

Kant, Heidegger and the Problem of Indifference:  
From Reason to Releasement

By

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BA, University of British Columbia, 2013

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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in the Department of Political Science

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## Abstract

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This thesis presents a study of Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger on the theme of indifference. There are two main argumentative trajectories. First, I establish the coherency of indifference as a unifying theme across both of their works. Specifically, it will be shown that for both thinkers indifference emerges as a “problem” bound up with the history of western metaphysics tending towards nihilism. For Kant, this appears as a problem of reason, and for Heidegger a loss of Being. Their responses to this problem can also be seen as broadly analogous: Both are concerned to demonstrate how a certain “authentic” relation to the inner possibility of metaphysics is possible, and do so without assuming anything in advance about the being for whom metaphysics is an issue. Second, I aim to show that Heidegger’s notion of indifference, as a closure of ecstatic time and loss of Being, more sufficiently accounts for the breadth of indifference as an experiential phenomenon, as well as makes possible a “turning” (*Verwindung*) of this closed mode into an kind of “open indifference” that makes possible the presencing of things. From the perspective of Heidegger’s response to the problem of indifference, Kant’s response will be shown to regenerate the very problem he seeks to overcome.

## Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Acknowledgments .....	vi
Dedication .....	vii
Preface .....	1
Introduction .....	4
 <i>Chapter One</i>	
“The Mother of Chaos and the Night in the Sciences:” Kant and Indifferentism .....	12
I. Pre-Critical Metaphysics and the Emergence of Indifferentism .....	17
II. Indifferentism as Constitutive Problematic .....	23
III. The Promise of Reason: Indifferentism and Critique .....	47
IV. Summary and Conclusion .....	94
 <i>Chapter Two</i>	
From Kant to Heidegger: The Problem of Foundation .....	98
I. The Grounds for the Authority of Reason: Apperception and Temporality in the Kantian Ground-Laying .....	102
II. Undermining the Grounds of Reason: Temporality and the Imagination in Heidegger’s <i>Ab-Grund</i> .....	121
III. Methodology and Presupposition: Transcendental Deduction and Phenomenological Hermeneutics .....	148
IV. Summary & Conclusion .....	180
 <i>Chapter Three</i>	
“The Unworld of the Abandonment of Being:” Heidegger and Ontological Indifference .....	184
I. The Case for Ontological Indifference: From <i>Being and Time</i> to Enframing .....	191
II. Overcoming Indifference: Letting and Releasing, “Poetically Man Dwells...” .....	235

III. Kant Revisited: The Regulation of Indifference .....	267
Conclusion .....	274
Works Cited .....	281
Appendix.....	285

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## **Dedication**

*For my brothers*

## Preface

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Heidegger once said that philosophy begins in the restless time of homesickness, and I have come to see that it is no accident that indifference, a marker of the homesickness that I feel, should appear to me as a question for thinking.

At the outset, indifference presented itself to me as an interesting albeit enigmatic concept for thinking. While it seemed to inhabit the same sphere as other (perhaps more popular) concepts, like apathy or disavowal, it itself appeared more nebulous, harder to define, containing a myriad of possible senses. Undoubtedly, the tonality was initially in a minor key: a burden or problem, something to feel guilty about, since care is preferred. Yet, I could by no means shake indifference so easily, and attempting to do so often seemed to exacerbate its negative potency. But why? And what is indifference anyway?

These questions were always going to be asked in relation to the history of philosophy, for not only did my concerns arise in relation to the question of indifference, but I was also committed to a dedicated study of two thinkers in the Western tradition that are, in some sense, foundational. I wanted my initial foray into graduate studies to both introduce me more fully into some of the dominant trends in contemporary thought as well as prepare me for a more direct engagement with them. Of course, no single project can fully accomplish this, yet I thought Kant and Heidegger – whom I already was somewhat acquainted with – might be a good place to start.

To say that they are “foundational” as a reason for study is, however, to underplay their significance, although accounting for this is admittedly difficult. Only in hindsight, I

think, can the reasons for my interest be understood, and even now it is not entirely clear, for plenty of other philosophers also captivated me at the onset of my studies and through them. I suppose one reason is that they simply made sense to me (at least I thought they did) amidst a good deal of stuff that did not seem to make sense. And this opening was enough for me to dig deeper. Thus my initial interest need not imply a valuation—my stance was never to become a committed Kantian or Heideggerian, nor was I bent on denouncing them. Amidst all the opinions about these thinkers I simply wanted to understand them, and this study evidences my attempt in this respect.

But they also spoke about indifference—indeed in odd yet thematically coherent ways. From my initial appraisals of the concept in both their works I was presented with a possible structural continuity; that they could speak to each-other along this theme. The question of indifference in general, then, quickly became a question of the meaning of indifference in these two thinkers, and my thematic and interpretative aims coincided.

The choice to do a comparative argument between two thinkers along a single concept did not strike me as audacious or unmanageable. In fact quite the opposite. Nor did it strike me as requiring any more than the typical length of a Masters thesis. As I continued along the project, however, and not until very late on, did I confront the fact that the topic I had chosen actually required more consideration than I had anticipated. Indifference, in both Kant and Heidegger, proved slippery, extending itself into domains concealed from me at the outset, but that nonetheless seemed essential for clearly understanding what it means and what is at stake in it. But this was the beauty of it, for had I not allowed it to lead me into these domains I would not have the luxury of feeling, at the “completion” of the work, that there is much more to think with respect to

indifference, and much more to explore in the wide array of side questions opened up by it.

For these reasons, I have been deeply grateful for the opportunity to conduct this research, and can only thank the reader for taking the time read it.

## Introduction

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We say we are indifferent when we don't care, when something doesn't "make a difference," or when we "can't be bothered." But this lack of care can appear in many different ways. I might be, for example, consciously indifferent to something, shrug my shoulders to it, acknowledging it and moving on to something else. The thing appears conspicuously as a potential object of concern only to be turned away from in indifference. Or, we may not be aware of our indifference because we have long decided to turn away from, or perhaps we simply outgrew, something we once cared for. A certain indifference emerges here, too. Or, we can be indifferent in the sense of having no awareness of something at all, that something is completely outside the scope of our circumspection, only to be realized when it, for whatever reason, appears as something of concern "from out of nowhere," as it were.

But we also use indifference to refer to something like an "attitude" or "mood." In this register, it usually comes into proximity with apathy, disinterest, depression, laziness, boredom, or lethargy. Here, indifference suggests a kind of sinking into a stubborn closure, where everything fails to make a difference, where a fog hangs over everything: The restless melancholy of Goethe's Faust in the prison of his existential boredom: "No dog would want to linger on like this!" The mood of indifference can also come into proximity, however, with a kind of composure, equanimity, calmness, peace, or serenity. An elevation above the world and into a state of, perhaps, noble indifference, of unaffectedness, something like the peaceful assuredness of Socrates as he confronts death in *Phaedo*. Or, perhaps, indifference as a mood can mean neither a sinking nor an

elevating, but a pure neutrality, a non-judging, non-willing, a wandering over the surface of things peering blankly at the world. The state of expressionlessness dancing in Antoine Watteau's *L'Indifferentiste*, or the terrifying unaffectedness of Akira Kurosawa's Samurai in *Rashomon*.

Usually, at least in the tonality that I most often hear it, indifference is understood pejoratively: as a failure to care. Here, indifference might be closely linked with disavowal, perhaps fatalism, perhaps quietism. It is, I get the sense, something to be overcome or superseded by action and resolve. But it has the tendency, I think, to stay put, haunting care, resolve and action. It seems to gnaw in the background, pulling us into itself in moments of "weakness," removing us from our investments. Or we might intentionally make room for its stubbornness by turning away from those things we care about in our everyday lives for a brief respite, a holiday. On the one hand, the confrontation with indifference here might play out on the level of ethics and choice, yet on the other hand, I think, on the level of our very orientation to the world, what it means to be engaged in and not engaged in possibilities.

The evident nebulosity of indifference presents a challenge for study. What type of indifference is to be considered? Whose indifference? And indifference towards what? Should we try to overcome indifference? Or come to terms with it? Or should we realize its recurring appearance as something essential to us? There are many ways in which these questions can be taken up, and it is perfectly possible to jump into them with a determinate notion of indifference already staked out in advance, like indifference to ecological destruction, or to politics, or to injustices. Moreover, it is perfectly possible to

look at the problem from many different methodological perspectives, e.g. psychological, sociological, political theory, evolutionary.

In this study, however, I will be exploring the phenomenon of indifference from a philosophical perspective. It intends an exploration of Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger insofar as they use the term. As we might expect from most philosophy, the meaning of indifference will relate to how each thinker conceives the “essence” of humans, specifically in relation to metaphysics. This, of course, already delineates the sphere of the meaning, and into a realm seemingly abstract and archaic. Nevertheless, I believe that this particular approach may provide some important insights about both how the concept has been understood by thinkers who have not only staked out an understanding of it in relation to their philosophical aims but also shaped our self-understandings, and also how we *can* understand it for our own personal negotiations with indifference. To be sure, a study of philosophical texts cannot lay complete claim to the phenomenon of indifference, for such an approach will always fall short of its experiential expression.

Let’s give a brief account of the direction of this study. First, this study presents a reading of Kant’s critical philosophy as respondent to what he calls indifferentism, the context of a prevailing indifference towards rational metaphysics and the concomitant proliferation of opinion and sophistry, emerging coextensively with the “age of criticism.” For Kant, the manner of overcoming this occurrence is by demonstrating the specific legislative and regulative function of reason which, construed appropriately, would establish certain limits and directives for what is possible and desirable for thought and action in such a context. Second, it presents the work of Martin Heidegger with

respect to this same question, that is, with respect to the waning authority of metaphysics in the horizon of Western thought, or what he identifies as the withdrawal of being, and its specific relation to what I call ontological indifference. Heidegger does not use the word “indifferentism” for this context, but rather nihilism or the age of technology. He does, however, speak of indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit* or *Indifferenz*) as existential features of Dasein’s being in the world in its everydayness that, especially as it appears in his analysis of “profound boredom,” indicates when our ecstatic, world-forming practices and activities give way to an indifferent closure, a severance of ecstasis. In the age of nihilism and enframing, moreover, ontological indifference corresponds to a kind of atonal fog, a nullification of time and thus Being, and the abandonment of the four-fold. Given the coherency of his many uses of the concept, I believe it is possible to defend the notion that we can speak of an “ontological indifference” in his thinking. My general interpretative hypothesis, then, is that both Kant and Heidegger use a variant of the word indifference in relation to the trajectory of Western nihilism and the inner possibility of metaphysics, and that thought from this perspective, they can be seen as attempting to, in some way, “overcome” indifference.

For both thinkers, moreover, the concept corresponds to a context of unrealized potentiality. Their respective diagnoses share the idea that their historical moment is as at once threatening yet also provides the condition of possibility for something like a turning towards our “highest” ends, in Heidegger’s words, presenting at once the “supreme danger” and the “saving power.” For Kant, this is because indifferentism is simply an expression of reason’s “dying partisan spirit” in the age of criticism, its willingness to subject authority and tradition to critique and to subsequently abandon

them, and its gradual opening up its own freedom and to “proposals for a new plan.” Indifferentism for Kant is the precarious context in which critical philosophy both finds its directive and establishes itself as a convicted voice for the necessity of an (anthropological) metaphysics against the failure of traditional metaphysics to secure its claims. For Heidegger, the slow withdrawal of Being over the course of Western thought, whose “completion” is expressed in the nihilism of the technological age, permits for the first time a post-metaphysical (in the onto-the-logical sense) comportment to Being, since the dominance of the metaphysical tradition has rightfully collapsed under its own weight. The saving power appears in the form of a “turning” of our relation to being towards the possibility of poetically dwelling in the world.

The argument of this thesis can be summarized as follows. Taking as my point of departure the Kantian meaning of indifference and his response to it, I am able to highlight a few central philosophical requirements that his thinking must accommodate. First, he must establish a method capable of guarding against the dual threats of scepticism and dogmatism, the outcomes of the empiricist and rationalist traditions, and, more significantly, against the problem of assumption itself. Moreover, he must demonstrate the necessity of metaphysics in some non-dogmatic form. Broadly construed, these offer the thread by which a philosophical connection can be made between Kant and Heidegger, and the means by which we can call into question Kant’s response to the problem of indifference from the perspective of Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology. I hope to show that, in this respect, Kant is limited with respect to his own requirements insofar as his philosophy is based on a few substantive presuppositions, which Heidegger identifies, and which are themselves rooted in his

methodology. Heidegger's thematic orientation towards the question of being and Dasein, I will maintain, both more adequately accounts for these specific presuppositions as well as the methodological problem of presupposition itself, making it possible to more adequately account for and address indifference in the critical sense Kant lays out. This aspect of the thesis is the "immanent" demonstration: a critical and interpretive interrogation of Kant based on his own conditions using Heidegger as leverage.

This interpretation is, however, set within a broader exposition concerning an depiction of and response to indifference. This is the more positive intent of the thesis and its principle aim. I hope to show that Heidegger's thinking with respect to indifference is far more helpful in both understanding indifference and coming to terms with it in a practical sense. By "practical" I mean here something like what Pierre Hadot has in mind when he speaks of philosophy as a "way of life," that it involves a certain set of practices and corresponding ethos that goes along with the manner of seeing indicated by the philosophy. The practice of philosophy is just such a coming-to-see-and-act in accordance with that which the philosophy intends to reveal. With this in mind, the positive exposition intends to show the following: Because Kant seeks to establish reason as the legislating faculty for knowledge of nature and morality against indifference, insofar as these conditions are proven to be still metaphysical (in Heidegger's ontotheological sense), that is "metaphysically violent" in some sense, it can neither adequately come to terms with indifference itself nor sufficiently overcome it. In fact, it threatens to regenerate it. Heidegger's approach, on the other hand, does not attempt to overcome indifference in the supercessionist manner Kant's does, but rather infolds it as an essential part of our being in the world, one that is, in a post-metaphysical way,

incorporated in a poetic openness to beings. Indifference becomes a crucial element involved in a way of being that is resolutely open to the reveal of things without imposing ourselves on them, allowing for the “ecstasy” of “poetic dwelling” within which beings are “let be.” If indifference, at root, amounts to closure, then it can only be by turning it into openness that it is “overcome.” A regulative metaphysical framework will not do against the dynamics of being and time, and it is the meaning of this simple “openness” that I find most helpful with respect to indifference.

Thus the argument of this thesis is not to be understood abstractly. I prefer demonstrative exposition to argument for the simple reason that argument is too closely linked with finalism and triumphalism. If we follow Heidegger, thinking does not “refute,” it engages in thoughtful conversation with an eye to what is concealed in prior thinking. My demonstration against Kant, and also Heidegger in certain respects, is meant in this spirit.

In general, I have tried not to assume any elaborate background knowledge on the part of the reader with respect to Kant or Heidegger. I thus felt compelled to try to explain what was necessary for each point to make sense. My attempt at detail was also motivated by my own limited understanding of Kant and Heidegger at the start. I did not wish to presume I understood something when I hadn’t worked out it for myself. This often leading me down side-trails I had no intention of following. I also strove for clarity of expression and precision in concepts, again for my own sake and for the readers. In general, while I have tried to balance detail and necessity, I leave it to the reader to judge my success in this.

The breakdown of the chapters looks like this: In the first chapter, I try to establish, first, *that* indifference functions as a problem for Kant's critical philosophy, and, second, *how* he attempts to address this problem. In the second chapter, perhaps the densest of the three, I engage in Heidegger's complicated relationship with Kant with an eye to uncovering the central presuppositions involved in the latter's "ground-laying" for metaphysics. I also engage in the problem of presupposition itself and juxtapose Kant's transcendental philosophy with Heidegger's phenomenology. This chapter does not itself deal with indifference directly, but rather carries on the threads left open in the first chapter and directs us into the third. It is a transition chapter meant to provide some helpful background for relationship between Kant and Heidegger, their philosophical proximity and discontinuity, and also how Heidegger more adequately deals with the conditions Kant lays out. In the third chapter, I follow the structure of the first chapter and try to show first that ontological indifference functions as something like a problem for his ontology, and then how it is "overcome" through its "turning." I try to establish the coherency of "ontological indifference" in Heidegger's work and how it is "overcome" in concepts like "releasement," "letting-be," and "poetic dwelling." In the conclusion, I survey the argument and point to some further areas of research and potential criticisms.

## Chapter One

# “The Mother of Chaos and the Night in the Sciences:” Kant and Indifferentism

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*[I]t seems as if we had been stopped short in the investigation of metaphysical truths. A kind of indifferentism [Indifferentismus] toward this science now appears, since it seems to be taken as an honor to speak of metaphysical investigations contemptuously as mere caviling. And yet metaphysics is the real, true philosophy! Our age is the age of critique, and it has to be seen what will come of the critical attempts of our time in respect to philosophy and in particular to metaphysics.<sup>1</sup>*

*The endeavours of all speculative philosophy now stand at the point of total dissolution, although human reason clings to them with undying affection, an affection that now seeks, though vainly, to turn itself into indifference [Gleichgültigkeit], only because it has constantly been betrayed.<sup>2</sup>*

—Kant

This chapter sets out to establish indifferentism or metaphysical indifference as a motivating problem for Kant’s critical enterprise. For the purpose of introduction, we can use the passages above to help give an initial sense of the concept’s meaning:

Indifferentism (*Indifferentismus*) occurs when reason has been “betrayed” by the history of metaphysics and has become indifferent (*Gleichgültigkeit*) to its defining problems. In such a context it has become “honorable” to dismiss metaphysics as “mere caviling,” as a trivial and inconsequential pursuit. And while this context occurs alongside the “age of criticism,” a positive occurrence for Kant that signals the “maturing of reason,” it nonetheless threatens the latter by eclipsing metaphysical investigation entirely. The

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, ed. J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.32-33.

<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science with Kant’s Letter to Marcus Herz*, trans. James W. Ellington, 2nd Revised edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co. Inc, 2002), 4: 380.

situation is thus ultimately precarious—we don't know “what will come of the critical attempts of our time,” and it is critical philosophy's job to intervene to tip the scales towards its immanent possibility of enlightenment. As will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter, these references have both a philosophical and extra-philosophical dimension. They refer at once to the dilapidated philosophical outcome of pre-critical metaphysics, various un-critical popular philosophers of 18<sup>th</sup> century reacting against those traditions, as well as a general cultural milieu that emerges alongside and animates this intellectual climate.

In what follows, I will use this basic explanation, along with Kant's most direct statement about indifferentism given in the “A” preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to expand its meaning and argue for its coherency as a viable vantage point from which to understand Kant's critical philosophy. The “A” preface, and Kant's prefaces in general, is significant because in it Kant allows himself to situate his work in relation to the conditions he finds himself within. Indeed, the tone and intent of his comments here align with perhaps his most well-known survey of his immediate culture or public in *What is Enlightenment?* Taking the A preface as my starting point, then, I will try to identify how the concepts of indifference and indifferentism resonate across Kant's theoretical and practical writings. In the end, we should have a robust sense of these concepts as a genuine problem for critique. It goes without saying, then, that my reading of Kant is highly selective and focused, aiming not towards a comprehensive exposition of all things “critical” in Kant's oeuvre, but rather only those that emerge from the specific conceptual analysis of metaphysical indifference. It is also worth mentioning that in reading Kant in this way, I am privileging his own assessment of the intellectual climate

and culture he is set within. As we will see, this involves a deflationary assessment of many of his popular-oriented contemporaries whom he named “indifferentists.” This term seems to be Kant’s coinage and is not how these thinkers understood themselves, and thus the question about whether and to what extent the term is suitable in each instance will be generally set aside.

The secondary aim of this chapter is to engage in a positive reading of Kant’s philosophy with respect to this problem. If the first section is concerned to establish *that* indifferentism does in fact function as a genuine problem, the subsequent section is concerned to highlight *how* Kant attempts to overcome this problem. It does so by attempting to distill basic requirements that indifferentism poses to an adequate critical philosophy.

I proceed in the following steps. The first is to introduce Kant’s own opening narrative in the “A” preface where he summarizes the need for a “tribunal of reason” against the history of Western metaphysics. It is here, in the first few pages of his entire critical corpus, that we find first and most nuanced mention of indifferentism and metaphysical indifference as that which arises out of this history, and I use this narrative as a means to situate indifferentism in relation to his more commonly identified pre-critical antagonists, dogmatism and scepticism. Attending to indifferentism will, correspondingly, allow me to distance myself from an interpretation that focuses mainly on these two traditions (and their various iterations) as central to understanding the significance of Kant’s work. I will then go on to a close reading of the central passage and elucidate five aspects of significance that clarify and expand on its initial meaning, which I will enumerate throughout the chapter. These, stated briefly, are as follows: (1)

Indifferentism emerges out of the history of Western metaphysics and the tired dialectics of dogmatism and scepticism; (2) it corresponds to and is expressed by the emergence of the indifferentist “Popular Philosophers” (*Popularphilosophen*), typified by some (variable) appeal to “common sense;” (3) it is expressed by “immature reason” and the whimsical proliferation of opinion and sophistry in a “marketplace of ideas;” (4) it arises from both the constitutive and discursive “confusion” and “uselessness” of traditional (scholastic) metaphysics; (5) and finally, it is an expression of cultural precarity, where reason is no longer dominated by some *de facto* metaphysical authority, but yet is burdened for the first time with the possibility of either realizing its “maturation” and enlightenment through rational freedom or satiating itself in the realm of frivolous opinion and instrumentality. Indeed, the precarity of such a context invites a critical intervention, and it is just such a critical intervention that Kant attempts to affect across his works.

I then move on to a reconstruction of some of the essential elements of Kant’s intervention. Given the way in which Kant establishes the problem, I claim that we can negatively distill three core requirements that Kant’s “new plan” must accommodate. First, thinking must establish itself against the assumptions constitutive of pre-critical metaphysics by securing its claims not only against those assumptions but rather against the problem of assumption itself. This is the *methodological* requirement. Second, it must bear relevance to the awakening freedom and “dying partisan spirit” of the age of enlightenment by orienting itself toward the public. This is the requirement of *public orientation* implied in Kant’s intervention. And finally, it must show the necessity of a specific non-dogmatic metaphysics achievable by reason against the chaotic marketplace

of metaphysical frivolity. This is the requirement of *metaphysical necessity*, and comprises the thematic content of that intervention.

Together, the aims of this chapter address what appears to be a gap in Kant literature, namely, Kant's motivations as they relate to his mention of indifference. Admittedly, my reading remains to a certain extent speculative, leaving room for a much more sustained and detailed historical explanation of the specific relations and character of the immediate philosophical and cultural context Kant is responding to. But since my overall aim is not a near-exhaustive historical-philosophical exegesis of Kant but rather the definition of a minor (yet I think integral) concept and its critical response across both Kant and Heidegger, I have chosen to allow a generous amount of space at the margins for further study without, I hope, sacrificing necessary details and rigour.

Perhaps the clearest suggestion of the gap that I seek to address comes in Manfred Kuehn's excellent study of the influence of Scottish common sense philosophy in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. (The connection between common sense philosophy and indifference will become clearer as we go along). In the concluding paragraph of *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, Kuehn says:

It really comes quite close to being scandalous that the "popular philosophers," these "moderate sceptics," or "indifferentists," as Kant called them, are not merely neglected, but almost completely *disregarded* today. For to understand Kant's metaphysical intentions and motives without them is impossible. But that is exactly what the majority of Kant scholars seem to continue to attempt.<sup>3</sup>

While I am not sure Kuehn would wholly sanction my (limited) contributions to this question for, as we will see, my concern is not entirely with the relation between Kant

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<sup>3</sup> Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Kingston Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), 274.

and the particular philosophers of common sense or indifference (although this is included and deeply significant), but rather with the *context* or historical “*stage*” of indifference and its relation to some of the central features of Kant’s critical philosophy, I nonetheless think that the following chapter operates within the spirit of Kuehn’s assessment.<sup>4</sup> What I hope becomes clear is that the concept in Kant’s usage reaches beyond a mere cataloguing of Kant’s influences and relations to the *Popularphilosophen*, but rather is most accurately understood as a broader historical and cultural diagnostic, encapsulating the general form of the chaotic world around him, *within which* those *Popularphilosophen* operate so seamlessly. In other words, the problem of indifference speaks not, in the first instance, to the intricacies of philosophical debate, but rather to a *stage* in the history of metaphysics and the process of enlightenment. This is already captured, I think, by the epigraphs above, and will be supported below.

### **I. Pre-Critical Metaphysics and the Emergence of Indifferentism**

In the preface to the first edition of *The Critique of Reason*, Kant offers a narrative of the warring history of prior philosophy, setting the stage for the necessity of critique. It is out of this warring history that indifferentism emerges as its culminating moment, incorporating the dominant traditions of that history, which are familiar to anyone acquainted with the reasons for Kant’s critical turn, namely, dogmatism and scepticism.

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<sup>4</sup> Kuehn is not alone in collapsing indifferentism into the specific indifferentists. Freidrich Beiser and D.A. Rees, for example, also seem to understand Kant’s mention of indifference in this way. See: Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); D. A. Rees, “Kant, Bayle, and Indifferentism,” *Philosophical Review* 63, no. 4 (1954): 592–95.

To properly situate indifferentism, then, we will have to give brief account of these pre-critical traditions in the manner Kant portrays them.

Kant understands metaphysics in general as a “wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason that elevates itself entirely above all instruction from experience through mere concepts” climbing “higher and higher to ever remote conditions” (B xiv; A vii).<sup>5</sup> Metaphysics is dogmatic when it neglects an antecedent critique of the capacities by which it constructs its speculative edifice. By neglecting such an antecedent critique, it is free to assume a certain rationalistic correspondence between thinking and the being of super-sensible objects, like God, Soul, or World. It can claim knowledge of metaphysical beings from “mere concepts alone” (B xv). While Kant understood the questions that arise through metaphysical speculation as having “pre-eminent importance,” an importance that has given dogmatism license to rule over reason as a “despotic queen,” dogmatical attempts to answer these questions have nevertheless been unable to achieve the level of apodictic truth exemplified by the sciences (especially mathematics and physics). As such, Kant came to see metaphysics, the “noble queen of the sciences,” as having “gradually degenerated through internal wars into complete anarchy” (A vii-ix). The most immediate representatives of this tradition for Kant was the school of the Leibnizian Christian Wolff and his followers, like Christian Baumgarten, with whom Kant was well acquainted as an early student of philosophy in Königsberg. In accord with the rationalist tradition, Wolffian philosophy based its metaphysics on the principles of

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<sup>5</sup> Citations to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are given in the standard form, referring to the pagination of Kant’s first (“A”) and/or second (“B”) editions of the original text, edited by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of the Sciences. All citations in the form (A xx/B vv) refer to the first *Critique*, and are taken from: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Professor Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). All other citations are referenced in footnotes.

non-contradiction (something cannot be and not be at the same time) and sufficient reason (everything must have a reason). Broadly speaking, it held that the reason for existence was also the ground for everything existing, which both allowed for epistemological claims to know the absolute and metaphysical claims that allied human reason with it. Owing to the detail and strictness of his methodology, Kant called Wolff the “greatest of all dogmatic philosophers” and indeed tried to model his own conceptual nuance and proofs on the Wolffian dogmatical procedure, although he would greatly diminish the principle of non-contradiction as ground for knowledge (B xxxvi).<sup>6</sup> As we will see later on, while dogmatism illegitimately presumes an ability to know super-sensible objects, and thus engenders its own contempt, Kant will take very seriously metaphysical speculation as in fact an entirely “natural” and necessary capacity of reason (A 642/B 670).

Scepticism, on the other hand, presents an inverse set of commitments. Instead of a dogmatic use of reason that uncritically “builds castles in the sky”<sup>7</sup> – lacking a certain “ground” from which to test its purely conceptual conclusions – scepticism in its most extreme form (global scepticism) doubts the possibility of apodictic knowledge itself. Inverting the metaphor, Kant describes scepticism as “a kind of nomads who abhor any the cultivation of soil” (A ix). The sceptic arrives precisely for the purpose of exposing the groundlessness of dogmatic edifice through a reflexive interrogation into the conditions of knowledge. Yet instead of sustaining an inquiry into those conditions to

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<sup>6</sup> For Kant’s discussion of the principle of non-contradiction as a merely *negative* requisite of truth, see ‘On the Supreme Principle of All Analytic Judgments,’ (B 189/A 150 – A 153/B 193).

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Dreams of a Spirit Seer Illustrated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, trans. Emanuel Goerwitz (Montana: Kessinger Pub Co, 2003), 2:342.

show on what grounds knowledge can be cultivated anew, the sceptic prefers to leave those grounds uncultivated, leaving knowledge empty thereby. The most immediate and significant representative of this tradition is David Hume. Taking as his starting point the empiricist commitment that knowledge begins with experience, Hume's problem was whether we can deduce the necessity of causal principles from empirical experience. He argued that connections between objects given in experience are the mere product of habitual synthesis (expectations) of the mind, and thus we are left, not with the indubitable knowledge of causal necessity, but rather a mere probabilistic knowledge inferred from our customary experiences and habitual expectations. Such a radical doubt of causal necessity famously, Kant writes, “awoke me from my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction.”<sup>8</sup> While Kant had much appreciation for scepticism for rightfully “subjecting the *facta* of reason to examination,” he nonetheless saw it as tending towards the absolute negation of reason by “blaming” and “censoring” it entirely, placing arbitrarily expansive limits on its use without showing how these limits are constituted as well defined “boundaries” based on *a priori* principles (A 761/B 789). Thus, while Kant did not deny that Hume contributed to the demonstration of metaphysical pretension, he nonetheless maintained that Hume was a philosophical nomad – unable to ground the necessity of causality and thus knowledge of nature.<sup>9</sup> In general, then, Kant sees scepticism as primarily destructive, oriented exclusively at the pretensions of dogmatism: “All sceptical polemicizing is

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<sup>8</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:260.

<sup>9</sup> While Hume’s inability to ground the principles of reason was indeed a defining problem for Kant, his scepticism remained philosophical. He never doubted the practical utility of the principle of causality, only its *a priori* validity. As we will see, there is a class of philosophers who doubt even its utility, and these are more dangerous.

properly directed *only* against the dogmatist [...] In itself it settles nothing about what we can know and what by contrast we cannot know.” “The mere [sceptical] censure of reason can never bring to an end the controversy about what is lawful in human reason” (A 764/B 792).

The commonly iterated justification for critique,<sup>10</sup> then, is to discover what is “lawful” in human reason via a critique of the antinomous and mutually supportive claims of these two dominant traditions which, together, constitute the dialectical terrain of pre-critical metaphysics as such. It is only in their mutual polemic that the metaphysical terrain is constituted and reconstituted, and Kant's critical project is to intervene to establish reason on new, “lawful grounds” and discover a “new path” outside this polemic. The general aims of Kant's arguments against these two traditions are well known, and can be understood in the common formula: On the one hand, he is concerned to show that because the claims of dogmatic metaphysics exceed the bounds of all possible experience, its objects cannot, strictly speaking, be known. Without a “touchstone in experience,” dogmatic metaphysical speculation can only ever yield transcendental illusions. And on the other hand, Kant also argues that despite this limitation on speculative reason we can nonetheless make universally valid synthetic *a*

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<sup>10</sup> It is overwhelmingly common to situate Kant's critical philosophy in relation to dogmatism and scepticism, or more precisely, to rationalism and empiricism (which, as Hume showed, yields scepticism if consistently thought through). Both Cambridge Companions to Kant's work, for example, begin by introducing the critical turn in relation to rationalism and empiricism (see: Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).; Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On the very rare occasions that indifferentism is mentioned, it is most often presented as either a species of scepticism, as secondary to the epistemological problems presented by that tradition, or (as already mentioned) as referring to particular indifferentists, or the group in general. The only exception to this trend is Ian Mackenzie's *The Idea of Pure Critique*, which takes indifferentism as a serious and constitutive problem for critical philosophy broadly construed, as a concept in itself. I am indebted to the introduction of this book as an affirmation of my conviction that indifferentism can be conceived as a unifying problematic, but the subsequent development of this conviction is my own.

*priori* judgements (judgements that amplify our understanding of objects by going beyond the given) with regards to objects of experience, and thus stabilize the claims of the natural sciences (and thereby bring them to the level of security reached by mathematics and physics). It is in reference to these dual aims of critique, then, that Kant can famously claim, on the one hand, to “deny knowledge to make room for faith” while, on the other hand, set metaphysics on the “secure course of science” (B xxxi).<sup>11</sup>

Now, how does indifferentism emerge from these pre-critical traditions? After narrating the warring and futile history of metaphysical debate between dogmatism and scepticism in this way, Kant famously describes the need for a “court of justice” by means of which “reason may secure its rightful claims while dismissing its groundless pretensions” (A x). While the search for “rightful claims” here is most immediately a reference to the problems presented by scepticism, and the dismissal of “groundless pretensions” is a reference to the problems presented by dogmatism, the need for a “court of reason” that would legislate over these antinomous positions, we find, is situated *most immediately* against what Kant identifies as indifferentism, which emerges out of the dogmatic-sceptical metaphysical dialectic. For what follows, we will take the following

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<sup>11</sup> To set metaphysics on the secure ground of the sciences is to stabilize it through an act of grounding. For Kant, mathematics and physics have enjoyed a security that metaphysics has not. In the B Preface to the first *Critique*, Kant describes the significance of Thales discoveries for mathematics, and Galileo and Toricelli’s similar discoveries for physics much later. The basic point is that these thinkers understood that to reach security in their respective inquiries they must proceed under the conviction that their objects are in a significant way produced by the mind, or that the mind projects onto nature a plan which they apply to it. Nature is made to conform to our rules. Thus to establish *metaphysics* on the secure road of the sciences (referring not to *these* sciences, but the natural sciences which have not yet enjoyed the same security) one must proceed from the same starting point, that objects of experience conform in some way to the features of the mind (see B vii-Bxvii). Kant’s Copernican revolution in philosophy entails precisely this turning, and is meant to show the systematic connection between all scientific disciplines in a single theory of human cognition.

passage as demonstrative of this fundamental point and, moreover, as the clue from which to expand its meaning and significance:

Now after all paths [dogmatism and scepticism] (as we persuade ourselves) have been tried in vain, what rules is tedium and complete indifferentism [*Indifferentismus*], the mother of chaos and the night of the sciences, but at the same time also the origin, or at least the prelude, of their incipient transformation and enlightenment [*Aufklärung*], when through ill-applied effort [metaphysics] has become obscure, confused, and useless.

For it is pointless to affect indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] with respect to such inquiries, to whose object human nature cannot be indifferent. Moreover, however much they may think to make themselves unrecognizable by exchanging the language of the schools for a popular style, these so called indifferentists [*Indifferentisten*], to the extent that they think anything at all, always unavoidably fall back into metaphysical assertions, which they yet professed so much to despise. Nevertheless, this indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*], occurring amid the flourishing of the sciences, and directed precisely at those sciences whose results we could least do without, is a phenomenon deserving of our attention and reflection. This evidently the effect not of the thoughtlessness of our age, but of its ripened power of judgement, which will no longer be put off by illusory knowledge, and which demands that reason should take on anew the most difficult of all tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge. (Ibid.)

There are five inter-related points that I think can be drawn out from this provocative passage, which I will spend the next section elaborating.

## II. Indifferentism as Constitutive Problematic

### *i. The Age of Criticism*

We can begin by first reiterating and briefly expanding on the historical dimension at work. Indifferentism emerges when dogmatic metaphysics, unable to secure itself against sceptical attacks and its own internal disputes, has proven its “uselessness.” Indifference “rules” when all “paths have been tried in vain,” when metaphysics has grown “tedious,” unable to solve its constitutive problematics, and reason turns away from them as a result. In more concrete terms, these forces amounted to something of an intellectual crises in

late 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany (and western Europe generally). In the words of the Earl of Shaftesbury, philosophy at that time had been “banished from high society and put into the schools and colleges ... [eventually] having to leave even these dusty corners. Descartes expelled the scholastics, Wolff expelled Descartes, and the contempt for all philosophy finally expelled Wolff.”<sup>12</sup> This was, as Moses Mendelssohn put it, a time of intellectual “anarchy” where, at least on the continent, philosophy was struggling to define itself amidst the growing rubble of the rationalist tradition and the proposals competing to fill the metaphysical vacuum.

In a footnote to this passage, Kant links the emergence of indifferentism and its corresponding anarchy with “the age of criticism:”

Our age is the genuine age of criticism towards which everything must submit. Religion through its holiness and legislation through its majesty commonly seek to exempt themselves from it. But in this way they excite suspicion against themselves, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination. (A xi)

This depiction of the enlightenment as corresponding to criticism – which we are by no means out of – is not uncommon. As Frederick Beiser explains, one of the central commitments of the enlightenment was the conviction that reason is capable of “peeling away the mystical shell of our moral, religious, and political beliefs and lay bare their truthful core, the universal and necessary principles of human nature and society.”<sup>13</sup>

Michel Foucault similarly stresses the link between the enlightenment and critique, this time making the more general connection between critique as an attitude more than a

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in: Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Kingston Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 36.

<sup>13</sup> *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

scientific-philosophic procedure, directed specifically at the historical era of modernity itself: “Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as the permanent critique of our historical era.”<sup>14</sup> Foucault’s depiction of the crises of identity that the attitude of criticism brings along is sympathetic to the anarchic depiction of Mendelssohn. By the time Kant would pen the opening of the first *Critique* at the age of fifty-seven, he was already well attuned to the intellectual and cultural climate developing through these forces, a climate of, in his words, “chaos.”

It is worth noting that while indifferentism corresponds with the age of criticism, the two are not identical. The desire to subject traditional authorities to “public examination” through reason is not, at least directly, a feature of indifferentism itself, for the latter is indifferent to such a process. As we will see, one of the principle features of this view is the rejection that metaphysical principles can be justified by reason at all, and thus the concept of indifference has little to do with such a process of rational justification. Rather, I think it is most helpful to understand indifferentism as a kind of negative *outcome* of this examination and its recurring failure to stabilize principles on new grounds. (Famously, Friedrich Jacobi would condemn this relationship between critique and the failure of reason as the generator of nihilism, leading him to posit a *salto mortale* to save tradition).<sup>15</sup> In other words, indifferentism must be understood as an

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<sup>14</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Vintage, 1984), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Jacobi (along with Johann George Hamann) is famous for being one of the first to call into question the heart of the *Aufklärung* itself, the power of reason, and is thus often depicted as a catalyst for the *Sturm und Drang* movement and German Romanticism, as well as existentialism. For Jacobi, the enlightenment faith in reason was not only not fulfilling its promise to establish principles in the wake of traditional authorities—this was much was evident. But more penetratingly, it was actually *responsible* for such failure, since it was his conviction that reason – if followed consistently – could never yield such principles,

expression of a simultaneous collapse of traditional authority brought about by the critical attitude of the enlightenment and a collapse in the promise of reason to establish its claims in the vacuum left by those authorities. It is the chaos of that vacuum.

Indifferentism, then, might be understood as a kind of *general* scepticism towards dogmatic-rational claims, yet with the important caveat that whatever skepticism it evidences it is *not* the variety that Kant ascribes to the sceptical tradition or figures like Hume. That is, whereas scepticism in this latter sense is understood as a polemical tradition that engages in philosophical debate over the capacities of knowledge against the dogmatist, which Kant appreciates and aligns with the specific ethos of critique, the sceptical context of indifferentism refrains from that debate entirely – it is a scepticism turned towards the possibility of solving the debates of metaphysics entirely, which turns to a complete indifference towards them and reason thereby. It can be regarded, using a term coined by Kant’s contemporary Karl Leonhard Reinhold, as a kind of “unphilosophical scepticism.”<sup>16</sup> We will see precisely what this metaphysical resignation looks like in a bit, and indeed how Kant understands the two senses of scepticism as connected. For now, we can say generally that what unites the two senses of scepticism is simply that they are both suspicious of the legitimacy of dogmatic metaphysics, and where they diverge is in their willingness to engage in reason-based polemics against it.

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tending rather towards their negation in atheism, fatalism and solipsism. Thus, for Jacobi, the faith in reason was actually an expression of nihilism—a concept by now familiar but introduced by him (*Ibid.*, 46).

<sup>16</sup> Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography*, 1 edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 351.

## ii. *The Indifferentists*

The second thing worth noting about Kant's description of indifferentism is its connection with the so-called "indifferentists" (*Indifferentisen*), those individuals who are somehow related to the context of indifferentism and emerge within it. Kant describes these as "exchanging the language of the schools for a popular style" functioning to help "affect indifference" (*Gleichgültigkeit*) towards metaphysics. Kant is referring here to a group of "Popular Philosophers" (*Popularphilosophen*) writing during the German enlightenment and elsewhere. Arnulf Zweig describes these as "generally unsystematic" public intellectuals "often opposed to the abstract technical discourse of the schools" instead preferring to appeal to "common sense" or "healthy understanding" with respect to matters of metaphysics.<sup>17</sup> Despite differences, however, they can be seen as sharing some general commitments, for example, to the spread of enlightenment, which entailed the education of the general public from subservience to superstition, ignorance and servitude to the independent use of reason; the cultivation of taste and manners; and, significantly for our purposes, a general commitment to the practical and public importance of intellectual questions, which meant breaking down the barriers between academic philosophy and popular concerns.<sup>18</sup>

This commitment to breaking down the barriers between academic philosophy and the public is partly owing to the collapse of dogmatic rationalism just described, but also the simultaneous profusion of and interest in British empiricism and natural sciences, which, in addition to introducing new ideas into the German philosophical community,

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<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, ed. Arnulf Zweig, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 14.

<sup>18</sup> *The Fate of Reason*, 165.

also demonstrated how philosophy could be made popular and be written with the general public in mind. Chief among this pursuit was that these works were not written in Latin but rather in their original common language, a sentiment approved by Kant from a very early stage in his career.<sup>19</sup> This soon became the norm in Germany where, as Manfred Kuehn explains, “even the most difficult and abstruse philosophical problems were held to be susceptible to this treatment, and in a certain sense ‘popularity’ became a *de facto* test for the meaningfulness of philosophical theories.”<sup>20</sup> Beyond this general commitment to popularity, however, the exact content advanced by those philosophers who take this turn to popularity seriously varied considerably, tending in both empiricist and rationalist directions, and often some admixture of the two. In fact, part of what unified the *Popularphilosophen* was, as Friedrich Beiser explains, their often eclectic uptake of more technical and systematic philosophy, “since mixing (sometimes completely contrary) philosophies was for them an affirmation of the freedom of reason.”<sup>21</sup>

Kant’s own direct engagement with the *Popularphilosophen* varies considerably, since he both wrote about and engaged in correspondence with many who have been marked by this title, thus making it difficult to organize his assessment of the group in general. Significantly, however, he does address the movement’s foundational figures,

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<sup>19</sup> Kant announced himself onto the philosophical scene with his *True Estimation of Living Forces* (1744) not only by audaciously calling into question the big names of German philosophy, Leibniz and Wolff, but also by writing his work in German and not, as was customary and advised, in Latin. In his biography of Kant, Manfred Kuehn suggests that this decision was based on a further, extra-philosophical contention against his predecessors who upheld the sanctity of academic philosophy against the common readership. Kant repeatedly refers to himself as “common” in that work, despite the grandeur of the arguments (Kuehn, *Kant*, 87).

<sup>20</sup> Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 168.

namely Thomas Reid, James Oswald, and James Beattie, Scottish philosophers of common sense for whom popularity was also a defining philosophical aspiration.<sup>22</sup> There is some debate as to the extent to which Kant knew these philosophers, but in Kuehn's highly detailed reconstruction, the evidence is overwhelmingly on the side of him having been well aware of them, if not through his own study, then at the very least through their influence on various intellectuals in Germany and secondary sources.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in addressing the Scots, it is likely the case that Kant was, by association, also attacking their more proximal German representatives, and in so doing attempting to sever the root from which they had begun to flourish in Germany. Moreover, since Kant was by no means a careless or arbitrary writer, it is also significant that his most direct criticisms come in the introduction to the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, a text designed as a "popular" rendition of the first *Critique* and meant to clear up the confusion around its publication and discredit initial unfounded criticisms by certain German *Popularphilosophen*.<sup>24</sup> It is unlikely that his comments, relentlessly negative as we will see, are without well-thought out justification.

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<sup>22</sup> For an excellent discussion of their influence, see Thomas Kuehn's *Scottish Common Sense in Germany*.

<sup>23</sup> Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> By 1784, the date of the publication of the *Prolegomena*, Kant's first *Critique* had suffered lack of reception, at least of the type Kant was hoping for, partly owing to its difficulty. Johan Schulz, an early reader of the text, said that he *Critique* was "a sealed book" consisting in "hieroglyphics" (quoted in *The Fate of Reason*, 172). Kant complained that his work had been "honored by silence" (ibid.). What reviews did come out after the first few years, however, Kant was disappointed with. The most significant of which, the "Göttingen Review" of 1782, was an anonymous polemic against the *Critique*, later discovered to be the work of the *Popularphilosophen* Garve and Feder (though Garve, whom Kant liked, alleviated himself of responsibility, claiming his submitted review had been doctored by Feder, a point confirmed when Kant was able to read Garve's review in its original form which he deemed "far more thought through") (Kant, *Correspondence*, 206). This first review basically charged Kant's system with recapitulating a form of Berkleyan idealism, misunderstanding Kant's "transcendental" as meaning "higher" or "beyond experience," where in fact Kant's transcendental *a priori* is steadfastly meant to be of immanent or experiential orientation—actually making experience possible without recourse to the *transcendent* realm, which, Kant claims, is what the reviewers took "transcendental" to mean. Kant addresses this charge in an

Kant's criticism in the *Prolegomena* has to do mostly with the manner in which Reid, Oswald and Beattie had taken up Humean scepticism for the service of a philosophy of common sense. He claims that the Scottish *Popularphilosophen* "took for granted" Hume's scepticism by reducing it to a problematization of the *usefulness* of the concepts that he doubted, like causality. For Kant, the usefulness of the concept was never in question, nor was it the most important part, and to react against Hume in this way risked foreclosing the possibility of a more sustained inquiry into the possibility of metaphysics which, Kant claims, was at the heart of the matter: "The question was not [for Hume] whether the concept of cause was right, useful, and even indispensable for our knowledge of nature, for this Hume had never doubted; but whether the concept could be thought by reason *a priori*. [...] Hume's problem was a question concerning the *origin* of the concept, not concerning its indispensability in use."<sup>25</sup> In casting the Scots as misreading the intention of Hume's questioning they, Kant claimed, "found a more convenient method of being defiant without any insight, viz., the appeal to *common sense*."<sup>26</sup>

What, then, is meant by common sense? And how does it shrink from the terrain of critique? First, it is crucial to note that there is no single doctrine of common sense but rather a tradition that stems, principally, from Thomas Reid's initial reaction to Hume, or more specifically, his attempt to disclose certain natural principles indispensable for our

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appendix of the *Prolegomena*, claiming that he was willfully misunderstood by these *Popularphilosophen*. He thus understands himself as suffering the same fate of Hume, where the essence of both of his work too became contaminated by the *Popularphilosophen*, who misunderstood it for reasons of convenience (*Prolegomena*, 112.).

<sup>25</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 259.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

complex sensory experiences against Hume's inability to secure such principles. For Reid, Hume had assumed that experience operated atomistically, that sense-data or impressions were experienced as basic units and then synthesized by the mind. Rather, for Reid, sensation already implies a complex process that incorporates connected yet distinct faculties. For a sensation to be a sensation, in Reid's view, it must be accompanied by perception, i.e. awareness of the sensation. But such a perceptive awareness is also, he thinks, necessarily accompanied by different types of principles. For example, the very fact of sensation compels us to believe "in the present existence of the thing" sensed; in a "mind, or something with the power of smelling [or any other sense], of which it is called a sensation, an operation or feeling;" and it also compels us to believe in a "faculty" capable of "sensing other notions like cause, extension, solidity and motion."<sup>27</sup> As such, perception (to be distinguished from just sensation, but not disassociated from it) is comprised of the unity between sensation and just these necessary beliefs that accompany them. These principles, and potentially others, ground our very sensory perceptions of things; to have sensations at all we must have these principles. This is just what is meant that they are principles of "common sense."

There are certain principles...which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life...these are what we call the principles of common senses; and what is manifestly contrary to them is what we call absurd.<sup>28</sup>

Absurdity, in this view, is not a logical absurdity (as it is for Kant), but rather a contradiction against the principles of common sense. As beliefs, they cannot be defined

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<sup>27</sup> Kuehn, *Scottish Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Kuehn, 29.

logically or rationally, and thus cannot be refuted by reason. Here, Reid evidences (one of) his proximities with Kant, who also held that reason could not guarantee (at least some) metaphysical principles, a point indicated by the failure of rational metaphysics. But unlike Kant's attempt to secure principles through reason, Reid's principles are more like what "every man knows but no man can define," "like seeing and hearing which can never be so defined as to be understood by those without these faculties."<sup>29</sup> We cannot explain the principles of common sense because they just *are* necessary for the operations of the mind: Just as we cannot define what it is like to hear, we cannot define what it is like to believe in an external reality. We simply do instinctually.

Part of what is involved here is Reid's descriptive methodology. For Reid, much of prior philosophy was principally oriented towards the explanation and justification of the powers and processes of consciousness and not, as he understood himself to be doing, merely describing those processes. This tendency was symptomatic of both rationalists and empiricists: the former attempting to explain principles through deductive inferences from logical axioms or given ideas, while the latter attempting the same using experiment and observation.<sup>30</sup> Instead, Reid sets "out to *find* [those principles] in order to enumerate them," by "tracing the labyrinth" of human consciousness until he can "trace it no further."<sup>31</sup> As such, he did not take the ones he discovered to be exhaustive, but rather allowed for the possibility of others to be found by participating philosophers. While this

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 21-22. Reid takes himself to be the first to consistently follow the method of description, and its crystallization has probable impact on subsequent philosophy, perhaps even phenomenology. Ernst von Aster, for example, noted the similarities between Reid's "phenomenological description" of the a priori component of all perception and Husserl's investigations (Ibid, 35).

descriptive introspection is meant to establish the principles as immune to logical and rational criticism, they are also taken to be the basis *for* rational justification.<sup>32</sup>

Oswald and Beattie, however, were less concerned to contribute to the rigour of Reid's descriptions of consciousness but rather with applying and expanding on its basic principles for popular use. Oswald multiplied the principles of common sense to include moral and theological dogmas, like the existence of God and religious faith. Yet, as Kuehn puts it, "his arguments against philosophical proofs in religious matters do not amount to more than the preaching of what he considered to be the truth and the exhortation that everyone should follow it" offering "no clear criterion of the principles" he propounded.<sup>33</sup> Beattie, by contrast, did not so much attempt to expand on the principles identified in Reid's philosophy, but rather restated it more successfully, allowing it to spread it "further than Reid himself could have hoped."<sup>34</sup> Kuehn summarizes the difference between Oswald and Beattie from Reid by saying that where Reid posits common sense as an answer to the question of the original principles of mankind, an arena that invites further descriptive exploration through rigorous description and introspection, Oswald and Beattie use common sense in the more colloquial sense of "what everyone already knows." This, Kuehn rightly indicates, not only marks a difference in emphasis between Reid and his followers but, more significantly, a substantive distinction in what is meant by their unifying concept. Common sense, to Oswald and Beattie, needs no further interrogation but is taken as the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

basis for dogmatically affirming what “everyone already knows” in the marketplace of popular appeal.

It is with this in mind that I think we can begin to appreciate the breadth of Kant’s criticism in the *Prolegomena*. Recall, Kant claimed that the Scots failed to realize the spirit of Hume’s critical inquiry which, to Kant’s admiration, was in fact questioning into the inner possibility of metaphysics. (As a result, Kant could equate Hume’s fate with that of the metaphysicians, “that of not being understood”).<sup>35</sup> By neglecting to take up Hume’s inquiry deeper “into the nature of reason, so far as it is concerned with pure thought” they both trivialize reason and think themselves into a situation in which there is no means by which to verify metaphysical principles, except some hazy appeal to description which, to Kant’s estimation, is unstable. His second charge, however, is more directed at the outcome of this philosophical problem, and perhaps is more suitable to Oswald and Beattie’s uptake: Common sense, he says, is “one of the subtle discoveries of modern times, by means of which the most superficial ranter can safely enter the lists with the most thorough thinker and hold his own. [...] Seen in clear light, it is but an appeal to the opinion of the multitude, of whose applause the philosopher is ashamed, while the popular charlatan glories and confides in it.”<sup>36</sup> Let’s deal with the philosophical charge first, then with the “charlatanism” it implies.

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<sup>35</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*. 258.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Besides the German and Scottish *Popularphilosophen*, there is some evidence that Kant might have also had in mind the work of Pierre Bayle, whose turn to common sense stems from his discovery of the antinomial nature of metaphysical speculation (near a hundred years before Kant’s discussion of the antinomies in the ‘Transcendental Dialectic’). For Bayle, the inability of reason to reach certainty about metaphysical questions did not so much lead him towards a universal common sense discoverable through “healthy understanding,” but rather amounted to the necessity of engaging tolerantly in discussion about matters of reason from a partial or finite position. His appeal to common sense amounts to a certain public orientedness of dialogue between people of different metaphysical convictions. For a discussion of the

Philosophically, Kant is unthreatened by the appeal to common sense, taking it as “mere child’s play” (A 783/B 811). For Kant, metaphysics is not simply concerned with *describing* the origin of our principles, but also with justifying these in knowledge claims. To justify metaphysical principles in this way – which is central to the critical project – one must show how synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible and on what grounds they rest. In so doing, we can come to understand that certain principles are valid while others are not. Kant’s fear is that the claim that metaphysical principles can be given without justification, that they are immediately certain, is also to claim that the human mind has within itself, prior to any synthetic judgment, the means by which to immediately know the world it experiences. This would then completely deflate the sciences. For example, Kant says: The “naturalist of pure reason” who “adopts his principles through common reason, without science ... virtually asserts that we can determine the size and distance of the moon with greater certainty by the naked eye than by mathematical devices. This is mere misology, reduced to principles” (A 855/B 883). This, to Kant, is not only absurd, but he also thinks that by appealing to common sense in this way the understanding lies dangerously “open to every fancy” since it is “in no position to withhold approval of [illegitimate] assertions” (A 232/B 285). Beattie’s postulation of the existence of God as a principle of common sense is another example of this fanciful tendency.

