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The Lie of Time: Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement in Kant's Critical Philosophy

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Abstract
 The Lie of Time: Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement in Kant's Critical Philosophy
 By Christopher Slover

My dissertation explores the possibility of “genuine aesthetic disagreement” in Kant’s critical philosophy. Genuine aesthetic disagreement occurs when two individuals issue opposing but equally authoritative evaluations of the same object, one calling it beautiful, the other ugly, but both possessing a transcendental right to demand the assent of the other. After showing Kant’s aesthetics to presuppose the possibility of this sort of conflict, I unravel its surprising consequences for human experience. For Kant, judgments about beauty and ugliness are grounded in the feeling of the very cognitive processes by which each individual gives transcendental structure to her objective world. The possibility that two people could ever genuinely disagree about what is and is not beautiful indicates a catastrophic schism in cognition and so in the objective world itself: the way the world is from one subjective standpoint is incompatible with the way it is from another. My dissertation exposes this schism and elaborates its ramifications.

I begin by proving the apparently trivial conditional that, if it is possible to judge objects beautiful or ugly at all, then genuine disagreement about these judgments must also be possible. To establish this point, I pit the constraints objective validity against those of what Kant calls “subjective” validity. According to Kant, while judgments of taste (claims about beauty or ugliness) demand agreement from everyone, they do not identify cognitive traits of their objects. Beauty is never an objective property, as, say, ‘redness’ sometimes is, but we still insist on the agreement of everyone when we attribute it. Examining the conditions of objective validity laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I establish that, under normal circumstances, any judgment with a legitimate claim to subjective validity would have to be objectively valid as well. It is a downstream consequence of Kant’s famous subordination of objectivity to normativity that a subjectively valid judgment escapes objective validity only if an *incompatible*, but equally authoritative, judgment on the same topic may be made from a different subjective standpoint. I may legitimately demand your agreement when I call an object beautiful, without inadvertently attributing beauty to that object as a property, only if you may call it ugly with an equal right to demand agreement from me.

The possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement, I go on show, requires cognition to structure experience in different and even incompatible ways from different subjective standpoints, indicating a transcendental schism dividing each of us from the others. I devote the rest of the dissertation to the study of this divide, ultimately locating its source in the fine-grained structure of “aesthetic ideas”—the representations that ground all judgments of taste. Just like their more widely discussed counterparts, ideas of reason, aesthetic ideas are necessary to the transcendental picture, even though they do not provide cognition: if we did not represent aesthetic ideas in some way, then experience itself would cease to be possible. Whereas representing a given object under an idea of reason involves conceiving it as a noumenal *unity* to which its sensible appearance will never be adequate, I argue that representing that same object under an aesthetic idea involves taking it as a sensible *manifold* whose multiplicity may never be consolidated under a concept.

The contrary interpretations that arise with respect to aesthetic objects, I go on to contend, constitute baseline subject-perspectives on the world from which distinct individuals originally gain the capacity to dispute with one another *rationality*. It is an essential, and not an accidental, fact about subjectivity that distinct individuals hold at least some commitments that are incompatible with those of everyone else. This transcendental schism of each with all the others is not only what first gives rise to “others” worthy of the name; it is also part of what makes the cognitive game of giving and asking for reasons originally possible (to borrow Sellars’s famous phrase). If individuals were not transcendently *incompatible* with one another, each making claims the others at least implicitly deny, then the very idea of a “reason,” and so ultimately of an “object,” would never be possible. Hence, I conclude, genuine aesthetic disagreement plays a necessary role in the transcendental structure of objective, rational, conceptually contentful experience.

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One of the efforts of this dissertation is to inquire into exactly what it is that we human beings need from each other. In practice, I have turned out to need a very great deal.

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Introduction

I. Overview: Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement

This dissertation investigates the problem of what I call “genuine aesthetic disagreement” in Kant’s critical philosophy. Two parties stand in a state of genuine aesthetic disagreement just if both make pure but conflicting judgments of taste about the same object, one calling it beautiful, the other ugly, and each basing her claim in the disinterested free play of her own cognitive faculties. Since both judgments are pure, each party has the right to demand agreement from the other, but since the claims are contrary, neither may confer the assent she owes to the other without abandoning the recognition she owes to herself. Neither withholding nor conferring agreement is appropriate, and yet both are required. In this dissertation, I show the possibility of this sort of conflict to be necessary, exploring its relentless consequences for transcendental epistemology, and devising new answers on its basis to the questions of *who we are* and *what we want from each other*.

In Part One, the strategy is first to show genuine aesthetic disagreement to be necessary to Kant’s theory of taste and then to show the judgment of taste to be necessary to Kant’s transcendental theory of cognition. Without genuine aesthetic disagreement we could not call anything beautiful or ugly, and if we could not do that, then we could not have experience at all. Establishing this much provides a *negative* demonstration of the possibility of this sort of conflict, proving that, without it, Kant’s critical epistemology would not be consistent: anyone committed to his theory of knowledge ought to be committed to the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement. But although this negative demonstration is rationally compelling, it is no way expository. It tells us *that* genuine conflicts of taste are possible, but it does not explain how this possibility arises or what it means that it does.

In Part Two, I provide a *positive* derivation of genuine aesthetic disagreement, originating these conflicts in what Kant calls the “supersensible ground of all humanity.” Whereas the supersensible ground of the *object* (represented by ideas of reason) is a concept beyond intuitions, this ground of the *subject* (represented by aesthetic ideas) is a sensible intuition beyond concepts. Characterizing this “absolute intuition” as a *time-difference*, a pure intuition deprived of its conceptual constraints, I develop the system of the time-difference by analyzing the fine structure of a sensible difference beyond the unity of thought. The adventure of time-difference is

extensive and tortuous, developing across three potencies and generating three transcendental processes. As the supersensible ground of subjectivity, its highest achievement is to dispense a manifold of *subject-perspectives* in a state of mutual discord. This discord is the originary instance of genuine aesthetic disagreement.

II. Taste, Aesthetic Conflict, and Transcendental Idealism

The negative demonstration of genuine aesthetic disagreement involves a novel interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism. As I read it, the Copernican Turn consists most fundamentally in reversing the priority of objectivity and normativity, challenging tradition by taking the latter to be prior to and productive of the former. Judgments refer to objects because they are governed by rules (concepts), rather than the other way around. Prioritizing normativity over objectivity involves privileging normative *attitudes* (practices of assessment) over normative *statutes* (rules of assessment). We are bound only by the rules by which we bind ourselves, responsible only to the norms to which we *hold* ourselves responsible. The rules to which we are responsible in the sphere of cognition are rules of *judgment*, i.e., concepts of the understanding, and we bind ourselves by these rules just by *assessing* our judgments by their means, *deferring* to them as standards of correctness.

But according to Kant's theory of transcendental idealism (as I will construe it), assessing by means of a conceptual rule is what *makes* the rule a rule. The rule determines whether my judgment is or is not correct, but the rule itself is a rule only because my judgment *defers* to it as such. Since a judgment refers to an object just if it is normative (conforming to the rule of a concept), and it is normative just if the judging subject-perspective appropriately *treats* it as such (assessing by means of it), it follows that judgments are objective just if subject-perspectives appropriately exhibit a distinctive normative attitude towards them.

