterity. Formal objectivity is only relative alterity to consciousness because it is included within consciousness as the other of consciousness; the transcendental investigation has shown that 'givenness' is the passive reception, by the spontaneity of active understanding, of the 'given' which was already previously synthesized by the elements of formal intuition and understanding into an indeterminate objective appearance. That methodological effort reveals the distinctive traces of conscious activity as those elements within objectivity which cannot be explained by an appeal to the previously-supposed absolute otherness of the object. That is, formal objectivity and subjectivity are disclosed within experience mutually, as a dyadic co-constitutive pair.

Attaining the transcendental perspective modifies the empirical perspective's two-fold distinction between receptivity in experience vs. 'spontaneous activity' in reflection into a three-fold distinction between act-existing as ground, objectivity as empirically given but transcendentally synthesized, and reflective activity as model- or order-making. The twofold reference frames of the subjective and objective take place against the background of positive indeterminacy or the 'chaos' of Being. It is a fundamental claim of my argument that Kant joins together "object" and "concept" in "judgment" and that neither can appear to reflective consciousness without the other. That imposes upon our investigation two basic avenues of further development, as well as an intrinsic methodological limitation: the transcendental investigation must explore and systematically distinguish what I will begin calling the 'ontological' (meaning objective) and the 'semiotic' (meaning reflective/symbolic) layers of experience, reconciling the inconsistencies of the empirical perspective while preserving intact its fundamental facts: that we experience what is genuinely other to our own beings, and can think truly about that experience.[6]

[6] Cf. Husserl, "The Distinction between State-of-Affairs and Judicative Propositions", *Passive Synthesis*, 333-337.

That must be done while adhering to the limitation that we cannot *write* or *think* anything which is not already both an object for-us and also a sign of that same object, a problem which in Kant is called "transcendental illusion", but which will ultimately lead us beyond the boundaries of Kant's own work to the question of whether Kant's entire system has a satisfactory ground.

We are now climbing up the spiraling stairs of the central tower of Kant's ruins. As we get closer to the central chamber of the 'observatory', we also enter deeper into the disorienting fog of reason. There are pulses or tremors which pass through the structure, shaking our grasp on Kant's thought and filling us with unease. In thinking through what Kant is saying, we project a model of ourselves, surrounded by concepts and again by objects. Do we really "understand ourselves" here, in Beck's words?[7] Are we not perhaps enfolding ourselves within subjective idealism after all?

In giving way to that temptation, we are suddenly trapped in a double enclosure: we are closed off from Being within objects (the objective) and then also again within signs (the subjective). That is because, in the philosophical mode or the mode of transcendental investigation, we are always already on the inside of both of these systems. We are always surrounded already by objects, and we are already thinking of these objects not in terms of direct immanent experience, which is wordless, but in terms of reflective propositions. "But in such judging, a concept is never referred directly to an object … . Instead the concept is referred directly to some other presentation of the object (whether that presentation be an intuition or itself already a concept)" [A68/B93]. From the beginning we were, and are, always already not only in the midst of objective experience, from within which the real, outer ground of objectivity appears only as a distant alterity, but we are also always already in the midst of *thinking* about that experience, because conscious awareness requires both intuitions and determinative concepts. In entering and simultaneously trying to describe the very heart of Kant's system, immediate experience, these double systems have suddenly changed from the medium and vehicle of our understanding to an opaque barricade. Concepts are closing us off from objects, because every object we can say is always also a concept already; we have been pulled even one step farther back from the problem of chapter 3, which was how to get from the encirclement of objects to the ground of empirical existing, being, in which reason desires to rest. To go further, we must now escape this trap, our first encounter with 'illusion' in the present chapter. The first question, against subjective idealism, is: how can concepts refer correctly through objects to empirical beings?

Our encirclement by the system of signs is a deep preoccupation of much contemporary philosophy.[8] Derrida made, against Husserl, precisely the same point I am drawing from Kant: that

[7] di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 37.

[8] For an overview see Søren Stenlund, "On the Linguistic Turn in Philosophy", in *The Practice of Language*, Martin Gustafsson, and Lars Hertzberg, eds. (Springer, 2002): 11-50.

we are ‘always already’ within the system of signifiers, where signifiers refer only to one another and the ‘differánce’ which makes a signifie-d an absolute *ground* of signification has escaped into ‘absence’, leaving only the ‘trace’, not the graspable reality, of metaphysical ‘presence’.[9] That is, the pseudo-object which is the ground of the referential function of the concept is non-identical to the being of the empirical object: one cannot capture existing in language. In other words, just as Kant had pointed out in 1759, *being cannot be spoken*, because “being” has always already become a *sign* of its non-identical self.[10] One possible outcome for philosophy, which post-structuralism toyed with for some time, is therefore to stop at that point, considering thought as just ‘play’ among the internal relations of signifiers in a system of signs that cannot be escaped (*jouissance* – Derrida).[11]

As transcendental investigators, trapped in Kant’s tower on the island of reason, the first stage of our problem is therefore to escape from the interior of the system of signs by finding an opening to its outer correlate, the system of objects found in the world as appearances. However, we cannot do so by attempting to appeal to something external to the system of signs, which would have to enter reflection *by becoming a sign*, also differentiated from its exterior referent, and hence fail circularly (this is one half of the problem of the “myth of the given”).[12] Put otherwise, we would have to claim that, e.g., ‘object’ or ‘being’ are some special kind of sign which are both the signifier and the signified identically, without internal differentiation, and therefore that simply saying the incantation ‘being is given’ or ‘objects are given’ resolves the problem of grounding the referentiality of *all* signs as a system (Lawlor).[13] That approach does not work, because it begs the question against the (Derridean) claim that ‘being’ and ‘object’ are both, *as words*, *different* from their supposed signified, which is unreachable from *within* language.[14] To escape that trap, we need an approach which doesn’t simply force a ground to become a word. Kant instead found the opening by a close analysis of the structure of signification itself, which does not violate the nonidentical referentiality of the system of signs. To review, the sign is the outcome of the act of judgment, as we saw in chapter 2. Every sign is distinct from every other sign because it has closed off a certain set of marks which constitute its meaning, and has excluded others. Not only that, but every sign is distinct from every other sign *as such* because its very structure *is* the function of closure and exclusion – a consequence of Kant’s theory of the structure of judgment as an act. That

9 Cf. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 217.
10 Cf. Bowie, *Schelling*, 71-72.
11 Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 352-353.
12 Cf. Sachs, *Myths of the Given*, 162.
13 Cf. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 203-204.
14 Cf. Sachs, *Myths of the Given*, 165. As Ricouer notes, it is also important to take into account the Nietszchean critique of language (“On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”) on the basis that theoretical objectivity is a pretense which conceals desire, although we cannot extensively explore that idea here: Ricouer, *Oneself*, 11-12.

is, there is no sign which includes every possible mark, because for humans there is always an 'outside' to the determinate which discloses the very existence of the determining as such: here, we are not even discussing the vertical outside of the infinite (i.e. transcendence of signification in absolute indeterminacy), but the horizontal outside composed of the unknown possible or excluded marks (i.e. the sequential infinity of other possible significations). Likewise, even if a sign could include every possible mark, it cannot include existence as a mark, because *it* (the sign) exists, as a reference to a *referend* which exists separately from the sign, disclosing that the determining of the sign was a subjective act which was non-identical to the existing.[15] Thus, every sign is bounded and finite on its 'sides', as it were, that are orthogonal to my awareness of it. But every sign is also distinct from *me* because I am conscious of it as resisting my efforts to alter it. That coming to light of the presence of will discloses the 'back side' of the structure of the concept, revealing it as the intentional object. In other words, the concept as the outcome of the now-disclosed act of judgment stands forth as distinct from my own being only because it is already assigned to an intentional ontological unity: an inexisting object. I would not know that I was distinct from the content of one of my concepts if it were not already *objective* toward me. Therefore, for Kant, the enclosure of the system of signs has an opening within itself, and always spills out into the world of objects, because each individual sign, or concept, gives itself as being incomplete without reference to intentional objectivity.[16] To summarize: because every sign, as the outcome of the act of judgment which creates the dyadic pair of concept-object, must correspond to an intentional object in order to be held in awareness as distinct from my own immanent surface via the *a priori* analogy-function of space (formal intuition), for Kant every sign as such already spills over into objectivity. Where Derrida occasionally argued that there is only the 'play' of signifiers, leading to "deconstruction",[17] Kant holds that signifiers are meaningless, and "impossible" to human awareness, without corresponding intentional or pseudo-objects [A139/B178]. It is impossible to be trapped in a mere "play" of signifiers because every signifier refers by its intrinsic structure to something which is not itself a sign: a transcendental object. Thus we can follow Kant through the opening that he created, and escape from the total enclosure of the system of signs.

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15 I draw these ideas, within Kant, out of the implicit consequences of the distinction between 'logical essence' and 'real essence' in the *Logics*.

16 This is not an 'ostensive', but an 'intentional' account of language-structure.

17 Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 204.

Noumenal vs. Phenomenal Objectification

We have escaped from the system of signs by finding an opening that spills us out into the system of objects. However, Kant's Copernican hypothesis was to argue that concepts only refer to objects-in-the-world as 'appearances', which were themselves 'always already' constituted by the passive synthesis of intuition in apperception. "Appearances", as we know well, are not "things in themselves". Although we can now be confident that the system of language or concepts does not have an ontologically independent existence, but is rather grounded in and emergent from the system of objective appearances, we are not finished retracing our steps to being. Have we escaped from the system of signs only to find ourselves now trapped within the system of appearances?

To review and reframe the findings of Chapter 2, the world-as-my-consciousness, for Kant, is not only interpretation but the sensing of being itself: I discover from the world that I have 'leapt in ahead of myself' not only at the level of reflective cognition but at the level of immediate perception, by "pre-synthesizing" the given as objective appearance.[18] As we saw, the joint purpose of the Transcendental Aesthetic, and the Deduction's discussion of the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, was to show that, in order for reflective activity to construct understanding upon objects, the non-material ideality of objects-themselves - which is *of the same kind* as reflection - must already (by transcendental inference) have been placed there by consciousness (Kantian 'passive synthesis'). Likewise, the Anticipations of Perception confirm, on my reading, that the distinction between the modality of real beings-as-objects and ideal objects is a difference of intensive degree, which implies the underlying sameness of their objective form [B208-210]. Kant's analysis of objects as 'appearances-themselves' is thus an analysis of their 'objective potency' – the potential to become cognizable – which *must* have occurred already at the level of intuitive synthesis.

Assuming that the appearance-object itself gives its own ideality in empirical experience is to claim that the empirical object is *really* (at the metaphysical level) *an idea*, meaning, as Kant claimed, that 'transcendental realism' is directly convertible to 'empirical idealism' [A369]. Kant's solution is to say that the empirical object, as partaking in the process of the subject-object relation of perceptual activity, is proto-ideal because it has been made affine to the observer by the observer's own pre-conscious act. Therefore, the passive synthesis of the object is required to

[18] "The fundamental fact of consciousness is precisely that we are not originally responsible for all the syntheses that we deliberately develop once consciousness has begun; when this happens we find that, on the contrary, those syntheses have already been originated for us. Consciousness, in other words, is constantly transcending itself-if not in the direction of Kant's 'thing-in-itself' or Fichte's ego, certainly towards a nature in which it has its pre-conscious history." di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 41.

resolve the problem of the grounds of 'truth' as a relation: I am comparing the sign-object complex to the appearance-object complex, and it is the fact that both sign and appearance are identically phenomenologically objective structures (both have identical objective 'form') that makes the formal comparison of truth-claims possible.

Kant's choice to hold that objects are already constituted as potentially cognizable in 'passive synthesis' is the Copernican hypothesis: to suppose that 'objects conform themselves to our cognition' [B xvi]. Kant indicates that the constitution of an object is, at the deepest level, a bare enclosure of a 'that': "*etwas* = x" [A250]. That entails both that without objectivity no being is distinct from any other being in the world and also that without objectivity no being is distinct from *myself*. Aesthetic determination is at root the mere standing-forth of a 'this' against a 'background', and categorial determination is, at base, the re-cognition of existing as substance. Kant pushes that structure out into the world itself in order to explain how it is possible for the world to be amenable to mathematical idealization. When I look out into the world-itself in immediate perception, what I sense are *already* constituted, but indeterminate, objects – the 'presentation' of 'appearances'. Objects of imagination/memory as subject to reflective analysis are a *second*-level representation, and conceptual signification/abstraction is a *third*-level representation.[19] The problem facing us now is the reappearance of the specter of 'subjective idealism': if the world as objective is merely the world-towards-me, the world of appearance, how can I hold that it is not in-itself merely the production of my imagination? We seem to have resolved the problem of grounding conceptual reference, escaping endless repetition of difference between signs, and the problem of truth as correspondence, establishing the familial co-receptivity between signs and objects, only to find ourselves unable to escape the world of objects conceived as the world of appearances-to-me.

Just as we could not escape the system of signs by finding something external that was also a sign, so we cannot escape the system of objects as subjective appearances by finding yet another object. Stated inversely, *genuinely* traveling beyond objectivity is also to travel beyond subjectivity, because they are dyadic poles. Beyond objectivity there is no-thing at all, but only the total annihilation of all difference.[20] That, as I have argued in chapter 3, is the mechanism by which Kant gives the Deduction of the Categories force and certainty: there is no alternative to objectivity/subjectivity but 'chaos' and the dissolution of the point-of-view that is the basis of consciousness itself.[21] As Merleau-Ponty clearly articulated, the emergence of subjectivity and

[19] See the A edition Deduction: A97-98.

[20] Cf. *KdrV*, A292/B349.

[21] As Jameson writes in a slightly different context, "… [It] becomes clearer that as we are always conscious—even in sleep or dreams, a kind of lower level of consciousness or what Leibniz might call sensitivity—we cannot by definition know what it is to lack that "attribute": what Hegel's contemporaries called the not-I is that which consciousness is conscious of as its other, and not any absence of consciousness itself, something inconceivable

objectivity itself as a dyad is *already* determinative activity, and the pure phenomenology of perception is a total inability to distinguish anything from anything else, including the self from the world and objects within the world from their background.[22] At the ontological level, the 'beyond' of appearances is the collapse of distinction between 'I' and the 'world', leading positively to a mystical unity in which I merge into oneness with the world, as Merleau-Ponty describes.[23] That is (although negatively) precisely Kant's point: the world even as experience is already pre-determined by apperceptive synthesis, made ready to be conceptualized and named through signs.

Here we seem to be stuck. Nevertheless, Kant has boldly claimed that he can provide us with a justification for empirical realism. As Kant's analysis of the concept, not appealing to some external concept but examining the inward structure of the concept itself, revealed that the structure of the concept itself depends on objectivity, so Kant's analysis of the object will reveal, through an examination of its inward structure, that it is also a structure of fundamental opening towards the real. Kant provides that analysis in the 'Phenomena and Noumena' chapter of the Transcendental Logic [A252].

> "...[From] the concept of an appearance as such, too, it follows naturally that to appearance there must correspond something that is not in itself appearance. For appearance cannot be anything by itself and apart from our way of presenting; hence, if we are not to go in a constant circle, then the word appearance already indicates a reference to something the direct presentation of which is indeed sensible, but which in itself – even without this character of our sensibility...- must be something, i.e. an object independent of sensibility. Now from this consideration arises the concept of a noumenon. But this concept is not at all positive and is not a determinate concept of some thing, but signifies only the thinking of something as such…".

The above passage is the key to making sense of Kant's view, and also escaping the trap of appearances. As Kant clearly states here, the concept 'appearance' contains within itself a reference to or deferral of a substantive 'in-itself': that is, part of what 'appearance' signifies is 'appearance *of'* something else. While, as Kant says, the "in-itself" is theoretically distinct from sensibility, it is

except as a kind of science-fictional picture-thinking, a kind of thought of otherness." That is, the total absence of consciousness would be exactly that – no consciousness. Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Verso, 2010): 32.

22 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 15-16.

23 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining-The Chiasm", *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Northwestern University Press, 1969): 134-140, 144.

"directly presented" within sensibility, as a reference which is part of the appearance, and is only thought "negatively", or as an absence or difference from appearance. I believe the best way to interpret this is by comparison with Aristotle's initial distinction between finite substance and accident in the *Categories*.[24] For example, substantially identical leaves change their color, the color *of* the leaves, from green to red rather than green leaves being substantially replaced by red leaves. It is the distinctness of the substantial unity of 'leaf' which allows us to perceive the change of color as accidental rather than substantial. On the other hand, the substantial unity is always given through, and present in, the accidents (at least as far as empirical beings are concerned). On that model it would make little sense to ask, in a specific empirical sense, 'what the leaf *is*' independently of its color, shape, size, relation in space, etc., because its 'is-ness' is disclosed to us precisely in and through these accidents. Nevertheless, in examining the accidents they appear to us as possessing not independent, but rather dependent ontological status: we do not perceive a 'red thing' stuck to the surface of a 'leaf thing' but 'a red leaf'. Therefore the two concepts cannot be separated from each other without a certain cognitive effort, a feature which is essential to Kant's problem. We know that the leaf is not its redness, since the redness can change without the leaf changing identity, but we also know that the leaf is *only given* through its redness and its other sensible qualities (and since Kant denies intellectual intuition, if we could not sense the leaf, it would not exist for us at all). Thus I claim that a "noumenon", in exactly the same way, is not a "thing" existing separately from its appearance; rather, the appearance discloses its own lack of substantiality, that lack being then itself cognized *negatively, solely* from *the appearance,* as a pseudo-object named "noumenon" [B306-307].[25] As Kant says, "All appearances contain the permanent (i.e., *substance*) as the object itself, and the mutable as its mere determination, i.e., as a way in which the object exists" [B224 (First Analogy)]. "Noumenon" is the pseudo-object necessarily generated in employing the concept of "substance", which is grounded in experience because "appearance", which we do experience, gives itself precisely as *lacking* and *requiring* "substance" to exist within it.[26]

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[24] Kant explicitly asserts that the thing-in-itself/appearance distinction is equivalent to the 'substance'/'accident' distinction at A186/B229. Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint,* 81-83.

[25] Cf. Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 23: "Rather, the expression 'behind the appearance' expresses the fact that finite knowledge as finite necessarily conceals at the same time, and it conceals in advance so that the 'thing in itself' is not only imperfectly accessible, but is absolutely inaccessible to such knowledge by its very essence. What is 'behind the appearance' is the same being as the appearance. Because it only gives the being as object, however, this appearance does not permit that same being to be seen fundamentally as a thing which stands forth."

[26] The position I am defending here is very close to that of Rae Langton in *Kantian Humility*. However, where Langton argues that Kant's 'noumena' is a 'substance' defined as "the bearer of intrinsic properties" (p. 19), I think that my approach, which comes out of Aristotle's *Categories*, has the advantage that Aristotle defines "substance" in a purely negative way: it is nothing more than that which is *not* accidental, but which the accidental requires as explanatory ground. That allows for a stronger statement of Kant's identical position on the total *unknowability* but necessity of the thing-in-itself.

The red leaf under discussion is an 'appearance' and also an 'object'. According to Kant, it possesses both empirical and contingent attributes (its redness and shape) and necessary attributes (the sorting of 'redness' and 'leafness' into predicable and substantive ontological priority, respectively, via categorial synthesis, the pure determination of 'a red leaf' as *a priori* governable under the empirical laws of nature via the schematized categories, etc.). That is, the leaf is governed by the transcendental laws allowing it to become an object-as-such, but then also by the empirical and contingent laws, learned *a posteriori* by understanding, allowing it to act in ways that fit its appearance-nature. However, both these kinds of attributes have been collected under a 'passive' synthesis of sensibility which has judged that they are all *of* the same object-appearance, as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, what we experience empirically is a 'mind-independent', a 'given', substantial leaf with the attribute of redness.

What underwrites the apparent 'mind-independence' of the leaf is its act of existence, the one feature of the leaf which Kant holds cannot be predicated of it and in fact can't properly be described as a 'feature' at all. Rather, I hold Kant's position to be that the appearance *is given* as revealing an inward and hidden metaphysical unity of its own, an independent existing, which can only be objectified by a kind of analogy that, as static cognized object, is then called the positive 'noumena' or the 'thing-in-itself'.[27] The underlying act of existing fulfills the appearance as 'real' from 'behind', as it were, by affecting sensibility directly through immanent force.[28] Kant is claiming that what we perceive in empirical experience, the 'appearance', gives itself as being the objective synthesis of all the sensations which are the qualities *of* 'it' - referring back in an apparently ontologically dependent way to it-as-substantive. Why do we call it an 'appearance'? Not because it is not real [B306], but because the complete empirical appearing *gives itself* as harboring or sheltering an 'essence' rather than *being* that essence. Thus, just as we escaped from the enclosure of signs by finding the intrinsic reference of a sign to an object, so we escape the enclosure of object-appearances by finding that every appearance has an intrinsic reference to an act of existing which is only intelligible as the ground and counterpart of the appearance's internal lack.

Such a reading, I think, dramatically simplifies some long-time puzzles in Kant scholarship. For example, it is quite plausible for Kant to say that "we know nothing of the thing-in-itself", and yet for the "thing-in-itself" to still have a positive function in Kant's system, because the "thing-in-

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[27] Contra Langton, *Kantian Humility*, 20-22, I think that there is not only a '*concept* of relation' structuring the appearance-substance relationship but that appearance *gives itself* as referring to substance in direct perception. Cf. Heidegger, *Kantbuch*, 22.

[28] The concept of force, clearly, has a problematic place in Kant's thought. Is it transcendentally regulative or actual? Cf. Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 752-757, for a discussion of the 'regulative' status of the "metaphysical *Grund* of experience" and the kinds of problems entailed for the actuality of supra-objective concepts. I discuss the problems entailed at length in the final section of the present chapter below, and we will see how Kant tackles this problem in the specific case of 'force' in Chapters 6-7.

itself" is the *"positive"*, and therefore transcendentally empty, form of the pseudo-object generated in thinking of the act of existing of an appearance, which cannot be validly objectified and yet is *given* as distinguishable from the appearance [B307].[29] We know nothing *theoretically* of the 'thing-in-itself', on my reading, for the very simple reason that we are either thinking of the pure existing grounding the appearance (the "thing in-itself" or positive noumena), which can only be objectively posited as the cause of the affection which has generated sensation,[30] and cannot be cognized positively without making use of the appearance as its sensible objective form, or else we are thinking of the pure form of objectivity-as-such (the "*negative* noumena"), which is not transcendentally actual at all but the empty form of the subjective generation of appearance as determinable [A253-257/B309-312]. The only exception to that rule, as Kant says, is that the noumena *must be posited* as the objective substantial unity of the appearances [B310-311]. However, that positing is not given as a positive quality of the noumena, but as a derivation from the failure of the appearance to explain its own activity of appearing [B311], meaning that its derivation comes as a transcendental deduction from experience and is not a violation of transcendental idealism.

Likewise, we can chart a delicate path through the various problems of "noumenal causality". I do not think Kant is committed to the claim that noumena *cause* their own appearances, because I think it would be strange to say in ordinary language that the act of existing of a chair, for example, has *caused* the sensible qualities of the chair. It seems to me that such relationships are more along the lines of identity than causality: it is the selfsame chair which exists in appearing and appears as existing. However, Kant *can* hold that noumena are to be *thought* as the *origins* of changes which *appear*, because apparent changes are *given* as being originally caused by substances rather than by appearances.[31] These conclusions are drawn from the negative features of appearances rather than from positive knowledge of noumena.

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[29] "Secondly, it followed that although Kant restricted our knowledge of the 'thing-in-itself' outside consciousness to its appearances in consciousness, he still could retain this presumed 'thing' as the object at least of an ideal possibility. In fact, he had to retain it on both theoretical and existential grounds-on the one hand, as we have just seen, as a means for conceptualizing the irreducibility of consciousness to self-consciousness; and on the other, in order to avoid restricting the possibilities of self-consciousness to the limits of theoretical thought. The 'thing-in-itself actually played for Kant a double role. It stood both for all that we cannot excogitate on the strength of pure thought alone, and hence must accept simply on the blind testimony of the senses; and for what we do, perhaps, freely produce through the power of thought, yet are unable to recognize because of our dependence on the senses." di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 5.

[30] See Kant's discussion between B307 and B313.

[31] "A free cause is purely intelligible; but we must realize that the *same being* is phenomenon and thing in itself, subject to natural necessity as phenomenon, source of free causality as thing in itself. Moreover, the *same action.…* relates on the one hand to a chain of sensible causes according to which it is necessary, but on the other itself relates, together with its causes, to a free Cause whose sign or expression it is. A free cause never has its effect in itself, since in it nothing happens or begins; *free causality only has sensible effects*." Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 40.

The problem with understanding Kant's position is the original problem Kant indicated, back at the beginning of *KdrV*: the intrusion of sensibility beyond its boundaries into the understanding, or, put otherwise, the multiplication of "given" pseudo-objects in cognition at the boundaries of possible experience. Now we can see that such multiplication is itself twofold, because every object is both an appearance and that appearance's structural reference to a noumenon. When we think about something like a noumenon, which is a transcendental reference extending beyond the properly sensible, as object of our thought we generate a duplicate noumenon *and* a duplicate appearance. Thus, when someone asks, for example, 'How can there be a thing-in-itself which is different from the appearance?', or asks, 'How can I know that the image in my imagination is not from an evil deceiver but corresponds to something in the real world?', there is, as an *artifact of human thought*, in both of these questions a non-empirical *thing* (noumenon) which has its own unknown objective *appearance*, projected beyond the empirically objective *appearance* which is missing its *thing* (substantive reference, assigned by default in Cartesianism to the ontological/metaphysical Self). It is the doubling of phantom appearances which makes the noumena irreconcilable with appearance *in thinking* extension.

For example, a leaf on a tree is an appearance which gives itself as being synthesized under *a priori* law-governedness and a position in space and time, fields which I perceive as being infinite but bounded and therefore know transcendentally must be ideal and not real, as well as a position in space and time relative to my own position. However, in the same appearance the leaf gives itself as possessing an inward reference to an independent unity, the empty reference to its 'noumenal' substantiveness. When I try to imagine what the leaf would be like noumenally, 'in-itself', while carefully remembering that it will have no appearance then, in fact I have no object: only the empty idea that it exists (the "something = X"). Because it is not possible to think anything as given without objectifying it and because an object is always a substance-appearance complex, in trying to think the noumenal leaf independently of its appearance I generate a *new* 'noumenal' appearance which is characterized only by being a negation of the leaf's actual empirical appearance: the noumenal leaf when I attempt to cognize it is given as 'otherwhere' and 'otherwhen' to the actual leaf [B307]. That duplication of substance-appearance complexes is, I hold, the explanation for the 'two-worlds' interpretation of transcendental idealism, which is just, on my view, a misunderstanding based in the objectifying nature of thinking itself.

In the case of external 'noumenal causality', if I decide to pick the leaf, my arm moves before me in space and time and takes the leaf off the branch. The noumenal willing is not assigned by Kant to a different set of appearances than the empirical appearances; I will to move precisely

my empirical arm, which gives itself *in* appearance as being moved *by* a non-empirical cause.[32] However, in trying to cognize that event I think a 'noumenally appearing arm-substance' which has an illusory double appearance as otherwhere and otherwhen to the empirical arm-substance given in empirical appearance. I would argue that the persistence and unavoidability of such confusions in reading Kant is in fact itself evidence for Kant's exact point: that whatever we try to think about as 'given' is assigned the empty form of 'object' = 'substance-appearance complex'.[33]

Since the references to noumenality and causality, while leading out of appearance, are given *within* appearance, on my reading, I hold that Kant does not contradict himself or methodologically violate transcendental idealism when he claims that it is possible to think and describe these entities and agencies, because the evidence for them that Kant describes is all part of appearance. In general, therefore, I reject the 'two-worlds' interpretation of Kant and I modify even the 'two-aspect' view by holding that the relation between an object considered as noumena and an object considered as appearance is much more straightforward and mundane than has generally been thought. The two 'aspects' must be understood as being united in the same object *and therefore, empirically, the same appearance*, which appears *as* a noumena-appearance complex. Objectivity is the clothing that existing wears when we encounter it; but not as a cloth thrown over a piece of furniture, but rather as the cloak of a ghost discloses its presence.