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relationship between Kant and Bayle’s relation to the antinomies of reason, see: Rees, “Kant, Bayle, and Indifferentism.” For a discussion of Bayle’s scepticism, see his entry on Pyrrhonism in: Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections*. Trans. Richard Hopkin. (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 194-210. And for discussion of his turn to public rhetoric and toleration, see *Bayle: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xx.

Corroborating common sense's antithetical stance to scientific knowledge is Kant's assigning it the methodological type of "naturalism," which is set against those "scientific" methods of scepticism, dogmatical and critical (A 855/B 883). In other words, while Kant's wars with the sceptics and dogmatists are internal to the domain of science (and thereby often receive all the attention), common sense wanders behind the scenes, indifferent to such pursuits. The key philosophical point then is that, for Kant, common sense cannot provide the means for adjudicating between principles, nor does it try, and thus gives up the critical aim of raising metaphysics to the level of a science.

The significance of Reid, Oswald and Beattie for our purposes lies in their foundational role in influencing the *Popularphilosophie* movement more generally. If most of the Germans did not accept every detail of the Scot's theories, many of them did take the notion of common sense very seriously, modifying it to their own ends. Since the purpose of this section was to give a basic sense of both the *Popularphilosophen* and some of their unifying ideas and their consequences, we will just offer a few examples of this uptake: There is, for example, obvious connections between the Scots and the German counter-enlightenment of Hamann and Jacobi, who similarly held that basic principles or beliefs ought to be grasped intuitively instead of groped at by reason, especially since (at least for Jacobi) the latter ends up in nihilism and solipsism.<sup>37</sup> The philosophers of Göttingen, Meiners and Feder, similarly saw merit in common sense, yet modified the theory to accommodate (non-discursive) reason as capable of immediately sensing metaphysical principles, like truth, beauty and justice.<sup>38</sup> Moses Mendelssohn,

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<sup>37</sup> See Kuehn, *Common Sense in Germany*, chapter VIII.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

moreover, transitioned from Wolffian speculative philosophy to a more modest account of speculative reason by the influence of common sense. For Mendelssohn, common sense becomes the controlling force of the presumptuousness of pure reason:

Whenever reason lags so far behind common sense or even strays from it and is in danger of losing its way, the philosopher will not trust this reason and he will not contradict common sense. Instead, he will silence reason whenever he does not succeed in leading it back to the beaten path.

Together, these give some indication of the influence of the Scots on the intellectual milieu of Kant's critical period, including figures both very much distant from Kant's admirations (e.g. Meiners and Feder) and most proximal to them (Mendelssohn).

Kant's philosophical qualms, however, were not the only elements involved in his assessment of common sense in the *Prolegomena*. The problem was not just with respect to the Scots interpretation of Hume nor with the inconsistencies (or differences of intent) of the theory itself, but also with what it implied: It implied charlatanism, indifference to reason, and the contamination of the field of rational debate. These extra-philosophical features, while much more difficult to substantiate, ought to be taken seriously since they express a possible link between the relation between popular philosophy, more authentic philosophical research, and the status of his culture more generally. "Charlatanism" glories in the "opinion of the multitude." It is clear here that Kant was especially cynical about the motivations of common sense philosophers, since a charlatan is someone who seeks fame or money through deceptions or unsubstantiated pretense. This corresponds to his initial assessment in the A preface that indifferentists "exchange the language of the schools for a popular style" (A x), and his further criticism in the B preface of the "loquacious shallowness that goes under the presumed name of popularity" (B xxxvi). There is, in other words, something dishonest about the popular philosopher to Kant's

mind, prepared to both deny the pursuits of reason in favour of popular appeal, yet also seduce the public into accepting their position with recourse to the language of the schools (without providing anything near Kant's coveted "proof procedures" that accompanied that language).<sup>39</sup> This simply muddies the water, contaminating the arena of earnest rational – hopefully critical – debate in favour of a mere satiation of reason.

Judging from these comments, then, one cannot help but suspect that Kant saw common sense philosophy as tending towards something like a "pure popularism," a popularism for its own sake. Or at the very least, it was easily susceptible to this possibility. Whether this is fair with respect to individual *Popularphilosophen* is a side consideration.

### *iii. The Immaturity of the Age*

The third aspect of indifferentism dovetails into the last point, pertaining to the character of the "public" that breathes life into the emergence of popular philosophy and gives a deeper significance to just what is at stake in indifferentism. If the propagation of the unfounded dogma of the *Popularphilosophen* is sustained, by definition, through popular support, then what is the character of the public towards which the popular philosophers can gain such notoriety? Who is behind the "opinion of the masses" that glorifies the popular philosopher and shames the philosopher? One of the most suggestive places we can begin to discern this dimension is in Kant's well known essay *What is Enlightenment?*, written as a response to the same question posted in the popular journal

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<sup>39</sup> While Kant was certainly against the claims of dogmatist, he nonetheless had great appreciation for the strictest of proofs they followed, of which Christian Wolff was the benchmark: "Criticism is not opposed to the dogmatic procedure...rather only to dogmatism... In a future system of metaphysics we will have to follow the strict method of the famous Wolff" (B xxxvi).

*Berlinische Monatsschrift* (The Berlin Monthly) in 1784. Here, Kant diagnoses what he perceives as a pervasive rational “immaturity” (*Unmündigkeit*) which impedes the possibility of enlightenment by inhibiting the independent use of reason. Kant describes rational immaturity as “laziness and cowardice [...] to reason for oneself without external guidance.”<sup>40</sup> *Unmündigkeit* means both “minority” in the sense of being “under age” as well as “dependent” or “under tutelage.” To be rationally immature is to be in a certain sense content with following whatever “dogmas and formulas” are already on offer, to be under the “leading strings” of dominant institutions, structures, and common opinions.<sup>41</sup> For Kant, such immaturity is synonymous with an uncritical appropriation of whatever is on offer by “authorities,” contributing to the propagation of a “great unthinking mass.” Kant puts it like this: “How easy it is to be immature! If I have a book to have understanding in place of me, a spiritual adviser to have conscience for me, a doctor to judge my diet for me, and so on, I need not make any efforts at all. I need not think, so long as I can pay. Others will soon take on the tiresome job for me.”<sup>42</sup> Here we see once again the connection between the purveyors of metaphysical “dogma and formula” –

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<sup>40</sup> To “reason for oneself” means to “look within oneself (i.e. within one's own reason) for the supreme touchstone of truth; and the maxim for thinking for oneself at all times is enlightenment.... Enlightenment consists in a negative principle in the use of one's cognitive powers...which means to ask oneself, whenever one is urged to accept something, whether one finds it possible to transform the reason for accepting it into a universal principle governing the use of one's own reason. Everyone can apply this test to oneself” (Immanuel Kant, *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge University Press, 1991. 249). In other words, the project of enlightenment is bound up with the practical possibility of realizing the categorical imperative. This will be discussed more below.

<sup>41</sup> “Leading strings” (*Leitband*) is one of Kant's recurring metaphors pertaining to the rearing of children. Leading strings are early modern child-rearing implements, designed to keep children within a safe distance of her parents, like today's leashes. This metaphor is significant not only for understanding how Kant envisions the process of enlightenment and the childlike state of his common contemporary, but also for the actual process of childhood education. For an excellent discussion of the centrality of this metaphor in Kant's thinking, see Mika LaVaque-Manty, “Kant's Children:,” ed. Margaret Dancy, Victoria Costa, and Joshua Gert, *Social Theory and Practice* 32, no. 3 (2006): 365–88.

<sup>42</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54.

which we might assume include the popular philosophers (though not exclusively, since a doctor would not be considered in this category) – and the multitude that sustains them, though this time with particular concern for the character of that multitude as “immature” reasoners, as unwilling to think for themselves. Kant reiterates this sentiment in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, this time with specific attention to the consequence of immature reason for questions of morality, which requires a strict metaphysical procedure in thinking: “Against this slackness or even base way of thinking, in seeking to identify the [moral] principle from among empirical motives and laws, one cannot actually issue too frequent a warning, as human reason in its weariness gladly rests upon this cushion, and in the dream of sweet pretenses foists on morality a bastard patched up from limbs of quite varied ancestry, which resembles whatever one wants to see in it.”<sup>43</sup> In both cases, we are presented with a depiction of the state of the culture in the “age of enlightenment,” that epoch in which reason is beginning to throw off the fetters of traditional authorities disavowing rational responsibility in favour of a kind of metaphysical deference. In the second preface to the first *Critique*, furthermore, Kant is unequivocal in situating critique against a “generally injurious” proliferation of metaphysical options linked with just the “loquacious shallowness of presumed popularity” (B xxxiv): “Through criticism alone can we sever the root of materialism, fatalism, atheism, of freethinking unbelief, of enthusiasm, and superstition. [...] Those who reject [...] the procedure of the critique of pure reason can have nothing else in mind except to throw off the fetters of science altogether, and to transform work into play,

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<sup>43</sup> Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4:426.

certainty into opinion, and philosophy into philodoxy” (B xxxvii). And late in his life (1794), in a letter to the publisher and *Popularphilosophen* Freidrich Nicolai, Kant criticizes the growing role of the publication industry in propagating this chaos, describing the state of publication in general as “carried out in the manner of a factory,” where the publisher “need not take into consideration the inner worth and content of the commodities he publishes, but only the market *to* which, and the fashion of the day *for* which, the in any case ephemeral products of the printing press are brought into lively currency.”<sup>44</sup> In this case, the publisher – who has a particularly important role for Kant in steering culture, since published writing is the avenue for Kant’s notion of “public freedom” – is more of a businessman pandering to the immaturity of the market, following the anti-enlightenment dictum: “The world wants to be deceived, therefore let it be deceived!”<sup>45</sup>

These passages offer us an important qualification on what is meant by the context of indifferentism. If we take such metaphysical play as a feature of what Kant means by indifferentism, then the latter cannot be conceived as a simple denunciation of metaphysical interest as such. Rather, if indifferentism is to correspond to the interplay between popular philosophy, the immature reason of the multitude, and the emergence of an unregulated marketplace of ideas, then it must be able to *account for* metaphysical proliferation. In other words, the meaning of indifferentism must turn not on an abdication of metaphysical interest, since this cannot and is not overcome (for reasons that will become more clear), but rather on the more specific abdication of a *rational* and

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<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant and Allen W. Wood, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, 1 edition (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8: 436.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 8: 437.

*critically grounded* comportment to metaphysics. It is the distinction between reason and mere opinion which marks the difference between rational maturity (*Mündigkeit*) and immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*), metaphysical responsibility and indifference. Thought in this more refined sense, then, the gamut of reference throughout Kant's work to indifferentism is opened up wide indeed, as indifferentism can now be seen to include *any* un-grounded popular metaphysical position that emerges in the age of enlightenment (which is not yet, owing to indifferentism, an "enlightened age").<sup>46</sup> Thus indifferentism, emerging out of the displacement of dogmatism, can begin to include a wide array of positions, including the ones mentioned above – fatalism, superstition, free-thinking unbelief, etc. – and thus signifies not any specific metaphysical position *per se*, but rather *the context within which all competing metaphysical options are, in themselves, equally valid*: Indeed, the German word for indifference, "*Gleichgültig*," is literally comprised of "sameness" or "likeness" (*Gleich*) and "having equal validity or legality" (*Gültig*). In such a context, every position is viable since there is no rational ground to claim one over another. Indifferentism, popular philosophy, and common sense tend, in other words, towards an unregulated relativism.

#### *iv. The Indifference of Dogmatism*

The fourth element of indifferentism takes its indication from Kant's statement that indifferentism emerges "when through ill-applied effort [metaphysics] has become obscure, confused, and useless" (A x). This suggests, and in conformity with Kant's

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<sup>46</sup> Kant, *Political*, 58.

criticism of the anarchical nature of dogmatism, that indifferentism is somehow related to the collapse of the metaphysical tradition itself. There are two relevant aspects to the “confusion” and “uselessness” of dogmatic metaphysical investigations. First, as already mentioned, Kant understood that dogmatism resolved to anarchy – or as he puts it elsewhere, it is “a battlefield designed for mock combat” – because it lacks an antecedent investigation into the capacities by which it constructs its speculative edifice. Such a critical investigation would show that reason, while naturally extending beyond all possible experience, never contains within itself the conditions for knowledge. It is thus resigned to “a groping among mere concepts,” at least when it concerns knowledge (B xv). In addition to this inflated view of the capacities of reason, the concepts of rational speculation themselves also contribute to the uselessness of dogmatic investigations. Concepts like God, Soul, and World represent unconditioned entities that stand outside the phenomenal realm of conditioned (causal) experience, concepts that, as unconditional, are indifferent to the domain of possible knowledge. It is owing to this nature of the objects of metaphysical investigation in conjunction with the epistemic presumptions of rationalism that dogmatism invariably engenders transcendental illusions. This means that the metaphysical “confusion,” abstraction and tedium that are so integral to the generation of metaphysical indifference have their source in a fundamental misconstrual of the nature of reason and the purpose of metaphysical concepts in relation to it: “The ideas of pure reason become dialectical only through misunderstanding and carelessness” (A 680/B 708). I take these as the *constitutive* reasons for the uselessness and indifference of dogmatic metaphysics.

Dogmatism also proves its indifference to reason in a more explicitly *discursive* sense, insofar as it has historically been the business of academic philosophers employing abstract and technical jargon with concern only to other members of the “schools” that can understand them. Kant mentions the disconnection between dogmatic elitism and esotericism with the public in the first *Critique*:

I ask the most inflexible dogmatist whether the proof of the continuation of our soul after death drawn from the simplicity of substance, or the proof of freedom of the will against universal mechanism drawn from the subtle though powerless distinctions between subjective and objective necessity, [etc.], have ever, after originating in the schools, been able to reach the public or even have the least influence over its convictions? [Owing to] the unsuitability of the common human understanding for such subtle speculation [...] the extension of scholarly metaphysics into the public realm] has never happened, and it can never be expected to happen. (B xxxiii)

The subtlety of such speculation is germane to the nature of dogmatism itself, since the latter is premised on the purely logical extension of reason with regards to objects that can never be confirmed in experience. This leads to an increasingly nuanced set of conceptual distinctions and arguments that gain their meaning only within the domain of general logic without ever touching down to the practical concerns of human life. Thus, against this discursive obscurity of dogmatism, Kant claims in a letter to Christian Garve that “every philosophical work must be susceptible to popularity; if not, it probably conceals nonsense beneath a fog of seeming sophistication.”<sup>47</sup>

However, considering Kant’s suspicion of popular charlatanism, we must be careful in aligning Kant’s appreciation of popularity, his rejoinder against the “uselessness” of dogmatic speculation and scholastic metaphysics, with the kind of popularity advanced by the *Popularphilosophen*, since the latter are also, like the

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<sup>47</sup> Kant, *Correspondence*, 10:339.

cloistered dogmatist, in the habit of “concealing nonsense beneath a fog of seeming sophistication.” The difference between strict academic dogmatism and the popular philosopher who propagates is that the obscurity of the former is internal to the discipline itself, indifferent to whether it can be understood by a popular audience, while the latter sophistically deploys obscurity for the purposes of popular appeal. Both trade on the appearance of sophistication, but their respective motivations, techniques, and audiences are different. Kant’s appreciation and use of the principle of popularity, then, must be set against *both* the discursive indifference of the dogmatist *and* the sophistical obscurity of popular philosophy. This of course raises questions about how Kant himself attempts to overcome both of these positions, especially since much of his own work is as technical and subtle as his dogmatist predecessors. This question will be explored directly in the next section. For now suffice it to acknowledge that dogmatism presents a discursive indifference, deeply related with its constitutive indifference, which together contribute to the waning authority of metaphysics, the emergence of criticism, and the resultant context of indifferentism.

#### *v. A Precarious Stage of Transition*

Considering indifferentism in this robust sense – as emerging out of the waning authority of metaphysical despotism and encapsulating the mutually supportive relationship between popular philosophy and the public that sustains it – we can understand the reason for which Kant must have characterized indifferentism so harshly, as “the mother of chaos and the night in the sciences.” While we will not fully see what is at stake here until Kant’s positive response is elaborated, it is at least clear at this point that with

indifferentism Kant is presented with a supreme obstacle to his normative aim of enlightenment through reason. But, and this is the fifth significant feature given by the passage above, indifferentism is not simply an obstacle, but is, at the same time the necessary condition *for* that enlightenment: it is *both* “the mother of chaos and the night in the sciences” *and* “the origin, or at least the prelude, of their incipient transformation and enlightenment” (A x). While an extreme danger, indifferentism is also a sign of the growing maturity of reason and a historically novel occurrence in which individual reasoners are granted the freedom to find their own way, to be *self*-legislators and autonomous agents. Such freedom, as Kant warns, is not easily realized, since it first demands an undertaking of critical reflection, an inquiry into what is *possible* for reason. Kant brings these dimensions together in the final sentence of our central passage: Indifference “is evidently the effect not of the thoughtlessness of our age, but of its ripened power of judgement, which will no longer be put off by illusory knowledge, and which demands that reason should take on anew the most difficult of all tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge” (ibid.). That is, the historical development of a “ripened power of judgement” in the age of criticism vis-à-vis the weakening legitimacy of dogmatism provides the context in which metaphysics *can* be the subject of critique and new path explored. In the ‘Doctrine of Method,’ he reiterates a similar point, this time stressing the necessity of the conflictual character of contemporary metaphysics for the *emergence* of critique: “Reason very much needs such a conflict, and it is to be wished that it had been undertaken earlier and with unlimited public permission. For then a mature critique would have come about all the earlier” (A 747/B 775). And again in the *Prolegomena*, this time linking it directly with the transitory *stage* of indifference:

Yet, though the period of the downfall of all dogmatical metaphysics has undoubtedly arrived, we are yet far from being able to say that the period of its regeneration is come by means of a thorough and complete Critique of Reason. All transitions from a tendency to its contrary pass through the stage of indifference, and this moment is the most dangerous for an author, but, in my opinion, the most favorable for the science. For, when partisan spirit has died out by a total dissolution of former connections, minds are in the best state to listen to several proposals for an organization according to a new plan.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, between the despotic rule of metaphysical authority and an enlightened age, we find the stage of indifference or indifferentism, a transitional stage on the way to the potential realization of humanity's "highest" ends. But while transitional, the situation is precarious, hinging on the success of critique itself. Kant's critique must fulfill the promise of reason to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of metaphysical authority through its internal failings and the relentless criticism it engenders. Kant is responding to a crises, and we will see what tools he deploys to do so.

### **III. The Promise of Reason: Indifferentism and Critique**

Given the way in which Kant establishes the problem of indifferentism described in the previous section, I would like to focus on two core philosophical requirements that Kant's "new plan" must accommodate. First, philosophy must establish itself against the problem of assumption constitutive of the battlefield of pre-critical metaphysics by securing its claims against those assumptions, and indeed the problem of assumption itself. This is the foundational *methodological* requirement. And second, it must show the necessity of a specific kind of non-dogmatic metaphysics against the chaotic marketplace of opinion and sophistry. This is the metaphysical *content* of that intervention.

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<sup>48</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:367.

These, however, are by no means the only requirements that appear in relation to indifferentism. To my mind, the glaring omission is the meta-philosophical implications of Kant's orientation, that is, that his philosophy actually seeks to intervene in this context. The manner in which, and justifications for, Kant's philosophical intervention constitutes a key part of his philosophy and deserves dedicated attention. Unfortunately, we cannot give this here. Instead, let me just say a few brief things to help give a sense of it.

As was already mentioned, Kant was dissatisfied with both naïve popularism and rational indifference amongst the *Popularphilosophen* as well as with the cloistered indifference of the scholastic philosopher. Kant's position exists between these two poles. The pivotal thing to recognize is that while he deeply appreciated the growing popular orientation of philosophy and the coextensive collapse between academic philosophy and the public (as evidenced by repeated statements to Christian Garve,<sup>49</sup> who pushed Kant in this direction, and his recurring justifications in the introductions to many of his works regarding their difficulty and his hope for their popularity), and in many ways modeled his philosophy in its spirit,<sup>50</sup> his relationship to it remained complicated for one central reason: He thought that any philosophy that seeks popularity must first run through the mills of critique, and only in this way can it gain the *right* to popularity:

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<sup>49</sup> For example, in a letter to Christian Garve in 1783 Kant readily concedes to Garve's criticism regarding to first *Critique*. Following the popular *gestalt*, Garve suggested that "if your philosophy is to become useful, it must be expressed in a popular manner, and if it contains truth then it can be expressed." In response, Kant concedes the point resolutely and hopes to "gradually remove this defect" (see *Correspondence*, 202).

<sup>50</sup> As evidenced by his admission that: "[In] matters that concern all men without distinction nature is not guilty of any partial distribution of her gifts, and ... in regard to the essential ends of human nature the highest philosophy cannot advance further than is possible under the guidance which nature has bestowed even upon the most ordinary understanding" (B 859). His philosophy is meant to be a philosophy of the people, rooted in the common understanding by taking it to its highest ends.

Not only can the procedure [of a metaphysics of morals] never lay claim to the supremely rare merit of a true *philosophical popularity*, since there is not art in making oneself commonly understood when one renounces all thorough insight; it brings to light a disgusting mish-mash of gleaned observations and half-organizing principles, which dreary pates savor because it is quite useful for everyday chatter, while men of insight feel confused, and discontented [...] Even philosophers, who quite easily see through the dazzling deception, get little hearing when they call for suspending this pretended popularity for a while, to earn the rightful permission to be popular only when they have first acquired determinate insight.<sup>51</sup>

Kant understood himself as one of these philosophers who “cut through dazzling deception” with “determinate insight,” thereby earning the “rightful permission to be popular.” And it is specifically in relation to the indifferentistic *Popularphilosophen* that it becomes clear why Kant gives both normative and sequential priority to establishing a critically grounded metaphysics *in advance of* satisfying the principle of popularity: “This would mean that the doctrine of morals is first *grounded* on metaphysics and afterwards, when it has finally been established, is provided with *access* by means of popularity. But it is quite absurd to want to comply with popularity in the first investigation, on which all correctness of basic principles depends.”<sup>52</sup>

The rightful permission to be popular, moreover, coincides with his definition of philosophy and the philosopher. Philosophy, Kant says, is fundamentally *legislative*, and in precisely the two domains of knowledge and morality: “The legislation of human reason (philosophy) has two objects, nature and freedom, and thus contains the natural law as well as the moral law” (A 840/B 868). In this sense, it is the role of the philosopher to affect such legislation: “Philosophy is the science of the relation of all cognition to the essential ends of human reason, and the philosopher is not an artist of

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<sup>51</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, 1 edition (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4:409.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

reason but the legislator of human reason” (A 839/B 867). In contrast to the dogmatic, or scholastic philosopher, then, who is concerned only with the “systematic unity of knowledge” and indifferent to the public use of that knowledge, Kant’s philosopher is *cosmopolitan*, engaging in inquiries of “that which necessarily interests everyone” (A 838/ B 866). What “interests everyone” here is to be sharply distinguished from the common-sensical “what everyone already knows” since it *goes beyond* common sense while nonetheless remaining constitutively *tethered to it*. As cosmopolitan, the legislative function of the philosopher is develop a “worldly knowledge” in the form of “teaching the ideal” that bring us to the “divine human being in us” (A 569/B 597). The primary means by which Kant thought this was possible was through teaching and publishing.<sup>53</sup>

To his mind, critical philosophy is the only philosophy entitled to popular promotion, and anything short of it would rather muddy the waters of what is an already precarious situation with regards to the fate of enlightenment and metaphysics. Only through critique can “precipitate reason be brought to understand itself, before making its dogmatic assertions.”<sup>54</sup> The problem was that critical philosophy demanded in many cases elaborate demonstrations and rigorous proofs that, as Kant bemoans throughout his writings, the public has no time for, and to his dismay he had to constantly defend himself against what he saw as constant (and even willful) misinterpretations. Ultimately, this puts him in a tenuous position between demanding a type and standard of thinking

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<sup>53</sup> With respect to teaching, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the Doctrine of Method, he argues that his critical philosophy should be used as a fundamental textbook in the schools (see: A 755/B 783). He also conceived enlightened freedom as freedom to use the pen in relation to the reading public (see: *What is Enlightenment?*). This obviously implies the publishing industry. Later in his life he would write a polemic to Friedrich Nicolai, regarded as a *Popularphilosophen*, against the practice of “merely turning out books.”

<sup>54</sup> Kant and Wood, *Practical Philosophy*, 366.

coincidental with his own, and the public that he seeks to address. Nietzsche has a well-known aphorism from *The Gay Science* called ‘Kant’s Joke’ that encapsulates Kant’s awkward position here: “Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the whole world, that the whole world was right: that was the secret joke of this soul. He wrote against the scholars in favor of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for the people.”<sup>55</sup> I believe Nietzsche is correct, but ultimately the joke was on Kant, for it is not difficult to trace a decline from his more youthful, Rousseau-inspired optimism towards the “common people” and the role of his philosophy with respect to them, to an impatient arrogance at the end of his life:

It sounds arrogant, conceited, and belittling of those who have not yet renounced their old system to assert that before the coming of the critical philosophy there was as yet no philosophy at all. In order to decide about this apparent presumption, it need but be asked *whether there could really be more than one philosophy*. [...] Since, considered objectively, there can be only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies; there can only be one true system of philosophy from principles.<sup>56</sup>

This, of course, is Kant’s own philosophy, and it is telling with respect to how he understood his work with respect to the chaos of opinions around him. While Kant never aligned himself with the ideal of the philosopher King (philosophers should advise kings in his view) he nonetheless (contrary to some appreciatory remarks by Hannah Arendt)<sup>57</sup> follows Plato’s allegory of the enlightened philosopher returning to the cave with “determinate insight” to put metaphysical directives and boundaries on that world. The

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<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pg. 140.

<sup>56</sup> Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, 6:207.

<sup>57</sup> Arendt applauds, for example, that “For Kant, the philosopher remains a man like you and me, living among his fellow men, *not* among his fellow philosophers” Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1989), 28.

main difference here is that Kant returns to show everyone else the light of reason by awakening them to a renewed metaphysics for the purpose of morality and knowledge, a renewed metaphysics that is immanent to, though not often realized in, “common” or “healthy understanding.”<sup>58</sup>

The key point here is that, in general terms, Kant’s philosophy was intended to address the dilapidated stage of indifferentism through a kind of philosophical intervention, but one that it is at odds with itself, burrowing itself into an elitist cynicism. The following reflections on Kant’s method and his arguments for the necessity of metaphysics will, I hope, give nuance to Kant’s claim for the *right* to intervene and seek popularity, since it is on the basis of the soundness of his transcendental philosophy and the metaphysics that emanates from it that he can claim such a thing.

*i. Transcendental Method and Non-Assumption.*

Kant’s critical method – as indebted to yet distinct from the general critical ethos of the enlightenment – was derived from what Kant understood as the unifying failure of both scepticism and dogmatism to deliver the grounds for knowledge. Recall that indifferentism owes its emergence to the futile wars of traditional metaphysics, constituted by their dialectically antinomous relation. These wars are spurn by the fact that each position inadequately accounts for the conditions of their claims. Claim is lodged against claim, and the central features of the problem – the axioms particular to each position – are never interrogated sufficiently. One builds into the sky without a

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<sup>58</sup> For the relationship between common understanding and common sense (in its vulgar, popular meaning) see: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, 1 edition (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5: 293.

stable ground, the other destroys dogmatic edifice without cultivating a new soil for the claims of reason. It is because each position uncritically assumes its entirely polemical starting point – a starting point that appears only by virtue of the other tradition – that both are blind to the possibility of an entirely different terrain, the terrain of thorough critique which exists between them. We also saw that these stances are both internalized in the “marketplace” and the *popularphilosophen*, who also operate based on ungrounded presuppositions yet with more public consequences. This means that, on pain of reintroducing further dialectics of reason, critique must locate a “stable ground” that stands apart from these polemics, a stable ground that can only be discovered if it does not assume in advance the capacities of reason by adhering to either strict empiricism, rationalism, or common sense. Thus, put simply, Kant must stabilize his own philosophy and his solution to indifferentism against the problem of assumption *itself*, lest he beg a question provided by his own critical turn.<sup>59</sup> This means that the method employed by Kant must be capable of proving all of the following: (1) denying the validity of dogmatic rationalism, (2) providing solid enough foundations for making claims about universal laws of nature and morality, and thus deny the threat of scepticism in both domains. In other words, the critical requirement of non-assumption must be guarded against sceptical regress; and (3) it must be capable of grounding knowledge without

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<sup>59</sup> Kant notably surveys the field of metaphysical assumption at work in the dogmatic tradition in his famous letter to Marcus Herz, 1772: “Plato assumed a prior spiritual intuition of Divinity as the source to the pure concepts and principles of the understanding, and Malebranche assumed a still continuing everlasting intuition of this Original Being. Various moralists assumed the same thing with regard to fundamental moral laws. Crusius assumed certain implanted rules for judgments and assumed certain concepts that God had already planted in human souls such as they must be in order to harmonize with things. [In each case] the *deus ex machina* is the most absurd thing that one can choose in determining the origin and validity of our cognitions; and it has, besides the vicious circle in the series of inferences from our cognitions, the further disadvantage that it encourages, in a whim, any pious or melancholy chimera” (*Prolegomena*, 132). While here he identifies the *deus ex machina* required for rationalistic assumption, the same principle of assumption applies to the sceptics who negate the field in its entirety.

assuming anything about the capacities of reason in advance but rather demonstrating its capacities from out of itself. It must, in other words, show precisely how human cognition is constituted, and where its limits and possibilities lie. Only in this way can Kant hope to achieve both (1) and (2). And only by establishing such a stable beginning for philosophy can reason gain the juridical “right” to legislate over the frivolity of the metaphysical marketplace that plagues the spectre of indifference.

The attempt to avoid assumption is entwined with Kant's move to an immanent exploration of the capacities of human cognition, characteristic of his well-known and self-proclaimed “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy.<sup>60</sup> But because such an immanent exploration cannot itself presuppose its method of exploration, lest it fall to the pre-critical problem of assumption in the sense that it would thereby be making claims without adequate grounding, Kant attempts to ground his critique of reason *on the work of reason itself*. As he puts it, the first *Critique* offers a “system that takes no foundation as given except reason itself, and that therefore tries to develop cognition out of its original seeds without relying on any fact whatever.”<sup>61</sup> Suggesting the tight connection between the particular arguments of the first *Critique* and this method of exploration, Kant also describes the first *Critique* as a “treatise on method” (B xxii). However, we are immediately confronted by an initial problem that needs to be considered: If reason is meant to discover its own capacities “without relying on any fact” outside of itself, since

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<sup>60</sup>Kant describes this revolution, famously, as follows:

“Up until now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects [whether empirical or transcendent]; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us try to see if we can get further with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us” (Kant, 1999: B xvi)

<sup>61</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:274.

relying on *mere* facts cannot offer universality or necessity, how can we be sure that it is able to occupy a suitable vantage point capable of locating its own “original seeds,” its *a priori* rules, without such facts? Doesn't this methodological principle threaten a kind of vicious circularity wherein reason is only ever able to locate its rules based on a contingent basis, rules based on the *facts* of how it experiences itself? Isn't there something unstable about this starting point after all?

To overcome this problem, Kant develops a novel method of argumentation that involves reason – considered now in the broadest sense<sup>62</sup> – inspecting the manifold ways in which it experiences and compartmentalizes therefrom the necessary conditions of possibility for those types of experience. The key type of experience that Kant wants to establish in the first *Critique* is objective experience, which involves a demonstration of the applicability of *a priori* categories to experience, and which then constitutes the basis for the other *Critiques*. Once demonstrated, this argument is meant to prove that there is an adequate basis from which to make universal claims about nature. There are, however, supporting methods that need to be briefly mentioned before explaining the character of this more specific, and more famous, procedure of “transcendental deduction.”

Perhaps the most general is the critical aspect of the method itself. This defines the general orientation of the thinking and its site of questioning: the immanent conditions of experience that explain the limits and possibilities of certain of our

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<sup>62</sup>The facts of experience from which transcendental argumentation begins are not always particular to the *faculty* of reason, but are discovered in each of the faculties, including the apparently most ‘irrational,’ namely sensibility. In this sense, Kant may seem to be contradicting his principle of reason inspecting itself as the method for critique. But this only if we take reason in the precise sense of “faculty of reason” as distinguished from others, instead of the broader sense of rational cognition in general, which includes in its fullest scope sensible experience and cognition as well as speculative and nonsensible cognitions (pure reason). For the validity of Kant’s method, the latter would have to be the case.

capacities. To be critical is to ask about conditions of possibility in the first place, and to do so by way of introspection into what *we* can accomplish. This is initiated by Descartes, but radically shifted by Kant. For Kant, as already mentioned, the critical method is an (authoritative) branch in the class of scientific methods, which also include scepticism and dogmatism, all of which are set against non-scientific common-sense naturalism. Critique makes claim to the inner foundations of these other traditions, and attempts to usurp them thereby.

But to carry out this critical questioning, to begin at all, we must have an initial sense of the components of the field of investigation itself, namely experience. The word that perhaps best describes how we come to have a sense of these components is “analysis” (*Analusis*) or “analytic,” which in its ancient Greek meant both “loosening up” and “releasing.” For Kant, analysis involves a kind of introspective exploration that allows the constituent “elements” of experience to become “released” and made apparent in that general domain. It involves, as he puts it in a typically sterile fashion, “a regression of the whole [experience] to its possible or mediate parts.”<sup>63</sup> The *Critique of Pure Reason*, which although “is presented in a synthetical *style*” (moving from simple to consequent), nonetheless presupposes a prior analytic that distinguishes its elements and searches after their possible combinations. Sensibility, understanding and reason are just such basic elements, from which further ones can be discovered. Kant suggests this

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<sup>63</sup> From Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation, cited in Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 1 edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 69.

connection between critique and analysis in his *Logic* lectures, naming “critical analysis” as “discovering through analysis all the actions of reason that we perform in thinking.”<sup>64</sup>

But such a critical analysis is not, and cannot, be simply descriptive. We saw what anxieties this produced in Kant with respect to Reid. Rather, it must somehow move from a description of experience to a justification of its essential elements that make possible fine distinctions between the concepts and principles we find along the way of our analysis, ultimately for the overall aim of deciding between truth and falsehood, good and bad metaphysics. Kant’s critical analytics is thus oriented towards transcendental conditions, conditions that are not necessarily seen immediately by mere introspection, but nonetheless decide on the limitations of the elements illuminated by it. This is just what had come to be meant by the “loosening up” part of the word “analysis.”<sup>65</sup> Analysis in this sense implies a “lematic” process of “assuming a proposition to be true while searching for another known proposition from which another can be deduced.”<sup>66</sup> This is essentially what is behind Kant’s famous transcendental procedure of deduction.

I believe there are a few ways of understanding just what this “transcendental deduction” entails, but one common way, offered by Charles Taylor, is as follows:

The arguments I want to call ‘transcendental’ start from some feature of our experience which they-claim to be indubitable and beyond cavil. They then move to a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or his position in the world. They make this move by a regressive argument, to the effect that this stronger conclusion must be so if the indubitable fact about experience is to be possible (and being so, it must be possible).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 71.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Charles Taylor, “The Validity of Transcendental Arguments,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, 79 (January 1, 1978): 151.

The deduction of conditions of possibility for experience involves starting from some compelling premise about experience and “regressively” reasoning therefrom to the necessary conditions by which that premise is possible. The form that these arguments take is basically: X is a necessary condition for Y, Y is given, therefore X. This procedure is directed primarily against the sceptic who doubts X, say, for example, that *a priori* categories are necessary and indispensable conditions of possibility for our experience of objects. If I could show that categories are necessary enabling conditions for something that the sceptic does not deny, e.g. that that we do experience objects, then I would succeed in proving to that sceptic their *a priori* nature does in fact hold, bringing them from the mundane acceptance of the premise to something richer about the transcendental nature of experience. But because the enabling conditions are not immediately implied in the premise but are often difficult to see, the deduction requires a (sometimes elaborate) “chain of indispensability claims” that proves that the conditions do in fact hold.<sup>68</sup> Much hinges on the success of this demonstration. In this example, Kant’s deduction is meant to show not only *that* the categories are a necessary feature of any objective experience whatsoever but also *how* and *why they must* apply to our experiences in each case. This requires, in turn, a deduction of further conditions, like the unity of apperception and the nature of time in relation to the categories, each of which is taken to be a necessary, or indispensable, component of just what makes the premise, our experience of objects, possible. An entire system of such transcendental conditions, Kant says, constitutes what is meant by “transcendental philosophy:” “I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori*

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

concepts of objects in general. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy” (A 11/B 25). More generally, the concepts of transcendental philosophy are meant to codify just what is possible for thinking, both in terms of knowledge of objects and as the basis for speculative inferences of reason.

But in order to carry out the specific transcendental deduction for which Kant is most famous, there are a number of other subsidiary transcendentially oriented methods deployed in support of it. The difficulty with this specific example, which has, it seems, exclusive right to the phrase “transcendental deduction” in Kant’s text, is that it brings together apparently incompatible elements: unformed intuition and concepts. It deduces the conditions that make this unity possible, as evidenced by our experience of objects. But in order to do so, Kant finds it necessary to, for example, decide on the character of space and time as “pure intuitions.” He also needs to gain the “clue” for the categories as *a priori* from a list of logic derived from “all possible judgments.” In each of these cases, something like a transcendental procedure is carried out, but without necessarily bearing its name. With regards to space and time, they first are shown to be *a priori* through a “metaphysical exposition,” which functions just to prove that we cannot experience outside them and that they are necessarily *a priori* and pure. After the metaphysical exposition, they then are given a “transcendental exposition” which demonstrates that it is just their *a priori* character that makes possible, for example, geometry or mathematics, or, phrased differently, our evidentiary capacity for mathematics and geometry rely on space and time as pure intuitions. The deduction of the categories from all possible judgments, on the other hand, is given the name “metaphysical deduction,” which similar to the metaphysical exposition, decides on the *a priori* nature of the categories, but does

not yet show how they are applied to objects of experience. This is done, again, by the “transcendental deduction.”

As we can see, there is a whole apparatus of procedures that are oriented towards the analysis of conditions of possibility and that help support the central transcendental deduction that Kant is after. In addition to the general “critical” and “analytic” orientation that over-arches the text, the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Logic both begin with a “metaphysical” explanation followed by a “transcendental” one. In both cases, the former shows *that* we possess the thing *a priori* (space and time or the categories), while the latter *justifies* or *explains* its necessary employment in experience. But while the aesthetic proceeds by way of “exposition,” a showing or exposing of space and time, the latter proceeds by “deduction,” a derivation of conditions from premises. The specific and elaborate arguments of the transcendental deduction of categorical objectivity as it appears in the middle of the Transcendental Logic in fact subsume all of the subsidiary findings provided by the other demonstrations. It is on behalf of the transcendental deduction that they are performed, and our acceptance of it thus depends on our acceptance of its supporting elements. Moreover, this form of argumentation is not unique to his theoretical philosophy, but also appears in his practical philosophy, as we will see.

However, beyond the success of the deductive demonstration and its supporting methods, a transcendental deduction also depends on the acceptance of the initial premise or starting points themselves. For example, we can imagine a radical sceptic of the nomadic sort, perhaps even an indifferentist, who denies the possibility of any binding process of deduction insofar as they deny the stability of any premise whatsoever. Or, not

going so far, we can imagine a critical philosopher who also doubts a given premise, but without doubting *every* premise. In the critical mode, I might doubt a given starting point but nonetheless maintain the possibility that adequate starting-points do exist and that transcendental conditions can be derived from them. (Interestingly, Kant claims that Hume was of this attitude, that he wanted to ground metaphysics but simply did not find the method or the premises to do so). More often, perhaps, critical doubt calls into question a particular premise but yet with an eye to replacing it with another one or expanding on the previous one, while still maintaining the project of establishing new, more sensitive enabling conditions. For example, we might doubt that predicative judgment is an adequate premise from which to decide on the character of human thinking, and choose to expand the purview of inquiry to conclude “worldly” discourse that does not privilege this mode. Or, and as we will see with Heidegger, we might doubt the very premise of objectivity by showing what non-objective experience looks like. (Although, this framing is a bit misleading with respect to Heidegger. His “criticism” of objectivity relies not so much on a counter-premise but rather on a phenomenological disclosure of non-objective experience against the *hegemony* of the objective disclosure).

I take much post-Kantian critical philosophy as operating under the spirit of this general mode of transcendental thinking, as both refining and widening the scope of what counts as acceptable premises, discovering new types of enabling conditions (historical, cultural, the will, political economy, power, Being, etc.), and calling into question the validity of prior attempts without relapsing into scepticism. Another way to phrase this is to say that much of post-Kantian critical philosophy broadens the field of assumption, that is, exposes concealed dogmatisms, and re-establishes a transcendental framework

that accounts for those conditions. We will see later on the way this might be advanced in Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, but it can also be seen as operative in, for example, the historical conditions unearthed by Foucault's genealogical mode of inquiry, or the empirically genetic conditions of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. It is important to note here that while this transcendental procedure is, in broad terms, a consistent theme after Kant, the specific method of establishing those conditions is an open question. It remains to be decided, for example, what similarities and differences lie between the Kant's transcendental method and Heidegger's phenomenological one. We will address this in the final section of the next chapter.

Returning to our question of methodological circularity, however, once discovered the transcendental conditions of experience *are meant to ground the "facts" of experience from which they are deduced*. That is, although the transcendental method *begins* with consentable facts of experience, with how we apparently experience them in each case, and thereby begs the question of uncritical assumption and raises the spectre of contingency in the first instance (since from the outside it may appear that he is proceeding inductively), the *a priori* conditions deduced therefrom are meant to subsequently ground the former insofar as they transcend the contingency of those facts. In this way, no *merely* "factual" premise should be left unaccounted for, and the problem of circularity is circumvented: We enter into the facts of experience only to discover their *a priori* conditions, and it is through these conditions, these transcendentals, that the threat of circularity vanishes and we are left instead with a kind of immanent hylomorphism where transcendental conditions exist *a priori* as conditions for possible experience, actualized through it.

I would encourage, however, that this is not taken in the form of a simple binarism between sensibility and understanding, or matter and form, but one that remains sensitive to the immediately complex process of human experience from which they are distinguished in the first place. That is, while transcendental conditions are taken to be immanent, or constitutive features of subjectivity that exhaustively constitute a universally shared framework necessary for experience, they are also understood as arising *along with* the aspects of experience they make possible. With respect to the forms of intuition, namely space and time, Kant says that these “lie *ready* for the sensations *a priori* in the mind” (A 20/B 34), or as Howard Caygill clarifies, “are *potentially* prior, but in *actuality* posterior to sensation or the matter of intuition.”<sup>69</sup> The same can be said for the categories, which are potentially prior yet actually posterior to, in this case, acts of judgment by the understanding. Part of what leads us to think of Kant’s account of experience atomistically is, I think, just the synthetic *style* he uses in the first *Critique*, which slowly builds from the simple components of sensible intuition to the application of the categories in judgment. Experience does not proceed in this sequential way, but rather for Kant in one fell swoop.

The key question for us is whether Kant overcomes the problem of presupposition with this elaborate method. While we have come some way in clarifying his procedure, we cannot yet decide on this question until we have a better sense of what Kant’s philosophy amounts to. Remember, Kant called the first *Critique* a “treatise on method,” suggesting a tight connection with the content and the manner of securing it. We will see what kinds of consequences this entails later on. We can suggest, provisionally, that a

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<sup>69</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, 266.

method stabilizes itself against assumption if it is non-foundational and critically aware of its own finitude and limitations, that is, if it adequately incorporates provisions for openness within the method itself (not as an abstracted principle). Yet as a critical method, it must also permit the reality of what it discloses and not relapse to scepticism. There is reason to believe, I think, that there are non-foundational elements in Kant's exploration, but also clear evidence that he was willing to sever his analytic exploration in favour of advancing a metaphysics of the subject for his normative aims.

## *ii. The Necessity of Metaphysics*

*The metaphysics of nature as well as morals, but above all the preparatory critique of reason that dares to fly with its own wings, alone constitute that which we can call philosophy in a genuine sense. This relates everything to wisdom, but through the path of science, the only one which, once cleared, is never overgrown and never leads to error...*

*Just for this reason metaphysics is also the culmination of all culture of human reason.<sup>70</sup>*

So far, I have tried to explain two broad requirements that critique is behooved to satisfy with respect to indifferentism. But we have until this point only seen the philosophical method and the relation critical philosophy has to the public. We have not yet dwelled on the specific content of Kant's metaphysics as it is levied against indifference. This requirement follows from the simple fact that indifferentism indicates a turning away from metaphysics, a renunciation of our capacity to discover rational principles for thought and action, amounting to the satiation of immature reason and the emergence of popular philosophy. To Kant's mind, this must be met with a transcendental demonstration of how a rational metaphysics is still deeply necessary. Of course, such a

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<sup>70</sup> A 851/B 879

metaphysics would have to be non-dogmatic, since dogmatism was itself responsible for the emergence of indifferentism in the first place, the collapse of which opened up new possibilities for human freedom, which were in turn stifled by indifference. But it would also have to carry the weight of necessity, since it cannot be reduced simply to one opinion among others. In this section, then, we will explore how Kant tries to generate a non-dogmatic yet binding metaphysics across some of his works. It is worth noting, however, that in comparison to the last two requirements this one opens up by far the largest and potentially unwieldy domain, as the meaning and purpose of metaphysics varies throughout his critical period, corresponding to different domains of inquiry (e.g. theoretical, moral, juridical, political). In what follows I will present a sketch of the metaphysical aspects of Kant's intervention, focusing on three general domains in which this takes place: general, special, and moral. These, loosely, will correspond to Kant's statements about the purpose of philosophy mentioned above, that its purpose is to legislate in the domains of science and morality. A systematic reconstruction of these, however, is beyond the scope of my intentions here.<sup>71</sup>

Prior to Descartes' epistemological turn, metaphysics was understood as "first philosophy" insofar as it was concerned with first principles of reality. Literally meaning "after physics," it concerned itself, according to Aquinas, with "objects that do not

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<sup>71</sup> Although I cannot offer a survey of Kant's political and juridical metaphysics, it is worth noting their obvious importance with respect to Kant's philosophical intervention into indifferentism. It matters deeply, for example, how he theorizes juridical right with respect to non-moral (irrational, immature) agents. I could not go into this latter domain from the start because this is not how Kant proceeds—his entire corpus, I think, is based on the fundamental structure of human experience given in his transcendental philosophy, and it is from this base that the other forms gain their grounding. Thus it was essential for me to follow Kant's metaphysics in the sequence he did. Indeed, as was discussed with respect to the requirement of publicity above, this sequence also serves to establish Kant's own right to seek publicity and thus to intervene in the context of indifferentism. I can only point to an excellent discussion of the political and juridical dimension of Kant's metaphysics as it relates to his moral metaphysics, which has helped me a great deal and will be cited frequently below: Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*, chapter 6.5.

depend on matter for their being,”<sup>72</sup> offering meta-physical principles that made sense of and grounded the domains of the particular physical sciences. Prior to Kant, and owing to the Christian and scholastic interpretation of Aristotle, the field of metaphysics settled into two domains: general metaphysics and special metaphysics. General metaphysics, or ontology, was concerned with the question of being, which in its Wolffian formulation (most immediate to Kant) was interpreted as “The First Grounds of our Knowledge and of Things in General.”<sup>73</sup> Special metaphysics, on the other hand, referred to those unconditional beings that stand outside of and stabilize the conditional realm of particulars, amounting to the sedimentation of the tripartite domains of theology (pertaining to the question of God), psychology (pertaining to the question of the Soul), and cosmology (pertaining to the question of the World). In his introductory definition of metaphysics as a “wholly isolated speculative cognition of reason that elevates itself entirely above all instruction from experience through mere concepts” climbing “higher and higher to ever remote conditions,” for example, Kant could mean both types, but as we will see it is the domains of special metaphysics that have a more explicitly significant function for Kant (B xiv; A vii). It is in relation to these three objects of special metaphysics, for example, that Kant spends much effort undermining in his Transcendental Dialectic, and re-establishing along non-dogmatic lines in both the Appendix to that section as well as in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Indeed, Kant

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 14.

<sup>73</sup> Cited in Caygill, *Kant Dictionary*, 291.

distinguishes special metaphysics from ontology as “metaphysics in its final end” or “authentic metaphysics.”<sup>74</sup>

While Kant is not nearly as direct with the ontological question of being, attending to Wolff’s definition above, inherited by Kant, gives us a clue as to where to start. The “first grounds of our knowledge of things in general” would correspond to the transcendental conditions of human knowledge, established in the constructive part of the first *Critique*. The “first grounds” refer to the manner in which intuitions are united with the pure concepts of the understanding in experience. In this sense, the *general* meaning of the word metaphysics simply coincides with a metaphysics of the knowing subject, expressed in those *a priori* conditions necessary for experience in general. Following the traditional distinction, the “essence,” constituting content, or “whatness” of a being is understood in terms of Kant’s “mathematical” categories of quantity and quality, and the “existence” of a being is simply *that* there is an *actual* intuition given and understood or recognized, corresponding to his “dynamical” categories of modality and relation. For Kant, this subsumption of ontology into the conditions of knowledge ultimately means that – contra rationalism – being itself is “not a real predicate:” it cannot be predicated to a concept in the same manner as, for example, the concept “green,” for unlike “green” “being is not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing” (A 598/B 626). For example, the propositions “the cup is green” and “God exists” express two different types of predication with regards to being. The former predicates “green” as a quality of the given (substance) cup. “Being” here is simply expressed in the actuality

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<sup>74</sup> Cited in Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Trans. Richard Taft. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 6.

of the phenomenon experienced, it itself isn't predicated. Rather, it is *expressed* in "the mere positing of a thing" (ibid). It appears here in the form of the copula between subject and predicate. This, for Kant, is the legitimate understanding of being. Consequently, to deploy being as predicate on its own without an actual object is to assign it a value that it does not contain in itself. Neither in terms of whatness or existence can being stand on its own. Considered in this sense, the second proposition, "God exists" is illegitimate.

Despite Kant's criticism of traditional ontology which assigns such value to being, then, we can say that it is the transcendental account of cognition that expresses the domain of ontology in Kant's system. More specifically, because this account of cognition ultimately yields a set of *a priori* categories that determine the character of experience, he can go on to say that "the proud name of ontology must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding" (A 247/B 303). The pure concepts of the understanding prefigure our experiences of objects of nature, and while remain latently operative in any experience whatsoever, nonetheless must be learned to be used properly for the purposes of sound judgment and knowledge claims. The principles of the understanding "demand instruction for the power of judgment, and so it becomes clear that although the understanding is certainly capable of being instructed and equipped with rules, the power of judgment is a special talent that cannot be taught but only practiced" (A 133/B 172).<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, this reorientation of the question of being functions to subsume the question of being in general within a view of the human subject

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<sup>75</sup> While the capacity for good judgment can be practiced in accordance with the principles established by the categories, Kant also maintains that it is not possible for everyone, since most are content with using principles like dogma, or rules, which they apply formulaically. The "lack of the power of judgment" for Kant, "is properly called stupidity" (A 133/B 172).

as a thinking being set over and against present knowable objects, thereby stabilizing not only the possibility of theoretical knowledge of nature, but also stabilizing the faculties in a systematic and well-ordered architecture of human experience. Being becomes synonymous with the subject (categorically determined thinker) – object (present or occurrent entities) duality.

It is in relation to this transcendental approach to the ontological question that Kant can say in a letter to Marcus Herz in 1781, referring to the “constructive” part of the first *Critique*, that “This sort of investigation will always remain difficult, for it includes the *metaphysics of metaphysics*.”<sup>76</sup> Here, Kant is not only implicitly reiterating the traditional distinction between general and special metaphysics, but also suggesting that his transcendental approach to being functions as the ground for special metaphysics; that speculative thinking towards the unconditional unities of God, Soul, and World is linked back to the precise character of the transcendental structure of thinking. Ontology is thus conceived as preparatory for speculative metaphysics. We will deal with this connection a bit further along, and indeed in more detail in the next chapter in the context of Heidegger’s relation to Kant’s ontology. For now, let’s turn to Kant’s understanding of the purpose of special or “authentic” metaphysics.

First, it is worth noting that the objects of special metaphysics arise from our inherent capacity for rational speculation. As Kant puts it in various places, human reason is naturally “haunted [*Heimsuchung*]” (B xv)<sup>77</sup> by speculative metaphysics, and thus it concerns “our inner nature” (A 703/B 731) as a “natural predisposition” (B 22). As Kant

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<sup>76</sup> Kant, *Correspondence*, 10: 270.

<sup>77</sup> Guyer and Wood translate *Heimsuchung* as “afflicted,” while Heidegger in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* as “haunted.”

puts it, rational speculation “does not concern the objective validity of metaphysical judgements, but [rather] our natural disposition to them, and therefore does not belong to the system of metaphysics but to anthropology.”<sup>78</sup> However, simply stating that metaphysics coincides with reason on anthropological grounds - that it is human nature to speculate - is not yet a sufficient demonstration in relation to the threat of indifferentism since it as of yet offers no boundaries on the free-flow of metaphysical opinion. That we *can* speculate is obvious, the problem is in the ungrounded character of that speculation. This means that beyond our natural predisposition for metaphysics – which will remain a given – Kant must demonstrate the *content* of that metaphysics and for what *purposes* it must serve. Kant confirms this more positive intent in the ‘Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic,’ which deals specifically with the speculative ideas of reason: “Everything grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive and consistent with their correct use, if only we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and find out their proper direction” (A 642/ B670). Or, in the *Prolegomena*: “everything that lies in our nature must be originally intended for some useful purpose.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, Kant’s arguments for the necessity of speculative metaphysics are based on two purportedly self-evident truths: that metaphysics is a natural predisposition that everyone undertakes, or has the capacity to undertake; and that this natural predisposition is purposive, it has a particular telic function with respect to other of our capacities.