Exhibiting this attitude consists in treating the subsentential component to which one normatively defers as possessing a *subjectively universal* authority. In standard cases of cognition, exhibiting this attitude is in fact *all* it takes to confer conceptuality on a judgment. To treat a component as such a subjectively universal standard, the judge must hold both *her* judgment and that of *everyone* else responsible to its criteria. If it is a rule worthy of the name, it is a rule for *everyone*. Somewhat surprisingly, however, treating the subsentential component as a subjectively universal rule by appropriately deferring to it herself and demanding that all others

do so as well is *all* that a judging subject-perspective must (or may) do to make that component a concept. For, if we were to locate conceptuality in any process other than the (appropriate) exhibition of this attitude, we would have to identify it in the *referential* dimension of the judgment, which transcendental idealism prohibits. Thus, in standard cases, treating a judgment as if it were subjectively universal (in the appropriate way)¹ is the process by which that judgment becomes conceptual, and so objective.

Now, one of the primary traits of a judgment of taste is its subjective universality. When a subject-perspective calls an object beautiful by means of a pure judgment of taste, she is entitled to demand agreement from everyone. By the foregoing, then, judgments of taste *ought* to be objective. Since taste claims are *not* objective (but rather aesthetic), some sort of positive interference is required to block the connection between the normative attitude of subjective universality and the normative status of conceptuality.

Genuine aesthetic disagreement provides this “block.” If it is possible, then subject-perspectives may appropriately treat their taste claims *as if* they were based in concepts without thereby *instituting* conceptuality in the judgments. For, under this hypothesis, a subject-perspective may purely judge some ‘x’ beautiful, appropriately deferring to ‘beauty’ as a universal standard for assessing her claim, while another subject-perspective may purely judge the same ‘x’ ugly, deferring with an equal authority to ‘ugliness’ as a subjectively universal standard of assessment. Since the normative attitudes are in both cases *appropriate*, both claims are subjectively universal—both judges are entitled to their *demands* for agreement. But since the appropriately demanded agreement may not in either case be granted, neither judgment becomes *conceptual* as a consequence of these appropriate demands. A judge of taste exhibits the normative *attitude* characteristic of cognition without thereby instituting conceptuality in her judgment as a *status* because opposing but equally warranted attitudes on the same topic are possible.

III. The Reason for Rational Reconstruction: A Spirit of Respect

After showing the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement to be implicit in the very idea of taste, I proceed to show taste to play a necessary role in Kant’s theory of cognition. Kant himself makes a related

¹ The qualifier ‘in the appropriate way’ indicates that one can always exhibit this concept-conferring attitude *incorrectly*, but this incorrectness must be assessed on the basis of concepts, and so on the basis of *other* concept-conferring normative attitudes.

case in the Introductions to the third *Critique*, demonstrating reflective judgment and empirical concepts to be possible only in the light of a principle of purposiveness that taste alone can represent. But I take things even further than this, contending that, without the judgment of taste, *no* cognitive judgments and not even *pure* concepts would be possible. This is so, I ultimately argue, because judgments of taste are necessary for preserving the *discursive difference* (between concepts and intuitions) upon which the core argument of the first *Critique* is based.

I make this case by generating a ground-up, rational reconstruction of Kant's theory of self-consciousness. Rather than using Kant's own terminology to perform this reconstruction, I translate much of his work into a more contemporary idiom that I take to better represent the spirit of his thought. Antiquarian readings of philosophers that carefully preserve the technical vocabulary of the thinkers they study are typically thought to be more "faithful" to those thinkers, providing "closer," more "accurate" renderings of their texts. Readings that deviate from this antiquarianism are in turn construed as disloyal, "mining" old texts for their useful tidbits while discarding the outdated shells. I dispute this distinction entirely.

One of the primary marks of a great thinker is to instigate a linguistic *revolution* in her own name, so that we cannot speak the same way after she is finished as we could before she began. Far from remaining faithful to the thinkers they supposedly elucidate, antiquarian interpretations frequently *deny* the thinker her insight by rejecting the vocabulary which that insight brought forth. By contrast, a *prospective* interpretation of a past philosopher can be undertaken in a spirit of deep respect, attempting to pay her back for the wealth of expressive possibility she bestowed upon us by rearticulating her thought in the terms she made possible.

It is in this spirit of respect that I undertake my rational reconstruction and idiomatic translation of Kant's theory of cognition. I think the most important discovery that Kant made was of the objectivating character of linguistic normativity, the fact that the rules governing *objects* are indebted to, and expressive of, the rules governing *language*. My rational reconstruction of cognition, accordingly, takes the prospective idiom of what I take to be the very best of contemporary philosophy of language² and rearticulates Kant partially in

² I rely primarily in the works of Robert Brandom and Wilfrid Sellars.

these terms, leaving behind the phenomenalist and metaphysical modes of expression that I think Kant wants us to get over.

IV. The Necessity of Taste: What is Cognitive Free Play?

The rational reconstruction contains three stages. First, I provide an interpretation of the Transcendental Deduction, emphasizing the importance of self-recognition and the primacy of the propositional. Second, I use this interpretation to present an account of the faculty of understanding, arguing that understanding is essentially a matter of negotiating material inference. Third, I argue that material inferences are underwritten by prior relations of material incompatibility, showing sensibility to host these relations and the imagination to represent them.

Whenever a subject-perspective judges that *P*, she takes responsibility for *P*'s correctness. Doing this involves affirming that *P* stands in a compatible inferential relation with all the other claims *Q*, *R*, and *S* to which she is already committed, synthesizing *P* into the total constellation. Performing this synthesis involves representing the relations of material incompatibility in which *P* stands. For the representation of a material *inference* is driven by a prior representation material *incompatibilities*: *Q* is a consequence of *P* just if everything materially incompatible with *Q* is also materially incompatible with *P*. Material, as opposed to formal, incompatibility arises from the *sensible* contents of the contrary claims. It is therefore hosted by the faculty of sensibility and represented by the faculty of imagination. By *imagining* *P* embedded in its field of material (*sensible*) incompatibility relations, a subject-perspective integrates it into her inferential network, thereby *understanding* it.

Ultimately, I contend that a subject-perspective represents a judgment with respect to its *concepts* by integrating it into its distinctive inferential network; but she represents it with respect to its *sensible* content by embedding it in the relations of material incompatibility that underwrite that network. Inferential integration (synthesis) is driven by the understanding, but it runs necessarily through sensibility and the imagination because the type of inference that it involves is driven by material (*sensible*) incompatibility relations that only the *imagination* can represent. By representing the synthetic unity of her network of commitments, a subject-perspective thereby *recognizes* herself, affirming herself as the analytic identity she takes herself to be, so that this entire synthetic-inferential process constitutes the transcendental practice of *apperception*.

This reconstruction prepares the ground for a new way of understanding the necessary role played by the judgment of taste in Kant's theory of cognition. Taste claims arise from the free play of the imagination and the understanding. The cognitive function of the imagination is to represent judgments embedded in distinctive fields of material incompatibility relations, while that of the understanding is to represent judgments rooted in the synthetic-inferential unity that *arises* from these incompatibility relations. The free play of these faculties, as I present it, consists in a subject-perspective's representation of the free and incessant *negotiation* of material incompatibility. When a subject-perspective embeds a given judgment in its distinctive incompatibility field, she represents it in a reproductive relation with all its incompatibles. In cases of cognition, the understanding sets upon these reproductive incompatibility relations to carve out paths of material inference. But in the judgment of taste, a subject-perspective represents nothing other than this reproductive incompatibility itself, feeling her judgment giving itself to and retrieving itself from its manifold contraries.