The Empty Object of Cognition

Armed with the necessary discussion above, I proceed now to a general summary of the layers, traces, and structure of the 'object-as-such' of Kantian ontology. As discussed, Kant's discovery of the positive existence of the non-empirical but worldly object is the motivating force of transcendental idealism. If the general formal object-in-the-world was not at the center of Kant's argument, Kant would have detailed merely the formal objectivity of empirical beings, an "immanent" or "descriptive metaphysics", as has sometimes been argued; but that interpretation cannot stand in the face of Kant's clear contrary claims detailed in the previous chapters.[34] On the other hand, however, if the general formal object were *not* an object-in-the-world, a true 'over-against' or *Gegenstand* presenced through imagination, Kant would be making ontological claims about the structure of consciousness in itself. The general formal object would then be a Platonic form, an essence presenting itself in an 'intelligible world' separate from the 'sensible world'.

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[32] Cf. *KdpV,* Ak. 5:97-99.
[33] Kant on causality: see the important passage [A538/B566-A542/B570]. Cf. Ricouer, *Oneself*, 108-109.
[34] Compare Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 290-297.

Rather, an object-as-such is the phenomenological structure of intention itself, which allows us to reflectively determine the basic orientations of ontology. An object as such is the ‘shape’ of the potential to become explicitly determined in our reflection, in terms of its substantive ground and its accidents, its mode of existence, and its relations to other objects, i.e., the table of ontological judgments. Objects as such can come in two varieties: ordinary empirical objects, which are divided into ‘actual’ and ‘possible’, and ‘special’ objects which are ideals projected by reason.

All objects are given, meaning that they are co-constituted with subjectivity as the opposing pole of the intentional relation. During empirical consciousness, we are presented with objects of possible experience as well as objects in present experience: co-present in my field of experience are trees, rocks, myself, my thoughts and dreams, the absolute bounding field itself of ‘nature’ or ‘the world’, and God. An object gives itself as giving itself to my receptive and secondary activity of knowing it. Therefore, within the empirical perspective, objective formal inexistence and existential presence are blended together into one.[35] An object-as-such is an empty structure which expects fulfillment from outside itself on the ontological level, just as the concept expects fulfillment from the object on the semiotic level. The identical object-as-such can be considered in two ways: either positively but then only phenomenologically, as the empty formal structure which is the bare content of transcendental ontology, in which case it is called the ‘transcendental object’ or ‘*etwas* = x’ by Kant, or negatively, as the lack or expectation of fulfillment disclosed sensibly in the appearance, in which case it is called the ‘noumena’.[36] When the *noumena* is falsely considered positively it is the “thing-in-itself”, which is the false reification that generates “transcendental illusion” [B307]. When the noumena is *schematized*, it becomes the ground making possible the objective appearance of absolute time, whereupon it is called ‘substance’ [B225-227]. The scaffolding supporting these distinctions is the fact that the structure of signs follows our thinking into the gap beyond the boundary of fulfillment, and the negative lack can itself be objectified conceptually, at the semiotic level, which is why ‘noumena’ can exist as a concept and be ‘thought’ but not ‘cognized’ [B146]. From there, we have a choice of two paths to follow in pursuing fulfillment.

In the case of empirical objects, they are first given in perception as indeterminate: ‘appearances’. An appearance is neither a singular ‘sense-datum’ nor a collection of ‘sense-data’, and also not a phenomenalistic ‘interior’ event: rather, it is an already constituted, complete objective manifold, within which the contributions of individual senses can be later distinguished in reflective awareness. The fulfillment of appearances is given inwardly by their reference to

[35] “The complete natural object of human knowledge [in classical Western metaphysics] was both intellectual and sensory.” Ralph Austin Powell, *Freely Chosen Reality* (University Press of America, 1983), 19.

[36] Cf. *KdrV,* [B307-308].

substantiality, by their activity of resistive force to embodied sense, which is what is invoked by the word 'real'. The substance is not perceived *directly*, but as *veiled* through the qualities.[37] On these assumptions, when I perceive, e.g., a cat I in fact perceive only accidental attributes, on the grounds that the cat's perceptible changes in space and time are accidental and not substantial changes.[38] Changes in the cat's substance, e.g., its birth and death, would not be initially given through sense except indirectly, through a retrospectively dawning awareness that its 'apparent inner purposefulness', its animating nature, has departed or entered its sensible body.[39] However, I certainly do not 'construct' an awareness of the presence of 'substantive this-cat' through linking together the disconnected faces or 'presentations' of sensation. Rather, Kant's point is precisely that the process goes the opposite way: I first perceive 'this cat' and in distinguishing the contributions of sense those sensings are always given in themselves as ontologically dependent: I never perceive merely 'blackness' but the 'blackness *of*'.[40] The reason Kant holds that all phenomenological objectivity, all thought, is ultimately grounded in the reality of the empirically real is that the signature of existing is force, and it is only empirical objects that 'push back' against our embodied senses by affecting inner sense, the pure immanent field of perception.

In my view of Kant's position on empirical existences, our human knowing and life is radically at the mercy of the unexpected world. We inhabit a formal system of concepts determined by the structure of formal logic, which reflexively models a second, outer formal system of objects which are determined as rule-governed and mutually related within a hierarchically organized totality by transcendental logic. The only element which falls, by inference and not by direct knowledge, outside of these systematic determinations is existence itself. Thus the kinds of questions which are *undecidable* (but not *unthinkable*) by us, on this reading, are the questions of traditional Western metaphysics. For example, the 'Forms' of Plato, or the debate between Heraclitus and Parmenides about whether Being is static or fluctuating, or an Aristotelian position about the individuality of beings vs. a Pre-Socratic or Spinozist panentheism, cannot be determined 'in-themselves' (although Kant would hold that Aristotle's is the correct ontology of appearances, the illusion-purified form of the empirical perspective). We can *perceive* the separable community and also the *oneness* of Being, but only as the pure indeterminacy of existing underlying the structure of ontology; if we wish to extend our metaphysical commitments further, we require some other ground of justification. We should take more seriously Kant's implicit point in *KdrV* that the

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37 Cf. Langton, *Kantian Humility,* 20, quoting Kant's *Reflexionen,* 5292: "the substantial *is* the thing-in-itself".

38 *KdrV,* [A187-189/B230-232]: "Hence whatever does change *endures*, and only its *state* varies" [emphasis original].

39 "Arising and passing away are not changes of what arises or passes away. Change is a way of existing that ensues upon another way of existing of the same object." *KdrV,* [A187/B230].

40 Cf. [A250]: "...Since appearances are nothing but presentations, our understanding refers them to a something as the object of sensible intuition."

mere fact that reason can entertain all of these positions is evidence that the underlying situation of Being is undecidable for us directly.

Likewise, we cannot say for certain *what* particular 'things-in-themselves' *are*, and whether they will stay the same. The history, which extends into the present day, of the metaphysical battles to define what an 'essence' is and how we know it separately from its accidental presentation is also here disclosed in Kant's perspective as being vague precisely because it rests on a confusion. Westphal builds an argument about Kant by assuming that the idea that an empirical billiard ball could suddenly, miraculously disobey the laws of Newtonian physics is totally inadmissible.[41] But, despite Kant's anti-fanatical diatribes, I think the inexorable logic of his position leads us to the opening of the possibility of the miraculous, or at least unexpected. We are not in a position to say what Being will do next, because we are always responding, scrambling to keep up with it. Being, understood objectively, will still be transcendentally law-governed, but its new manifestation of behavior will reveal that our model of the contingent empirical laws that govern its appearances needs adjustment: Kant's explanation, I think, for the possibility of "scientific revolutions".[42] Finally, I think Kant's position also leads to a vision of the radical contingency of material existence. Material, physical objects do not explain their own act or mode of existing. That act of existing can itself only be grounded, as we shall see, through an appeal to a teleological and moral argument, not a physical or objectively theoretical one.

After that, to turn to non-empirical objects, they are not given through perception but through imagination, which also makes use of the manifold of pure intuition. Thus 'appearance' is not coterminous in meaning with 'object of possible experience' but a subset of the latter. The ground of fulfillment of non-empirical objects, which must also ultimately be resistive force, will not be force over against sense but the force of the will. Therefore, the ground of the reality of the object-concept complexes God, self, and cosmological world is the movement of the will as a striving activity (to be discussed fully in Chapters 5 and 6).[43]

Every object-as-such, empirical and non-empirical alike, has three openings or directional traces leading beyond itself. To establish these clearly, I will use German terms rather than English terms for the convenience of a linguistic familial resemblance. Objects-as-such are the outcome of a process which has gathered them into a singular and isolated unity; the three openings are the directions into which objects tend to collapse back into a lack of difference, just as a perspectival sketch defines an object standing forth at its center and the guidelines determining its faces run

41 Westphal, *KTPR*, 210.

42 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1996): 92-97.

43 I emphasize here again that these are not *concepts* only but also *objects*, because it is their pseudo-objectivity that makes them *given* and thus presented as 'outside ourselves': cf. [A339/B397].

backwards into points.[44] First, each object has an inward ground into which it disappears, the lack or opening which expects fulfillment within itself: the '*Abgrund'* (the "thing in itself"). Second, each object has a horizonal opening to all the objects with which it stands in community, but beyond that, to the disappearance of all objects into a unified absolute field: the '*Hintergrund*' [back-ground] (or 'Nature', as it will begin to be called). Third, each object has a teleological opening to its past and future, which tends toward the absolute unity of teleological origin: the '*Urgrund*'. The reader will note that these correspond to the special metaphysical objects of Self, World, and God, respectively, meaning that special metaphysics is continually implied in defining the absolute frame of reference of ordinary objects: as Kant says, the 'regulative ideals' are the boundaries of the process of quite ordinary and worldly reflective thinking [A323/B379].

Within these three *Grunds*, there are two directions: the direction trending towards the unified object, and the direction trending away into the collapse of difference. For Kant, carefully remaining on the shore of the island of reason, it is crucial to remember that we are investigating from within the domain of reason and so the *Grunds* are only cognizable as the limits of objectivity. That is why Kant correctly chooses to keep them distinct from one another, within the distinguishing process of reason, and to emphasize that they are only the projections of reasoning. In-themselves, the *Grunds* are totally indeterminate and even nonsensical (in a Wittgensteinian sense). Since each one is an indeterminacy bounding the object, the only way to differentiate them among themselves is through their relation to the determined object, which is our only grip on distinction, our safe footing. If reason attempts to push beyond the object and through the *Grund* to grasp the *Grund* metaphysically, that causes a loss of objectivity which results in the collapse of difference between the *grounds* themselves*:* reality, background, selfhood and God become undifferentiated as the 'Absolute' of later German Idealism.[45] From there it is no longer possible directly to differentiate between the *Grunds* as intuitive grounds; however, because that investigation is taken up in *reflection* into the concept, which is the spontaneous issue of the self's

[44] In a curious coincidence, cf. Girard: "Just as three-dimensional perspective directs all the lines of a picture toward a fixed point, either beyond or in front of the canvas, Christianity directs existence toward a vanishing point, either toward God or toward the Other." René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Johns Hopkins Press, 1965): 58. Where Girard writes "Christianity", we have "transcendental structure of objectivity", but the ultimate opposition between openness to the supersensible ("God") and the grasping of otherness which actually renders the latter the production of the Same ("Other") is structurally identical.

[45] "The greatest drawback of the Hegelian system is not "idealism" … but narcissism: "Reason, he says there, "must demand that difference, that being, in its manifold variety, become its very own, that it behold itself as the actual world and find itself present as a shape and Thing." We thereby search the whole world, and outer space, and end up only touching ourselves… . Never truly to encounter the not-I, to come face to face with radical otherness … : such is the dilemma of the Hegelian dialectic". Jameson, *Hegel Variations*, 132.

activity and bears its own illusory objectivity, the One Absolute becomes by default the Absolute of the Self, as in 'identity philosophy'.[46]

The objective basis securing Kant's assurance that the *Grunds* are only regulative ideals is the dyadic structure of the subject-object relation, by which, in the object, every absolute structure is divided into two: the subjective frame and the objective frame, as we saw in our discussion of the Deduction. For example, every object is co-constituted with the spatial objective frame of 'north, south, east, west' and also the spatial subjective frame of 'left, right, before, behind'. Likewise, every object is both an element of Nature and an element of my systematic science of Nature; every object is incorporated into both a teleological structure of its own purposiveness disclosed in its activity (developed by Kant only from the third Critique onwards) and my idea of God. In each of these cases, the objective frame is given as the infinitely traversable but determinate outside corresponding to the enclosure of the finite subjective frame, but the effort to determine the objective frame encloses it and makes it also finite: trying to metaphysically ascend from my painstakingly assembled idea of God or Nature to God or Nature in themselves deposits me only in a new idea of God or Nature, the endless deferral of metaphysical presence.[47] Whereas Hegel holds that the possibility of including the infinite in the finite proves the infinitude of the Absolute, Kant interprets the same structure, on the basis of his understanding of judgment as *finitization*, to mean that the infinite's enclosure in the finite means that the infinite-toward-me is nothing more than the human, Leibnizian infinite of endless temporal process.[48] The absolute fields of space and time and the absolute boundaries of the teleological are limits that process along with my thinking, always dancing away beyond the repetitive movements of my judging.

The total structure I have described above is therefore the system of signs, internally spilling out into the system of objects, which internally requires fulfillment through affective force, which, as the signature or 'trace' of existing, the non-conceptualizable 'Other' which grounds the whole structure of human consciousness, is the closest to the absolute ground that our thinking can retrospectively determine. Kant's complete theory of objects is that they are denoted by signs, structured formally by the transcendental object, governed empirically by laws of nature (for real

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[46] Fichte is, of course, the arch-representative of that position: cf. Bowie, *Schelling*, 59.

[47] Contra Deleuze's criticism in *Difference and Repetition*, 133-137.

[48] Jameson again: "Famously, Hegel's reaction to the sensible limits Kant's critique sets for human knowledge and philosophizing lies in a closer scrutiny of the very category of the limit itself: we cannot set a limit, he points out, without somehow already placing ourselves beyond that limit. It is a devastating insight, which at once destabilizes the Critique … Rather, that beyond as which the noumenon is characterized now becomes something like a category of thinking (along with the limit itself). It is the mind that posits noumena in the sense in which its experience of each phenomenon includes a beyond along with it; in the sense in which the mirror has a tain, or the wall an outside. The noumenon is not something separate from the phenomenon, but part and parcel of its essence… ." Jameson, *Hegel Variations*, 29. I differ from Jameson in assigning that exact insight to Kant (before Hegel), but where Hegel takes it as positive license to expand cognition into the limit, Kant understands the accessibility of the limit's outside to cognition to be the *precise* reason why it is finitized. See Ch. 5.

objects) or by psychological laws (for imaginary ones), and fulfilled from within themselves by the resistive force against us of either modifications of immanent sense or resistance against/attraction for moral will.

On Kantian Metaphysics and the Semiotic Problem

We have now made our way through the overgrown foundation of Kant's architectonic and into the tower of reason. We are close to the central observatory chamber, in which Kant made the measurements that allowed him to trust reason against the apparent evidence of the illusion on the horizons. As we approach, we also are caught at last by the specter haunting the island: I previously described the isolation of the transcendental object-as-such in experience as the vision of a 'ghost', and this too is a ghost, since it is a deeper dimension or unfolding of the transcendental object. This ghost, however, is a trickster: we must now discuss the structure of "transcendental illusion".

The basic mechanism of "transcendental illusion" is very simple. It is a logical consequence of Kant's original framework of judgment, as discussed in Chapter 2. Every concept, in order to be 'given' or have reference, must be accompanied by a pseudo- or intentional object, the latter being co-structured by passive understanding and formal sensibility, meaning that it is pseudo-spatiotemporal. In other words, we think of every objective concept we have as being distinct from us in space and time [A277-80/B333-36]. "Now it is true that anything, even every presentation insofar as one is conscious of it, can be called an object" [A189/B234]. The very simple trick is that not every objective concept is fulfilled by empirical intuition as a real object, and yet our thinking 'fills in' the spatiotemporal reference in the same way that our eyes 'fill in' the missing optical information in a deliberately designed visual illusion. At the very beginning of *KdrV,* Kant actually summarizes the whole secret of transcendental idealism in a single sentence, which passes by unnoticed because its meaning is at that point still cryptic: "For these principles, which properly pertain to sensibility, do actually threaten to expand the bounds of sensibility until they include everything, thus threatening to displace even the pure (practical) use of reason" [B xxv]. It is *sensibility*, the pure spatiotemporal form of the object-as-such, which transgresses into *understanding* by cloaking every concept in bounding 'surfaces' which allow it to stand 'over-against' other ideas and 'over-against' the process of reasoning itself as 'material' or 'element'.

The extent of the trick which has been played on us here should not be underestimated. As an illusion intrinsic to the act of thinking, which is recursive, the illusion is recursive as well. It recurs in the attempts even to think through the illusion itself. "Transcendental illusion, on the other

hand, does not cease even when we have already uncovered it and have, through transcendental critique, had distinct insight into its nullity" [A297/B353]. When we try to think through what Kant is saying, we try to construct an *objective model* of his claims, because philosophy wants to take the objective point of view rather than the subjective (more on the peculiarities of objective language in Chapter 7). As Sartre says in *Being and Nothingness*, reflexive presence is the projection of a model which is precisely *not* what being is, which is "nothingness".[49] To understand what is not immediately before us, we must project a model which is an objective duplication and repetition in thought of the original object. It is precisely in attempting to transit to philosophical objectivity that we fall into transcendental illusion: in judging, we imagine *watching ourselves* doing what Kant is describing. There is a multiplication of entities that takes place, in which the entities are all distinguished from one another by pseudo-spatiotemporal distinction. That mechanism was disclosed for us in the above discussion of the doubling of appearance in the noumena-phenomena problem: it is the necessary thinking of a noumena as an object having *surfaces* which makes it impossible to understand how it can be interpenetrable with appearance. Kant's point is that all of this is an *illusion* of reason.

The structures generated in the process of transcendental illusion include the entirety of the apparatus of the objective self (more on selfhood in Chapter 5). Subjectivity, as an *object*, is an *illusion*. In considering reflectively what happens to us when we meet an empirical object, we try to distinguish the subjective *as object* from the objective, and so generate an objective 're-presentation' spatially distinct from empirical appearance which takes place 'inside' the objectified third party. Thus, for example, included here is the entire apparatus of a naïve philosophy of 'mind', in which 'concepts', 'representations', 'beliefs', 'sensations', etc., jostle for position 'in' a 'consciousness' or 'mind' which is simultaneously everyone's mind and no one's mind.[50] We watch 'Smith' or 'Jones' undergo 'mental events' as outside observers of a projected 'interior' which does not actually exist.[51] The "Cartesian theater", the pseudo-experience of having a 'private mind' as a *space* where ideas and perceptions happen and interact, is an illusion of spatio-temporal distinctness generated by the "sublation" of formal sensibility into pure thought. The idea that the 'mind' holds 'appearances' which have to be matched 1:1 with 'objects' in the 'world', the so-called "mind-world" problem, is a pseudo-problem, because its concept of 'mind' and of 'world' are both cloaked

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49 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel Barnes (Pocket Books, 1978): 79-81.

50 Despite E.J. Lowe's avowal that "there is no such thing as 'the mind'" (8), there is nevertheless an immediate plunge for the remainder of the work into these kinds of difficulties in then describing the relation of 'persons' and their 'states' to 'bodies': E.J. Lowe, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

51 These are the characters in Edmund Gettier's famous "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", *Analysis* 23:6 (1963): 121-3.

in spatiotemporal pseudo-objectivity by the unavoidable mechanism of transcendental illusion. All of these structures are "subreptively" spatialized, and that is how transcendental illusion works and infects all of our thinking constantly. Reason, coming into contact with this ghost, is put under a spell which generates an infinite labyrinth of pseudo-ontological entities extending in every direction. For each recursive repetition of the act of thought, a new, further pseudo-entity is generated as the 'objective' correlate to the effort to escape.

Let us take a case study. A major objection to Kant's thought from the early days is that Kant's system fails to defuse Hume's original claim that experience is only a "constant conjunction": that is, if the causal ordering of experience is a transcendentally subjective contribution, can it not still be the case that experience is intrinsically without causal ordering?[52] Kant's answer, given in the Analogies of Experience, is that objectively real experience, as distinguished from subjective impression, simply *is* causally ordered, organized "according to a necessary rule of succession" [A197/B242-A203/B249]. It is precisely the causal ordering of objective experience which makes it *possible* to distinguish it from subjective impressions [A202/B247]. Naturally, those searching for an 'argument' here have found Kant's discussion quite unsatisfactory, and it can justly be considered as begging the question against Hume.[53]

However, Kant is not trying to prove that *things in themselves* are causally ordered; only that appearances *as objective* must be ordered in necessary temporal succession. The necessary temporal succession of experience is what makes an appearance an empirical "object" rather than just an "appearance" [A197/B242]. If we start from the idea that all presentations are modifications of the subjective empirical manifold, the question is: what makes us think that some of them are 'real'? It is the fact that some of them obey a necessary law of temporal succession (which is the schematization of the law of cause and effect).

Now, to understand why this genuinely constitutes a reply to Hume, we must remember that 'objective appearance' for Kant is *direct phenomenological perception of the world*. The objective 'contents of my consciousness' *are* the objectified real world, but we have made them 'contents', and occluded the problem from ourselves, in the very act of reflecting on what Kant is saying. What Hume is actually *doing* is conducting a thought experiment. Hume, crucially, does not deny that the objective world *appears* to obey a necessary law of cause and effect; therefore he is actually constructing a '*possible world'* in which there is a projected third sequence of non-causally ordered 'appearances in themselves', separate from the 'causal objective world' (which is supposedly our projection) *and* from our subjective play of "successive impressions" [A190-191/B235-236]. Kant's

[52] Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 288, 325.

[53] For a sympathetic discussion of the Analogies see Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 479-500. "Begging the question": Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 325.

real question to Hume is the question of what the ontological status of a '*possible world*' is. *Where* is the spacetime in which the 'third sequence' is taking place? Kant's answer is that it is taking place in Hume's imagination, and Hume's imagination has falsely cloaked it in a spatiotemporal objectivity which seems to give it *objective possibility* as a given object of thought. But in *actuality* there is no gap between the subjective order of impressions, in which our thinking is playing, and the objective order which *is* experience itself, in which our sensory bodies are grounding us. Hume's 'third space' is a metaphysically hypostatized space, a folded chamber in the labyrinth of illusion, containing 'appearances in themselves' which we are only accessing in thought rather than in reality. There is nothing *really* at that level but the silent presence of Being, which does not admit of conceptual determination. Thus Kant can validly reply simply by showing that objective experience of appearances is causally ordered because it *is*, and if it wasn't we would not know the difference between our sequence of impressions of a house's faces and the apparent objectivity of the house, making it impossible for truth to exist between them [A191-193/B236-238].

To really attain the true depth of the transcendental perspective like this, to realize that all of one's reflective attempts even to grasp Kant's own argument are *still* taking place in hallucinatory spacetime chambers of objective reasoning, is a deeply insecure and strange feeling. Kant's 'touchstone', which allows us to feel our way out of the hallucinatory maze of thinking, is the fact that the only true real is the real that is given through impacts against the body. "Nothing is actually given to us but perception and the empirical advance from it to other possible perceptions" [B521]. To give an apt analogy, it is as if we have been bewitched by the ghost of transcendental illusion, and even though our eyes tell us that there is nothing but a void, we must proceed on flagstones that the soles of our feet still tell us are real. The incredible difficulty and power of Kant's model is that it collapses counterfactual speculation into direct contact with phenomenological experience. To be consistent inside Kant's system, we will have to say that the 'place' of imagination, if it is not to be unreal, can be nowhere else except just where my empirical self is: here and now, entangled in objects in the phenomenal world. My reflections on the past and future are spilled out into the structure of the objects with which I am surrounded in the present.

Another important consequence of these reflections is the explanation of an ambiguity that runs throughout *KdrV*, which finds its textual stem in the word "metaphysics". [B308] Consider the curious doubling of 'metaphysics' in the Prefaces to *KdrV*, where Kant claims on the one hand that metaphysics exceeds the bounds of pure reason [Bxxiv-v], but on the other hand claims that dogmatic metaphysics is both possible and also inevitable [B xxxvi]. The explanation is that Kant's text itself is continually eliding between "metaphysics" understood from the clarified post-transcendental perspective, and "metaphysics" understood from within the hallucinations of

transcendental illusion, and Kant simply relies on the context of the discussion to make clear to the reader which sense is in play.[54] I think that my reading succeeds in straightening out these apparent textual contradictions in the play of senses of "metaphysics".[55] Although Kant limits "transcendental illusion" only to the three "ideals" of "special metaphysics", I have hopefully shown along the way that the mechanism of transcendental illusion, which consists in the multiplication of 'given' pseudo-objects as placeholders for concepts, also explains many traps and difficulties in the so-called 'philosophy of mind', and the assumption of the broader extension of the illusion is necessary to render Kant's argument in *KdrV* intelligible.

Now, we will push into the illusion one step farther, and raise, in a preliminary form, the question which will be our 'guiding thread' until the close of the investigation. In the first part of the present chapter, we considered what we could call the 'normal' or 'direct' relation of concepts-objects-Being, in the discussion of 'subjective idealism'. Concepts must have an inner ground as objects and objects must have an inner ground in existing, meaning that the 'normal' function is valid and functional within transcendental idealism. In the discussion just above, we (reflexively) considered the first mode of transcendental illusion, in which a concept generates an object which is lacking metaphysical fulfillment (these are the three ideals of reason, and also the structure of philosophical imagination itself). But there is a third case to consider: a situation in which a concept generates an object out of what cannot be metaphysically fulfilled because the metaphysical *exceeds* the possibility of determination.

The correlation of pseudo-object with concept is the structural basis of "transcendental illusion": the illusion is that because we have the concept 'God' (for example) we are given a conceptual pseudo-*object* to correspond to it which lacks empirical sensible evidence, but which we at first take for granted as 'given' and therefore as objectively real. "For in order to reach God, freedom, and immortality, speculative reason must use principles that in fact extend merely to objects of possible experience; and when these principles are nonetheless applied to something that cannot be an object of experience, they actually do always transform it *into an appearance*, and thus they declare all practical expansion of reason to be impossible" [B xxx, emphasis added]. The

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[54] For example, this is how I resolve Kant's frequent use of the distinction between 'thinking' and 'cognition'. It is often left unclear by Kantian commentators of 'immanent metaphysics' leanings what exactly the content of 'thinking' would be if *only* 'cognition' attends to an object (still less if objects can only be empirical and real). Rather, in the hallucinatory perspective both 'thinking' and 'cognition' have an object and Kant's text is, as expository, implicitly speaking in the transcendental: one type of what *appears* to be cognition is *actually* (transcendentally) 'thinking'. But both of these senses must be read in the text for the distinction to be understood.