In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant identifies precisely two domains in which the objects of special metaphysics are necessary. First, metaphysical

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<sup>78</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 362.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

“ideas” are necessary for the “regulation” of the *theoretical* use the faculty of the understanding. And second, they function as necessary postulates for the realization of moral law in *practical* reason.<sup>80</sup> In the former, the purpose of the ideas is oriented towards knowledge of nature, and in the latter towards morality. This coincides, recall, with his assessment of the philosopher who is meant to legislate specifically over these domains. While the purpose of metaphysical ideas differs between these two domains, since they make possible two different sorts of practices, the manner of comportment to these ideas, I will maintain, is near analogous. In both cases, we must *believe* in the ideas of traditional metaphysics since only through such a comportment do they offer a horizon of meaning within which we can take up the practices of scientific inquiry and moral reasoning. I will give reasons for this claim at the end of the section, but will first offer an exposition of how Kant justifies their use for these two purposes.

With respect to theoretical reason, Kant defines the objects of special metaphysics in a more precise sense as “transcendental ideas” or “ideas of reason.”<sup>81</sup> As ideas they express, Kant says, the “totality of the conditional” or that “allness” which incorporate the conditional phenomenal realm within metaphysically unified domains (B379): “The transcendental concept of reason is none other than that of the totality of conditions to a given conditioned thing [...] and because the unconditioned alone makes possible the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 363-364.

<sup>81</sup> Kant’s derives the word ‘ideas’ here from Plato, and indeed claims the later as basically a predecessor of his own view: “Plato noted very well that our power of cognition feels a far higher need than that of merely spelling out appearances according to a synthetic unity in order to be able to read them as experience, and that our reason naturally exalts itself to cognitions that go much too far for any object that experience can give ever to be congruent, but that nonetheless have their reality and are by no means merely figments of the brain” (A 314/ B 370-71). He is particularly impressed by the way in which the ideas for Plato take on a regulative and normative function, that they are “pre-eminently practical,” meant as the formal ground for ordering and legislating appearances (A 314/B 371).

totality of conditions [...] a pure concept of reason in general can be explained through the concept of the unconditioned” (ibid.). (Transcendental ideas are thus distinguished from scientific ideas which generate conditional principles insofar as they are conditional on their application to phenomena given in empirical experience). These ideas are aligned with the domains of special metaphysics: The transcendental doctrine of the Soul, which pertains to the absolute unconditioned unity of the thinking subject (Psychological Ideas); the transcendental science of the World, which pertains to the absolute unconditioned unity of series of conditions of appearance (Cosmological Ideas); and the transcendental cognition of God, which pertains to the absolute unconditioned unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general (Theological Ideas)( B 392).

While transcendental ideas in their dogmatic form are taken to be “extravagant” and “constitutive” of reality, in Kant’s anthropological redefinition they point to “problems” that can be discovered within finite reason *a priori*. They are discovered *a priori* because they are the logical conclusion of speculative thinking, stemming from its constitutive concepts, the categories. As problems, however, they can never be verified empirically, but they can, Kant maintains, nonetheless be proven as necessary postulates for the regulation of the judgments of the understanding, which is itself empirically directed (A 671/B 699). They regulate, Kant says, by uniting “local” “distributive unities” (the various unities of the scientific disciplines, for example) performed by the syntheses of the understanding into totalizing or “collective unities” (A 644/B 672). A rational God, for example, secures the principle of sufficient reason; or the World as an “infinite series” secures our ongoing quest for knowledge. Although no sensible intuition can ever be given in them, the transcendental ideas nonetheless remain in a *mediated*

relation to that intuition and, as such, Kant says, actually achieve *objective reality*, albeit only in this mediated sense. As Kant puts it, the principles of pure reason “will also have objective reality in regard to this object [of experience] yet not so as to determine something in it, but only ... by bringing it as far as possible into connection with the principle of thoroughgoing unity” (A 665-6/B 693-4). Frederick Rauscher helpfully summarizes the connection between the ideas of reason, the understanding, and intuition as follows:

Reason is not constitutive of experience because reason does not determine particular objects of experience [intuitions]. Rather, reason obtains cognitions from the understanding, which are themselves constitutive of experience, and orders them objectively through its own principles, providing a regulative systematicity to them. [...] Thus, in the words of Philip Kitcher, reason is ‘projecting unity of nature’ – that is, neither determining any specific unity nor operating without any connection to the actual order of nature.’<sup>82</sup>

The fact that the transcendental ideas function as necessary pre-conditions for the distributive syntheses of the understanding means that the ideas can assume their transcendently grounded validity. Thought in their linear connection with the understanding and sensibility, in other words, transcendental ideas as the highest principles of reason offer the necessary metaphysical horizon for understanding objects within a coherent system of meaning and purpose. Put directly, they too are necessary conditions of possibility for theoretical experience. Kant thus describes them as the “final aim” and “the completion of the critical business of pure reason” (A 670/B 698) and states their transcendental necessity without equivocation, and in so doing draw out the claim that reason has a natural predisposition towards metaphysics from mere factual

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<sup>82</sup> Frederick Rauscher, “The Appendix to the Dialectic and the Canon of Pure Reason: The Positive Role of Reason,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Pg. 301.

observation to an *a priori* necessity for theoretical judgment: “The transcendental ideas are just as natural to [human reason] as the categories are to understanding” (A 462/B 670).<sup>83</sup>

Indeed, given the strength of Kant’s assessment of their necessity, we might venture the following hypothesis: The theoretical function of the pure forms of human thinking – the categories – for the purposes of determinate knowledge of nature rely on an over-arching speculative commitment of reason with regards to metaphysical principles. Only with some “projected unity of nature” made possible by ideas of reason can determination of particular objects be possible. If this is so, then we might be led to say that the ideas of reason are conditions of possibility for even the systematic coherency of the categories, since the latter are only ever brought into possible relation in acts of judgment, and acts of judgment require a metaphysical horizon that gives them cause to theoretically understand phenomenon. Put otherwise, if the very process of objective determination and synthetic judgment requires a metaphysical horizon, then insofar as the categories only come into relation with one another through such processes of judgment, then they too require transcendental ideas for their proper functioning. Thus,

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<sup>83</sup> Kant explains the basic function of the three transcendental ideas as follows: We must posit *psychological* ideas in order to “connect all appearances, actions, and receptivity of our mind to the guiding thread of our inner experience *as if* the mind were a simple substance that persists in existence with personal identity” (A 673/B 700). On this postulate rests the possibility of the scientific investigation of the self, or psychology. Second, we must posit *cosmological* ideas “so that our inner and outer appearances of nature are understood *as if* nature were infinite in itself and without a first or supreme member” (Ibid.). On this postulate rests the possibility of ever more refined scientific judgements and investigation into nature (A 656/B 684). And finally, with respect to *theological* ideas, “we have to consider everything that might ever belong to the context of possible experience *as if* this experience constituted an absolute unity, but one dependent through and through, and always still conditioned within the world of sense, yet at the same time *as if* the sum total of all appearances had a single supreme and all-sufficient ground outside its range, namely an independent, original, and creative reason, as in relation to which we direct every empirical use of our reason in its greatest extension *as if* the objects themselves had arisen from that original reason” (Ibid.). On this postulate rests the ability for the sciences to assume that nothing given within experience is without reason, and that everything experienced carries the weight of causal necessity (there is systematic “continuity” between concepts) (A 656/B 684).

the two senses of metaphysics mentioned above in the letter to Marcus Herz – the transcendental apparatus of the mind that offers the “stable ground” for judgment and the traditional objects of speculative metaphysics as transcendental ideas – can be understood as *necessarily linked* in their deployment for theoretical reason. Although they are both “metaphysical” in different senses (general and special), they are unified for the theoretical aims of thinking.

How do the same ideas function for Kant’s practical philosophy? In contrast to theoretical reason, which is oriented towards determinate knowledge of nature, practical reason is concerned with the determination of the will in moral choice. In addressing the importance of these ideas for the purposes of morality, it is worth mentioning from the start that in order to get to them we have to pass through what I consider a new classification in the word “metaphysics.” As we will see, moral considerations lead to a rational awareness of a purely formal moral law – the categorical imperative – which is metaphysical in the sense that is derived from reason alone and is untethered from any empirical or contextual directive. Obviously, the moral law is not reducible to special metaphysics, nor to ontology. It does, however, maintain a relationship with both. Thus, in order to get to the ideas of special metaphysics we will have to first pass through Kant’s moral law as a distinct yet connected domain of Kant’s metaphysics, one that he gave particular emphasis to, and also take into account a few important side considerations not yet mentioned, like the question of freedom.

Kant’s moral philosophy is first of all based on the fact that we are capable of “ought” judgments, which express the practical necessity of an action, and that we are

capable of determining our actions or our wills according to such judgments. In the *Groundwork*, he makes a distinction between hypothetical judgments, where I ought to do something as a means to some other end, where the “ought” is conditional on satisfying that end, and unconditional judgments that are immediately ends in themselves no matter the particular outcome, where we are obliged to conform to them by virtue of no other purpose than their own satisfaction.<sup>84</sup> Both of these examples are further distinguished from determinations of the will based on appetite, desire, or feeling, which do not relate to cognition but to the sensory, or “animalistic,” sides of our duplicitous subjectivity. Against both hypothetical judgement and actions based on desire, Kant’s practical philosophy aims to establish a moral principle as an end in itself, as an unconditional. Once established, such a principle could be referred to for the determination of particular or contextual actions, directing us back into the world with confident insight into the moral validity of them. It would, in other words, carry all the weight of duty or obligation. This operation is the same as that in his theoretical philosophy, where pure transcendental concepts, once discovered, establish the right to universality of particular judgements that accord with them. Kant aligns this moral principle with metaphysics and pure philosophy, specifically against the empirically-minded alternatives: “Now the moral law in its purity and genuineness ... is to be sought nowhere else by pure philosophy; hence metaphysics must come first, and without it there can be no moral philosophy at all. That which mixes up these pure principles with empirical ones does not even deserve the name of philosophy.”<sup>85</sup> Such a moral principle

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<sup>84</sup> Kant and Wood, *Practical Philosophy*, 52.

<sup>85</sup> Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, 46.

must also be distinguished from one that would base principles on common sense, which although would similarly lay claim to universality, would also do so on an empirical basis (what everyone knows or what is implied in common empirical experience).

For Kant, the determination of the will in accordance with the pure moral law coincides with his notion of practical freedom. This practical freedom, however, is predicated on an earlier discussion of what Kant calls “transcendental freedom” in the first *Critique*. To get at Kant’s arguments for the necessity of metaphysics for morality, then, we must first treat the question of freedom in these two senses: The first concerns the relation between the thinking subject and the law of causality that governs our experience of phenomenal nature, and the second with determining the will in accordance with rational principles. Because the latter is possible only if the former is, we will start with transcendental freedom. This connection will become especially important later on.

In the first *Critique*, Kant was concerned to show how the law of causality holds for all human experience. Insofar as all of our experiences have a necessary antecedent cause, then that experience can be explained as belonging to the realm of natural necessity. However, he reserved a specific realm of autonomy for the human subject, understood as what he called “transcendental apperception” or “the pure, original, unchanging consciousness” (A 107). This is the pure “I think” that accompanies all my representations in the very act of thinking them. However, because all of our thinking is always directed to some object, we can never actually cognize the subject who is doing the thinking. When we think even ourselves, for example, we render ourselves an object of cognition (‘I am here, sitting at this desk right now’) in the form of how we *appear* to ourselves. And as an appearance or phenomenon, we are necessarily given to ourselves in

the field of causality. If we only had this empirical self-perception to rely on then a substantive sense of freedom would be impossible (contra Hume). But the key point with regards to apperception is that empirical perception cannot exhaustively constitute thinking, since empirical self-perception must always be antecedent to the pure spontaneity of thought itself—our thoughts of ourselves always come too late and never bear immediately on that spontaneity. And, for Kant, because this spontaneity is a transcendental condition for having an experience whatsoever, it must exist even if we cannot perceive it directly. Furthermore, and crucially, because we can never cognize spontaneity directly but only apperceive it transcendently, we must maintain epistemically agnostic towards it with regards to its causal or non-causal status: Because it exists outside the realm of possible experience we have no grounds to say that it is absolutely spontaneous or absolutely conditioned.

This agnosticism is taken as an opening for the first type of freedom, which Kant calls “transcendental freedom” or “cosmological freedom.” As Kant puts it, transcendental freedom is “the faculty of beginning a state from itself, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature” (A 533/ B561). Such a freedom, moreover, “would not stand under any conditions of time, for time is only the condition of appearances and not things in themselves” (A 539/B 567). The very possibility of overcoming the antinomy between causality and freedom rests on his prior distinction between appearances and things in themselves or noumena. As Kant puts it: “If appearances are things in themselves, then freedom cannot be saved” since then *everything* would be causally determined (A 336/ B 564). Freedom then must be noumenal if it is to have any meaning. But because we can

never *experience* noumenal reality but only *think* it, transcendental freedom can only be another regulative *idea* of reason: “Freedom in this signification is a pure transcendental *idea* ... Reason creates the idea of an [absolute] spontaneity, which could start to act from itself, without needing to be preceded by any other cause that in turn determines it to action according to the law of causal connection” (ibid.). Although we have certain clues about our capacity to realize such transcendental freedom, chief among which is the aforementioned character of apperception as spontaneous thought and the fact that reason, as a faculty of pure intelligibility, is capable of postulating ideas without any corresponding object of intuition (A 547/B 575), the idea of transcendental freedom cannot be confirmed as actual since, *qua* idea, it simply offers a regulative horizon that gives us autonomy from causal nature. Thus transcendental freedom must remain, at least at this stage, (a regulatively necessary) possibility.

Now, Kant maintains that this idea of transcendental freedom is nonetheless the condition of possibility for *practical* freedom. He mentions this directly in a few places: “It should be noted that the practical concept of freedom is based on the transcendental idea of freedom [pure spontaneity]” (A 533/B 561). Or, “the abolition of transcendental freedom would also simultaneously eliminate all practical freedom” (A 534/ B 562). The connection between these two domains is straightforward: transcendental freedom as the idea of original causality through spontaneity makes possible the practical ability to *choose* without necessitation from sensible impulses. The power of independent choice presupposes independence of thinking. But this step from transcendental freedom to practical freedom is pivotal, for it is in the latter that we are capable of *actualizing* our transcendental freedom in a way unachievable in theoretical reason, concerned as it is

with knowledge and not action. In this way, practical freedom serves to substantiate the coherency of the idea of transcendental freedom by fulfilling its possibility. If transcendental freedom is possible, in other words, we must be able to create a novel sequence of causes based on purely intelligible principles that we discover outside of nature and within ourselves. This, as is well known, is precisely what Kant thinks is possible in moral reasoning. It is, moreover, the way in which freedom and morality come into coincidence.

As Kant puts it, “If no determining ground of the will other than that universal lawgiving form can serve as a law for it, such a will must be thought as altogether independent of the natural law of appearances [...] namely, causality.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, although we cannot experience our cosmological freedom directly, if we can in fact discover a “universal lawgiving form” and conform our wills to it, then we have sufficient practical grounds to accept ourselves as rationally free agents. Kant thought that such a moral law, in the form of the categorical imperative, was in fact possible, yet required, as Ian Hunter persuasively argues, certain exercises in metaphysical awakening which his moral philosophy is meant to influence. For Hunter, Kant’s practical works can be understood as evidencing Kant’s commitment to generating a metaphysical or spiritual awareness in his readers, a kind of metaphysical “*paideia*,” or spiritual and moral education that “is designed to induce and intensify [in readers and students] the longing to behold metaphysical substances – a pathos which in turn drives the self-purifying exercises of metaphysics as an intellectual ethos.”<sup>87</sup> In establishing hard limits to knowledge in the

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<sup>86</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:29.

<sup>87</sup> Hunter, *Rival Enlightenments*, 281.

first *Critique*, Kant is able to intensify the spiritual quest for beholding epistemically forbidden substances on practical grounds. Indeed, such an epistemic limitation is, as Hunter rightly points out, the condition of possibility for anything like belief at all. Such a process of intellectual and metaphysical purification is achieved, in especially the *Groundwork*, by rooting the demonstration, first, within popular ideas about morality, typically of an entirely empirical or prudential nature where metaphysical awareness is usually only dimly felt, and guiding reason therefrom to the metaphysical principles of moral law. It is through such a process that the sensuous and empirically governed aspect of our subjectivity is shown to be deficient for moral purposes, and the “higher” intellectual and spiritual aspects of our subjectivity can be awakened.

While the relation between freedom and the moral law may appear in a certain sense tautological, since awareness of the moral law is meant to prove our freedom while freedom is required to become aware of the moral law, this mode of understanding their relationship is in fact inappropriate. Following Hunter, if the moral law is approached from a rational *awareness* or *awakening* of a law within as opposed to a logical demonstration of its necessity we can come to *feel* the moral law in its immediacy, as something within us that binds us to a community of intelligences. More precisely, and as Jeanine Grenberg argues, if we take into consideration Kant’s distinction in the *Metaphysics of Morals* between intuition [*Anschauung*] and feeling [*Gefühl*], we can see that awareness of the moral law is not simply rational or logical, but rather involves an affective dimension, a sensory *feeling* that emanates from an immediate awareness of the categorical imperative. Such an intuitive awareness would have to be distinct from

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

intuition in its *empirical* sense. As Grenberg puts it, “The experience of feeling allows something to be given to us sensibly that is not given in sense intuition and which, furthermore, is objectless, pointing only mysteriously to its cause or object.”<sup>88</sup> Kant intimates this also in the *Groundwork* that awareness of the categorical imperative is “closer to feeling.”<sup>89</sup> In this way Kant can say that we have knowledge of the moral law “*in concreto*” without violating his own epistemic constraints: we are confronted with a sensible fact that is non-intelligible yet also non-empirical, yet as sensible confirms itself as concrete, yet nonetheless metaphysical.

Practical freedom follows from this awareness as its condition of possibility, since the fact of the moral law presupposes our freedom to determine our wills according to it. Thus, we can say that, with respect to knowledge of freedom, the demonstration is less tautological as it is transcendental: from the fact of the moral law that we feel immediately, we find its condition of possibility, namely practical freedom, which arises along with such rational awareness. It is for this reason that Kant puts unique emphasis on freedom as the only idea of reason that we can in fact know, albeit in this transcendental sense: “Among all the ideas of speculative reason freedom is the only one the possibility of which we know *a priori*, though without having any insight into it, because it is the condition of the moral law, which we do know.”<sup>90</sup> In the corresponding

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<sup>88</sup> Jeanine Grenberg, *Kant’s Defense of Common Moral Experience: A Phenomenological Account* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 196.

<sup>89</sup> Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, 2 edition (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4:436.

<sup>90</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:4.

footnote, moreover, Kant says: “were there no freedom, the moral law would not be encountered at all in ourselves.”<sup>91</sup>

Now, in order to see how the metaphysical ideas of special metaphysics come into effect in Kant’s practical philosophy, we need to consider the categorical imperative and what it entails. In one formulation, the imperative reads: “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction”<sup>92</sup> This imperative is derived from two basic capacities: First, it is derived from our capacity to transcend particulars and consider ideas that hold for everyone without contradiction, that is, our capacity to at least *think* the noumenal as rational beings. And second, it is derived from our capacity for normative consideration, that is, our capacity for “goodness,” which is demonstrable every time we make a normative choice and direct our will based on *some* maxim. It is towards these two aspects of the categorical imperative – universality and goodness – that lead to the postulates.

The condition of universality means that, insofar as individual wills are able to identify with the categorical imperative as a principle outside any determinate directive, that principle can be seen as universally binding for all subjects who, *qua* reasoners, must beholden to the same law insofar as they have a capacity to discover it.<sup>93</sup> In other words, the formal quality of the moral law allows it to stand outside the contingent directives

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> *Groundwork*, 4: 429.

<sup>93</sup> See, for example: J. B. Schneewind, “Autonomy, Obligation, and Virtue: An Overview of Kant’s Moral Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 309–341.

that separate instrumentally oriented agents and instead unite those wills in a universal “kingdom of ends” of pure intelligible and free wills. Such a hypothetical kingdom unites moral agents within the intelligible world, but without collapsing particular or contingent directives, since the moral law simply offers a transcendental formula or test for the determination of those particular ends. With respect to the condition of goodness, moreover, the inherent normative dimension of practical reason in general implies that all willing subjects already have a natural predisposition towards morality: every action is always done for the benefit of *a* good, though this is typically some merely subjective hypothetical end or a sensible pursuit. For Kant, however, the enlightening project is to transcend these particulars and strive for the “production of the highest good in the world”<sup>94</sup> in alignment with the moral law. The basic starting point, however, is that *some* sense of normativity is either operative or latent in our practical actions, and thus it is simply “fact of reason” that we have an *a priori* sense of morality.

However, we cannot actually achieve complete conformity with the moral law, as it meets a barrier pertaining to our essential nature as *homo duplex*, as entities caught between the lower realm of sensibility and the higher realm of intelligibility, as both epistemically and morally finite. Put simply, the production of the highest good in the world is at odds with our inherent moral incompleteness and fallibility, which plagues us as empirically embedded creatures who are pushed and pulled by this or that desire or contingent directive: “Complete conformity with the will with the moral law is, however, *holiness*, a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any

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<sup>94</sup> *Kant's Practical Philosophy*, 236.

moment of his existence.”<sup>95</sup> Insofar as we are morally incomplete yet nonetheless capable of positing a highest good, then we find ourselves in a kind of moral aporia, caught between, on the one hand, our rational ability to discover and quest after a formal moral law, and on the other, our inability to fully realize that imperative. Thus, according to Kant, we require certain external metaphysical guarantees that would allow us to overcome this aporia and quest after moral perfection despite our constitutive limitations.

It is here – at last – that the metaphysical postulates come into effect. First, in order to overcome the potentially crippling and fatalistic barriers of our own moral finitude, Kant evokes the necessity of believing in the existence of the immortal soul so that we can ensure to ourselves that our finite efforts towards moral law in this life are not in vain, and indeed can continue on indefinitely in a life after the one given on earth.<sup>96</sup> This postulate offers a kind of temporal guarantee that would allow us to overcome the finitude of our own lives and pursue moral perfection with whatever security that belief affords. Second, and as we would expect given the necessity of an immortal soul, we also must believe in the existence of a morally perfect God, that is, a perfectly holy being who is responsible for the creation of a purely intelligible world, securing thereby the possibility of attaining the highest good through participation in that world: “The highest good in the world is possible only insofar as a supreme cause of nature having a causality in keeping with our disposition is assumed.”<sup>97</sup> And finally, awakening to our rational freedom puts us in a particular transcendent relation to the

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 5: 123.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 5:127.

world of causality and empirically based morality, where we can elevate ourselves from it and gain the kind of moral composure that allows us to enact our own moral choices.

Along with awareness of the moral law, then, we come to an awareness of the objects of special metaphysics as necessary objects of belief, which are derivative of the first-order awareness of moral law and practical freedom. Just like the theoretical ideas, then, we can see that God, Soul, freedom, and in a less explicit form, World (which is implied in Freedom, which secures our ability to enact new causal sequences), are once again resuscitated as regulatory principles, though this time for the moral orientation of reason. Freedom and the categorical imperative enjoy a unique status insofar as they are the only (practically) knowable principles.

Now, given our explication of these two domains of metaphysical necessity in Kant's thinking, we should now assess whether or not they are of equal importance for their respective domains. So far, I have situated these two domains of reason on more or less equal footing. But does Kant present them this way? On a cursory glance, we may be lead to answer these questions in the negative, as the relative attention that Kant places on each varies significantly. The regulative use of the transcendental ideas are given only around ten pages of consideration in the first *Critique*, indeed in an appendix to the "Transcendental Dialectic." On the other hand, the general necessity of metaphysical thinking for moral considerations is given robust treatment in all of Kant's practical writings comprising at least three distinct publications (*The Groundwork*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and the *Metaphysics of Morals*). Some commentators are willing to maintain the distinct relevance in practical reason with respect to metaphysics, and there

is good evidence for this view. However, following Frederick Rauscher, I think that it is possible to maintain that the significance are closer than might be suggested by the asymmetry of attention Kant affords them. Establishing this should help us show just what weight Kant put on them with respect to his attempts to establish the necessity of metaphysics.

The demonstration of their proximity turns on their epistemological status, relating to Kant's distinctions between opinion, believing, and knowing. Each of these are modes in which something is "held to be true." *Opinion* has to do with taking something to be true but not having either subjective or objective grounds for its validity. In opinion, I take  $p$  to be true without knowing whether  $p$  is actually the case objectively in nature, *nor* whether  $p$  is based on subjectively necessary conditions. It is worth recalling here that "mere opinion" [*Meinung, doxa*] marked the compartment to metaphysics symptomatic of indifferentism and the proliferation of popular philosophy. To be clear, however, the category of opinion need not be taken in this dogmatic sense (dogma is etymologically linked to the Greek word *doxa*), but rather might include more modest *hypothetical* opinions, as in "I think  $p$  is the case, but I am not yet sure."

*Belief* [*Glauben*] refers to taking something to be true on purely subjective grounds, where "subjective" is taken not in the colloquial sense of " $p$  is true only for me because I think it's true," but rather in the universal sense, referring to that which conforms to universally shared faculties of the mind across all rational beings. With belief, I take  $p$  to be true based on the fact that conviction towards  $p$  is rooted in the character of my subjectivity and its natural ends, yet where  $p$  is not demonstrable objectively. As Kant puts it,

The expression of belief is an expression of modesty from an objective point of view, but at the same time of the firmness of confidence in a subjective one. ... The word “belief,” however, concerns only the direction that an idea gives me and the subjective influence on the advancement of my actions of reason that holds me fast to it, even though I am not in a position to give an account of it from a speculative point of view. (A 827/B 855)

Rauscher nicely summarizes this as: “Believing thus has reference to cognitive faculties but not to any object,” and thus has an entirely *immanent*, i.e. subjective, necessity.<sup>98</sup>

And finally, *knowledge* [*Wissen*] pertains to a claim that is of both subjective and objective validity, those that satisfy the subjective *a priori* features of thinking in correspondence with objects actually given in experience. I know something to be true when *p* is confirmed in experience and also grounded in the rational structure of all thinking beings, making it true for everyone. Of the three, only knowledge is *apodictic*, that is, “universally and objectively necessary.”<sup>99</sup>

The relevant category with respect to both theoretical ideas and practical postulates is of course that of belief, as neither ideas of reason nor practical postulates can be said to have any objective validity – no object is ever given in them and thus cannot be objects of knowledge – yet both are rooted in the subjective nature of the universally shared faculty of reason, and thus must hold for all subjects: “In the transcendental use of reason [...] to have an opinion is of course too little, but to know is also too much” (A 823/B 851). This would suggest, then, that insofar as both practical reason and theoretical reason require a transcendental use of reason, then in both cases our comportment is the same—we *must believe* in metaphysical first principles in each case.

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<sup>98</sup> Rauscher, “The Appendix to the Dialectic and the Canon of Pure Reason,” Pg. 308. See also: Andrew Chignell, “Belief in Kant,” *Philosophical Review* 116, no. 3 (2007): 323–60.

<sup>99</sup> Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, 571.

However, we can note two complications. First, Kant complicates such an easy alignment of theoretical ideas and practical postulates along the lines of belief in the Doctrine of Method where he mentions that belief is only appropriate in a “practical relation,” and goes on to single out morality as its only example, suggesting that what is meant by “practical relation” refers exclusively to his moral philosophy: “Only in a practical relation, however, can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true be called believing. This practical aim is either that of skill or of morality, the former of arbitrary and contingent ends, the latter for absolutely necessary ends” (A 823/B 851). As we have seen, contingent belief for the purposes of skill are ruled out of court for their arbitrariness, and thus belief in its strongest and most enlightened sense cannot refer to it. Thus it would seem that, at the very least, the strong sense of belief applies to moral philosophy over theoretical philosophy. Soon after this remark, however, Kant goes on to assert, in apparent contradiction, that the theoretical and regulative use of the idea of God is “an *analogue* of practical judgments, where taking them to be true is aptly described by the word *belief*” (A 825/B 853). Theoretical judgments are situated as analogues to practical ones insofar as they both require belief, but are not identical since they stem from different sources. What can we make of these countervailing descriptions? Rauscher suggests that in order to overcome this tension we simply need to understand the reference to “practical relation” in the first quotation “in a broad sense that includes the practice of science.”<sup>100</sup> That is, if what Kant means by “practical relation” is not considered in the specific sense as pertaining to what we commonly understand as Kant’s moral considerations, but rather includes the practice of theoretic/epistemic investigation

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<sup>100</sup> Rauscher, “The Appendix to the Dialectic and the Canon of Pure Reason,” 308.

as well, then we can ameliorate the contradiction and give precedence to the latter of the previous two quotations, making possible our assertion that for Kant both theoretical and practical reason require a belief in the principles of traditional metaphysics. Believing would apply to both theoretical ideas and practical postulates as the transcendental principles that guide and influence “practice” in both domains. Thus, from the point of view of the manner in which we “take things to be true,” the regulative ideas of reason and the practical postulates would have an analogous functions in their respective domains, despite the asymmetry of attention that Kant gives them.

The second complication is that, if we grant the acceptability of the concept of belief with respect to both the practices of theoretical and moral reasoning, might there be a further distinction in the *type* of belief pertinent to each domain, a distinction that might help in accounting for the differences in Kant’s manner in presenting them? In describing the analogous character of the ideas of reason for theoretical reason, Kant calls them “doctrinal beliefs” (A 825/B 853) and gives the example of the necessity of believing in God for the purposes of knowledge of nature. More precisely, since purposive unity is so important a condition for the undertaking of rational investigation into the causes of nature, and since “experience liberally supplies examples of it,” we should not hesitate in presupposing – in the manner of doctrinal belief – a highest author that guarantees that purposive unity: “I know of no other condition for this unity that could serve me as a clue for the investigation of nature except insofar as I presuppose that a highest intelligence has arranged everything in accordance with the wisest ends” (A 826/B 854). Doctrinal belief in this case is “*contingent*” on the recognition of purposive unity in nature, but since its efficacy repeatedly catches out in the actual experience of nature and helps guide

our knowledge of it, “it would be too little if I called this merely having an opinion, but rather in this theoretical relation it can be said that I firmly believe in God” (ibid.).

Despite the strength of this statement, however, Kant then concedes that there is “something unstable” about merely doctrinal belief because “one is often put off from it by difficulties that come up in speculation, although to be sure one inexorably returns to it again” (ibid.). I take Kant to mean here that there is kind of internal antagonism within the theoretical *attitude* between believing and knowing, that the instability towards doctrinal belief is rooted in the countervailing verificationist comportment of the theoretical reasoner.

Kant then distinguishes moral belief against doctrinal belief. In moral belief, as we saw, Kant maintains that the postulates are construed as “absolutely necessary” based on immediate awareness of the moral law (A 828/B 856). With morality, we come to “moral certainty” of the existence of God and a future life that is purely subjective, but that nonetheless binds us to other subjects capable of the same metaphysical awareness (A 829/B 857). In other words, moral law necessarily implies acceptance to the postulates, and thus gain a stronger veracity than doctrinal belief, where it seems Kant is more willing to concede the ideas derivative, or at least reduced, status with respect to questions of knowledge.

While Kant is clearly offering a distinction between the strength of the two types of belief, however, I would suggest that even though doctrinal belief is “weaker” than moral belief this does not mean that it is not always-already operative in practices of knowledge. This “always already” character would point to something like a *tacit* belief that underlies these practices. I think Kant recognized this insofar as he understood that

speculative reason, in the form of transcendental ideas, still bears immanently on the understanding as its supervening guide. It is worth considering, then, that the real distinction between theoretical and moral belief plays not on the level of certainty generated in each domain, since both are subjectively valid and necessary, but rather with respect to the attitude or comportment taken to them, and the relative explicitness each requires. For example, a doctrinal belief may be operative but nonetheless tacit or presupposed. When it is made explicit, then it runs up against the aforementioned tension between the theoretical attitude and the possible validity of the belief, creating a kind of attitudinal aporia, an “instability.” In moral belief, however, we consciously hold up of the idea of God as a necessary postulate in a totality of metaphysical awareness that includes the moral law, freedom, and a future life: “The belief in God and another world is so interwoven with my moral disposition that I am in as little danger of ever surrendering the former as I am worried the latter can ever be torn away from me” (A 829/B 857).

Situating both theoretical ideas and practical postulates in accordance with belief is indeed significant for our purposes, as it allows us to unify the scientific aims of the first *Critique* and the moral aims of the second in a heightened practical significance, where practical is now understood in the broad sense. If indeed we must believe in God, Soul and World for both science and morality, then we cannot simply wave away either as an empty logical postulate for the purposes of theoretical consistency, or as an insignificant addendum to the sober empirical work of objective determination. To have a *tacit* belief is still a belief with consequences. We might consider, then, the internal relationship between Kant’s famous guiding questions: What can I know? What ought I

do? And what might I hope for? The first of these of course refers to the subject of the first *Critique*, the second question to the second *Critique*, and both are united in metaphysical horizon of the last question. Only by directing our hope in the existence of the objects of traditional metaphysics can our pursuits of knowledge and morality sustain their enlightened potential.

These principles of reason, it mustn't be forgotten, are established upon Kant's initial subsumption of *metaphysics generalis* into transcendental philosophy in the first *Critique*, as that which establishes the general transcendental architecture from which reason gains its limitations and possibilities. Here, his ontology is expressed by, we learned, an "analytic of the pure understanding," the categories. These too must be considered an integral part of Kant's arguments for metaphysical necessity, since they are by no means given by empirical conditions but are *a priori* conditions for our experience of nature, playing a predominant role in relation to the theoretical ideas of reason. Indeed, while they exist *a priori* as latently operative in any experience whatsoever, their proper use must be *learned* for the purposes of "sound judgment" and apodictic certainty. In a similar way, we must awaken ourselves to them.

Accordingly, then, we can re-unite with our central theme and understand more fully Kant's attempt to intervene in the context of indifferentism. We can see how Kant's arguments for metaphysical necessity in both theoretical and practical reason might stand against the dual features of the problem of indifferentism, "the mother of chaos and the night in the sciences." Yet their necessity is not intended as a relapse into externally imposed dogmatism, but rather are taken to be secured in the universal nature of the subject, even in its "ordinary understanding," and realized through each reasoners

capacity for their realization. In this sense, Kant's metaphysics gains immanent traction on the public he seeks to address (at least philosophically), yet point beyond the common understanding into its heightened potential, a potential dangerously precarious (to his mind) in that public. And if we take this internal generation, as it appeared especially in his moral philosophy, as corresponding to a kind of metaphysical *paideia* or spiritual awakening, there can be no question of tedium and uselessness symptomatic of prior metaphysics.

#### **IV. Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter I have tried to show that indifferentism constitutes a viable vantage point from which to understand Kant's critical philosophy, one that embeds him specifically in the socio-historical context of the age of criticism, the waning authority of traditional metaphysics, and the concomitant emergence of popular philosophy and "immature" reason. I then tried to show that this context sets a few basic requirements on Kant's philosophical response to it. Accounting for Kant's tenuous orientation towards the principle of popularity, I then focused on Kant's method as it attempts to establish the capacities and limits of human cognition against the problem of assumption symptomatic of pre-critical metaphysics. Only in this way can he gain the *right* to address the context of indifferentism by establishing a type of thinking outside the sisyphic polemics of dogmatism and scepticism without giving up on the metaphysical claims of reason. And second, given that he has sufficiently discovered a novel critical/transcendental "path," Kant must demonstrate precisely how and for what purposes metaphysics is necessary for finite reason, since it is only by establishing a renewed non-dogmatic metaphysics that

the unregulated sphere of opinion can find its boundaries and be directed to its highest ends. This is only achieved if such a metaphysics is located within the “natural predisposition” of the common faculty of reason. Such a rational awareness of metaphysical responsibility is the marker of freedom, for it is only in and through reason that we find the non-empirical (and a-temporal) source from which we can direct our thought and action beyond the chaos of sensible conditions. (For a visual representation of this, see Appendix, first half of figure 1).

These requirements are structurally connected: Kant’s philosophical response to indifferentism is structurally dependent on his transcendental philosophy as the ground-laying for his metaphysics.

By claiming the specifically *rational* character of metaphysical necessity, Kant can go on to claim that those who defend an indifferentistic position, the various “*Popularphilosophen*,” rest on an insurmountable performative contradiction: “For it is pointless to affect indifference with respect to [metaphysical] enquiries, to whose object human nature cannot be indifferent. [...] The so-called indifferentists, to the extent that they think anything at all, always unavoidably fall back into metaphysical assertions, which they yet professed so much to despise” (Kant 1999: A x). Combating this performative contradiction, in other words, is what the positive anti-indifferentistic aim of critique is all about: By harnessing the power of the age of criticism Kant attempts to redirect it towards the immanent necessity of metaphysics dwelling within each human qua reasoner, hoping thereby to dam the unregulated chaos by guiding reason to its own highest ends.

I would like to conclude this chapter by way of a summary meditation that links the foregoing to the more general stage of indifferentism. In a marginal note from his pre-critical writings, Kant expresses his anxieties and aims by way of metaphor:

Everything goes past like a river and the changing taste and the curious shapes of men make the whole game uncertain and delusive. Where do I find my fixed points in nature, which cannot be moved by man, and where I can indicate the markers by the shore to which we ought to adhere?

This passage wonderfully captures, I believe, Kant's stance towards the world around him at the time before the first *Critique* (1764), a sentiment that gets reiterated in the opening narrative of that work discussed at the opening of this chapter and is carried through the rest of his critical thinking. When Kant speaks here of the changing tides of the river, the shifting tastes and shapes of men, he is referring to a world in which European civilization is slowly losing its mores, customs, and its faith in reason, replacing these with opinion and uncertainty. We imagine Kant spinning in chaotic whirlpools as he glides downstream, fixing his eyes for fleeting moments on the stability of the shore hoping that in this perpetual movement there might be some guiding light to stabilize the careening ship and take it to land. As we have seen, this is the enlightening light of reason, which not only holds the power of guiding us to land but also offers the hope of cultivating a stable enough ground for a widening of the path of critique, that path made just for rational humans. The philosophical metaphor of the river is a popular one, and for good reason: On a river we are constantly navigating change and can easily sense that we are losing control, simply being swept along as we move past apparently fixed points without ever being fixed ourselves. In longing for respite from the river, for example, Kant here pits himself against Heraclites or Zeno, both famous for the same metaphor to illuminate a world not of stability but of change, flux, and becoming. It is the

concept of indifferentism, I think, that most adequately captures the metaphor of the river, and I believe that both the concept of indifferentism and the metaphor of the river point directly towards what would come to be named nihilism by Kant's contemporary Friedrich Jacobi, and later by Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger.

In what is to come, I am searching for a post-Kantian critical response to the same (or at least very similar) problematic – indifferentism or metaphysical indifference – in the work of Martin Heidegger. While Heidegger's way is certainly not the only viable way to call into question the Kantian system, I am drawn to Heidegger's interpretation of Kant for the simple reason that he presents a critical reading that so carefully undermines the metaphysical implications of his transcendental philosophy by calling into question the coherency of its most integral structural foundations. As we saw, the most integral of these foundations lies within Kant's transcendental architecture of the human subject, his ontology. If we can show this as somehow lacking, or that fails the security it requires, then the superstructure built atop it would too begin to sway under its own weight. I take Heidegger to do this, yet in a way that does not give up on some of the central aspects of critical philosophy nor on the question of the inner possibility of metaphysics. Moreover, and as we will see, not only is Heidegger a powerful critic of Kant, but he also develops his own sense of indifference within the horizon of the pivotal Kantian question: how is metaphysics possible?

## *Chapter Two*

### **From Kant to Heidegger: The Problem of Foundation**

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In this chapter, I want to take up Kant's philosophical response to metaphysical indifference at its root, i.e. at the level of its grounding, through the lens of Heidegger's reading of Kant. My wager is the following: If Kant does not achieve a stable ground and fails the condition of non-assumption, then his philosophy lacks the entitlement it seeks, failing its own requirement. His philosophy would then fall to dogmatism, albeit of an anthropological variety. Such a dogmatism would impede critical philosophy's own quest for immanence and would regenerate indifference because the theory of the subject as well as its "natural" aims would remain external or derivative to the being from which they are meant to emanate. Through Heidegger, I hope to show how Kant's response to the problem of indifference is indeed limited with respect to these requirements. The crucial feature of this demonstration, however, is not primarily that Kant fails his own requirements and lacks the right to intervene in the context that worries him so, as this simply presupposes the role of philosophy as legislative, an aspect of Kant's philosophy that is highly questionable. Rather, it is positively oriented toward an alternative basis for metaphysics than the one Kant offers, one that proves more sensitive to the dynamics of human experience and its relation to the world.

Admittedly, this chapter is dense, moving through some intricate conceptual material and doing so fairly quickly. While I think there is much at stake in it with regards to the central theme of indifference, it does not deal with indifference itself, but rather some of the background conditions that allow Kant and Heidegger to come into

proximity. The question that needs to be kept in mind throughout, towards which this chapter is directed, is: What is the *basis* for Kant's metaphysics, and how does Heidegger call into question that basis for the purpose of *another* basis?

Indeed, although I will be using Heidegger's thinking as a means to trouble the Kantian response to metaphysical indifference (and eventually the Kantian meaning of indifference itself), it is crucial to note that Heidegger's relationship with Kant is not straightforwardly negative. In fact there are important points of convergence, which Heidegger acknowledges forthrightly. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, for example, Heidegger (in)famously interprets Kant as anticipating some of his own most significant insights by carrying out a proto fundamental ontology, a questioning into the possibility of metaphysics from the perspective of finite temporal transcendence. Heidegger will also find worth in Kant's thesis that "being is not a real predicate," which he returns to throughout his writings,<sup>101</sup> since contained in this thesis is the notion that being (*da Sein*) emerges in its distinction from beings (*das Seiende*) in and through the "transcendental" character of human finitude. It is for this reason, furthermore, that he will in his early work appropriate the Kantian term "transcendental" itself to describe the disclosure of being. As he puts it in *Being and Time*, being is "the *transcendens* pure and simple," and "every disclosure of being as the *transcendens* is transcendental knowledge. Phenomenological truth is *veritas transcendentalis*."<sup>102</sup> And because Heidegger understands himself as carrying along the project of fundamental ontology intimated by

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<sup>101</sup> For example, Heidegger turns to Kant's thesis at least as early as 1927 in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and as late as his 1961 in the essay *Kant's Thesis about Being*.

<sup>102</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Revised edition (Albany: State Univ of New York Pr, 2010).

Kant in this way, he will also understand his work as *critical* “in the original sense and true tendency” of the word.<sup>103</sup> By this he means that, properly understood, a critical philosophy is a “transcendental science” insofar as the latter distinctly questions into the possibility of the emergence of being from beings, the source of metaphysics. Thus, far from being unequivocally opposed to Kant, Heidegger finds reason to find himself carrying on the mantle of critique and transcendental philosophy in his own way.

Understanding critique as involving (though not exclusively) a questioning into the possibility of metaphysics adds a heightened significance to this chapter’s focus on the Kantian ground-laying itself, whether it is sufficient, and whether it is in fact stable enough for his metaphysics of reason or if it necessarily must lead this way.<sup>104</sup> Thus in what follows I attempt to navigate precisely where it is in Kant’s ground-laying that Heidegger exposes their points of convergence and divergence. Preliminarily, we can say that there are two options vying for the authoritative ground in Kant’s transcendental philosophy. The first is the pure subject of the “I think.” This option leads Kant to posit an absolute presence – transcendental apperception – that functions to unify representations as belonging to a single and universally identical thinking being. Heidegger often stresses the shortcomings of this dominant aspect of Kant’s philosophy,

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<sup>103</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter (Indiana University Press, 1988), 17.

<sup>104</sup> To be clear, however, while this type a critical scrutiny which questions into the ground has a particular connection with Kant’s attempt – insofar as both Kant and Heidegger see this ground-laying as beginning with an analytic of the finite “subject” or Dasein – it is also central to metaphysics as such. As Heidegger puts it: “the problem of ground is bound up with the central questions of metaphysics” (Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil, 1 edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55). According to Heidegger, Western metaphysics establishes itself always on some grounding principle. For Kant, and refashioning the critical orientation of figures like Descartes, the ground was not primarily a logical ground as it was for the rationalists, or simple empirical experience as for the empiricists, but rather the character of human experience as transcendental synthesis. It is Kant’s unique attempt in this direction that Heidegger finds compelling, for reasons that will be shown throughout this chapter.

as in *On the Essence of Human Freedom* or in passing remarks in *Being and Time*, which we will refer to throughout. The second is the time-forming projecting unity of the transcendental imagination. This option, less acknowledged and unique to Heidegger's interpretation in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, leads him to identify a grounding "Ab-Grund" or non-ground within the Kantian architectonic, an "Ab-Grund" with the power of destabilizing the authority of reason, presence, and the Cartesian image of the subject *qua* knower. And if, as Heidegger says in *On the Essence of Ground*, "the question concerning the essence of ground is the question concerning the truth of Being itself,"<sup>105</sup> then there is much at stake in determining which of the two options in the Kantian system is allowed to flourish, for it is within the truth of Being that expresses the possibilities of human historical existence.

In the first two sections we will use these differences as a blueprint: The first section will be dedicated to summarizing some of the central features of Kant's transcendental account of cognition along the standard account, corresponding to Heidegger's negative comments as they appear in *On the Essence of Human Freedom* and *Being and Time*. In the next section, I will focus on Heidegger's positive reconstruction of Kant's thinking in line with fundamental ontology and the pivotal role of the transcendental imagination in an effort to problematize the first approach. In the final section, I will discuss how the substantive differences that emerge in the previous two sections may relate to methodological differences, focusing especially on the two thinkers responses to the question of presupposition identified in the last chapter as integral to critical philosophy.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 98.

## I. The Grounds for the Authority of Reason: Apperception and Temporality in the Kantian Ground-Laying

Over the course of the following section, I want to keep in view the following passage found in *On the Essence of Human Freedom*. The passage gives us a framework for understanding Heidegger's criticisms of Kant's central presuppositions. Referring to Kant's proofs for the 'Analogies of Experience,' which we will deal with in a bit, Heidegger says:

We must make these proofs as genuinely transparent so that we can see the foundation upon which they rest, a foundation uncritically presupposed by Kant. In our case it is the conception of time on the one hand, and the conception of the understanding on the other hand. More fundamentally, it is the conception of the relationship between time and the 'I think' (understanding). Still more precisely, it is the uncritical and unclarified juxtaposition of an uncritical approach to the essence of man as finite subject. That this inner structural connection between time and the 'I' as 'I think' (understanding), thus also the fundamental relationship between them as the essence of the relationship between subject and object, remains unclarified, in short that transcendence is not sufficiently determined to really become a problem – this is the basic reason for the substantive difficulty of understanding e.g. Kant's proofs of the Analogies.<sup>106</sup>

Setting aside for the moment Heidegger's reference to the proofs of the analogies, there are two preliminary things worth noting about this passage that will help orient the following discussion. The first is the recurring language of "critique" throughout. In the last chapter we said that critique must satisfy a condition of non-assumption, and here we find Heidegger claiming that Kant is not sufficiently critical precisely because he has uncritically allowed presuppositions into his grounding of the finite subject. The second thing worth noting is just the structural connection between the specific presuppositions that Heidegger identifies. In a continuous series, we are made aware of the following: (1)

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<sup>106</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, New edition edition (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), 119-120.

the relationship between time and the understanding, (2) an uncritical approach to the essence of man, (3) the relationship between the subject and the object, and finally (4) to transcendence.<sup>107</sup> In accordance with this series, we will begin and focus this section by summarizing the first of these points, the relationship between time and the “I think” in the manner Kant presents it, while also keeping in mind that, first, this relationship unfolds to incorporate the other elements of Kant’s presuppositions, and second, that this relationship itself will be problematized in the next section in the context of Heidegger’s positive reading in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Through this positive reading, we should gain a more thorough view of these presuppositions and their connection.

*i. Time as the Present: From ‘Experience’ to the Deduction*

In dealing with the relationship between time and the “I think” of the understanding, it is worth rehearsing Kant’s concept of experience [*Erfahrung*], since it is one of his most general concepts, and working our way in from there. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant defines experience as “the synthetic connection of appearances (perceptions) in consciousness, so far as this connection is necessary,” where this synthesis is “the product of the sense and the understanding.”<sup>108</sup> The synthetic connection of appearances is comprised of the functions of the relevant faculties, which (for now) include sensibility and understanding. Sensibility passively receives intuitions, or empirical givens, that offer the content or matter of cognition. By itself, however,

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<sup>107</sup> Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Fifth Edition, Enlarged*.

<sup>108</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena: To Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science with Kant’s Letter to Marcus Herz*, trans. James W. Ellington, 2nd edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co Inc, 2002), 305.

intuition alone cannot give us full experience, since without recognizing our intuitions we would not have consciousness or awareness that we are in fact experiencing something. This would be no experience at all. Thus, according to Kant, experience requires judgment [*Urteilkraft*], or “the uniting of representations in a consciousness” in the understanding.<sup>109</sup> Judgments of experience, moreover bring representations to consciousness through pure concepts “which determine the form of judging in general.”<sup>110</sup> As distinguished from empirical concepts (like “chair”) pure concepts are the “categories” that constitute the faculty of the understanding, and function as the logical and transcendental forms of all possible judgments. Kant claims to discover twelve, falling under the headings of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Modality.<sup>111</sup> It is through these *a priori* concepts as the transcendental conditions of possibility for of all judgments, moreover, that those judgments – so long as they are sound - can achieve objective validity and necessity and take on the status of knowledge, since they would hold for all thinking subjects endowed with the same categories. Indeed, it is on their basis that Kant’s much coveted synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible (judgments that amplify concepts by adding a predicate not contained in the subject, without relying on experience for proof, i.e. induction), for one can now combine concepts that do not analytically imply one another, like “matter” and “persistence,” into a necessary

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid..

<sup>110</sup> Ibid..

<sup>111</sup> In the *Prolegomena*, Kant makes an important distinction between judgments of perception and judgments of experience. Judgments of perception are subjectively valid, and apply to one’s subjective perception of a state of affairs like “The room is warm, sugar sweet, and wormwood nasty” (Ibid., 299). These can never become judgments of experience because they refer to tastes or preferences, which can never yield objective validity. The priority for Kant’s theoretical philosophy are judgments of experience, since only they can carry the weight of necessity and universality.

proposition: e.g. “In all alterations the quantity of matter remains unaltered” (B 17). In this particular case, it is the category of “substance” doing the work, as we will see shortly.

The capacity for judgment emanates from the pure “I think” (*Ich denke*), or as we said earlier, “transcendental apperception.” This is the “pure, original, unchanging consciousness. [...] The numerical unity of which grounds all concepts *a priori*” (A 107). It is that which “must be able to accompany all other [representations] and which in all consciousness is one and the same” (B 131). In judgment, we think objects or representations, and the unity of the thinking subject allows us to locate these objects as belonging to a single consciousness, as belonging to *me*. Put otherwise, as a unity, pure apperception grounds the possibility of *uniting* them in acts of judgment: “I find that a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the unity of apperception” (B 141). Without this original unity of consciousness all representations would remain “dispersed” and “without significance.”

Thus, between the unorganized intuitions of sensibility on one side, and the pure subject of categorically determined thought on the other, we have a basic image of *homo duplex* as a categorically governed cognizer of intuitions. It remains to be seen, however, how something that is in itself devoid of empirical content (the categories) be brought into an *internal* and *necessary* relationship with something full of content but without inherent logical form (intuition)? This question in fact points to the heart of the first *Critique*, the transcendental deduction of the categories, and Kant’s solution remains one of his most lasting contributions to post-Kantian thought. He said that the problem, “costed him the most... effort” (A xvi) and in a famous letter to Marcus Herz in 1772,

summarized it in his own words: “If intellectual representations rest upon our inner activity, when comes the agreement that they are to have with the [sensible] objects that, after all, are by no means produced by them?”<sup>112</sup> In other words, by what *right* (*Quid Juris*) do concepts apply to intuitions? Kant would call this “the most difficult task ever undertaken in the service of metaphysics.”<sup>113</sup>

Kant’s solution to this problem lies in his novel account of time. Kant defines time as “a necessary representation that grounds *all* intuitions [...] in it alone is the actuality of appearance possible” (A31/B46). Unlike space, which is solely the “the ground of *outer* intuitions” (A24/B38), time is the ground of both inner and outer intuition, inhering in both external objects and our inner stream of consciousness and changing mental states. As the pure form of inner sense, time forms the common medium shared by all the faculties, and thus it is only through this common medium that they can be brought into relation. Time itself is that “substratum” which is permanent across all representations, and thus we must look to time for their possible union (A 182/B 224). As Kant puts it,

Wherever our representations may arise, whether through the influence of external things or as the effect of inner causes, whether they have originate *a priori* or empirically as appearances – as modifications of the mind the nevertheless belong to inner sense, and as such all of our cognitions are in the end subjected to the formal condition of inner sense, namely time, as that in which they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relations. (A 98-99)

The question becomes, then, how are the faculties understood temporally, and how are they temporally synthesized such that intuitions can be brought into internal and

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<sup>112</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, ed. Arnulf Zweig, 1 edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 133.

<sup>113</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, 6; 260.

necessary connection with concepts? One way into this question is to recount the basic structure of the “Transcendental Deduction.” We will use as our guide the A edition of that chapter, but it is worth noting that the B edition makes significant alterations in the structure of argumentation and, for many, in the content of those arguments as well (despite the fact that Kant portrays the difference as simply one of clarity) (B xxxviii).