This incessant flux of the imagination is free, because it results in no conceptual pathway of inferential-synthesis, but it nevertheless stands under the entire faculty of the understanding because, without the unity that the understanding institutes and represents, the incompatibility which the imagination negotiates would be unintelligible. It is *pleasurable* because apperception itself always runs through the imaginary negotiation of material incompatibility, so that, in the experience of cognitive free play, a subject-perspective feels nothing other than the pure process by which she herself has reality.

Free play is a necessary process of cognition because it allows a subject-perspective to represent an intuition *beyond* all conceptual constraints. When a judgment is represented in the throws of nothing other than its reproductive incompatibility relations with other judgments, it is represented with respect to its absolutely *sensible* dimension. One of the primary theses upon which the first *Critique* relies is that cognition always comprises two distinct types of representation: sensible intuitions and concepts of the understanding. In order for the "discursive difference" between these types to be retained, one must represent both concepts beyond intuitions and intuitions beyond concepts. Ideas of reason perform the first job, and the judgment of taste—through cognitive free play—performs the second. Hence, in the judgment of taste, a subject-perspective actively preserves a distinction that makes experience itself possible.

V. Transcendental Mythology: The Plunge into Time-Difference

After demonstrating that the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement is necessary to Kant's theory of taste, while taste is necessary to his theory of cognition, I go on to provide a positive account of aesthetic conflict by developing it from the "supersensible ground of all humanity." This development consists in the study and relentless analysis of what I call "time-difference."

The representation to which Kant gives the distinctive job of representing intuitions beyond concepts (or absolute intuitions, as I call them) are "aesthetic ideas." Every judgment of taste adduces an aesthetic idea because such judgments always represent absolute intuitions. Absolute intuitions constitute what Kant calls the "supersensible ground of all humanity." The argument in the *Antinomy* section is that judgments of taste have subjective universality just because the aesthetic ideas they adduce represent this supersensible ground: when a subject-perspective judges something beautiful, she implies that anyone who counts as a *subject-perspective* must make the same judgment she does because her claim is based in the *ground* of subjectivity itself.

Since genuine aesthetic disagreement is necessarily possible, this ultimate ground of aesthetic justification must somehow be capable of dispensing *contrary* warrants to different subject-perspectives on the very same topic. Figuring out how this works involves plunging into the ground itself and discerning its internal principles. The strategy is to deduce subjectivity itself from its supersensible ground of absolute intuition and see what this deduction has to teach us about why subject-perspectives are capable of genuine aesthetic conflict. The latter half of the dissertation is devoted to this project: my goal is to draw something recognizable as an "I-saying" creature, equipped with our type and number of faculties, from the definition of absolute intuition.

I begin this project by attempting to characterize absolute intuition more concretely. What is an absolute intuition? What are its nuclear traits? After showing it to be an element of pure time, I further define this element by depriving it of all the properties it acquires from concepts. Through a process of "deschematization," I show it to consist in nothing other than its absolute difference from the *other* such elements in its manifold. I call it a *time-difference*.

The next step is to plunge *into* time-difference itself, defining its essence and deriving all of its processes from this essence. The system of time-difference, I show, exhibits three potencies, each defined by its own

process. The first potency exhibits the process of *Eternal Return*, the second of *Permanent Revolution*, and the third of *(De)construction*. In the first potency, a time-difference develops an ontologically affirmative, fourfold relation of mutual positing to all the other time-differences constituting its absolute manifold. Each time-difference is itself only through positing all the others as having already posited *it*. Eternal Return names this reciprocal process of mutual positing.

In the second potency, this affirmative mutuality turns violent. A time difference is *for itself* nothing other than the active reflecting of manifold others, which are, to this extent, passively reflected *for it*. But in order to reflect these others, the reflecting element must reflect them *as* reflecting *it*, so that its activity is converted to passivity in the moment of its expression. Time-differences of the second potency are identified purely with their activity, and so this passivity brings on their annihilation. Permanent Revolution names this process of endless destruction at the level of the universal.

In the third potency, we enter the perspective of some *one* time-difference and excavate what it fully is for itself when it actively reflects-for-itself. Since time-differences are annihilated by their passivity, this passivity is nothing for them—walling them within the boundaries of their own finite perspectives. From its own perspective, a reflecting time-difference constructs a *hierarchy* of time-differences of which it itself is in command. In order to construct its own hierarchy, however, time-differences must actively *repress* the passivity which occasions its annihilation, banishing it from the zone of its conscious perspective. This amounts to the exclusion of a manifold of active time-differences, which, banished to an expansive unconscious, proceed to *counter-construct* their own hierarchies. The simultaneity of construction and counter-construction is called *(De)construction*.

These counter-constructed counter-hierarchies signify the passivity of the constructing time-difference, and so they menace it with an impending threat of death. In response to this constantly escalating feeling of doom, every constructing time-difference simulates a *witness* to its own activity, a “disinterested” party who can affirm its authority. This witness is not real; it is rather a *stratagem* of the time-difference, an attempt to cope with the terrors gathering at the threshold of its consciousness. This stratagem, this lie time tells to itself, is a *subject-perspective*.

After subject-perspectives have come on the scene, I mobilize the moments of the time-system to show the processes of each potency to correspond to, and account for, one of our transcendental faculties. Eternal Return grounds sensibility; Permanent Revolution is a process of the imagination; and (De)construction accounts for the understanding. I go on, from here, to provide a brief gloss of the political and rational dimensions of subjective life. Subject-perspectives are simulated in a condition of radical conflict: each recognizes the hierarchy of a unique time-difference, to which the hierarchies of the others constitute a terrifying unconsciousness. The original political attitude is *paranoia*—everyone signifies a conspiracy against everyone else. The original rational attitude is *forgiveness*, which is a betrayal of time that occurs when the members of the subjective community decide to identify with each other instead of the time-differences that simulate them, collectively rejecting history.

Finally, I solve the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement by showing the state of mutual strife in which subject-perspectives are originally simulated to be an *aesthetic* conflict. Genuine aesthetic disagreement is possible, I argue, because it is the original condition of subjectivity itself. I conclude the dissertation with brief discussions of the sublime and the artistic. The sublime is a flight from aesthetic discord into reason. The artistic is the experience of genuine aesthetic disagreement *as* genuine aesthetic disagreement, and it forces the subject-perspective back up the time-differential wormhole of her own simulation.

Ultimately, then, this dissertation attempts to tell a new story about subjectivity—about who we are and how we came to be. It is important to undercut some of its lofty ambitions in advance, however, by delimiting the sphere of its possible legitimacy. The story about the origin of self-consciousness on offer here unfolds through a dive into time-difference. Just as an idea of reason represents a concept beyond intuitions, a time-difference is an intuition beyond concepts. Thus, just as the flight into the former may yield only *illusions* with no grip in objective reality, so too must the plunge into the latter yield representations with no share in truth. For Kant, rational illusions are falsehoods about the *objects* of experience that must be believed in order to make those objects possible. By contrast, intuitions beyond concepts constitute falsehoods that must be believed to make the *subjects* of experience possible. If the former are illusions, then the latter may be called *myths*. I take what follows here to represent a *transcendental mythology*. Thus, what I am attempting to do is tell a

mythical story about self-consciousness adequate for grounding something as obviously mythical, deceptive, and false as a *subject* with rational and moral responsibilities who dares to utter the word *I*.