[55] Stephen Palmquist defends, in terms worth studying, a position along these lines in *Kant's System of Perspectives: An architectonic interpretation of the Critical philosophy* (University Press of America, 1993), although I think his structure of 'perspectives' is perhaps overly complex and introduces unnecessary internal divisions into Kant's terminology.

problem is that it is the *concept* which generates the object and begins transcendental illusion. As Jameson writes:

> "For all such words obey a kind of retroactive paradox in which it is the articulation that produces the afterimage of the object it ends up naming (but which did not, of course, exist in that form before the name). "The self knows itself as actual," as Hegel puts it, "only as a transcended self" (365/299), where the term *aufgehoben* designates just this constructivist quasi-temporal paradox of the positing of an object by way of what conceptually brings it into being in the first place".[56]

That is why Kant points out that, transcendentally speaking, the system of concepts extends farther than the system of objects – we can name what is outside objectivity, but precisely in so doing we make the supra-objective illusively objective, endlessly deferring what we hope to grasp directly.[57]

The 'excessive' case in point for us here is the word 'Being', which along with "force" in the metaphysical sense, or 'Real', I have been using to populate the content of the term 'metaphysics' for our purposes. Now, the problem here is that these words have taken over the function of the ground for my investigation and for transcendental idealism itself. I have been trying to present the case, against the 'metaphysics of experience' position, that Kant also sees the structure of reason as unfolding at a border on the other side of which is the colorful multiplicity of existing rather than nothingness. The question is how it is possible to *assert* the determinate difference between a positive and a negative indeterminacy, between existence and nonexistence. The puzzle is that it is the *idea* "noumena" that generates the *object* "thing-in-itself"; but, further, in the special case now under consideration, that makes it simultaneously impossible to reflectively recover the genuine presence of supra-objective Being, *because* it also turns supra-objective being into the object-concept 'Being' in the same movement of grasping.[58] The non-identical repetition which makes us unable to grasp the Divine also makes us unable to grasp the ground of existing which is necessary to explain thought itself.[59]

In other words, the very fact that signs are always accompanied in the act of judgment by objects creates a second, and perverse, problem which *covers over* the direct structure of 'empirical realism' described above: the problem of *reflectively* accessing objects and the supra-objective. It

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56 Jameson, *Hegel Variations*, 86.

57 Cf. B148-9: "The further extension of the concepts *beyond* our sensible intuition is of no benefit to us whatsoever".

58 This is precisely Derrida's argument in *Voice and Phenomenon*: Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2009): 59-62, 73, 75-77.

59 In relation to the discussion of this whole section cf. Emmanuel Falque, "The Extra-Phenomenal", *Diakrisis Yearbook of Theology and Philosophy* I (2018): 9–28.

seems that Kant, operating at the ontological level, thought that he had genuinely succeeded in making a connection between the ontological/objective structure of consciousness and the force of reality which necessarily fulfilled it (as we shall see more fully in Chapter 6). We can likewise see that at the *ontological* level such claims are unproblematic. We *can* directly *experience* the supra-objective root of objectivity in the loss of difference between subject and object, the positive overflowing of indeterminate existence outside of time and space (a mystical experience). We can directly experience the unity between the empirical and transcendental self in the 'punctual I'.[60] We can directly experience the force of sensory affection fulfilling the objective structure of appearance and reassuring us, through resistance, that the physical world is not a dream. However, we can neither objectify nor articulate such encounters in an identical way (meaning that the articulation would correctly re-produce the non-objectivity of the supra-objective). The only way to correctly articulate the supra-objective is to lose the ability to speak, to be struck mute with wonder or despair.[61] Second, and in reverse, we *can* describe the supra-objective loss of objectivity, which is, indeed, what I have just done above, but only by covering over the opening to the non-objective real by the reintrusion of the system of signs: because signs refer to objects, the *real cannot be uttered non-objectively*.[62] Uttering the real makes it another sign, placing it in the horizontal layer of difference between signs, and in doing so also makes it another object, placing it in the horizontal layer of difference between objects. In order to be philosophical or knowable as a reflective achievement, the result of the extra-ontological exploration must be *articulable* (Powell on Kant and communication).[63] But the requirement of articulation restricts the limits of the ontological to be co-extensive with the limits of the semiotic, because the unity of the act of judgment issues both simultaneously. In reflective thought, in other words, the system of signs leaps again to cover over our intuition which had pushed beyond the ontological, and so the no-thing beyond objectivity

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60 Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook*, 149.

61 "The point is that the potential of thinking itself must first *be* in a way that it cannot itself explain. Getting to the origin of the potential within thought would entail the ability to recognise the origin when it is reached, but this is the problem we have repeatedly encountered: how could it recognise something which is a priori excluded from knowledge, by reflection? Gasché seems unaware of this problem when he claims with regard to Hegel: 'With this self-inclusion of absolute reflection, which escapes any further reflection, not only is reflection overcome, for it is comprised, but also absolute reflection becomes the ultimate totality of all possible relations, the relation to self included' (Gasché 1986 p. 63). The question is how this could ever be *known.*" Bowie, *Schelling*, 166.

62 "In short, the issue is not the *givenness of the phenomenon of non-givenness* (a phenomenology of night); rather, it is the *non-givenness of givenness itself*—neither by *privation* nor by *excess* but by *abnegation* (the night of phenomenology). Kant's cinnabar or his "melee of sensations" is not merely a "fourth synthesis"; instead, as Gilles Deleuze saw, it is a '*vanishing point,*' the 'the empty space that ceases even to be a sign of lack,' a 'line of flight that *wanders* so much the line itself disappears, *whose wandering leads to madness*.'" Falque, "The Extra-Phenomenal", 26.

63 Powell, *Freely Chosen Reality*, 35-36: "Hence 'an object [of experience can never be and is never] given to us' except as 'universally communicable' to others. So *communication to others belongs to the conditions of the possibility of objects of experience*. This communicability consists in the a priori proportioning of the powers of individuals to one another."

becomes cloaked in a 'thingness' which is an illusion granted by the intentionally objective structure of the *concept*, i.e., at the semiotic rather than ontological level. Thus it is only to travel from the center to the shore of the island of reason which Kant already mapped long ago [A236/B295].

The question here is not meta-philosophical, for, as Fichte said, "the question of the possibility of philosophy is itself a philosophical question".[64] It is, however, a meta-*linguistic* question. The only concrete possibilities remaining for the urge to think are to either remain silent, as the ancient skeptics did, or to proceed in language with the awareness that the use of language is now radically provisional and the question of *where* language stands, of its ontological status and ground, must be answered for philosophy to become fully valid and transparent. Now, in following Kant's thought, we realize that it is not static but constantly *disappearing*; the house of the architectonic that we have been painstakingly digging out is being covered anew by sands falling in on us as we race along after Kant's vanishing footsteps. It is 'a proof spinning like a top' [B 424].

These observations about something fundamentally mirage-like at the very heart of transcendental idealism are not, of course, new. By distinguishing the ontological from the semiotic problem of mediation, I think I have succeeded in sharpening the point which Jacobi or Hamann were originally trying to make, but which suffered from an unclarity between the status of the 'thing-in-itself' as an object and the question of the transcendental standpoint as *philosophy*. The question is not whether *objects* are grounded in existing but whether *language* can *also* be grounded in existing, because what has been revealed is that it requires its own, separate ground. That is, we suddenly realize, what do we *mean* by 'force'? If we know what 'force' is, doesn't that make it just another object? But if we don't know what 'force' is, how can it be the ground of objectivity and satisfy reason as a resting place? Kant's attempt to discuss cognitions which 'do not extend theoretical knowledge', along with Lyotard's attempt to follow Kant into the 'basement', as it were, of thought, also are vulnerable to that second-order accusation. We will pursue these concerns farther in Chapters 6-7.

For the time being, we will proceed in the now-unstable structure of Kant's thinking, choosing to suspend the problem of our own journey's possibility until we have seen the structure of subjectivity (Ch. 5) and learned more about the roots of language itself in the act of judgment (Ch. 6). If we succeed in gathering a few more tools from the later *Critiques*, we will be poised to attempt an 'escape' from Kant's system and a closure, which is at the same time an opening, of the system of language into Being (Ch. 7).

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[64] Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre,* 89.

Chapter 5: The Self-As-Object

In the present chapter we turn to Kant's transcendental disclosure of subjectivity, as the dyadic correlate and counterbalance of the object. However, to properly grasp Kant's views on subjectivity we have to be again careful to start from the right point: namely, a return to direct empirical experience. All that we have in thinking, and our perennial philosophical beginning, is a surrounding world, a world-to-us, within which – and only from within which – the formal structures of objectivity and subjectivity can be purified and abstracted by an act of discriminating reflection. The transcendental unity of apperception, just like the deduction of the categories and the deduction of the ideality of spacetime, and like every transcendental investigation, works backwards: we are *in* empirical experience, and the 'I' has just vanished from behind us. We have to turn quickly to catch the eddyings or vanishing traces *in* the objective, which is the only philosophical material available, of the prior passing of the world-constituting subjective within us.

In turning from the general structure of objectification in-the-world to its conceptual correlate, the 'self', the immediate question is: does Kant hold that the invariance of intentional objectification holds consistently here as well, and that conscious activity has likewise generated a 'self' determined in spacetime and through the categories? Kant does indeed hold that the 'self' is an intentional object which has been determined through objectifying consciousness [B156-59]. The 'self' has a special place in Kant's system of phenomenological objects: unlike empirical objects, the self can never be 'fulfilled' by categorial determinations through the senses. Therefore, selfhood as a unified locus or terminus of experience is an *irreal* object, one of the three irreal objects of special metaphysics (God, self, and the totality of the world) – it is projected into objectivity as an indispensable necessary reference of human thinking, a "regulative principle" [A672/B700]. The impossibility of 'fulfilling' the self (as well as God and world-totality) through sensible intuition is demonstrated by the incoherence which results when reason attempts to reach the actual ontological ground of these objects through their merely phenomenological ontology.[1] Therefore, Kant does not discuss the self as an object among empirical objects but places it in the special discussion of the failures of reason to find the actual ontological ground of the three metaphysical regulative boundaries of reasoning-in-the-world: the Transcendental Dialectic (with the Paralogisms of Pure Reason devoted specifically to the 'I').

However, the position of the 'self' as an object in Kant's system is not only special but unique [A341/B399], because Kant has referred the productions of the unseen transcendental

[1] For a good discussion of the structure of Kant's "Antinomy" see O'Shea, *Kant's Critique*, 60-65.

activity of synthesis back to the subject via the Copernican hypothesis. That means that the structure of all empirical objects-in-the-world, as well as the regulative objects of God and worldhood, ultimately are productions of (transcendental) subjectivity. For that reason, we must ask whether Kant has also been consistent in applying the phenomenal-noumenal structure of appearance to the object of the 'self', and the answer is that he has, splitting the 'self' into a known and an unknown [A383].[2] Therefore, we need to delineate and explore a complex set of structures in discussing the Kantian 'self'. First, in experience we have the trace of subjectivity, which is then objectified as the 'empirical self'. The passing of subjectivity in experience, however, also is a trace leading to the inference of the contentless 'transcendental ego' or 'noumenal self'. Furthermore, we have already seen, in Chapter 3, that the 'subjective' appears in our knowledge as part of the object/subject dyad of the totality of consciousness, and we will see in the present chapter that the "subjective" begins to have its own signature trace in "*non*-sensible intuition", "feeling", or "auto-affection".[3] In tracing the 'noumenal self' and the activity of transcendental apperception, insofar as we can, we need to ask whether we can prevent that root of apperception from becoming not just the *cognition* but the *creation* of all experience and its contents, letting the transcendental ego slide from the ontological to the metaphysical and becoming the Absolute of subjective idealism. It is precisely our lack of determinate knowledge of the origin of transcendental apperception that prevents it from becoming the ground of our whole system of knowledge. The delicate balance between the non-existence of selfhood and the totalization of selfhood is the path we must now navigate after Kant.

The Illusion of Transparent Selfhood: The Paralogisms and Self-Knowledge

Our initial traversal of the structures of subjectivity will proceed 'synthetically' or 'empirically': from pure sensation, to the domain of the ontological subject or 'me', to the domain of pure reason or the operations of transcendental apperception, although these are not sequential stages but secondary divisions within a unity. As we have seen, in Kant's phenomenology of 'pure perception' the sensible reception of beings actually occurs at the dimensionless surface of personhood: the interface between the body and the world. The 'interiority' where senses are united in a manifold and given categorial structure is (phenomenologically) a mere projection towards an 'inward' pole which finds its justification as a counterweight to the pull of objectivity in the world. In direct experience, in the suspension of thinking, we actually find ourselves pushed out into and

[2] Compare to Sartre's analysis of "nothingness" as the modality of the for-itself, the 'gap' or 'distance' to the "in-itself": Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 75-77. Cf. Gardner, *Guidebook*, 130.

[3] The best discussion of the unique status of these elements is in Lyotard, *Sublime*: cf. 17-19, 22-25.

immersed into the world.[4] From my first-person point of view, the surface of perception is not only at the edge of my body but also at the edge of the *object*. If the object is given as *over there*, my sensing has also extended *over there* to constitute that object as for-me [A376]. Since that is the case, the description of the supposed 'structures' of consciousness, for Kant, is a delicate bridge extended inward into the 'non-space' behind awareness, but, as we have seen from the previous discussion of transcendental illusion's mechanism (Ch. 4), Kant neither gives nor requires a license to assume the metaphysical reality of any ontologically considered part of the transcendental inference of consciousness: rather, 'selfhood' needs to be no more than a 'regulative ideal'.[5] That is one of the reasons why Kant insists on the presence of the I as a mere *correlate* to the presence of the object in the Deduction [A123]. It is the world, and only the world, that is real and available; hypostatized philosophical description of 'consciousness' is the mere projection of spatiotemporally objectifying intentionality into a hypothesized self-object which is inferred from its traces in the world, nothing more.[6] The fact that the inevitable metaphor for ontologized consciousness is a *space* analogous to the world is exactly Kant's point: in the inevitable thinking of consciousness as an object, we inevitably project a separate space-time for memory which really exists nowhere. We have to "draw time as a line" to recognize it [B154]; but the actual structure of bare sensation, and of pure perception as such, is the flat and immanent plane of sense wherein the force of sense between being and being commingles, like the single dimension of the rippling surface of a disturbed pond.

At the ontological layer of direct perception, if consciousness is spilled out entirely into the world, that means that reciprocally, the world is the world-as-consciousness. All we know or can know is exclusively *as* being known, as signaled by its formal structuring even as appearance.[7] All of the German idealists from Salomon Maimon onwards emphasize the importance of the double movement of imagination as structuring both the spontaneous, in active reflexive synthesis, *and* the

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4 For a very interesting reconstruction of 'embodiment' as a basic structure of all the Critiques, see Angelica Nuzzo, *Ideal Embodiment: Kant's Theory of Sensibility* (Indiana University Press, 2008); cf. 316-320.

5 "The self therefore represents an ideal distance within the immanence of the subject in relation to himself, a way of not being his own coincidence, of escaping identity while positing it as unity…" Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 77.

6 Sartre's reconstruction of an explicitly Kantian view of the bifurcated 'I' in *Transcendence of the Ego*, is in my view exactly in accordance with the one I present throughout the present work. "[There] is no I on the unreflected level… There is consciousness of *the-streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken*, etc., … . In fact, I am then plunged into the world of objects…" Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness*, trans. Robert Kirkpatrick and Forrest Williams (Noonday Press, 1960): 48-49.

7 The phenomenological recasting of this situation, which I have argued throughout the present project, places Kant in proximity to Hegel, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger rather than to the kind of second-stage, reflective considerations about "conceptualism" and "non-conceptualism" which have populated Kant studies in English: see Dennis Schulting (ed.), *Kantian Nonconceptualism* (Palgrave McMillan, 2016), for any number of examples of an approach to Kant which fundamentally depends on the hypostatization of the "mind" and which I think is therefore based on a misunderstanding, despite its many interesting exegeses of Kant's arguments.

given, in passive synthesis, considering that their major point of departure from Kant.[8] It is thus very odd that, as far as I can tell, none of these figures seem to have attributed the doctrine of 'passive synthesis' to Kant himself, even Schelling, whom one would think would have closely searched Kant's 'empirical realism' for support in developing his 'objective nature' against Fichte.[9] I have argued, therefore, that the doctrine of the 'passive synthesis' of imagination as 'the given' is already clearly documented in Kant's Transcendental Deduction, and is not, as Maimon claims, a later revision to transcendental idealism.

The consequent nuancing of the disagreement here is of great importance. Maimon objected to Kant on the grounds that there was an 'unbridgeable gulf' between understanding and sensibility, which we can see operates on the (mis)understanding that for Kant sensibility *alone* is operative at the ontological level of perception.[10] However, Kant asserts instead that sensation is structured as intuition by sensibility, and the latter structured *also,* still as the given, by understanding. Understanding *returns* to actively and reflexively cognize objective structure in spontaneous analysis. Kant's view is therefore a true idealism, but one which nevertheless exempts being and its empirical manifestations, sensibility, from the total closure of consciousness with itself. Maimon and Fichte wanted to render transcendental idealism properly scientific by deriving the totality of consciousness, all the way down to the particularity of sense, from an originary principle.[11] Kant's reply to Fichte is that it is logically impossible to derive the particularity of sense from the universal under which it is included: to define a particular, in traditional logic, one must already know not only the genus but also the specifying difference.[12] Although, for Kant, the already constituted object is decomposable only into sensible elements which are also always themselves already objects, the particularity of sense nevertheless remains irreducible to the act of combination which is the signature of understanding's activity.[13] "Grittiness" and "redness" are *facts*. Over against the effort of consciousness to derive itself as a pure system of reason is being disclosing itself through the irreducibly diverse facticity of sensations: it is the bare fact that sensibility is in-itself *difference,* and any gathering together of sensibility's multiplex facticity is already a synthesis, which

8 See Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 289-292.

9 However, see Luis Fellipe Garcia, "Nature at the Core of Idealism: The Birth of Two Strands of Post-Kantian Philosophy", *Idealistic Studies* 51:1 (2021): 27–49, for the contrasting claim that Schelling (and Fichte) are consciously developing tensions internal to Kantianism rather than transcending it.

10 Beiser, *Fate,* 291-292.

11 Beiser, *Fate,* 296-298.

12 For example, the fact that I know that both 'chalk' and 'pen' fall under the genus 'writing instrument' does not give me the particular information that chalk is a white mineral substance. Beiser, *Fate,* 245-246, 295-296; cf. Kant, "Public Letter on Fichte" [Ak. 12:359-60].

13 For example, "redness" as decomposed from a red object must still be inscribed on a pseudo-spatial plane in imagination, which is the evidence of its objectivity. It is not possible to isolate a sensation by itself as a 'raw feel', but it is, I think, possible to negatively abstract the common structure of objectivity to grasp by contrast the irreducibility of sensible particularity (Reinhold may have had a point here: Beiser, *Fate of Reason,* 261-262).

demonstrates the irreducible foothold of 'nature' or 'realism' in Kant's transcendental idealism.[14] Kant's 'failure' to make transcendental idealism a self-deriving science of 'identity philosophy' is thus precisely his phenomenological strength: consciousness organizes itself as an effort of abstract unification *against* the irreducibly multiple particularity of being's manifestations.[15]

Going one step farther, the absolute idealists after Maimon also redefine the activity of understanding which is responsible for generating *objective* perception or 'the given' as a universal or infinite 'I': the *das Ich* or Absolute.[16] We are now considering sensation as gathered together as the field of the objective. On my reading, for Kant the *das Ich* or infinite, transpersonal I of Maimon, Fichte or Hegel is simply a false metaphysical hypostatization of the ontological structure of direct perception. For Kant the 'given' is not an *infinite* I, but a *public* 'I', which underwrites the apparent intersubjective validity of empirical experience via the invariance of the structure of categorial objectivity. What we normally think of as the 'private' domain, in which we commune with ourselves and experience an unreeling thread of thoughts, motives, memories, reactions, fantasies, etc., must, as a logical consequence of Kant's placing the synthesis of appearances in the spatiotemporal world, be considered *phenomenologically* (not metaphysically) 'public'. The memories invoked by a perceived object are in some way *part* of that object. My angry reaction to something someone says to me is not *in* me but *between* us. That is why the disentangling of the subjective from the objective, which takes place at the level of reflection, comes in the form of a disagreeable surprise in the Judgment of Taste in *KU*.[17] For Kant the empirical world of appearance is itself the evidence and the domain of intersubjectivity, because what we perceive has been constituted as universal through the function of judgment (see Ch. 6/7). That also has some implications for the interpretation of Kant's fundamentally communal theories of politics and morality, the social body as a *sensus communis*.[18] However, on Kant's critical view the former is not a transpersonal, metaphysical *Geist* or 'collective unconscious' but merely the ontologically public structure of passive understanding, alienated from itself as 'the given'. The false hypostatization of the passive understanding turns phenomenology into metaphysics, and transforms the *personal* history of philosophical enlightenment into the *metaphysical* history of the unfolding of Absolute

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14 Falkenstein develops this point in his "blindness thesis", but does not (in my understanding) leave space for the pure phenomenological form of objectivity-as-such between 'concepts' and 'blindness': Falkenstein, *Kant's Intuitionism*, 57-58.

15 See di Giovanni, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 12-13.

16 Beiser, *Fate*, 293-295.

17 The objective is universal as given, and here the subjective order of the concept is now disclosed as *duplicating* the universalization of the objective, in a way that has to be further explored, but allows for illusion to enter. The extremely far-reaching significance of this structure will not be developed fully in the present investigation but will play a key role in chapter 7.

18 See Alex Cain, "The Metaphysical Spectator and the Sphere of Social Life in Kant's Political Writings", *Critical Horizons* 21:2 (2020): 153–66.

Spirit. Kant's general methodological tool of 'transcendental illusion', applied here, indicates that there is no justification for doing so.[19]

Withdrawing from the empirical domain of subjectivity to a more 'abstracted' reflexive consideration, when we turn to think about 'ourselves' alone, it will identically be a constant temptation built into the inalterable formal structure of our awareness to reify a 'subject', to turn 'the subject' or 'the self' into an object where no such object really exists. Kant is quite clear that he considers this the true state of affairs in the "Paralogisms" of *KdrV*. In the Paralogisms, Kant's discussion is directed toward the traditional "predicaments" or conclusions of "rational psychology": that the soul is substantial, simple (without internal parts), numerically identical, and related to "*possible* objects in space" (Kant's italics) [A341-8/B399-406]. Although Kant only devotes a brief discussion to the question, we can see that it is these "predicaments" which give rise to the problem of "empirical idealism": the emergence of the metaphysically self-grounding 'self' which is then cast as the ontological and pre-existing ground of merely "*possible"* objects in space.

A "paralogism" generally speaking, Kant states, is a type of argument which is wrong in its formal structure, regardless of its contents [A341/B399]. In this case, the starting point of rational psychology is the bare apperception "I think". Kant points out that, rather than being itself contentful, the "I think" is a empty form or container which is structuring all other possible thoughts as being *my* thoughts: it is the bare possibility of my consciousness of whatever it is I am presently conscious of [A342-3/B400-401]. Since that is the case, the objective thought "I think" is actually composed of two non-identical pieces: the "I" who is the object of the thought and the "I think" which is the reference making "I think" *my* thought.[20] "This subject is cognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the least concept of it; hence we revolve around it in a constant circle, since in order to make any judgment regarding it we must always already make use of its presentation" [A346/B404]. Thus the attempt to make pure subjectivity bend around to touch itself only results in the objectified deferral of subjectivity in the pure object: "Hence we can say about the thinking *I* … that it cognizes *not so much itself through the categories*, but cognizes the categories… in the absolute unity of apperception and hence *through itself*" [A402, emphasis original]. In other words, the "false form" of the paralogisms consists in inadvertently but necessarily placing the form of the object in place of the subject, and

[19] "Hegel's view of the relation between categories and forms of judgment is similar to Kant's at least in one respect: there is a fundamental relation (in need of clarification) between the structural features of the acts of judging and the structural features of objects. The difference between Hegel's view and Kant's view is that Hegel takes this relation to be a fact about being itself, and the structures thus revealed to be those of being itself, whereas Kant takes the relation between judging and structures of being to be a fact about the way human beings relate to being, and the structures thus revealed to be those of being as it appears to human beings." Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint,* 109.

[20] Compare with Longuenesse, "Kant on the Identity of Persons", 149-167.

then filling that object with the empirical intuition of apperception, yielding "the illusion of regarding the unity in the synthesis of thoughts as a perceived unity in the subject of these thoughts [which] one might call… the subreption of the hypostatized self-consciousness" [A402]. That demonstration yields the fragments of Kantian selving: 1) the uncognizable existence which is the grounding condition of the unity of my consciousness, i.e. a 'true self', which drops out of the discussion as unnameable, perpetually and instantly occluded by the noumenal subject; 2) the extrapolated subject which is in fact simply the displacement of the objective categories onto a "hypostasis" of apperception (noumenal subjectivity), and 3) the empirical subject distinguished in time-consciousness from the objective order (phenomenal subjectivity).

Passing through the reflexive thought of the self, we finally, in fact, return to the Cartesian intuition of 'I think', the glowing 'point' of inner immediacy.[21] Kant seems to deny the obvious presence of my self-identity to myself, my comfortable 'dwelling with myself' (Hegel) in immediacy upon which Descartes' method relies.[22] Can it really be true that we don't actually know that we are ourselves? To exaggerate somewhat in order to show the problem, on Kant's view, it could almost seem that 'I-activity' would be another mind, unknown to me in-itself, living in me and directing my thoughts – whereas what the ordinary perspective would certainly want to affirm is that 'I-activity' is *I*, and thus also *me* (that is, the identity of the empirical self and 'noumenal self' can be known or intuited).[23]

In fact, in my view Kant does not disagree with (e.g.) Schleiermacher or Fichte that there is the possibility of a pure experiencing of the reconciliation of 'I' to 'I' (the *transcendentale Standpunkt*), since he says so himself in the Paralogisms [A366].[24] The reason Kant repudiated the philosophical superstructures then built on these interpretations is that the *Standpunkt* cannot become *determinate* as immediate perception without retreating back into objectification (much less become cognizable as a concept, which is a representation of an object).[25] The only way to reach such an atomic experience is by letting go of the objective otherness of the world and the correlative identity of subjectivity, but that is precisely what makes the experience philosophically meaningless. The weight in the phrase "intellectual intuition" should not therefore be on "intuition",

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21 See Márton Dornbach, "The Point Well Missed: Kant's Punctual I and Schopenhauer's Optics of Philosophical Writing", *MLN* 124:3 (2009): 614-637.

22 G.W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic: part I of the* Encyclopedia of Sciences *with the Züsatze* (Hackett Publishing Co., 1991): 113-114 (§64).

23 In *The Embodied Self*, Thandeka manages to accuse Kant of both errors simultaneously: that Kant holds that everything we experience was produced in being by the self (subjective idealism) and also that we don't know the self at all (59-60).

24 Thandeka, *Embodied Self*, 88-89*;* Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy (Wissenschaftslehre) Nova Methodo (1766/99)*, trans. Daniel Breazale (Cornell University Press, 1998): 65-66.

25 This is the significance of Derrida homing in on the problem of 'infinity' as the center of the earlier problem of 'genesis' in Husserlian phenomenology: more on this point in the next section of the present chapter. Cf. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 204.

but on “intellectual”: Kant’s objection is that the pure immediacy of the intuition of self-presencing (which will be, for Kant, the auto-affection of freedom) cannot be turned into a self-founding proposition, because doing so goes through the secondary mediation of reflection. These considerations ground “practical cognition” without “expanding theoretical cognition” [Ak. 5:132-135].

In my view Kant’s objection is functionally identical to Schelling’s argument, in *Ages of the World* (*Weltalter*), against Hegel’s logic, and perhaps Schelling states the issue more clearly.[26] Hegel’s logic relies on the claim that the original immediacy of A=A (Being), and the “concrete” immediacy of A= -(-A) (the Concept), are identical: the Absolute knows itself. But the question here is whether, since reflection is a mediation, the Absolute knows it*self* or only knows an ‘it’ which has been *posited* as it-self. Schelling asserts that Hegel can only positively answer in favor of the former by secretly relying on an intuition, the Cartesian intuition of *it=itself*. Schelling makes a second argument against Hegel that the *being* of the thinking which completes the Logic is itself absent from the Logic.[27] Kant’s position amounts to exactly the same, on my view: not only is self-knowing deviated through the mediation of reflection, but it is also deviated through the time-consciousness which structures even pure thinking of a syllogism [A363-365], meaning that any ‘itself’ of pure reason is, in Deleuze’s terms, a “non-identical repetition” of identity.[28] The being which has thought the repetition always escapes the repetitive movement, since any attempt to formulate it is included within the dialectical logic and is therefore not being itself. Thus, for both Schelling and Kant before him, it is possible to prove logically within absolute reason itself that philosophy cannot be self-founding: rather, ‘being precedes thinking’.