In the ‘A’ deduction, Kant explains a three-fold synthesis by which intuitions are united with concepts, culminating in the unity of the thinking subject. In general, this process is meant as a demonstration of possible experience, and that we only in fact experience when we all the syntheses are completed. Only in the final synthesis of the understanding is the manifold of intuition unified in a single consciousness and the conditions of experience satisfied. Thus the three syntheses occur as a totality and single process, which Kant distinguishes through an act of transcendental analysis of its constituent parts and their function. Although Kant attributes the phrase ‘Transcendental Deduction’ as the title of a particular chapter in the first *Critique*, the deduction in question – how the *a priori* categories deduced in the Transcendental Logic (the “metaphysical deduction”) apply necessarily to intuitions in acts of cognition – actually extends beyond that chapter in both directions: Beginning in the ‘Transcendental Aesthetic’ and ‘Transcendental Logic’ and ending not until we see the principled application of the categories in their specificity to objects in the ‘Analytic of Principles.’ So while we will deal with the ‘A’ deduction in its specificity, we will carry it on into a discussion of the Analytic of Principles, with specific attention to the ‘Analogies of Experience’ (which, recall, are referred to by Heidegger in our opening passage) to gain a

fuller, though not exhaustive, sense of precisely how Kant completes the deduction and the relation between time and the understanding.

The first level of synthesis belongs to sensibility. The faculty of sensibility passively synthesizes the manifold of intuition into independent moments. Sensibility “apprehends” the manifold and gives it a basic temporal unity in advance of cognitive or conceptual identification. The mind “distinguishes the time in the succession of impressions on one another; for as *contained in one moment* no representation can ever be anything other than absolute unity” (A99) (original emphasis). In other words, the synthesis of apprehension in the faculty of sense offers a minimal unification of the raw sense-data or impressions into singular yet unconnected temporal unities (A<sub>T1</sub>|B<sub>T2</sub>|C<sub>T3</sub> ...). They are the ever-fleeting instants of an elementary synthesis. However, if judgments about empirical intuitions are to be possible based on pure concepts that lie *a priori* to those intuitions, and insofar as this level of synthesis is restricted to instantaneities that pass *in* time, then there is required a further synthesis that groups together instants *over* time: “If I were to lose the preceding representations [...] from my thoughts and not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones, then no whole representation nor any of the previous thoughts could ever arise again” (A102). Thus, to account for the fact that we *can* make such empirical judgments we require some further synthesis that allows for us to reproduce intuitions.

Kant introduces a second-order synthesis intermediate between sensibility and the “I think” of the understanding. The inclusion of this synthesis augments our earlier definition of experience as a synthesis between understanding and sensibility, since it is carried out by a third faculty, namely the imagination. Kant calls this the synthesis of

“reproduction.” The imagination reproduces the moments of sensibility and unifies them in a broader horizon of time, holding together “images” or “schemas” in the present. The passively formed moments of the first synthesis are reproduced by the imagination such that intuitions in the past can be associated with what is given in the present ( $A_{T1} \rightarrow A_{T2}$ ). I am able, for example, to associate my experiences of the sun rising in the past with the same phenomena in the present by recalling those past experiences in the imagination.<sup>114</sup> In this way, Kant says, the “first synthesis of apprehension is inseparably combined with the second synthesis of reproduction” (A102). However, that we can reproduce previous apprehensions in the imagination is not yet sufficient for experience, for it is not yet clear that we acknowledge, first, that images do in fact relate to the intuitions from which they are derived, and second, that the images are actually unified in consciousness. Kant describes the need for a third synthesis like this:

Without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representation would be in vain. For it would be a new representation in our current state, which would not belong to the act through which it had been gradually generated, and its manifold would never constitute a whole, since it would lack the unity that only consciousness can gain for it. (A103)

Only through conceptual recognition, then, can the prior syntheses of the imagination be fully unified as belonging to a single consciousness, and thus conceptual recognition is required to complete the synthetic account of experience. The unity of the “I think,”

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<sup>114</sup> This example of memory is not the only function of the imagination. In this case, the image exhibited in recollection is derivative of a prior sensation (*exhibitio derivitava*). But the imagination is also capable of producing an original image (*exhibitio originaria*) not given in sensibility. While the image is original in the sense of never given, it must also be freely comprised by sensed intuitions. For example, while I have never seen a dragon, I can bring one to mind. But I have seen scales, drawings, fire, and so on. In addition to the reproductive power of the imagination, then, this is the productive power of the imagination. This element of the productive imagination was not explicitly drawn out in the considerations of the first *Critique* but, Heidegger argues, remained latent there (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 92).

expressed as recognition in judgment, functions as that identity that grounds the otherwise dispersed and unconnected manifold of intuition and the schema of the imagination, and as governed by the categories, it necessarily recognizes the images of the imagination according to the rules of the understanding. It thus serves two basic functions. On the one hand, it is the subjective centre that makes possible the unification of the temporally dispersed stream of consciousness and the spatio-temporal manifold in a single consciousness. And on the other hand, as rule governed, it grounds the categories as belonging to the pure subject of thought. Insofar as the unity of apperception is simply the spontaneity of categorical thought, then the unifying capacity of the categories is essentially linked to the primary unity of the pure subject. Thus, and revisiting the last example above, the final synthesis not only allows me to recognize the recurrence of the sun rising in the form of a conceptual judgment, e.g. “the sun rises,” it would also allow me to assert the fact of its rising with universality and necessity, that “the sun rises” follows the rules of *a priori* categories, like causality, and thus can be explained as a necessary phenomenon of nature.

So far we have seen three syntheses that bring intuition to judgment. The general view of temporality has been barely concealed, since it is obvious that Kant conceives experience as a bringing-to-present of intuitions for the purpose of conceptual recognition, judgment, and ultimately knowledge: Experience represents “The relation in the existence of the manifold [sensibility] not as it comes to be constructed in the time of being perceived [instantly] but as it exists objectively in time” (B219). And to bring the manifold to objectivity in time, it must be synthesized through the imagination and judgment in the present.

*ii. Time as the Present: Categories of Relation and Apperception*

If the account of experience as it is offered in the A deduction amounts to a bringing to present the manifold, what roles do the categories play in particular with regard to this account of experience, and how do they help solidify the overall project of securing apodictic knowledge of nature? This is deeply significant, for the unity of apperception is *fundamentally constituted* by the categories. Better, it is expressed by them since they are implied in every thought. Thus if we want to understand the relation between time and the “I think,” we must give some explanation of the way in which the categories determine the nature of time. We will not go into all of the categories here and their role, but only give a cursory summary of just one: substance or permanence. This category is the foundational category of “relation,” and will give a sufficient account of Kant’s view. Before we go on to elucidate its meaning in particular, however, a brief note about the categories and time more generally.

The categories are deduced from a table of “all possible judgments” and are meant to exhaustively constitute the logical forms of any possible judgment, any act of determinative thinking. Every judgment will include one category from each of the categorical headings: quantity, quality, relation and modality.<sup>115</sup> Although the categories are deduced through a logical deduction of all possible judgments, however, they only gain their epistemic validity in their temporalized or “schematized” form. The general aim of Kant’s ‘Analytic of Principles’ is to show how the categories are temporalized in this way, and thus how they can apply to intuitions given in time. The analytic of

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<sup>115</sup> For example, the logical form of the judgment “the sun must rise” yields: quantitatively universal, relationally categorical, qualitatively affirmative, and modally apodictic. The categorical content, derived from the logical form is, respectively, reality, subsistence, totality, and necessity.

principles is thus an extension of the problem of deduction, the lawful applicability of intuitions, *Quid Juris*. And since experience is synonymous with judgment, the principles also tell us how objects *must* appear to us in order for them to be objects at all. In other words, the temporal determination of the categories points to the way in which the categories – the rules of thinking – actually *prefigure* objects in their possible givenness. As such, it also serves to “transcendentalize” logic, pulling it from its “general” and “pure” use – which “abstracts from all contents of the understanding ... and has to do with nothing but the mere form of thinking” (A 54/ B78) – to its *a priori* relation to objects of experience (A 57/B 82).

Kant discusses the categories of relation in their transcendental and temporal function in the ‘Analogies of Experience.’ The principle of the Analogies reads: “As regards to their existence, all appearances stand *a priori* under rules of the determination of their relation to each other in *one* time” (A 176/B 218). The categories of relation assert the rules pertaining to the *relation* of all appearances within a single horizon of time. Because the time determinations of relation refer to the existence of objects Kant defines them as “dynamical” as opposed to “mathematical.” The dynamical categories (which also include those of modality) have to do with the conditions by which objects are given as *actual*, that is, as existing objects (*existentia*), whereas the mathematical categories have to do with the conditions by which objects are given in “reality,” that is, their substantive-perceptual content (*essentia*), and include the categories of quality and quantity (A 162/B 201).<sup>116</sup> Kant says that together the categories of relation constitute the

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<sup>116</sup> The categories of relation speak to the temporal character of objects of experience, and thus within a specific domain of Kant’s Modal set categories, which he also defines as dynamical, that is, as dealing with

“three rules of all temporal relations of appearances, in accordance with which the existence of each can be determined with regard to the unity of all time, precede all experience and first make it possible” (A 177/B 219). Heidegger clarifies this point by claiming that the three categories of relation express “*intra-temporal modes of the present*,”<sup>117</sup> which are the conditions of possibility for objects as actually given: “The Analogies are rules which are always *pre-represented* in every human experience, rules which hold up, for every possible experience, the fundamental relations of the possible being-in-time of that which is present.”<sup>118</sup>

Of the categories of relation, permanence (substance) is primary, as it is upon this that the others are secured. The principle of substance reads: “All appearances contain that which persists (substance) as the object itself, and in that which can change as its mere determination” (A 182). The object given is a substance insofar as it is related to the permanent that must subsist behind all alteration, and it is this connection that allows the object to endure across changes. The permanent, however, is nothing other than time itself: “Permanence gives general expression to time as the *constant correlate* of all existence of appearances, all change and all accompaniment. For change does not affect time itself, but only the appearances in time” (A 183/B 226) (my emphasis). In other

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the existence of objects as opposed to their essence. The modal categories distinguish actuality from possibility and necessity. Modally speaking, actuality and necessity are co-extensive: If an object is given as actual then it is also necessary, i.e., has a cause, since an actual object given in experience is already governed by the field of causality. A possible object is one that agrees with the formal conditions of experience (logical consistency and possible givenness in space and time) but not yet given in experience, and thus not yet actual nor necessary. Thus the categories of Relation – persistence, succession, and simultaneity – can be said to operate within the modal domains of actuality-necessity, while the domain of possibility must correspond to the laws of causality without actually having a causal object given. See ‘The Postulates of Empirical Thinking’ (A 218/B 265 – A 235/B 287).

<sup>117</sup> Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 114.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 116.

words, since all representations are given in time, time itself is permanent. The crucial demonstration is how objects given in time can be considered substantively, that is, as existing beyond their changes and alterations. Kant offers an example to elucidate the point: “A philosopher was asked: How much does the smoke weigh? He replied: If you take away from the weight of the wood that was burnt the weight of the ashes left over, you will have the weight of the smoke” (A 185/B 228). The answer of the philosopher relies on the permanence of the substantial element of the fire – in this case it’s mass – beyond its changes in state. Or as Kant puts it, the philosopher “assumes as incontrovertible that even in the fire the matter (substance) never disappears but rather only suffers an alteration in its form” (ibid.). Thus, the substantiality of a given object rests, first, on the fact that the various objects (fire, smoke, ash) are given as actual, that is, they have a *duration* or *magnitude* in time, and second, that this duration of the object is simply the appearing expression of the permanence of the field of time that grounds it, a permanence that therefore unites objects as persisting across time even when they undergo changes in their state, and a permanence that allows for questioning into causal explanations not given immediately to the senses.

The duration-permanence of objects experienced allows those objects to take on the character of substance, which offers, by analogy, the subject term for predicative judgement. And insofar as substantiality corresponds to actual objects, then the field of substantiality is as broad as possible objects.<sup>119</sup> Summarily, then, insofar as our

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<sup>119</sup> For example, the cup in front of me is an object just as the lid on top of it is. Both have specific durations in perception, and thus are capable of functioning as the subject of predication. For example: “The cup is green” and “the lid is black.” Or, we can switch subjects and predicates, as in: “the cup has a lid” and “the lid is on the cup.” In the first case, the cup is the substance and the lid is the accident, and in the other case, the lid is the substance and the cup the accident. In both cases, the accidents are not less-real, but rather

experiences are always related to objects or appearances, then permanence and substantiality is also always operative in that experience: “Permanence is therefore nothing more than the way in which we represent the existence of things in appearance” (A 186/B 229). Or, it is simply the “mode in which we represent to ourselves the existence of things in the field of appearances” (A 186/B 229).<sup>120</sup> In other words, the category of substance, as a “regulative principle,” is simply a necessary feature of our experience that’s necessity is proved in each case that we experience an object.

Substance is not a “relation” in the manner of the subsequent categories, causality and community. The latter speak to relations between objects in time and necessarily entail a comparative, as in: X occurs after Y (succession/causality), or X occurs at the same time as Y (simultaneity/community). Permanence can only be understood as a relation insofar as objects of experience are *internally* related to the permanence of time

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“really inhere” in the subject or substance. This definition of substance as corresponding to any given durational object permits, therefore, a wide array of valid propositions about appearances without limiting which objects count as substances and which as accidents. Indeed, the two can be interchangeable (thus distinguishing substantiality from prior theories that link it with pure, supersensible beings).

<sup>120</sup> One of the questions that may seem perplexing is whether there is a broader class of “experiences” beyond the cognitive mode. Can we, for example, speak of imaginative experience in Kant’s system, where we do not subject phenomena to the rules of the understanding – that is, we do not even enact the understanding as a capacity – but rather allow them to freely float in the synthesis of the imagination outside of categorical demands? Is this possible for Kant or impossible? According to Kant, and as discussed earlier, in order for us to have any experience at all we must be *consciously* aware of that experience, and to be consciously aware of an experience is to have an understanding of the phenomena of the experience, even if it is sometimes only a vague one. Such an understanding, or recognition, would always already activate the categories, even when we experience something without a ready concept, like an experience of the sublime, as Kant discusses in the third *Critique*. But these examples simply point to the authority of cognitive experience and the derivativeness of other forms, which are defined specifically with respect to the possibility of knowledge. For if every experience is a more or less explicit mode of cognitive awareness, then every experience rests upon the categories – which may just remain latent and unprincipled in, for example, our mere opinions. This is why

Kant thought that we have to *learn* to use our *a priori* categories in a principled way, that is, we need to learn “sound judgment” (A 133/B 172). Thus, even in unformed opinions or immediate awareness of phenomena, the categories themselves would remain latent. Thus the answer to the question of whether or not there is a broader class of experience in Kant’s thinking outside categorical subsumption is no, there is not. There is, however, degrees in which we adequately use them.

as such.<sup>121</sup> Because persistence grounds objects as substantial, Kant says, it can function as the condition of the other relations: “without the permanent, there is no time relation” (A 183/B 226).

A brief note about causality: If the principle of causality reads “Everything that happens (begins to be) presupposes something that it follows according to a rule” (A 189/B 222), it is the transcendental horizon of permanent time established by substantiality that allows objects given *in* time to follow on from one another *necessarily* “according to a rule.” In this case, “all change is only alteration” of the primary field of time as present, and that which is given in this field are so many sequential and simultaneous “nows” operating in causal community. Because all change occurs in time, all change is temporally defined as succession along the horizon of permanence. We perceive change as a succession of phenomenon from one state to another within a substratum of permanent time, which we do not perceive. Insofar as we do experience objects as occurring successively, the law of causality must hold, and the fact that we apply the category of causality through the understanding (which is transcendently constituted), allows us to take the “subjective” and imprecise experiences of phenomena (I see a boy crying, now I see a cut on his foot) and turn it into an objective determination (the cut caused the crying).

We are prepared now to come into a closer proximity with the particular union between the pure “I think” of apperception and Kant’s determination of time as indicated by Heidegger in the opening quote of this section. In order for the categories of relation to function as the bringing-together of objects in the present in the three modes of

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 122.

permanence, succession and simultaneity, it must be established that there is a temporally unified subject for whom these intra-temporal modes are grounded, and against which objects can stand. The temporally unified subject must be co-present with the object given at every step, securing the permanence and unity of time so that objects can be objects at all. Against the object in general, which Kant at various places calls object=X (the transcendental form of the object, or the “objectivity of the object”), there must be an opposition subject in general that grounds its unity. Thus, the “I think” is expressed as the ultimate ground of the bringing-to-present characteristic of the categories: “The general principle of all three analogies rests on the necessary unity of apperception with regard to all possible empirical consciousness at every time” (A 177/ B219). Or:

In original apperception of all of this manifold, so far as its temporal relations are concerned, is to be unified; for this is what its transcendental unity, under which everything stands that is to belong to my (united) cognition, and thus can become an object for me, asserts *a priori*. (A 177/B 220)

Thus, the relation between the “I think” of the understanding and time is one defined by the bringing-to-present of objects through thinking, where the pure unity of apperception operates as the always-present, expressed by the seamless spontaneity of thought (judgment), which is itself constituted in terms of the categories in general, and of relation in particular, or the intra-temporal modalities of the unity of the present. The substratum of thinking is the permanence of time, and it is on this permanence that all determinate judgments are secured as capable of universality and necessity.

Recall, however, that in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section Heidegger said that the relation between time and the “I think” remained “unclarified,” and that this relationship acts as an “uncritically presupposed” foundation. Heidegger reiterates this criticism in section six of *Being and Time*, saying that “the decisive

*connection* between *time* and the ‘*I think*’ remains shrouded in complete obscurity. It did not even become a problem” (original emphasis).<sup>122</sup> Kant provided ample, and in many ways convincing argumentation for the type of experience we do evidently have when we cognize objects. We are thus lead to ask: What precisely remains obscure? What precisely is presupposed by Kant? Entering into these questions, we can note a passage where Heidegger summarizes the foundational role of Kant’s notion of time – especially as it appears in the first Analogy, and points us in a promising direction for critical exploration:

Time is the substratum of everything we encounter in experience, it is the *pure intuition* which is always already spread out before our view. Change and simultaneity are comparable and determinable only in terms of time – presupposing that time itself is perceivable. But this is not so. Consequently, the possibility of experience presupposes a substratum in the real to which all temporal determination must be referred. [...] Permanence is the presupposed horizon for our definition and representation of whatever we encounter as present.<sup>123</sup>

As Kant explains in the Transcendental Aesthetic, we cannot perceive time itself, but we can perceive objects as durational. We can also recall objects over time, bring them from the past into the present. These lead Kant to deduce that time itself – *while unperceivable* – can be deduced as a “regulative principle” that secures the permanent horizon of presence within which all objects appear (A 179/B 222).<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the transcendental deduction of the character of transcendental apperception and the permanence of time is

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<sup>122</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 23.

<sup>123</sup> Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 118.

<sup>124</sup> For Kant, both the Analogies of Experience and the Postulates of Empirical Thinking, referring to the categories of Relation and Modality respectively, are “regulative principles.” They are distinguished from the regulative *ideas* of reason discussed in the last chapter. The latter establish the speculative horizon within which cognition carries out its empirical work, the former allow us to cognize objects themselves in terms of their existence in time. These regulative principles are further distinguished from the Axioms of Intuition and Anticipations of Perception, referring to the categories of Quantity and Quality respectively, which are *constitutive* principles, insofar as they constitute the content or “whatness” of an object intuited.

based on a prior demonstration of the fact that we are not only *capable* of bringing objects to stand against us in acts of cognition, but that our experience is fundamentally defined by this capacity (whether recognized or not). Per the procedure of deduction, it is only by construing experience as a bringing-to-stand objects against the subject that the subject must be defined as that ever-present unity against which objects can stand, and correspondingly, must time be presupposed as the permanent substratum which objects appear as standing. Kant takes it as a matter of course that objective experience is synonymous of human finite experience, and it is based on this premise that the entire view of temporality is founded.

This view of time is familiar. According to Heidegger, it permeates Western metaphysics. In *What is Called Thinking?* he summarizes this view in a way that clearly resonates with our discussion thus far:

The temporal is what must pass away. And time is the passing away of what must pass away. This passing away is conceived more precisely as the successive flowing away of the “now” out of the “not yet now” into the “no longer now.” Time causes the passing away of what must pass away, and does by passing away itself; yet it itself can itself pass away if it persists throughout all passing away. Time persists, consists of passing. It is, in that it constantly is not. This is the representational idea of time that characterizes the concept of “time” which is standard throughout the metaphysics of the West.<sup>125</sup>

We can see clearly that, in his own unique way, Kant follows this basic conception of time: time as permanence is the condition of possibility for our experience of “nows” passing away into the “no longer now,” with the added caveat that that which is permitted to pass passes only so far as it is capable of being recalled in the service of the present for the purpose of cognition. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger will call this the “vulgar

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<sup>125</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1976), 100.

concept” of time, and will work to explain it as ontologically derivative from the perspective of his own view of ecstatic temporality. We will introduce this concept in the next section.

For now, we can wonder if Kant’s depiction of the capacity for objective cognition, as universal and necessary, does not beg a question about its exhaustive and exclusive status, and whether, once again, the deduction of the transcendental structure of such experience does not engender an uncritical circularity. Doubting the universality of cognition of objects as a premise for a deduction of its enabling conditions is, as we saw in the last chapter regarding Kant’s methodological requirements vis-à-vis indifferentism, one of the ways in which the transcendental method is susceptible to challenge, and the obscurities discovered by Heidegger at the heart of Kant’s ground-laying now give us cause to further explore these questions. But they do not as of yet give us a way out of them since we have no alternative vantage point to glimpse their precarity. Only from a hitherto concealed perspective can Kant’s thinking be critically illuminated. However, as we will see, such an alternative requires no less than a leap out of the theoretical compartment of modern metaphysics and into the a-theoretical realm of lived hermeneutic experience and critical ontology. But before we perform such a leap, we will first see how Heidegger prepares for it, indeed, discovers a stepping-stone from within Kant’s transcendental apparatus itself, demonstrating how, unbeknownst to Kant,<sup>126</sup> he

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<sup>126</sup> It is unclear whether Kant was aware of an alternative conception of time lurking in his ground-laying. Heidegger alludes to this awareness in claiming that Kant “shrunk back” from these findings between the first and second editions of the first *Critique*, and that Kant’s revisions in the second were an attempt to cover up his unsettling discovery. This is an interpretative problem that I will not deal with. I do not see it as entirely significant.

opened the way for a much more radical undermining of the security of the sovereign subject and its metaphysics.

## II. Undermining the Grounds of Reason: Temporality and the Imagination in Heidegger's *Ab-Grund*

Heidegger's positive encounter with Kant comes most directly in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), often called simply the "Kantbook," a text notorious for its apparent "violent" reading of the first *Critique* as it cuts against the dominant epistemological and cultural interpretations prevalent among the neo-Kantians at the time. For example, one of the most prominent of these, Ernst Cassirer, significant for his debate with Heidegger at Davos Switzerland over this very point, claimed that in his interpretation Heidegger "speaks no longer as a commentator, but as a usurper, who as it were enters with force of arms into the Kantian system in order to subjugate it and to make it serve his own problematic."<sup>127</sup> Specifically, and in Heidegger's words, after *Being and Time* he "sought refuge" in Kant's text as "advocating the question of being which [he] posed."<sup>128</sup> Indeed, it was intended as the next part to *Being and Time*.<sup>129</sup> In it, Heidegger directly claims Kant as anticipating his own fundamental ontology by

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<sup>127</sup> Quoted in: M. Weatherston, *Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant: Categories, Imagination and Temporality*, 2002 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1. From: 'Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik: Bemerkungen zu Martin Heideggers Kant-Interpretation', *Kant-Studien*, 36 (1931), 17. Heidegger's relationship with Cassirer is well known, as it forms one of the best-known and influential philosophical debates of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cassirer, a Jewish neo-Kantian, debated Heidegger over how to understand Kant at Davos, Switzerland. Staged high in the Alps, these two represented two of the most influential schools of philosophy at the time, neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, and was a turning point in favour of the latter. It was well attended, with some of the most influential and would-be influential philosophers of the day taking part. The philosophical climate within which this debate takes place is evidence of the importance of Heidegger's reading of Kant from a strategic perspective: To combat the influence of Kantian rationalism, Kant himself must be wrested from these dominant interpretations and brought into the ontological fold.

<sup>128</sup> Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, xvii.

<sup>129</sup> *Being and Time*, 23.

undertaking a questioning into the finitude of man as the ground for the possibility of metaphysics (indeed, the ontological difference): “The intention of the first *Critique* remains fundamentally misunderstood if it is interpreted as a theory of experience, or even as a theory of the positive sciences. [...] It signifies instead the working out of a complete determination of the ‘whole contour’ and ‘whole internal, articular structure’ of ontology.”<sup>130</sup> In Heidegger’s hands, this internal structure is interpreted in sympathy with his own account of finite existential temporality. While Heidegger will concede that this as an “over-interpretation” in his later life (1973) (an admission justified not so much in terms of philological standards but rather in terms of his wayward approach to the question of being that typified the 1920s),<sup>131</sup> he nonetheless offers important justifications at the time of its initial publication. For example, in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, published a few years after the *Kantbook*, Heidegger says:

To show [that the problem of the first *Critique* is disclosing the finitude of man] is the task of a Kant interpretation, which, however, does not have the pseudo-philological aim of presenting the ‘correct’ Kant – there is nothing of the sort. *All philosophical interpretation is destruction*, controversy, and radicalization, which is not equivalent to scepticism. Or else it is nothing at all, mere chatter that repeats more laboriously what was said in simpler and better fashion by the author himself.<sup>132</sup>

To say that that philosophical interpretation is “destruction” references a particular phenomenological technique that Heidegger develops and deploys towards the history of Western thought, oriented towards “destroying” prior metaphysics by exposing its ontological presuppositions and, at the same time, “constructing” that history as a history

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<sup>130</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 11.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, xvii.

<sup>132</sup> *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 119.

of the revealing of Being. This justification can only be fully appreciated when we see in what sense phenomenology carries out such destructions “without yielding skepticism,” which will be explained in the next section. In the *Kantbook* itself, however, Heidegger offers a stronger claim, though not unrelated, claiming that his reading “brings out what ‘Kant had wanted to say.’”<sup>133</sup> The legitimacy of this claim rests on accepting that Kant was in fact trying to ground the possibility of metaphysics—which of course is a contestable point (at least in this unyielding articulation). For Heidegger, Kant’s fundamental ontological intentions come out in greatest relief during the time surrounding the first edition of the first *Critique*. At this point, the question of the possibility of metaphysics from the perspective of finitude constituted Kant’s “concealed passion,” eclipsed soon thereafter by the “seduction of reason” and its capacity to sediment first principles and stabilize the chaotic world around him.<sup>134</sup> Perhaps not incidentally, Heidegger’s stance towards Kant here is not unlike Kant’s own, who once said that it is “not unusual to understand a philosopher better than he understood himself” (A 354/B 371).<sup>135</sup> Indeed, just in the same way that Kant staged his critical encounter with prior metaphysics on his own terms, so too does Heidegger claim to stage a “thoughtful dialogue” with Kant on *his* own terms. Neither thinker is interested in simply repeating what was said before in better or clearer words, but rather in critically

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<sup>133</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 141.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 141.

<sup>135</sup> Heidegger repeats this principle almost verbatim in *Fundamental Concepts to Metaphysics*: “We must bring ourselves to a point where we can understand a philosopher better than he understood himself.” To which he adds: “This does not mean that we should rebuke him and point to him which precursors he is dependent on, but that we are in a position to concede him more than he was prepared to concede himself.” (Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 155.

interrogating the grounds and assumptions of prior philosophy so as positively expand on and push them to their limit in accordance with their own thought. As such, claiming Kant's concealed passion in this way allows Heidegger to creatively reconstruct the first *Critique* in a way that brings out its potentialities in the direction of his own thinking, which subsequently affirms its ongoing worth and relevance. Thus, while we cannot ourselves factually decide on whether or not Heidegger is correct in identifying Kant's concealed early passion (although Heidegger himself later on admits he was being too forceful on this point),<sup>136</sup> I nevertheless think that, accepting Heidegger's methodological justifications, it is possible to appreciate and take very seriously his innovative interpretation which, although seems "audacious and violent," is unquestionably provocative and insightful, creating a compelling way of looking at the purpose and structuration of Kant's first *Critique*.<sup>137</sup> And a good thing too, for without such creative (though not arbitrary) interpretations the history of philosophy would, I would think, remain inert and lifeless.

The following summary of Heidegger's "radicalizing" reading will help to negatively situate the central presuppositions mentioned in the last section *against* this alternative. The precise aim is to locate the function and relevance of the transcendental imagination as more "originary" to the understanding and apperception, and to trace out some of its implications for Kant's metaphysics and Heidegger's own account of Dasein.

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<sup>136</sup> From *The End of Philosophy*: "The talk about the metaphysics of metaphysics, which is touched on in the book *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, is justified in that it attempts to interpret the Kantian idea from the perspective [of 'heightening metaphysics through itself'], which still stems from the mere critique of rationalist metaphysics. However, more is thus attributed to Kant's thinking than he himself was able to permit within the limits of his philosophy" (Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy by Martin Heidegger*, 1 edition (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 92).

<sup>137</sup> Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 141.

All of this, of course, set within the broader questioning into the legitimacy of Kant's critical response to indifferentism, which demands a response to the possibility of metaphysics as its foundational element.

*i. The Imagination as Ground*

Heidegger takes Kant to be "laying the ground" for metaphysics. The point of departure for this ground-laying is the central question of the deduction mentioned above, i.e. how the understanding can come into internal and necessary relation with intuition, and vice versa. The common view, implied in the previous section, is that the spontaneity of apperception actively forms the content of the manifold through acts of judgment. Heidegger tries to show how this active spontaneity presupposes a deeper ground implied in the process of synthesis. In this way, and keeping in line with his phenomenological orientation, Heidegger's reading constantly demands that we suspend privileging the understanding and instead try to attend to the peculiar way in the faculties "belong-together."<sup>138</sup> It is in this belonging-together that the character of human finitude is

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<sup>138</sup> Heidegger does not use the phrase "belong-together" as a way to describe his reading of Kant in the *Kantbook* but rather it appears in his reading of Husserl's concept of intentionality in *History of the Concept of Time*. There, he focuses on the peculiar way in which the correlates of intentionality, *intentio* (the subjective intending) and *intentum* (the entity in itself as it is intended), "belong-together." He gives specific precedence to the *intentum* pole, bracketing the subjectivization of the intention and the objectivization of the *intentum* given by Husserl, instead sticking with the entity as it is given in the *how* of its givenness. This allows him to recast the *intentum* from a transcendental description of objectivity and instead in the direction of a fundamental ontology, opening up non-objective determinations of the *how* of the entities themselves, like presence-to-hand or readiness-to-hand (see: Rudolf Bernet, "Husserl and Heidegger on Intentionality and Being," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 21, no. 2 (1990): 136–52.). Heidegger's follows the spirit of this questioning into the belonging-together, though in his case with respect to the poles of intuition and understanding, the thing intuited and the way it is understood. The question is what mechanism lies behind the *how* of their belonging-together in and through experience. Similarly, it is meant to subvert the simplistic depiction of Kant's subject as duplexed, and more fundamentally, to show how these poles are rooted together in and through the imagination, which subsequently opens up onto an ecstatic or "original" view of time.

positively understood (that is, without simply pointing to “one of our many imperfections” in a negative demonstration) and the character of transcendence revealed.

The central points that contribute to Heidegger’s reading are as follows: If the Kantian problematic is viewed as a questing into the possibility of metaphysics and this takes place through an investigation into the transcendental conditions of knowledge, and if the transcendental conditions are said to be “ontological” (*metaphysics generalis*), then Heidegger conceives the Kantian project as one of fundamental ontology, as a questioning into the being of the being for whom beings appear as objects. If, moreover, knowledge is understood as essentially finite, since it must always relate to finite spatial-temporal intuition, then the key question of Kant’s fundamental ontology pertains to the possibility of the union between intuition and knowing, or more specifically, the “original synthesis” that allows for the belonging-together of the faculties through human experience. Crucially, such an original synthesis would have to explain how the finite subject is capable of transcending the given and understanding it in its (objective) being. So while knowledge would in this case be conceived as a knowledge that transcends and understands the being in its (objective) being, *transcendental* knowledge would refer to the *ontological* conditions by which such transcending-understanding is possible. In this sense, Heidegger says, transcendental knowledge is also ontological knowledge, and the question then becomes set squarely within an ontological explanation of how transcendence is possible.<sup>139</sup> Accordingly, Heidegger states the problem as follows: “the problem of the possibility of ontology is the question of the essence and essential ground

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<sup>139</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 89.

of the transcendence of the preliminary understanding (givenness) of being.”<sup>140</sup> Contrary to the previous section, the “essential ground” of transcendence and the “original synthesis” of the faculties are sought not in the unity of apperception but in the function of the transcendental imagination, towards which we will now turn.

In the *Kantbook*, Heidegger must negotiate inconsistencies between Kant’s two editions on the role of the imagination, putting a lot of stock in the following passages from the A edition: “There are two *stems* to human cognition, namely sensibility and understanding, which may perhaps rise from a common but *unknown* root;” “Synthesis in general, as we will see, is a result of the *power of the imagination*, a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are seldom conscious even once;”<sup>141</sup> “[The transcendental imagination is the faculty of] *synthesis in general* [...] which grounds all cognition *a priori*, [by means of which] we bring into combination the manifold of intuition on the one side and the condition of the necessary unity of apperception on the other side” (A 124)(my emphasis). In the A addition, this mediating “synthesis in general” is said to be *prior* to apperception: “The principle of the necessary unity of the pure (productive) synthesis of the transcendental imagination prior to apperception is thus the ground of the possibility of all cognition” (A118). Heidegger will take these as strong indicators towards exploring the structural priority of the transcendental imagination as Kant understood it in the first edition, and attempt to carry out its consequences, for in the second edition Kant is said to cover it over, replacing it with the view that:

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>141</sup> Cited in Ibid, 44. Heidegger’s italics. Found at CPR, A78/B 103.

“[Combination or synthesis] is *only* an operation of the understanding, which is itself nothing further than the faculty of combining *a priori* and bringing the manifold under the unity of apperception” (B135). This latter claim coincides with the understanding-centric focus of the previous section, but Heidegger reduces its merit by attempting to show how it is in fact subsidiary to the project of metaphysical ground-laying, of which the former quotes approach more penetratingly.<sup>142</sup> He also argues that Kant not only concealed the central role of the imagination unwittingly, but rather that he “shrank back” from it in awareness of its potentially unsettling mystery. This, Heidegger says, is indicated by Kant’s recognition of and abstention from a fuller working out of the “subjective side” of the transcendental deduction, which was tasked with “going back to the powers of knowledge upon which the understanding rests.”<sup>143</sup> While the subjective and objective side of the deduction cannot be fully distinct, Kant ultimately tends to the side of objectivity, illuminating only the necessary conditions of subjectivity for the cognition of objects. (Kant comes close to a subjective deduction in the A edition, and thus it is here that Heidegger stresses his proximity to a fuller exploration of the unknown root of the imagination). As such, Kant is ultimately inhibited from a full exploration of, to use Heidegger’s phrase, the “subjectivity of the subject.”

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 117.

Admittedly, Heidegger's attempts towards the transcendental imagination are quite complex. While the *Critique of Pure Reason* seems to present one, or possibly two apparent levels of analysis, more or less inter-woven together (the empirical and the transcendental), Heidegger claims that there are "five stages" to the ground-laying implied in it. We cannot recount all of this here (we do not really need to), but we can establish the culminating moments of Heidegger's reading to give a sense of it.

We can start with the priority of the transcendental imagination with respect to sensibility: Recall that in the A deduction Kant situated the imagination as between sensibility and the understanding, taking on a "reproductive" function, that is, as reproducing images of prior experience in the present for the purpose of recognition by the understanding. In this case, the image exhibited in reproduction is derivative of prior sensations, it is an *exhibitio derivativa*. However, the imagination also has another (empirical) power. It is also capable of *producing* an "original" image, *exhibitio originaria*, not given in sensibility though without creating the image in its actuality. This productive capacity is not, in other words, an infinite intuition, an *intuition originarius*, but still essentially finite (B 151). The produced image is not created out of nothing but rather is comprised of a creative and spontaneous synthesis of experienced intuitions. Dreaming involves something like this, but so too the colloquial expression "imagine...X." Of particular significance here is not that we can form specific, or as Heidegger would put it, ontic, intuition-images creatively in the mind (a unicorn, a fictional event, etc.), but rather that the condition of possibility for such a capacity directs us to the *spontaneous* character of the *transcendental* imagination as distinct from its empirical receptivity towards particular sensible intuitions. In other words, the

transcendental condition, which for Heidegger says the same as ontological condition, for the “fact” of the production of both empirically given and empirically non-given intuition-images would have to reside in a spontaneous creativity at the heart of the imagination itself.

This means that the essential role of the imagination must not lie simply in the production of intuition-images, but rather must lie in the condition of possibility for this productivity, a condition of possibility that points directly to its relation with the pure intuitions themselves, space and time, within which particular images can be given at all. The claim here is that far from being solely located in sensibility, as the *Transcendental Aesthetic* might suggest, the forms of intuition must rather be somehow generated by the imagination’s transcendental capacity, for how else would the imagination be capable of the free-forming production of ontic images outside of specific empirical sensations? As Kant puts it: “insofar as the imagination’s synthesis is an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining and not, like sense, merely determinable, [it can thus] *determine the form of sense a priori*” (B 152). One way the relation between the imagination and the forms of intuition becomes more clear, Heidegger suggests, is if we attend to the character of those pure intuitions themselves and Kant’s demonstrations of them: Far from relying on a purely formal demonstration, Kant “exposits” the transcendental unity of space and time by attempting to show how pure intuition can “catch sight of itself” as a pure and unified field of space and time.<sup>144</sup> In the metaphysical expositions of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, for example, we are meant to bring ourselves to an awareness of the “togetherness of the manifold” by showing how such a togetherness must make possible

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<sup>144</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 100.

all of our representations. The unity caught sight of is, Heidegger says, nuanced by Kant's use of the word "synopsis" in the A deduction.<sup>145</sup> The word suggests, on the one hand, a *synthesis*, or bringing-together. On the other hand, an "optics" or seeing-intuiting. The pure forms of intuition caught-sight-of, then, must be both synthetic and intuitive. But sensibility is specifically *not* synthetic in this sense, it only passively organizes discrete "nows." Or in the language above, it is *determined* and not *determining*. That we can catch sight of the synopsis of space and time leads us, in a more positive way than the previous point, to the particular synthetic character of space and time themselves, which would, by extension, "have to belong to a faculty of *formative* intuition." This, for Heidegger, "is only possible in the transcendental imagination."<sup>146</sup> Indeed it is for this reason that Heidegger can go on to say that "the Transcendental Aesthetic is fundamentally unintelligible. It has only a preparatory character and can be read properly only from the perspective of the [imagination.]"<sup>147</sup>

But could the unity of space and time be accomplished by the understanding? The B edition wants to suggest that all synthesis is the product of the spontaneity of apperception, but again, the A edition at least alludes to the imagination claiming that right. If Heidegger could prove the latter is the case, then he could complete the claim that the unity of space and time, the condition for finite knowledge in general, must lie in the imagination and not in either sensibility or the understanding. The consequence of this would be that, as essentially grounded in the imagination and its production of pure

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 100; 102.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 102.

intuition, the thinking faculties cannot claim a-temporality; there is no sense to the claim that reason is capable of securing anything like “pure intelligibility” in the noumenal realm so integral to his moral and special metaphysics.

Heidegger suggests that the primary barrier to accepting the foundational role of the transcendental imagination with respect to the understanding rests in the metaphysical “seduction” of the independence of thinking apart from intuition. This seduction is related to the seduction of pure logic as to a significant extent autonomous from intuitions and sensibility. Within Kant’s thinking, while the categories are conceived transcendently, this seduction is expressed when we give too much emphasis on the fact that we come to an awareness of the categories through an initial process of “reflection” into their proper use, and their subsequent mobilization through the course of judgment. Stressing judgment here implies, in the first instance, a relative autonomy of the categories from their essential relatedness to intuition, and that they gain their connection with sensibility only through the sovereign power of the understanding. Heidegger pushes against this reading by stressing the importance of the “first sentence of the thematic discussion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*” where Kant says, “In whatever manner and by whatever means a knowing [*ein Erkenntnis*] may relate to objects, *intuition* is that through which it relates itself immediately to them, and by which all thought as a means is directed” (A 19/B 33). Heidegger further emphasizes the significance of this passage as follows:

In order to understand the *Critique of Pure Reason* this point must be hammered in, so to speak: knowing is primarily intuiting. From this it at once becomes clear that the new interpretation of knowledge as judging (thinking) violates the decisive sense of the Kantian problem. All thinking is merely in the service of intuition. Thinking is not simply alongside intuition, “also” at hand; but rather according to

its own inherent structure it serves that to which intuition is primarily and constantly directed.<sup>148</sup>

Far from being semi-autonomous concepts of logic that rest in something like an inert fashion ready to be deployed by the activity of apperception in judgment, Heidegger's key claim here is that they must *already* be synthesized in order for us to, in the first instance, experience intuitions as objects from which we *then* make judgments. This prior synthesis would pull them from their seeming inertness – suggested by their derivation from logic – towards an essential and inseparable relatedness with intuition. This would show that they are *always already* synthesized *towards intuition*.

The key chapter in the first *Critique* in this regard is 'On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding,' a short and somewhat mysterious chapter that offers a prelude to the 'Analytic of Principles,' which is meant to show just that the categories must be temporalized if they are to apply to intuitions. But beyond mere introduction, Kant briefly aligns this capacity for schematization with the imagination:

This schematism of our understanding...is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty...the schema of the pure concept of the understanding ... is something that can never be brought to an image at all, but is rather only the pure synthesis, in accord with the rule of unity according to concepts in general, and is a transcendental product of the imagination, which concerns the determination of inner sense in accordance with conditions of its form (time) insofar as these are to be connected together *a priori*.<sup>149</sup>

Here, the transcendental imagination is said to be that which is originally responsible for pure synthesis, of bringing the pure concepts of the understanding in relation to the pure

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<sup>148</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 15.

<sup>149</sup> (A 141/B 181 – A 142/B 182).

intuition of time.<sup>150</sup> To schematize here means to temporalize the categories themselves as “*pure images*.” “The schema of the pure concept of the understanding is brought into an image, provided ‘image’ is now taken as ‘pure image.’”<sup>151</sup> These pure images are not ontic (like the image of a dog), but are rather temporal, and are also called “unities.” “Unity” is “not the empty unity of a concept in general, but is a unity which springs from synthesis itself, from the manifold of time.”<sup>152</sup> So, in their temporal or schematized form, the categories are temporalized unities. We will see an example in a moment.

Heidegger then goes on to say that the pure images offer a “look” for our experience of objects: “The schema of notions [categories] has a character of its own. As schema in general it represents unities, representing them as rules which impart themselves to a possible look.”<sup>153</sup> This means the following: If the categories can be said to require a prior schematization for their essential relatedness to intuition, and this prior synthesis rests in the transcendental imagination which is given this role, then the categories themselves can be said to offer the “look” of “unity” in advance of any sensible apprehension. The imagination, both spontaneous and receptive, is both oriented towards what is offered by sensibility, always, that is, “open” to the given, but in its openness is also always-already guided by the rules of the understanding that offer its general orientation to the given: *They provide the manner of way of looking that the imagination is open to always-already.*

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<sup>150</sup> Space is here left out,

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>152</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 3rd Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 193.

<sup>153</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. 73.

Heidegger offers the example of substance, which we addressed above. Recall that the category of substance gained its transcendental validity in the temporal form of persistence. It was derived from our experience of particular durational intuitions in the present, *nows* of some duration or another. As such, time is understood as that which is “immutable and lasting,” offering the condition of possibility for experiencing durations in the first place. Thus, Heidegger says, “time is not one thing among others which lasts. Rather, precisely on the grounds of the essential character previously mentioned – to be now, in every now – time gives the pure look of something like lasting [duration] in general. As this pure image (immediate pure ‘look’), it presents that which forms the ground of intuition.”<sup>154</sup> In this case, the temporal schema of the category of substance gives the look, in advance of particular intuitions, of “lasting,” as allowing particular *nows* to hold together over time in the present.

For Heidegger, then, because the categories are not (in the first instance) secured through an act of inward reflection from which we then deploy them in acts of judgment, but are rather always synonymous with experience itself, then, contra the tenor of many of Kant’s statements and subsequent interpretations that stress the understanding’s autonomy, it is the transcendental imagination that holds priority as the ground in Kant’s transcendental account.

But what is even more and above all crucial is that, now clearly, the pure concept of understanding is not given at all through a pure formal-logical function of judgment. Rather, this concept springs from the imaginative synthesis which is related to intuition and that means to time.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>155</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, 193.

In this way, and by focusing on the belonging-together of the faculties and not simply reiterating the primacy of the understanding, Heidegger is able to give support for the thesis that the “original synthesis” that unites the faculties is accomplished by the transcendental imagination, the root from which the “stems” of sensibility and understanding rest. The central player is the horizon of time that is synthesized by the imagination, creating the field of pure nows in which particular intuitions are given through sensibility as well as the temporal unities implied in the categories such that those “nows” can come to take on the look of objectivity in general (“object=x”).

From this, Heidegger begins to draw conclusions distinctly his own with regards to the temporal character of the original synthesis, conclusions that begin to hint well beyond Kant and directly into his own account of Dasein. It is especially here, I think, that we can make sense of Heidegger’s much later assessment of the *Kantbook* as “attributing more to Kant’s thinking than he himself was able to think in the limit of his philosophy.”<sup>156</sup> First, he claims that the original synthesis forms the “ecstatic” quality of time itself as forming the unity between past and future in the present: Because, as we saw above, sensibility is passive, its synthesis corresponds to instantaneity, to the forming of an unconnected series of “nows.” It is thus concerned with the immediate present. In its connection with sensibility, then, the transcendental imagination as the source of time itself “produces (forming as creating) the immediate look of the now as such, i.e. always the look of the actual present as such.”<sup>157</sup> The empirical imagination as reproductive, on the other hand, holds together past presents, presents that once were given in their

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<sup>156</sup> *The End of Philosophy*, 92

<sup>157</sup> *Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 126.

immediacy but are no longer. It is thus concerned primarily with the past, unifying past “nows” in a field of recollection and production. In this register, Heidegger claims that the transcendental imagination “holds open the horizon of the possible attending-to, the having-been-ness.”<sup>158</sup> The transcendental imagination, in other words, holds open the horizon of the past within which the actual present of the immediate nowness of sensibility is set within. Finally, the understanding, as containing the conditions for the conceptual recognition of the manifold, offers in *advance* (i.e. prior to, *a priori*) the conditions by which objects can be understood as objects. That is, the categories in their temporal form *project* the conceptual conditions for our experience of any object whatsoever. The understanding thus *pre-forms* the way in which objects appear. Thus, Heidegger argues, “this third mode of synthesis must ‘form’ the *future*.”<sup>159</sup> In uniting the faculties in this way, the imagination offers the “look” of objectivity provided by the categories in advance of the sensible apprehension of particular objects, where such projection is of course determined or closed by the totality of the categories.

Because of this, and this is the second major point that Heidegger draws out, the three-fold synthesis can correspond to what Heidegger calls “original time:” the ongoing synthesis of the past (reproductive imagination) in the present (sensibility) through the pre-forming of the future (the understanding). As Heidegger puts it, “the three modes of pure synthesis are three in number not because they refer the three elements of pure knowledge, but rather because, originally unified in themselves [in the transcendental

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 128.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 128.

imagination], as time-forming, they constitute the ripening of time itself.”<sup>160</sup> This ripening of time itself in the transcendental imagination is “able to support and form the original unity and wholeness of the specific finitude of the human subject.”<sup>161</sup> In other words, the specific finitude of subjectivity is located *not* in the first instance in any limitation on our capacity for judgment, for this is deemed must be seen as derivative of the ecstatic character of original time that announces the essential finitude, our essential embeddedness within finite intuitive experience. By extension, Heidegger goes on to claim that Kant’s account of transcendental knowledge is best understood as “*forming* transcendence.” Construed in terms of Heidegger’s ontological difference, this forming is

nothing other than the holding-open of the horizon within which the Being of the being becomes discernible in a preliminary way...If ontological knowledge unveils the horizon, then its truth lies precisely in [the act of] letting the being be encountered within the horizon.<sup>162</sup>

By accomplishing “transcendental synthesis in general” the transcendental imagination holds out the horizon within which beings can appear as beings, in this case in the manner of standing forth as objects. In this way, it proves its structural priority to the representational unity provided by the categories and apperception. While the categories offer the “formal unity” for cognition of objects, the transcendental imagination offers the condition by which those formal unities can apply to intuitions.

As structurally prior, Heidegger argues that it “undermines this previously established foundation” by yielding an indeterminate openness beneath its apparent solidity, ultimately gesturing towards a more pronounced and attentive “Transcendental

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 131.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 87.

‘Analytic’ of the subjectivity of the subject” that he offers in his early work.<sup>163</sup> This is why Heidegger can summarize that the earlier characterization of the unity of ontological knowledge as founded in categorical understanding and apperception cannot be construed as the *end* of the Kantian ground-laying of the possibility of metaphysics, as we may otherwise want to maintain, but rather the *beginning* from which a deeper questioning into the source from which that unity “springs-forth.”<sup>164</sup> In reading Kant in this way, Heidegger attempts to liberate the transcendental imagination from the “closed system” of the categories and objectivity, and opens a direct lineage between it and what Heidegger will call, simply, Dasein, or “there-being.”

## *ii. The Consequences of the Imagination as Ground*

We are now prepared to ask the central question for which we have been preparing a response: What consequences follow from the discovery of the structural priority of the transcendental imagination with respect to Kant’s metaphysics? With this question, we can finally give an account of the presuppositions identified by Heidegger in the opening passage to the first section. And in drawing them out, we want to hold in the background the normative aims of Kant’s metaphysics against indifferentism that requires them.

First, if the synthesis of time creates the field or horizon within which beings can appear to finite knowledge, then we would be left with account of the “subject” than the one that remains on the surface of Kant’s ground-laying. The subject can no longer be

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 46.

understood as an ever-present unity, nor be theoretically deduced as a regulative substance, but rather simply as that openness to and transcendence of beings implied by the original synthesis of time. That which allows things to stand forth in the horizon of time, “cannot [itself] be a being [...] but just a nothing [*ein Nichts*]: Only if the letting-stand-against against ... is a holding oneself in the nothing can the representing allow a not-nothing [*ein nich-Nichts*], something like a being [...] to be encountered at all.”<sup>165</sup> To fully realize the nothingness of human finitude would be to liberate it into original time itself and refrain from objectivity and the regulative psychological postulate of Kant’s metaphysics, and indeed his anthropology altogether. As we will now see, this nothing is not an empty abyss but rather a positive field of the emergence (and concealment) of being, including the being of the “human” itself—an insight that not only figures into Heidegger’s criticism of Kant’s shrinking back, but also in his criticism of the discourse of “humanism” championed by Sartre later on: “More original than man is the finitude of the Dasein in him.”<sup>166</sup>

Second, the “vulgar” image of time as a sequence of nows becomes derivative of the ecstatic projective unity of the transcendental imagination. Although he does not fully follow through with it in the *Kantbook*, as ecstatic and projective, time as actuality and presence will give way to the priority of the temporal mode of possibility. The closest he comes in the *Kantbook* is to say that “in view of the essential structure of the transcendental power of the imagination, which was attained within the problematic of the ground-laying, the constitution of transcendence is to be projected anew onto the

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 160.

grounds of possibility.”<sup>167</sup> Here, the transcendental imagination gives glimpse of the famous statement in *Being and Time* that “higher than actuality stands possibility.”<sup>168</sup> As it is developed in this latter text, possibility here is not to be considered in the Kantian sense as related to whether or not something is capable of fulfilling the formal conditions of actuality (logical consistency and possible givenness in space and time), where what is not possible is “impossible” in the sense of incapable of being given for knowledge. In the language of *Being and Time*, this vulgar conception, “[i]s a modal category of presence-at-hand, signifying what is not yet actual and what is not at any time necessary. It characterizes the *merely* possible [*das nur Mögliche*].”<sup>169</sup> As a modal category of presence to hand, it reduces the ecstatic character of Dasein’s temporality once again to the sovereignty of actuality and presence. Rather, possibility is to be thought in the existential sense of projection, or “thrown possibility.” This expresses the manner in which we are constantly projecting interpretations, hopes, understandings in our being-in-the-world, projections that are rooted in our facticity, the particular horizons of possibility afforded by our place in history and context. Dasein simply *is* in the manner of *projecting* possibilities, where such possibilities need not be “actualized” in the manner of theoretical bringing-to-presence. Thus to speak here of *mere* possibility as derivative to the actual is absurd.