VI. Chapter Summary

Chapter One makes the case that the judgment of taste is structurally coherent, under the proposal of transcendental idealism, only if we accept the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement. Chapter Two begins the rational reconstruction of self-consciousness by analyzing the transcendental deduction and defending an *inferential* theory of understanding. Chapter Three continues the reconstruction by showing sensibility to host, and imagination to represent, the material incompatibility relations that underwrite the material inferences of the understanding. Chapter Four shows judgments of taste to be necessary to cognition because they represent intuitions beyond concepts. Chapter Five deschematizes absolute intuitions, characterizing them as time-differences. Chapter Six begins the chronicles of time-differences, delineating the dynamics of the first potency. Chapter Seven describes the process of Eternal Return and explains its relation to sensibility. Chapter Eight interrogates the second potency of time-difference, uncovers the process of Permanent Revolution, and accounts for its relation to the imagination. Chapter Nine discusses the third potency, the process of (De)construction, and the simulation of subjectivity. Chapter Ten analyzes the political, rational, and aesthetic dimensions of subjective life, finally explaining how genuine aesthetic disagreements are possible.

Part One

Aesthetic Conflict and Cognition: Reconstructing Self-Consciousness

Chapter One

Taste and Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement: The Cost of Transcendental Idealism

On January 12, 1995, the first production of Sarah Kane's *Blasted* premiered to a famously mixed reception. Enacting the atrocities of "anal rape, frottage, urination and defecation, baby eating, cunnilingus, fellatio, [and the consumption of] eyeballs"³, most of London's theatre critics heralded the piece as a national disgrace, a horror whose enormity could hardly be expressed in any five-hundred word review. *The Guardian's* Michael Billington "dismissed [it] as 'naive tosh,'"⁴ and *The Daily Mail's* Jack Tinker dubbed it a "disgusting feast of filth."⁵ Several prominent playwrights, however, came to Kane's defense. Edward Bond wrote that, "The images in *Blasted* are ancient. They are seen in all great ages of art... I worry for those too busy or lost that they cannot see its humanity."⁶ In a letter to *The Guardian*, Caryl Churchill called it "a rather tender play."⁷ And Harold Pinter reports telling Kane herself "that it was terrific."⁸

The controversy between the critics who despised the play and the playwrights who admired it represents an extremely heightened example of what I will call *aesthetic disagreement*. One person, or one set of people (in this case the playwrights), responds affirmatively to an object (in this case a play), while another person, or another set (the critics), responds negatively to it. If I may tentatively group the affirmative descriptions under the general heading of 'beauty' and their negative counterparts under that of 'ugliness,' then the general form of an aesthetic disagreement would be as follows:

Affirmative: This object is *beautiful*.

Negative: This object is *ugly*.

³ Iball 2008, 4

⁴ Boehm, Mike. "Beyond her Darkness." *Los Angeles Times*. 31 Oct. 2004. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-oct-31-ca-kane31-story.html>

⁵ Qtd. in Urban 2001, 36.

⁶ Lobel, Brain "4.48 Psychosis: The Struggle of a Young Playwright." *Steppenwolf Theatre*. <https://www.steppenwolf.org/articles/4.48-psychosis-the-struggle-of-a-young-playwright/>

⁷ National Theatre Team. "Five of the Best... Sarah Kane Plays." *The National Theatre*. <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/blog/five-best-sarah-kane-plays>

⁸ Hattenstone, Simon. 2000 (30 Jun.) "A Sad Hurrah (Part 2) *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2000/jul/01/stage1>

Pinter’s assessment of the play as “terrific” classes it as beautiful, while Tinker’s characterization of it is a “disgusting feast of filth” classes it as ugly. The vindication of either party’s claim entails the delegitimation of the claim of the other. Pinter and Tinker therefore stand in a state of aesthetic disagreement.

The subject of this dissertation, and of this chapter in particular, pertains to the nature of these sorts of disagreements as they relate to Kant’s late-critical theory of taste. Kant distinguishes judgments of taste—that is, judgments that call objects beautiful or ugly—by the property of *disinterestedness*. In order to make a “pure” judgment of taste, one that attributes beauty or ugliness to its object *appropriately* (rather than erroneously), one must take pleasure only in its specifically aesthetic characteristics, having no interest in its “existence” (KU.5:204.90). One can have such an interest either because one takes *sensible* pleasure in it, so that it not only “pleases but [also] gratifies” (KU.5:207.92) or because one takes *moral* pleasure in its concept, so that it “pleases by means of reason alone, through the mere concept” (KU.5:207.92). But no judgment that calls an object beautiful for these reasons counts, for Kant, as pure or correct.

This distinction provides rudimentary criteria for *adjudicating* the conflict between the critics (represented by Tinker) and the playwrights (represented by Pinter), allowing us to determine who ought to concede to whom about the beauty or ugliness of *Blasted*. We may imagine at least three scenarios of disagreement:

	Pinter: “ <i>Blasted</i> is beautiful”	Tinker: “ <i>Blasted</i> is ugly”
<i>Scenario-1:</i>	Interested	Interested
<i>Scenario-2:</i>	Disinterested	Interested
<i>Scenario-3</i>	Interested	Disinterested

In Scenario-1, both Pinter’s and Tinker’s judgments are *interested*. The former calls *Blasted* beautiful not because he actually finds it so, but, e.g., because he has a moral interest in supporting young playwrights. The latter, by contrast, calls it ugly not because he finds *aesthetic* fault in the piece, but, e.g., because he is morally opposed to depictions of extreme violence. Neither judges the play on its specifically *aesthetic* merits. *Neither* party has authority over the other in Scenario-1. Each party judges on the basis of his own interest.

In Scenario-2, Tinker's judgment remains interested, but Pinter's is now *disinterested*. While Tinker continues to call *Blasted* ugly because of his moral interest against depictions of violence, Pinter judges it beautiful, not because he wants to support Kane, but only on the basis of its aesthetic merits (whatever that might mean). As adjudicators of the dispute, we decide Scenario-2 in Pinter's favor. Tinker may be correct that it is *morally* impermissible to depict extreme violence, but the moral value of the piece is not the same as its aesthetic quality, so his claim is not binding as a specifically *aesthetic* judgment. Pinter's judgment, by contrast, as disinterested, approves of the piece on a purely aesthetic basis. In the domain of taste, Pinter's judgment has priority over Tinker's. Scenario-3 presents the converse distribution: Pinter's claim is interested while Tinker's is disinterested. We therefore decide the disagreement in *Tinker's* favor, for the same reasons.

All three of these cases of disagreement may be called 'artificial.' In each, there is an apparent conflict where there should not be one. The disagreement would vanish if the disputing parties better understood the factors that gave rise to their discord. Since the only purported judgments of taste that have any authority are the disinterested ones, adjudicating these three disputes simply involves ascertaining which of the two parties, if either, judges in a disinterested manner. While ascertaining this may be challenging, it is in principle no less possible than ascertaining who judges correctly in matters of scientific cognition: evidence may be presented in either direction, understanding progressively achieved. Arriving at aesthetic consensus in these cases is simply a matter of attaining a greater understanding.