To sum up the above, we are immanently in the midst of direct experience, which is for us already objectified. Our empirical evidence consists of the multiplicity of sensation and the subjective (but originally objectively given) elements of affect, feeling, situatedness, etc., which are the basis for the division of experience into the subjective and the objective. Beyond that, the structures of ‘me’ (empirical selfhood or passive selfhood), ‘self’ (transcendental selfhood), and ‘I’ (pure apperception) are ontologically constituted only through transcendental illusion: they are discursive functions of thought which have no ground, but are distinguished merely on the basis of the dividing and categorizing function of thought turned ‘inward’. Kant grants intuitive reality to the pure ‘I’ of dimensionless inner immediacy, but denies that the latter can be lifted into the domain of reflective propositional argument. Rather, it can be accessed only through a complex

[26] Cf. the reconstruction given in Bowie, *Schelling*, 168-174.
[27] Bowie, *Schelling*, 166.
[28] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1-2, 70-72.

derivation from the objective reality of good and evil as externalized appearances of freedom, an operation Kant undertakes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (to which we will turn in Chapter 6).

The 'False Self' and the Self-Unfolding of Pure Reason

From the previous 'synthetic' discussion of subjectivity, we turn now to an 'analytic' discussion, which proceeds from an organizing principle of 'reason'. Kant uses "reason" in two senses, a narrower sense in which reason is over against "understanding", and a broader sense in which reason includes all conscious operations of understanding, imagination and reason as the movement of 'judgment'. The organizing principle is the activity of reason as a double movement of grasping which unites and identifies a particular 'this', but in so doing also identifies an 'other' over against which the 'this' can be delineated.

Reason (in the broader sense) operates immanently in the midst of a kind of nothingness, but not a void: rather a nothingness so called because it is full of presence which cannot be made in any way distinct. It is not even a manifold yet, but just the homogenous infilling of act. In my view this is essentially identical to Merleau-Ponty's structure of "object" and "background", combined with the later idea of the "intertwining".[29] Reason takes one distinct thing at a time as its focus from the midst of that indeterminacy. This is its immanent operation, the "synthetic" judgments which directly constitute experience as such out of the relative nothingness of unconsciousness. Its secondary or meta-operation is to move along the rungs of an outer structure which emerges only gradually during the temporal, historical course of living thought. That outer structure is a hierarchy, the analytic organization of knowledge, in which concepts and objects are grouped under sets and then under universal headings [A662/B690]. These are the subjective and objective 'reference frames' of consciousness in their logical rather than phenomenological employment. The organization of knowledge takes place in two directions: one direction descends from the awareness of generals/universals to the identification of particulars, and the other ascends from experience of particulars to the deduction or identification of universals [A331-2/B388-9]. These operations are the "analytic" judgments which dissect and recombine already acquired object-concepts. Awakened reason finds itself already somewhere in the middle of this hierarchy, suspended between universals and particulars. The inner task of synthetic/analytic reason, as empirical, is to take the confused mass of particulars which are constantly accruing in empirical experience, and the assortment of partial or unsupported 'maxims' and 'theorems' we have picked up through education and

[29] "Object/background": Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 4; "Intertwining": Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining/The Chiasm", in *Visible and Invisible*, 146, 152.

experience, which organize some parts of our knowledge in an unsystematic and incomplete way, and gradually assemble these into a whole which is complete and consistent.[30] The two halves of that whole are the theoretical/speculative knowledge which models the world, and the practical knowledge which provides a guide or externalized scaffolding for action. (How they form a whole is a question yet to be approached.) We will call this whole the 'empirical' task of reason, or, to use Kant's terminology, the task of the "understanding" – reason as focused within empirical limits.

As Allison has argued in what he calls the "discursivity thesis", finite reason is bound by its necessary reference through sensibility.[31] For human reason to operate, since it is fundamentally a responsive activity, some empirical event of Being must have sparked the recognition of objectivity, beginning to equip reason with its library of concepts. But the event of sense involves a kind of amnesia, since in the event of being moved by hypothesized 'forces' the human person is immersed directly and immanently in the activity of the empirical world.[32] Consciousness, by contrast, is the theater of double removal from direct experience: whenever we know, in other words, is also when we have just 'come to', just awoken, and the things-in-themselves have once again retreated behind the appearances they have imprinted upon us. Reason's lust for the unconditioned is thwarted initially by the fact that, among the appearances of the empirical world, infinitude has always retreated behind the particular determinations of sensibility. Each object gives itself as being a reference to a tantalizing beyond within itself, which we only fully experience when the non-finite of ontological indeterminacy lines up with the non-finite of reflective failure, and the infinite shines through into us in the experience of beauty (Ch. 6).

However, what is perhaps insufficiently emphasized in Allison's account is that finite reason is doubly bound, through *judgment itself*. Pure consciousness is just as finite as sensible, empirical consciousness, because it is mediated statically through determination and genetically through sequential time.[33] Genetically, in the pure *now*, reason becomes aware that it has two distinct operations: immediate judgment, contained in the moment, and the reflective structure of relating immediate judgments to each other, which references events beyond the present moment. In taking up the second stance, immediate judgments are transformed into *materials* of the present singular operation of reason; that is, they become *given*. The given, separated through time from the present judgment, makes it structurally impossible for reason to reconcile being with knowing.[34]

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30 Cf. the "Architectonic of Pure Reason": [A832-35/B860-63].

31 Allison, *IF*, 6-8.

32 Cf. again Merleau-Ponty's late discussion of "*chair*" or "flesh": *Visible and Invisible*, 152.

33 This is why Kant emphasizes that finite reason would still be absolutely distinct from divine reason even if finite beings had sensibility of a totally different form than the human [B72].

34 Cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* vii-viii: "I cannot therefore constitute myself as a unique and active subject, but as a passive ego which represents to itself only the activity of its own thought… the *I*, as an Other which affects it. I am separated from myself by the form of time… The form of the determinable means that the

The difficulty is repeated statically, in the concept. In traditional logic, the definition of something is given through knowing its genus and its specific difference. Among the objects which reason can think is itself. On the basis of the experiential division of subjectivity into the infinite sequence of 'me's associated with particular objectifications, and the transcendental unity of the apperceptive reference, reason populates the empty concept of itself with its own genus, infinitude, and its specific difference, sequential or mathematical infinity. Finite reason objectifies itself as the pure function (t_1, t_2, t_3, …), wherein the times are the empirical selvings and the parentheses are the infinite unifying function of transcendental apperception. Reason is a determinate infinity both as a temporal sequence and as the accumulated result of that sequence – a definite recursive function endlessly traversing finite, determinate objects and assembling them into a whole with no definite stopping point [A665/B693]. In its endless accumulation of these objects, it cumulatively approaches actual infinity, in which all internal determinations would be erased, but it can never reach actual infinity because an endless determining sequence is irreducibly distinct from an actual indeterminacy: a structure which is functionally identical to Leibniz's integral calculus.[35] It is structurally impossible for determining reason to grasp actual infinity without transforming actual infinity into a determination of itself (a pseudo-object which has objective *boundaries*), or else losing reason entirely in a total loss of differentiation, which would include the loss of consciousness itself as a determination [A647/B675]. The bare fact that 'infinity' is a *this* as a determinate, bounded *concept* is itself the conclusive proof that it is a mere production of human reason. It is both statically bounded as a determinate concept and also genetically bounded as a step within the temporal sequence extrinsically governing the operations of finite reason.[36] Where, as far as I can tell, Leibniz occasionally seems to have given the impression that the difference between divine and human reason was simply that humans, trapped in time, could not live long enough to assemble the totality of analytic knowledge based on intellectual intuition, Kant makes the difference between divine and human reason *a priori*, qualitative rather than quantitative: humans *necessarily* cannot know as God knows, because even our infinity is different from God's infinity.[37]

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determined ego represents determination as an Other".

35 Kant explicitly makes this distinction in a line of reasoning including B540 and B545. Compare Cantor's reflections on infinity and the Absolute Other of negative theology: Rico Gutschmidt and Merlin Carl, "The negative theology of absolute infinity: Cantor, mathematics, and humility", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 95:3 (2024): 233-256.

36 It is worth comparing the overall discussion of this section, and the general issue of the co-opting of the "other" by the "subject", to the extensive parallels in the beginning of Levinas' lecture "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" – as well as Levinasian, and Heidegger-through-Levinasian, sketches of a different layout of the "ontological"/"metaphysical" layers of being and knowing, a comparative evaluation of which is unfortunately far outside our present scope. Emmanuel Levinas, "Martin Heidegger and Ontology", *Diacritics* 26:1 (1996): 11-32.

37 I find a similar argument given by Aquinas in the *Summa:* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars*, Q11:2, R.o. 1-4; Q11:3, R.o. 3; Q13:11 Resp.

The only infinity to which we have access is itself bound in the dividing chains of sequential time, not total (with-itself and in-itself, free of internal distinctions), but additive.

The point that the object of infinity, by its mere structure, is the non-identical repetition of indeterminacy allows the extension of Kant's critical point to the attempts of later speculative idealism to prove that reason can transcend itself in dwelling identically within the Absolute. The specific difference of mathematical repetition in determining the concept of finite reason is, through the double structure of judgment, simultaneously the generation of the concept of the 'other' of the genus of infinitude which is necessary to determine the boundaries of the first idea. The 'other' is the idea of a non-internally differentiated infinity, which is the totality of the objective: the regulative ideal of Nature [B391/393].[38] That idea, in being thought, generates again its own other, the idea of an infinity which is absolutely undifferentiated both internally and externally: God, the Divine [B391/393]. Where some of the later German Idealists argued that our reason's ability to grasp the distinction between iterative infinity and absolute infinity shows that we are capable of reaching absolute infinity Itself (the "Absolute"), Kant insists that the very same fact actually demonstrates the reverse conclusion: that 'absolute' infinity is only the 'other' or 'outside' generated by objective reason in the process of objectifying iterative infinity as a totality, and is therefore *itself* only another conceptual shadow or afterimage of whatever an actual absolute infinity would be [A645/B673].[39] For Kant it is logically impossible for us to become metaphysically identical with God, since our 'Divine' absolute is itself always triply concretized within a definite concept, a point of view, and a time-consciousness.[40] The importance of examining the mathematical structure of objective reason is to show that these are the true Kantian limits, the "boundaries" of pure reason – it isn't just the fact that we sense, nor is it simply the fact that our understanding is discursive, it's the finitude of unity as unification itself. The focus on one thing that gives rise to consciousness, which is necessarily deferred through time-consciousness, is exactly the same as the hard limit of 'absolute' infinity, which is forever beyond our reach.[41]

Kant thus agrees with Leibniz not only on the 'integral' model of finite reason but also on its inherent limitation or tragic flaw: the desire of objective reason exceeds its mathematical structure.

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38 The "categorical syllogism" is the function which coagulates the unity of the "thinking subject", and the "hypothetical syllogism" (i.e., one which compares two propositions – an Other) generates the absolute idea of Nature, while the "disjunctive syllogism" (i.e., one which relates two propositions to a greater whole – the absolute other of the other) generates the absolute of God [A336/B393].

39 Kant explicitly distinguishes between the *intrinsic* absolute and his absolute, which "holds in every reference" [A326/B382]. The presence of a reference implies determination. Cf. B545-46.

40 Compare with William Desmond, *Hegel's God – A Counterfeit Double?* (Ashgate Publishing, 2003); see p. 3.

41 In Derrida's wrestling with Husserl, likewise, it is the (non)availability of the '*infinite*', specifically, as only ever a repetition of itself which is the 'absence' around which Derrida's critique matures. Bowie's criticism of Derrida usefully identifies how Derrida's linguistic problem is identical to the problem of the Absolute under discussion here: basically, Derrida fails to see that Being *must* hold signification together even if it cannot be said (Bowie, *Schelling*, 70-73). We will approach that thorny ground in Chapter 7.

The true scope of the desire [Ak. 5:121] impelling the intrinsic task of reason is not limited to the totality of all objective, and therefore finite, knowledge. Rather, as Kant repeatedly says, reason desires the *unconditioned*: reason "[demands] that the series of conditions be completed by the unconditioned" [B xx]. Reason's true desire is to transit beyond distinction entirely, into the unconditioned or the non-finite, the point from which all things are regarded as one and which is therefore the true end point of reason's auto-assembly of hierarchical knowing. But reason is actually confusing the intuitive immediacy of the *indeterminacy* of Being with the conceptual structure of the *infinite*: the tragedy of reason is that these irreducibly distinct principles can only be reconciled through the false hypostasis passing through the central Paralogism of the subject, conflating subjective immediacy with objectivity.

Reason wants not only to fall into Being but to *know* that it has done so, which requires determining Being as a concept through the spatiotemporal divisions of objectivity, and thus reason is doomed to be always on the far side of its own operations, trying to return to the indeterminate, the lowest, through the infinite, the highest [A656/B684]. The indeterminate or unconditioned, as Kant always points out, "completes" the infinite series of the mutually conditioned [A322/B379]. To reach the unconditioned is the same thing as finding the boundaries of the infinite sequence of the conditioned (the indeterminate 'outside' generated in the act of putting brackets around an infinite mathematical series), which allows reason to see itself as 'a whole picture', as in some sense complete. To see its own activity as a whole is, in fact, the same thing as to see its own activity, by a kind of analogy, as an *object*, meaning that to reach the unconditioned is also nothing other than completing the reflexive movement of self-consciousness. When reason sees its own being as a non-identical object, it has a (practical) choice to grasp itself within the indeterminate 'other' as either the totality of existence or as *not* the totality of existence, whereupon it can rest. The basis for that decision will be the topic of discussion in Chapters 6 and 7.

In the failure of reason to metaphysically fulfill itself as pure subject-object or *Tathandlung*, we turn to the empirical fulfillment of subjectivity as differentiated object. The objectivity of subjectivity consists in the bringing into view of what Kant calls "affect" or "feeling", *Gefühl*.[42] In my encounters with objects, the manifold of evidence that is given includes not only objective elements but elements that cannot be assigned to the object. It is not clear to me whether Kant ever offers a clear theoretical distinction between these two or a definition of *Gefühl*, but I suggest that the distinction is that some elements in the manifold of the given are universal with respect to space while also being finite, yet undetermined, with respect to time: for example, anger affectively colors my perception of all objects universally, but only so long as it lasts. The spatial universality of these

[42] Cf. Lyotard, *Sublime*, 11.

elements is akin to the universality of the required reference to the 'I' which is the global condition of transcendental apperception; that connection justifies assigning these evidences to the 'I' as its appearances, and beginning to refer to them as 'subjective', just as sensory and spatial appearances belong to the object.

Since these affects or subjective elements undergo their own arcs of birth, change, and disappearance, what is established is a history of the 'I', a parallel timeline that is originally given entangled with, but can be isolated from, the same empirical record of experience that contains objective history, the independent history of the world. As Westphal has, I think, correctly argued, this is the thrust of Kant's argument in the Refutation of Idealism, that the history of the world and the history of the I are mutually conditioning: it is only by comparison to the stability of objects that I can see the history of myself, and only by comparison to the stability of myself that I can see the history of objects.[43] The first traces of subjectivity in the empirical objective considered as a whole are the interpretations with which objects themselves are entwined: the ideal productions of memory and imagination, the objective openings of practical possibilities for action, and the productions of culture in ethics, politics, and art, all found in objects-in-the-world. These traces are what disclose and lead back to the inference of a subjectivity which freely determines an orientation-in-the-world for itself.[44]

As discussed in Chapter 3, the time-independence of the objective and subjective orderings of events, along with the spatial structuring of affective response in empirical self-cognition, gives rise to two parallel spatio-temporal frames, not just one. I am surrounded by absolute space and absolute time and I also carry with me relative space and relative time, organized according to the extension of my body and the "law of association", or the principles of psychology, which govern the sequence of my thoughts. Because the affective elements of experience are conditioned by the contingent activity of empirical objects, and also mediated through the "inner sense" of time, Kant refers to their accumulating totality as the "empirical consciousness" [B160]. It is the empirical ego, and this alone, that we can now refer to safely with the objective concept 'self'.[45] The empirical ego is filled with a rich variety of content, although Kant never seems to consider it too important to systematically organize that content: empirical psychology, personality types, cultural and racial archetypes, desire, education, and moral reasoning are all Kantian topics which find their proper critical classification as contents of the empirical self.[46] What I know as 'me' is available as the history of these elements, preserved as the given manifold of my memory. Although, strictly

[43] Westphal, *KTPR*, 39.

[44] I think Heidegger develops a similar idea as the inscribing of *Dasein* within the world in "Care" [*Sorge*], through the 'to-handedness' of other projects already incorporated into the world of appearance. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (SUNY Press, 1996): 178-185.

[45] Cf. Longuenesse, "Kant on Identity", 159.

speaking, this affective history is not mediated by space, it becomes pseudo-objective for us when it becomes given in the reflexive operation of reason, the operation which allows reason to turn on itself and make itself its own content. In becoming pseudo-objective, it *is* then mediated by space, as Kant says: even though time conditions us as inner sense, we cannot bring time before us without depicting it spatially, that being the condition of thinking separation from the spaceless affective play of consciousness's feeling-tones and thus bringing to objective distinctness [B156]. In reflection I can analyze and break down the subjective components of events to begin to assemble a picture of my own being, available in a domain of language which is not, say, physical (as in material physics) but employing a different, as yet unknown mode: I am angry, I am melancholic, I am a priest, I am a gambler.[47]

The destiny of the subjective, and its independence from the objective order, are therefore disclosed by a series of "pits" or "tunnels" which emerge from the surface of the objective immanence of perception.[48] The explicit emergence of that vision in Kant's *Critiques* is in the Second Moment of Taste in *KU*: immersed in the public world, when I see a beautiful object I assign its beauty to itself, and therefore expect everyone else who encounters it to also perceive its objective beauty [Ak. 5:211-12, 239]. When others do not find it beautiful, it is that disturbing and disorienting glimpse which gives me an objectified plane to grasp the difference between the world and myself. But I do not know *myself*; I only know the fact that beauty is happening in the object and no one else can see it. 'Myself' is a theoretical inference which hypostatizes and thus causally explains the affective appearance of the disjunction in the world between public and private. Thus we encounter the affective presences of morality and beauty as what Kant calls "affections" or "feelings". In Kant's view, we discover ourselves slowly in the world-itself, through a process of differentiation from other subjects and from objects, a process which has a certain plasticity through the reflexive power of reason in determining our will's course, but in which we have a 'metaphysical shadow' or hidden mass that is never transparently disclosed to us. Kant's rather unique philosophical insistence that the true 'self' is unknown and unobjectifiable, but can only be discovered by reading what it has inscribed in the objective world, provides a perfectly complementary opening where the theoretical structure of depth psychology, or psychoanalysis, can be mounted to the structure of Western philosophy. The continuing significance of that Kantian

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46 Kant discusses all these topics at length in the *Anthropology.* Although, again, they seem to be 'descriptive' rather than 'architectonic', the reading of the *Anthropology* [Ak. 7:119-333] and Kant's earlier essay on mental illness [Ak. 2:259-71] are a valuable counterbalance to the dry formalism of the first Critique as a fuller picture of Kant's complete philosophy.

47 Bergson, *Matter and Memory,* 36-38, 47, 65-66.

48 Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* 77.

point of departure for modern psychology is a topic of increasing interest, and in my view one of the most valuable and original parts of Kant's thought.[49]

The Subjective and the Problem of Language

Despite the above, it is clear from the subsequent philosophical history, I think, that Kant's account of the interior structure of the subject is provocative but inadequate. Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel, the Romantic movement in Germany and England, Kierkegaardian existentialism, Husserlian phenomenology, etc. etc. are in one sense all varieties of response to Kant which focus on developing the affective experience, the inner history, emotional coloring, poetic and existential mood, teleology, etc. of the subjective point of view – of what it is like to be and to have a self. There is clearly something missing here which has raised the curiosity and resistance of subsequent Continental philosophy. The idea that any part of the empirical self could yet still be an *a priori* principle of the subjective is a possibility curiously neglected by Kant. Recall that Kant's division of the projected post-critical metaphysics is between the metaphysics of nature (objective or theoretical) and the metaphysics of morals (subjective or practical). Kant completed a first version of the founding text of both: the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* and the *Metaphysics of Morals*, respectively. However, Kant spent much of the later part of his career intensively working on the question of a 'transition' which would show how the basic forces of empirical physics (heat, gravity, etc.) could be derived from the pure metaphysical concept of matter. With the structure of Kant's architectonic displayed like this, it becomes clear that the parallel 'transition' between the pure metaphysical concept of a universal moral law and the empirical experience of being a teleological self is missing.[50] The absence of the transitional derivation of the empirical experience of the subjective from the architectonic system is not only worth noting in its own right, but also another clue to the problem of the transcendental deduction of language which will be taken up in the final chapter (7).

Kant's account of selfhood is a delicate balance between the error of asserting that selfhood does not exist at all, and the error of asserting that selfhood can be metaphysically hypostatized into the ground of all ontological appearances. For the latter, Kant secures himself against Cartesian

[49] For example, Ricouer, *Freud and Philosophy;* Riccardo Pozzo, Piero Giordanetti, and Marco Sgarbi, eds., *Kant's Philosophy of the Unconscious* (Walter de Gruyter, 2012), or Christoper Insole, "Becoming Divine: Kant and Jung", in *Negative Natural Theology: God and the Limits of Reason* (Oxford University Press, 2024), 158-177.

[50] Cf. Oliver Thorndike, *Kant's Transition Project and Late Philosophy: Connecting the Opus postumum and Metaphysics of Morals* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018): 113-114. Compare Vasco S. Carvalho, "Boredom and its Remedies: An Analysis of *Langeweile* within Kant's Anthropology" (*Philosophical Cartographies*, Tirant io Blanche, forthcoming).

skepticism by denying that any objectification lacking empirical evidence is metaphysically grounded, and thus concluding that transcendental phenomenology or "rational psychology" is a functional or "regulative" system rather than a descriptive or "theoretical" system. The sub-divisions of judgment are identifiable only through their objective evidence: for example, the practical facet of 'good vs. evil' in the object, the aesthetic of 'beautiful vs. ugly' in the object, and the theoretical of 'what/where/etc.' the object is. However, Kant does not say that those specific differences justify establishing these sub-activities as ontic entities or objects: in the traditional term, 'faculties'. That is simply because, as 'inward' objects transcendentally traced as explanations of the features of objects, they are only posited and not proven.

I also note that Kant plays with several different hierarchical orderings of the powers of soul throughout the Critical period (sometimes "reason" seems uppermost, and sometimes "imagination" or "judgment"), and does not seem to me to definitively determine their relationship. However, it is not clear whether that matters, because one could conclude that the 'powers' are simply a conceptual distinction made for the purposes of the transcendental investigator's convenience without damaging Kant's overall system.[51] Kant has been accused of a "faculty psychologism", but Kant does not use the term "faculty", instead calling them *Vermögen*, "powers", allowing us to suppose that the differentiation of their distinctive activities is a tentative and delicate moment of thinking which ultimately collapses back upwards into the actual unity of the act of judgment.[52]

The drift of Kant's thinking runs into the tension of the opposite problem: that the reality of selfhood or subjectivity collapses into nothingness, ruining the purpose of philosophy as the education of the will towards the good. Here we must again make a distinction between the connective tissue between the metaphysical/ontological vs. the semiotic/ontological layers, as in Ch. 4. Kant's general attitude towards the Real as force, namely, that it cannot be proved as such from within the structure of a responsive reason that is always subordinate to it, and therefore that the Real can 'take care of itself', means here that I think Kant would, and does, consider it quite unproblematic to *feel*, from a first-personal point of view, the fulfillment of objective/ontological subjectivity by the metaphysical in the experience of autonomy or freedom.[53] However, we cannot use that feeling as the basis for any determinate/dogmatic, 'self-founding' philosophy of subjective idealism.[54] There is, I think, a discomfort in Kant's unavoidable basic conclusion that we do not and

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51 See the clarification in *KU* [Ak. 5:168], where reason is restricted merely to the "power of desire". Cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 23-24.

52 Again, the basis for the claim is the fact that in both the A and the B deduction of the Categories all the sub-operations of judgment are derived from the original transcendental unity of apperception, which is pure synthesis.

53 Cf. Kant, *Dreams*, 46 [Ak: 2:321].

54 Hegel, on his side, accurately recognizes the difference between himself and Kant at least once in the *Encyclopedia Logic:* "Critical Philosophy cannot make the passage to the Infinite. These thought-determinations are also called "concepts"; and hence to "comprehend" an ob-ject means nothing more than to grasp it in the form of something

cannot know ourselves phenomenologically as a holistic unity but only as a collection of processes which are disparate and conflicting. The question I would ask is whether that is not in fact phenomenologically the case; if so, I think philosophy would have to proceed by asserting that the "integration" of the 'faculties' into a whole 'self' is not a theoretical fact but a *moral task* temporally imposed via education.[55] We will not proceed further down that road here.

What is left over, in parallel with the problem of the 'forces' which allow empirical noumena to be positively fulfilled by Being rather than being negatively empty, is the problem of 'will' and 'freedom' as the inner fulfillment of the ontological structures of 'selfhood'. Here we are up against, not Kant's "faculty psychologism" but his "vitalism", a dogmatic assertion of the existence of subjective forces (primarily will) which fulfill selfhood from beyond the objective.[56] If I do have a 'metaphysical shadow' of my 'true self', how do I detect it is there at all, a 'known unknown' rather than an 'unknown unknown'? In speaking concretely of *Gefühl* and the "auto-affection" of free will, are we not here transgressing the Critical limits of knowledge? Or is there a type of language which we can deploy, or a way of justifying deploying language, which can be grounded on bases that are not the same as theoretical cognition? I suggest that Kant, at least to some extent, became aware of and began responding to these meta-theoretical concerns in the two subsequent Critiques and the later Critical writings. We will turn to these texts, and what can be found of a 'linguistic turn' in Kant's work, next.

conditioned and mediated; so that inasmuch as it is what is true, infinite, or unconditioned, it is transformed into something conditioned and mediated, and, instead of what is true being grasped in thinking, it is perverted into untruth" (109, §62). The question is whether, in regretfully setting sail from the 'island of reason', Hegel has actually gone anywhere or is merely dozing on the deck of his ship.

55 Karol Wojtyła proposed a 'process' understanding of "integration" in *Osoba I Czyn.* Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki (D. Reidel Company, 1979): 192-19..

56 On "vitalism", cf. James L. Larson, "Vital Forces: Regulative Principles or Constitutive Agents? A Strategy in German Physiology, 1786-1802", *Isis* 70:2 (1979): 235–49.

Section III – Beyond Objectivity: The Supersensible Ground of Thinking

Chapter 6: Passing the Limit of Objectivity in "Nature" and "Morals"

The present and final section (Chapters 6-7) will attempt to conclude our 'archaeological' movement through Kant with a return from its interior. What we need to 'return' to is the ground of thinking, the 'unconditioned' or contact with immanent presence which allows us to feel the structure of our thinking as secured, 'objective' instead of 'subjective'. What we have seen in the past two chapters (4-5) is that Kant's system, by its unflinching confrontation with skepticism, puts us in danger of being trapped in an endless sequence of conditioned states, passing between ontological objects and semiotic concepts. Thus we must not only return, but *escape*, by finding the ground which is the exit from 'transcendental illusion'.