Third, this alternate existential view of time has significant consequence for the divergent characterizations of freedom between the two thinkers. Recall, after

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>168</sup> *Being and Time*, 36.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 143.

establishing the necessity of the categories for the purposes of objective knowledge, Kant was forced to establish freedom on noumenal grounds as a self-causing agency expressed by its capacity for moral action in accordance with the categorical imperative. But that freedom was considered in this way was simply by virtue of the metaphysical priority given to causality and sequentially given objective nature: With the transcendental imagination, however, the ontological priority of causal nature fades away and freedom becomes defined as temporal transcendence, the temporal transcending of beings in our (somewhat contingent) understanding of their being. “Freedom is the condition of possibility for the manifestness of the being of beings, of the understanding of being.”<sup>170</sup> Freedom is, in other words, the wherein of the ontological difference. Because freedom is prior in the ground-laying to causality, causality would then be resituated as simply one mode in which beings can be “projected” upon, in a particular (objective) understanding of their being. This is why in *On the Essence of Human Freedom* Heidegger can claim that instead of causality acting as the ground for the problem of freedom, constraining its meaning in advance, the inverse is in fact true: “Causality is *one* ontological determination among others. *Causality is grounded in freedom.*”<sup>171</sup>

Freedom qua transcendence is the temporal field for the emergence of the being of beings. As transcending, Dasein “surpasses” beings in a projective understanding of their being. In *On the Essence of Ground*, Heidegger clarifies this grounding character of freedom: “Freedom’s being as ground does not – as we are always tempted to think – have the character of *one* of the ways of grounding, but *determines itself as the grounding*

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<sup>170</sup> *The Essence of Human Freedom*, 207.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

*unity of the transcendental strewal of grounding.* As *this* ground, however, freedom is the *abyss of ground* [*Ab-grund*].”<sup>172</sup> This is a more general articulation of the claim that freedom is the ground of causality: Just like causality, the unity of the subject, logic, God, and so on, are based on the priority of freedom as transcendence. In transcending beings in a projective understanding, Dasein “lets” beings appear in these ways, as the ground of other beings. Indeed, insofar as we are ecstatically engaged with beings at all – which Dasein is (for the most part, as we will see) – then freedom allows beings to show up at all as possible grounds. Freedom in this sense would be prior to any determinate or ontic freedom that gains meaning from a particular comportment or understanding of beings, like objectivity. As prior, freedom is the condition for the appearance of any being whatsoever as a being, and thus is ontological. This means that, no matter the particular conception of freedom (e.g. negative, positive, political, moral) the freedom that allows beings to appear in the first place must act as the fundamental type of freedom. Only within a determinate understanding of being can anything like “positive” freedom arise at all, for the “towards-which” of this type of freedom must be staked out, “given” in advance. Freedom “belongs to human Dasein as *the fundamental constitution of this being, one that occurs prior to all comportment.*”<sup>173</sup> Consequently, freedom understood in the Kantian sense as rational freedom presupposes particular (ontic) domains as universal: the objectivity of nature and the spontaneity of reason as beginning a sequence of causality. For something to appear as an object at all, and thus for freedom to appear as

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<sup>172</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil, (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 134.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

a problem of reason, we must first ek-sist in the free-space of Dasein's thrownness in objective Being.<sup>174</sup>

With the reconceptualization of the subjectivity of the subject as the grounding *ab-Grund* of temporal transcendence, and the priority of this transcendence over the detached legislating subject set against present objects, it is clear that the normative metaphysics derived from these essential elements of Kant's ground-laying would be seriously affected. Recall that the primary faculties for the achievement of Kant's metaphysical intervention into indifferentism were reason and the understanding, and both, as thinking faculties, were essentially determined by the categories. If the categories cannot claim universal necessity and thinking is, in each case, essentially related to the imagination, then the metaphysical aims of reason to stabilize the world in first principles must suffer a crises of ground, and would take on the status *if possibilities* of Dasein as opposed to telic necessities. One way to think of this is by recalling that the transcendental ideas, for instance God is, like freedom, defined in relation to causality, as that which stands outside the causal realm and acts as a rational guarantor of the principle of sufficient reason, that everything perceivable has an explainable cause. The primacy of reason and with it logic would be undermined as *inessential* and *derivative* aspects of the being from which they are meant to define necessarily, and *thus would remain external to it*.<sup>175</sup> As Heidegger puts it, and against Kant's intentions, "The *Critique of Pure Reason*

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<sup>174</sup> Heidegger's notion freedom will be further discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>175</sup> A note on the derivative character of logic: Recall that Kant's categories were based on the "logical form of all possible judgments." Categories are deduced from logical forms which are deduced from all possible judgments. For Heidegger, judgements take place in the mode of "statement" (*Being and Time*, 151-53). A statement is "a pointing out which communicates and defines" through predication, which is itself only possible in the mode of "merely looking at" a thing (*Vorhandenheit*) (ibid). Judgments qua statements thus cut off a being from the circumspect and heedful understanding that constitutes our being-in-the-world.

itself thus rattles the mastery of reason and the understanding. ‘Logic’ is deprived of its prominence in metaphysics, which was built up from ancient times.”<sup>176</sup> For Heidegger, these presuppositions, which entail their connection with the sequential view of time and the uniformity of the subject, are rooted in a simple fact: Kant’s pre-understanding of the being of beings “remained on the undisturbed and safest level of pure self-evidentness,”<sup>177</sup> namely the objectivity of objects as understood through horizon of traditional logic. And to call such self-evidentness into question would require a radical questioning into the meaning of being—which despite his advances Kant more or less glossed over (or subsumed). This is why although Heidegger can appreciate Kant’s anticipation of fundamental ontology, he can nonetheless reduce his criticism of him to two fundamental and connected omissions: “Two things prevented Kant from gaining insight into [transcendence]: first, the neglect of the question of being in general, and second, and in conjunction with this, the lack of a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject.”<sup>178</sup> Kant could not adequately follow through on the second because he lacked an awareness of the first. And, because the very starting point of his analysis took as its guide the modern poles of reason and sensibility, subject and object, and even considering the discovery of the transcendental imagination, Kant’s thinking remained hemmed in from the start. For, even thinking Dasein as located *between* subject and object in the place of the transcendental imagination is already to prefigure its

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Heidegger concludes that statement is a derivative mode of interpreting entities that cannot be taken as exhaustive of the way in which we understand. Therefore the logical characters that are derived from judgments cannot claim universality.

<sup>176</sup> *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 170-71.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, 159.

<sup>178</sup> *Being and Time*, 23.

locality through an illegitimate metaphysical convention. Starting from subject and object, ultimately neither “cement nor even schema ... could ever put them back together.”<sup>179</sup>

Beyond these philosophical criticisms of Kant’s presuppositions, there is another reason that Heidegger gives that is significant for our purposes. As per our previous discussion of indifferentism, the capacity of pure reason to attain metaphysical principles was an essential requisite of Kant’s metaphysical intervention. If pure reason should fall, then so too would his enlightenment aims. Heidegger suggests that as Kant became ever attuned to his cultural surroundings and the failure of his philosophy to make the impact he had hoped, he became “increasingly under the spell of pure reason as reason,” as a legislative force.<sup>180</sup>

[With the first *Critique*] Kant had won “clear insight” into the character of the “universality” of ontologico-metaphysical knowledge. Now for the first time he had “rod and staff” in hand, in order to wander critically through the region of Moral Philosophy and to repair the indeterminate, empirical universality of popular philosophical doctrines by means of the essential originality of the ontological analyses which alone can situate a “Metaphysics of Morals” and the ground-laying thereof. In the struggle against the superficial and obscured empiricism of the predominant moral philosophy, the decisive demarcation of the pure *a priori* in opposition to everything empirical has attained a growing significance [since it is only through this] that rational character of pure knowledge and of action must be solidified.

... [But] the problematic of pure reason amplified in this way must push aside the power of the imagination, and with that it really first conceals its transcendental essence.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>180</sup> Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 118.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

Taking his transcendental structure as universally grounded, Heidegger equates Kant's subsequent entry into the public with that of the divine shepherd who guides the immature age from darkness to the righteous path of moral and metaphysical virtue. Such a darkness, following the metaphor, is aligned in this passage with the "superficial and obscured empiricism of the predominant moral philosophy" exemplified, as we know, by the *popularphilosophen*, an indicator of the "night" of indifferentism. But if Kant's entry into public could not gain its transcendental right (*Quid Juris*), since it simultaneously "pushed aside the power of the imagination" and "its transcendental essence," then the intervention lacks its legitimacy and Kant's critical attempt falls to an anthropological variant of the dogmatism he was behooved to overcome.

In this section I have tried to show the fundamental ontological reading that Heidegger carries out in the *Kantbook* with an eye to the implications that the transcendental imagination poses for the Kant's metaphysical intervention into indifferentism. We have concluded that Kant fails the right to intervene in that context based on several central weaknesses in his process of grounding, and as such his regulative metaphysics cannot claim indubitable authority they require. But in the last chapter we highlighted that, not only must the content of a critical philosophy be adequately stabilized, it must do so by securing itself against the problem of presupposition. Of course, the two are deeply connected. In the next section, I want to take up the methodological question once again and examine how Heidegger not only claims a starting point that does better than Kant's attempt with respect to presupposition, but rather how he accounts for the problem of

presupposition within his methodology in a way inaccessible to the very *orientation* of Kant's deductions.

### III. Methodology and Presupposition: Transcendental Deduction and Phenomenological Hermeneutics

*Concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.*<sup>182</sup>

—Kant

*The sail of thinking keeps trimmed hard to the wind of the matter.*<sup>183</sup>

—Heidegger

Given Heidegger's criticisms regarding the content of Kant's presuppositions we should ask whether these presuppositions are germane to Kant's method itself or if they are unrelated. Correspondingly, if Heidegger's arguments both for and against Kant's ground-laying are to be consistent, then his method must also secure itself against not only the assumptions of dominant themes in Kant's philosophy (as well as the Western tradition itself), but against the methodological problem of presupposition in general. In this section, we will take up these questions, situating Kant's transcendental method against Heidegger's early phenomenology with particular attention to the problem of presupposition. While I will focus on Heidegger's early method, it is important to keep in mind that while he does not retain many of his early techniques and orientations in his later work in their precision, since they are deemed too close to the tradition of

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<sup>182</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Professor Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, 1 edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), A 51/B75.

<sup>183</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2013), 6.

metaphysics, they are not, I think, wholly abandoned either.<sup>184</sup> We will have occasion to touch on a few aspects of his later methodology in the next chapter.

### *i. Heidegger's Method*

Both Kant and Heidegger can be understood as attempting to locate a suitable method from which philosophy can base itself against the problem of assumption. In his very early (1918) *Towards the Definition of Philosophy* Heidegger labels this the “Axiomatic Fundamental Problem” which is linked to his then concern of establishing philosophy as a “primordial science.”<sup>185</sup> If every science depends on a set of axioms (basic principles or concepts) that function as the origin for its factual assertions, and if philosophy has as its object the primordial origins of the sciences, then “the problem of philosophy is therefore the validity of the [primary] axioms.”<sup>186</sup> For Heidegger, the pursuit of securing axioms against presupposition is not so much a problem to be overcome, as it was with Kant, but rather to be understood as a positive and necessary aspect of thinking. The problem of presupposition not only characterizes an “essential characteristic of philosophy” as a historical matter of fact (pace Kant), but rather is said to be “unavoidable.”<sup>187</sup> How, then, is presupposition unavoidable and how does this unavoidability not cripple philosophy into mere relativism? What sort of incorporation of

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<sup>184</sup> One such difference that is that the early method takes place in something like a critical attitude, “destroying” prior ontology, much the same as Kant, called at the time “all destroyer,” did. But in the later work, Heidegger takes a different approach, where thinking the history of thought becomes thinking the history of being, and philosophers are expressions of that history. There can be no “criticism” here, only a revealing of prior ontology as a history bearing on Being’s destitution. See *End of Philosophy*, 77.

<sup>185</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 17.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

the problem of presupposition, which has plagued prior philosophy, lies here?

Accounting for these questions in Heidegger's work is by no means simple, as it calls us to explain the complex relations between phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ontology. I will give an overview of some of the pertinent aspects of these concepts here as they relate to method as it is developed especially in some of his earlier work (pre *Kehre*), though by no means claim to exhaust them.

In his own way, Heidegger carries on the well-known Husserlian maxim "to the things themselves!" This tells us, at first glance and in general terms the "towards-which" of phenomenological research. In *Ideas I*, Husserl clarifies the maxim as the "principle of principles," which reads: "that every originally presentive intuition is a legitimate source for cognition, that everything that is offered to us originally in intuition is simply to be accepted as that which is given, but also within the limits in which it is given."<sup>188</sup> Here, the "thing itself" is equated with that which is "originarily presented," that which is given, or that which is intuited. In the War emergency semester of 1918, Heidegger reformulates Husserl's principle approvingly: "Everything that is offered originarily in intuition is simply to be accepted...as that which is."<sup>189</sup> While Heidegger's is almost a verbatim condensation of Husserl's formulation, we can note the slight qualification that he includes: That which is offered in intuition is to be accepted *as that which is*. The phrase "that which is" points to the ontological dimension of the given, a point that will thematically distinguish Heidegger from his teacher over the course of the subsequent

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<sup>188</sup> Edmund Husserl and Dermot Moran, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 43.

<sup>189</sup> Cited in: Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection: Heidegger and Husserl on the Concept of Phenomenology*, trans. Kenneth Maly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2013), 82.

years. In *History of the Concept of Time*, for example, Husserl's phenomenological analysis of the transcendental ego will be found "neglectful" of the prior consideration of the meaning of being, which remains uncritically presupposed in that analysis in the direction of objectivity.<sup>190</sup> Husserl's "phenomenological research stands under the constraints of an old tradition... Contrary to its most proper principle, therefore, [Husserl's] phenomenology defines its most proper thematic matter not out of the matters themselves but instead out of a traditional prejudgment of it, albeit one that has become quite self-evident."<sup>191</sup> In claiming that Husserl's phenomenology is "un-phenomenological" in this way, Heidegger seeks to more radically realize the principle of principles by shifting it towards ontology, claiming that that which is originally given is being.<sup>192</sup> In other words, the possibility of phenomenology arriving at the originally given depends on its possible access to being as primordial to the objective-oriented tradition. This makes phenomenology and ontology two sides of the same coin: "Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. *Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible.*"<sup>193</sup> Or, directly addressing the principle of principles, "We come to the question of being as such only if our inquiry is guided by the drive to *question to the very end* or to *inquire into the beginning*, that is, if it is determined by the sense of the

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<sup>190</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 114.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>193</sup> *Being and Time*, 33.

phenomenological principle radically understood – which means by the matter itself – *to allow entities to be seen as entities in their being.*”<sup>194</sup>

These claims are deeply significant. They tell us that the question that orients the course of Heidegger’s thinking throughout his life, the question of being (*Seinsfrage*), is only possible through phenomenology. But while Heidegger’s uptake of the Husserlian maxim gives us a sense of the thematic divergences between their respective takes on phenomenology, the key to understanding these differences is not by simply distinguishing them thematically but by recognizing the specific method that accompanies the principle. As Heidegger puts it unequivocally, “Rightly conceived, phenomenology is the name for a methodology.”<sup>195</sup> Or: “phenomenology is a ‘methodological’ term, inasmuch as it is only used to designate the mode of experience, apprehension, and determination of that which is thematized in philosophy.”<sup>196</sup> Phenomenology is neither a “standpoint” nor “technical device” deployed here and there as it suits the “theoretical disciplines” (although it has since been taken up in this direction), but is rather the *how* of genuine philosophical research insofar as it makes possible a grasping of things themselves as they appear in themselves. This claim both pertains to the phenomenological “tradition” itself and also the method of *prior* philosophy, though it lacked a specific understanding of it and thus would run into errors based on method. There are two preliminary things worth mentioning here. First, the phenomenological meaning of method here is best understood as a *practice* that involves

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<sup>194</sup> *History of the Concept of Time*, 137.

<sup>195</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 20.

<sup>196</sup> *History of the Concept of Time*, 85. See also; *Being and Time*, 26; *Towards a Definition of Philosophy*.

a specific way of comporting towards the given. As a practice, it must be learned and performed, and its performance is set against more common ways of understanding, i.e. the orientation or “standpoint” of “theoretical explanation,” which takes leave of the intuited-given and too quickly attempts to explain it from “behind the scenes,” and the instrumental adoption of this or that method as a “technical device.” Set against these more common orientations, the practice, Heidegger warns, is difficult: “The primordial habitus of the phenomenologist...cannot be appropriated quickly” for it “becomes mere form and leads to occlusion of all genuine problems if it is handled mechanically, in the manner of routine.”<sup>197</sup> One must learn to occupy the appropriate “habitus” (which Heidegger does from visiting Husserl in his “workshop”).<sup>198</sup> Second, the content of phenomenology, the “originary given” (qualified by Heidegger as that which is “thematized in philosophy” i.e. the question of being), is in some sense coincidental with the method of access to that given: The disclosure of beings in their being is made possible through a phenomenological comportment, and this comportment is guided by what shows itself through it, those beings.<sup>199</sup> This, however, does not mean that beings are closed off from ordinary non-phenomenological understanding. Not at all, since phenomenology only has as its matter that which can be experienced. Rather, this is simply to say that phenomenology is the mode in which it is possible to thematically

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<sup>197</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 93.

<sup>198</sup> In *My Way to Phenomenology*, Heidegger recounts the difficulty he had in understanding phenomenology prior to meeting Husserl in 1919 in his “workshop,” with whose guidance he began to learn “phenomenological seeing, teaching, and learning” as opposed to going about philosophy by “simply reading philosophical literature” (*On Time and Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 78).

<sup>199</sup> One may identify a circle here similar to the one identified in Kant’s deductive method, and be sceptical about the ability of any theory to account for it. As will be shown, a theory cannot account for it, but phenomenological experience can. We will return to this. First, we must stick with explaining the method more concretely.

disclose both what is already there in the average understanding and, moreover, to deliberately explore those phenomena with any eye to their ‘essential’ structure, in Heidegger’s case, ontological structure. In general, this means that the gap between the method and that which is disclosed through it decreases almost entirely. As Heidegger puts it in the later *Time and Being*, “the method is not only directed towards the matter of philosophy. It does not just belong to the matter as a key belongs to a lock. Rather, it belongs to the matter because it is ‘the matter itself.’”<sup>200</sup> In this sense, phenomenology is not a philosophy *of* intuition or *of* the immediate, but rather simply reveals “the subject matter itself” through its own *enactment*.<sup>201</sup>

The coincidence between the method of phenomenology and the matter it brings itself into connection with is already located in the word itself. As Heidegger explains in *Being and Time*, the word “phenomenon” (from the Greek φαινόμενον) means that which “shows itself in itself.” It is distinguished from the word “appearance,” which implies a being not shown that stands behind the appearance and grounds it.<sup>202</sup> And the word “logos” (from the Greek λόγος) means “discourse” in the sense of “making manifest” by “letting something be seen” through “vocalization” and “indication.”<sup>203</sup> The phenomena that show themselves in themselves belong with the sight of the discourse that lets them be seen from themselves. Heidegger’s formulation reads: “To let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself.”<sup>204</sup> There is no separation here between

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<sup>200</sup> *On Time and Being*, 63.

<sup>201</sup> *History of the Concept of Time*, 88.

<sup>202</sup> *Being and Time*, 29.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

the object of theoretical inspection and the subject doing the inspecting, thus there is no theoretical problem of how the two poles can join together. Rather, following (in his own ontological way) Husserl's discovery of intentionality, Heidegger's phenomenology looks to the "belonging-together" of the matter and the thinking for which it appears prior to any theoretical separation. For Heidegger, such a separation implies an ontologically unnecessary (and ultimately alienating) commitment about the nature of Dasein from which all kinds of pseudo-problems follow (e.g. solipsism, scepticism, or idealism). And because it is precisely such separation that, according to Heidegger, permits ungrounded (or un-intuited) theoretical abstraction in this way, then phenomenology's claim to access the things themselves coincides with its claim to root out traditional presuppositions based in that mode of thinking. As Heidegger puts it, the fact that every step of phenomenological exploration must be secured in intuition means that it is methodologically against "all non-demonstrative determinations" and "opposed to all free-floating constructions, accidental findings...and taking over concepts only seemingly demonstrated."<sup>205</sup> If it is "transmitted in an empty and predisposed way of understanding, then it loses its roots in its native soil [the given] and becomes a free-floating naming."<sup>206</sup> It is, in other words, opposed to very possibility of dogmatism.<sup>207</sup>

These proclamations give clear notification of Heidegger's stance on the problem of presupposition: In a much more explicit way than Kant's transcendental method, Heidegger's phenomenology is meant to secure itself against any unaccounted for

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>206</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 87.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, *History of the Concept of Time*, 136.

construction, determination, or concept that comes with uncritically accepting this or that aspect of traditional metaphysics. What is unique to Heidegger's approach is that he identifies not necessarily presuppositions in this or that axiom (though he does do this, as we saw above), but rather with the theoretical-reflective attitude that typifies, most immediately, the Cartesian-Kantian-Husserlian line of philosophy and the co-emergent scientific worldview. For Heidegger, it is this *attitude*, or mode of reflection, that is in the first instance responsible for generating the types of errors that lead to the theoretical problem of presupposition in the first place. In a wonderfully simple explanation, Heidegger uses his experience of his lectern to elucidate what is involved in this mode of reflection. From this perspective, the lectern would appear as, for example, "brown surfaces, right angles from each other" or "a largish box with another smaller one set upon it."<sup>208</sup> These primary qualities would then function as "founding-connections, as if I would first see brown, intersecting surfaces that then reveal themselves to me as a box, then as a desk, then as a lectern, as if I had, as it were, stuck what makes it a lectern onto the box, like a label."<sup>209</sup> The key point here is that the perception of the thing qua object and its qualities is involved in the primary moment of apprehension, functioning as so many founding elements from which the subsequent meanings and relations are drawn out. Theoretical reflection apprehends "Things and objects, *which are then* conceived as meaning this and this" (my emphasis).<sup>210</sup> Against this attitude, and as early as 1918, Heidegger developed a mode of phenomenological seeing capable of disclosing or

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<sup>208</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 60.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

showing the *worldly* character of things in their lived immediacy. As Friedrich Von Hermann explains, such a mode of phenomenological comportment is not a “looking-at,” “which can easily be misunderstood in the sense of the reflective being-directed-to” of theoretical reflection, but rather is best grasped as a “looking-into” and “listening-into” the immediacy of the lived world.<sup>211</sup> When we perform this mode of phenomenological comporting, we notice that

there is no founding inter-connection [of primary qualities or basic objects]. All that is simply bad and misguided interpretation, diversion from the pure seeing into the experience. I see the lectern in one fell swoop, so to speak, and not in isolation, but as adjusted a bit too high for me. I see – immediately and so – a book lying upon it as annoying to me (a book, not a collection of layered pages with black marks strewn upon them), I see the lectern in an orientation, an illumination, a background.<sup>212</sup>

As Heidegger formulates it at this early stage, such a mode of seeing would be “in absolute sympathy with the living that is identical with living-experience itself”<sup>213</sup> without any “mental detours across thing-oriented [object-oriented] apprehension.”<sup>214</sup> Consequently, any mode of reflection that takes as its basis the theoretical attitude “is possible only as destroying the lived experience of the surrounding world.”<sup>215</sup>

While this mode of seeing offers a kind of basis for the type of phenomenal experience Heidegger is after, it is further nuanced later on. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, for example, Heidegger offers a rare and unfortunately scant explanation of his own method as operating through a triad of “reduction,”

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<sup>211</sup> Herrmann, *Hermeneutics and Reflection*, 64.

<sup>212</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 60.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

“construction,” and “destruction.” Much like Husserl’s epoché, Heidegger’s reduction must suspend the everyday natural attitude: “The reduction means leading phenomenological vision back from the [naïve/everyday] apprehension of a being [...] to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon the way it is unconcealed).”<sup>216</sup> Given that any apprehension is always an apprehension of a being, then the reduction allows us to view the apprehended being (the given) in its being, that is, in the manner it is understood (projected upon). But this initial “leading back” cannot be *at the expense of* the lived immediacy of the a-theoretical world of experience, since that would align Heidegger’s method with the theoretical tradition he is clearly combatting. It thus does not lead towards Husserl’s corresponding “transcendental reduction” into the pure ego (it is in this sense that the word “bracketing” might be misleading). It must rather open up a view *into* that world, that is, find a way to look and listen into the a-theoretical domain of lived immediacy. Heidegger must by necessity, for example, suspend the immediate everyday apprehension of beings so that he can write and think phenomenologically about Dasein, but he does so only so far as necessary to look back on the being of Dasein as it exists *in its lived immediacy, in that everydayness*.

This implies the second element of the triad, that of construction: “For the guidance of vision back from beings to being requires that we should bring ourselves forward positively toward being itself [the being of the being].”<sup>217</sup> There are a few

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<sup>216</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 21.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* Heidegger has not at this point (1927) have a clear sense of the distinction between the ontological difference (being of beings/beings in their being) and “Being itself.” The distinction would become pivotal later on, but what he means here by “being itself” (*Sein Selbst*) while signalling the overall horizon of the questioning (towards the meaning of being itself) is nonetheless thought, I think, from the perspective of the ontological difference. The way towards “being itself” is approached through the ecstatic/projective

important things I would like to draw out of this aspect. The first is that it dissuades any suggestion of naïve realism that might have appeared in the previous suggestion that the method comes into “absolute sympathy with lived experience.” The reduction is not innocent and does not amount to something like an all-seeing sovereign gaze. Rather, in its positive dimension, it necessarily includes the “point of view,” “direction of view,” and “range of view” of the looking, i.e. the facticity and orientation that comprises any interpretation whatsoever.<sup>218</sup> This means that the reductive-constructive dyad implies an interpretation of Dasein that is bound by the factic circumstances it is set within.

Heidegger says, in this regard, that philosophy is an “awakening of Dasein to itself” in the sense of a deliberate disclosure of Dasein to itself from *within* the supervening constraints of its hermeneutic facticity.<sup>219</sup> To be sure, and to dissuade any overly subjectized depiction of what is meant by “interpretation,” while the interpretation is set within hermeneutical constraints, the constraints themselves are already given by the matter itself, for the matter, too, appears as it is within the horizon allowed by the “hermeneutic situation.” Second, because Heidegger’s questioning is with respect to being, and being is claimed as the originary phenomenological given, then in the first instance any reductive recursion must still remain within being, and thus even though it is *from* beings in their everyday apprehension, it is also necessarily a movement *towards* beings. More specifically, however, it must orient us towards the crucial possibility of

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disclosure of Dasein that, while never abandoned, becomes integrated into his later notion of being itself as truth or alethea, concealment/unconcealment.

<sup>218</sup> From ‘The Hermeneutical Situation’ in Günter Figal, ed., *The Heidegger Reader*, trans. Jerome Veith (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 39.

<sup>219</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Ontology--The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (Bloomington, Ind.; Chesham: Indiana University Press, 2008), 14.

understanding beings *in their way of being*: from everyday apprehension “to the understanding of the being of this being (projecting upon the way it is unconcealed).”<sup>220</sup> Because “being is not accessible like a being,” that is, we cannot point to being as we can this cup or book beside me, the being of these beings must be *brought into view*, Heidegger says, in what he calls a “free projection:” a projecting of the “antecedently given being upon its being and the structures of its being.”<sup>221</sup> I understand this as follows: When we move from reduction to construction, insofar as we do so phenomenologically (and that means ontologically) we do so with an eye to the way of being of those beings encounterable through that reduction. Since we are guided in the first instance by ontological questioning, moreover, and correspondingly the question of Dasein’s relation to being, then this orientation towards the being of beings takes place in the field of Dasein’s understanding/projecting of beings. But to get at the being of beings we have to “freely” project, which I take as entering a kind of “ecstatic openness” that allows beings to reveal themselves in themselves, at first partially, and with effort more fully, such that we can slowly build or “construct” a description of the beings way of being, like Dasein’s own. This process is often quite elaborate, as it is with the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*, which slowly circles the way of being of Dasein to tease out its “existential structure.” But it can also be seen in his later works where art, poetry, or things are given rich phenomenological descriptions in this circular manner for the intention of drawing out their ontological meaning from simple starting points.

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<sup>220</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 21.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

What about the third aspect, that of destruction? Because, Heidegger says, every projection of being “occurs in a reductive recursion from beings,” and this “commencement towards being [construction] is obviously always determined by the factual experience of beings and the range of possibilities of experience that at any time are peculiar to factual Dasein [including the phenomenologist],” then the “possibilities of access and modes of interpretation of beings are themselves diverse, varying in different historical circumstances.”<sup>222</sup> The variation of historical possibilities for the “occurrence” of contemporary Dasein can only be appreciated through an awareness of the history of being, of the way in which being has been revealed or understood throughout the tradition of Western thought and which still infuses contemporary Dasein. Indeed, thinking is so deeply entangled by traditional concepts that the question of the meaning of being itself must proceed with a critical eye to the tradition that has both given it as a question in the first place and shaped our understanding of it in advance. As Heidegger will put it much later, “one cannot speculate about [the givenness of Being] precipitately and without a foothold. The ‘there is’ rules the history of Being. Therefore the thinking that thinks into the truth of being is, as thinking, historical thinking.”<sup>223</sup> Thus, “all philosophical discussion, even the most radical attempt to begin all over again, is pervaded by traditional concepts and thus by traditional horizons and angles of approach, which we cannot assume with unquestionable certainty to have arisen originally and genuinely from the domain of being they claim to comprehend.”<sup>224</sup> The task here is to

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>223</sup> From the ‘Letter on Humanism.’ Cited in: *Pathmarks*, 255.

<sup>224</sup> *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 21.

“loosen up history” and “arrive at those primordial experiences in which we achieved our first ways of determining the nature of Being.”<sup>225</sup> Similar to the reduction-construction unity, historical “destruction” must also, then, involve the other two: a recursion from beings (reduction) towards being (construction) also requires a destruction of the history of thought as a history of ontology. Thus, insofar as the other two are implied in it, Heidegger clarifies destruction as “de-construction,” and it is obviously this aspect of the method that is most pronounced in his reading of Kant’s first *Critique*.

Together, then, the three elements of Heidegger’s method mentioned in *Basic Problems* function as a kind of methodological unity, inviting phenomenological thinking into a back and forth between its mutually implied moments, each of which attuned to the manner in which beings are revealed in the historicity of the lived immediacy of Dasein.

With respect to the problem of presupposition, then, we can distinguish here two elements that can now be taken into account. The first is the claim that phenomenology grasps things themselves in the performance of a mode of seeing that sticks with lived intuition. This element is specifically levied against the introduction of theoretically generated presuppositions harboured by traditional metaphysics, which too easily take leave of things themselves and look to explain them behind the scenes or, to use Kant’s phrase, by “building castles in the sky.” This, for Heidegger, is one of the central generators of unfounded abstractions and their cementation into philosophical presumption. But, second, this is not to say that presuppositions are overcome *tout court*. On the contrary, instead of trying to account for the problem by claiming an alternative absolute beginning for philosophy by way of some theoretical axiom or principle (which

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<sup>225</sup> *Being and Time*, 45.

would simply regenerate the problem), Heidegger *accounts* for theoretical presupposition by demonstrating that they are grounded in the necessary circularity of Dasein's hermeneutic facticity (whose structure of understanding takes the open form of fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception, i.e. is fundamentally projective, and thus is also always entangled with interpretation).<sup>226</sup> Second, *and by necessary extension*, he *integrates* presupposition as a positive feature of the method that explores that hermeneutic existence.<sup>227</sup> He achieves this by becoming both critically self-aware of its own presuppositions *as* presuppositions and by *using those presuppositions positively as the starting point for phenomenological exploration*.

A critical question can be raised at this point. What begins the enactment of a philosophical investigation in the first place? How does Heidegger's phenomenology secure the particular field of investigation at the outset? Is not *this* beginning, this always-already orientation towards a specific question, itself a presupposition? We might already glean the answer to this question from the foregoing, but we can be especially clear here by explaining Heidegger's use of what he calls "formal indication" (*formale Anzeige*). The function of a formal indication – a concept or idea broadly – is to point in the direction of a phenomenological investigation, where that investigation attempts to fulfill or concretize the indicator given at the outset. Initially, the phenomenological meaning of the concept is not yet secured, but its very existence as a concept or idea allows for its

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<sup>226</sup> *Being and Time*, 7, 148.

<sup>227</sup> The hermeneutic facticity of Dasein is necessarily connected with the phenomenological method insofar as the latter is by no means external to the former—phenomenology is a possibility of Dasein and not some privileged position outside of it: "Philosophy is a mode of knowing which is in factual life itself and in which factual Dasein is ruthlessly dragged back to itself and relentlessly thrown back upon itself" (*Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 14).

phenomenological meaning to be drawn out. It thus indicates towards its own possible fulfillment without being fulfilled at the outset. It exists in phenomenological potentiality, or as Heidegger puts it in *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, “determinate indeterminateness.”<sup>228</sup> The technique is widely used in Heidegger’s work, but we can look at a broad example to help explain it: After having discovered the question of being as a site of neglect in the history of metaphysics, Heidegger is immediately thrown back – via the question itself (i.e. the matter itself) – on the being of the being for whom being can be a question at all, namely Dasein. Initially, Dasein is taken simply to *indicate* the being that is capable of asking such a question, a being that in each case we are, without presuming anything in advance about the nature of this being. No “arbitrary idea of being and reality, no matter how ‘self-evident’ it is, may be brought to bear on this being in a dogmatically constructed way.”<sup>229</sup> Subsequent elaborations of Dasein’s ontological structure are fulfilments of the initial indication of Dasein’s implied relation to being. Keeping with his discovery of the primordial world of the a-theoretical world of lived immediacy as *the* domain of appropriate phenomenological description (insofar as it is necessarily concerned with ontology, as Heidegger claims it is), moreover, Heidegger also *indicates* that the foundation from which such a beginning should start is simply Dasein in its “undifferentiated” structure of “average everydayness.” Thus begins an analytic of the structure of the being for whom being can become an issue from the basis of lived Dasein in its a-theoretical worldly *existence*. We have here , the, two very broad

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<sup>228</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 14. In this sense, the indicator must not be construed negatively as in some sense “mediated,” as an appearance behind which there is a deeper reality (Heinrich Rickert commits this misunderstanding, which Heidegger corrects at *HCT*, 88). It is phenomenologically positive with potential intuitable content.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

indicators: being and existence (Dasein). Heidegger affirms the use of formal indication along precisely these lines in the methodological survey in section 63 of *Being and Time*: “The formal indication [*formale Anziage*] of the idea of existence was guided by the understanding of being in Dasein itself... The idea of existence that we have posited gives us an outline of the formal structure of the understanding of Dasein in general, and does so that is not binding from an existentiell point of view.”<sup>230</sup> In other words, the “understanding of being in Dasein,” which refers to the step from the question of being in general to the question of the being of the being who can ask the question, “guides” (or formally indicates) the question towards the “idea of existence” from which the existential analytic takes *its* formally indicating point of departure. The text is a concretization of that indication, itself set within the broader indication of the question of being, and unfolds into other domains of indication (“understanding,” “guilt,” etc.). Both open massive domains of exploration, indeed ones that are taken to be the most primordial of all, and Heidegger will always stay, despite the many paths he takes, within them.

The scope of this all-too cursory example is helpful for showing how formal indication applies to the broad development of Heidegger’s (early) thinking: from the question of being (formal indicator) arises the question of Dasein’s existence (formal indicator), from which arises the existential analytic that attempts to fulfill the latter and prepare a way into the former. It is used, I think, in less overt permutations across all of Heidegger’s works – from the “common sense” indicator of technology as instrument in

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid, 299-300.

the *Question Concerning Technology*, to that of ‘art,’ ‘thing,’ ‘equipment’ and ‘work’ in *The Origin of the Work of Art*.

Crucially, moreover, not only is the articulation and exploration of indication meant to take place on the side of the phenomenologist undertaking the investigation, but so too with the reader-cum-phenomenologist. When I read “existence” in *Being and Time*, or more specific features like “guilt” or later concepts like “poetic dwelling,” I must attempt to stage an experiential encounter with those phenomenon in my own way in sympathy with the manner they are being described. Only in this way can I be said to be fulfilling the indicators of that text in the manner appropriate to its articulation. As Gadamer explains it, “The ‘formal indication’ points us in the direction in which we are to look. *We* must learn to say what shows up there and learn to say it in our own words. For only our own words, not repetitions of someone else’s, awaken in us the vision of the thing that we ourselves were trying to say.”<sup>231</sup> This, of course, puts particularly intense – yet incredibly rewarding – demands on the reader.

While the domain indicated positively yields its own concretization, it is itself never absolutized, in two senses. First, it yields new domains by “creatively unveiling of new spheres of problems”<sup>232</sup> This is what occurred between the question of being yielding the question of Dasein, and gives the process an ongoing positive intent that is never totalized. Second, it is self-consciously understood as factually and historically given, as Heidegger would later put it, as that which begins a “path” of thinking. This applies to the many specific domains of Heidegger’s inquiry –from Dasein to poetry to

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<sup>231</sup> Cited in: Ryan Streeter, “Heidegger’s Formal Indication: A Question of Method in *Being and Time*,” *Man and World* 30, no. 4 (1997): 420.

<sup>232</sup> Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*.

technology and so on – and even to the question of being itself: “Even the ontological investigation which we are now conducting is determined by the historical situation and, therewith, by certain possibilities of approaching beings and by the preceding philosophical tradition.”<sup>233</sup> This awareness of the conditions by which the phenomenon is given should also be a measure against the threat of a dogmatic “hardening” of the domains of phenomenology themselves. With respect to being, this is evidenced by Heidegger’s ceaseless attempt find the adequate language to say being in its simplicity: e.g. ontological difference, Being, *Lichtung*, *Ereignis*, *Es gibt*.<sup>234</sup>

The points discussed so far further coincide with Heidegger’s definition of phenomenology as a “possibility.” To say that phenomenology is a possibility is “rightly understood in its most proper sense when it continues to be taken as a possibility and preserved as a possibility.”<sup>235</sup> More specifically:

Preserving phenomenology as a possibility does not mean to fix a chance state of research and inquiry as ultimately real and allow it to harden; it rather means to keep open the tendency towards the matter themselves and to liberate this tendency from the persistently pressing, latently operative and spurious bonds of the tradition. This is just what is meant by the motto “Back to the things themselves.”<sup>236</sup>

Heidegger’s method, then, if it is to live up to its articulation, must be steadfastly oriented against its closure into theoretical abstraction or other forms of un-phenomenological concealment. As Heidegger puts it, “Being covered up is the counter-concept to

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<sup>233</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.

<sup>234</sup> I am indebted here to Richard Capobianco’s excellent study of the many ways Heidegger attempts to say the simplicity of Being as the “*Ur-phenomenon*” of Dasein’s existence. (Richard M. Capobianco, *Heidegger’s Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2015).

<sup>235</sup> *Being and Time*, 36

<sup>236</sup> Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 136.

‘phenomenon.’”<sup>237</sup> To be sure, this does not imply, on the other hand, that it can fully unconceal phenomenon in their totality and transparency. Rather, to uncover is always accompanied by coverings: “There are accidental coverings and necessary ones, the latter grounded in the enduring nature of the discovered.”<sup>238</sup> The possibility of discovery *endures* despite this or that unconcealment. This is exemplified by the repeated statements in, for example, *Being and Time* regarding its necessary incompleteness, and also Heidegger’s later more sensitive appreciation of the essential concealment of Being itself, the task always remaining open-ended. Indeed, Heidegger confesses at one point that, owing to this constitutive inclusion of presupposition, the difficulty of this research “rests precisely in making it self-critical in a positive sense.”<sup>239</sup> We can understand the statement that phenomenology remains a possibility in at least two senses: It remains a possibility because, first, the phenomenologist must remain self-critical, guided by given starting points, and, second, because the matter itself constantly reveals itself in new ways and discovery is always possible. Indeed, to understand this relationship is to understand matter and thinking as belonging-together in the ecstatic hermeneutical sense that is implied in both terms.

Let’s summarize some of the crucial elements of Heidegger’s phenomenology with respect to presupposition. Heidegger is consciously aware of the philosophical problem of presupposition and tries to integrate it positively into his own method. This positive integration itself rests on the phenomenological discovery of the hermeneutical

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<sup>237</sup> *Being and Time*, 34.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> *History of the Concept of Time*, 87

existence of Dasein that is itself invariably caught up in presupposition and circularity—yet of the sort that positively define its ecstatic existence. Phenomenology as a method can by no means pretend to secure itself outside of this hermeneutic facticity, since it itself is a possibility of Dasein. Indeed, the very notion that presupposition is avoidable rests on a mistaken theoretical attitude that purports access to the theoretically axiomatic. As a unique philosophical possibility of Dasein, phenomenology involves the triad of reduction, construction and destruction in their mutual implications, and gets underway by the guidance of certain formal indicators that open up the domain of inquiry, the most general of which, for Heidegger, is the question of being. These formal indicators may never close, but “creatively open up into new spheres of problems,” and invite both intuitive-experiential fulfilment by the interlocutor as well as ongoing further critical clarification of the phenomenon. The method is also self-consciously historical, aware of the manner in which the problems and indications it begins with are given by virtue of the tradition of philosophy it is set within, which it subjects to ontological scrutiny in an attempt to “deconstruct” prior metaphysics in a positive way. The exploration of history is accompanied by the realization that the method itself pushes against that tradition from the perspective of questions that appear in the present, yet, insofar as the specific question is ontological, this de-constructive orientation to history is at the same time an undermining of the metaphysics of actuality, which hemmed in the very possibility of phenomenology itself to realize itself as a possibility. All this attests to a positive integration of presupposition – constitutive Dasein – into what can now only loosely be defined as Heidegger’s “method.”

It should be clear, then, that the problem of presupposition – and the corresponding problem of circularity – are by no means foreign to Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology, but necessary and positive aspects of it. If it is said to be “overcome” it is only by exposing their necessity for Dasein as projective and, by extension, the thinking that attempts to disclose it.

### *ii. Kant’s Method Reconsidered*

Finally, we can return to the overarching question this section was preparing: How do things stand with the transcendental method of Kant? First of all, this depends on how we understand Kant’s manner of approach, and as the previous section has implied, it is not so easy to simply cast aside Kant’s method as one of abstract deduction or even, for that matter, as necessarily leading to foundationalism. It is possible to understand his exploration of the subject as phenomenological in a loose sense, as guided by the matter itself – the subject as knower – and following that matter, that domain, into the phenomenological conditions that make it possible. Kant must have been a great explorer, as is often said, if he could continue to discover new faculties and so imaginatively draw out their relations. When we think of “analysis” as “revealing” and “loosening-up” we approach the phenomenological possibility of his thinking, a point that Heidegger shares with respect to his understanding of Kant’s method, as well as his own.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, and as was mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Heidegger did not himself see anything

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<sup>240</sup> Heidegger says that we should not think of Kant’s “analysis” in terms of an “unknotting” and “breaking up of finite reason into its elements, but rather the reverse: an ‘unknotting’ as a freeing which loosens the seeds of ontology. It unveils those conditions from which an ontology as a whole is allowed to sprout” (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 29).

particularly wrong with many of his central methodological concepts: He followed a broadly transcendental approach, oriented towards conditions of possibility, at least at the stage of *Being and Time*: Being was thought, at that time, as the “*transcendens* pure and simple,” which lead to a disclosure of the “existential *a priori*” of the way of being of Dasein in a broadly Kantian sense.<sup>241</sup> Nor did he see anything pernicious with the critical orientation that is at its foundation, upon which he was thrown back when he moved from the general question of the meaning of being onto the being for whom being can be a question at all, which implied a critical destruction of prior ontology. Nor with the term “analytic,” which was mobilized in terms of his analytic of the “existence of Dasein” and operated in the similar manner of “releasing” a general domain of existence and setting free its “*a priori*” elements, albeit in a hermeneutical way. Loosely conceived, then, each of these elements of Kant’s method are seen as compatible with phenomenological ontology, and evidence the malleability of interpreting Kant’s broad methodological manner of approach into Heidegger’s own. What, then, can distinguish them? There are three points that, I think, may set their differences in relief in favour of phenomenology.

First, the transcendental analytic proceeds in the manner of the *theoretical attitude*. This is obvious from the fact that the deduction begins with the premise of objective experience from which it goes on to explain the conditions of possibility for that premise. That things appear in the manner of objectivity of at all attests to Kant’s

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<sup>241</sup> “*A priori*” in Heidegger’s usage means, simply, prior. Though not in terms of the vulgar conception of time as prior in a sequence of nows, but rather prior in the sense of that which is projected in advance such that beings can show themselves as beings at all. Being is thus *a priori* because it is that which is projected on beings “in advance,” which is closer to simultaneity, emerging together. There is a freedom in this distinction between beings and their being, which centres on the ecstatic possibilities of Dasein, and which allows both beings to show up as they are, but also for that showing to take many different modes. Thus, being is also the *transcendens*. It is the transcendental *a priori* in a different though not unrelated sense as Kant. See: *Basic Problems*, 20.

attitude going in, operating in the mode “presence-to-hand,” an ontologically derivative comportment that by no means can claim exclusive right to what is meant by experience, as revealed by the opening up of the a-theoretical realm of Dasein. Kant was, after all, trying to ground the sciences, and the way he thought this was possible was by making *that* manner of seeing the ground for of *all* manners of seeing. The first criticism, then, has to do with the very attitude that prefigures Kant’s analysis and already limits the domain of givenness to that of abstracted cognition of objects. The validity of this criticism rests on “accepting” an alternative mode of disclosure, the a-theoretical, which appears to be more fundamental.

Second, Kant’s transcendental deduction is oriented towards the *actual* structures of cognition that prefigure any experience. Even when they are not used correctly, i.e. when judgments are poor or we don’t recognize such and such, the categories nonetheless remain latent as condition of possibility for coming-to recognize objects as objects, which the understanding always seeks (as it is constitutively oriented by the principle of sufficient reason). The consequence of this tendency towards actuality is that it is susceptible to its own “hardening” into an “architectonic” for the purpose of a “canonical” measure against all other thinking. From a Heideggerian perspective, this would inhibit the character of thinking as determined by the temporal mode of possibility, which is essentially interpretative and ecstatic. In section seven of *Being and Time*, for example, Heidegger writes that: “Our elucidations of the preliminary concept of phenomenology shows that its essential character does not consist in its *actuality* as a philosophical moment” which is accompanied by a footnote that reads “i.e., not in the

transcendental-philosophic direction of Kantian critical idealism.”<sup>242</sup> This says that in its orientation towards actuality the latter “covers over” possibility and phenomenological interpretation. He therefore has Kant in mind when he writes:

Within a “system” the structures and concepts of being that are available, but concealed with respect to their autochthony, may perhaps claim their rights. On the basis of their integrated structure in a system they present themselves as something “clear” which is no need of further justification and which therefore can serve as a point of departure for a process of deduction.<sup>243</sup>

The clarity of the “structures and concepts of being” that found the Kantian system may present themselves as obvious, i.e. that being is objective, but it is precisely this obviousness – which is inherited and cemented by the Cartesian tradition – that conceals the source from which they are given and, moreover, allows the conditions derived from them take on the status of actuality. Heidegger calls this “dissimulation,” and says that it is the “most frequent and the most dangerous kind [of concealment], because here the possibilities of being deceived and misled are especially pernicious.”<sup>244</sup> While Kant’s transcendental implies an actualized structure of being in this way, Heidegger’s sense of the “transcendental” as indicating the possibilities of the way of being of Dasein allows for these possibilities to remain possibilities within that most “general” of phenomenon, being, which is never actualized.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 36.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. It is worth noting, however, that Heidegger comes to see that what is systematic about Kant’s thinking is of a different sort than what occurs in Fichte and Hegel. If Kant’s thinking is systematic, it is systematic in relation to his normative aims, where each faculty retains its function in relation to the whole based on self-evident purposes, without deciding on the absolute structure of “things in themselves.” The ideas of reason, as we have seen, are only immanently necessary, conditional on certain aims that we evidently orient ourselves towards: knowledge and morality. *Unconditional* necessities for Kant are an “abyss,” that is ungrounded in themselves (A 613/B 641).

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> That being is said to replace the categories as a new transcendental may suggest simply a repetition of the same problem that Kant’s transcendental system is criticized for, claiming a universal *a priori* as *the*

Finally, as was hinted at in the previous quoted passage, Heidegger dissuades against the use of *deduction* by relating it to the concealing forces of systematicity and actuality. Let's look into the status of deduction itself. For Kant, a deduction is always a deduction of the transcendental *a priori* and not a strictly logical deduction. Thus the criticism must not too quickly appeal to a logical procedure – an abstract equation of premises to conclusions, for X to be true Y must also be true – but rather must regard the thematic it is set within, an analysis of the immanent processes of consciousness, which situates it in the general direction of phenomenology. In other words, we should take heed of the sympathetic terrain between the two thinkers for without doing so we would threaten to conceal the precise methodological difference we are after.

Within this terrain, we can wonder at whether Kant's transcendental deduction implies a kind of leap, or severance of the phenomena for the purpose of grounding, a severance that, while implied in the logical rendition, is unique to Kant's efforts. There is some textual evidence that suggests such a severance in Heidegger's view. In section three of *Being and Time*, for example, and on the back of a brief discussion of Kant, Heidegger distinguishes his approach as "genealogical" against a "deductive" approach, albeit only in passing: "And precisely the ontological task of a genealogy of the different possible ways of being (a genealogy which is not to be construed deductively) requires a preliminary understanding of 'what we preliminarily understand by the meaning of

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definitive one, that *this* condition is now the one that practical choices are judged by universally. There is some reason to accept this concern, but whatever criticisms come by way of it, they would have to sufficiently account for the fact that being is *not* actual, and as such permits any and all ontic variations: from theoretical inspection to handiwork to sports or whatever. Thus there is no specific ontic horizon that being forces us into, rather, it emerges along with and inextricably tied to those ontic decisions and ways of being.

being.”<sup>246</sup> This is the only instance that Heidegger uses the word “genealogy” in that text, but, from the root words, we can see that it refers to “genetic” and “allowing things to be seen.” A genetic phenomenology would allow those “root” phenomenon of our possible ways of being to reveal themselves through the course of intuited “releasements” of those phenomenon. From this we can glean, at the very least, that by Heidegger’s estimation deduction does not proceed in the appropriate manner, that it does not secure itself in this genetic-phenomenological approach.

Another demonstration, also negative, comes a bit later on in section seven, where Heidegger is trying to say what the appropriate “phenomenon of phenomenology” are. There, he distinguishes against the vulgar concept of phenomenon as “mere appearance,” which implies something behind the appearance which does not appear, as well as against the Kantian sense of “empirical phenomenon” which does *not* imply something behind the scenes,<sup>247</sup> and thus is “formally” acceptable, but not yet the type of phenomenon he is after.<sup>248</sup> The proper phenomenon of phenomenology, he says, is that “which *already* shows itself in appearances” in the second, ontic sense. This “already” means just the same as “genetic.” Thus, he goes on to say, carrying on the Kantian analogy, “what shows itself in itself (the *forms of intuition*) are the phenomenon of phenomenology. For clearly space and time must be able to show themselves in this way...if Kant can be said to make a valid transcendental statement that space and time are the *a priori*

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<sup>246</sup> *Being and Time*, 10.

<sup>247</sup> Heidegger takes what has come to be known in the Kant literature as a “one world” approach to the question of phenomenon and things in themselves. The distinction, on this view, is not a metaphysical one, which implies a metaphysical entity *behind* the empirical phenomenon, but rather an epistemological one, that we cannot *know* the things in themselves.

<sup>248</sup> *Being and Time*, 30.

‘wherein’ of an ordering.”<sup>249</sup> What more does this tell us? Recall that Kant reserved a specific name for the type method he used in the Transcendental Aesthetic, concerned with the forms of intuition. He called them “expositions.” To exposit is to expose, to show. He did not see it fit to carry this expository approach forward into the transcendental deduction, which is given its own name. Perhaps there is something hinging on the character of an “exposition” in Kant’s language over that of a “deduction.” It is telling, in other words, that Heidegger would not include the *a priori* of the Transcendental Logic, the categories as the phenomenon of phenomenology, even despite the fact that both the forms of intuition and the categories are taken to be *a priori* in a general sense. Also of note here is that Kant himself called the logical form of all possible judgments just a “clue” from which to base a deduction, and then went on to attempt to secure the categories derived from them as definitive and universally necessary. Does this not imply a prior methodological severance from the phenomenon, indicating a gap in the procedure, a gap made possible by the inherited poles of reason and sensibility of prior metaphysics, yet a gap impossible if one is just “exposing” what reveals itself from our manner of existing, demonstrably so? Does this not raise suspicion that Kant’s transcendental deduction harbours an unsecured demonstration, that it sutures two phenomenon, intuition and categories, despite the incredible temporal depths he discovers in that process of deduction? Is this “suturing” not implied by the universality and necessity (*Quid Juris*) that this relationship intends? I believe all of these points do

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

suggest that the deductive aspect of Kant's transcendental method does indeed imply something like a gap or severance from the phenomenon.<sup>250</sup>

Barring the possible constitutive limitations of the transcendental deductive procedure, the primary criticism of Kant's method has had less to do with the specific operations of his analysis – as many of them (transcendental, critique, analysis) are for the most part quite malleable in the direction of Heidegger's (early) phenomenology – but rather had more to do with the thematic and normative ambitions that these mutually supportive methods seek to secure, that is, towards actuality and closure. This should not be surprising, since Kant himself elides (in a similar way as Heidegger) the distinction between the method and the content of his philosophy altogether. Recall, the *Critique of Pure Reason* was, in addition to all its positive claims, also regarded as a “treatise on method,” and thus it matters deeply the purposes and intentions that the mode of argumentation it deploys are set within, for within a horizon that seeks closure and actuality the use of critique, analysis, and transcendental, for example, will tend in a sympathetic direction. While Heidegger's intentions are broadly similar to Kant's insofar as they are also oriented towards claiming the primordial matter of philosophy, i.e. the

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<sup>250</sup> More needs to be thought on this point. Taking the categories as a “clue” is not in itself phenomenologically problematic. It says nearly the same as “formal indication,” and Heidegger uses the word in some places in just this sense. The deduction takes a given, and seeks a condition of possibility, using a clue as a lead-in for that condition. It then searches for those conditions with recourse to the form of thinking, logic, and then asks how they can come together. The conditions are not nothing, but phenomenologically positive. The issue would be that the condition is understood narrowly, as the sole condition, and that once it is discovered the matter becomes closed. This is implied in Kant's leniency towards the objective side of the deduction, which suits “his chief ends.” But if Heidegger's point about Kant's neglect of the “subjective deduction” is correct, we might pause on this point, for Kant's thinking would then be turned (at least at some point) from closure to openness: He would have been poised at one point to continue the “deduction” into the “subjectivity of the subject,” but did not *for extraneous reasons*. This being-poised implies further phenomenological exploration, which Heidegger takes up. The matter then remains, in the last instance, undecided with respect to the use of “deduction.”

question of metaphysics (being), his advances in this direction are co-aligned with his destruction of traditional metaphysics and the authority of presence or actuality and the simultaneous opening up of a way of seeing that remains constitutively open. Thus, even if we take Kant as a proto-phenomenologist, offering a phenomenological description of the conditions by which our experience of objective beings are possible, as Heidegger does in the *Kantbook*, it is still the case that he only follows the phenomena, in the most generous reading, as far as is necessary to reaffirm the identity of the categorically determined subject and ground his normative aims of enlightenment. We can say this while still permitting the possibility that, at one point at the beginning of his critical period, Kant was seduced by the things themselves and not by the legislative force of reason.