In this chapter, I will make the case that, if we adopt Kant's theory of taste, then a *fourth* scenario must be possible, namely, one in which *both* Pinter *and* Tinker issue disinterested but opposing judgments of taste, the former calling the work beautiful, the latter calling it ugly, but both doing so purely on the basis of its aesthetic merits and so with equal authority. On the one hand, since Pinter's judgment is pure, he is "right" (in an aesthetic way which must be carefully understood) to call *Blasted* beautiful, and so Tinker ought to give up on its ugliness. But, on the other hand, since *Tinker's* judgment is also pure, *he* is "right" to call the play ugly, and so *Pinter* ought to give up on its beauty. Both judge with the appropriate aesthetic authority, but the claim of each is incompatible with that of the other. Resolving the conflict is not a matter of achieving greater understanding—it would persist, and would even be heightened, if the disputing parties perfectly understood

the factors contributing to their disagreement. This fourth scenario is a case of what I will call *genuine aesthetic disagreement*.

My claim in this chapter is that, if genuine aesthetic disagreement were not possible, then the very idea of a judgment of taste would be incoherent. I will make this case in four sections. First, I will explore the modi of taste by comparing a pure aesthetic judgment to a cognitive judgment about the same object, showing the two claims to be logically identical and aesthetically similar, distinguished only by the untethered *presupposition* that beauty is not an objective property. Kant argues *from* rather than *for* this presupposition, I will show, using it to infer the modi of taste, but neglecting to provide a positive exposition of its ground. Given the significant overlap in authority and structure, I will contend, the sole presupposition that distinguishes cognitive from pure aesthetic judgment requires independent justification.

Second, I will contend that saying why beauty is not an objective property requires an understanding of the conditions of objectivity in general: What does a judgment have to do in order to thereby be attributing an objective property? To answer this, I will investigate Kant's foundational thesis of transcendental idealism, arguing that judgments are standardly *objective* for Kant just if the subject appropriately treats one of its subsentential expressions as a *subjectively universal* standard for assessing the correctness of the judgment as a whole. On this reading, the pure judgment of taste *ought* to be cognitive, beauty an objective property, since it is subjectively universal.

Thus, third, I will show the subjective universality of the judgment of taste to be compatible with its lack of objective validity *only* if genuine aesthetic disagreement is possible. Since judges of taste correctly attribute subjective universality to their claims by deferring to such terms as 'beauty' and 'ugliness' as normative standards of assessment with authority for everyone, beauty ought to qualify within the framework of transcendental idealism as an intersubjectively intelligible property of its object. The only reason it does not, I will contend, is because differing subject-perspectives are capable of genuinely disagreeing about whether an object is beautiful.

Finally, fourth, I will show these radical conflicts to exhibit the structure of what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls a *differend*—each party has a legitimate claim against the other and no common rule can settle the controversy.

I. The Taxonomy Taste

As the discord between Pinter and Tinker exemplifies, genuine aesthetic disagreements hold between opposing judges of taste—one calls a certain object beautiful, the other ugly. In this section, I provide an exegesis of taste, comparing a pure aesthetic judgment to a cognitive judgment about the same object, investigating the logical and aesthetic structure of both, and ultimately showing the one to be distinguished from the other by the *presupposition* that beauty is not, and cannot be, an objective property.

1. Two Judgments on a Painting

Consider the following judgments about the same painting by Mark Rothko, *Red on Maroon*:⁹

1. *Red on Maroon* is red. (CJ)
2. *Red on Maroon* is beautiful. (JT)

The first (CJ) is a typical judgment of experience that cognizes an object by attributing a determinate property to it—*redness*. Although it is empirical and reflecting, it is nevertheless objective: it is based in a concept of the understanding that refers to the object itself, making a claim that could be correct or incorrect depending on how things stand with the object. The second (JT) is a judgment of taste, where, for now, this term just signifies any judgment that calls an object beautiful or ugly. What differences distinguishes these two judgments? What similarities do they share? (These questions are broad, but they will narrow as I answer them.)

The first and most important difference between CJ and JT is that while CJ is cognitive, JT is aesthetic:

In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground **cannot be other than subjective**" (KU.5:203.89).

⁹ Rothko, Mark. *Red on Maroon*. 1959. Tate Modern, London. [Tate.Modern.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rothko-red-on-maroon-t01165), <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rothko-red-on-maroon-t01165>

In this passage, Kant construes the difference between CJ and JT as a matter of “relation.” Both judgments represent the same object (*Red on Maroon*), but while CJ “relates” that representation to its *object* (the thing represented), JT relates it to its *subject* (the person doing the representing). Just as ‘redness’ is supposed to be present in the object, a certain species of ‘pleasure’ is supposed to be present in the subject. CJ affirms the presence of redness in the object by stating that it is *red*, while JT affirms the presence of pleasure in the subject by stating that the object is *beautiful*.

Despite this difference in relation, the two judgments also bear a striking similarity. Both attribute traits to the object *itself*. In JT, the subject does not say, ‘Representing *Red on Maroon* makes me feel pleasure’, which would specify that she associates the representation only with a modification of her state. She does not even say ‘*Red on Maroon* is beautiful to me’, which would at least narrow her claim about the object to its appearance to *her*. She states far more baldly that ‘*Red on Maroon* is beautiful’. As Kant puts it, the subject speaks of beauty “beauty *as if* it were a property of things” (KU.5:213.98, *emphasis added*). If beauty, like redness, is explicitly attributed to the object *itself*, on what grounds do we say that, in JT, the subject “relates” the representation of the object only to her own feeling (rather than to a property of the object)?

Kant addresses this question in the following way:

Any relation of representations... even that of sensations, can be objective (in which case it signifies what is real in an empirical representation); but not the relation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation. (KU.5:203.89).

According to Kant, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is entirely barred from correlating with an objective property. While many subjective feelings *do* correlate with objective properties—e.g., the feeling of heat correlates with fire’s property of being hot—pleasure and displeasure are unique among subjective feelings in that “by means of [them] nothing at all in the object is designated.” Thus, unless one is willing to deny that beauty and ugliness pertain essentially to subjective pleasure and displeasure, one must admit that JT is grounded in a subjective feeling without an objective correlate.

While this distinction seems uncontroversial *prima facie*, it is more problematic that it appears. For, as Kant himself acknowledges, empirical cognitive judgments, no less than judgments of taste, are grounded in subjective feelings. CJ, for example, attributes redness to the object on the basis of the subject’s *sensation* of

redness: even if redness pertains to the object as a property, the only access the *subject* has to this property runs through the *feeling*, characteristic of red objects, she experiences when she looks at it. So both JT and CJ are based in feelings, the one in a pleasure-sensation, the other in a red-sensation, and both employ these feelings to attribute traits directly *to* the object (the object *itself* is called both beautiful and red), but only the trait attributed by CJ counts as a genuinely objective property. Why?

As we saw, Kant explains this difference by presupposing that pleasure is distinctive among sensations in that it can never have an objective correlate. But why is this the case? Why do pleasure-sensations never correlate with anything objective, like red-sensations often do, so that beauty can never be a property? While I think Kant is right to distinguish pleasure and beauty in this way, and while I think doing so makes psychological sense, a distinction that carries as much weight as this requires a transcendental ground. What is the *transcendental* basis for the purely subjective character of pleasure and the nonobjectivity of beauty?

2. *The Logical Forms of CJ and JT: Affirmative, Singular, Categorical, Assertoric*

In order to discover the transcendental ground of JT's subjectivity, we need to better understand its structure. Among the foremost suppositions driving the argument of Kant's first *Critique* is his view that all judgments are defined by the same "logical forms."¹⁰ Every judgment exhibits a *quality* (affirmative, negative, or infinite), a *quantity* (universal, particular, or singular), a *relation* (categorical, hypothetical, or disjunctive), and a *modality* (problematic, assertoric, or apodictic). These logical forms define the possible ways in which a judgment may relate to its object. To begin seeking out the transcendental ground of the subjectivity of pleasure, I will first define both JT and CJ according to the logical forms of judgment, determining whether this ground may be found within a difference in structure.