As chapter 4 established, there are two separate problems which arise from the nonidentical structure of judging: the first problem, which motivated *KdrV*, is the determinacy of the *object* covering over the absence of intuitive evidence (the 'ontological' problem). The second problem is the determinacy of the *concept* covering over with objectivity what is *excessively given* or indeterminable (the 'semiotic' problem). In the present chapter, we will review Kant's attempt to transcend the ontological problem in the later 'Critical' works, along with what appears of the path towards a solution to the semiotic problem.

Many sympathetic contemporary interpretations of Kant simply stop at the point that all determinate knowledge of the suprasensible is regulative rather than theoretically concrete.[1] For example, Allison argued that Kant's transcendental idealism was an "epistemic" rather than "metaphysical" structure, establishing limiting conditions to human knowledge as spatiotemporal objectivity and denying all positive knowledge of the supra-objective as "transcendental illusion".[2] Thus Allison held that "freedom", for example, does not hold positive reality for Kant but serves merely as a problematic concept which must be thought in order to think human moral agency; it is purely epistemic and has no metaphysical reality.[3] However, Allison had to frequently discount the numerous passages in which Kant directly asserts the "suprasensible reality" of freedom.[4]

The reason for trying to go farther than this, as already indicated here, is that Kant himself tries to go farther, giving not only the 'doctrine of method' or 'critique' of metaphysics but also

1 See, for example, Allais, *Manifest Reality*, 290-308, or Bird, *Revolutionary Kant*, 757-771.
2 Allison, *IF*, 3-27.
3 Allison, *IF*, 64.
4 Allison, *IF*, 19.

attempting to lay the foundations of a new critical metaphysics. What Kant clearly understood, as borne out by the subsequent history of Continental philosophy, is that reason *will not be content* with a structure that it knows is merely regulative or 'illusory': we must have metaphysics. We wish to follow the Kant who wrote that the admirer of nature "falls into astonishment at a wisdom he did not expect: an admiration…" which "is a kind of *sacred awe* at seeing the abyss [*Abgrund des Übersinnlichen*] of the supersensible opening before one's feet" [Ak. 7:261; emphasis mine].[5] Departing from Allison, then, we are taking Kant at his word when he says there is a positive suprasensible reality of absolute freedom (also of existing as pure activity); the ultimate problem for us and for Kant is not that there is no suprasensible reality, but how we can *articulate* it as presence, translating the undetermined beyond of determinacy into a determinate form.[6]

What we are looking for is not the existence of that outer ground (i.e. being itself), which we, following Kant, will take as metaphysically unproblematic (e.g., if there were no being, we would not be philosophizing)[7] but a method for securely reaching it without destroying transcendental idealism. Strictly speaking, in empirical givenness, wherein the ontological and metaphysical are blended in presentation, I am directly and unconsciously convinced that an empirical object is real by the field of presence which surrounds it, precedes it, and fulfills it. What Kant is working on in the later Critical writings is an attempt to show that there is an interface in the field of consciousness that can be transcendentally isolated and determined, establishing at the *ontological* level only the transcendental possibility of our awareness of the outer ground of Being.

After *KdrV*, I find ample evidence that Kant is attempting to extend his thought beyond critique to positive philosophy, and also that Kant understood to some degree that the attempt required tackling the semiotic problem. As has been observed, after the first Critique a historical development enters into Kant's thinking, the traces of an evolution or even hesitation in subsequent Critical writings.[8] Some have argued that Kant came up with radically new discoveries after *KdrV*, or ideas that dramatically altered the course and fate of the architectonic project.[9] We will

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5 Kant, *Anthropology*, 363.

6 "Can the critique, then, not speak the language of this 'reflective perception' upon which, according to all indications, it ceaselessly orients itself? Or perhaps this 'reflective perception' has no language at all, not even the voice of silence?" Lyotard, *Sublime*, 35.

7 "That this is so, experience teaches us, and the abstraction of this experience produces in us the general conception of matter. But this resistance which something makes in the space in which it is present, is in that manner indeed recognized, but not yet conceived. For this resistance, as everything that counteracts an action, is true force, and, as its direction is opposed to the prolonged lines of approach, it is a force of repulsion which must be attributed to matter and, therefore, to its elements. Every reasonable man will readily concede that here human intelligence has reached its limit. For while, by experience alone, we can perceive that things of this world which we call "material" possess such a force, we can never conceive of the reason why they exist." Kant, *Dreams*, 46.

8 Förster gives an excellent overview of the textual evidence for a modification in Kant's thought between the first Critique, the third Critique, *MFNS*, and *OP* throughout *KFS*, but particularly in "The Green Color of a Lawn", *KFS*, 24-47.

9 Westphal, *KTPR*, 128-129.

incorporate these symptoms into our own diagnosis: Kant is, for the most part, proceeding on the 'ontological' level, demonstrating that there is a positive outside of the structures of consciousness which is either only partially determinable or else determinable only through inference from its empirical effect within the objective domain. That takes place in two arcs: first, Kant shows that empirical material 'forces' find a point of contact within objectivity as the resistance to the subject's movements, and second, that 'will' finds a point of contact within objectivity as the inference of freedom's actuality from the distinction between 'happiness' and 'duty' in the concrete object (discussed in detail below). However, Kant is also at least vaguely aware that there is a *semiotic* complication obstructing access to the indeterminate, as shown in his insistence that both 'forces' and 'will' do not "extend theoretical cognition", and in the original structure of 'transcendental illusion' (as discussed in Ch. 4). I will argue in the present chapter that Kant succeeds ontologically, but does not become fully aware of the semiotic problem, leaving behind only the pieces of a solution in *KU*.

If my overall analysis so far is correct, we would expect these problems in Kant to originate in the attempt to approach the final limit of the supra-objective, in order to secure the necessary ground of objectivity as a finite, bounded domain. That would be equivalent to the attempt to approach a new statement of the content of "metaphysics", which, as the supra-objectifiable, obviously would repeatedly defy such approaches. Indeed, we find that the rather mysterious fate of "metaphysics" is a striking feature of Kant's post-Critical corpus. In Kant's early Critical writings, he consistently indicates with a curt and even breezy confidence that, after the critique of the mediation of knowledge has been digested and understood, writing a revised version of metaphysics, a properly scientific metaphysics, will be a quick and straightforward affair [A xx].[10] Further, Kant repeatedly claims, even quite late in his career, that he will "rapidly" proceed to, and dash off, the short, complete text of scientific metaphysics himself [*KU*, Ak. 5:170].

There are several ways to phrase the mystery here. First, Kant originally indicates that he expects the *reader* of *KdrV* to be able to see exactly why scientific metaphysics will be short, simple, and complete, and even occasionally suggests that the reader might simply do the work for himself as an exercise: [A xix / A856/B884].[11] Needless to say, the reader of *KdrV* has not concurred in these assessments. However, the further mystery is that the content of Kantian metaphysics still remains unexplained, because Kant himself never seems to have finished it either.[12] It has been noted that Kant's letters to his friends promising the metaphysics, and their unanswered replies

[10] Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 4-6.
[11] Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 223-25.
[12] For an excellent and sympathetic summary of the question, see de Boer, "Kant's Projected System of Pure Reason", in *Kant's Reform*, 212-55.

asking why it was taking so long, begin to hint at a certain strain, hesitation, and perhaps even panic in Kant's approach to his central life's task.[13] We may infer that it was not lack of interest that kept Kant from writing the metaphysics, but a deep struggle, or a writer's block.

Now let us recall that Kant thinks of "metaphysics" as indicating the field of the classical study of being, divided into "general" being and "special" being, and that post-Kantian general metaphysics has been reconfigured as transcendental ontology and special metaphysics has been reconfigured as transcendental illusion. It is then clearer why Kant thinks that post-Kantian metaphysics will be a brief science. It might even fit on one page. Post-Kantian metaphysics, to be distinct from transcendental ontology, will have to be the science of the ulterior ground, the non-objective and non-conceptualized. It will be the science of the formal unity of the natural and the moral in Being itself. It will be a short science because, as we can see, there is hardly anything at all one could say in that pure, negated domain. We can intuitively see why Kant would initially say that completing that science, in terms of its exhaustiveness, would be easy. There could hardly be any contents to such a metaphysics, and they would possibly boil down to only one proposition, the statement of a unity which precedes and grounds the formal unity of apperceptive consciousness.

However, we can also see why Kant discovered that it was very hard to write that rule. The science of pure metaphysics will be the objective science of the supra-objectifiable, which seems on its face to be a contradiction in terms. In order to write it, one must find a way to extend the possibility of language-use beyond the critical boundaries of language-use, a loophole permitting the conceptually entailed pseudo-objectification of that which is *ex hypothesi* non-objectifiable. In that light it also becomes intelligible why Kant vacillated on the relationship of his transcendental critique to Kantian metaphysics: if it turns out that *nothing* is sayable in Kantian "metaphysics" proper (the science is an empty set), transcendental critique *is* metaphysics, insofar as it already circles and discloses the presence of the empty otherness of itself within itself (i.e. the pointer to absent "existence" in the synthetic *a priori* is the only positive content of "metaphysics", which is already stated in transcendental idealism).[14] Likewise, it is not clear how anything that is said about nothingness will not be simply a reiterated critique of the illusion of knowing it directly, and thus simply a restatement of the work transcendental idealism has already done. The relevant point I wish to make clear here is that the final problem of Kantian metaphysics is thus, specifically, the problem of finding a theoretically consistent way to extend language into the indeterminate. The problem can also be stated as that of successfully capturing a distinction between *positive*, or presenced, indeterminacy and *negative* indeterminacy or nothingness, a distinction which must take

[13] Förster, *KFS*, 53-54, 72-73. Cf. de Boer, *Kant's Reform*, 252-53.

[14] See *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolfs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat? (FM)* [Ak. 20:257-332: 281, 300].

place in language. If Kant holds that previous 'dogmatic metaphysics' is an illicit extension of determinate theoretical knowledge into the undetermined, objectless activity of freedom, he would not be able to begin a new 'positive philosophy' until he had found some method for determining the cognitions of positive philosophy which is not simply empty determinate theory like the old metaphysics.[15] In other words, we need a new mode of language that is proper to the description of acting being rather than the description of objects: that is, the 'partially' or 'indirectly' determined [Ak. 5:56-57].[16]

What can we further guess or infer, regarding Kant's missing metaphysics? Kant explicitly tells us that it will be divided into two parts: a "metaphysics of nature" and a "metaphysics of morals" [A850/B878]. The metaphysics of nature would concern the ground of theoretical knowledge, and the metaphysics of morals would concern the ground of practical knowledge. Kant's attempts at the metaphysics of nature appear as the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786; Ak. 4:467-565) and then the *Opus Postumum* [Ak. 21-22]. Kant's progression through the metaphysics of morals is marked by the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785; Ak. 4:387-463), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788; Ak. 5:3-163), and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797; Ak. 6:205-493). One may note two things here already: first, the fact that each branch of Kantian metaphysics requires further intermediate "foundings" or "ground-layings" discloses the presence of some theoretical hazard that Kant was approaching with caution.

What I would like to argue now is that, if one is looking for it, the history of Kant's thinking post-*KdrV* in fact shows many traces of Kant feeling through the hypothetical problem described above. Kant's efforts in that direction are forked into two forms: the first form is the theoretical branch, in which Kant seeks to ground speculative reason in the "metaphysics of nature" by developing the indeterminate language of "dynamics" in *MFNS,* which ultimately becomes the grounding of the concept of empirical matter in the self-affection or *Gefühl* of resistive force in the subject in *OP*. The second branch is the practical, in which Kant seeks to ground the "metaphysics of morals", as a purely *non*-speculative form of reason, in the self-affection or *Gefühl* of the moral law, an effort which takes place in two stages: first, the establishment of the actuality of freedom in *KdpV* and second, the evolution of the indeterminacy at the heart of judgment as the centerpiece of a theory of language as reflexive judgment in *KU*.

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15 Cf. *FM,* [Ak. 20:293-294].

16 The difficulty we are describing here skirts around problems which, of course, have been the subject of significant research in analytic philosophy: consider, for example, Wittgenstein's shift from the 'picture' model to the 'game' model of language (or even the famous discussion of 'nonsense' in the original *Tractatus*), or the "speech-act" theory of J.L. Austin, or the battles over defining the "is-ought" distinction in metaethics. I leave these kinds of approaches to one side simply due to the limitations of space.

For the sake of completeness, the present chapter will examine both of these branches. I will begin with the theoretical branch, and offer a brief interpretation of *OP* in terms of a resolution of the problem of grounding the "metaphysics of nature". However, because, in my view, Kant's solution is ultimately to root the concept of empirical matter in the self-feeling of the subject, which is nothing more than a restatement of Kant's already completed principle of the primacy of practical over theoretical reason [Ak. 5:120-22], the practical branch and the "metaphysics of morals" assumes the greater importance and will be covered at more length. In general, I will try to show that the method Kant takes to delve to the outer limit of objectivity itself is a transition to the mode of *Gefühl* or "feeling", as described in the previous chapter (5). We will assess the success and shortcomings of that method; I will argue that one further step at the semiotic level is still required or justified, namely, a "transition" between theoretical and practical language-use and a "transcendental deduction" of language-use as such (Chapter 7).

Selbstsetzung *and the Grounding Problem of Metaphysics of Nature*

Let us begin by picking up the thread of the "metaphysics of nature", which requires a grounding of the concept of physical matter (the foundation of the science of physics) in the real-objective, specified as contrasted with the imaginary-objective—that is, as offering resistance to the will (cf. the Anticipations of Perception, and *OP*, discussed below). I will note at the outset that Kant's grounding of the metaphysics of nature has a troubled history, and much is unclear. What I will provide here is a speculative reconstruction, anchoring itself in a few specific observations and quotations from *KdrV*, *MFNS*, and *OP*, of the arc of a movement in Kant's understanding of the problem of empirical physics. I think that speculative reconstruction of the evolution of Kant's remarks on physics can convincingly cast it as Kant's progress on the grounding problem of the metaphysics of nature, fitting *MFNS* and *OP* into the architecture of a reconstructed "Kantian architectonic" which has been my interpretive effort throughout the present investigation. That speculative reconstruction must be brief due to the constraints of space, but I will try to show nevertheless that it is not necessarily forced, but fits the materials available in a plausible way.

As a first attempt at that task, Kant wrote *MFNS* in 1786, distinguishing "dynamics" from "mathematics" as descriptions of modalities of language-use and observational perspective [Ak. 4:496].[17] In exploring the architectonic significance of "dynamics", I would note first that it is highly suggestive that Kant edited the Table of Categories to incorporate that material into the B

[17] I remind the reader that I make use of the Ellington translation.

edition of the First Critique in 1787. The "first comment" that Kant makes on the Table of Categories is that they "can be broken up, initially, into two divisions… the first… directed to objects of intuition (both pure and empirical),… the second… directed to the existence of these objects" [B110]. The name Kant gives the first group (Quality: Unity, Plurality, Allness; and Quality: Reality, Negation, Limitation) is the "mathematical" categories; the second group (Relation: Inherence vs. Subsistence, Causality vs. Dependence, Community) and (Modality: Possibility vs. Impossibility, Existence vs. Nonexistence, and Necessity vs. Contingency) he calls the "dynamic" categories [B111]. That is, "mathematical" categories are directed towards *objects* of intuition, both pure (meaning ideal) and empirical, and "dynamic" categories are directed towards the *existence* of those objects [A161/B200]. The systematic details of that alteration of the text are quite suggestive. First, a distinction between an object of intuition ("both pure and empirical") and the *existence* of that object confirms again that what Kant has previously had in mind with the transcendental project is precisely that distinction, as I argued in earlier chapters. Second, the assignment of the name "mathematical" to the objective categories confirms that objectivity is associated with determination, idealization, and abstraction from time as process: the "static" world and the "scientific" world are the same. Third, the categories devoted to the *existence* of an object are those which are not directly determinative, but which rather rely on a relation of comparison between a dyadic pair of concepts. I suggest that Kant therefore indicates the lower bound of language and determination in coming into contact with the real ground of being – i.e., a singular concept cannot directly enclose real existence, but rather real existence can only be expressed in the space between pairs of opposing determinations.[18] Kant thus expands his original description of the 'noumenal' by emphasizing in more detail that it is not exist-ence (as a static objective concept) lying beyond determination of appearances as their ground, but exist-*ing*, as living force, which is the other to determination. In order for there to be an empirical object there must also have been an event which is only cognizable as its own determined product, i.e., the selfsame object.

First, we note that in *MFNS*, Kant sets out to demonstrate that the basic principle of the science of empirical physics is the concept of an object-as-such mediated or specified through the concept of *matter*, which entails resistive force.[19] He did so in order to make possible a 'transition'

[18] See *KdrV*, [A160-162/B199-201], as well as [A419/B447]: "But this same world is called *nature* insofar as we consider it as a dynamical whole and take account, not of the aggregation in space or time in order to bring this aggregation about as a magnitude, but of the unity in the existence of appearances." It would be worth comparing this also to Kant's mature ideas about the 'Antinomial' or dialectical stage of metaphysical history in *FN* [e.g. Ak. 20:287-293].

[19] I think Kant's consistent interest in 'forces', and the function the concept serves in his thought, is likely, once again, an inheritance from Leibniz. See Letter J of the Leibniz-Bouvet correspondence, 18 May 1703, 5-6: " 'I also do not know if I have spoken to you about my science of dynamics, or forces, where I have found the perfect way of determining them, deduced a priori from the sublime principles of real metaphysics… I demonstrate, moreover, that force is of the essence of corporeal substance and that it is the entelechy of the ancients, although it needs to be

from the empirical to the metaphysical in the field of physics [Ak. 4:469, 473].[20] These reflections clearly orient us, in my view, towards the underlying idea, which I have been defending for some time, that the metaphysical ground of thought is made present by force in Kant's understanding. Kant attempts to offer a proof that matter must be composed of two opposed forces, the attractive and the repulsive force, and that matter expands from a hypothetical original 'zero point' until its attractive force cancels out the repulsion, yielding the various densities of physical materials. That account has been extensively criticized,[21] and Kant did not remain satisfied with the account given in *MFNS*.

The basic problem, as noted by Howard, is to give an account of the foundations of physics as a science, which for Kant means to show how empirical physics is rooted in an *a priori* system of principles (a "science" by definition is a body of knowledge which is organized according to *a priori* principles).[22] Furthermore, as Westphal has noted, the problem of physics is not to show how the "concept of a body as such" entails the concept of "force as such"; the problem is to show how the concept of *matter* entails an "*external* force".[23] The difficulty, in our words, would be that, since the necessary structure of all sciences derives from the *a priori* form of objectivity-as-such which is in fact subjectively imposed ("objects conforming to our concepts"), if the ground of empirical reality in Kant's view is resistive force, as I have been arguing, then what we are saying is that the foundation of the possibility of physics as a science depends on subjective consciousness being able to predict *a priori* the existence of resistive-force-as-reality (i.e., the concept of matter). However, that seems to be explicitly contrary to Kant's basic principle that reality precedes and escapes the totality of the structure of responsive thought. Following that inferred thread, rather than the commonly discussed but less clearly relevant issue of the "circularity problem", we turn to *OP*.[24]

As the title indicates ("Posthumous Work"), *OP* is Kant's final and unfinished work. Since the book remains a draft, there is significant controversy about how and *whether* it can be interpreted and its relations to the critical system as a whole. Evaluations of the systematic significance of *OP* range from considering it the crowning achievement of transcendental philosophy (Palmquist, Förster) to considering it the admission of the ultimate failure of transcendental philosophy (Westphal).[25] As Howard notes, lacking the book's own final statement of

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determined by the coincidence of bodies or by the first disposition of God.' (In footnote:) The "sublime principles of real metaphysics" refer to the need to reintroduce the Aristotelian notion of substantial forms into mechanics as the concept of force." https://leibniz-bouvet.swarthmore.edu/letters/letter-j-18-may-1703-leibniz-to-bouvet/

20 Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 6.

21 E.g., Westphal, *KTPR*, 190-195.

22 Stephen Howard, *Kant's Late Philosophy of Nature (KLPN)* (Cambridge Elements, 2023): 32-33.

23 Westphal, *KTPR*, 128-129.

24 "Circularity problem" in *MAN*: "The density of a body seems to depend on the degree of its attractive force, and the degree of attractive force depends on the density." Howard, *KLPN*, 27 fn. 43. Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 2, 34-35.

25 Förster, *KFS*, 75; Palmquist, *Kant and Mysticism*, 96; Westphal, 174-175.

what it is about, scholars have had to rely on Kant's letters and notes in the period of *OP*'s composition to form a "systematic" hypothesis about its overall significance.[26]

Of these documents, several are worth mentioning. First, Kant promised his correspondents Garve and Keisewetter, for many years, to complete a project, the "Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to the Science of Physics", which he thought would only require a page or two.[27] A "Transition" is required, on Förster's account, because *MFNS*, while providing an *a priori* account of "what is required for something to become an object of the external senses in general" [4:479], does not explain "how beyond this the systematic form of an empirical science [physics] might be anticipated *a priori*".[28] In other words, Kant is trying to get from the bare concept of matter to the specific constellation of empirical forces as an *a priori* system (e.g., light, gravity, heat).[29] However, in Kant's letters to Garve and Kiesewetter there is an infamous passage where Kant claims that there is a "gap" (*Lücke*) in his thinking, and that it is causing him "the pains of Tantalus".[30] That passage has been taken as the basis for reading a certain urgency into *OP*, an anxiety on Kant's part, perhaps about the Critical architectonic itself. Howard has argued that assumptions about *OP* which claim that all of transcendental idealism is in need of proving, on the basis of the "gap" passage in the letter, are perhaps unfounded.[31] However, we must also take into account that 'anxiety' in approaching *OP*, even if its true cause remains uncertain in the literature.

The next hermeneutic problem is that *OP* itself is by no means a straightforward 'text'.[32] Following a decades-long fight between the manuscript owner and the editors of the Akademie critical edition, the editors chose to publish the text in the order in which the bundles of its physical pages ("fascicles") had been delivered. It is generally accepted that that ordering is not the order in which Kant wrote the fascicles, meaning that a visible chronological evolution of Kant's response to whatever the central problem of *OP* is has been lost in the official German *AA* edition. Förster's English-language translation of *OP,* however, employs the ordering established by Erich Adickes; therefore, as Howard notes, it is at present the most authoritative version of a text which is fundamentally hermeneutically uncertain.[33] Although Förster's translation is also an abridgment, omitting pages which Förster describes as "repetitive", I find that the English translation as it stands

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26 Howard, *KLPN*, 10-11.
27 Förster, *KFS*, 51-53.
28 Förster, *KFS*, 5.
29 Förster, *KFS*, 11.
30 Förster, *KFS*, 48. Cf. Howard, *KLPN*, 10-23.
31 Howard, *KLPN*, 21.
32 Förster, Eckhart, gives an overview of the history in Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum*, trans. ed. Eckhart Förster (Cambridge University Press, 1993): xv-xxix.
33 Howard, *KLPN*, 61-62.

contains sufficient material to demonstrate the reconstruction I wish to establish, and so I will rely on it in what follows.[34]

With these caveats in mind, and aware that here we are stepping onto the most uncertain textual terrain in all of Kant's system, we turn to the text of *OP* itself. Förster presents *OP* as divided into roughly four chronologically distinct 'stages'. In each of *OP*'s stages, Kant wrestles with a distinct problem connected to the original issue of transitioning from metaphysics to the concrete science of empirical physics, breaking off his thinking when a new insight occurs to him and starting afresh in the next stage. The first stage [*OP*, 1-61] involves Kant circling back repeatedly to the problem of the original *a priori* derivation of the forces which are to found physics as an empirical science: without any other 'plan' or 'idea' to begin with, Kant attempts to derive these forces from the categories of quality and quantity, without success.[35] As his arguments evolve, Kant slowly realizes that "attraction" as a universal force is not sufficient to explain what is peculiar about the objectivity of corporeal bodies, but rather what is in question is "cohesion"; that is, it is not that a universal field of gravitational attraction has condensed objects here and there but rather that objects are 'stuck together to themselves' [*OP,* 48: Ak. 22:146].[36] Then, Kant abruptly breaks off and reemerges with the second stage [*OP*, 62~120], which is devoted to proving that the "ether" is the universal field of vibrating force which underlies the possibility of determining anything as an object. In the third stage [*OP,* ~120-199], Kant again radically changes the subject to the *Selbstsetzunglehre*, the idea that the 'subject' is auto-constituted through the awareness of one's own body moving and resisting other bodies. Finally, in the fourth stage [*OP*, 200-256], Kant extends the development of *Selbstsetzunglehre* from theoretical and physical self-constitution (the constitution of the subject as an object-in-the-world) to moral and teleological self-constitution (the constitution of the subject as a *"person"*) – "man-in-the-world" is the unity of the regulative ideas of "God" and "World". As Kant triumphantly inscribes the last words he ever wrote, he declares that he has reached the "highest standpoint of the Transcendental Philosophy" [*OP*, 235: Ak. 21:32].

To summarize my interpretation of the above bare facts, the four loosely discernible stages of *OP* can be rendered intelligible as sequences of a single evolving thought, if that thought is understood to be the problem of grounding the metaphysics of nature, which means theoretically establishing a mechanism or passageway by which the subject can become aware of the real existence fulfilling the empirically objective. Kant can and has explained the subject's knowledge of the objective order of ontology on the basis of the 'Copernican hypothesis'. However, Kant's "empirical realism" then depends on the further claim that we can know that empirical appearances

[34] Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum*, trans. ed. Eckhart Förster (Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[35] Förster, *KFS*, 14.
[36] Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 40-42.

are fulfilled by the real presence of what Kant calls "force". While the "noumenon" is still, positively speaking, the empty formal structure of subjectivity generated by thought, here we are not talking about the noumenon as the appearance-correlate of a given object, but the indeterminate and global presence or tonality in experience that makes us ordinarily confident we are in 'the real world'. The problem is not with the noumena, but how we have the independent and direct access to "force" that makes us re-cognize the concept as referring to empirical reality.[37] In the first stage of Kant's reflections on that question, he is playing with the problem of establishing *a priori* the basic system of empirical physical forces (i.e. heat, light, gravity/attraction, and repulsion). In my view, Kant would still have been approaching that problem on the basis of his prior methodology: determining the nature of a "force" as such, of which the empirical forces would then be derivable as specifications or differentiations.[38] The definition of a force as such would be required to make the empirical forces related as a scientific system.[39] Simultaneously, Kant begins with the problem in the definition of matter-as-such from *MFNS* he has already identified. Since explaining the density of matter in terms of the attractive force of matter makes the attractive force of matter circularly dependent upon its density, we can see why Kant would reassign the counteracting force against internal repulsion to "universal attraction" or gravitation [*OP,* 33: Ak. 22:214-215]. That solution does not last, because gravitation is a force that acts at a distance, whereas repulsion acts immediately. There is a kind of "gap" of empty space, in other words, between the two forces which are meant to determine the boundaries of objects having density/mass. However, Kant holds onto the idea of a "universal" force, and the concept of the "caloric" begins to crop up in his musings [*OP,* 34: Ak. 22:215]. Thirdly, in the *Oktaventwurf* or initial stage, Kant puzzles through the fundamental forces again and again until he hits on the idea that a lever, or mechanical force, cannot be understood without the principle that there is a force *within* the machine which is transmitting the externally applied force [*OP*, 29, 46: Ak. 22:208, 146].[40]

Kant's discovery that bodies, as mechanical systems in physics, are themselves internally composed of forces, forms the basis of the second stage of his thinking, in which he returns again and again to the possible significance of that result and makes a distinction between an inorganic and an organic body [*OP*, 60, Ak. 21:184].[41] The immediately obvious distinction is that an organic body appears to be internally organized so that it can exercise its own forces according to an

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37 In other words, the question is, 'how do we know *a priori* what 'real' as opposed to 'imaginary' denotes?'