In criticizing Kant's method and the closure of his thinking from the perspective of Heidegger's early method, I am not intending to let Heidegger off the hook. For while phenomenological hermeneutics, as described here, makes significant advances in approaching a self-critical yet "positive" methodological orientation that integrates the problem of presupposition without yielding relativism or scepticism, it also must be acknowledged as making possible a similar sort of hubris emblematic of Kant, and indeed much of the philosophical tradition more generally. The idea that one "merely describes" the phenomenon "as they give themselves" has the potential to lead to the same kind of dogmatic conceit that comes with a systematic philosophy. I do not think this is necessary, however, and I think that the basic features of phenomenology described here have the potential to lead to an auto-critical, explorative, pluralistic orientation that is open to its own concealments. Heidegger did conceive his own philosophy in along some

of these terms,<sup>251</sup> even if he also used it to legitimize Nazism. Perhaps an explicit radicalization of the hermeneutical finitude of Dasein into phenomenological thinking – which should be there all along – would aid in this respect. So while, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger says that “concealment” is the “counter-concept to phenomenology,”<sup>252</sup> giving the sense of an exuberant frontier of constant unconcealment, I believe he makes an important discovery, or better, offers an important lesson, that the unconcealment of being is always simultaneously a concealment. This implies that if thinking in the manner of phenomenology is to be retained it must be attentive to its own concealments, no matter the enchantment of the things themselves.

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<sup>251</sup> Yet this claim – which cannot be developed here – must be set within a discussion of the “purpose” of philosophy. The worry here centers around what can be considered what Nietzsche called “the attitude of philosophers,” specifically in terms of philosophy’s claim to disclose the “essential,” the essence of, to put it bluntly, thinking and acting. That we should want “pluralism” in this domain is, potentially, to draw it from its aims and towards a more “modest” attitude towards different philosophical orientations. But there is evidence, in Heidegger’s case, that he always encouraged thinking in general, and was supportive to his students and often generous to his interlocutors in engaging in dialogue, yet while still retaining strength of his own line of thinking. Pluralism, here, is included, though still within the general domain of classical philosophical-metaphysical questioning. Heidegger does not understand the “provisional” or “open-ended” nature of his thinking, then, as implying a “pretended modesty,” but as rather generated by the matter itself and the “finitude of thinking and of what is to be thought” (Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), 35).

<sup>252</sup> *Being and Time*, 34.

#### IV. Summary & Conclusion

Taking as my guide the structural unity between the elements of Kant's critical intervention into indifferentism, I was led to interrogate the "right" of his intervention in the "grounding" function of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Questioning into the ground, I was led, via Heidegger's reading of the first *Critique*, to identify two competing grounds. The first, the unity of apperception, leads to the host of uncritical assumptions that Heidegger identifies in Kant's thinking. The second, the time-forming transcendental imagination, leads to an opening of transcendental philosophy along the lines of fundamental ontology and onto the phenomenological domain of Dasein's temporal existence. Siding with the latter ultimately means calling into question the regulative metaphysics built atop the former, and the universality and necessity of Kant's positive metaphysics by extension. We have also seen how the view of the subject as ever-present unity for the purpose of cognition of present nature is bound up with a particular theoretical-reflective attitude that marks much of the dominant tradition of modern philosophy, and that thinking Dasein demands a different hermeneutic-phenomenological approach. As a resolutely methodological practice, phenomenology simply indicates the manner of approach to phenomena as they are given, remaining aware of its own historically and contextually situated starting points yet understanding them in their positivity. Thus, Heidegger's phenomenology can be said to be neither sceptical nor dogmatic – accomplishing a greater sensitivity to one of the constitutive requirements of critique – but rather in its enactment constantly discloses the matter itself as given within the particular domains already given.

However, while the uncritical assumptions that Heidegger identifies in Kant's philosophy demonstrate on a philosophical level how Kant is limited in responding to his own critical requirements and that his intervention ultimately the right he seeks, we still have not decided on the claim that Kant's metaphysics, while oriented against indifference, actually *contributes* to it. For this claim, we will have to wait until we have sufficiently given account of Heidegger's ontological questioning, how indifference emerges as a problem for it, and how it is redefined (in sympathy and antagonism) with Kant's own conception.

Before going on, however, a brief note about the nature of the critical discussion developed in this chapter. One could raise the charge that I have not sufficiently dealt with the breadth of Kant's work, and that the criticisms about Kant's account of experience, while not only based on a contestable approach to his thinking (Heidegger's violence), also fail to adequately account for Kant's political and aesthetic notions of experience. There are two things to mention here. First, I take up positively Heidegger's debatable reading since I am deeply sympathetic to his mode of engagement with the history of western thought as a critical "de-construction" of the history of ontology. This is my own orientation that prefigures this thesis, and its justification is meant to be implied in the foregoing. I am open, however, to rethinking this. In other words, I do not take Heidegger's violence as a crippling problem. Second, and with respect to the question of the concealed breadth of Kant's thinking, I concede that these are glaring omissions and am sympathetic to this charge, as basing our understanding of Kant solely on the first *Critique* does diminish the scope of his thinking and especially how he was willing to reconfigure the relation of the faculties (as well as discover new ones) based on

the particular orientations of a dynamic human experience. Moral experience is different than cognitive experience is different from aesthetic experience, and more recent thinkers have shown that reorienting our understanding of Kant from the first *Critique* to, say, the third allows a different picture to emerge.<sup>253</sup> Indeed, one of the admirable aspects of Kant's thinking, I think, was that he was willing to demarcate domains at all and not presume to collapse them into a single unified account (despite the obvious normative limits given to reason and its capacity for knowledge and moral regulation).<sup>254</sup> From this perspective, we would do well not to exaggerate the first *Critique* nor impoverish the ways in which the three diverge from and support one another. So far I have tried, in cursory fashion, to show such divergences and supports between at least the first two critiques, but have, especially in this chapter, given pride of place to the first—following Heidegger. I think there are at least two reasons that justify this focus.

First, insofar as for Kant (and as we will see, also Heidegger) indifference is essentially linked with metaphysics, and specifically the relationship between finite thinking and the metaphysical, then the first *Critique* offers the foundation for understanding that relationship while the second builds upon it. Kant's practical philosophy would not be possible without his theoretical, and we can simply point to his

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<sup>253</sup> For example, Gilles Deleuze discovers a positive correspondence between Kant and his transcendental empiricism by focusing his reading of Kant's critical philosophy in general from the perspective of the third *Critique* as the keystone of the critical enterprise, especially the discovery of "the free play of the faculties" in experiences of the sublime and enacted by the imagination (Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1985), 68.). Hannah Arendt similarly takes the role of the imagination developed in the third critique as a point of departure for constructing an account political judgment based on Kant's later thinking, a faculty that he never explicitly developed but, she says, very well might have (Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*). Including Heidegger, we can see an interesting trend here in the appeal to Kant's faculty of imagination across these otherwise anti-Kantian thinkers for diverse ends.

<sup>254</sup> It is interesting to note in this regard that Kant was open to the possibility of further critiques based on different domains of experience. Arendt claims this when she tries to show the contours of Kant's never-written *Critique of Political Judgment*.

theory of freedom – so essential for moral law – as derived from the predominance of causal nature as one element of evidence, or to Kant’s own statements that we cannot understand the capacities of reason in the moral realm without first understanding its limitations in the theoretical. Thus, from the perspective of the problem of indifference, we are behooved to interrogate the initial structuration of human thinking in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Second, my own view is that of all of the of Kant’s ideas, the view of the subject as set against present and substantial objects, and the capacity of reason to regulate itself through recourse to principles, are perhaps the most lasting and ubiquitous. By this I mean that they still very much infuse our stance in the world, of which my own experience can attest. Again, both of these elements – objectivity and regulative reason – are built atop the structures elaborated in the first *Critique*, and rely on the metaphysical depiction of the subject developed in his transcendental philosophy. Thus, if we are interested in calling into question the practical and lasting ramifications of the Kantian picture, we must – once again – look to the root of their emergence. Heidegger shows one way of doing so.

In sum, then, the focus on the first *Critique* emerges by virtue of the problem itself and is guided further by the critical questioning that Heidegger carries out. This is not to say that considering Kant’s other works wouldn’t offer a better-rounded picture, but simply that, per the problem of indifference, the heart of the matter resides in the first *Critique* and the question of the inner possibility of metaphysics residing therein, and that a broader picture would simply flesh out what has been elaborated so far and would not change the central foundations of Kant’s normative project of enlightenment.

*Chapter Three*  
**“The Unworld of the Abandonment of Being:” Heidegger and  
 Ontological Indifference**

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*The enormity of that indifference [Gleichgültigkeit] pertaining to the ordinary understanding is that such understanding fails to bear the being of beings and is able to acquaint itself only with beings. Beings are the beginning and end of its accomplishments.<sup>255</sup>*

*Our letting-be [Seinlassen der Dinge], our giving things over to themselves and to their being, is an indifference [Gleichgültigkeit] that belongs to the metaphysical essence of Dasein.<sup>256</sup>*

—Heidegger

We are now prepared to move beyond Kant and turn towards a direct confrontation with Heidegger on the question of indifference. The central requirements of Kant’s critical philosophy – the necessity of metaphysics and securing against the problem of presupposition – have now been taken into account, the first negatively and the second positively. With respect to the first requirement, while I have tried to show how Heidegger undermines the authority of reason from within Kant’s transcendental philosophy, I have not yet showed what his alternative “positive” stance to metaphysics looks like. With respect to the second requirement, I have offered some potential phenomenological criticisms of Kant’s method while also demonstrating how Heidegger’s phenomenology itself more sufficiently deals with the problem. While it is worth bearing in mind just what the phenomenological method entails and how it secures

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<sup>255</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 356.

<sup>256</sup> From *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 102. Cited in: Mark Hewson, *Blanchot and Literary Criticism* (A&C Black, 2011), 60.

itself against presupposition, this methodological dimension will now be permitted to recede from explicit attention (for the most part).

The central theme of this chapter, then, is to draw out Heidegger's negative demonstration against Kant's metaphysics into a positive demonstration of his own account of indifference and his "metaphysical" response to it. Since Heidegger understands himself to have undermined Kant's positive philosophy, however, it cannot be the case that his concept of indifference remains identical to Kant's account: Undermining legislative reason would correspond to an undermining of the sense of indifferentism as a problem for reason. And, if Heidegger's philosophy is indeed meant to be more "primordial" than Kant's, that is, ground its possibility, then his account of indifference must also ground Kant's explanation. From the perspective of Heidegger's philosophy, in other words, Kant's account of indifference must be shown as "derivative." The following chapter, then, has its work cut out for it. It must: (1) positively demonstrate the sense of indifference in Heidegger's work as a "problem" analogous to Kant's depiction; (2) show how that problem is "overcome" by Heidegger's own positive relation to metaphysics; (3) do so within the horizon of the Kantian account, reaching back every once and a while to draw comparisons; and (4), try to decide on the claim that, after all, Kant's response generates the problem he seeks to overcome. The focus will be on (1) and (2) as these entail the most effort and are foundational for the others. I will try to achieve (3) throughout, but because delineating Heidegger's own philosophy with respect to indifference demands sustained interpretation, it is not always possible to secure every point of comparison. The reader will have to make some of these connections on their own. With respect to (4), in many ways (1), (2), and (3) should

supply all the material for its argumentation. I will thus take up (4) at the very end by summarizing the previous points and drawing out their implications for Kant's account.

The overarching claim of this chapter is that we can not only speak of an "ontological indifference" in Heidegger's thinking, but that in its own way indifference indicates towards *the* fundamental tonality of his thought, that pervades not only his discussion of "negative" phenomenon like anxiety or boredom, but also of the age of technology and nihilism, and also the state of "releasement" and the calm tranquility involved in freedom as "letting-be." As I understand it, and put simply, ontological indifference entails, in the early work, the "suspension" of the ontological difference and a loss of ecstatic time, and in the later work the "withdrawal" or "abandonment" of Being in the technological age.<sup>257</sup> The two, I hope to show, are structurally connected. For now, we can take the following as an introduction of what to expect: In *Being and Time* indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit/Indifferenz*) is dominantly conceived in terms of the "inauthenticity" (*Unmundigkeit*) of the everydayness of Dasein. With everydayness, indifference is conceived as a "passing things by," a fallenness in the "they" and a privation of authentic care. It is also used in reference to the attunement (*Befindlichkeit/Stimmung*) of inauthenticity in general, the complete indifference (*Ungestimmtheit*) of "grey everydayness." In both cases, indifference is derivative of care and does not assume its own explicit ontological import. It is not until *The Fundamental*

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<sup>257</sup> I have chosen to delineate Heidegger's different uses of the word "being" as follows: beings (*das Seiende*) and their being (*Sein*) are lower cased. These uses refer to the ontological difference which is effected through Dasein's projective disclosure. Being itself (*Seyn* or *Sein Selbst*), on the other hand, is upper-cased. This qualifier, however, should not suggest that Being is somehow autonomous from the ontological difference. Rather, the unconcealment/concealment (truth) of Being manifests (or "gives") the world (or "region") prior to the ecstasy of Dasein and the ontological difference. Yet while the truth of Being is prior to Dasein's thrownness, it is still essentially "appropriated" to humans. The two still "need each-other."

*Concepts of Metaphysics*, written a few years after *Being and Time*, that Heidegger articulates indifference with more overt ontological significance. Here, “profound boredom” comes to be understood as the “fundamental attunement of contemporary Dasein,” and is typified by “a profound indifference” of beings, their uncanny suspension in the groundless horizon of Dasein’s boredom. From the perspective of this text, I believe that the everyday indifference in *Being and Time* can be understood with a heightened ontological significance, indeed one that situates the tonality of “contemporary Dasein” in boredom within the everyday indifference that we exist in “proximally and for the most part.” This vantage point, moreover, is further intensified when we include Heidegger’s historically oriented, post-*Kehre* writings that begin to align the “forgottenness of Being” which guides the questioning of fundamental ontology with its essential concealment or abandonment in the epoch of technology and nihilism. Here, the world appears as “undifferentiated” in an infinitely substitutable “standing reserve” and ecstatic temporality becomes “destitute.” In all cases, ontological indifference will signify a *closure* to the ontological difference and Being itself, a loss of ecstatic time, freedom, and a corresponding “emptiness” and undifferentiation in the horizon of beings. These points will be elaborated in the first section.

In the second section, we will see how Heidegger offers an account of just what it means to “overcome” metaphysical indifference. Unlike Kant’s regulative metaphysics that attempts to supersede indifference with reason, Heidegger’s will rather attempt to “turn” its meaning so that we can experience it in a “turned” or “mended” relationship. I take the concepts of “letting beings be” and “releasement” as particularly illuminating in this regard.

We can thus take note, albeit preliminarily, of how indifference will function as a “problem” for Heidegger in a manner analogous to Kant’s explanation. Similar to Kant, ontological indifference will bear an essential relationship with prior metaphysics, though instead of construing this in terms of a dialectic between scepticism and dogmatism, which spins out common-sense, Heidegger will understand prior metaphysics as “Onto-Theo-Logy.” “Onto” because the matter of metaphysical thinking has always been “the universal and primal,” namely, Being. “Theo” because metaphysics has always understood Being as “the highest and ultimate,” the ground of beings.<sup>258</sup> And “logy” because “logos” is that which “accounts for the ground of beings in terms of Being as such as the ground.”<sup>259</sup> There are many expressions of ontotheological metaphysics, from Nature, to God, to the Subject (as in Kant), to the Will. Understood as presence, the “destiny” of Being *qua* ontotheology could take shape towards its own ultimate realization in what Heidegger will understand as the current epoch of Technological enframing and nihilism, an epoch in which ontological indifference flourishes.

Metaphysics as ontotheology approximates, though does not coincide with, Kant’s notion of dogmatism: Both refer to the tendency in metaphysical thinking to illegitimately (uncritically) take leave of its condition of possibility and posit the metaphysical (Being) in a determinate horizon of knowability. Yet this can only be a very loose approximation, since for Kant the meaning of dogmatism is first and foremost within the horizon of epistemology, both with regards to prior metaphysics and with his own positive metaphysics (different forms of belief). While Heidegger accepts the

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<sup>258</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, 1 edition (Chicago, Ill.; London: University Of Chicago Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, 59.

criticism against knowledge claims with respect to the metaphysical (indeed, he appreciates at one point Kant's critical philosophy in this regard as inaugurating the "last turn" of western metaphysics), his understanding of metaphysics as ontotheology is not confined to questions of knowledge. (Because of which, if Heidegger can be seen within the critical legacy, the negative aspect of this critique must be understood in terms of ontological de-construction). The basic point, however, is that indifference for both thinkers will refer to the culmination of traditional (dogmatic/ontotheological) metaphysics in the historical age they are set within. And in relation to this age, both attempt to at once *account for* the inner possibility of metaphysics against traditional depictions as well as *generate* an "authentic" relation to that possibility.

This interpretation has little to do (at least for now) with what has become known as the "ontological indifference" in post-Heideggerian literature. I am thinking of those phenomenologists, for example Emmanuel Levinas or Jean-Luc Marion, who more directly call into question Heidegger's seemingly all-encompassing discovery of being as "originary given" and attempt instead to disclose what is "Other" to Being. "Indifference" in this sense refers to an indifference towards being *for the sake of* a positive phenomenology of the radically Other to Being, in the case of Levinas and Marion, ethics and religious experience.<sup>260</sup> However, insofar as I am here concerned only

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<sup>260</sup> In one instance, Marion uses Heidegger's discussion of profound boredom (which will be discussed below) to show how the human being can fall out of Dasein (as ecstatic), thereby demonstrating an indifference to all differentiation, in which case, "Nothing makes any difference any more, not even the ontological difference." For Marion, this is significant for it indicates in the direction of a theological relation to beings (their pure givenness) outside of Being (see: Jean-Luc Marion and David Tracy, *God Without Being: Hors-Texte, Second Edition*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, 2nd Revised edition (Chicago; London: University Of Chicago Press, 2012). Levinas, on the other hand, looks to resituate the human being as primarily an ethical being as opposed to an ontological one. In its primary relations with Others, the space of transcendence is formed not between Dasein and Being, but between I and Other, where the radically infinite alterity of the

with Heidegger, my interpretation will remain *within* the horizon of Being and the ontological difference: the indifference of beings set within the possibility of a ‘turning’ towards Being in its withdrawal; Beings’ indifference as confined within the possibility of being’s non-indifference or, perhaps, *proper* indifference. This is *not* an indifference to Being itself for the sake of a renunciation of the question of Being or a phenomenology that is non-ontological.

As in the first chapter, my intention is not so much to establish the strong claim that indifference functions as a “central concept” for Heidegger that trumps his more pronounced concepts, or even that it is necessary to understand his thinking. Rather, I simply hope to show that indifference might offer *another* way to understand his thinking that sheds light on an interesting continuity across it, illuminating new lines and dynamics. Moreover, while I think that the vantage point of ontological indifference is persuasive, I also want to acknowledge, and make use of, the methodological license provided by Heidegger’s phenomenology. I see no binding problem in, for example, taking leave from Heidegger’s own precise explanations from time to time by trying to expand on them through a phenomenological inquiry of my own. (Such explorations, as we will see, are particularly necessary if we are to find the element of ontological indifference in concepts like “releasement” or “letting-be” which can be quite allusive.)<sup>261</sup> Indeed, I take this license from Heidegger’s own claim to engage in

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Other is beyond Being as essence (See: Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 109-127.

<sup>261</sup> Not only are these concepts allusive with respect to their possible cohabitation with indifference, they are also allusive in their own right. One of the main difficulties of interpreting and expositing Heidegger, it seems to me, is explaining his concepts – which are meant to take leave from metaphysical language – in simple terms that do not rely on the complex phenomenological webs that they are situated in. It can be very difficult to pull a concept from the particular train of concepts that give its precise, post-metaphysical

“thoughtful dialogue” with the history of philosophy, something I am attempting in my own way.

### **I. The Case for Ontological Indifference: From *Being and Time* to Enframing**

The ontological difference – the difference between beings and their being – as generated through temporal transcendence means that the question of metaphysics becomes embedded not in speculative reason but in our capacity for transcendence as such, of revealing the being of beings. Because indifference will be construed ontologically, it will bear relation to the ontological difference. As one might expect, it will present as a kind of “negative” of the ontological difference. Thus, insofar as the ontological difference is the condition of possibility for metaphysics, ontological indifference will be, like Kant’s account, counter-metaphysical. It denies, or at least tends in the opposite direction of, transcendence. In this section, I will survey how indifference appears in some of Heidegger’s writings, focusing especially on *Being and Time*, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, and his writings on nihilism and technology. The goal is to elucidate apparently independent references of indifference in their possible structural continuity in terms of how ontological indifference will present for Heidegger the ontological status of Dasein in the “contemporary age,” of nihilism and enframing . As we will see, it is *The Fundamental Concepts* that offers the key text in providing a kind of pivot-point for the other two.

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sense. Moreover, this is also difficult because rendering these concepts in “simpler terms” always risks drawing them into a metaphysical horizon latent in that language. To be sure, this is not just a problem for exposition but also for understanding Heidegger in general.

### *i. Indifference in Being and Time*

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger uses the Latinate *Indifferenz* and its German synonym *Gleichgültigkeit* to describe, primarily,<sup>262</sup> Dasein's inauthentic mode of everydayness: "Our previous analysis, starting with average everydayness, confined itself to the analysis of indifferent or inauthentic existing."<sup>263</sup> It is also used to describe the kind of "attunement" or attitude that goes along with this everydayness. To begin with, we will take one of Heidegger's most revealing descriptions of indifference as an attunement as our point of entry. From an interpretive perspective, the following passage is significant because, as one of the final pronouncements of indifference in *Being and Time*, it involves a variety of subcomponents developed throughout the text which previous iterations do not always share and, moreover, it demonstrates with unique clarity its possible extremity:

The pallid lack of mood [*Ungestimmtheit*] of complete indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit vollends*] which clings to nothing and urges to nothing, and which goes along with what the day brings, yet in a way that takes everything along with it, demonstrates in the most penetrating fashion the power of forgetting in the everyday moods of taking care what is nearby. Just barely living, which "lets

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<sup>262</sup> Heidegger also uses indifference (primarily *Indifferenz* or some derivation of it) in a broadly methodological sense, expressing his manner of approach to the existential analytic. In *Being and Time*, Dasein is taken at the outset in its "indifferent mode," not yet partitioned into authenticity or inauthenticity. As we will see, it is also used thematically with respect to Dasein's fallenness. Because indifference in general expresses both a thematic and a methodological manner of approach there is some confusion around Heidegger's usage in this register. Robert Dostal, for example, argues that the methodological use ultimately collapses into the thematic use, thus rendering Heidegger's method in *Being and Time* "inauthentic" (see: Robert J. Dostal, "The Problem of 'Indifferenz' in Sein Und Zeit," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43, no. 1 (1982): 43–58. ). Nevertheless, while Heidegger is not overly consistent between the thematic and methodological uses, I think the methodological sense is near correspondent with his notion of formal indication, expressing those "neutral" terms that begin a particular phenomenological exploration. Alleviating Heidegger of the charge of methodological inauthenticity, then, might entail a concerted explanation of formal indication and its relation to methodological indifference in that text.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 223.

everything alone” as it is, is grounded in giving oneself over to thrownness and forgetting. It has the ecstatic meaning of inauthentic having-been.<sup>264</sup>

In the “grey everydayness” of this complete indifference Dasein is “everywhere and nowhere,” that is, “never dwelling anywhere,” “just barely living.”<sup>265</sup> Let’s look at some of the features of this passage.

First, indifference is understood as a “lack of mood.” For Heidegger, moods [*Stimmung*] are ontical modes of “attunement” [*Befindlichkeit*], which constitute, along with understanding and interpretation, one of the basic existential features of Dasein’s *being-in* the world. As an existential, Dasein is always already attuned in some way to the world around it, that is, it is always in one mood or another. With attunement – as with all existential features of Dasein – Heidegger strongly dissuades against any kind of psychical interpretation, that moods are somehow “in us” which we impose on the world. Rather, moods are “equiprimordial with the disclosedness of the world.”<sup>266</sup> That is, while moods are often instigated by particular encounters in the world (as in fear about a certain possibility). Heidegger’s point is that we always “find ourselves” in one mood or another—we are always attuned into things in some way, and this tuning is expressed by the frequencies of our emotive landscape. That indifference is considered as a “lack of mood,” however, is not to say that it is not *attuned* at all. Rather, it must be understood as a kind of *minimal* attunement, or rather, an *inverted Stimmung*: an *Ungestimmtheit*. Considered in this way, complete indifference represents the barest, lowest of frequencies, the dull drone that pulls all higher frequencies, the symphonic nuance of

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<sup>264</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 330.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid, 329; 331.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, 133.

beings and the world, down into it, out of tune and into their most fundamental tones, their most basic and barely articulated form. In the low tonalities of indifference, the mountains will appear as an undifferentiated background that glides by as you stare indifferently out the window, the person next to you in the empty waiting-room a passer-by. Complete indifference represents the lowest ebb of Dasein in the world, where it is at home everywhere because nowhere is its home, where everywhere accords with its frequency yet without those frequencies speaking much at all. It is a skimming the surface of things and dragging them along with it.

As an attunement, indifference is related to our temporality, our “having-been.” The word Heidegger uses for attunement, *Befindlichkeit*, comes from the (somewhat baroque) expression “*Wie befinden Se sich?*” or “how do you find yourself?” It is this “finding oneself” that indicates the “having-beeness” of Dasein that it confronts in its moods in general: “The ecstasy of having-been first makes possible finding oneself in the mode of ‘how I find myself.’”<sup>267</sup> In other words, the temporal mode of having-been, our “past” that we carry along in our specific “thrownness” into the world, is actually what grounds the possibility of attunement in general: We must “have” a past in order to “find ourselves” at all.

Yet complete indifference “demonstrates in the most penetrating fashion the power of forgetting in the everyday moods of taking care what is nearby.” Recall, Heidegger opens *Being and Time* with the claim that we have *forgotten* the question of being (and that we have forgotten that we have forgotten the question of being), and thus the suggestion that complete indifference demonstrates “in the most penetrating fashion”

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<sup>267</sup> Ibid, 325.

the power of forgetting must be deeply important, for it situates the source of forgetfulness itself in the fallenness of inauthentic everydayness, in indifference. In *Being and Time*, in particular, the central notion of forgetting is with respect to Dasein's own being. While Dasein is indeed concerned with its own being in average everyday indifference, this is only in the "mode of fleeing *from* it and of forgetting *it*."<sup>268</sup> More precisely: "The ecstasy of forgetting has the character of backing away *from* one's own-most having-been in a way that is closed off from oneself. This backing away from...ecstatically closes off what it is backing away from."<sup>269</sup> In this basic forgetting, both Dasein and its having-been become, in a sense, indifferent to one another. This is not just "a failure to remember" but rather an essential part of our Dasein in its everydayness, one implied in the inauthentic turning-away from one's potentiality-of-being that we all do.<sup>270</sup> But it also has implications for concealing an authentic relation with history, a remembering that *resolutely* ("openly")<sup>271</sup> "repeats" possibilities given by virtue of the *historical* thrownness and "heritage" of Dasein.<sup>272</sup> Forgetting in this sense

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<sup>268</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 44.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid*, 324.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>271</sup> The word resoluteness, *Entschlossen* or *Entschollessenheit*, if taken literally, means "unclosedness." In on the *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger says: "The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of the subject, but the opening up of the human being, out of its captivity, in that which is, to the openness of Being." (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, 57).

<sup>272</sup> There are obvious concerns here that arise over Heidegger's concept of authenticity in general and its relation to history in particular, as this connection is often expressed (especially in the 1930s) in the nationalistic language of the authentic German Volk as "repeating and retrieving" its spiritual essence against the dual threats (the "pincers") of Americanism and Sovietism (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Professor Richard Polt, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 41). I do not intend to enter into Heidegger's attempt at a philosophical unity between the question of Being and German nationalism, but can only suggest that "authenticity" and Dasein's "historicity" need not imply this interpretation. If authenticity just speaks to an awareness or openness to possibilities as possibilities, and history the historical roots of our thrownness, then an authentic relation to history would just involve an openness and awareness to one's own history as providing the possibilities in the present. In my case, this would include my personal history, my family history, the history of settler colonialism, the history of the

coincides with Dasein's tendency to fall into the "steadiness" of the everyday, where what is of historical concern is what is immediately "happening."

Although indifference as an attunement is primarily rooted in having-been, it also relates to projection, or possibilities approaching from the future. If Heidegger's category of care (*Sorge*) – that Dasein always cares-for or is concerned about its possibilities – signifies the "being ahead of itself" of Dasein, then indifference collapses "aheadness" into a very limited set of possibilities, closing the futural horizon into a narrow and indifferent aperture, so to speak. With the indifference of the everyday, then, we become *closed* to the world: "The common-sense [everyday] way of taking care [indifference] has taken over the potentiality-of-being of Dasein and of its disclosure, which amounts to closure."<sup>273</sup> Cut off from the authentic past and from authentic the future, Dasein is cut loose in an eternal return of the present: "like yesterday, so today and tomorrow."<sup>274</sup>

The apparent opposite of this closed indifference is "authentic resoluteness," which in *Being and Time* is generated through the experience of mortal anxiety (*Angst*). Heidegger calls this a "fundamental attunement" (*Grundstimmung*) because it brings us face-to-face with the "the possibility of the impossibility of existence," "the extreme limit" aheadness of death.<sup>275</sup> This reveals, subsequently, the "uncanniness of the everyday, familiar being-in-the-world" in which "everything at-hand and objectively

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West and so on. There is nothing in this that necessarily suggests nationalism, even if it does tend towards the "communal" or togetherness of any historical thrownness. But even here, communities authentically related to history permit a wide array of possibilities. I think part of the issue here is Heidegger's clear appreciation for Ancient Greek culture and its relation to Being, which he hoped in the 1930s would be repeated within the historical particularity of the German people.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, 298.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, 371.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid, 251.

present has nothing more to ‘say’ to us” and “beings in the surrounding world are no longer relevant.”<sup>276</sup> Beings appear in a “barren mercilessness” and we are led to “grasp at the nothingness of the world.”<sup>277</sup> Significantly, in *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger says that in anxiety “all things and ourselves sink into indifference” and that this indifference is met with an “entranced calm.”<sup>278</sup> (We will have more to say about this use of indifference later on). Confronted with this indifference, this “barren mercilessness,” Dasein becomes aware of its own potentiality-for-being: Anxiety “brings one back to the sheer That of one’s own-most, individuated thrownness.”<sup>279</sup> In the That – the brute facticity of Dasein’s existence – Dasein enters the “moment” [*Augenblick*] of authentic “resoluteness” [*Entschluss*] towards possibilities. In the moment, “which temporalizes itself in resoluteness,” possibilities are grasped *as possibilities*; that they can be or not be, that we have some freedom with regard to them, that we *are* our possibilities. In being held out in the nothing of Being, Dasein comes to see itself *as* Dasein, as transcendent and world-forming. Far from indifferently passing-things-by, then, in resoluteness we “disclose the actual situation in such a way that existence circumspectly takes care of the factual things at hand in the surrounding world in action.”<sup>280</sup> We tend towards a kind of “wholeness,” and the things at-hand in the world are “let be” in how they appear to us.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid, 325.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, 325.

<sup>278</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 88.

<sup>279</sup> *Being and Time*, 328.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> We will consider the character of letting-be later on.

Now, because indifference in general is co-aligned with inauthenticity and everydayness, it also appears in many of Heidegger's assessments of the particular modalities within the broader ontological category of inauthenticity. For example, "curiosity," "idle talk," "passing another by," "ambiguity," falling into the "they" in general, are all described at one time or another in terms of indifference.<sup>282</sup> For example, idle talk [*Rede*] indicates when "hearing and understanding have attached themselves beforehand to what is spoke about as such...[because of which] discoursing loses the primary relation of being [*sein*] to the being [*seienden*] of what is talked about."<sup>283</sup> This amounts to simply "passing the word along" and the discussion floating into "complete groundlessness."<sup>284</sup> With curiosity [*Neugier*], Dasein "seeks novelty" and "doesn't stay with what is nearest in the world," "distracting" itself from "new possibilities."<sup>285</sup> It indicates a "restlessness and excitement" amounting, as in above, to "never dwelling anywhere...constantly uprooting itself."<sup>286</sup> With ambiguity, Dasein does not seek to understand the uniqueness of something, but sediments an understanding in advance to the point of confusion. Ambiguity operates in the attitude, in other words, of "I have seen everything already, nothing can surprise me." Passing-another-by, moreover is described as the everyday "deficient and indifferent" manner in which Dasein is "proximally and for the most part" with others, where it pays little concern for the other, manifesting in

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<sup>282</sup> That they are all described as indifferent does not mean they are identical in their mode of indifference, however. Heidegger says as much: "there is an essential ontological distinction between the "indifferent" being together of arbitrary things in objective presence and the not-mattering-to-one-another of beings who are with one another" (Ibid, 118).

<sup>283</sup> *Being and Time*, 163.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

“inconsiderateness” and “indifferent tolerance.”<sup>287</sup> All of these, finally, point to the way in which Dasein falls in everydayness into the “averageness” of the “They” [*das Man*].<sup>288</sup> Averageness “watches over every exception that thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed... everything that is original is flattened down as something long since known... every mystery loses its power.”<sup>289</sup> The indifference of average everydayness “reveals an *essential* tendency of Dasein which we call the levelling down of all possibilities of being.”<sup>290</sup>

We see, then, the manner in which the being-in-the-world of average everydayness contains a potential tendency towards the “pallid lack of mood” of complete indifference. In addition to being a *Seinsmodi*, inauthenticity in general is also a *Seinsbestimmungen*, an ontological *tonality*.<sup>291</sup> As a tonality, we can begin to feel the dull resonances oscillating across the phenomenon discussed so far – from idle-talk to fallenness to complete indifference – in proximity and sympathy. It is as if complete indifference strikes the most basic note of Dasein’s being-in-the-world, creating the dominant undertone from which the minimally caring comportments of everydayness take their guide. Dominated by the undertone, a symphony by Arvo Part could envelop the world and one would just hear “classical,” or just “music.” This might suggest, indeed, the near *fundamentality* of the tonality of indifference, as a basic tonality of Dasein’s thrownness in which it is for the most part. Yet it cannot be *the* fundamental

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid, 119-20.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid, 53.

tonality, for what is more fundamental than the near *absence* of tonality, the moment of awareness of the nothing, where the strings stop vibrating entirely? Stretched out into the nothing of one's own mortal being, anxiety confronts beings hanging in irrelevancy and barrenness. In confrontation with death, the world refuses itself completely in a manner just one step more extreme than complete indifference, which confronts beings in a near barrenness, a pallid state. As far as fundamental frequencies go, anxiety towards the nothing cannot be too far below the lowest-notes of complete indifference: Hovering just over death and far from the openness of resolute ek-sistence, it is "just barely living." We will see these come into even closer proximity in the next section.

If indifference, in its various appearances, creates the bleak tonal landscape of everyday inauthenticity, then it can be said to offer the counter-tonality of authenticity in *Being and Time*. In general, this counter-tonality signifies a tendency towards closure and concealment, of reducing possibilities to the They and, to use a phrase from the first chapter, "what everyone already knows."<sup>292</sup>

### *ii. Indifference and Boredom*

Two years after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger delivered a lecture course entitled *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. The title is misleading, for in this text Heidegger does not deal with "fundamental concepts" in any ordinary sense, but rather undertakes an extended discussion of attunement and its relation to the possibility of philosophical questioning. If prior metaphysics moves in the realm of "beings as a

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<sup>292</sup> Common sense is taken here in a vulgar way and does not refer to any philosophical school as it did with Kant.

whole,” that is, in some conception of the “worldhood of the world,” then Heidegger’s aim is to *awaken* his students (and the reader) to the tonality that compels us to *see into* “beings as a whole” and experience the worldhood of the world and, like anxiety, into our own essence as Dasein. This is not performed abstractly by talking *about* philosophy as taking place in this or that attunement, but rather its performance is intended to *lead* the reader into its own Dasein by “letting” what is “sleeping” “become wakeful.”<sup>293</sup> That which sleeps is meant to be the fundamental tonality “of the age,” namely, boredom.

Heidegger’s point of departure for pinpointing boredom as the attunement of the age the “proliferation of need” expressed by, he says, “contemporary social misery, political confusion, the powerlessness of science, the erosion of art, the groundlessness of philosophy, the impotence of religion.”<sup>294</sup> There is, in other words, something of a crises in the contemporary situation gesturing to a fundamental “lack” in Dasein. This crises is further expressed, pace Kant, by the tractability of various culture-oriented popular philosophies of the day, all of which all circle around some binary between “life” and “spirit,” Dionysean and Appollonean.<sup>295</sup> Heidegger is not so much interested in the content of these positions – he concedes that they are all “correct” in some sense – nor in trying to too quickly patch over the various social, political, religious and aesthetic needs that give rise to them, but is rather interested in the condition of possibility for their emergence in the first place: the fundamental *lack* in Dasein from which they arise and cover over:

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<sup>293</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 60.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*, 163.

<sup>295</sup> Heidegger surveys the philosophies of Spengler, Klages, Scheler, and Ziegler (*Ibid*, 69-72).

What does the fact that these diagnoses of culture find an audience among us tell us about what is happening here?... [Philosophy of culture] sets out what is contemporary about our situation, but it does not take hold of *us*. What is more, not only does it not succeed in grasping us, but it unties us from ourselves in imparting us a role in world history... Our flight and disorientation, the illusion and our lostness becomes more acute. The *decisive* question now is: What lies behind the fact that we give ourselves this role and indeed must do so? Have we become too insignificant for ourselves, that we require a role? Why do we find no meaning for ourselves any more, i.e., no essential possibility of being? Is it because an *indifference* yawns at us out of all things, an indifference whose grounds we do not know?<sup>296</sup>

The source of the fact that cultural diagnostics find such a ready audience is, we hear, *indifference*, an indifference meant to capture both why cultural diagnostics are so necessary and why they do not “take hold of us” in the way we might hope. We can note here an easy proximity with Kant’s explanation of indifferentism. The root of his crises rested in metaphysical indifference, a proliferation of popular philosophy and the coextensive immaturity of the age, searching for meaning in whatever is given in the marketplace of ideas. Similar to Heidegger, Kant also tries to explain both why popular philosophy has gained its audience and also how we need to find our own measure of guidance, or “awaken” within ourselves, a metaphysical orientation provided by, in his case, our common faculty of reason. But with Heidegger’s approach, indifference “yawns” at us, its fatigue is *felt*, and we are not meant to turn away from this feeling for the sake of establishing the case for reason or something else that would orient us away from it, but rather we are meant to turn *into* the tonality, *into* indifference and let *it* awaken.<sup>297</sup> Thus, “we do not need any diagnoses or prognoses of culture in order to make

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>297</sup> The importance of moods as attunements was, for the most part, lost in Kant. While he did discuss different moods in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, they are cast along with the lower

sure of our situation” but just need to “find ourselves” in the tonality most proximal to our being.<sup>298</sup>

While Heidegger introduces this tonality initially in terms of indifference, his entryway is through an extended phenomenological exploration of three forms of boredom, culminating in an analysis of “profound boredom,” that “silent fog in the abysses of our Dasein.”<sup>299</sup> It is through the analyses of boredom that we can come to appreciate the structural continuity between the indifference of *Being and Time* and the indifference of boredom. Indeed, we can come to appreciate the merit of ontological indifference.

While we can experience boredom in different ways, boredom in general, Heidegger finds, is comprised of two basic elements: “Being-left-empty” (*Leergelassenheit*) and “being-held-in-limbo” (*Hingehaltenheit*). In the first, and perhaps most common form of boredom, “being-bored-by...,” our regular “being immersed” in things-at-hand is suddenly halted by the particular context we find ourselves in. We feel detained in a situation that we have no control over. Heidegger gives the example of waiting at a train-station. Our arriving at the train-station with the expectation of boarding the train and going on to our destination is interrupted by the annoyance of having to wait. We try to “pass the time” by arbitrary things: checking our watch, counting trees, trying to read, and so on, but no matter how hard we try, time “drags” unbearably slow. The world “refuses us” and we are “left empty” by it. We are detained by time itself as

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faculties. To appreciate the ontological importance of moods we would have to give up anything like a hierarchy of the faculties.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 77-78.

the dragging of the present—there is nothing to motivate our ecstatic orientation, nothing to immerse ourselves into, we are held in an unbearable “limbo” between possibilities, between past and future. We are both conspicuously and painfully aware of the oppressiveness of the present and try to flee from it.

In the second form of boredom, “being bored with...,” the feeling of “being-left-empty” of the first form is not owing to the situation itself, but rather to an indefinable emptiness inside ourselves. As with a casual evening with friends, for example, we “set aside time” to be “present with” company, and although through the course of the evening we may enjoy lively discussion, listen to good music, enjoy nice food, leaving us, in the end, “feeling quite satisfied,” it is possible to come to the realization that, during such occasions we were, in fact, bored after all.<sup>300</sup> We may notice that, in hindsight, we were tapping our toes from time to time, or checking our phone, or our minds wandered every once and a while. We notice that, after all, there was something left out of the situation, some indeterminate “I don’t know what,” and that in an obscure way we weren’t entirely fulfilled. We were still somehow left empty by the evening. “Being-left-empty” here is not generated by the refusal of things at hand as in the former case, but rather, Heidegger says, “grows from the depths” of our Dasein.<sup>301</sup> The evening, in the last instance, “does not correspond to what we, without clearly knowing it,

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 117.

properly seek for ourselves.”<sup>302</sup> We somehow “leave ourselves behind” in passing the time in this way.<sup>303</sup>

Unlike the temporality of the first form of boredom, where time drags and feels oppressive, we do not *feel* time at all in this case—we deliberately leave it aside for ourselves to “be there alongside and part of things.”<sup>304</sup> We are engaged through the course of the evening, present with it, without concern with what we left behind before the evening or what is to come after, the present is just floating along. But insofar as we nonetheless come to recognize boredom after all, we see in retrospect that it is precisely this “passing the time” that holds us “limbo.” The being-held-between, “on the hinges” (*Hingehaltenheit*), as it were, is not owing to the external situation but to the withdrawal of original time itself. In “releasing” a certain amount of time and bringing it “to stand” we “cut ourselves off from our own having-been and our own future.”<sup>305</sup> We “forget” these other dimensions of temporality.<sup>306</sup> This has the effect of “compressing the present into itself, and the peculiar time which is there in the present, namely the “now,” stretches itself” in the unobtrusive floating of the present.<sup>307</sup> Once again, it is this severance from past and future that indicates the temporal source of the “being-left-empty” that we feel

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>305</sup> Boredom’s cohabitation with releasement – a central concept of Heidegger’s later thinking – will be discussed in the next section. Ibid, 125.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

after the fact, a lack that we feel in the depths of our Dasein without necessarily knowing why.<sup>308</sup>

The third form of boredom, profound boredom or “it-is-boring-for-one,” is the most significant of the three. It approaches “the essence of boredom” and is deemed “fundamental.” As the essence, the other forms take part in it in their own way. Heidegger’s claim is that the other two *can* open up onto this third form, but they by no means must do so. I will address their structural connection in a moment.

Heidegger does not give an extended example for the third form because, unlike the first two forms, it “occurs from out of the blue” like a “flash of lightning.”<sup>309</sup> It is not tied to any particular type of situation but erupts suddenly for different Daseins in unique contexts. As a *fundamental* attunement, and like anxiety, profound boredom brings us into an awareness of our Dasein *as* Dasein, as “there” in the world and capable of transcendence. Unlike the first form where being-left-empty is given by the oppressiveness of the situation, and unlike the second form where being-left-empty is felt through a retroactive awareness that the situation was unfulfilling, the being-left-empty of profound boredom arises out of the *complete* “telling refusal” of beings as a whole, that is, *in every respect*. If being-left-empty in the first two forms are predicated in an absence of a certain possibility – escaping the oppressiveness of the situation or realizing the unfulfilling nature of “passing the time” – being-left-empty in the third form is the

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<sup>308</sup> I do not think this is to imply that situations like these – being present with others – cannot be more temporally dynamic. Heidegger is relying here on a case where a certain form of everydayness is included in being-with-others against the projects that Dasein has going on otherwise. In these cases, while Dasein may enjoy itself, it is not wholly invested in the occasion. But of course we often *are* in situations with others that we are wholly invested in, and we feel a sense of “fullness” and belonging, where such occasions are not a distraction nor do they permit time to just “stand,” but rather fill time with possibilities. This, however, would not elicit boredom.

<sup>309</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 135.

absence of possibilities *as such*, collapsing the world into an all-encompassing totality of unappealingness and defiance. In this case, we are neither trying to flee from emptiness nor are we only dimly aware of it, but face it head on. Things-at-hand refuse themselves, the past refuses itself, and the future refuses itself: “In every respect, retrospect, and prospect beings withdraw.”<sup>310</sup> This includes, moreover, our very sense of ourselves. For if Dasein’s sense of self requires an immersion within its possibilities and with beings, then the collapse of such an immersion implies at the same time a collapse of Dasein as a “self.” It is boring for the indeterminate *one*. We are left *completely* empty, as it were, “hanging” or “suspended” in a resolute *indifference* on all fronts, everything appearing in the undifferentiated horizon of having “worth equally much and equally little.”<sup>311</sup>

[In profound boredom] *the indifference of things and of ourselves with them* is not the result of a sum total of evaluations; rather each and every thing at once becomes indifferent, each and every thing moves together at one and the same time into an indifference... Beings have – as we say – become indifferent as a whole, and we ourselves as these people are not excepted. We no longer stand as subjects and suchlike opposite these beings and excluded from them, but find ourselves in the midst of beings as a whole, i.e. in the whole of this indifference. Beings as a whole do not disappear, however, but *show themselves precisely as such* in their indifference. The *emptiness* accordingly here consists in the *indifference* enveloping beings as a whole.<sup>312</sup>

Just as in the previous two forms of boredom, temporality is initially experienced as a mode of the present, yet a present *completely* un-sutured from past and future in a way distinct from the previous two instances. Here, the precise meaning of “boredom” itself, as *Langeweile*, is given its “more essential meaning.”<sup>313</sup> “In boredom, the *while* [*Weile*]

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<sup>310</sup> *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 145.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

that is allotted to Dasein as such, the “proper” time of ecstatic finitude, becomes *long* [*lang*], stretched indeterminately.<sup>314</sup> This lengthening of the while has nothing to do with the amount of minutes that it takes to experience profound boredom nor with the chronological length the life of a particular Dasein, but rather in the foreclosing of possibilities in their entirety, where time loses all direction.”<sup>315</sup> We are closer, in this instance, to “being timeless, removed from the flow of time.”<sup>316</sup> It is for this reason that Heidegger describes profound boredom as coming to be “entranced by time itself,” the time beyond the “dragging” and “standing” of the previous two forms. “Both being-left-empty and being-held-in-limbo in the third form of boredom are determined through and through by the *essence of time*.”<sup>317</sup>

If we are “left empty” by the indifference of all beings whatsoever, then we are held in temporal limbo through the suspension of time implied in this emptiness. And it is in this suspension of time that profound boredom can take on its ontologically revelatory capacity, similar to anxiety in *Being and Time*.

In being suspended in time and amidst beings as a whole we come to an awareness, “in a flash,” of the “unarticulated unity and simplicity of [Dasein’s temporal] horizon all at once.”<sup>318</sup> This is to say that in profound boredom Dasein comes face-to-face with its own ecstatic temporality in a negative sort of way, that is, it comes to a profound realization of the complete *absence* of transcendence, and that only in the

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid, 153.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid, 148.

horizontal unity of time can Dasein transcend the barrenness of beings. As in anxiety, Heidegger calls this, following Kierkegaard, a “resolute disclosure” of “the moment of vision,” the moment in which we come to an awareness of ourselves as temporal beings and our capacity to realize possibilities as our own possibilities.<sup>319</sup> And it is only through this moment of vision – this singular *shortening* of stretched time – that we can “rupture the entrancement” in which we are captivated.<sup>320</sup>

With profound boredom, then, we see how we become aware of beings in their complete telling refusal and our complete emptiness. As the “extreme” form of being-left-empty and being-held-in-limbo, *profound boredom directly confronts the ontological basis of the other two*. “Only because this constant possibility – the ‘it is boring for one’ – lurks in the ground of Dasein can man be bored or become bored by the things and people around him. Only because every form of boredom comes to arise out of the depths of Dasein...does it seem that boredom came from nowhere at all.”<sup>321</sup> This means that the other two forms indicate in the direction of the essential emptiness of Dasein without realizing it, fleeing from it: “In becoming bored by something the human being who is bored – without explicitly knowing it – wants to escape the ‘it is boring for one,’ i.e. to remove him- or herself from the possibility that the Dasein in him will become manifest and begin to oscillate in the third form.”<sup>322</sup> The forms of boredom, then, are “fluid,” sliding between one another, yet only to the level that “man grants his own Dasein.”<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, 156-57.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 157.

The question for us now is whether or not it is possible to incorporate the everyday and complete indifference of *Being and Time* into this fluidity. That is, are we able to situate the indifference of *Being and Time* in relation to the scales of boredom, grounding it within the essence of boredom, Dasein's ontological emptiness? Our clue: "In truth and fundamentally, a corresponding transposition of man's existence always occurs [in the second form of boredom] – either towards the surface and into the realm of busy activities or into the dimension of Dasein as such."<sup>324</sup> The second form of boredom plays a kind of "pivotal" role, gesturing towards Dasein's emptiness, but with the possibility that this emptiness can easily be pushed aside for the sake of re-immersing oneself back into the world of the everyday. The crucial point is that with this statement Heidegger suggests a unified horizon between the busyness of the inauthentic indifference of everydayness, and the depths of that indifference in profound boredom. At first glance, this connection is intuitively obvious: boredom must always occur out of everydayness, as a kind of interruption, since it is in everydayness that we live for the most part. They *must* be linked for the transition to be possible. This would suggest, then, the following: In everyday indifference we are barely caring for beings, gliding them over as we normally do. But every once and a while we may slip out of that glide, the world may present obstacles to the uniform temporal satisfaction of the everyday. These breaks, these waiting-times, are the restless moments of the first form of boredom, the unbearable hang-time of impatience (an impatience increasingly warded off by the ready-to-handness of entertainment). Yet we also, every once and a while, create our own "breaks," usually for relaxation or "casualness," "taking time" from everydayness and

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 157.

suspending it for such and such a purpose: A break from everydayness with the usual company, the usual activities that, after all, we may find don't fulfill us. We have glided out of everydayness only to find a certain averageness here too. At this point – the pivot point – we can either re-enter everydayness and shrug off the call from the depths of Dasein or follow that call downwards.

However, given our discussion of indifference in the last section as a (near fundamental) counter tonality, it would seem that the connection is not only commonsensical but actually qualifies everyday indifference as grounded in the depths of Dasein's emptiness, a point wholly absent from *Being and Time*. Showing that this is the case would allow us to highlight the structural features that make possible this commonsensical demonstration, and further show that ontological indifference demonstrates the fundamental competing ground of Dasein's transcendence.<sup>325</sup> We are on the way to understanding this connection if we see that from the indifference of everydayness, to complete indifference, to its interruptions in boredom, and the essential indifference of complete boredom, time is hanging ever-more and beings are refusing themselves ever-more. Developing this, let's consider the relationship between indifference in general with the ontological difference. Heidegger writes, near the end of *Fundamental Concepts*:

And yet—the most profound undifferentiatedness (*Indifferenz*) and indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*) of ordinary understanding does not lie in that undifferentiated comportment toward various beings, within which the ordinary understanding is able to manage and find its way through. The enormity of that indifference pertaining to the ordinary understanding is that such understanding fails to hear the being of beings and is able to acquaint itself only with beings. Beings are the

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<sup>325</sup> Recall in the last chapter, Heidegger identified an *ab-Grund* in Dasein. This *ab-Grund* was understood as the original time of transcendence, the wherein of the ontological difference. The significance of Dasein's essential emptiness and ontological indifference would suggest that the nullification of ecstasis is itself a ground in Dasein.

beginning and the end of its accomplishments. In other words, precisely that distinction which ultimately and fundamentally makes possible all distinguishing and all distinctiveness [the ontological difference] remains closed off from ordinary understanding.<sup>326</sup>

With “ordinary understanding” Heidegger is gesturing once again to the ordinariness of the everyday, affirming its “supreme undifferentiatedness,” the leveling of things most pronounced in complete indifference. As we see here clearly, the ground of that indifference is not located solely in the undifferentiated comportment towards various beings exemplary of this “superficial” level, with some ontic orientation of indifference, but rather in the *ontological* failure of that ordinary understanding to “hear the being of beings.” It “only acquaints itself with beings.” An ontological failure to realize the ontological difference.

But we must be careful as to what this implies. On the one hand, the undifferentiatedness of the ordinary understanding can be understood as a kind of ontological mistake or naivety, since beings are *always* given in a determinate horizon or “pre-ontological” understanding of their being. From this perspective, we might be tempted to account for this undifferentiatedness through a kind of counter-factual transcendental demonstration: While we *can* get by without being, since the horizon of undifferentiatedness and indeed boredom is evidence of the minimal way we comport to beings, this apparent undifferentiatedness nonetheless always presupposes a prior “pre-ontological” understanding of the being of the beings we comport towards indifferently. From this perspective, the undifferentiatedness of the horizon of the ordinary understanding is simply naïve to the ontological difference that is its condition of

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid, 355.

possibility, but must be there all along. This is certainly accurate and is, on one level, what Heidegger wants to show. But yet, that this undifferentiatedness *is nonetheless possible*, both as a feature of our everydayness (and also, Heidegger says, as exemplified by the historical failure to ask the question of the being of beings) points to a more penetrating explanation of *how it appears in its own right*. That is, it cannot simply be that the indifference of the everyday always just presupposes the ontological difference and that Dasein is simply naive, but rather *there must be something in Dasein that tends it away from the ontological difference into indifference, that pulls it from transcendence*.