The logical quality of any judgment pertains to the claim that judgment makes about the *existence* of its object: does the proposition *affirm* the existence of a certain trait, *deny* it, or place its object within the *infinite* domain of entities that lack that trait? Both CJ and JT exhibit an affirmative quality: each assert the existence of a certain trait (redness or beauty) with respect to *Red on Maroon*.

¹⁰ For a detailed explanation of why Kant divides the functions of judgment by these four headings, see Brandt, 2000. *The Table of Judgments*.

The logical quantity of any judgment denotes the range of objects over which it has authority. Universal judgments attribute a predicate to every object of a certain type—signaled with a quantifier such as ‘all’ or ‘every.’ Particular judgments attribute a predicate to at least one (but not all) object of a certain type—signaled with the quantifier ‘some.’ And singular judgments attribute a predicate to one specific object. Both CJ and JT attribute traits to a unique object (Rothko’s one and only *Red on Maroon*), so both are quantitatively singular.

The logical relation of any judgment denotes the structure holding among its constituent parts. The judgment ‘All humans are mortal’ exhibits a categorical relation between the *subject* ‘humans’ and the *predicate* ‘...are mortal’; ‘If it is raining, then the streets will be wet’ exhibits a hypothetical relation between the *antecedent* ‘it is raining’ and the *consequent* ‘the streets will be wet;’ and ‘Either God is immortal or he does not exist’ exhibits a disjunctive relation between the first *disjunct* ‘God is immortal’ and the second ‘he does not exist.’ Both CJ exhibit a simple categorical relation, asserting something of the form ‘*x* is *y*’.

The modality of any judgment designates the type of commitment one has to its content, or, as Kant puts it “the value of the copula” (*KrV*.A99/B100.209). Problematic judgments typically appear as components of compounds. In the hypothetical judgment, ‘If it is raining, then the streets will be wet’, both the antecedent and consequent claims are problematic because they are explicitly asserted in terms of a condition that may or may not hold. Assertoric judgments state that something happens to actually be the case: e.g., ‘Santa Fe is in New Mexico’ asserts something true but not necessary. Apodictic judgments assert necessities: ‘triangles have three sides,’ etc.. The modality of a judgment defines the degree of necessity with which a certain relation pertains to a certain object. Both CJ and JT are logically assertoric: both assert that a certain trait *does* pertain to *Red on Maroon*; neither insists that this property *must* pertain to it.

Thus, both CJ and JT exhibit the following logical structure:

	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Relation</i>	<i>Modality</i>
CJ: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is red’	Affirmative	Singular	Categorical	Assertoric
JT: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is beautiful’	Affirmative	Singular	Categorical	Assertoric

Since both JT and CJ exhibit identical forms, the transcendental ground of the necessary subjectivity of pleasure obviously cannot be derived from any distinguishing mark in the logical structure of the judgment that attributes it. We need to seek out this ground elsewhere.

Now, one of the distinctive innovations of the third *Critique* is to employ these same forms to define a judgment's relation not only to its *object* but also to its *subject*. The categories of quantity, quality, relation, and modality characterize not only the *logical* but also the *aesthetic* forms of judgment. Indeed, since aesthetic judgments relate representations to the representing subject (rather than to the represented objects), these aesthetic uses of the forms are far more relevant for understanding them than their logical counterparts are. Going forward, I will define the aesthetic forms of both CJ and JT and see if the transcendental ground of the necessary subjectivity of pleasure may be found in any distinctions among these aesthetic forms.

3. *Quality: Disinterested (CJ), Disinterested (JT)*

Since the *logical* quality of a judgment denotes the relation of that judgment to the existence of its object, the *aesthetic* quality of that same judgment must denote the judging subject's *attitude* toward that existence. Whenever the subject has an *affirmative* or *negative* attitude toward that existence, taking pleasure or displeasure in it, she has an *interest* in that object. When she takes neither pleasure nor displeasure in the object's existence, she exhibits a *disinterested* attitude toward it. Thus, judgments are qualitatively *interested* or *disinterested*. Aesthetic judgments in general may be interested or disinterested. Cognitive judgments, based in concepts of the understanding rather than reason, are typically *disinterested*. In order to judge that something is *red*, the subject has no need to take pleasure or displeasure in this fact. Conversely, aesthetic judgments are typically *interested*, since they involve the pleasure of the subject). The judgment of taste, however—which attributes beauty to objects—is, like a cognitive judgment, *disinterested*.

Kant acknowledges two types of interested aesthetic judgments: moral judgments and aesthetic judgments of sense. All moral judgments call objects either *good* or *bad*.¹¹ Moral judgments include every day judgments of perfection—e.g., 'This is a good pen,' 'My insurance is bad,' 'I've yet to find a good barber'—but they also include full-blown ethical evaluations about the moral integrity of a person or an object—e.g., 'He is

¹¹ KU.5:207-5:209.92-94

good person,’ ‘Lying is wrong,’ ‘She is bad to her husband.’ Moral judgments confer pleasure on the subject just when a moral state-of-affairs is judged to *exist* or when an immoral one is judged to *not exist*. For this reason, they are necessarily interested: it is always the existence or nonexistence of certain objects that confers moral pleasure.

Aesthetic judgments of sense call objects either *agreeable* or *disagreeable*.¹² They apply broadly to all objects that produce pleasure or displeasure but which are neither beautiful (or ugly) nor moral (or immoral)—‘This pie is tasty,’ ‘Purple is pretty,’ ‘A# sounds nice.’ In general, they identify some more or less determinate property of their object, defined by a concept, and then report whether that property elicits pleasure or displeasure in some particular person. They are interested because they declare a preference for the existence of objects which exhibit pleasurable properties and the nonexistence of objects which exhibit displeasurable properties.¹³

By contrast, judgments of taste, as disinterested, have no concern for the *existence* of their objects. Kant writes: “if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection)” (KU.5:204.90). Calling something beautiful, Kant claims, is not the same as stating that something has *value* to me. If I approve of a painting because I have invested money in the art gallery that displays it, then the *existence* of the painting pleases me (it is making me money), and I am liable to mistake the pleasure I derive from the painting’s value to me for pleasure in its *beauty*. This, of course, does not mean that I cannot be pleased *that* a beautiful object exists; it just means that I cannot call an object beautiful because I am *already* pleased by its existence.¹⁴ Essentially, the judgment of taste is disinterested because it must be unbiased.

Thus, both CJ and JT are aesthetically disinterested. The subject need not associate any pleasure at all with the redness of *Red on Maroon*. And the pleasure she associates with its beauty does not arise from its *existence*.

¹² KU.5:206.91

¹³ KU.5:207.92

¹⁴ For a discussion of the interest one might have in objects that one has *subsequently* called beautiful through a disinterested judgment of taste, see: Henry Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, 94-97.