38 Howard, *KLPN*, 32, 34, 37.

39 Compare Förster, *KFS*, 11-14.

40 Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 17.

41 Förster, *KFS*, 17: "Each physical body is to be regarded as a system of mechanically moving forces, Kant writes almost in passing … when [the consequences of this thought] are clear to Kant, he begins an entirely new Elementary System…".

intention; it is organized "purposively" [*OP,* 61, 64-66: Ak. 21:186, 210-214].[42] However, it seems that Kant is still here thinking of an organic body as an object, as one of the elements of the system of scientific physics.

When Kant breaks off these thoughts and returns with the "ether proofs" section, he is dropping the question of the organic body as an internally self-organized system of forces in order to expand on the implicit consequences of his other line of thinking: that there must be something 'universal' and 'seamless' about force as such. Kant changes that force from gravitational attraction, which acts "at a distance", to what he calls "ether" or "universal caloric", which has to underlie all motion in order to ground the possibility of empirical experience [*OP,* 70-71: Ak. 21:221-223]. The "ether", according to Kant's eventual definition of it, is a kind of total fabric composed of the pure vibrational motion of matter, which is "attracting and repelling only in its own parts": the "form of a universally distributed, all-penetrating world-material, which is in continuous motion in its own location" [*OP*, 73: Ak. 21:225]. The local variations of density are explained as the determinations of that underlying fabric of movement by other, extrinsic forces [*OP*, 81-82: Ak. 21:552-553]. While many commentators have reacted to the sudden appearance of "ether" with skepticism,[43] in my view the real significance of the ether proofs is metaphysical: that Kant has realized that the quality of the metaphysical *Real* must be a universal unity, seamlessly permeating the totality of what we know as "empirical experience", just as the forms of space and time are a universal unity for ontology.[44] I believe that precisely that realization is informing Kant's repeated and increasingly confident insistence that it is 'not possible for space to be empty' as the basis of arguing for ether, because if there were nothing in any part of space to affect us through intuition, we would simply be unaware that it is there: "...for empty space is not an object of possible experience at all (since no perception of the *nonbeing of a real object* is possible, only the *non-perception of its being*)" [*OP,* 69: Ak. 21:218, emphasis added]. To see what Kant is getting at, if we assume that I am correct in thinking that grounding metaphysical "forces" is the real motivation behind the ether proofs, the issue is that, without a universal field of 'reality' fulfilling the whole space of the empirical, I would be perceiving discrete objects in my environment as 'real', and the empty space in between them as *not* real. But that is not in fact what happens; even 'empty' empirical space has a positive presence

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42 Compare with Aristotle's transition in *Metaphysics* from the concept of a substance and nature as such to the concept of an internally organized or 'living' nature: Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V (Δ), 1014b16-1015a19.

43 Cf. Howard, *KLPN*, 27, fn. 46.

44 Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 87-89, 105-106; although Förster holds, in keeping with the Critical system as a whole, that the ether is for Kant ultimately only a "regulative ideal" (*KFS*, 91-93), by contrast my reconstruction of Kant's overall ontological/metaphysical position leads naturally to the conclusion that Kant is correct to insist on the *actuality* of ether, because it is (viewed this way) the missing link between the system of objects and its ground in 'force': the world *must* be filled with forces precisely because everything real must be underlied with force in order to be real and not a metaphysical object.

over against my perception that makes me think it is a real space continuous, at the metaphysical level, with the real space real bodies are occupying. The question here, in my view, is not taking place at the scientific/ontological level of whether there is air or some sort of empirical matter in purportedly 'empty' space, but rather at the transcendental/metaphysical level of whether there is *matter as such*, considered as the pure vibration of an attractive/repulsive fabric of forces, stitching together the 'material world' into an entire whole, in what empirically and conceptually appears to be 'empty space'.[45]

The remaining problem, and the gathering momentum indicated within the ether discussion itself, is that there is still a distinction between the pure *a priori* structure of thinking about the empirical world and the constitution of empirical spacetime as lived experience. The quiddity of the empirical as seamless *Real*, though it is now unified through the ether proof, remains ungrounded for the subject. Kant here finds that he has returned to the basic structure of transcendental idealism with which he began, spending dozens of pages going over and over the problem of the synthetic *a priori* judgment and its transformation from the domain of thought to the domain of real existence [e.g., *OP*, 170-184: Ak. 22:28-43/413-421]. Simultaneously, the topic of the "organic body" and its specific nature reemerges as an increasingly insistent question. What happens next, in my view, is that Kant realizes that in thinking through the nature of an organic body we are putting ourselves, *as* organic bodies, into the solution to the problem [*OP*, 149: Ak. 22:507-508]. That is, of course, precisely the "subreptive" mechanism of the old Paralogisms, given a new centrality and importance [A354]. Rather than a purely objective or "mathematical" science of physics, as seen from the outside, we are now here dealing with a partially subjective or "dynamical" science of physics.[46] As Howard notes, Kant therefore separates these two domains and chooses to continue pursuing the subjective system of the constitution of physics.[47]

The importance of Kant's discovery that there is a subjective intrusion into the basis of the system of pure forces gathers in momentum until Kant makes another, final break, into the doctrine of "self-positing" (*Selbstsetzunglehre*) [*OP,* 191, Ak. 22:85]. Here is the point where Kant finally sees that the first problem, the necessity of a universal field of forces to make 'real' the totality of empirical experience, is conjoined with the second problem: the subjective and internal mechanism of purposive forces in an organic body.[48] In short, Kant's final statement on the metaphysics of

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45 On this paragraph cf. Stephen Palmquist, "Matter's Living Force as Immediate Experience of the World," in *Kant and Mysticism: Critique as the Experience of Baring All in Reason's Light* (Lexington Books, 2019): 113-120. Palmquist's parallel discussion of *OP* takes a theological dimension that I do not think is quite defensible, but I otherwise fully agree.

46 Howard, 39-45.

47 Howard, 41.

48 Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 100-101.

nature is thus: the self-moving of the subject is the act which gives rise to the original awareness of the subject as an object, unifies the field of objective metaphysical forces as all which uniformly resists the movement of the subject, and thereby co-constitutes the subjective and objective in the possibility of empirical experience as such.[49] It is the force within me which gives me access to the force without me which can ground the system of ontological objects as 'real'.[50]

In the light of what I have been arguing throughout the text about transcendental idealism, which was itself conditioned already by the reading of *OP*, the reader can perhaps already see that in my view, these developments do not constitute a radical break or a revision of the general thesis of transcendental idealism. Rather, they are "discoveries", in my view, in the sense that Kant has finally consciously realized the true scope and significance of remarks that he has been unconsciously making all along. The most important passage in this regard is [B155] in the Transcendental Logic of *KdrV*, where Kant had asserted in a passing remark nearly twenty years previously that succession was derived ultimately from "the motion of the subject".[51] I think it quite defensible to say that the entire project of *OP,* as I have presented it, is simply Kant finally working out the consequences of that brief statement. Although Kant does not draw the conclusion explicitly, I would note here that Kant's demonstration that human experience as such is not possible without the transcendental condition of a *body* makes Kant's philosophical anthropology ultimately a hylomorphic one, and offers Kant's final anti-Cartesian argument by removing the metaphysical distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*.[52]

Another valuable contribution that *OP* makes, therefore, to the retrospective understanding of transcendental idealism and *KdrV* is to show that it is perfectly plausible that the *internal* self-understanding of reason as an absolute and formally invariant dawn, in which subject and object are both birthed from the 'zero point' of the transcendental unity of apperception, is totally compatible

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49 On a similar phenomenology of "resistance" cf. Emmanuel Falque, "Résistance de la Présence", *Archivio di Filosofia*, Vol. 86:2 (2018): 101-123.

50 "Only because the subject [is conscious] to itself of its moving forces (of agitating them) and – because in the relationship of this motion, everything is reciprocal – [is conscious] of perceiving a reaction of equal strength (a relation which is known a priori, independently of experience) are the counteracting moving forces of matter anticipated and its properties established" [Ak. 22:506, Förster's trans.]. Cf. Förster, *KFS*, 112.

51 Cf. B155 fn.: "But motion taken as the *describing* of a space is a pure act of the successive synthesis, by productive imagination, of the manifold in outer intuition as such, and belongs not only to geometry but even to transcendental philosophy."

52 "Suppose now that it had been proved that the soul of man is a spirit … then the next question which might be raised is *Where is the place of this human soul in the corporeal world?* I would answer, that body the changes of which are my changes, is my body, and its place is, at the same time, my place. … Nobody, however, is conscious of occupying a separate place in his body, but only of that place which he occupies as man in regard to the world around him. I would, therefore, keep to common experience, and would say, provisionally, where I sense, there I am. I am just as immediately in the tips of my fingers, as in my head. It is myself who suffers in the heel and whose heart beats in affection. I feel the most painful impression when my corn torments me, not in a cerebral nerve, but at the end of my toes." Kant, *Dreams,* 48-49. On the discussion of the whole paragraph cf. Emmanuel Falque, "Peut-on Réduire Le Corps?", *Archivio di Filosofia* 83:1/2 (2015), 91-107.

with the *external* or 'mathematical'/'objective' understanding of reason as a historical process of coming-to-be through education and external provocation. To say that the transcendental subject is the same as the genetic subject of history considered in two perspectives is not a violation of transcendental idealism, a point which may help make that idealism more palatable to its critics. Kant lends credence to the idea that he himself was moving in this direction of a transcendental-genetic or 'noematic' phenomenology by his increasing insistence on the "original *act* of self-consciousness" in the closing stages of *OP.* Palmquist, whose interpretation of *OP,* in my view, is a bit too "enthusiastic" in Kant's sense, nevertheless, I think, correctly sketches the basic structure of the grounding of the transcendental subject in a historical-genetic subject as a fundamental conclusion of Kant's closing moves in *OP.*[53]

In any case, we have now reached what, in my view, is Kant's ultimate 'ground' of the "metaphysics of nature", the demonstration that we have independent access to the fulfilling force within empirical appearances through the internal organic machine, or complex of forces, in the body itself. The "dynamics" of *MFNS* only serves as a bare beginning: by enclosing the field of the 'static determinate' as a whole under the concept "mathematical", it allows us to conceive the empty alternative of the 'moving indeterminate' under the concept "dynamic". As a theoretical concept, however, "dynamics" does not really justify itself or the domain of "forces" it supposedly denotes; as summarized above, in my view Kant only fully resolved this problem in *OP* by deriving the objective knowledge of "forces" fulfilling real matter from the kinetic counterbalance of the resistive forces within the *subject.* However, the necessity of a reference to "purposiveness" in establishing the concept of an organic body means that the theoretical forces of the empirical as such are all ultimately referred as a whole, for their own grounding, to the *practical* forces of will in *Selbstsetzung*, as Kant indicates by his own transition from physical to moral-teleological self-positing at *OP*'s conclusion.[54] Since the ultimate basis of all of transcendental philosophy is therefore revealed to be the practical-teleological realm, we must retrace our steps through Kant's corpus to pick up the parallel thread of the "metaphysics of morals", and see how, and whether, Kant succeeds in also "grounding" his system there.

Gefühl and the Grounding Problem of Metaphysics of Morals

To begin discussing Kant's gradual exploration of the field of practical knowledge, I must first offer a qualification to what I have written above about the hypothetical content of a 'post-

[53] Cf. Palmquist's discussion in *Kant and Mysticism*, 113-134.
[54] Kant, *OP*, 200-201 [Ak. 22:116-118].

Critical metaphysics': that the post-Critical metaphysics, as "practico-dogmatic", is not theoretical for Kant, and thus its propositional 'statements' must be understood in a special way.[55] As Pluhar writes, "It is worth noting that the expression "metaphysics of morals," which figures in the titles of both works, does not signify any type of *speculative* metaphysics—the illegitimate theoretical metaphysics Kant criticized in the first *Critique*. It refers rather to the a priori part of morality, which Kant takes to consist in the practical knowledge of the system of duties that pertain to human beings considered merely as such".[56] Whereas, at the end of *KdrV*, the concept of freedom could only be thought problematically, as a power that might or might not exist on the "other side" of the sensible world, in *KdpV* Kant declares confidently that the "actuality" of freedom has now been secured [Ak. 5:3-6]. Nevertheless, Kant continues to insist that freedom is still unavailable in its determinate contents to speculative reason [Ak. 5:135-136]. Therefore, we are to expect that Kant has somehow worked out a method for reaching the actuality of freedom from the contents of determinate experience without thereby making freedom the object of determinative theoretical speculation.

Kant's method, to summarize the argument of *KdpV*, progresses as follows: first, Kant points out that objects in-the-world possess an aspect or quality in experience which is separable from their empirical attributes: namely, their desirability [Ak. 5:30]. Being "good" or "bad" is a objective relation intrinsically oriented towards the presence of a subject, and furthermore, a purpose-intending subject; therefore Kant defines the "object" of practical reasoning as an object which is "purposive", deferred through the determination of the will in imagination. In other words, in order to see an object in terms of its practical value, we must be envisioning a future state of our own inner sense, which will be the result of transforming the object in some way through act (grasping it, consuming it, possessing it, etc.) [Ak. 5:57-8].

Kant then turns to the empirical fact of a conflict in experience between the sensible desirability (pleasantness vs. unpleasantness) of an object taken practically and its practical value according to a need of reason, the "good" and "evil" absolutely [Ak. 5:58]. The empirical fact of various experiences in which I judge that a subjective benefit in terms of pleasure or "happiness" is in conflict with a pure "good" and "evil" is Kant's departure point for transcendentally inferring the possibility of the absolute self-determination of the will as its own basis. Good and evil are "derived" as absolute categories in empirical experience from the suprasensible actuality of the

[55] Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781* (Cambridge University Press, 1992): 381-382, (*FM*, Ak. 20:293-294).

[56] Pluhar, *KdpV,* xxi.

will's self-determining freedom [Ak. 5:63], meaning in reverse that the existence of good and evil justify the transcendental inference of the actuality of freedom.[57]

Kant's discussion of the results of *KdpV*, and the proper integration of practical with speculative reason, from [Ak. 5:94-106] and again from [Ak. 5:132-148], in my view very elegantly confirms the archaeological reconstruction of *KdrV* we conducted previously. First, Kant argues that, because our own actions and their results only appear as objective when their "*existence* is determinable *in time*", "… the same subject, who on the other hand is also conscious of himself as a thing in itself, also considers his existence *insofar as it does not fall under conditions of time.*… [The] entire sequence of his existence as a being of sense… is in the consciousness of his intelligible existence nothing but a consequence… [This] action, with everything past that determines it, belongs to a single phenomenon of his character—the character which he on his own imputes to himself… ." [Ak. 5:95-98]. In other words, just as we saw previously (Chapter 5), reason is conscious of itself-in-itself solely as the process or activity of judging, which in its practical modality is the self-determining of will in absolute freedom. Otherwise, reason is reflected in the *empirical self*, which includes the history, as determined in time, of actions and judgments.[58]

In terms of the broader theory of transcendental objectivity, Kant asserts that the theoretical concepts "freedom, immortality, and God" have no "corresponding intuition" and therefore no "objective reality" [Ak. 5:134]. These "otherwise problematic (merely thinkable)" concepts now "acquire objective reality" [Ak. 5:134-5]; "… I.e., we are instructed by this law that *they have objects,* yet without being able to indicate how their concept refers to an object. By the same token, this is not yet cognition *of these objects*" [Ak. 5:135]. I propose that Kant's terminology here lines up perfectly with the understanding of transcendental idealism and the logic of the judgment I mapped out at the beginning of our investigation. From the transcendental perspective, i.e. with the corrective filter applied, "freedom, immortality, and God" are merely thinkable (empty concepts). However, in the *empirical* perspective they have illusory objects (that is, after all, the basis of transcendental illusion). Now, they are given "objects"; and yet Kant's prior assertion that the immortality of the soul and the existence of God are only "possible" and that we do not have a "duty" to believe in their actual existence [Ak. 5:122-126] confirms that the structure of an object and the real existence of a being are two separate questions for Kant, and that the division between these two is the key question in transiting between objective and non-objective cognition.

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[57] Thus, also, the reason that Kant insists on the necessity of the absolute purity of the moral will in "Duty!" [Ak. 5:86] is that only purified will, isolated from any empirical pleasure or "heteronomy", proves the existence of practical reason as a judging faculty rather than a merely automatic animal instinct for drive-satisfaction.

[58] Kant claims that the only reason that 'noumenal efficient causality' still seems problematic or hard to accept is because we are still thinking of noumenal causality as participating in space and time [Ak. 5:101-106].

Going further, there are two instruments or 'Critical tools' of interest which appear in *KdpV*. First, in the exploration of a "practical" dimension of objects which is non-theoretical, Kant chooses to rely on the developing idea of a "source" [*Triebfeder*] or "moral feeling" [Ak. 5:80] which is apparently a kind of 'auto-affection': the feeling is nothing other than the will's awareness of its effect upon itself [Ak. 5:117].[59] For "practical cognition" to function, in parallel with theoretical cognition, we require both concepts and some sort of intuition, or other given [Ak. 5:90]. However, Kant denies that there can be "suprasensible intuition" of practical objects, calling that "fanaticism" [Ak. 5:136]; the distinction here is between an "intuition" assigned to an extrinsic object, which would be a mystical objective revelation, and a given ground which is nevertheless subjective and internal, for which Kant again begins to deploy the term "feeling" [*Gefühl*]. Therefore we are now granted permission to access various kinds of "inner feeling", the feeling of pleasure and pain, for example, as well as the feelings of "self-conceit" and "self-love", "worthiness" and "dignity" [Ak. 5:73-89]. These are quasi-intuitions which extrinsically fulfill cognition in non-speculative propositions, in parallel to the senses fulfilling cognition of speculative propositions.[60]

Second, the specific form that the "moral law" of the will takes is of great importance. The sole *a priori* cognition of practical reason is what Kant calls elsewhere the "categorical imperative": "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle of a universal legislation" [Ak. 5:30].[61] That law seems at first glance to have curiously little to do with what we generally think of as morality. Kant agrees: "The thing is strange enough and has no equal in all the rest of practical cognition" [Ak. 5:31]. What is strange enough about the moral law, as Kant emphasizes multiple times, is that it is the will "determined *by the mere form of law*… [This] thought is not a precept according to which an action by which a desired effect is possible should be done… [Rather] it… determines the will a priori merely with regard to the form of its maxims" [Ak. 5:31]. What Kant is saying here is that the "mere form" of law consists in nothing other than the *universalization* of a subjective proposition, indifferent to the contents; the movement that makes a maxim a law is from "I will benefit from X" to "Humanity, as represented in my person, will benefit from X".[62] It is the replacement of the individual "I" as the subject of the proposition with a universalized "I" in which I subjectively share the viewpoints of all as if I am all of humanity in one, the *sensus communis,* which Kant therefore turns to discuss next. What I wish to point out here

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59 Cf. Lyotard, *Lessons*, 2-4.

60 Lyotard offers the best analysis I have found of the peculiar status of the 'quasi-intuition' grounding practical knowledge as 'thought feeling itself' in his discussion of judgment in general (as opposed to the sublime experience specifically), in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, and I will be referring repeatedly to his analysis.

61 Kant has restated the central discovery of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*: Ak. 4:416-421.

62 Compare Allison, *IF*, 143-154, on a supposed 'gap' in Kant's explanation of the categorical imperative which I think is intuitively explained by the universalizing structure of the 'form of law' as such.

is that this movement of practical universalization is the parallel of the universalized philosophical point of view in the theoretical domain, the "view from nowhere" of Thomas Nagel.[63] That parallel, and the fact that Kant asserts the "primacy" of practical reason over speculative reason [Ak. 5:120], will have far-reaching consequences for our conclusions in Chapter 7; for now we set them to one side.

At the end of *KdpV,* then, we have retrieved the following: we have established access to a non-objective or "suprasensible" [Ak. 5:106] domain, which is governed by practical reason. That domain is not objective because its "objects", which are otherwise sensible and spatio-temporally governed, fall under the jurisdiction of an inner consciousness of auto-affection by the "feelings" of pleasure and pain (subjective and heteronomous will) and moral worth/duty (universalized subjective, autonomous will). The only proper contents of the suprasensible realm are the feeling of self-legislation or "moral dignity", the inference or projection of personal infinity which makes "holiness" contentful as the clarified limit of the moral task (i.e. a "limit" as in integral calculus), and the inference or projection of the presence of God which makes "holiness" contentful as the ultimate reconciliation of happiness and virtue as the unified "end" of humanity [Ak. 5:130-131]. Finally, we have also uncovered in the "suprasensible" a pure form of universalization as such, the mere form of the moral law, which will become of crucial importance in Chapter 7.

In the same manner as we discussed previously in chapters 4-5, we and Kant are clearly still open here to the 'grounding problem'. We have seen Kant explain that we can directly feel our engagement in the system of forces with the world, and that the ground of such engagement is the will of subjectivity. How do we ground our awareness of subjectivity, then? At the ontological level, it is unproblematic to invoke 'self-feeling' as the direct phenomenal ground of moral cognition; the question is how, at the semiotic level, we can objectively encode that ground. How do we *say* what we mean here, if we intend something indeterminate and non-objective? Indeed, as we attempt to follow Kant in transiting to the outside of objectivity entirely, the problem is only growing clearer: while Kant says that the practical investigation has not extended theoretical cognition, only fulfilled its "need" by providing it motivation [Ak. 5:142], is not a statement about the (presumably invariant) nature of the will itself a statement in a theoretical mode? Should not transcendental idealism's discussion of freedom be somehow 'true'?

[63] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford University Press, 1986): 64.

The unexpected appearance of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*KU*) in the 'systematic architectonic' requires some explanation, because it depends on a 'realization' which Kant suddenly had in 1787.[64] To summarize a plausible account of the issue, Kant had given a complete critique of the objective structure of theoretical knowledge and also a critique of the *a priori* elements of practical knowledge: our own practice to the degree that it is determinate and cognizable to ourselves. However, Kant had failed to provide an account of the link which 'mediated' the two systems or distinct types of knowing, Kant's version of Leibniz' 'Kingdom of Bodies' and 'Kingdom of Ends' – that is, perhaps we are purely subjectively moral beings in an objectively moral-less world. For Kant, we originally posit the ideal of God, Who establishes the categorical imperative, through rational reflection on the totality of objective appearances.[65] What Kant seems *not* to have thought of at the time of the initial 'Copernican revolution', on the evidence of his letters of the period 1781-87, is that he did not yet have an account of how the 'moral world' of the Second Critique and the 'theoretical/empirical world' of the First Critique were necessarily the *same* world.[66] Hence, without some feature of the 'world' as totality-of-objects that can ground the root of practical reason as in-the-world, we are faced with an *ethical* 'subjective idealism' (moral relativism). As Kant writes, his consequent breakthrough is the realization that 'nature' must therefore be 'subjectively purposive', meaning that it appears to us as if purpose, the determinate structure housing indeterminate freedom defined in the second Critique, is in nature itself as well as in our own activities [Ak. 5:193]. In other words, practical reasoning is grounded in the world and not just in the subject through the distinctness of 'natural purposiveness' from my own purposes. Kant says wonderingly that he could "meditate on the consequences of this for the rest of my life".[67]

However, the above considerations still do not quite answer the question of the 'ground' at the level of language which we are searching for. If we reread the threefold structure of the critical architectonic in terms of our own interests, the shape of what we need to find in *KU* becomes clear.

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64 Förster, *KFS*, 8.

65 The question of Kant's theological opinions is a vast topic which I have chosen to leave out of the present investigation; in general, I would defend the position that Kant is much closer to a quietist or apophatic theology than to an atheist theology. It is certainly the case that Kant did not like the Catholic Church (*Dreams*, 37, 38; [Ak. 2:317]), but Kant nevertheless accepted the possibility of Divine evidence appearing empirically within history, which I would suggest is perfectly consistent with transcendental idealism (see 'Lectures on philosophical theology', Ak: 28:1118-1121).

66 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar, (Hackett Publishing Co., 1987): c-ci. The quote is lxxxviii.

67 Letter to Reinhold, Dec. 1787 [Ak. 10: 514]; trans. in Förster, *KFS*, 8.

KdrV established that the "theoretical" is the exclusive domain of the objective, the "boundaries" of reason, doubly determined by the structure of the conceptual and the structure of the ontological in the act of judgment. *KdpV* attempted to return to immediate experience and then delve beyond the objective by establishing the "suprasensible reality" of the freedom of the will, the objective evidence for which was the existence of good and bad as either subjective or universal qualities of objects, and thus the "self-affection" of will feeling its own power to determine itself. While one version of the 'linking' function of *KU* was given above, as a link between the objective world and supersensible purpose in the "objective purposiveness" of Nature, here we see that another linking function is possible: the link between the objective determination of theoretical judgments *as propositions* and the supposedly non-objective determination of practical judgments *as propositions* in a connecting theory of what a *judgment is as such*. It is quite suggestive to therefore discover that Kant begins building the discussion of *KU* from precisely that point: the structure of judging as such [Ak. 5:168/179]. At the semiotic level, in other words, the 'linking' problem for *KU* to solve is what makes theoretical judgments and practical judgments related as modalities of propositions. On the alternative, semiotic-level view I am outlining, *KU* will therefore be Kant's theory of language-use.[68] I will argue that the structure of language-use as such is a thread running through the backbone of *KU*, but that it is an invisible one. My claim is that Kant did not fully realize the systematic, semiotic-level consequences of what he was arguing with respect to aesthetic and teleological judgment specifically: thus the subsequent analysis of *KU* provides both the justification and the materials for Chapter 7, the next and final part of our investigation, by showing that Kant did all the preparatory work to complete a semiotic analysis for transcendental idealism, but did not actually carry that analysis out.[69]

In the opening sections of *KU*, Kant clearly indicates that the question at stake is whether "judgment… a mediating link between understanding and reason… also [has] a priori principles of its own?" [Ak. 5:168]. Understanding and reason have here just been identified as the regents over the domains of theoretical and practical reasoning, respectively. Here Kant has begun to call the latter simply the "*power of desire"* [Ak. 5:168]. Kant offers a further leading question: "Does judgment give the rule a priori to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, the mediating link between the cognitive power [in general] and the power of desire… ?" [Ak. 5:168]. The answer is that it does, meaning that judgment provides "a concept through which we do not actually cognize

[68] My thanks to Michael Boch for making me aware of the work of Kurt Walter Zeidler, who has developed an alternative account of *KU* as Kant's 'theory of language': cf. Kurt Walter Ziedler, "Die Antinomien in der 'Kritik der Urteilskraft'", *Vermittlungen: Zum antiken und neueren Idealismus* (Ferstl und Perz Verlag, 2016): 129-156.

[69] Much of the content of the following discussion was presented as "Kant on the Beauty of Prose" at the conference *Kant*: *Then and Now* organized by the University of Valencia, October 2024; the text is forthcoming in an edition of *Philosophical Cognitions*, Tirant io Blanche. It has been rewritten for the present chapter.

anything but which only serves as a rule for the power of judgment itself—but not an objective rule, to which it could adapt its judgment, since then we would need another power of judgment in order to decide whether or not the judgment is a case of that rule" [Ak. 5:169]. Here we note with interest that Kant is clearly stating that we are firmly outside the territory of the objective, searching for a self-determining *a priori* touchstone which shapes judgment as such and yet which is not employed in objective cognition and which does not itself become objective, or extrinsic to the act of judgment.

In searching for the principle of the power of desire which joins together the objective and the practically legislative domains of reason, Kant asserts that "judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal" [Ak. 5:179]. In that formula, which I will begin to call the 'movement of universalization', Kant captures both the structure of the ethical categorical imperative, which subjectively expands the individual maxim to all of humanity as such, and the structure of the theoretical proposition, which takes a universal standpoint as a proposition as such (that is, even singular or individual judgments still have a form, as language, in which they have been externalized to any one person who encounters them). In other words, it is the reflexive movement of transference and expansion of the particular into a rule-bound concept or principle which is the structure of judgment as such.