Indeed, on closer inspection the ontological difference cannot have exclusive right to the ground of everydayness, for as we have seen, Dasein is precisely capable of experiencing the complete withdrawal of being to various degrees and in different ways. Heeding our fundamental capacity to sever ourselves from being and just experience beings, then, the transcendental argument can here switch direction and become oriented towards the ontological character *of indifference itself*. Heidegger does not *only* say that the ontological difference is the condition of possibility for a naïve undifferentiatedness, but rather that that undifferentiatedness has *its own* basis in the fundamental indifference of Dasein, its fundamental capacity to conceal being and become profoundly bored. This does not deny the ontological difference – indeed it still may presuppose it – but it does show that we cannot simply cast aside indifference as failure to understand the being of beings. On the contrary, it would imply that this failure to realize the ontological difference is rooted in our Dasein.

Let's tease this out a bit further. In boredom, we are met with *just* beings. If the ontological difference is only possible when we transcend beings in ecstatic care,

boredom is the suspension of that temporality, the withdrawal of the being of beings. In everydayness, while we may not be bored nor conspicuously confront the “telling refusal of beings” in the heightened way of boredom, we nonetheless also carry along for the most part in relation to beings only, in a kind of bare transcendence. Fallenness into the They, recall, amounted to a “levelling down of all possibilities,” a concealing of possibilities as such for the purpose of repeating what “everyone already knows.” In the concealment of possibilities – most extremely Dasein’s own – everyday indifference maintains itself with a minimal orientation to the ontological difference. This suggests that, while everydayness is, on the one hand, poised in the direction of transcendence, it is also poised in the direction of non-transcendence, making everydayness something like an ecstatic pivot-point between the various levels of indifference and the levels of care. In everydayness, care and indifference unite and almost cancel each other out: barely caring, only for that which is in reach, the next task to be completed, the next curiosity to fulfill. In the age of boredom, however, this “bare care” must be closer to indifference than it is to the moment of resoluteness, closer to that pallid lack of mood that tends towards complete closure than to resoluteness which tends towards openness. Profound boredom is, after all, the “stifling fog in the abysses of our Dasein.”

If this is correct then we can expect a structural continuity between everydayness and the elements of boredom: being-left-empty and being-held-in-limbo. We find this readily. Being-left-empty is already implied in the words “deficiency” and “indifferent” attributed to average everydayness. These words imply, Heidegger acknowledges, a “*lack*” in Dasein with respect to its own authentic fulfillment. As a lack, everydayness too must have its basis in the “complete emptiness” of the essence of Dasein itself. And with

respect to “being-held-in-limbo,” in everydayness Dasein finds itself “*stretched along* ‘temporally’ in the succession of its days. The monotony, the habit, the ‘like yesterday, so today and tomorrow’ and ‘for the most part’ cannot be grasped without the temporal stretching along of Dasein.”<sup>327</sup> The indifference of everydayness is also, then, synonymous with a constant making-present of time, suspending the possible as possible in favour of repeating things habitually, levelling down the days by regulating them in advance, much like the second form of boredom. The *emptiness of Dasein and beings* and the *lengthening of time* symptomatic of boredom, then, become symptomatic of all of the phenomena related to the category of indifference, distinguished only in relation to the awareness and orientation to that emptiness and lengthening.

If Dasein’s freedom *qua* transcendence is the condition of possibility for the ontological difference, where things “make the difference,” then we would expect that it is precisely ontological *indifference* as non-transcendence that offers the most massive obstacle to this. Put otherwise, because the ontological difference is realized in an authentic relation with possibilities as possibilities, then indifference – both by definition and exemplified by the phenomenon discussed so far – indicates a collapse or concealing of possibilities, in a variety of different forms, rendering ontological indifference not only a salient counter-phenomenon to authenticity but also as a potent motivator of Heidegger’s questioning. It is, after all, the most “penetrating” indication of forgetting, and the most general expression of our contemporary “homesickness,” a homesickness that both opens *Fundamental Concepts* and typifies complete indifference in *Being and Time* as the “urge to be at home everywhere”. Ontological indifference, then, speaks of

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<sup>327</sup> *Being and Time*, 353.

the manifold ways in which we conceal the being of beings, up until the point where beings are simply left hanging without being. The ontological *difference*, on the other hand, speaks of the manifold ways in which we unconceal the being of beings in transcending them, up until the authentic moment of resoluteness. In indifference, we oscillate between barely caring (everydayness) to, potentially, not caring at all (profound boredom). Such an indifference has nothing to do with a conspicuous “not being bothered by...” or simple disinterestedness in being, but rather is an ontological feature of our being-in-the-world with its own grounding in Dasein’s essential “emptiness.” Just as the ontological difference is necessary, so too is ontological indifference, and the two must presuppose one another. The basic equation might look something like: In order for this or these beings to make a difference, I must become indifferent to others; in order to unconceal, I must conceal (this will be discussed more in the next section). Yet if boredom is indeed the tonality of the age, and we find ourselves “proximally and for the most part” in the indifference of everydayness, we find ourselves for the most part dipping into the tonalities of indifference, narrowing the aperture of Dasein’s thrownness.

In this sense, we can see the importance of the concept of indifference *in particular*. While Heidegger uses many words that are structurally linked – inauthenticity, everydayness, boredom, etc. – it is indifference itself, I think, that offers their unity across the two texts discussed so far. Indifference is found in both everydayness and in boredom and points, I think, to the most general domain within which these two are located, situated specifically against the ontological difference and authentic care. The tonality of indifference strikes the basic note, the bare oscillation at the bottoms of Dasein that hovers just over the nothing of death, and the more we

gravitate into its force, the more we tend into it, the more likely we are to find ourselves ejected from beings. In our *complete* ejection – where everything is completely indifferent as in profound boredom – we find ourselves “world-poor” and “barely living,” in the state, Heidegger will say, of the animal.<sup>328</sup>

This view of ontological indifference, then, would give both Heidegger’s discussion of boredom and *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* itself a heightened significance. The main barrier to authentic anxiety in *Being and Time* was exactly the indifference of everydayness, “the untroubled indifference that opposes the most extreme possibility of existence.”<sup>329</sup> If this is the case, if our own mortality is blocked by indifference, then insofar as Heidegger is interested in an awakening of Dasein to itself in the contemporary age then he must turn *this* tonality, the *primary* indicator of our “homesickness” into itself, even if as we saw above anxiety leads into the same telling refusal of beings, the same indifference of beings on all fronts. In this sense, boredom not only must take “practical” priority over anxiety, but it leads onto a near identical fundamental experience of Dasein as Dasein in relation to the collapse of Being as was

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<sup>328</sup> The animal, for the early Heidegger, is “world-poor,” that is, lacks the transcending and world-forming capacities of Dasein. As in profound boredom, the animal experiences, for the most part, the complete “telling refusal of beings,” where its “environment” or “disinhibiting ring” is determined by various sensory indicators that it habitually responds to. The world of the tic as described by Jacob Von Uexkull, for example, includes three central indicators: the smell of a mammal underneath it, the feeling of warmth of its body, and the tactile feeling of the skin that it embeds itself within. In Heidegger’s later works (as in his discussion of the poetry of Georg Trakl), however, the animal is not juxtaposed in relation to Dasein and transcendence, but is rather understood as “holy,” as “vascillating in the undefined” (*On the Way to Language*, (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1982), 167). If Heidegger says that humans are not yet mortals in the age of enframing, then animals too have not yet been let into their own mortality, their holiness, their concealment. Now *both* humans and animals are understood in terms of mortality, and *both* are threatened by the completion of metaphysics in enframing. Neither are permitted to enter the “open,” and neither are given any kind of clear or essential differentiation: The “thinking animal,” that now encompasses both man and animal, “is not yet determined” (Ibid). The question of mortality, then, no longer speaks to an anthropocentric purity but, it seems, extends to all living creatures. (see also: Andrew J. Mitchell, “Heidegger’s Later Thinking of Animality: The End of World Poverty,” *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2011): 74–85).

<sup>329</sup> *Being and Time*, 244.

the case in anxiety. The final realization of both attunements is to draw Dasein into its supreme ontological indifference, yet the latter, as more proximal to our “contemporary Dasein,” must take precedence. We must come home into our homesickness.

In sum, the busyness and monotony of everyday indifference, and the “needs” arising in relation to politics, society, religion, philosophy and art, point for Heidegger towards a fundamental groundlessness, that is, a suspension of authentic time and essential lack in Dasein. The suspension of time located in Heidegger’s analysis of profound boredom reverberates in our ordinary everyday being-in-the-world, revealing its essence. Our “situation” is delineated with respect to groundlessness, emptiness, and the floating of a time approaching standstill: “Yet *we* have less each day, each hour we make less [essential] progress and have instead increasingly approached a standstill. Not only that, but we have perhaps worn through the ground we were standing on to begin with, we have perhaps reached a place that is groundless, and begun to float, entered an attunement.”<sup>330</sup>

### *iii. Indifference, Nihilism and Enframing*

*The uniformity resulting from technology is not unlike the ‘indifference’ [Gleichgültigkeit] of everything produced by deep boredom.*<sup>331</sup>

We can now transition to Heidegger’s later work to see what role ontological indifference might play there. We will take as our point of departure the structural features of boredom, or indifference in general, being-left-empty and being-held-in-limbo.

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<sup>330</sup> *Fundamental Concepts*, 160.

<sup>331</sup> Michael Inwood, ed., *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), 139.

After *Being and Time* and the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger begins what is famously called his “turning” (*die Kehre*), where he begins to question whether one can get to the experience of Being itself (Heidegger’s concern all along)<sup>332</sup> from the perspective of Dasein’s projective transcendence, and begins to more attentively appreciate the manner in which Being is *already* given to Dasein’s ecstatic disclosure of the world.<sup>333</sup> This means that the ontological difference becomes situated *within* a prior givenness or disclosure of Being itself, a prior givenness within which Dasein “understands being.” Correspondingly, the “world” is no longer simply the “totality of things at hand”<sup>334</sup> as in *Being and Time*, but now means “the clearing of Being into which the human being stands out on the basis of his thrown essence.”<sup>335</sup> This indicates a turn from Dasein as that which can “recall” Being in relation to its own realization as potentiality-for-being, to a sensitivity to the way in Being both unconceals and conceals

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<sup>332</sup> In his persuasive study, Richard Capobianco argues that the fundamental question of Heidegger’s thinking was always oriented to “recovering the experience of Being as manifestive, as showing itself from itself, as unconcealing, as shining-forth, as opening and offering itself.” In this sense, the “meaning of Being” for Heidegger cannot be reduced to the question of projective *meaning* or human positing, but rather must be sought in the disclosure of Being in the first place, within which Dasein’s projective meanings take place (Capobianco, *Heidegger’s Way of Being*, 9). Heidegger’s turning, then, simply speaks to his orientation towards this fundamental experience of Being: Initially from the perspective of “human’s relation to Being,” and “in the reversal—Beyng and its truth in relation to humans” (Figal, *The Heidegger Reader*, 303).

<sup>333</sup> This notion is not foreign to *Being and Time* but was already indicated in it. For example, in section forty-four, in the context of a discussion of “Dasein, Disclosedness and Truth” Heidegger describes truth as “unconcealment” against traditional notions of truth as “adequation” (as in Aquinas’ *adaequatio intellectus et rei*) or “correspondence” (as in Kant’s account of judgment). Dasein both experiences truth insofar as it is always already thrown into a particular mode of unconcealment (truth) and when it itself unconceals. In general, we must already “presuppose” truth in as the horizon within which things are intelligible, communicable, and representationable.<sup>333</sup> In *Being and Time*, however, truth as prior unconcealment is set within the overarching aims of fundamental ontology and thus is not approached head on. In a footnote written sometime in the 1930’s to the statement in that section that, with truth “the investigation takes a new point of departure,” Heidegger writes: “This is the real place to begin the leap into Da-sein” (*Being and Time*, 205). It is this leap into the manner in which Being discloses to Dasein in its world that comes to take on central significance.

<sup>334</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68.

<sup>335</sup> From ‘The Letter on Humanism,’ cited in: Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil, 1 edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 266.

itself throughout the history of the West, determining the ontological tonality within which Dasein finds itself in each case. In this sense, Heidegger's work takes on an increasing historical orientation, leading him to both explain the ontological underpinnings of the history of metaphysics as ontotheological, but also come to appreciate the nature of Being itself as "Truth" (*Aletheia*) and as an event (*Ereignis*).<sup>336</sup> We are concerned for now with the most immediate manner in which Being itself is revealed to Dasein in its historicity, with an eye to situate boredom and ontological indifference within Heidegger's appreciation for the culmination of Western metaphysics as involving two dominant aspects: nihilism and technological enframing. We will take these in turn.

While it was Friedrich Jacobi who introduced the term nihilism into the philosophical lexicon – indicating both the cause and consequence of rational metaphysics – it is Friedrich Nietzsche that would offer the most penetrating and influential expression of the term for Heidegger's thinking. Nietzsche used the word to describe the "inner logic of metaphysics" as the "devaluation of values," a position often summed up by his famous phrase "God is dead." This means that "the supra-sensory realm loses its effective power" and thus "Western philosophy understood as Platonism is at its end."<sup>337</sup> That "God is dead" does not simply or even originally signify an absence in

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<sup>336</sup> Heidegger's famous statement of the turn in the *Letter on Humanism* evidences some of these points: "The adequate execution of this other thinking [the truth of Being itself] that abandons subjectivity is made more difficult by the fact that in the publication of *Being and Time* the third division of the first part, "Time and Being," was held back. Here, everything (in terms of the what and how of that which is thought-worthy) is reversed. The division in question was held back because thinking failed an adequate saying (letting itself show) of the turning and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics" (Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil, 1 edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 249-250).

<sup>337</sup> From "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead" in *Off the Beaten Track*, 162.

belief in God, but rather the tendency of Western metaphysics – understood in terms of the will to power – towards the nothing, a constant devaluation and revaluation of values, where not only God, but reason, the subject, morality and so on “suffer the loss of their constructive force.”<sup>338</sup> The loss of belief in God, and other super-sensory ideals, then, are “always only the consequence of nihilism.”<sup>339</sup> For Heidegger, while Nietzsche attempts to overcome nihilism through his doctrine of the will-to-power, he does not yet recognize the metaphysical presuppositions of the will as such that, to him, evidences a clear link with the Cartesian self-knowing or self-certain subject. Because the will-to-power has its basis in nothing other than itself, it expresses its own constant affirmation, and thus “The intuitive self-certainty of subjectness proves to be the justification belonging to the will to power.”<sup>340</sup> Appealing to the will’s unimpeded realization in its own willing, then, still relapses into a form of subjective metaphysics, one that in fact expresses a heightened and “completed” form of nihilism: the unencumbered self-actualization of the will that guarantees for itself, by necessity, the “stability of a constant reserve.”<sup>341</sup>

While Heidegger ultimately understands Nietzsche’s philosophy as the completion of nihilism and as an expression of Western metaphysics in its final form, doing less to overcome it than to generate it, he nonetheless shares Nietzsche’s basic insight that nihilism is an accurate depiction of Western metaphysics and the condition we find ourselves within: “No one of any insight into the world would today wish to deny that nihilism in its hidden forms is the ‘normal condition of mankind.’ The best evidence

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid, 165.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Harper Perennial, 1982), 91.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid, 102.

of this is provided by the exclusively re-active attempts to oppose nihilism.”<sup>342</sup> Heidegger also shares the sentiment that nihilism must be overcome in some sense. Here, however, he adds an expected warning: We must not attempt to overcome nihilism too hastily by trying to supersede it with, for example, a new constellation of values, or the ideal of the will to valuation as such. We must not, that is, try to “overcome” (*überwunden*) it by transcending or surmounting it but rather, “instead of trying to overcome nihilism, we must first attempt to turn towards its essence, into its “locality.”<sup>343</sup> Only if we can first appropriately turn into nihilism without recourse to the language of metaphysics can we then ask about overcoming it. What, then, is the essence of nihilism?

“The essence of nihilism, which finds its ultimate consummation in the will to will, resides in the oblivion [*Vergessenheit*] of Being.”<sup>344</sup> This says that Being and nihilism, or the nothing, belong together in some way. How is this possible? Let’s start with the claim that nihilism is consummated in the will-to-will as the last vestige of metaphysics. Heidegger defines metaphysics as, at root, the transcendence or “surpassing” of beings in a determination of their being, understood as presence.<sup>345</sup> But

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<sup>342</sup> *Pathmarks*, 296.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*, 319.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid*. Oblivion as *Vergassenheit* means both “forgottenness” (from *Vergessen*) as well as “hidden” (as in *Verborgen*) (Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 72). Being’s abandonment and withdrawing into oblivion signifies these two senses. To note, forgottenness does not here signify some vulgar form of recollection—as if Being can somehow be recuperated as an object of memory, a factum of cognition, as in “I once knew the formula, but I forget it now,” or “I knew where my keys were, but I cannot remember.” These renditions downplay the Greek, non-theoretical and metaphysical sense of remembering as “striving for, attaining to, the unconcealed,” similar to Plato’s notion of recollection as “catching-sight-of, the revealing of beings—i.e. of beings in their look” (Figal, *The Heidegger Reader*, 300). To forget is to lose connection with the *experience* of the manifestness of Being, which by no means implies some attempt at transposing the Greek experience into the present: while the speak out of the same source – the open of Being – what the open reveals in each case is different. Remembering as striving to the unconcealed is a stepping-out into the open, with what presents itself in itself to us today. More on this in the next section.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*, 312.

Being, as presencing (verbal: *Anwesenheit*) through freedom has always announced itself against that which is unconcealed in any prevailing epoch of metaphysics. In other words, any given metaphysical unconcealment, in attempting to solidify beings, conceals Being as presencing, and in-so-doing both creates the conditions of its own downfall as well as the impetus for a new metaphysics to emerge. Being always offers a “counter-attack.”<sup>346</sup> This constant unconcealment and concealment of Being, picking up pace in the modern turn to subjectivity, drives metaphysics all the way to the point where it begins to account for its own overcoming. Hegelian dialectics and Nietzsche’s will-to-will are evidence of this, and it is the latter – the regenerative loop of the wills unencumbered self-actualization – that finally, Heidegger thinks, not only conceals Being and its history, but rather fully casts it off into its essential “oblivion.” For Heidegger, this means that the essence of nihilism, as most proximally manifest in the will-to-will, resides most essentially not in any particular epochal concealment of Being, nor their accumulation over history, nor in the “being-held-into-nothing” of Dasein’s authentic anxiety, nor in Dasein’s forgetfulness, but rather in the complete and proper oblivion of Being itself, its *own* turning away from us. If *Vergassenheit* means a *forgetting* and *concealing* of Being, then Heidegger uses *Verlassenheit* to indicate the abandonment or turning away of Being itself, and it is the later that offers the *source* of the former.<sup>347</sup> Being as presencing is essentially related to its own withdrawal, that in every unconcealment there corresponds a concealment, every *alētheia* is accompanied by *lēthe*: “Concealedness is the very heart of

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid, 304.

<sup>347</sup> As Heidegger puts it, “What really happens in machination is the *Seinsverlassenheit* of beings: that being leaves beings to themselves and denies itself to them” (Inwood, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 72).

coming into appearance.”<sup>348</sup> In this case, the essential withdrawal of Being itself is itself the nothing of nihilism that, far from signifying “anything negative,” is rather the “sheltering that preserves what is as yet unrevealed.”<sup>349</sup> In its withdrawal, Being shelters that which can come to presence “beyond” what is currently disclosed “in the present.”

As the oblivion of Being, then, we can see that insofar as “completed nihilism” forecloses Being’s capacity to presence in the world by rendering everything always-already present that the “nothing” says the same as the abandonment of Being. The two are, Heidegger says, “in kinship.”<sup>350</sup> As we will see later on, it is precisely this essential relation between Being and the nothing, between presencing and withdrawal, that must be headed in a post-metaphysical compartment. Only through an “appropriate seeking” can Being preserve itself and release its “treasures.”<sup>351</sup> For now, let’s look at one of the fundamental qualities of nihilism, its temporality, keeping in mind the temporality of profound boredom just discussed as “being-held-in-limbo.”

In *Why Poets?* Heidegger opens his discussion of the role of poets in the age of the abandonment of Being through a passage from Hölderlin’s poem, “Bread and Wine.” In it, Hölderlin names this abandonment the “destitute time,” and poeticizes it thus: “All things are not/ Within the power of heavenly ones. That is/ Mortals first reach into the abyss. For so it turns/ with them. The time is/ Long, but what is true/ Comes to Pass.”<sup>352</sup> Heidegger goes on to interpret the character of the destitute time as follows:

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<sup>348</sup> From *Four Seminars*, cited in *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 36.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 313-314.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 314.

<sup>352</sup> *Off the Beaten Track*, 200.

Long is the desolate time of the world's night. It reaches [*gelangen*] its midpoint only at length [*lang*]. In the midnight of this night, the desolation of time is the greatest. The destitute time is then no longer able even to experience distress. This incapacity, by which even the distress of desolation sinks into darkness, is the very desolation of time. The distress is not fully eclipsed because it now appears only as a need to be satisfied. Perhaps the world's night is now approaching its midpoint. Perhaps the time of the world is now fully becoming a desolate time.<sup>353</sup>

Heidegger interprets Hölderlin's desolate time as the "evening of the world-era drawing into its night," where "the united three, Herakles, Dionysus and Christ" have "forsook the world."<sup>354</sup> Writing over a century after Hölderlin, we hear here Heidegger wonder whether we have not reached the midpoint of the world's night, the complete abandonment of Being, where "night is the longest." What is it to say that the night is the longest? We should not read "long" here in a vulgar or ontic sense, suggested perhaps by Heidegger's statement in his late *Der Spiegel* interview that another "three-hundred years" lies ahead before the "other thinking" appears.<sup>355</sup> Rather, "long" should be thought in terms of the lengthening of time itself, just in the sense of the *langweile* of ontological indifference and boredom. The length of this time is destitute because it has lost the lighting force of being, that is, lost a relationship to the creative potentiality of presencing. Just as in boredom, past and future are cut off, and the age hangs in the kind of stillness, the uncanny tranquility of mid-night where the present of completed nihilism is severed from history. To live in the long night is to forget when the sun set and that a daybreak is possible, to have no sense of the beginning or end, to be cut off from history and its orientation. "The will to will rigidifies everything in a lack of destiny, where by

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid, 201.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid, 200.

<sup>355</sup> *Philosophical and Political Writings: Martin Heidegger* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 41.

destiny we mean a granting of the openness of the Being of beings.”<sup>356</sup> The length of the long night, then, must be thought in terms of the temporality of ontological indifference, the suspension of beings from an abandoned Being, the stretching of time in an epochal “being-held-in-limbo,” this time not instigated by the collapse of Dasein’s ecstasis (though this is implied) but by the loss of Being itself.<sup>357</sup>

But if the temporality of ontological indifference, indicated by the features of boredom, finds its expanded, epochal resonance in the “desolate time” of completed nihilism, how can we describe its other main feature, namely, “being-left-empty”? Do beings refuse themselves, do they “hang” in indeterminacy? We have already heard mention of the cohabitation of nihilism with the will-to-will, which amounted to the self-securing of a “constant reserve.” It is in this “constant reserve” that we get sight of just how beings are left empty in a way that resonates with our prior discussion of ontological indifference. Heidegger’s clearest expression of this comes not in the context of nihilism but in his confrontation with technology, which is related to it: “The basic form of appearance in which the will-to-will arranges itself in the unhistorical element of the world of completed metaphysics can be stringently called ‘technology.’”<sup>358</sup>

For Heidegger, humans are essentially technical beings. This is already implied in Heidegger’s notion of “readiness-to-hand” (*Zuhandenheit*) in *Being and Time*. In Dasein’s being-in-the-world, the world is defined by the “context of useful things” that

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<sup>356</sup> *End of Philosophy*, 92.

<sup>357</sup> This suggests a u-turning of the findings in Heidegger’s analysis of boredom. If the complete loss of Being occurred through Dasein’s fundamental attunement in *Fundamental Concepts*, this loss is now accounted for by the history of Being as nihilism.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

we rely on as we carry on our activities. But in the modern age, the essential relatedness of Dasein with ready-to-hand entities becomes inverted away from Dasein's "letting-be" of those entities in its engagements with them towards a purely instrumental character. Technology and instrumentality begin to eclipse Dasein's relationship with beings and its world. Dasein becomes embedded and taken over by the network of means towards nihilistic ends, the world becomes "a filling station" as the will-to-will rages onwards. However, while Heidegger's sense of "technology" does include specific technological devices we use and their relations, its meaning is more penetrating than just these tools. Technology as "enframing," becomes the dominant and exclusive way in which we relate to beings.

In *The Question Concerning Technology*, his most sustained engagement with this theme, Heidegger shows how the common understanding of technology – that it is a means to an end and a human doing (instrumental and anthropological conceptions) – is in fact based on a partial understanding of the original meaning of causality, or *technē*, for the Ancients. For the Greeks, causality implied more than means and ends, but included four "modes of occasioning:" *causa materialis* (the matter the thing is made with), *causa formalis* (the form it is shaped towards), *causa finalis* (its purpose or function), and *causa efficiens* (the maker). Greek craftsmen and artists knew that the thing created was "indebted" to all four causes and that they, as makers (*causa efficiens*), are "responsible" for "gathering" the other causes and "bringing-forth" a thing through them.<sup>359</sup> Such a being responsible, Heidegger says, is "bringing something into

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<sup>359</sup> Many artists, I think, have an intuitive sense of this.

appearance, letting it come forth into presencing, and starting something on its way.”<sup>360</sup> It shares this nature with “*poēsis*,” which also “lets what presences come forth.”<sup>361</sup> The refutation of the instrumental and anthropological theses rests on, then, the notions that, first, understanding *technē* as a means to an end is to only appreciate one mode of occasioning (*causa finalis*) out of four, and that the maker (*causa efficiens*) is neither solely responsible for bringing-forth the thing nor is she the sole recipient for its purposes. The technological thing is rather indebted to *all modes of occasioning* and purposively oriented, in some occasions, away from human instrumentality, perhaps, for example, as gift to the Gods. And, second, each of these modes of occasioning are unified in a the broader category of “bringing-forth,” which brings something from concealment into unconcealment through “letting” the thing come into presence. The maker does not, of its own accord, fashion the object, but *gathers* something into its own revealing, its own presencing. Technology, then, is “neither only a human activity nor a mere means within such an activity” but rather “a way of revealing” through this non-instrumental letting/bringing-forth.<sup>362</sup>

That technology appears as instrumentality to us, however, not only evidences our forgetting of technology’s relation to *technē*, *poēsis*, and bringing-forth, but rather indicates the essence of enframing. Enframing, “sets upon” and “challenges” Being as constant “standing-reserve” for our consumption: “Everywhere everything is ordered to stand-by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call

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<sup>360</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 9.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*.

for a further ordering...[Standing-reserve] designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences.”<sup>363</sup> The ontological determination of standing reserve, then, “is not permanence (steady persistence) but rather orderability, the constant possibility of being summoned and ordered, that is, the persistent standing at ones disposal.”<sup>364</sup> Beings are not co-aligned in a totality of presence, but rather determined in advance as, before they appear, as already subject to orderability and consumption. In conjunction with the will-to-will, the standing reserve extends itself into the possible as such, and thereby “drives out every other possibility of revealing,” and, eventually, “revealing as such.”<sup>365</sup> That is, in enframing, every other possible mode of revealing is forgotten, and instrumentality comes to seem as the *only* way of relating to beings. It is thus the “supreme danger.”

We, as mortals, are not outside of this orderability but have been enveloped within it. “The current talk of about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this.”<sup>366</sup> In our thrownness into enframing, we find ourselves already challenged to order the world, “already challenged to exploit the energies of nature.”<sup>367</sup> And since mortals are the ones endowed with freedom, a freedom subverted by the seamlessness of orderability they in fact “belong even more originally than nature within the standing reserve.”<sup>368</sup> This is to say that, insofar as enframing is a “way of revealing,” and revealing as such is linked to human freedom, then humans belong

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>364</sup> *Four Seminars*, 62.

<sup>365</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 27.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

*essentially* within enframing, insofar as they are, in many respects, responsible for. This insatiable massiveness of enframing, incorporating mortals within itself, presents what Heidegger calls, from Hölderlin, the “supreme danger:” “man stands so decisively in attendance on the challenging-forth of enframing that he does not apprehend enframing as a claim.” He “fails to see himself as the one spoken to, and hence also fails in every way to hear what respect he ek-sists, in the realm of an exhortation or address [from Being].”<sup>369</sup>

Enframing is not to be understood as some overarching metaphysical idea or ideology that floats over top the world, but embeds itself in our a-theoretical worldliness, or everydayness within the world of ready-to-hand. Heidegger presaged this point already in *Being and Time* when he wrote that “Everydayness takes Dasein as a ready-to-hand matter of concern, that is, something managed and reckoned up. ‘Life’ is a ‘business,’ whether or not it covers its costs.”<sup>370</sup> Heidegger will later call this “reckoning” and “managing” “calculative thinking.”<sup>371</sup>

How, then, does this constant reserve, which consumes everything in advance, relate to the “being-left-empty” of ontological indifference? The clearest expression of this comes in *The End of Philosophy*:

The consumption of all materials, including the raw material of “man,” for the unconditional possibility of the production of everything is determined in a concealed way by the complete emptiness in which beings, the materials of what is real, are suspended. This emptiness has to be filled up. But since the emptiness of Being can never be filled up by the fullness of beings, especially when this

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> *Being and Time*, 277.

<sup>371</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy by Martin Heidegger*, 1 edition (University of Chicago Press, 2003), 105-106.

emptiness can never be experienced as such, the only way to escape it is incessantly to arrange beings in the constant possibility of being ordered as the form of guaranteeing aimless activity. Viewed in this way, technology is the organization of a lack, since it is related everywhere where there are not enough beings—and it is increasingly everywhere and always not enough for the will to will escalating itself—technology has to jump in, create a substitute, and consume raw materials.  
<sup>372</sup>

We can notice that, like boredom, beings are left “suspended” by the “complete emptiness of Being.” The emptiness of “what is” is indicated by an essential “lack” in Being: Essential because beings can never “fill up” the lack of Being’s abandonment, despite the efforts of metaphysics. With boredom we saw a near identical relation between beings and their being, where beings were left suspended by being’s withdrawal, itself predicated on the collapse of ecstatic time and the severance of the ontological difference made possible by the fundamental lack in Dasein. Just as in the epochal transposition of being-held-in-limbo, in other words, what was once secured in Dasein is now secured in Being itself, i.e. the nihilative nothing of its oblivion. This puts a significant and deeply important twist on the relation between the two levels: The emptiness of Being, we hear, “cannot be experienced.” This makes sense since that which we can experience are only ever beings and never being itself. Even in profound boredom, which amounted to Dasein experiencing itself in “self-awakening,” we never experienced the withdrawal of being directly but only the telling refusal of “just beings.” The telling refusal of beings was the “outward” indication of the loss of being and our own emptiness.<sup>373</sup> But here, in the epoch of technology and nihilism, and owing to

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<sup>372</sup> *End of Philosophy*, 107.

<sup>373</sup> I use the word “outward” here in conformity with Heidegger’s appreciation of Plato’s use of the word *eidos*. “*Eidos*, in the common speech, meant outward aspect that a visible thing offers to the eye. But what Plato extracts from this word will never become visible to the naked eye,” i.e. the immutable Ideas or

Heidegger's turn, it is precisely Being itself that accounts for the lack, and *this* lack, which cannot be experienced directly, will contain within it an important qualification on just what an "authentic" relation between man and Being looks like, a qualification that doesn't necessarily negate Dasein's ecstatic potentiality but gives it an overarching "orientation" towards the essence of Being itself as revealing in things.

Just as in the levels of ontological indifference, this emptiness is evidenced by the everyday indifference of Dasein and the supreme undifferentiatedness of beings. The will-to-will is understood as an "aimless activity" where "beings, which alone are admitted into the will-to-will, expand in a lack of differentiation ... This lack of differentiation bears witness to the already guaranteed self-constancy of the un-world in the abandonment of Being."<sup>374</sup> Just as in boredom, because beings are suspended by the lack of being they appear in un-differentiation, an undifferentiation that collapses the world into itself. The world is no longer the site of the appearance of Being, but rather the denial of Being. It is an "unworld." This lack of differentiation, is a profound "uniformity" amongst beings, a uniformity "only masked by the procedure and arrangement which stands under the 'principle of production.'"<sup>375</sup> The production of more and more goods, for example, as "diverse" as they may be, is only – once again – the outward expression, the "need," of technology and the abandonment of Being, the nihilistic veneer that restrains the age from turning into itself, covering it over with a

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Forms (*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 20). Beings, in our case, are the outward experiential expression of Being, which cannot be experienced directly.

<sup>374</sup> *End of Philosophy*, 108.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*, 108.

plethora of arbitrary things. The satisfaction of consumptive need, predictably, can never satiate the need itself but propels it onwards.

If Dasein is thrown into the age of techno-nihilism then its profound boredom cannot be experienced in isolation from these overarching ontological conditions. Rather, we can now see that the ontological source for boredom doesn't only come from the essential emptiness of Dasein *qua* Dasein, but rather is rooted in the epochal abandonment of Being, the heightened name for what Heidegger earlier called "the contemporary situation."<sup>376</sup> Indeed, the foregoing attests to the manner in which the ontological indifference symptomatic of everydayness and boredom is carried over into the "planetary" domain of nihilism and technology: Being-held-in-limbo is now the long night of the destitute time, and being-left-empty is the abandonment of Being itself, expressed in the undifferentiated (ontologically indifferent) horizon of beings as standing reserve. Ontological indifference is thus a continuing thread that links the "scales" of Heidegger's thinking, allowing them to speak to each-other in a unique way.

In its indifference to Being and Being's indifference to man, we find an analogous dynamic to the mutual indifference of dogmatic indifference to reason and reason's indifference to metaphysics in Kant's thinking of indifferentism. Here, we have a mutual indifference on both sides of the appropriation between humans and Being. Unlike Kant, this mutual indifference is essential, not just a failure of rational maturation, as if we can surmount it or supersede it. We must, for Heidegger, turn into the ontology of

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<sup>376</sup> Heidegger abandons the word "situation" in his later work for it is still too closely related to subjectivity—that the situation is the situation for a subject.

indifference. As it stands, however, this indifference has only been discussed on the side of the “danger.” In the next section, we will attempt its turning. For now, allow me to conclude this section by way of appropriating Heidegger’s imagery in the service of creating a sketch of the landscape of ontological indifference. In Heidegger’s later thought, the abandonment of being is synonymous with the abandonment of what he calls the “fourfold:” Earth, Sky, Divinities and Mortals. Heidegger would find in these onto-poetical realms within which Being has presenced in the history of metaphysics and can re-presence in a non-metaphysical way in the age of enframing and nihilism. Using the language of the fourfold, and with ontological indifference: We are kept from the deep shadows of the Earth and its mysteries, the radiance of the sky and the secrets in its depths. We are met, instead, with *greyness*, “the greyness of the everyday,” the “pallid” tones in which pure light and pure dark meet and cancel each-other out. We are met with the “stifling fog” of profound boredom, the “cloud shadow that conceals the land,”<sup>377</sup> the “dull and gloom of the everyday,”<sup>378</sup> that keeps our gaze to the immediate, “just passing things by,” as if we could stumble into a “clearing” (*Lichtung*) without noticing it. With ontological indifference we are kept from an awareness of the eternal life of the Divine, vaulting across the heavens and emerging in things, and from the nothingness of our own mortality, the finality of our own existence and the ecstatic openness afforded by it. We are met, instead, with *animality*, the “bare life” that neither knows death nor existence, an animality that can neither guard the Earth nor become entirely severed from it, entranced by those most base stimuli that trigger habitual response, locked in our world-poor

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<sup>377</sup> *Elucidations of Holderin’s Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, N.Y: Humanity Books, 2000), 126.

<sup>378</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 153.

“environment.” In Enframing, “the drive of animality and the *ratio* of humanity become identical.”<sup>379</sup> Barely living, we are “resources,” the “most important raw material.”<sup>380</sup>

Having lost sight of the poetic element in *technē*, the fires of technology – its ancient symbol – burn onwards into the possible, thickening the horizon with smoke, drawing mortals deeper and deeper into the world’s night, a darkness that contains no mystery. (For a visual representation of this landscape, see Appendix, figures 2 and 3). Yet a new relation to technology, to the Earth, Sky, Divinities and Mortals is still, for Heidegger, possible. It is lurking as the saving power concealed within the danger of Enframing and the abandonment of Being. In his poem *The Ister*, Hölderlin writes: “Now come fire! / Impatient are we / To look upon the day.”<sup>381</sup> In eager exuberance Hölderlin captures the promise of technology, the dawn of man. Yet, in the world’s night, we must *wait with* technology for the *aletheic* truth of Being’s arrival, and do so, for Heidegger, poetically. We are thus, in the destitute time, closer to Rene Char:

Truth waits for dawn beside a candle.<sup>382</sup>

## II. Overcoming Indifference: Letting and Releasing, “Poetically Man Dwells...”

So far in this chapter, we have seen that indifference can be understood as a kind of “negative” aspect of Heidegger’s thinking in a manner roughly analogous to Kant’s.

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<sup>379</sup> *The End of Philosophy* by Martin Heidegger, 106.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid*, 107.

<sup>381</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, ed. Jeremy Adler, trans. Michael Hamburger (England: Penguin, 1994), 254.

<sup>382</sup> Rene Char, *Selected Poems of René Char*, ed. Mary Ann Caws and Tina Jolas (New Directions, 1992), 67.

Indifference refers to the loss of the ontological difference, which means, correspondingly, a loss of metaphysics. In the vacuum of nihilism, Dasein is left with an emptiness that it tries to cover over by attending to so many outward “needs,” and by seeking out the diagnostics of “cultural philosophy” to help offer respite from metaphysical homesickness. Similar to Kant, Heidegger looks towards the “conditions of possibility” for this emergence ultimately for the purpose of usurping the horizon of metaphysics altogether. Though in Heidegger’s case this is not through the transcendental subject but the more “primordial” domain of Dasein’s relation to Being, and Being’s givenness to Dasein.

If it can be said that Heidegger undermined Kant’s appeal to legislative reason by relocating the ground of the subject from apperception to the time-forming power of the imagination, then it can be said that Heidegger’s account of ontological indifference actually makes possible the Kantian account of indifferentism. Dasein’s indifference must now be more fundamental than the indifference of reason. Moreover, if Heidegger ultimately linked his early reflections on indifference and boredom into his later thinking, then we can also see how Kant’s account of indifferentism as “the mother of chaos and night in the sciences” simply underappreciated the force of the “river” he found himself floating within; the river, as we said, that indicated in the direction of nihilism. From Heidegger’s perspective the resultant “chaos” would not correspond to the proliferation of metaphysical opinion and dogma, as if nihilism could be reduced to a problem of epistemology, but rather to the growing ontological homelessness in modern Dasein, the essential lack at its core beginning to make itself felt. In this case, the metaphor of the river becomes at once the danger and the saving power entwined with the trajectory of

nihilism, the dwelling-place of the poet: “The rivers are the poets who found the poetic, upon whose [groundless] ground human beings dwell.”<sup>383</sup>

Our task now is to see what “positive” relation to metaphysics Heidegger offers based on this more primordial relation between humans and Being. We are thus still well within the territory that began this thesis, that is, wondering about indifference and its relation to metaphysics. In Heidegger’s case, while the “turning” from metaphysical destitution and enframing is a turning “out of metaphysics,” it is not an abandonment of metaphysics thought in a more penetrating sense, but once again involves a claim to the essence of metaphysics, just as in Kant. For Heidegger “The recovery of metaphysics is the recovery of the oblivion of Being.”<sup>384</sup> Such a recovery, Heidegger says, “turns toward the essence of metaphysics. It entwines itself around it...insofar as it calls for that realm that can raise it into the free dimension of its truth.”<sup>385</sup> This response to metaphysics will, as we will see, look much different than the call of indifferentism towards reason. For what is primary here is not a question of our failure to know the epistemic “truth” of metaphysics but rather *experiencing* the “event” [*Ereignis*] in which Being comes to presence. Being’s truth” refers to the “free space,” what Heidegger sometimes calls the “clearing” (*Lichtung*), in which Being presences in the world, it’s unconcealing/concealing.

The question we are interested in is, given the coherency of ontological indifference, how is it “overcome” in Heidegger’s thinking in sympathy with Heidegger’s

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<sup>383</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn “The Ister.”* Trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 146.

<sup>384</sup> From ‘On the Question of Being’ in *Pathmarks*, 314.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*

broader turning of metaphysics? It is at this point that we enter into a direct engagement with Heidegger's "positive" response to the requirement of metaphysical necessity bestowed by Kant. We are looking for how he attempts to generate a relation to the inner possibility of metaphysics, just as Kant did.

However, before we go on to consider what this might look like, we need to get a more precise sense of what is meant by "overcoming" in Heidegger's thinking. First, overcoming could not be understood in terms of a superseding or supplanting as is meant by the German *Überwindung*. Rather, it must be understood in terms of Heidegger's coined *Verwindung*, a "restoring-surmounting" that would bring that which is overcome into its "concealed truth."<sup>386</sup> This is, Heidegger says, "similar to what happens when, in the human realm, one gets over grief and pain."<sup>387</sup> That which is overcome in this sense is never fully left behind but brought into a different, perhaps clearer or "mended" relationship, one that we have "come to terms with." We "*turn*" our relationship to it so that it no longer inflicts harm but we come to see its essential place, similar to the turning of boredom and anxiety. Gianni Vattimo elaborates this as a "twisting, resignation, or ironic acceptance."<sup>388</sup> The crucial register in which Heidegger applies this term for us now is with respect to Being's oblivion, where oblivion (as mentioned) does not dominantly mean "forgetting" but rather concealedness. In its concealing of Being, enframing "entraps the truth of itself within its own concealedness," that is, covers over its own "condition of possibility" as the loss of Being and forbids it to appear at all. In

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<sup>386</sup> From 'The Turning' in *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 39.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 29.

such an entrapping, we have seen, it presents a “danger in the highest sense,” where every other possible way of revealing is driven out so far that we no longer even notice the claim that enframing is making on us.<sup>389</sup> However, because humans are not – despite its insatiable massiveness – “helplessly delivered over to technology” they have a certain space to “adapt” to the “ordaining” of what has come to presence in the technological age. “Ordaining” here means both “coming-to-presence” and “destining,” as well as “skill” and “aptitude.”<sup>390</sup> This means that the manner in which Being itself is ordained to us in the current epoch *already implies* a kind of skill or aptitude that we have come to take on as a matter of course—calculative instrumentality, neglect of things and so on. This also implies, however, that the current mode of revealing is by no means absolute but can change, or better, alter its course, through shifts in our “aptitude,” shifts possible on the basis of our essential freedom. As Heidegger puts it, human freedom might yet yield “another destining yet veiled waiting.”<sup>391</sup>

The realization of this other destiny – the *Verwindung* of enframing – depends on a novel relationship to Being that is only possible when metaphysics has reached its completion. Only in the “wake” of metaphysics as ontotheology, where no particular metaphysical horizon “fills” us, can humans “stand-out” into the clearing of the disclosure/givenness of Being as the “shepherds of Being” in a non-determinative way. This “standing-out” into Being implies: (1) a “turning homeward” into the essence of *humans* qua essentially free and “needed by Being” to maintain the open for its “coming

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<sup>389</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 27.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid*.

to pass.” (2) a coming into the essential *relation* between humans and Being as “appropriated” to one another, where neither is the wholly determinative ground for the other, but rather both reach out to one another in their “mutual belonging;”<sup>392</sup> and (3), the allowance of *Being itself* to rest in its withdrawal and concealment. While the turning, then, occurs *through* humans, and thus a turning in humans is “needed by Being,” humans are not to be understood as the fundament of the relation.<sup>393</sup> Humans and Being “co-respond” or “conjoin” to one another in the turning. In what follows, we must always bear in mind this co-respondence and not too easily collapse the “practices” involved in human turning as strictly of their own making or doing. They are rather allowed for by the essence of Being as withdrawing and presencing.

#### *i. From Indifference to Letting-be*

In trying to overcome ontological indifference, then, I am after a particular kind of “turning” of its meaning sympathetic with Heidegger’s overarching aim of “turning” into and out of nihilism and technology. This may look like a kind of “resignation,” to use Vattimo’s word, so long as this also implies an “ironic acceptance” and twisting of how it appears in the first instance. Through such a turning, then, we might catch sight of a way of “coming to terms” with indifference without abandoning it nor assuming a grasp on it through a renewed metaphysical thinking. Rather, we might allow it to relate to the turning of humans and Being that Heidegger conceives as a possibility more broadly. In this, we can note at the outset that indifference in this positive sense could not be a kind

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<sup>392</sup> See “The Principle of Identity” in Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*.

<sup>393</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 39.

of abstract indifference: an indifferent toleration of this or that, a setting-aside and leaving-on-its-own. Nor should it immediately imply something pejorative, despite the previous section. We must rather allow for the possibility that indifference also plays a role in a post-metaphysical comportment to the world and beings. If the Heideggerian meaning of overcoming is followed, this must be a possibility. In attempting this, however, we should not presume in advance that there will exist a perfect terminological correspondence. This is okay since we are not after a perfect terminological correspondence but rather a phenomenological one.<sup>394</sup> Language here must be permitted to slide around a bit, and we must be willing to give up precise definitions in favour trying to bring to mind the phenomenon in question, bringing it into a certain feeling or resonance.

Since ontological indifference has amounted to a certain kind of closure to beings and concealment of Being, we might expect that overcoming indifference would reside in the opposite, in an openness to beings. This is indeed where we will find it. We are given our clue in this direction from the (unfortunately yet translated) early *Einleitung in Die Philosophie* (1928):

The letting things be (*Seinlassen der Dinge*) in the widest sense is situated fundamentally prior to every particular interest or determinate indifference. Our letting-be, our giving things over to themselves and to their being, is an indifference [*Gleichgültigkeit*] that belongs to the metaphysical essence of *Dasein*. This [metaphysical/ontological] indifference is only possible in care ... To let beings be [*Seinlassen*] is not at all nothing. Certainly, we do not actually do anything, in order that, for example, nature is what and how it is; we add nothing, and yet this letting-

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<sup>394</sup> What I am doing here is carrying on a concept more germane to Heidegger's fundamental ontology into his later thinking. There is nothing, I think, disingenuous to this move, since it would simply help to clarify what is meant by the "turning" necessary by humans, specifically with respect to letting-be—a term that does indeed carry through from his early to later work.

be is an ‘act’ of the highest and most original kind, possible only on the basis of the innermost essence of our existence, freedom.<sup>395</sup>

Here we find a remarkable passage that aligns what would become a central notion in Heidegger’s later work, “letting-be of things” (*Seinlassen der Dinge*) or just “letting-be” (*Seinlassen*), with an indifference “belonging to the metaphysical essence of Dasein.” Letting-be, we are told, is an “act of the highest and most original kind” and involves “giving things over to themselves and to their being.” We also notice that letting-be is only possible in freedom. Guiding us onwards, then, we will enter into the appropriate realm from which to consider the cohabitation of indifference and letting-be as belonging-together if we hold in our mind just what this “freedom” entails, if we bring ourselves into proximity with the free-space that allows beings to be, that freedom that ultimately turns humans “homewards.”

To note, however, Heidegger is not consistent in aligning “letting-be” with indifference in this way. In *On the Essence of Truth*, for example, written a few years after *Einleitung* in 1930, he says that “Freedom reveals itself as letting beings be...this phrase – to let beings be – does not refer to neglect and indifference but rather the opposite. To let be is to engage oneself with beings.”<sup>396</sup> At first glance, this seems to contradict the notion that letting-be, which is not neglectful (as we will see), is rooted in indifference. To be sure, this statement makes no claim about indifference with respect to Dasein’s metaphysical essence but rather uses indifference in, it seems, an ontic way: that letting-be does not refer to neglecting things. But we have also seen in the previous

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<sup>395</sup> Cited in: Mark Hewson, *Blanchot and Literary Criticism* (A&C Black, 2011), 60.

<sup>396</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 144.

sections that this neglectful quality of indifference is in fact a feature of ontological indifference as such, that it abandons the being of beings and glides over them as a constant reserve. If this is the case, then, how can we make sense of this apparent antagonism?

I think the solution is to *allow* for it. Or better, we should not see it as an antagonism at all but rather let it suggest the tendency of ontological indifference in both directions. It is perhaps the case that ontological indifference, *insofar as it is rooted in the essence of Dasein*, is able to be *both* neglectful and to let-be. Ontological indifference would then be located on both sides of the turning, that it can be *both* neglectful in the sense of the abandonment of Being *and* let-be in the sense of turning that abandonment into its essential withdrawal, perhaps, allowing for a deeper sense of caring, of engaging with beings. Taken in this way, the apparent contradiction in fact opens onto a line of thought towards ontological indifference's overcoming in just the sense elaborated, and thus may confirm and motivate this interpretation. What, then, is meant by letting-be and how is it related to freedom?<sup>397</sup> We will first deal with the nature of letting-be and freedom before turning to their relation with indifference.

In the previous chapter (section II.ii), I noted how freedom as transcendence was an ontological feature of Dasein, which always “surpasses” beings in the “towards-which” of its ecstatic engagement in the world. This freedom is neither a negative nor a positive freedom, but an ontological freedom corresponding with the openness of Dasein to beings and beings to Dasein. It is in this freedom to “stand-out” into the “clearing” or

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<sup>397</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot rely on *Einleitung in die Philosophie* where Heidegger draws out the connection between indifference and letting-be. I tried at one point to find a translator for the surrounding pages of the passage quoted above but had no luck.

“truth” of beings, or what Heidegger calls the “open,” that Dasein can be “free-from” or “free-for” at all. Letting-be, we can now add, is integral to this ontological freedom.

In the early Heidegger, this letting-be looks like the following. When we transcend beings, we only do so insofar as the beings are allowed to presence in such and such a way. We do not unilaterally project onto beings but rather our projections are both constrained and led in advance by what is given and how it is given. Transcendence is, in each case, defined by an “accordance” or “attunement” with beings. The condition of possibility for this accordance is, Heidegger says, freedom and letting-be: “Because every mode of human comportment is in its own way open and plies itself to that toward-which it comports itself, the restraint of letting-be, i.e. freedom, must have granted it its endowment of that inner directive for correspondence of presentation to beings in each instance.”<sup>398</sup> For beings to appear in sympathy with my attunements they must already be allowed to appear in ways amenable to them. For example, in order for me to lift the cup in front of me to drink out of it, or to sit back and appreciate its coloration, or make a proposition about it, the cup must have already been allowed to appear to me as a container for a drinking, a thing of aesthetic interest, or a present-to-hand entity that contains certain properties. None of these comportments, to be sure, necessarily imply that I feel myself “free” in any heightened sense, nor that I do anything other than what I usually do. Rather, letting-be here is simply the prior moment of allowance that lets the cup enter into accord with whatever comportment I take up:<sup>399</sup> “Letting beings be, which

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<sup>398</sup> From ‘On the Essence of Truth’ in Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 146.

<sup>399</sup> We can see here the basis for Heidegger’s claim against traditional notions of truth as adequation or correspondence. Whether in Aquinas’ “*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*” (truth is the adequation of intellect and thing), or in Kant’s account that truth is the conformity of objects with judgments, or the more

is an attuning, a bringing into accord, prevails throughout and anticipates all the open comportment that flourishes in it.”<sup>400</sup>

Because letting-be is the condition of possibility for all accordance whatsoever and prevails in all open comportment, it must also ground the possibility of metaphysics. Here, Heidegger says, letting-be is specifically a “letting-presence” in conformity with a particular metaphysical horizon.<sup>401</sup> While this form of letting-be still involves a “setting-free into the open,” that which is let-be is only let-be insofar as it accords with the overarching economy of presence established by a given metaphysical horizon. As Heidegger puts it: that which is let-be in this case “*is only thus admitted* as something present for itself to the openness of co-present beings” (my italics).<sup>402</sup> This, of course, was the case with Kant: experienceable beings were only admitted into the open insofar as they contained the mark of objectivity. Kantian (theoretical) metaphysics, then, is indeed a letting-be, but in the metaphysical sense of a “letting stand together” of objects for the purpose of representation.<sup>403</sup>

Thus, in the most general sense, freedom as letting-be speaks to the *allowance* that prevails in the open that prefigures the appearance of beings in how they show

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general formulation that truth is the correspondence between a proposition and a state of affairs, in each case truth signifies the accordance between the “thought” (intellect, judgment, proposition) and the “matter.” As an accordance, Heidegger says, the traditional concept of truth implies a “relation” between these two, apparently dissimilar things. Heidegger’s point is that the possibility of this relation – of a thought coming into conformity with the matter – rests on the “open comportment” within which we stand in relation to beings such that they can appear at all as things of concern at all. The ground of truth as accordance is the openness of Dasein’s there-being: “The essence of truth as the correctness of a statement is freedom” (from ‘On the Essence of Truth’ in *Pathmarks*, 142).

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>401</sup> *On Time and Being*, 37.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> *The End of Philosophy*, 57.

themselves, and thus acts as an ontological condition of possibility for our particular ontic comportments, including the possibility of metaphysical determination. In other words, letting-be indicates the manner in which beings are already opened in the “clearing” of Dasein’s freedom, its out-standing “being-there.”

However, while letting-be expresses the manner in which beings are already revealed in the “open” of freedom, and thereby grounds all comportment whatsoever, it is also the case that certain types of comportment align more sympathetically to letting-be while others do not. Unsurprisingly, comportments that are open to beings’ manifesting themselves are so sympathetic. This sense of letting-be, Heidegger says, involves a “being open for...from the very outset,” a “free holding oneself towards whatever beings are given there in letting oneself be bound.”<sup>404</sup> Letting-be in this case “does not close up in itself,” but is “intrinsically...resolutely open,” in which we do not “apply our own measures on beings,” but rather “the giving measure is transferred to beings in advance in accordance with the comportment that lets itself be bound.”<sup>405</sup> “Being-bound” here does not refer to some sort of confinement but rather to an “entrancement” by beings, an entrancement that allows them to offer measure, or guidance, to Dasein’s projective being-in. In this case, we are neither subjected to their whim nor do we impose ourselves or our preconceptions on them. That is, we neither “confine” beings by, for example, engaging them in a linear fashion as means to our ends, nor do we “lose ourselves” in them by becoming wholly immersed and giving ourselves up entirely, but are attentively engaged in them by opening a “region” in which they can appear as what they are,

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<sup>404</sup> *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 342.