4. *Quantity: Subjectively Universal (CJ), Subjectively Universal (JT)*

The quantity of any (cognitive) judgment denotes the range of objects over which it has authority. Judgments may be *universal*, *particular*, or *singular*. Universal judgments attribute a predicate to every object of a certain type—signaled with a quantifier such as ‘all’ or ‘every.’ Particular judgments attribute a predicate to at least one (but not all) object of a certain type—signaled with the quantifier ‘some.’ And singular judgments attribute a predicate to one specific object. The *aesthetic* quantity of a judgment, however, denotes the range not of *objects*, but of *subjects*, over which it has authority. We may infer immediately that CJ is aesthetically universal. For, since it attributes a property that pertains to the object itself, it is binding for *everyone* who might ever judge that object. As Kant puts it: “...an **objectively universally valid** judgment is also always subjectively so, i.e., if the judgment is valid for everything that is contained under a given concept then it is also valid for everyone who represents an object through this concept” (KU.5:215.100). But what about JT? Does the claim that ‘*Red on Maroon* is beautiful’ have authority over only *one* subject, namely, the one who utters it, over some but not all of them, or over *all* subjects as such, exhibiting a universal quantity? Kant argues that judgments of taste are subjectively universal—whenever someone calls an object beautiful, she takes her judgment to have authority over *everyone* who judges the same object.

This subjective universality, Kant claims, follows immediately from its disinterestedness. After defining the beautiful as “that which, without concepts, is represented as the object of a *universal* satisfaction” (KU.5:211.96), Kant makes the following argument:

This definition of the beautiful can be deduced from the previous explanation of it as an object of satisfaction without any interest. For one cannot judge that about which he is aware that the satisfaction in it is without any interest in his own case in any way except that it must contain a ground of satisfaction for everyone. For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself completely **free** with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure from everyone. (KU.5:211.96-97).

Since a given subject’s judgment of taste is not based in *any* interest, Kant reasons, it is also not based in any *private* interests applying only to the given subject. And since there is no way someone could derive a private pleasure from an object other than through a private *interest*, it follows that the pleasure that warrants the

judgment of taste must be thoroughly *public*. The subject who makes the positive judgment of taste must represent her own pleasure as deriving from conditions that somehow have a grip on everyone else as well. Hence, the subjective *universality* of taste follows directly from its *disinterestedness*.¹⁵

Kant undertakes the task of explaining the consequences of the subjective universality of the judgment of taste in §9 of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, further elucidating the facultative interactions that make taste possible on the basis of its distinctive quantity.¹⁶ His account has something of the dialectical character of an antinomy. On the one hand, relying on insights from the first *Critique*, he points out that “Nothing... can be universally communicated except cognition and representation so far as it belongs to cognition” (*KU.5:217.102*). While I cannot rely on anyone else to have the same opinions or preferences that I do, I *must* expect others to cognize the same *objects* that I do. This follows from the basic definition of an object as an extra-subjective referent of subjective representation.¹⁷ Since I know objects of experience just by cognizing them, determining given sensible intuitions under concepts of the understanding, it follows that the sphere of cognition is common in everyone, and, moreover, Kant claims, this is the *only* reliably common sphere of subjectivity.¹⁸ But on the other hand, since the judgment of taste adduces a subjective feeling of pleasure, while judgments resulting in cognition always adduce concepts denoting objective properties, the judgment of taste cannot result in cognition of its object. Even if I attribute the same subjective universality to the claim ‘*Red on Maroon* is beautiful’ as I do to the claim ‘*Red on Maroon* is red,’ I do not predicate beauty of the painting as a *property* in the same way as I attribute redness.

Thus, an apparent tension holds between the subjective universality and the aesthetic nature of the judgment of taste. The former requires it to adduce some sort of cognitive process, while the latter prevents

¹⁵ For an argument that Kant’s direct inference of subjective universality from disinterestedness is unjustified, see: Paul Guyer 1997, 132. And for what I take to be a compelling refutation of that argument, see, Allison 2001, 99-103.

¹⁶ This section is famously convoluted: it is difficult to discern whether Kant is arguing *from* the subjective universality of the judgment of taste to infer further structural features of the judgment from it, or arguing *for* this universality by adducing previously introduced features of taste. I take the section to be more explanatory than argumentative. While relying on disinterestedness as a sufficient ground for subjective universality, Kant is explaining *how* the judgment could be not only subjectively universal, but also disinterested, by the cognitive free play he had introduced in the introductions.

¹⁷ *KrV*.A104.229.

¹⁸ *KU.5:217.102*

the judgment from actually resulting in cognition. Kant resolves this tension by arguing that the judgment of taste adduces the feeling of what he calls “cognitive free play.” He writes:

Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, it can be nothing other than the... feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general. Now there belongs to a representation by which an object is given, in order for there to be cognition of it in general, **imagination** for the composition of the manifold of intuition and **understanding** for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations. This state of a **free play** of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given must be able to be universally communicated, because cognition, as a determination of the object with which given representations (in whatever subject it may be) should agree, is the only kind of representation valid for everyone. (KU.5:217.102-103).

Cognition occurs (through the assertion of a judgment) when the understanding unifies a sensible manifold, apprehended by the imagination, under a determinate concept. Every determinate property that cognitive judgment attributes to the object (by means of a concept) corresponds to some determinate mental state (interaction of the imagination and the understanding) of the judging subject.¹⁹

Conversely, not every mental state of the subject corresponds to a determinate property of the object. Since the imagination and the understanding always cooperate in cases of cognition, cognition always involves some sort of interaction of these faculties. Since this interaction may result in the cognition of an indefinite multitude of objective properties under concepts, it follows that the *process* of this interaction may be removed from any, and so from *all*, of the properties in which it results, as well as from the concepts that define those properties. When this process of interaction is represented in isolation from any resultant objective property, it is represented as occurring outside the normative grip of any determinate concept: as such, it is represented not as a determinate mental process, but as a *free play*. When the encounter with an object occasions the representation of this free play, a cognitive mental state is achieved—and *felt*—but no property of the object is determined. In this case, beauty is attributed to the occasioning object.²⁰

Judgments of taste are able to be subjectively universal because they adduce the feeling of cognitive free play, and cognition is the “universal point of relation with which everyone’s faculty of representation is

¹⁹ For more on the notion of a “mental state,” see Allison 2001, 51-54.

²⁰ For further (and contrasting) discussions of the complexities of §9, see Allison 2001, 110-118, Ginsborg 1990, 72, and Guyer 1997, 151-160

compelled to agree” (KU.5:217.102). But these judgments remain aesthetic because the mental state whose feeling is adduced does not correspond to any determinate property of the object which is called beautiful.

Thus, both CJ and JT are subjectively universal—the one because it is a cognition, the other because it is based in an interaction of the faculties *involved* in cognition.

5. *Relation: Purposiveness With a Purpose (CJ), Purposiveness of Without a Purpose (JT)*

As we saw above, the *logical* relation of any judgment denotes the logical structure holding among its constituent parts, defining the way in which a particular property belongs to its object. But the *aesthetic* relation of a judgment pertains not to the object that it mentions, but to the link between the subjective *faculties* whose free play it adduces.²¹ That is, the relation of the judgment of taste designates the way in which the imagination and the understanding relate to one another in their free play. This relation, Kant argues, is one of *purposiveness without a purpose*.²²

To understand why, we must first understand what Kant means by a “purpose.” By this, Kant means, most particularly, a concept. Concepts are ends or purposes for a number of reasons, but, first and foremost, because they set conditions for the imagination’s synthesis of sensible manifolds. Since a concept is defined as the *unity* to which some manifold is brought, the understanding and the imagination presuppose and rely upon one another in both determining and reflecting judgments. If it were not for the synthetic work of the imagination which *brings* the diversity to a unity, then either the manifold would not be manifold or the concept would not unify it, and the definition of a concept is violated in both cases. Conversely, if it were not for the unity instituted by the concept, then the synthetic work of the imagination would be impossible, since synthesis is only intelligible insofar as it pursues unity. Thus, a given concept is intelligible only as the end of the imagination’s corresponding synthesis. It is the *purpose* of a corresponding instance of imaginative synthesis, and imaginative synthesis is intelligible only insofar as it *purposively* pursues unity for the manifold under a concept.