That structure operates according to the transcendental principle that Kant calls the "formal purposiveness of nature" [Ak. 5:181]. As we saw in chapter 5, reason self-assembles into an immanent operation of synthetic judgment, the direct forging of new experience, suspended within a hierarchy of previous judgments which are now subject to analytic traversal and recombination. One way of explaining what Kant has realized is that, just as the transcendental coming-to-be of spatiotemporal orientation establishes both a subjective and an objective navigational reference frame for the body, here we have only yet discussed the establishment of the subjective reference frame of reason. The objective reference frame of reason, which must be co-established in order to gain "orientation" for the subjective, is the idea that nature's empirical laws are presented *as if* they have their own intrinsic organization [Ak. 5:179-186]: in other words, reason needs to feel as if it is exploring not only *its own* system of scientific knowledge but that its knowledge is also charting and illuminating the outer *system* of scientific knowledge of nature *as such*. Because it is not necessary in that context to assert that nature is law-governed in-itself, this extension does not violate transcendental idealism, just as the absolute/objective reference frame of "north-west-east-south", within which "left-right-forward-back" unfolds and is charted, does not violate the transcendental ideality of absolute time and space.

Finally, Kant connects the discussion of the transcendental principle of natural purposiveness back to the original topic by asserting that there is a special pleasure *of reason* in figuring out that nature appears as if it is organized for some purpose, in working out empirical laws and then discovering that they appear to be connected of their own accord in a harmonious and organized system [Ak. 5:187-188]. The unique status of the *rational* pleasure, as opposed to sensible pleasures, which is the basis of the critique of the power of aesthetic taste is an extremely important and subtle distinction that is sometimes overlooked.[70] The distinction is critical because it allows for the experience of beauty, and the experience of the sublime, not to be *sensible* soakings in an overpowering bodily experience but rather to be the infinitely vibrating feeling that there is some mysterious and not fully understood *meaning* to existence that the physical world hints at – 'hidden meaning' being a way we can translate Kant's claim that it is the presentation of nature as-if it has been organized by an intelligence like and yet distinct from and superior to ours, mysterious because of the now-concealed, now-revealed character of its presence in nature, and the lack of a definite statement of what kind of meaning or purpose it is.[71]

The principle of judgment itself, as Kant asserts, is in its aesthetic division "merely subjective" [Ak. 5:189], which Kant insists is neither sensation nor concept; rather, "the *pleasure* or *displeasure* connected with" the presentation is "that subjective [feature] *which cannot at all become an element of cognition*" [Ak. 5:189]. As Lyotard notes, that subjective, non-objective, non-cognizable feeling is later explained by Kant as the power of judgment feeling its own activity, i.e., it is the bare circle or spiral of the act of reflexivity as such.[72] We know we are on the right track here in attempting to delve beyond objectivity because, as Lyotard further points out, the familiar objective Categories, applied to the object of aesthetic taste, become distorted "monsters" warped through the mirror of subjectivity.[73] Since the Critique of Teleological Judgment is a determinate operation of theoretical philosophy [Ak. 5:194-195], we will not pursue it further here.

The question at stake is now a semiotic one: how does Kant develop an account of the possibility of non-objective language in *KU*? I will assume that, in describing the experiences of beauty and sublimity as the infinite resonance between imagination (the apperceptive synthesis responsible for consciousness) and reason (now defined as the power of pure desire), Kant has successfully given his readers an example at the ontological level, or the level of direct phenomenological experience, of the supersensible or supradeterminate (just as I assumed in a

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70 E.g., see Donald W. Crawford, "Kant", in Berys Nigel Gaut, Dominic Lopes (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, (Routledge, 2000): 53; Lyotard, *Lessons*, 7-8.

71 See "Comment", *KU* [Ak. 5:445], and *KdpV*, [Ak. 5:88]. "The aesthetic emotion is not desire but the ending of all desire, a return to calm and joy." Girard, *DDN*, 34.

72 Lyotard, *Lessons*, 3-8, 11-14.

73 Lyotard, *Lessons*, 49.

previous section that the direct experience of the 'resistive force' of reality is always available in a first-personal, private perspective).

On my reading of *KU,* it turns out actually to be the case that the aesthetic judgment as such, the description of what is beautiful or sublime, is the basis and also the exemplar of Kant's account of how language can successfully convey the non-objective and indeterminate, because that is precisely what, on Kant's account, the beautiful and sublime *are.* The peculiarity of *KU* is then that it is *itself* a description of what is beautiful and sublime, meaning that Kant's account of how language can be infinite is hidden in the weave of the text of *KU* itself. Rather than deliberately and self-consciously presenting a theory of language, then, *KU* offers a sequence of moments which taken together are obviously the elements of a theory of language that is never then returned to with a "doctrine" that captures and realizes it.

Thus, there is clearly meant to be a link of some kind in *KU* between the assertion that poetry is the highest of all arts [Ak. 5:321], the claim that the human form is the ideal of beauty, not as *physical* form but as presenting purposive inwardness [Ak. 5:233-36], and the claim that beauty as such is the "symbolic hypotyposis" of morality [Ak. 5:351]. Most clearly, when Kant attempts to defend the connection of beauty with morality, he does so by saying that "beauty is the *symbol* of morality" [Ak. 5:351, emphasis added]. There he distinguishes such symbolic "hypotyposes" from "*characterizations* … of concepts by accompanying sensible signs", whose "point is the subjective one of serving as a means for reproducing concepts", i.e. "words" [Ak. 5:352]. Rather, beauty operates through the indirect structure of "analogy", which is an "indirect symbolic hypotyposis" that is nevertheless "cognition" [Ak. 5:352-353].[74] Here Kant is clearly indicating that the symbolic hypotyposis of beauty has both a familial relation to and is also distinct from the ordinary referential function of language, meaning that the experience of beauty, while infinite, is *not* non-conceptual or wordless. Similarly, Kant says that the methodology of taste requires the cultivation of "intimate *communication*" [Ak. 5:355], in the discussion of the *sensus communis* obviously implying that people must talk to one another to develop good taste. The same obvious implication is found in the peculiar structure of the Second Moment and of the Antinomy of Taste itself, in which I discover that others do not share my conviction of the objectively universal compulsion of the beautiful (and thus discover that the conviction itself is subjective), which clearly cannot take place unless I express my conviction and ask others for theirs.[75] Nevertheless, the pre-eminence of poetry as art is

[74] Cf. Christopher Janaway, "Kant's Aesthetics and the `Empty Cognitive Stock'", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 47:189 (1997): 459-461.

[75] See Rudolf Makkreel, "The Confluence of Aesthetics and Hermeneutics in Baumgarten, Meier, and Kant", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 54:1 (1996): 71.

not used by Kant as the cornerstone of an explicit theory of how the infinitude of beauty can be captured in language.

The clue that I found in *KU* to explain this odd absence is another odd absence, or hidden thread: because Kant never traveled once settled in Königsberg, the descriptions of the sublime Swiss Alps [Ak. 5:265-66] or the beautiful jungles of Sumatra [Ak. 5:243-44] in *KU* are not Kant's direct descriptions of physical places, which he never saw, but *re*-descriptions of a *text,* the travel accounts given in print by de Saussure or Marsden. I think the consequences of that curious elision or "sublation" are quite serious. Kant is conflating two very different experiences, the first being the direct sensible experience of physical confrontation with a beautiful object, and the second being the *imaginative* recreation of that direct experience, the "soul-stirring sensations … given to the readers" [Ak. 5:265]. That strange omission is the basis for my claim that Kant never explicitly worked out a theory of language's power to portray the indeterminate, only laying out its pieces implicitly as the text of *KU* itself. If we would like to make explicit that theory, we must address the evident problem, revealed by the above examples, that what exactly the beautiful object *is* is equivocal in the peculiar case of language-as-beautiful: is it the text or is it the object which the text is describing, or both?

I suggest that, if the aesthetic judgment is the reflexive reproduction of the direct experience of the aesthetic infinite, the answer is 'both'. The aesthetic judgment as experienced is the infinite free play of the faculties of imagination and reason: the judger cannot ultimately settle on whether the object before him is to be determined theoretically, as a 'what it is', or purposively, as a 'what I wish to do with it'. Rather, for that individual the form of the object has exceeded itself, becoming an endless vibration or disjunction between these two settled categories.[76] The object seems to be hinting that it has a meaning and an essence of its own, in the 'purposive' order which serves, as discussed above, as the orienting reference frame within which the purposeful order of human thinking takes direction. That is what beauty and sublimity are, phenomenologically. Since concepts are the material of determinate communicable judgments, which "subsume under a universal an individual" [Ak. 5:179], that means that poetry and oratory function as arts by means of conceptually encoding the *in*determinate judgments of beauty: that is, through metaphor, allegory, hyperbole, etc. The ontological-level object of language is not merely the object which is described, but the object-*as*-described by a subject who has perceived it, which becomes prominent in the peculiar subjectivity of the aesthetic judgment, the way that beauty speaks only to one heart at a time.[77] The aesthetic ontological object of language is therefore the repetition of the beauty of nature

[76] Compare Lyotard, *Lessons*, 56-59.

[77] Cf. Longuenesse, *Human Standpoint,* 265: "This second judgment, imbedded, as it were, in the first (or in the predicate of the first), and which only the critique of taste brings to discursive clarity, is a judgment no longer about

as the human appropriation of itself, in a privileged double place which captures both subjectivity and objectivity in the emergence of the moment of judgment. The "apparent (subjective) natural purposiveness" which is thus uniquely captured in poetics is the subjective purposiveness of subjectivity itself, the human experience objectified as a part of Nature, the indescribable, indeterminate beauty of *being a human* who longs for wordless heights but cannot decisively cognize them or fully describe the meaning of his own existence.[78] Language is capable of being beautiful because it can reproduce, at the semiotic level, the infinite horizons of the human spirit itself as a way of existence which is embodied in a world of facts, but wills the undetermined future.[79] At the semiotic level, then, the meaning of such judgments is repeated as infinite because it is not bounded by the literal, even though the *sentence* is still determinate as a semiotic structure. Therefore, the beauty of poetics (i.e. all linguistic arts) at the level of the signified, its reflexive "free play", is in the inexhaustible resonances of trace meanings resulting from the unexpected juxtaposition of disparate images, extending "the exhibition of the concept" into "a wealth of thought to which no linguistic expression is completely adequate" [Ak. 5: 326]. Kant's instinct to call poetry (or more generally, poetics) the highest art is, from that perspective, quite correct, because poetics is the reflexive encoding of the very activity (in playful analogizing) of reconciling infinite human freedom with objective determinacy, i.e., it is the reflexive or semiotic repetition of the aesthetic judgment itself.

Does that solve our problem? In part, yes. By reconstructing an account of beautiful language implicit in *KU* in which the infinite direct experience of the beautiful is repeated and exteriorized in the beauty of the language of aesthetic judgment at the semiotic layer, it becomes at least theoretically possible to say that language can, as such, convey the indeterminacy of the purposive and also convey the indeterminacy of the objectively real, or 'natural', as combined with the purposive in the 'teleological'. However, there is unfortunately still a problem remaining, which we can state as the structure of the Second Moment of the Judgment of Taste: the disjunction between the universality of the form of the aesthetic judgment and the privacy or subjective validity of the experience which it conveys is repeated at the semiotic level when language itself becomes an object. In simpler terms, even if someone under the influence of beauty writes beautiful language, not everyone will then feel that language itself as beautiful. To some people it will be cold and dead. The possibility of poetic metaphor as a structure in the horizontal surface of the language-system does not yet demonstrate under what conditions it is actually fulfilled vertically. Furthermore, it is not yet clear how poetic metaphor solves the problem of grounding philosophy,

the object, but about the judging subjects..."

78 Cf. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy,* 51, 55.

79 Cf. Peggy Knapp, "Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and the Aesthetics of Prose", *Novel*, 41:1 (2007), 121-143: 121-24.

which is not necessarily a related modality of language (are aesthetic judgments to be identical to theoretical ones?) Language about the supersensible or the metaphysical is *theoretically possible* but not *necessarily convincing*: we can choose either to 'see through' it and allow it to be fulfilled by the metaphysical ground of the Real, or we can choose only to 'see its surface' and consider it another example of transcendental illusion, the hypostatizing of the uncognizable as a repetition of itself. That double possibility is what I call the 'semiotic antinomy', in a repetition and imitation of the antinomies of Kant's original project in *KdrV*. To an attempt at a resolution of the semiotic antinomy we turn next, in the final chapter (7).

Chapter 7: Sketch of a Transcendental Deduction of Language-Use

Our discussion in the previous chapter of Kant's sketches of "metaphysics of nature" and "metaphysics of morals" ended up a bit scattered, since I had to introduce the reader to the argument of each work involved and also untangle a bit of scholarly activity around them. Let us summarize what Kant did and did not succeed in doing. Then we can see what we have left and proceed to a final restatement of our remaining difficulty.

At the level of the ontological perspective, Kant succeeded, in my view, in showing the ground of a "metaphysics of nature" and a "metaphysics of morals" in his late Critical works. That is, Kant was able to demonstrate that any researcher, working in the first person, can contact indeterminacy through a structure which transforms it into a feature of the objective, and available, world of consciousness. For example, physical objects are 'real' in the full sense that we wish them to be, because their objectivity is fulfilled by the resistive force they exert against our embodied intent, over a sufficient duration of time, distinguishing them from dreams and hallucinations. Likewise, our freedom is fulfilled by the evidence of the feeling of moral law exerting force against our animal desires, and we need not fret that we are 'in reality' or metaphysically unfree. I consider myself at liberty to disagree with Kant about the positive reality of the existence of God, evidenced historically, without violating the structure of the transcendental critique of objective reason, as I have reconstructed it.[1] At the ontological level, or the level of direct objective perception/cognition, there is thus no longer any reason for skepticism or fear about the 'beyond' of objective constitution.

The question remaining is: without an objective intuition, how have we determined the boundaries of the specificity of concepts which refer to excessively given indeterminacies? If the determination of such 'excessive' concepts is purely negative or 'apophatic', how can we additionally hold that they possess a positive valence, or, in other words, make the transition from 'negative' to 'positive' philosophy? Kant asserted forcefully that the feeling-states of will expand practical cognition but that they do not expand theoretical cognition [Ak. 5:132], meaning that here we are in a kind of 'basement' of the objective. But when we turn to look at the concept which has expanded practical cognition, we note that, according to our understanding of Kant's framework, it is a concept which has created an object for itself carved from the supraobjective field. We must ask: how do we know about the objective validity of such a concept? In actuality, must philosophers

[1] As noted previously, Kant's mature views on organized religion are complex. I do not think it justifiable to doubt that Kant personally believed in the existence of God, independent of the 'regulative ideal' of the Divine which organizes the political community. However, extensive evaluation of the possibility of a positive dogmatic Christianity reconcilable with Kantianism is far outside our present scope.

know that they are free but *fall silent* in the face of the impossibility of validly expressing their freedom?

Lyotard, in *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, outlines the broader or deeper version of the above issue: the discussion of *KU* is distorted from the beginning, because "feeling must have its own way".[2] The fourfold categories, which determine every object, are broken and distorted in the judgment of taste, producing strange "monsters" which are subjective and objective together.[3] Trying to get a firmer grasp on the shape coming through that distorted framework, Lyotard links *KU* back to a passage in *KdrV* called the "transcendental topic" [A268/B324-A270/B326].[4] There, Kant states that reason must already have a method for determining which faculties should be called upon in any judgment before a judgment actually takes concrete form. For correct cognition, we require not only the form of an object which is produced by any thinking but also the ability to pre-determine whether the pure object falls under sensible or intellectual cognition, i.e. whether it is 'real' or 'transcendental illusion' [A270/B326]. The categories are objective structure, but that objective structure, in Lyotard's words, has a "place" where it fits and is shaped.[5]

Now, Lyotard's discussion is precisely the problem we are trying to capture. Of course the structure of the categories must already have a "place" prepared for it, and it is clear and necessary that the "places" or "*topoi*" cannot themselves be determinable or objective, but are rather a pre-categorial 'deliberation'. [A269/B325] But our direct assent to Lyotard's exegesis separates from reflection on the language that he is using to convey it to us. How did we know what Lyotard *means*? In what space is this structure of thinking taking place; over what 'gap' is it extending, and what is on the far shore?[6]

A final way of restating the difficulty is thus as follows: both Kant and Lyotard discuss structures which are the 'other' or necessary pre-condition of objective thought. However, as transcendental reflection on the non-given of subjectivity, the only possible status of such discussion within transcendental idealism is *regulative* or practical. When we become aware of the regulative status of the *concept*, its content becomes posited as *subjective*, because any practical object is a project of the will. Thus Hans Vaihinger demonstrated his sensitivity to the vector of Kantian thought by developing the philosophy of "as-if": we act *as if* it is true that God is real and

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2 Lyotard, *Sublime*, 17, 46.

3 "The result is a twisting of the effects of determination that were expected … [that] produces or invents the logical monsters that we know: a delight without incentive or motive, a subjective universality, a perceived finality, an exemplary necessity. ...these names are, in proper method or rather in proper manner, those of the 'places' that the reflective heuristic discovers, even in tautegory, by means of the category." Lyotard, *Sublime,* 49.

4 Lyotard, *Sublime*, 27-28, 30-49.

5 Lyotard, *Sublime*, 28-31.

6 On the general importance of the 'gap'- 'two banks' – 'bridge' metaphor in Kant's thought, see Howard, *KLPN*, 18-20.

we are free to pursue good and evil.[7] Likewise one might credibly accuse Cassirer of 'subjectivizing' symbolic forms.[8] But obviously, then, such "*Fiktionen*" are unsatisfying to the reason that wishes to find, with Kant, the "sacred ground" of the supersensible. A fiction cannot be sacred. The question is now clarified in a Kantian format as: what is the *objective ground* of the subjective regulative concept-object? What makes regulative principles 'objectively valid' or 'true'?

Transcendental Semiotics

The two puzzle pieces that Kant has left us from chapter 6 are first, the renewed significance of the mechanism of 'subreption' from the Paralogisms, and the structure of judgment as the universalization of the private, from *KdrV* and *KU.*

In direct experience, the 'objective' is returned to me as the 'given'. The experience of dwelling among objective appearances is empirically valid for all persons, even though the degree or specificity of objectivity may vary among persons (those missing a sense, or unreflective children, for example). That unproblematic universality is because, through objectivity, being as force pushes back against all our willed movements in space equally.

However, at the direct or ontological level we do not *know* or *affirm* difference, because the *only* concepts of the original judgment of perception are the Categories, the bare determination of objectivity-as-such. We are thus absorbed in the objects which surround us.[9] It is only possible to determine difference at the *semiotic* level, the level of reflection which takes place in subjective time-consciousness. Thus, for example, at the ontological level I am equally absorbed and dissolved into the empirical objects around me, and the unreal objects of hallucination, fantasy, and memory. I am absorbed fully into my emotions, my projections, and so forth. I can only *decide* the difference between objects when I become determinately aware in reflection.

Kant's definition of judgment as a function of universalization in *KdpV* and *KU* leads to the troubling fact that the semiotic, in a repetition of the 'excess of the boundaries of sensibility', apparently duplicates the universality of the ontological but is in fact *private*. When I define the object as 'beautiful' or the event as 'meeting God', I am disturbed when I discover that others *do not agree with me*, disturbed because the subjective is originally given as *in* the objective. I only

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7 Hans Vaihinger, *Die Philosophie des Als Ob. System der theoretischen, praktischen und religiösen Fiktionen der Menschheit auf Grund eines idealistichen Positivismus* (Felix Meiner Verlag, 1922), 1-12, 59-69.

8 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, vol. 1: Language,* trans. Ralph Manheim (Yale University Press, 1980): 73-80.

9 I have argued that Gabriel Marcel developed an extensive ethical anthropology, in response to Sartre, from the same phenomenological intuition of the 'sticking' of intentional selfhood into objects: Andrew Parrish, "Hospitality and Pilgrimage in Gabriel Marcel", *Marcel Studies Journal* (forthcoming).

find out that I am the only one who likes sardines by meeting others who do not like sardines, which is then the basis for my slow creation of a conceptual structure of 'selfhood' which allows me to articulate that the experience of deliciousness must (transcendentally) not be *objective* but *subjective*. This carving out of a selfhood as the container for the unsettling enigma of private judgments is the basic structure of the trap of the semiotic "transcendental illusion": while every semiotic concept is given as universal through the structure of judgment, some of them are not, and we only discover the *a priori* method of distinction between them after a good deal of trial and error.

Thus the objective order, which is objective precisely because it is public, is imitated by the subjective order, which gives a false universality to the private through encoding it in language, which is itself a pseudo-object and thus carries the sense of 'givenness' required.[10] The problem extends to the philosophical use of theoretical reason, which is where the recursive meta-entanglements of transcendental illusion really begin to hamper our thinking, and we grasp the true ambition and difficulty of Kant's project. As Nagel noted, philosophy is always written in a perspectiveless "view from nowhere", a universal stance which does not explain its own justification for doing so.[11] We now have the Kantian theoretical framework to site Nagel's observation. The philosopher, or any thinker of the mechanisms of subjectivity, is always necessarily committing the subreption of the Paralogisms: objectifying the 'subject' but filling this theoretical object with the private, and subjective, intuitions of the first-personal perspective. It is only by reference to first-personal intuition that philosophical descriptions of subjectivity can be created and tested. Second, that subreption is taking place in language through the universalizing function of judgment: the mechanism of the elision from privacy to objectivity is the apparent objectivity of the *concept*. The "nowhere" from which philosophy is written is the projection of universalization through the structure of judgment itself.

In other words, the writer of the universalized theoretical text is focused on the theorized object beyond the writing. The reader of the universalized theoretical text takes *the text itself* as a new object. Because the text is a secondary object, which refers mediately to another object and only then to being, it is at the semiotic level of interpretation that a new distinction comes into existence. The concept, because it is itself positive and determinate, always refers to an intentional object, as we discussed in Ch. 4; but in reflection it becomes possible to *affirm* or to *deny* that the

[10] Lyotard, *Sublime*, 67: "Because this [imaginative] capacity for a production that exceeds simple reproduction is an *a priori* condition for aesthetic judgment, ... it must be universally communicable. This is why, when it is exercised even singularly, it is legitimate for it to require that the unlimited space it opens up for thought and the suspended time in which its play with understanding is sustained, be accessible to any thinking faced aesthetically with the same singular circumstance. This is something that the metaphysics of forces has great trouble establishing."

[11] Nagel, *View from Nowhere*, 60-65.

intentional object has a further pass-through reference to Being. The peculiar paradox of reflection is that the unproblematic phenomenological evidence of positive indeterminacy at the *ontological* level is problematized at the *semiotic* level, but the universalizing and objectifying structure of the semiotic makes the issue appear pseudo-ontological. Skepticism and dogmatism are both only possible as reflective determinations, *positions* that are *said about* being, even though both take place as acts among the shimmering of Being.

The philosopher who writes the text is not reflecting on the text but producing through the text, oriented toward an object outside it, and thus there is an intuitive convincingness in the writing. The philosophers who *read* the text may either agree that the text is convincing, or they may disagree.[12] There are countless examples of such difficulties in contemporary philosophy. A paradigmatic example is the tremendous interest in contemporary phenomenology and negative theology of the so-called "unsayable".[13] A moment's critical reflection will lead, however, to the posing of the question: If, by definition, the unsayable is unsayable, how exactly is it possible to say so much about it?[14]

Transition from the Theoretical to the Practical System of Signs

We can depart from Kant's conclusion, in *KdpV*, concerning the "primacy" of practical reason with respect to theoretical reason [Ak. 5:120]. There, Kant said that theoretical reason constitutes a closed system of objects, but that it does not find the satisfaction of its own "interest" within its own domain [Ak. 5:121]. As we know, that is because reason is the function of human consciousness which seeks the unconditioned, trying to establish the borders of the infinite sequence of the determinable by relating that sequence as a whole to the other of the indeterminate. The "interest" of reason is to return to, and rest in, the unconditioned "ground" of the objects which it knows are its own productions, to be humbled and reassured by the real presence of what is beyond reason. Practical reason satisfies its own interest and also that of speculative reason in two ways: first, by establishing the reality of absolute freedom through the evidence of the unconditional moral law, and second, by establishing the ideal of holiness as the teleological horizon for practical activity [Ak. 5:120-121]. Reason is comforted by resting in, and being judged/bounded by, the absolute alterity of its own freedom: freedom had to always already generate the determinative activity of reason, so it is prior to and greater than that restless activity.

[12] There are resemblances here to Derrida's thought concerning the self-presence of the 'voice' to itself during the act of speech, as opposed to the distance and nonidentity of writing: Derrida, *Voix et Phénomène*, 84-89.

[13] See Franke, ~~*Unsayable*~~, 139-145.

[14] Cf. Christopher Insole, "Anthropomorphism and the Apophatic God", Modern Theology 17:4 (2001): 475-483.

Thus speculative reason is in the end "subordinated" to practical reason, "because all interest is ultimately practical and even the interest of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone" [*KdpV,* Ak. 5:121]. Indeed, as shown previously, in the end Kant's ground of the speculative in the self-affection of the subject (in *OP*, chapter 6) is also taken up into and subordinated to the force of the subject's will, at the ontological level. The obvious corollary is that the system of theoretical *knowledge*, considered as a whole, is subordinated to and contained within the system of practical *knowledge*. In other words, the logical conclusion of Kant's thinking here is that all human knowledge is ultimately derivable from a form identical to the categorical imperative, the sole *a priori* principle of practical reason.

If the categorical imperative's form is the movement from embodied immanence and direct cognition to a universalized view *sub specie aeternitatis* ('what I want within my own body' shifts into 'what would I do if I were all of humanity in one?'), then all knowledge (in the semiotic domain, of course) is likewise the reflexive recasting of the directly perceived as *sub specie aeternitatis*, as the 'communicable' or 'public'.[15] However, the theoretical form of knowledge is itself a form of activity, and so it is grounded by and incorporated into the "interest" of the practical form of knowledge ('What is a human being?' and 'What is the world?' are completed or supported from below by 'What am I supposed to do in the world?'). That forms the basis of a 'Transition from the Theoretical to the Practical System of Signs', which joins together the two systems under a common problem, that of the ground of the reflexive activity or universalizing activity of language as such. Language as such is grounded by the movement of universalization, which Kant has already stated is the "necessary condition" of the "universal communicability of our cognition" [*KU,* Ak. 5:239]. Like Kant's "Transitions", this move serves as a "keystone" or "crossing" which allows us to freely cross over between one domain and another at the semiotic level, paralleling the crossing of "forces" which united the ontological level of the practical and speculative.

Sketch of a Transcendental Deduction of Language-Use

Having completed our "transition", we are faced with the unified problem of finding the necessary ground of the representative activity of language as such, in both its practical and theoretical modalities. Here we need to find the objective condition or ground of the principle of judgment itself, the 'movement of universalization' considered as a totality itself.

[15] Cf. Nagel, *Nowhere,* 127-130.

Finite philosophical thinking is apparently able to find and delineate its own boundary. Furthermore, in order to acknowledge its own finitude, it is *necessary* for the 'boundaries of reason' to be so delineated.[16] However, since awareness of a boundary requires awareness of both sides of the boundary, the inner and the 'beyond', and the boundary here being defined is the boundary of thinking itself, we are justified in asking: how is it possible that the boundary of thinking can be determined by thinking itself?