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid* 342.

maintaining a slight separation such that we can make judgments about them, decide to go along with them, or refuse them.<sup>406</sup> This extra-ordinary stance, where we let appear what *is* as opposed to what we expect or hope or intend, is somewhere in the “middle-voice” of Dasein, neither active nor passive, neither demanding nor neglectful.

Letting-be also gives up on the pretense that the world can be made fully “available” and “controllable.”<sup>407</sup> Rather, as the attunement that accompanies standing-out in the open, it is also the attunement that allows for beings *not* to be present. More precisely, insofar as letting-be makes no metaphysical demands on the Being of beings, then it allows Being itself to rest in concealment, “conserving concealment” as concealment.<sup>408</sup> As such, by allowing for concealment, letting-be is the attunement within which truth – the event of unconcealment – can occur. Only if there is concealment can things appear in novel ways. Concealment in this sense cannot appear as a “limit to surmount,” but rather as a “fundamental occurrence” that accompanies and makes possible every unconcealment.<sup>409</sup>

We can note here an immediate relationship between our previous discussion of ontological indifference and letting-be. Ontological indifference was primarily understood in terms of closure, all the way to the point of ejection from Being. With indifference, we tend to narrow the purview of the open, condense its aperture to the habitual and routine, that everything that appears is long since known, appearing in the uniform horizon of constancy. Here, concealment is completely forgotten. That this mode

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<sup>406</sup> From 'On the Essence of Truth,' in *Pathmarks*, 149.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

of being in the world holds sway in enframing is, we said, the nihilistic culmination of metaphysics. With metaphysics the aperture of the open is set by the determination of Being as constant presence. In this sense, metaphysics disavows concealment by bringing everything to stand. In both senses – ontological indifference and metaphysics – then, we lose track of concealment as concealment, and presume that everything already visible is just what and how it is. We are within the open but fail to recognize its openness as an openness to concealment.<sup>410</sup> The world in both cases tends towards an “unworld.” Letting-be, by contrast, does not deny that a given view of beings – the aperture of the open – determines the manner in which beings appear, but in allowing things to remain concealed the open is permitted to rest as the open, as the site where things can emerge. The open comportment of letting-be is, in other words, at once an openness *to* concealment and itself an act *of* concealment, and both are necessary for the open to be and remain open.

So far, we have mentioned two related senses of letting-be. The first indicated the prior unconcealment of beings that operates as a condition of possibility for every comportment and accordance, and the second with the types of comportment that align

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<sup>410</sup> We can note here a slide in the meaning of the “open,” where on the one hand, the open is used in relation to Dasein’s open comportment, and on the other in relation to *the* open it comports itself towards, the region of the revealing of beings. In a precise formulation, we notice this slide: “The forest clearing (opening) is experienced in contrast to dense forest, called ‘density’ (*Dichtung*) in older language. The substantive ‘opening’ goes back to the verb ‘to open.’ The adjective *licht* ‘open’ is the same word as ‘light.’ To make something open means: To make something light, free and open, e.g., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The openness thus originating is the clearing [*Lichtung*]...The clearing is the open for everything that is present and absent” (*On Time and Being*, 92). The clearing as the open here is the “openness of Being itself” as that within which the open comportment relates. This shift, as I have been indicating, is symptomatic of Heidegger’s turning: “The thinking that proceeds from *Being and Time*, in that it gives up the phrase ‘the meaning of Being’ in favour of ‘truth of Being,’ henceforth emphasizes the openness of Being itself rather than the openness of Dasein with respect to the openness of Being. This indicates the turn in which thinking always more discretely turns to Being as Being” (*Four Seminars*, 47).

with letting-be as standing-out in the open. We can add a third sense to these and enhance them thereby.

The primary relation in the early sense of letting-be is between Dasein and the world. Dasein is responsible for the letting required for beings to appear as what and how they are. It is as if beings are set free only insofar as they relate to Dasein's projections. Or, at least, Dasein is the principle mediator between unconcealment and concealment, suggesting its preeminent centrality. In Heidegger's later work, however, he qualifies letting-be in a way sympathetic to his turning towards the truth of Being as primary to Dasein's projective disclosure. In *On Time and Being*, for example, Heidegger says, "When letting-presence is thought explicitly, then what is affected by *this* letting is no longer *what is present*, but *presencing itself*."<sup>411</sup> In this case, letting means "to admit, give, extend, send, to let-belong."<sup>412</sup> Here, Heidegger is stressing not the letting of present beings (as defined in a horizon of metaphysics for example), but the letting of their way of *presencing* (*Anwesen*), their unfolding in unconcealment, their poetic or auto-poetic emergence. The crucial point follows on from this. If Being itself is now understood as essentially concealed, and it is this concealment that allows beings to presence, then it is fundamentally "Being that lets beings presence."<sup>413</sup> The "deepest meaning of being is letting."<sup>414</sup> In this case, "it is no longer the presence of a being which draws ones attention, but the ground which that being covers over in order to make it

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<sup>411</sup> *On Time and Being*, 37.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

independent from it.”<sup>415</sup> Heidegger also uses the word “giving” for this relationship. Being *gives* beings (*Es Gibt*). Letting now becomes: “the gift of a giving which gives only itself, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws.”<sup>416</sup>

This is a significant move, for it no longer suggests, at least in the first instance, that letting is an act of free human projection and that beings are let-be principally through Dasein. Rather, it situates Dasein’s free projection within the primary letting of Being, and in so doing indicates a unique decentering of the human. As Heidegger puts it, appreciating the primary letting of Being requires a “free thinking from the ontological difference.”<sup>417</sup> Here, humans would “release” (*Gelassen*) themselves “away from themselves” as privileged points of reference, and give ourselves (without renouncing ourselves) to the priority of the things and the world given to us as the gifts of Being.<sup>418</sup> We come to see that that letting-be is carried out prior to our projections, willing, planning, calculations and so on, but rather occurs beyond us in the rhythm of “what is.” Indeed, the primary relation is now, Heidegger says, “between world and thing,” and we get the sense that this making room for this primary letting is correspondent to how Heidegger understands the turning of enframing, amounting to the “thinging of things” and the “worlding of world.”<sup>419</sup> We are on our way to understanding the relationship between letting-be and freedom in the later Heidegger, then, if we attend to the gift of Being as it appears between world and thing, and the relationship humans have to it.

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology And Other Essays*, 47.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, 43.

One demonstration of the relationship between world and thing is given in Heidegger's essay *The Thing*. Here, Heidegger thinks the nature of thingness outside of metaphysical representation. He does not (and cannot) do so in abstraction by talking about thingness in general, by accumulating all the shared properties of things and inferring a general category, but rather must do so with regards to a specific thing (presumably) in front of him, in this case, a jug.<sup>420</sup> In thinking the "jugness of the jug," Heidegger "lets" the jug appear as it is in its world in the heightened sense we are after. This means, for the later Heidegger, that letting the jug appear is to notice its belonging within the onto-poetical realms of the fourfold: the earth, sky, divinities and mortals.<sup>421</sup> First, we confront the jug as a holding-vessel and not as something else. The jug, as a thing, has its own potentiality of being as a vessel. This potentiality reveals itself immediately in the space that it contains, its "void." In its void, the jug appears as what it is made for, its purpose to contain and to pour. When we relate to the jug "at-hand," we do so in its capacity for "containing" and "outpouring."<sup>422</sup> It is in the containing and outpouring that the jug "gives" what is contained in it, and indeed gives *itself* as what it is as a jug. But even though we may use it as a useful thing the jug does not collapse into its

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<sup>420</sup> To note, the "category" of "thing" here reaches well beyond the example of the jug, which is an "*aedificare*," something built or made. The way of being of the jug will be different than other things in this general category of made things, like a book, or a table, and even more different from unmade things of nature, like a creek or a deer. Although the scope is wide for what constitutes thingliness, however, for a thing to be a thing it must gather the fourfold, and objects designed for consumption cannot do this.

<sup>421</sup> Heidegger summarizes the "meaning" of the fourfold (meaning here not to be considered in a strict sense but a poetical one) as follows: "Earth is the serving bearer blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water, rising up in plant and animal... The sky is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the drifting clouds and the blue depth of the aether... The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead... The mortals are human beings. They are called mortals because they are capable of death as death" (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, 147-48).

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 179.

utility, as a mere instrument for our use. Rather, it is a thing in its own right, bearing its singular (to use the language of the *Question Concerning Technology*) “indebtedness” to the fourfold: The water poured from the jug contains the earth, which “makes way for the spring” from which it was gathered. The water poured also contains the sky, in its “rain and dew.”<sup>423</sup> Thus, “in the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell.”<sup>424</sup> The gift of the water is also a drink for mortals, “quenching their thirst,” “refreshing their leisure.”<sup>425</sup> But the gift of the drink might also be given “for consecration,” which does not still thirst but “elevates the celebration of the feast.”<sup>426</sup> Here, the gift becomes a “libation for the immortal gods.”<sup>427</sup> In the jugs thinging in its outpouring of gift, “earth, sky, divinities and mortals dwell together all at once.”<sup>428</sup>

Experiencing the jug in this way, Heidegger says, allows the jug to presence (not “*be present*”) with and within the “mirror play of the fourfold.”<sup>429</sup> The thing and the fourfold are “appropriated” to one another; they extend into one another in the world: the jug presences the fourfold and the fourfold presences in the jug. Yet, like all appropriation in Heidegger’s thinking, this is accompanied by an “expropriation,” that is, each element of the fourfold maintains its own withholding or withdrawal in the relationship, its own concealment.<sup>430</sup> They exist together in the middle space of “holding-

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid, 171.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid, 177.

together” and “holding-apart,” maintaining their autonomy while also needing that relation to be what they are.<sup>431</sup> In this way, a thing can remain “in its own-most” while also reaching beyond itself into its world.<sup>432</sup>

How, then, are humans related to the thinging of things? As Julian Young notes, while humans *qua* mortals are just one of the elements of the fourfold, because they are those to whom Being is appropriated, the ability of things to thing ultimately depends on human turning from enframing and instrumentality to a “poetic” openness to the thing and world.<sup>433</sup> That the primary sense of letting occurs between Being and things in the world, in other words, does not imply that humans are no longer necessary. Rather, they too must “let-be” in the even more heightened sense of “safeguarding” things. To let-be here is no longer set in terms of a being appearing to us in relation to our *own* potentiality of being, nor that they are principally conceived as guides for-*us* in their manner of disclosure, but rather to let-be is oriented now towards a things’ *own* potentiality of being, its own way of presencing in the fourfold. Letting-be now means “to let the thing presence in its thinging from out of the worlding world.”<sup>434</sup> To understand things as things in this way, in other words, is to think them outside the ontological difference, as not just *beings* in the horizon of the ontological difference, but *things* in their own right, always expropriated in a region of their own autonomy, already given by the gift of being. In safeguarding, then, we “protect” things by allowing them to rest “in their own

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<sup>431</sup> As Heidegger says elsewhere, “we can only say the same if we think the difference” (Ibid. 216).

<sup>432</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 177.

<sup>433</sup> Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72.

<sup>434</sup> *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 178.

nature.”<sup>435</sup> We become aware of the fragility of things against the threat of enframing, instrumentality and neglect, and thus are called to watch over them. To use one of Heidegger’s famous phrases, the very manifestness of Being itself gives our own existentiality a supervening orientation as “shepherds of Being,” in which we are “called” to safeguard the open region where things thing and the world worlds.

We can nuance this *human* letting-be – which is sympathetic to the primary letting-be of Being – by noting both its “active” and “passive” dimensions.<sup>436</sup> First, “safeguarding” implies a keeping-safe or protecting *from* the threats of enframing. Heidegger also describes this as a “sparing” and “preserving,” where we “leave something beforehand,” “return it specifically to its being,” and “free it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace.”<sup>437</sup> On the other hand, safeguarding also includes a positive or active element, a “nursing” and “nurturing” of things and above all, a “poetic dwelling” with them. The two imply one another.

Poetic dwelling is, Heidegger says, the “manner in which humans *are* on this earth.”<sup>438</sup> To dwell is to inhabit the world by “taking under care” the fourfold, by “staying with things,” with what is closest to us.<sup>439</sup> In poetic dwelling, mortals “take measure” of the fourfold, by “preserving it in its essential being,” its presencing.<sup>440</sup> Measure-taking is not a “clutching,” “grasping” or an assessing of dimensions for our own purposes, but a

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>436</sup> Young, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, 72.

<sup>437</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 179.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

consideration and caring for things, “setting them free into their own-most” or “gathering them into their own nature.”<sup>441</sup> Ontically, dwelling in this way permits a range of practices that can be broadly considered “poetic,” that is, as related to *poēsis* or “bringing-forth:” from cultivating the earth, to architectural building, to handicraft, to artwork, to written and spoken poetic expression, to thinking itself. Each of these “reveal” beings in their own way, and do so by bringing-forth beings beyond how they appear “in nature” (things of this sort are *auto-poetic*). Obviously, what appears in each case will depend on the comportment particular to each of these practices. With gardening, for example, we would be concerned with choosing fertile land with proper irrigation and sun-light; deciding on plants suitable for the area and how they might support one another in a system of biodiversity; and watching over and tending to their growth. We tend to the manner of being of things for eating and sustaining us, of growing and preserving, and in-so-doing take heed of the providence of the earth and sky. Or, with a work of art, our comportment is guided by a work that discloses the manner in which we find ourselves as historical human beings, in which “all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits.”<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>442</sup> *Off the Beaten Track*, 41. In *The Origin of The Work of Art*, Heidegger uses Van Gogh’s “Peasant Shoes” as an example, but of course we can think of plenty of others more suitable for our time and place. For myself, Esther Shalev-Gerz’s “Between Listening and Telling: Last Witnesses, Aushwitz 1945-2005” or Adam Stimson’s “Sick and Tired” have been especially powerful examples for instigating a revelation into, with inexpressible force, my own Euro-Canadian heritage as tied up in the legacies of both the holocaust (Shalev-Gerz) and settler colonialism (Stimson). In these works, one is drawn into an affective meditation on the ineffable depths of the death, war, suffering, silence, and violence that lie in our shared history, that bind us together in the present as inheritors of that history. Indeed, in our mutual recognition of this history, myself and the other visitors of the exhibit were brought in both cases into an intimate proximity. In Heidegger’s words, the work of art was not “reduced to [my] private experiences, but [brought us] into affiliation with the truth happening in the work.”<sup>442</sup> Our “being-with-one-another [*Miteinandersein*]” was “founded” through the work of art, revealing the “the historical standing out of [our] human existence.”<sup>442</sup>

Whether participating in bringing-forth dwelling-spaces or tending to their preservation, addressing an artwork of another or bringing-forth one's own, reading a poem or writing one, or thinking in the meditative sense of following a path of thought, we are in each case, according to Heidegger, taking part in the poetic. The "form" and "content" in each instance are indeterminate, since the poetic here is understood in terms of the open, of the co-responding of humans and being, which does not include any necessary ontic determination. In poetic dwelling, humans are in the open in the sense of a "going among" or "going amidst" things in the world, that is to say, relationally in-between them, and are "lost" along the paths of bringing-forth in "twilight," where time is becoming more still and things more strange.<sup>443</sup> In the open, humans are "underway" in an open exposure to what may come. By stepping into the open and poetic dwelling within it, Heidegger says, we gain an (inexhaustible and undefined) sense of the "breadth of our being,"<sup>444</sup> that is, we are exposed to the dynamic range of the manifestness of things as they are revealed to us in our historical situation: from our relation to others as co-dwellers thrown into the history of Being, to our relationship with the earth as that which gives us our dwelling places, to our relationship with the sky as that which provides us with light and dark, rain and warmth, and to the mystery contained in the concealment of things, what Heidegger calls the "Godhead."<sup>445</sup> In short, then, poetic

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<sup>443</sup> *On the Way to Language*, 147. From Trakl, Heidegger appreciates the "blueness" of twilight, the color of neither day nor night, but where the two meet. In the darkness, the light is still lingering as a trace: "The brightness sheltered in the dark is blueness."

<sup>444</sup> *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 219.

<sup>445</sup> Heidegger's notion of poetic dwelling may seem to suggest a kind of individualistic self-absorption. However, as Julian Young argues, it directly implies care-for other humans as dwellers or would-be dwellers, as those capable of their own turning towards dwelling. In undertaking what Young calls a "personal turning" from enframing individuals are able to "foster" resistance to the mainstream of

dwelling – as involved in the “active” element of safeguarding – turns us *into* the world and towards things, safeguarding the ever-possibility of the occurrence of truth (*Ereignis*), of the unconcealment of the new and unpredictable within the fourfold: “The more poetic a poet is—the freer (that is, more open and ready for the unforeseen) his saying—the greater is the purity with which he submits what he says to an ever more painstaking listening.”<sup>446</sup>

Heidegger often accompanies letting with “releasing” or “releasement” (*Gelassenheit*). This is the “composure,” “equanimity,” or “unconcern” that accompanies the letting-be of things and the presencing of Being in them.<sup>447</sup> “Releasement towards things” for Heidegger is necessary for “dwelling in the world in a different [non-metaphysical] way.”<sup>448</sup> This term nearly says the same as letting, since its primary tone is to orient ourselves to things as they show themselves in themselves. But the merit of releasement in particular is that it indicates in the direction of what we are releasing *from*: Our mode of habitation in enframing and nihilism. We release *from* calculative and

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enframing and create “cells of resistance” to it. (Julian Young, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 124-26).

<sup>446</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 229. I am reminded here of the seventh fragment of Heraclitus: “Whoever cannot seek the unforeseen sees nothing, for the known way is an impasse” (Heraclitus, *Fragments*, trans. Brooks Haxton, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 7). For Heidegger, however, the relation between poetic dwelling and the unforeseen does not transpire through a seeking but rather a waiting. More below.

<sup>447</sup> These terms – equanimity, composure, and so on – resonate with another important passage in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* that aligns dwelling and freedom with “peace:” “To dwell is to be at peace, to remain in peace. The word peace, *Friede*, means the free, *das Freie*, and *frei* means: preserved from harm danger, preserved from something, that is, safeguarded. To free really means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm to that which we spare. Real sparing is something *positive* and happens when we leave something beforehand in its own essence, when we return it specifically to its essential being, when we 'free' it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at pace within the free sphere that cares-for each thing in its own nature” (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, 147).

<sup>448</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1969), 54.

representational thinking, and *from* the will. In releasing, we accomplish a “step-back” from this habitual comportments, and we release *towards* a poetic, will-less, openness to things as they appear to us in the technological age.<sup>449</sup> Releasement in this sense is closer, Heidegger says, to “waiting.” This is not an expectant or representational waiting, nor the impatient waiting of the first form of boredom, but an attentive and engaged waiting that does not know for what it waits. In waiting for the unforeseen, we hold open the horizon of possibility with each step along a path of thinking. In holding-open, we let things approach from out of concealment in their strangeness, occasionally stumbling into the clearing (*Lichtung*) of the open, where things are, in a “flash,” lit up anew, as if for the first time. As in a revelatory revealing, we gain, as Heidegger says in his *The Turning*, a sudden “in-sight” into that which is—in both its destitution and wonder, its danger and saving power.

Taking as our point of departure Heidegger’s statement in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* that letting-be, “an act of the highest and most original kind,” is rooted in indifference as part of “the metaphysical essence of Dasein,” we were led to explore the meaning of letting-be in Heidegger’s thinking. We saw that, by including the nature of Being itself as fundamentally withdrawn, the notion of letting-be gains an altered significance from his earlier notion of “projective” letting. Attending to the manner in which Being lets, or “gives,” beings, Heidegger said that the proper way to understand letting is not in the relationship between Dasein and beings, but rather through thing and world. As we saw,

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<sup>449</sup> To be sure, releasement here is not understood as a denial of technology, but rather affords a space in which things are no longer conceived in strictly instrumental terms. Releasement is a “simultaneous Yes and No to the technological world” (Ibid, 54).

letting refers here to the mutual appropriation and expropriation of things and the fourfold. But humans as poetic dwellers play a central role as those who, thrown into the world and things, allow those things to thing and the world to world through them. They do this through “sparing” and “preserving,” “caring” and “nurturing,” “listening” and “watching,” and “waiting” and “freeing” that which is given. We approach dwelling poetically when we remain “open to the unforeseen.” That is, we positively take heed of our own finitude and the concealment of things, their expropriation, the depths of their own-ness, generating a constant allowance for the unpredictable, creating space for the flash, the “in-sight,” the moment of unconcealment, the *aletheic* event truth, Being’s “coming to pass.” To let-be, to enter into the space of freedom, then, means to inhibit in advance the closure of beings into a predetermined plan of our instrumentality, while also allowing things to conceal themselves.

### *ii. From Letting-be to Indifference*

Where, then, do we stand with indifference as a feature of the metaphysical essence of Dasein? How can we rejoin with our intention of turning indifference from closure to openness? In the first instance, we can note an intuitive cohabitation between concepts like letting and releasement with indifference. When we speak of letting things into their own, or finding ourselves in composure, or releasing the will and standing out in the open, there is an air of what we might call a “noble” indifference to all of this. An indifference that does not primarily signify closure but openness, calmness, equanimity, unconcern, a steady awareness of concealment and a simultaneous engagement with things. This intuitive cohabitation, however, deserves to be demonstrated outright as

structurally salient. However, we can note the obvious difficulty: In the last section we saw that indifference primarily meant closure. When we move from everyday indifference into complete indifference, or from these into the forms of boredom, we experience the “telling refusal” of beings as we slip out of them. In enframing and nihilism, we also find ourselves in some bare relation to beings, which appear undifferentiated. But with the poetic openness of letting-be, we are attentive to beings in their being, in the manner they present themselves to us, in their differentiation and singularity. Given this, it is especially difficult to find what structural continuity might exist between ontological indifference in now both senses: in the “negative” or “inauthentic” sense of closure and the abandonment of Being, and the “positive” or “authentic” openness which lets Being withdraw and things to thing. Yet a reconciliation must be possible, for indifference is said to be a feature of freedom, and freedom is a precondition of both.

Earlier (section I.ii of this chapter) I mentioned a basic formula that seemed to encapsulate the relation between the ontological difference and ontological indifference. When ecstatically oriented to this or that being, we are affecting the ontological difference. We are transcending towards the being of the being of concern. We are engaged in beings in our projective being-in-the-world. But in complete indifference, everyday indifference, and the forms of boredom, we are closing off to beings, *concealing* their being, and losing touch with the ontological difference. We are in this instance tending away from transcendence itself. This, as we said, had its *own* ontological basis in Dasein’s emptiness, its capacity for non-transcendence. We were led, through this reflection, to the following basic formula: For every enactment of the ontological

difference there corresponded an act of indifference; for every unconcealment there corresponded an act of concealment. In a mundane sense, this means that indifference functions as a necessary counterpart to any moment of projective transcendence. Insofar as we are directed to this or that possibility, we necessarily foreclose others, we become indifferent to them. Considered in this sense, it is obvious how indifference can act as an essential feature of our Dasein that is simply unavoidable: we have to become indifferent to things, not only in the “grey scales” of enframing, but as a matter of course insofar as we exist as finite Dasein.

Thinking indifference in this mundane way, then, allows us to loosen the concept from its exclusive ties with the levels of fallenness discussed in the last section and to give it a wider resonance. If the pronounced modes of indifference are significant, it is because they indicate a potential tendency of the mundane type to its extremity, towards closedness to possibilities as such, ultimately to the loss of Being as that which presences. In other words, Dasein’s necessary indifference (the concealment of possibilities accompanying finite projection), becomes pronounced when, for whatever reason, it begins to close to possibilities as such into the uniformity and constancy of enframing. But if this indicates how indifference is a necessary feature of our Dasein, and how it is related to the more pronounced indifference of fallenness, it does not yet tell us how it would function in letting-be, for as it stands it is still understood negatively, as the concealing shadow of transcendence. Letting-be, however, operates in mode of ecstatic openness, where we are without question engaged with beings.

We can come into proximity with what Heidegger meant when he said that letting-be is an indifference rooted in the “essence of our Dasein,” I think, if we attend

not to the distinction between closure and openness in the first instance, but rather to the distinction between “engaging” and “withdrawing.” Or, more precisely, “between” engaging and withdrawing, by bringing to mind the experience in which both are operative. Recall that the type of *engagement* indicative of letting-be was described at various points in terms of “waiting,” or “preserving,” or “holding-open.” In all of these cases, to let-be is never a full immersion in beings: we do not “get lost” in them, as Heidegger says, and thus would not “get swept away” by whatever they dictate. But nor do we stand back and project our demands on them. Rather, we pull back from them at the same time as we are drawn towards them: We “withdraw in the face of [them] so they can reveal what and how they are.”<sup>450</sup> If we want to understand the function of ontological indifference in letting-be, then, we need only bring to mind its function for providing the counter-weight to transcendence, *its role as the ground for withdrawal itself*. Recall, withdrawal is experienced in boredom, where beings appear as just beings, as beyond our ecstasis. Yet in boredom we are thrust into this withdrawal with an acute discomfort. In letting-be, on the other hand, we *maintain* a tempered withdrawal, on the edge, it would seem, between ejection and immersion. (Perhaps this is why some artists are so susceptible to falling out of the open and into the depressed state of “artists block”). To withdraw *from* is to enact Dasein’s capacity to become indifferent, to maintain a certain reservation with respect to beings. It is only with this tempered indifference, that holds open the horizon – what Agamben has rightly called a “zone of indifference” in Heidegger’s concept of the open – so that beings can reveal

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<sup>450</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 144.

themselves.<sup>451</sup> By maintaining a will-less non-metaphysical indifference, the open remains indeterminate, the condition of possibility for the strange and intimate to come forth.

If Dasein is shown to be metaphysically empty through our experience of boredom, it is this emptiness that allows for the continual presencing of things, for the renewed “filling” of freedom in the open. Without it, Dasein would be fully immersed in beings, “lost in them” and unable to withdraw at all, to hold itself back and let things presence on their own, indeed unable to make decisions about beings at all. If Dasein is temporally held “in limbo” in boredom, it is similarly suspended in freedom, for what else does it mean to “wait” without expectation than to suspend ecstatic temporality, to untether time from projective past and future and hold them open? Is not this waiting the inversion of the restless waiting of boredom, but a waiting nonetheless?

The function of ontological indifference in maintaining the openness of the open is significant, for it now reveals itself as a fundamental root of both the abandonment of Being in enframing as well as its essential oblivion in its turning, in poetic dwelling. The *closed* withdrawal of Being indicative of enframing is a function of the pronounced ontological indifference of nihilism—our capacity to fall out of Being and will the nothing. But the *open* withdrawal involved in freedom and letting-be is a *turning* of the “destitution” of that the first “neglectful” withdrawal into its twisted opposite, as that which *lets* Being withdraw. Put otherwise, as a holding-back of projection, ontological indifference *makes no demands of Being*, and thus allows Being to rest in concealment

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<sup>451</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell, 1 edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 37.

only to appear in the presencing of things. “Thinking [as letting] is a gentle releasement that does not renounce the concealment of beings as a whole; [it] does not disrupt the concealing but entreats its unbroken essence into the open region.”<sup>452</sup> The indifference of letting-be allows Being to rest in its own indifference, its withdrawal. We can here imagine a mutual withdrawal or falling away between humans and Being itself: In both enframing and its turning, they withdraw from each-other, and that which is left behind as the remainder is, simply, the open: In enframing, we have the duality of *Vergassenheit* and *Verlassenheit*, a mutual withdrawal of humans and Being, left with the unworld. In its turning, we have a similar mutual withdrawal, a *releasement towards the primary letting of Being in its gift-giving withdrawal*, leaving the clearing of poetic dwelling.

This would, of course, also implicate the history of metaphysics: Ontological indifference would be, in its own way, explanatory for the metaphysics as ontotheology, as indifferent to Being itself in favour of a metaphysics of presence that closes it over. In *The End of Philosophy*, Heidegger writes: “All events in the history of Being as metaphysics have their beginning and ground in the fact that metaphysics leaves and must leave the essence of Being undecided, in that it remains indifferent from the very beginning to regarding of what is worthy of question in favour of saving its own essence, and indeed in the indifference of its not knowing.”<sup>453</sup> Metaphysics must be indifferent to Being for it to be metaphysics. Yet, in the turning into metaphysics, this indifference *is realized as indifference*. We do not “recollect” being as if we lost it somewhere along the

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<sup>452</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 152.

<sup>453</sup> Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy by Martin Heidegger*, 56.

way, but positively allow it to recede through the ontological indifference in letting-be.

To appreciate the differentiation of things, then, we require indifference.

Moreover, through attending to indifference, we can come to appreciate the unity of experience across Heidegger's central tonalities: complete indifference. boredom, anxiety, enframing/nihilism, letting-be and releasement. Were not complete indifference, anxiety and boredom all defined by an indifference indicated by the loss of being, and both described as involving a strange calmness or tranquility? Is this not what transpires in releasing oneself into the open, too, where we do not experience a *vacuous* releasing (*Leergelassenheit*) but one towards things (*Gelassenheit zu der Dingen*), where *both* are accompanied by an entranced tranquility? Are we not temporally "hanging" in the uniformity of nihilism and enframing, and in the waitfulness of releasement, where we *release* our time so that things can appear in their own temporality?<sup>454</sup> Do we not in each case come to experience the indifference of Being itself in both negative and positive registers? I do not think we should hesitate with these hypotheses, and assert that attending to ontological indifference in fact points onto the fundamental tonality of Heidegger's thinking that twists and turns in its multiple valences.

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<sup>454</sup> This releasement of time seems much like the second form of boredom, where we take time to be present for a particular occasion. Yet, with releasement towards things we do not transpose the everyday into the "break-time," and thereby leave ourselves "left-empty," but rather are here closer to the festive state of the "holiday" or "holy-day." In Heidegger's interpretation of Holderlin's "Bread and Wine," he writes: "a celebration, strictly taken, is something other than a mere void, an interruption. In the setting aside of work for the holiday, [we are transposed] beyond ourselves into a rarely experienced realm, out of which our being is determined. Out of such transposition there begins astonishment or terror or even awe. From such times there springs meditation. An open domain begins to surround man... The unaccustomed opens itself up and opens up the open only in poetizing. Celebrating is a becoming-free for the unaccustomed element of the day which, in distinction to the dull and gloom of the everyday, is what is clear" (*Elucidations of Holderlin's Poetry*, 126. Here, releasement towards things is to release the projective time of the habitual everyday and enter the suspended festive state, the open, in which the unaccustomed, the extra-ordinary, the unforeseen, can appear.

The open and letting-be, then, comes to signify a strange unity of opposites: transcendence and non-transcendence, the ontological difference and ontological indifference. Perhaps not far from what Heraclitus said: “They do not apprehend how, pulling apart from itself it agrees with itself. A back stretched harmony, as in the bow and the lyre.”<sup>455</sup> And should this paradoxical cohabitation be so strange? That we have found our way here is suggested by Heidegger’s concept of freedom as letting-be. Freedom implies both sides of the opposition: it is both a transcending towards (the ontological difference) and holding back from (ontological indifference). Heidegger’s thought does often demand we think the “middle” space between different apparently countervailing phenomena that, while appearing as paradoxical, nonetheless indicate in the direction of a phenomenological possibility. (Was this not also at play in the relation between his phenomenological method of reduction and construction, as requiring a suspending or bracketing along with a free-projection?) If we are indeed on the right track with this formulation, then we can also see how we can come into a “mended” relationship with that indifference that we, as finite Dasein, carry with us necessarily. In this, we could imagine performing something analogous to Heidegger’s turning of boredom, from something that impresses us as overly debilitating to something that reveals something about our openness to beings and their presencing. If ontological indifference is also the condition for letting and freedom, then we can come to appreciate its function for letting-be, and not too quickly attempt to “fill the void” by fleeing from indifference. While we experience indifference as something that impedes us from engaging with things, perhaps attending to its locatedness in the “emptiness” of our being, our non-substantive

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<sup>455</sup> Fragment 51

*thereness*, allows us to reconfigure our relationship to it, heeding the way that it is precisely this indifference that allows us to remove our own will-full projections, our own calculative planning, our own dogmatic representations and hold open the horizon within which beings can appear in their own-most way of being without getting swept along by them. (For a visual and summary representation of Heidegger's relation to indifference, in sympathy with Kant's, see Appendix, second half of figure 1).

### **III. Kant Revisited: The Regulation of Indifference**

The basic claim here is that Kant's regulative metaphysics generates the indifference he seeks to overcome. That this is so relies on a reconfiguration of Kant's understanding of indifference in conformity with Heidegger's assessment. If Heidegger's indifference appears in relation to the (non) ground of Dasein's ecstasis, then the metaphysical malaise of Kant's indifferentism can be explained as an expression of the loss of ecstasis and the emptiness at the root of Dasein as it is thrown in the abandonment of Being, its listless failing out of a horizon of metaphysical certainty. This means that Kant's interpretation – that indifference is a sign of a (mistaken) failure of reason – is derivative of a first-order indifference rooted in our capacity to lose Being. As derivative, it rushes too quickly into an analytic of the subject in order to stave off the changing tides of nihilistic indifference, bearing the consequence of – as was said in the last chapter – an anthropological dogmatism.

If Dasein is ultimately understood as the open within which things thing and the world worlds, bringing Dasein “in touch” with “things themselves” in the mode of poetic disclosure, then the dominant compartments of Kant's metaphysics can easily be seen as

covering over our poetic openness to things themselves. Let's briefly elaborate some of the instances where this occurs, and in-so-doing rehearse and expand upon some of the criticisms levied in the second chapter (section II.ii). These, by now, should be relatively obvious, and thus will be treated quickly.

First, we can note the contesting views of the subject that each thinker advances. In contrast to the substantive unity of transcendental apperception, Dasein is "original time" itself, the projective unity of thrown ecstasis. Incorporating indifference now as a problem of temporality, that tends in both temporal closure and openness to that which presences, would not the view of the self qua self-same identity block the very possibility of releasing the self (its will, its projections, etc) into the open? Indeed it would, for the constant presence of apperception functions to universalize a single, legislating metaphysics that closes in advance the very possibility of not only attuning to what gives itself in itself in the world prior to theoretical disclosure, but also attuning to the even more prior givenness of Being. The world, in this case, is made in the image of the transcendental subject, which reflects Being as a domain of its own highest epistemic and moral ends. It is ontologically separated from the world as its legislator. Starting from such a subject, there is no way into the world of things, into the free play of the open, and thus it contributes to ontological indifference in the closed mode.

Second, and correlatively, things of experience are not only limited to the empirical for Kant, but are always-already determined by the mark of objectivity. This means that they exist only insofar as they conform to the preformed horizon of time as a series of the present—an infinite sequence of substantiality and causality, the ground for knowledge of nature. Quite obviously, it is precisely this horizon that Heidegger works to

contest from the start, showing how the worldhood of Dasein is a primordial domain to the present-to-hand hegemony of theoretical reflection. This, of course, not to deny the necessity and indeed usefulness of theoretical reflection more generally (as we invariably must enter this mode from time to time), but to show that humans, as appropriated to Being as it gives itself in the world, are fundamentally closer to their poetic essence when their comportments align with such givenness in the manner of free releasement and letting-be. When theoretical reflection is made hegemonic, as in Kant's theoretical philosophy, the preformation of things in the service of objectivity closes off – once again – the very possibility of such comportment, and by extension the thinging of things and worlding of world. The presencing of things is prohibited in a horizon of relative objective equality, leading towards an undifferentiated horizon of a constant reserve of objects for theoretical/epistemic judgment: “The same qua equal banishes all zeal always to level what is different into the equal or identical. The equal disperses [what is distinct] into the dull unity of uniformity.”<sup>456</sup> Thus, on the side of objectivity, we see again a contribution to ontological indifference in its closed mode.

Third, Kant's regulative metaphysics constructed around the transcendental subject, as its metaphysical guarantee, functions to close off the mystery of the fourfold within which things presence. In relation to the fourfold, Kant's regulative metaphysics can be summarized as follows:

First, the transcendental subject takes the place of mortals. It is situated at once within the phenomenal realm of world (present, experienceable entities) and beyond it insofar as it is capable of rational thought, which transcends the world for the sake of

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<sup>456</sup> Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 216-217.

regulative postulation. The transcendental subject's relation to death – the defining element of Heidegger's concept of mortality – is established by the postulate of the soul (see chapter one, section II.ii). Here, the soul guarantees the impossible quest after divine perfection and full alignment with the moral law. The mystery of death becomes hardened into a problem of reason and deferred to a rational theology. The onto-poetical realm of divinity is taken up by the regulative postulate of God as a rational creator and pure moral being, both guaranteeing the principle of reason (that everything has a reason or cause) as well as the possibility of moral law and the kingdom of ends. The realms of earth and sky, finally, are subsumed in the domain of the phenomenal world, both as it is given in the sequence of causal experience and as it is regulated as an infinite series (cosmological idea). In each case, the capacity to dwell in and with the fourfold as it presences in things is closed off in a tight, mutually referring constellation of regulation guaranteed by the satisfaction of reason's noumenal ends. (For a visual representation of Kant in the fourfold, see Appendix, figure 4).

We can also consider the function of regulative principles from the perspective of our navigation of the world more generally, in abstraction from the precise character of Kant's constellation and the fourfold. One way of approaching this is with recourse to Heidegger's category of the "they" (*das Man*). Far from referring to a general mass of people, the They properly signifies the horizon of averageness, or normality, that we tend to measure ourselves against as a kind of standard for our thoughts and actions. The force of the They is in its power to nullify the extra-ordinary, the a-typical, the ab-normal, the mysterious, into a horizon of sameness and long-since-known. While it is easy to read the They in terms of the dominant currents of the "mainstream," it can apply in every case

that a certain normalized standard supervenes over Dasein's being-in-the-world and Dasein's potentiality of being. As a standard, it regulates in advance – like a principle – Dasein's comportments. The problem here is not so much a matter of influence – as if we somehow must withstand all influence and assert our own egoistic individuality – but rather with the attunement that underlies the relationship. In fallenness, the They prefigures and dictates the possible, concealing their character *as* possibilities, thereby propagating the repetition of the uniformity, the dull tones of closed indifference. Concealing the possible, regulation conceals the kind of poetic openness to the world, including to other Dasein or dwellers, with whom we are always existing alongside. Closed indifference follows here in step.

A regulative ideal in this general sense – a standard that we come to take on as a matter of course – is often barely noticeable insofar as they are so entwined in Dasein's everydayness. We follow such principles often without knowing it (in a sense similar to ideology). What is significant about poetic openness in this regard is not that it *de facto* nullifies any and all regulative principle: it cannot insofar as, first, it is very difficult to maintain such openness, and second, because the open is itself marked by both presence and absence, i.e., there is always a determinate horizon the boundaries of which are difficult to see. Rather, what is significant about poetic openness with respect to regulative standards is that it maintains an openness to the contestability of those standards whenever they happen to make themselves apparent. In the first instance, such contestability is evidenced and experienced in the moment of unconcealing, in truth. For example, unconcealing one's habitual self-regulation in terms of gender, sexuality, political orientation and so on, presents an opportunity for a certain open comportment to

what that unconcealing reveals, a possibility for allowing the matter to reveal itself in a thoughtful orientation to it, and perhaps, poeticizing it, altering ones patterns of behaviour and thinking. Often, however, unconcealments of this sort are met with either an entrenching of prior regulative principles (a fleeing from what is revealed and dogmatic hardening) or a supplanting of them with new ones. In both cases, Dasein is closed from the kind of thoughtful openness that accompanies freedom as letting-be, creating boundaries to what is possible in one's relation to the world, others, and what is disclosed. In this sense, the horizon of regulative principles is *in general* an impediment to the kind of openness that Heidegger's thinking amounts to (even if these particular examples are foreign to his own). And insofar as such openness involves both a tempered distance from (withdrawal) as well as a deep attentiveness and engagement with what is revealed, we here hold ourselves in the ever possibility of confronting that which always-already regulates us in the world, while also welcoming a thoughtful confrontation with it. Neither sceptical relativism nor dogmatic bunkering, neither quietism nor fatalism, but an attentive and thoughtful caring-for the unforeseen. A welcoming of the stranger.

We see Kant's regulative metaphysics is but a heightened and philosophically acute expression of this tendency, which he hoped would guide the age of indifferentism into the age of enlightenment. Not only does his precise metaphysical apparatus inhibit the kind of freedom and letting-be that Heidegger's thinking opens onto, but as pronouncing the hope of rational maturation in conformity with that apparatus, he can be seen as regenerating the problem he looks to overcome. We can conclude, on this note, with a fragment by Hölderlin that encapsulates this thought sentiment nicely:

The wise, however, who only distinguish with the mind, only in general fashion, quickly return to pure Being, and succumb to an even greater indifference because

they believe they have distinguished sufficiently, and treat the [identity], to which they have returned, as the eternal one. They have duped their nature with the lowest degree of reality, with the shadow of reality...and it avenges itself [thereby].<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, ed. Charlie Louth and Jeremy Adler (Penguin, 2009), 244.

## Conclusion

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In this thesis I have tried to show how indifference functions as a salient and unifying theme in the works of Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger. By taking as my point of departure the relation between Kant's critical philosophy and indifferentism, the thesis was given its boundaries, stabilized in terms of the dual requirements of non-assumption and the necessity of metaphysics. It is based on these two requirements that the structure of the correspondence between Kant and Heidegger unfolded. Kant's satisfaction of these requirements took the form of the method of transcendental deduction (and its supporting apparatus) and his attempt to regenerate a necessary and universally valid regulative metaphysics, depending on reason's self-awakening. Principally, this regulative metaphysics was explained in terms of the systematic unity of his general, special and moral metaphysics. Through these avenues, Kant understood himself as having gained the "right" to intervene in the transitory yet precarious stage of the history of metaphysics that he called indifferentism.

Taking as my point of departure Heidegger's specific reading of Kant in his early period, I was able to call into question Kant's attempts in both directions: First, through his creative phenomenological reading of the first *Critique*, Heidegger could show the centrality of the transcendental imagination as primary to the unity of apperception, as that which is responsible for the transcendental synthesis of time itself in its ecstatic projectiveness. This led Heidegger to expose the derivative nature of apperception and the regulative metaphysics based on its stability, as well as point in the direction of his own account of Dasein. Through this, the coveted security of Kant's critical philosophy

was rendered ill-founded, and thus his intervention lacked its juridical right. Second, through an elaboration of Heidegger's phenomenological hermeneutics, I was both able to expose the difficulties of the transcendental deductive approach along the question of presupposition, and also yield to the merit of the phenomenological method on this question.

Having exposed some central difficulties with respect to the two critical requirements bestowed by Kant's reaction to indifferentism I then, in the third chapter, repeated an analysis of indifference in Heidegger's philosophy along the same structure of the first: explaining it as first a problem surfacing through the history of metaphysics (construed now as ontotheology and nihilism) and then in terms of Heidegger's attempt at overcoming that problem. As a problem, ontological indifference appeared principally in terms of closure from Being—in all the cases of everyday fallenness, boredom, nihilism and enframing. The structure of ontological indifference remains the same throughout, differentiated only with respect to Heidegger's turning from fundamental ontology to the truth of Being. In all cases, Dasein confronted an undifferentiated horizon of just beings grounded in its loss of ecstatic time, its withdrawing from the world. In terms of his "response" to the closure of this predominant valence of indifference, and unlike Kant's supercessionist overcoming that looked to emerge from indifference into a regulative proceduralism, Heidegger's overcoming involved a "turning" and "twisted" acceptance of indifference as an essential part of our Dasein, one that cannot be supplanted but understood as necessary. Taking as my point of departure his statement that letting-be is an indifference "rooted in the essence of Dasein," I was led onto an exploration of how indifference could function in just such a turned sense, including surrounding concepts

like releasement, freedom and the open. Here, I argued that it is the element of indifference grounded in Dasein that, in its own way, permits the peculiar “engaged withdrawal” or “open concealment” indicative of the kind of experience that Heidegger aligns with poetic openness and dwelling.

Insofar as the predominant meaning of indifference signifies closure, then it is coming into proximity with Heidegger’s concept of the open that affords a persuasive contribution to indifference as a problem of metaphysics. To overcome indifference is, in keeping with the structural requirements bestowed by the analysis of Kant, the concept of the open is helpful, I think, in both ontic and ontological senses: yielding an attuned orientation to the unique and singular encounters we face in our everyday lives as well as the mystery of givenness in general. The world, to use one of Heidegger’s phrases from Hölderlin, becomes “radiant.” Though, if we are to understand the task of thinking in this open manner in the way I believe Heidegger intends it, this should not suggest an entrenchment in some kind of mysticism or a disavowal of the dangers of enframing, but rather leads onto the task of thinking: the matter as it presents itself in both the danger and saving power. There is no easy redemption here.

This thesis, then, is self-consciously set within the horizon of metaphysics: both thinkers attempt to bring humans into a relationship with the inner possibility of metaphysics, our metaphysical nature, through claims to capture that essence. Of course, committing to this general horizon is itself a contestable point, and deserves concerted and nuanced attention. I make no claims to the strict necessity of this mode of philosophy, but can only express its importance for both coming to terms with the nature of metaphysics itself as well as for finding a way outside its dominant, ontotheological,

resonance. Indeed, insofar as I began this thesis as dominantly an instrumental thinker, the line of thinking opened up by this horizon has been significantly *paideic*.

Moreover, although this work might read as somewhat systematic – establishing certain conditions and arguing towards a conclusion with respect to them – the questions opened up by it are far from concluded. Besides the *many* side problems that could not be fully explored over these pages, there are two dominant questions that linger at the present time.

First, there is an asymmetry in the treatment along the question of philosophy's relation to the public. In the first chapter, I gave some attention to explaining Kant's position as seeking intervention in the state of indifferentism. For him, philosophy must be legislative in this regard, and should seek popularity so long as it is founded on the stability of critical philosophy. When I turned to Heidegger, the requirement of publicity did not carry through. This was in a certain sense intentional, as addressing this head on would expand an already long work. In certain respects, Heidegger follows the Kantian collapse of the philosophical with the ordinary understanding which, recall, is how Kant could locate his own philosophy as having significance for the public he seeks to address. Heidegger's notion of post-metaphysical thinking and dwelling is, at least in principle, similarly cultivatable by every individual Dasein, since it basically involves a type of comportment, attitude, and practice that allows non-metaphysical and non-neglectful relations with things, a possibility that exists in the age of enframing. But he also conceives philosophy, pace Kant, as against common sense: "Common sense is blind to what philosophy sets before it;" "Making oneself comprehensible is the death of

philosophy.”<sup>458</sup> Heidegger also, though seldom, speaks of his philosophy as a kind saving power that offers the sole mode in which the danger of technological enframing can be overcome. There is, similar to Kant’s philosophical conceit, a kind of, as Dominique Janicaud has put it “dogmatic massiveness” about this stance.<sup>459</sup> Kant called his the “one true philosophy,” and Heidegger often imagines his own thinking being taken up in the service of a world-historical turning out of metaphysics. Of course, Heidegger’s involvement in Nazism is deeply relevant on this point. I am not satisfied with either of these hubristic orientations, but cannot conceal my own appreciation for, to my mind, those non-hubristic concepts like letting-be and releasement. Thus the question of publicity that opened up over the course of my considerations of Kant put me face to face with a crucial, meta-philosophical question that I have been circling for some time: What is philosophy and what relationship does it have with public affairs and politics? The neglect of this question, which is germane to both thinkers, evidences a significant omission that this thesis loses in not considering. Indeed, in not addressing it, the concepts I take up positively, like “letting-be,” may tend towards being construed as a private affair. Whether it can be reduced so is not yet considered. Any serious consideration of both Kant and Heidegger, and philosophy in general, it seems to me, must grapple with these questions.

And second, if indifference is indeed a fundamental moment in the abandonment of being, wouldn’t a more radical turning into indifference entail an abandonment of the horizon of Being altogether? Would indifference here maintain itself as indifference, pure

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<sup>458</sup> *Pathmarks*, 136-37.

<sup>459</sup> Dominique Janicaud et al., *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”*: *The French Debate*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), .

and simple, in all its promiscuity? Would we be left instead with the adventure of the open, without any supervening poetical directives, no matter their appeal? This question cannot, I think, be taken lightly, for it implies a consideration of the aims of phenomenology itself as method. While I considered the phenomenological method in the second chapter and its merits, it was thereafter taken as a matter of course. But it must remain questionable. Certainly, with respect to Heidegger's uptake, it is hard to imagine an exclusion to Being as "originary given," as every particular line of thinking that is non-ontological would nonetheless be easily subsumed in Being. And, since phenomenology is meant to be coincidental with philosophy itself, and philosophy with the question of Being, twisting out of the question of Being would have to, it seems to me, follow one of the following options: conceive a phenomenological thinking outside the horizon of Being; reconceive the nature of philosophy itself as non-phenomenological; enact a distinction between the philosophical merit of the question of Being and the *significance* of the question in a time when Being is abandoned; or leap out of philosophy altogether. Heidegger's dismissal of philosophy for thinking is something of an abandonment of the philosophical tradition, yet without giving up Being as the primal matter of thought, thereby enacting a post-philosophical thinking that retains the ur-phenomenon of traditional ontotheological philosophy. As he puts it in 'On My Way to Phenomenology:'

The age of phenomenological philosophy seems to be over. It is already taken as something past which is only recorded historically along with other schools of philosophy. But what is most its own phenomenology is not a school. It is a possibility of thinking, at times changing and only *thus* persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought. If phenomenology is thus experienced and

retained, it can disappear in favor of the matter of thinking whose manifestness remains a mystery.<sup>460</sup>

We are at once gestured towards the maintenance of phenomenology as thinking only insofar as it *changes* with respect to what is to be thought, yet still within the mystery of the manifest: Being. What can we make of these valences? Many thinkers after Heidegger have been prepared to omit Being as a central category, while still retaining and expanding on many of his central insights (e.g., time as difference). Perhaps the ontological indifference leads onto such a path. This presents a series of questions for another time, not far in the horizon.

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<sup>460</sup> *On Time and Being*, 82.

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## Appendix: Figures

Figure 1: The meaning of Indifference in Kant and Heidegger

	1		2
	<b><u>Kant</u></b>		
	<b>Transcendental Subject</b>		<b>Metaphysical Ideas</b>
A	<b>“Negative”</b> (Impediment to Critique and Enlightenment)	<i>Indifferent to Metaphysics;</i> Immature Reason; Indifference of reason to metaphysics;	<i>Indifferent to Finite Reason</i> 1) “Dogmatic”: Groundless; “Useless”; External 2) “Popular”: Sophistic; frivolous; formulaic; External
		Mutual Indifference	
B	<b>“Positive”</b> (Condition of possibility for Critique and Enlightenment)	<i>Belief in Metaphysical Principles;</i> Mature Reason; Autonomous; Self-legislative	<i>Non-Indifferent to Finite Reason</i> Rationally generated (immanent); Necessary for Enlightenment; Regulative (Juridical); Universal; A-temporal
		Generates 	
	<b><u>Heidegger</u></b>		
	<b>Dasein/Human</b> (Subjective Genitive)		<b>Being</b> (Objective Genitive)
C	<b>Negative</b> (“Supreme Danger”)	<i>Will-to-will (completion of ontotheology)/ Indifferent to Being</i> Technological Enframing; Nihilism; neglect of things.	<i>Abandoned/ Concealed;</i> <i>Indifferent to humans;</i> Cast off into Oblivion; Forgotten; Appears as Infinitely exchangeable “standing reserve”
		Mutual	

<p><b>D Positive</b> ("Saving Power")</p>	<p><i>Indifferent to Metaphysics (Ontotheology)/ Authentic Relation with Being itself</i> Gelassenheit/Seinlassen; Poetic dwelling; Phenomenological seeing → Will-lessness</p>	<p>Appropriation; The One</p>	<p><i>Withdrawn/ Concealed</i> Safeguarded in its proper withdrawal or expropriation; presencing ←</p>
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Figure 2: The Fourfold

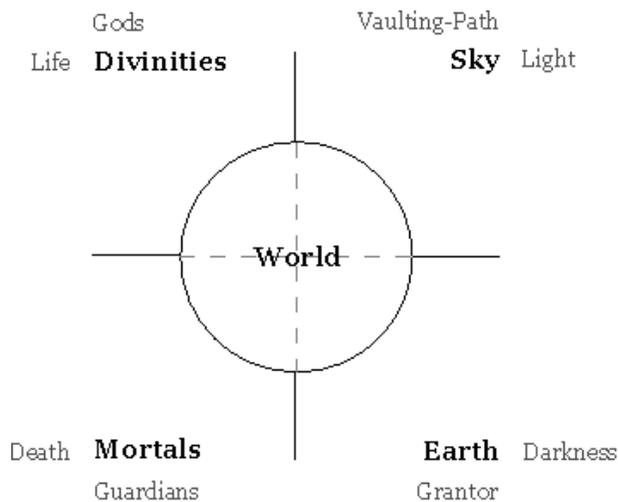
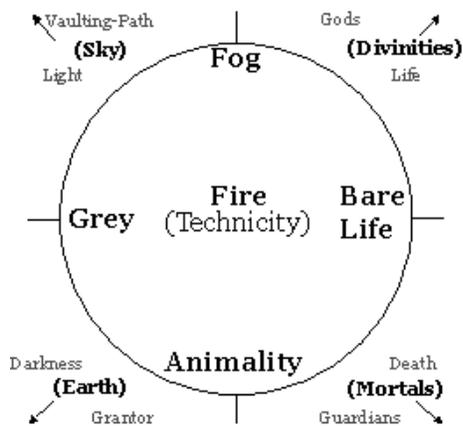


Figure 3: The Landscape of Indifference



*Figure 4: Kant in the Fourfold*