More specifically, the finitude of human thinking, as characterized by Kant, consists in the fact that human thinking can only apply to what is already in the form 'object'. Every sign, in order to refer properly, must refer to that which has already been constituted as 'objective' in the initial division of the subject-object relation of awareness itself. When we recognize the finitude of human thinking, we are referring therefore to what is beyond *objectivity*. In order to complete the delineation of the objective as a closed field, we have to *know* the *beyond of the object* – something carried in the *concept* must be *supra-objective*. However, not only does Kant's system seem to preclude such a possibility, but when we turn to face the *concept* it then itself falls into the system of objects and the glimmering of the supra-objective is lost: it is this reflexive objectification which gives rise to the complaints of Kant's readers. It would seem, ontologically, that whatever cannot become an object for us must also be incapable of being a sign for us, since signs are secondary to and dependent upon objects. However, the puzzle is that language which purports to articulate or describe the beyond of objectivity is in fact *already in existence* and employable by us thinkers.

For analysis, let us take as example Franke's term "the ~~unsayable~~". It is printed with a strikethrough in his work as a way of highlighting the awareness that the term is meant to carry, and denote, what cannot be denoted: it is a deliberately negated determinacy.[17] That device of crossing out words to emphasize the negation of their objective, determining content was also employed by Heidegger in his late works: "~~*Seyn*~~" is a linguistic device to illustrate the impossibility of correctly using a sign to designate Being as such.[18]

First, I point out that the negation does not apply absolutely to these terms, but only relatively. If all we know about the 'not-unsayable' is that it is *not* the unsayable, and all we know about 'not-Seyn' is that it is *not* Seyn, the extension of possible positive determinations is otherwise unlimited. How do we know that not-Seyn and not-unsayable are not identical in absolute

[16] Cf. Franke, ~~*Unsayable*~~, 148-149: "Apophatic thought does, then, have something *normative* to offer to the whole spectrum of philosophical discourses, even without being able to say anything at all directly about reality as such."

[17] Franke, ~~*Unsayable*~~, 144-145, 148-149.

[18] "In this perspective one can suggest, against Rorty's desire simply to have done with metaphysics, that in Apel's terms 'metaphysics' cannot come to an end, because its key words cannot be finally cashed in and given 'meaning': the very rules for the use of the word 'being', for instance, exclude this. The continued interest in Heidegger's struggle with the word *Sein* – which included only using it 'under erasure' – is evidence of what I mean." Bowie, *Schelling*, 7.

indifferentation, and that they are not also indifferentiable from the absolute negation of any other concept whatsoever (~~banana~~)? In fact, Franke wants to talk about "the unsayable" as opposed to some other idea, and Heidegger wants to talk about "Being" as distinct from bananas – the purpose of the erasure is to show that the content of the concept *exceeds* the concept, but not that the content is *unrelated* to the concept entirely.

That distinction allows us to unearth the fact that there is a 'subreption' here between two distinct functions. The function of preserving the relative determinacy of the cancellation comes from the canceled or negated positive term. But the purpose of Franke's or Heidegger's ungrammatical usage is to invoke a sense of wonder.[19] It is to jar the reader into a positive opening beyond the determinacy of ideas. The peculiarity here is with the availability of that second function. When we read the phrase ~~unsayable~~, we *know what it means*.

What we know is meant is the shimmering of the infinite as positive. The same function is being employed in the possibility of poetic metaphor conveying the infinite from Chapter 6, I think, but we have here narrowed down the problem to its most specific and pointed instantiation – a single word which denotes the beyond of ontology through its cancellation. That is, what is indicated is the *excess* or *overflowing* of indeterminacy rather than the absence or void of indeterminacy. The question is, since the indeterminate cannot itself – theoretically, or objectively - admit of any determination whatsoever, upon what basis – what ground – do we make the distinction between a positive and a negative indeterminacy?

Just as in Kant's transcendental investigation, we can now see that there is a peculiar doubleness in that problem: in ordinary reflection we do use and possess the ~~unsayable~~; we can employ that category of thinking intersubjectively and understand one another, as the examples above of Franke, Heidegger, and Kant himself prove. However, the further peculiarity here is that we *already do* employ such language: there are plenty of people who know exactly what Heidegger was trying to say, even if the form of his statement is semiotically self-contradictory on closer examination. That peculiarity, that we are already employing, in actuality, a semiotic structure which turns out to be missing its transcendental foundation, is an exact duplicate of the original ontological puzzle of Kant's "Copernican turn", in which synthetic *a priori* objects were missing their spatiotemporally formal foundations. The problem is only revealed by the inward turning of a transcendental 'suspension', which reveals that there ought to be no object attached to the unsayable word, just as Kant's transcendental ontology revealed that there was no act-existing attached to special metaphysical objects. The question is: How is the ~~unsayable~~ *possible* a priori?

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[19] Franke, ~~*Unsayable*~~, 152.

Now I would like to point out that we can go another step, and recast the underlying terrain of our puzzle as an antinomy, the Semiotic Antinomy. The question can be restated as: how is it possible *a priori* to determine, at the semiotic level, whether an intentional object is fulfilled by a *positive (present)* or a *negative (absent)* infinitude? In looking at the word itself, the infinitude is disclosed as insecure: that is (at the semiotic level) a parallel to the point of Janicaud's critique of the "theological turn". Putting a capital letter on 'Being' does not, one might argue, make 'Being beyond beings' anything other than another being, a semiotic object.[20] Just as speculative reason, in *KdrV*, cannot judge once and for all whether the ideals of reason exist or do not exist, because it can validly reason to either conclusion, so reason in its mode of language-use cannot judge from within language whether the pseudo-objects created by concepts are metaphysically objective or non-objective. That is because it can validly reason within the determinate to either of the two following conclusions: the *unsayable* is resolved simply as what we cannot say (it is negative or empty infinitude), or else the *unsayable* is the overflowing fulfillment of all possible determinations in the domain of the *sayable* (it is positive or presencing infinitude).[21]

The most basic semiotic assertion of transcendental idealism is that the reflective choice of whether to assert the "metaphysics of presence" or the "metaphysics of absence" is impossible to resolve purely theoretically.[22] The situation here is an exact semiotic parallel of the situation Kant originally uncovered at the ontological level: where Kant found that the special metaphysical object was both fulfilled and unfulfilled in the metaphysical beyond, here we find that the objective concept is both fulfilled and unfulfilled at the level of the object (the signified). In other words, we have a semiotic Antinomy: reason cannot decide whether pseudo-universal and pseudo-objective theoretical language is truly grounded or not.

The resolution of the Antinomy has to take place, once again in parallel with Kant, in the form of a "transcendental deduction". Like Kant's resolution of the cosmological antinomies, and as we have already seen, the real status – the transcendental ground – of both positive and negative infinitude has to be regulative and not theoretical. The ground of the differentiation between the two must be *in the subject*.

If we consider the empirical structure of the totality of our language as a semiotic system, there is an affective 'cast' which is only expressed *through* the structures of this system but which is

[20] Franke, ~~*Unsayable*~~, 151-154: "The problem is that the formulation which makes apophasis a discourse about discourse gives it a positive object. Like all formulas, this one, too, must be withdrawn."

[21] Jamie Barnes gives a very interesting first-person example of feeling the play of belief and unbelief in confrontation with a text and its underlying experience in Barnes, "The Ontological Implications of Spirit Encounters", *Social Analysis* 63:3 (2019): 24-46; cf. 28-31.

[22] As H.S. Harris notes, Hegel's early reflections in the 'Critical journal' took precisely this form: that 'dogmatism' and 'skepticism' were simply the immanent shapes of consciousness and their battle could not be decided directly but only through the historical evolution of *Geist*. Di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 254.

distinct from the system as bare language. That affective cast takes two opposite forms: either the totality of language as a closed semiotic system is operated as opening to an outside, or else the closed system is operated as reducing its own outside to within itself. All of our propositional knowledge, taken as a whole, has a qualifier attached to it which, without changing the contents of any individual judgment, changes the *cast* or *stance* of the totality of knowledge towards its own outside: namely, the indeterminate. That qualifier is similar to the "feelings" Kant employs in the practical realm: it is not a sensible intuition, but an inner affection. Parallel to Lyotard's reflections on pleasure, it is thought "feeling itself".[23] We can *feel* the disposition of the totality of our own knowledge toward indeterminacy, as being either positive and interpenetrating or negative and externalized. Within the knowable realm of semiotic evidence, then, the totality of determinate semiotic knowledge can be cast in one of two ways: either indeterminacy interpenetrates the totality as openness to possibility, or else indeterminacy is extrinsic to the totality as the closure of the *unknown*.

However, since these structures are not objective but transcendentally subjective, they are possibilities which are collapsed within the pure structure of reason's double movement. The pure structure of reason is nothing whatsoever other than the pure movement of the singular put in relation to the infinite, being 'schematized' as a universal, at the double levels of objectivity (synthetic objectification) and the semiotic concept (the universalizing movement of judgment). The singular and the infinite are concentric, and the movement of universalization takes place within the interiority of both. Transcendentally, it cannot be actual indeterminacy but only reason's own infinity which is employed for this movement. However, the pure movement of universalization can progress in two, and only two, opposing ways. Either the singular is assimilated to the infinite, or the infinite is assimilated to the singular – and these are not identical. The assimilation of the singular to the infinite is a positive or open infinity, in which every singular is interpenetrated with the infinite; the assimilation of the infinite to the singular is a negative or closed infinity, in which the infinite is singularized.

Thus, when I consider the concept 'unsayable' or 'Being', the reference which such words bear is to the positive infinitude which has become an affective cast of my own closed semiotic system. The function of *evoking* beyond the determinate is fulfilled in the ground of that affective totality which is only determinable through its presence-for-me in concrete language. The answer of

[23] Lyotard, *Sublime*, 9-10: "Let us say that the 'state of mind', the *Gemütszustand*, is a nuance. This nuance affects thought as it thinks something. The affection occupies a position in a range that extends from extreme pleasure to extreme displeasure; affections occupy a position similar to that of the right and the left in pure reflective thought. Sensation, the *aisthesis*, signals where the 'mind' is on the scale of affective tints. It could be said that sensation is already an immediate judgment of thought upon itself. ... the affection is like the inner repercussion of the act, its 'reflection'."

how it is possible for '~~unsayable~~' to evoke wonder is that I carry the possibility of wonder within myself as the affective cast of my propositions, the interpenetration of indeterminacy with the concept.

However, because the work of reason is limitation, the positivity of the indeterminacy which comes through is not my *production*. Rather, the affective cast which transmits positive indeterminacy is a cast of *limiting* the determinacy of language. When the singular is assimilated to the infinite, every singular becomes the bearer of infinite possible references, as in the poetics of Kant's *KU*. It is an affectivity which is therefore open to the impossibility of ever saying everything about anything [cf. *Vienna Logic*, Ak. 24:840]. Absolute *indeterminacy* has been *mediated* by the limitation of language which thereby permits its permeation. By contrast, assimilating the infinite to the singular is the conditioning of indeterminacy in which indeterminacy threatens the domain of the determinate as the 'unknown'. This is how it is transcendentally possible to determine indeterminacy as positive or negative: the *determination* itself is, and must be, transcendentally subjective, but because it is a limiting, it does not determine the existence but only the possibility of *appearing* of positive indeterminacy.

Because these structures are regulative and fall under the domain of practical reason, they are not supersensible facts; rather, they unfold extrinsically as possible conditions of the will. 'Being' is filled with the colorful vitality of the indeterminate for me because I have *chosen to believe* that it is. However, that choosing to 'believe' is not a subjectively *extrinsic* but objective *interior* alteration: it does not *create* but *lets through* the existing of pure indeterminacy. The structure appears in evidence not as a choice made by the active will, which would fail to resolve the problem of 'regulative' principles becoming conceptually subjective, but as the *objective* framework of the totality of the subjective frame: it is the horizon of greater or lesser interpenetration of indeterminacy in the already 'given' system of concepts which gives will the opportunity to *know itself in the consequences of its choices.* The contact of indeterminacy with the concept of the indeterminate is what grounds the semiotic system as a whole and makes it possible to speak of, not only transcenden*tal*, but also transcen*dent* philosophy as *true* or *false*.

At the semiotic level, skepticism is the ontological denial of the fulfillment of Being, and dogmatism is the ontological assertion that Being is included within the object, but both are actually variations of the assimilation of the infinite to the singular, because they equally exteriorize the indeterminate to the *concept*. The critical stance, by contrast, is internally doubled at the level of the concept: it extends the concept while holding it empty, permitting indeterminacy to flood it. In this semiotic sense, the 'critical' stance is of course not Kant's invention, but simply the apophatic

method of philosophy as a whole: the question.[24] The philosophical is a *practical* instrument: its actual function is to ascetically alter the relationship of the philosopher to indeterminacy by clearing away the closed determinacy of the mediating objects produced by subjectivity, in the end producing an individual who 'knows only that he does not know'.[25] The successful production of this effect is what it in fact ultimately means, on this account, for philosophy to be 'true'. However, it is not a 'subjective' effect or 'as-if' play, but an objectively given alteration of the empirical self measurable in time-consciousness, a genuine change in one's mode of being.

The bipolar structure unfolds within time, as exteriorized, and changes in time also. The assimilation of the infinite to the singular collects infinitude into a determinate unity, whereas the assimilation of the singular into the infinite tends to lead toward a relaxation of difference.[26] At the end of philosophy for the individual, all particulars are eventually seen under their relation to the indeterminate, to Being.[27] By contrast, the reduction to unity eventually loses all 'outside' in a collapse into the objects which have become the container for the Ego, the Self. For that reason the cast which produces positive infinitude contains the cast of negative infinitude within itself, whereas the reverse is not the case. 'Good understands evil, but evil understands neither goodness nor itself.'[28] It is that non-identity in the results of the twofold movement that allows them to become a *scale* or standard for the will. Kant demonstrated the absolute autonomy of the decision between good and evil as presented in objects. Because the semiotic ground shows the phenomenological evidence of the accumulation of these decisions as the *objective* boundary of the horizon of concepts, the semiotic ground reaffirms good as *true* and evil as *false.* The pure movement of will in the practical object is brought back into relation with a structure that serves as its internal standard, the reflexive moment of objective conscience. The progression or regression of the widening horizon in which all things are seen in their relation to indeterminacy is the exteriorized phenomenological measure of the *status* of the will, a comparative point which establishes character over against discrete choices.[29] Here we could place a philosophy the heart of which is a movement of educative liberation, such as Plato's or even the Hegelian dialectic.

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[24] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 3-12: 'the question of being is the being of the question'. In other words, asking what Being is in the correct way is a supra-linguistic action: to transport oneself to a specific stance and place, which answers the question through altering the apparent presentation of all the surrounding landmarks.

[25] Plato, *Apology*, 20e-23b.

[26] I believe we are here close to Heidegger's late idea of "Gelassenheit": cf. Barbara Dalle Pezze, "Heidegger on Gelassenheit", *Minerva – An Internet Journal of Philosophy* 10 (2006) (online).

[27] Cf. the closing pages of Rudi Te Velde, *Metaphysics Between Experience and Transcendence: Thomas Aquinas on Metaphysics as a Science* (Aschendorff Verlag, 2021). I unfortunately do not have access to this book at present and cannot provide an exact page number.

[28] Cf. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperCollins, 2001): 39.

[29] This is also the basis of the missing 'transition from the metaphysics of morals to the structure of the empirical self', discussed at the end of Chapter 5.

To draw our discussion to a conclusion, the ‘transcendental semiotic deduction’ permits us to ground the system of concepts by showing that the special concepts which apparently bear reference to the extra-objective or indeterminate have a double function. They remain within the system of determinate concepts by virtue of their common structure, but carry an affective reference which is transcendentally disclosed to be the opening or closure of subjectivity *as* subject, which is a practical or existential stance conditioning language but only disclosed within it. If subjectivity has chosen to be open, the special concepts of the extra-objective ground the system of concepts by connecting the whole to indeterminacy. Transcendental idealism is likewise thus grounded by being disclosed as a practical ‘model’ of ‘selfhood’ which is connected to the ‘truth’ through its fidelity to the founding structure of philosophy, the ‘self-critical’ method of doubled concepts which gradually extends the presence of the indeterminate in the philosopher’s awareness. Transcendental idealism is ‘true’ of us only if, and because, it inducts us into the perennial philosophical method, which is to find one’s way towards the “clearing” of Being, as Heidegger puts it.[30] The semiotic cast is the empirical evidence of the ‘standard’ as a structure within which the autonomy of the will for objective ‘good’ and ‘evil’ finds its own reflexive moment and can become aware of itself in time as conscience, available as the progressive widening or narrowing of the phenomenological horizon. By making these moves, we have established the possibility of grounding transcendental idealism itself and stilling the mirage that shook Kant’s tower. The first question is, ‘What is the ontological status of transcendental philosophy?’ The answer is that transcendental philosophy must be a regulative system: it is a projection by which the self establishes an ideal horizon to grasp its own possibilities (a Kantian practical object). The second question is, ‘Upon what basis can a regulative system be evaluated as true or false?’ The answer is that the empirical self’s system of concepts discloses an outer horizon of openness or closure to indeterminacy, and thus there is extrinsic evidence in a presentation to establish an objective point of comparison for the truth or falsity of regulative ideas. Thus we have finally ‘escaped’ from the transcendental illusion haunting Kant’s ruined system, and we find ourselves once again blinking in the bright sunlight on the shore.

[30] Cf. Theodore R. Schatzki, “Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism”, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 43, 168:1 (1989): 80–102, and Michael Mosely, “Where the Paths Meet: Heidegger’s Concept of the Clearing”, (PhD Dissertation, UNSW Sydney, 2019): https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/2136.

Conclusion

Our journey is now complete, and we find ourselves standing once again on the shore of Kant's peaceful island of reason. At the beginning, the interior of that island, or the nature of Kant's "Copernican turn" and "transcendental idealism", was a mystery to us. It was a mystery that might well have been left undisturbed, save for the fact that Kant had left behind a warning for us as well. Although we were apparently right at the edge of the open horizons of the metaphysical sea, Kant claimed that things were not as straightforward as they seemed: if we tried to leave the island without undergoing the same careful preparation that Kant had tested on himself, we would only be lost in an endless illusion.

To begin, in Chapter 1, we traveled to the periphery of the ruins of Kant's Critical architectonic, where other philosophers before us had already done the work of excavating Kant's ideas, setting them in order, and marking their relations according to an intelligible pattern: a set of overlapping interpretations of Kant's purposes and the problems to which he had responded in his design. I identified a "continental", a "German idealist", an "analytic-traditional", and an "analytic-metaphysical/revolutionary" interpretation as the four which would most immediately shape our own direct encounter with Kant. What emerged from these accounts was that Kant had sought to identify intrinsic "boundaries" for human reason as such, to map the limitations of human knowing. As subjective, that aim was complemented by an objective problem concerning the separation of "phenomena" from "noumena" or "appearances" from "things in themselves". In general, we had to balance accepting the principle that "things were not what they seemed to be" (the mediation of experience by subjective structures) with the principle, or hope, that "things are yet not unknown to us" (Kant's promise of "empirical realism"). Understanding that more clues regarding the true nature of Kant's doctrine of the "thing in itself" would be our goal, we cautiously let ourselves down into the Critical system itself, by opening the text of *KdrV.*

In Chapter 2, we only traveled a few pages into *KdrV* before being blocked by a tricky interpretive problem: Kant's linking together the problem of metaphysics, the limitations of human knowledge, and the "synthetic *a priori*" judgment as together holding the key to the puzzle of the necessity of transcendental idealism. In order to overcome that hurdle, I took the reader back into Kant's pre-Critical writings on logic and the formal structure of the pure judgment, in order to argue that Kant always conceived of judgment as a unifying activity that produces human knowledge, its output nonidentical to the real by virtue of its known character as an ingathering or unification. For Kant, as already established in early writings on God's existence and possible worlds, the outer

limit of this finite process is existing itself, which cannot be a valid predicate. From these considerations, what naturally emerged, as I tried to show, was the concept of an intentional or phenomenological 'object-as-such', the positive focal point of the traditional field of "general metaphysics". After Kant realized the independent existence of that empty objective form ("etwas=X") and its direct accessibility in consciousness, he grounded synthetic *a priori* judgment aesthetically in the pure intuitions of space and time which serve as the horizon of consciousness. At that point we could already understand that the limitation of human knowledge is the fact that it must invariably take objectively determined form, whether or not there is a real being to fulfill that object (which we were beginning to understand as the contents of the "transcendental illusion" Kant imputed to special metaphysics).

In Chapter 3 we continued to press on into the depths of Kant's system, turning from the Transcendental Aesthetic to the Transcendental Logic. We saw that the Logic, as an "objective" or "transcendental logic" rather than a "general logic", is simply the determinate complement of the objective relations established in perception, and the Categories are the names for the set of judgments required to establish objective consciousness. The Deduction of the Categories showed that the transcendental unity of the apperceptive point of view, the subjective *I*, which is always referred to within in-itself fragmentary empirical consciousness, and the transcendental unity of the object, are both derived from the ultimate transcendental unity of the act of apperception in imagination, which has divided subject from object out of the origin of pure immanence.

At the close of Chapter 3, the Deduction of the Categories had allowed us to see the totality of the inner surface of the sphere of consciousness as the co-constitution of objectivity and subjectivity simultaneously. We turned therefore to a new section of our investigation, trying to capture the newly revealed broader perspective as a large-scale summary of Kant's stance on objects and subjectivity. Chapter 4 tackled the object first. On the basis of the conjoined structure of judgment, which pairs a concept with an intentional object, I separated an "ontological" layer of Kant's transcendental perspective from a "semiotic" layer. Here, although we have successfully reached the interior of the point of view of transcendental idealism, we suddenly discover that we are inside what I called a "trap": once inside the observatory of transcendental idealism, it seems there is no way back out to ordinary experience, to the shore where we started. That is because, first, everything that we say or think will be a sign, and second, every sign or concept we employ will refer to an intentional object. These two problems are the double repetition of a structure fundamental to Kant's thinking, which I here introduced explicitly: to know finitude *as* finitude, it is necessary to be able to index or refer specifically to the outside of finitude. However, if finitude is not a quality of a type of object but an imposition conferred by the act of specification itself, the

consequence is that any reference to infinitude is itself rendered finite by the act of reference (that is the basis of Kant's "humility" vis-a-vis Hegel, particularly with reference to God and Absolute Being). Kant's method, I argued, is to find the reference to the outside of a particular domain of finitude within that domain itself, by showing how the domain's structures are defined in terms of relation to an otherness that they lack. Thus the structure of judgment we were already familiar with yielded the result that every sign is already correlated to an intentional object, meaning that the threat of a post-structuralist immanentization of signs is avoided; secondly, I argued that for Kant every object requires fulfillment as an intrinsic condition, and that in the empirical division of this structure, "appearances" are always given as including an interior reference to their own independent ground of being, which we must objectify in our thinking as a "noumena" but which metaphysically would be the pure act of existing, evidenced, for Kant, by "forces" affecting the subject through "feeling" or *Gefühl*. Therefore, my reconstruction of Kant's philosophy is organized as the tiered system of semiotics > ontology > metaphysics, the last being only indirectly inferrable through objects as the fulfilling force of the Real. The organization of that solution is, however, made complicated by the overlapping intrusion of the system of signification, which overwrites the metaphysical with new pseudo-objects in the effort to indicate it: this is the structure of "transcendental illusion" – the concept "God" gives rise to the corresponding illusory object "God". The conclusion of Chapter 4 is that, while on the ontological/existential level it could well be perfectly unproblematic to believe in and enjoy direct contact with a 'beyond' of objectivity that is positive presence rather than negation, as Kant's own theory requires, it still requires explanation how we can render access to that level from the semiotic/reflective level. Despite that, we were still waiting at this stage to see how Kant himself would successfully isolate and establish ontological access to these grounds of "force".

Chapter 5 turned to the subjective dimension of the totality of consciousness, which is disclosed only through traces inscribed in the objective. I reviewed at a broad scale the contents and operations of the "transcendental self" as a pure, quasi-mathematical function of iterative division and reunification, and the "empirical self" as the repository of the life-history of the subject. In trying to understand what could be said validly of the subject within transcendental idealism's strictures, we came across Kant's account of the particular nature of the subjective as "Gefühl" or "feeling". Feeling is non-objective because it is unlimited by space, and yet it appears in and can be described through objects. We retained *Gefühl* as a tool that could become useful in addressing Kant's problem of reaching the non-objective roots of experience.

With Chapter 6, therefore, we made another new beginning with our final section: attempting, with Kant, to pierce beyond the sphere of consciousness to its grounds. Kant's approach

was divided into two by the way that he set up his problem: he needed to find a ground for the physical/theoretical in the "metaphysics of nature", and a separate ground for the practical in the "metaphysics of morals". In the first branch, the resolution of the "metaphysics of nature" came in two steps: the "dynamics" of *MFNS* turned into the ultimate ground of matter, described as the resistive force felt as *Gefühl* in the body of the subject, in *OP*. That meant that the metaphysics of nature would have its ground ultimately deferred to the ground of the metaphysics of morals, which Kant himself confirmed in the end stages of *KdpV*. Secondly, therefore, we followed the evolution of the "metaphysics of morals" and Kant's peculiar characterization of "metaphysics of morals" as *non*-speculative from *KdpV* to *KU* – the instruments here were the practical object as deferred through the freedom of the will, and the complex mechanism of identification of the moral law through objective good and evil. I defended a reading of *KU* as an implicit theory of language, with the identification of natural teleological purposiveness, and beauty/the sublime, as the transitional link between moral *Gefühl* and the objective order. At the end of these chases, I concluded that on the ontological level, Kant had succeeded in establishing that there was a direct phenomenological route to the "force" grounding both the practical and the theoretical, but that on the semiotic level, Kant had raised the question of the objective status of language without fully resolving it, i.e. taming and caging "transcendental illusion".

Finally, therefore, in Chapter 7, I attempted to give a sketch of the 'transcendental deduction of language', to put the ghost of transcendental illusion to its rest and allow us to finally escape Kant's ruins for the shore, our original starting point. A direct consequence of Kant's whole train of thought is that the objective system of language is ultimately formally derivable in full from the pure form of judgment, the form of universalization in reflection. The consequences of that 'transition from the theoretical to the practical' are manifold, but, for one example, it requires us to conclude that texts are the projection of 'possible selves', as are the multivocal archetypes of depth psychology. Their truth is to be determined through, not acting as such, which would be subjective, but the *results* of act in the widening or narrowing of the phenomenological horizon of Being, which is properly *objective* and gives a rule to the will. From there, we moved to a summary of the unified problem of language as such, as expressed in the puzzle, 'How is the unsayable possible?' The answer I gave is that language, or reflexive unification, must only have been possible within the transcendental condition of a structure that gives shape to the totality of reflexive judgments as such, an anthropologically determining stance always already pre-conditioning consciousness, which can be empirically cast in two fundamental opposing poles of 'closure' or 'openness'.

Although we are still on the shore of Kant's island, the identification of the structure of 'closure/openness' means that the metaphysical sea, the boundless, will only prove to be a prison of

endless illusion if we *choose* to make it so. In other words, we have found a chance of safe passage to Being. In another curious echo of Kant's own position, belief, as the objective affective cast of 'openness' in our knowing, turns out to be the backdrop of the operations of reason as such. If we set sail expecting to be able to plant our boots on the other islands of the metaphysical sea, to colonize and conquer them, we will only drown. However, if we set sail in the expectation that what we know is not all there is to be known, and the fantastic things along the way should be admired but not grasped, we will find a kind of path or shining thread emerging which we can only see as long as we don't try too hard to look at it: the practical thread of the inner feeling of freedom through infinity, of philosophical contentment liberated from the need to possess singulars. In closing: "The impatience of the reader, whom our considerations thus far have only wearied without giving instruction, may be appeased by the words with which Diogenes is said to have cheered his yawning listeners when he saw the last page of a tiresome book: 'Courage, gentlemen, I see land!'" (Kant, *Dreams*, 114).

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