²¹ For an alternative view of the relation of taste, see (Allison 2001, 119).

²² KU.5:236.120

Because concepts are the individual ends of particular imaginative processes, it follows that they must also be construed as the “ends” of particular cognized *objects*. Kant writes: “If one would define what an end is in accordance with its transcendental determinations... then an end is the object of a concept insofar as the latter [i.e., the concept] is regarded as the cause of the former [i.e., the object]” (KU.5:219-5:220.105). In other words, if an object appears in subjective experience, then it can always be inferred that a purposive imaginative synthesis has gathered the manifold under some conceptual purpose as this object. The concept, then, is the final cause, or end, of the object insofar as it is cognized. Further, the “causality” which the concept commands is nothing other than the purposive synthesis performed by the imagination, or just ‘purposiveness.’ Kant writes: “the causality of a **concept** with regard to its **object** is purposiveness” (KU.5:220.105). This is to say, if the object is considered as the effect of the concept that acts as its final cause, then the way the concept *produces* its effect is by inducing the synthesis of the imagination. Hence, insofar as objects are cognized—i.e., insofar as they appear in experience at all—they are products of purposive, imaginative syntheses which answer to discrete conceptual purposes.

However, although the object of the judgment of taste must be *purposive* for the subject, it must not be judged to possess any *purpose*. For, since purposes refer to concepts, it follows that if the object of the judgment were determined by a purpose it would lay claim to *objective* validity, which violates its aesthetic character. Consequently, pleasure in the beautiful must be induced by the judgment of a *purposive* object which nevertheless *lacks a purpose*:

Thus nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective), consequently the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is **given** to us, insofar as we are conscious of it, can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept, to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste. (KU.5:221.106).

The purposive object of the judgment of taste must be seen to *lack* a purpose, i.e., a concept. The interplay occurs because the judgment is perceived to be purposive, and it is *free* because the object lacks a purpose or concept which binds it to a particular rule for synthetic unity.

Finally, then, since the attribution of beauty applies to objects which are not determined by a concept but whose judgment occasions the feeling of the interplay of the imagination and the understanding, it follows

that the subjective consciousness of “purposiveness” relates the play of the imagination to the *entire* faculty of the understanding. For, since *particular concepts* (or purposes) designate individual synthetic unities of the manifold produced by completed instances of imaginative synthesis, the understanding *itself* (which contains individual concepts) generically governs the *purposive work* of the imagination that gives content to these concepts, so that any encounter with *purposiveness* is an encounter with the imagination’s play with the *general work* of the understanding itself.

The aesthetic relation of JT, then, is purposiveness without a purpose—in JT, the imagination performs the synthesis characteristic of purposiveness, but it is not guided by a discrete concept of the understanding, characteristic of a purpose. By contrast, the aesthetic relation of CJ is purposiveness with a purpose—the purposive synthesis of the imagination is guided by a determinate conceptual *purpose*.²³

6. *Modality: Necessary (CJ), Necessary (JT)*

The logical modality of any judgment designates the degree of necessity that holds between an object and the property the judgment attributes to it. The aesthetic modality of a judgment, by contrast, designates the extent to which the subject’s assertion of it is necessary. All cognitive judgments are aesthetically necessary (assuming they are correct). Since cognitive judgments attribute properties to the objects of themselves, it is necessary that any subject who judges the same objects attribute those same properties.

Likewise, Kant defines the judgment of taste as aesthetically *necessary*. Whereas “[o]f that which I call **agreeable** I say that it **actually** produces a pleasure in me[, o]f the **beautiful**... one thinks that it has a necessary relation to satisfaction” (*KU*.5:237.121). The necessity of the judgment may be inferred more or less immediately from its subjective universality. Since I demand universal agreement from everyone when I call something beautiful, it follows that I assert not only that I *actually* take pleasure in the object but also that taking this pleasure is necessary.

The only real addition that Kant’s treatment of the modality of taste adds to the analytic is terminological. Since beautiful objects are taken to be grounds of necessary satisfaction for everyone, it follows that everyone has the same “sense” for distinguishing beautiful objects. Kant gives this sense the new name of

²³ For more on Kant’s theory of purposiveness, see Huseynzadegan (2015, 2019 pp. 67-85).

“sensus communis” (KU.5:238.122), but *sensus communis* just pertains to the commonality of the cognitive faculties that we saw Kant discuss under the banner of subjective universality insofar as this commonality leads specifically to common attributions of beauty.

Thus, both CJ and JT are aesthetically necessary—the one because it attributes an objective property, the other because it is based in the “*sensus communis*” by which objective attribution is possible.

7. *Results of the Structure*

The foregoing analyses have revealed the following taxonomies of CJ and JT. The logical structure of both is:

Logical Structure	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Relation</i>	<i>Modality</i>
CJ: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is red’	Affirmative	Singular	Categorical	Assertoric
JT: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is beautiful’	Affirmative	Singular	Categorical	Assertoric

And the corresponding aesthetic is:

Aesthetic Structure	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Relation</i>	<i>Modality</i>
CJ: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is red’	Disinterested	Universal	Purposive without a purpose	Necessary
JT: ‘ <i>Red on Maroon</i> is beautiful’	Disinterested	Universal	Purposive with a purpose	Necessary

Logically, the two judgments are identical, and aesthetically, they differ only in *relation*. JT is purposive *without* a purpose, since it is grounded in a synthesis of the imagination, characterized by purposiveness, that remains unregulated by a determining purpose or concept. By contrast, CJ is purposive *with* a purpose, since it is grounded in an imaginative synthesis guided by the rule of concept. If the transcendental ground of the necessary subjectivity of pleasure is to be found in the *structure* of JT, then, it will be found in its *relation*.

Unfortunately, however, further analysis of the relation of characteristic of JT can yield no insight into the necessary subjectivity of pleasure, since Kant had to *presuppose* this necessary subjectivity in order to derive this relation. For, it is only by *assuming* that the judgment of taste can never attribute an objective property, no matter how authoritative it might be, that we arrived at purposeless purposiveness as the relation characteristic

of taste. This presumption of the necessary subjectivity of pleasure in general, paired with the subjective universality of pleasure in the beautiful, allowed us to deduce purposeless purposiveness as the aesthetic relation characteristic of taste, because this was the only relation that could retain both the universality and subjectivity of the pleasure in which the judgment of taste is based.

Since the only structural difference between JT and CJ arises from the *presupposition* that all pleasure is necessarily subjective, no further analysis of JT's structure will help us uncover the transcendental ground we are looking for. A new strategy of investigation is called for.

II. Transcendental Idealism: The Priority of Normative Attitudes

The previous section argued that the primary difference between cognitive and pure aesthetic judgments arises from the *presupposition* that pleasure is an exclusively subjective feeling with no correlate in the object. It tried (and failed) to discover the ground of this presupposition in the logical and aesthetic forms of taste. The current section takes up the search anew through analysis of Kant's master thesis of transcendental idealism, hoping to discover the transcendental ground of pleasure's exclusive subjectivity in the principles of objectivity itself.

Understanding transcendental idealism involves appreciating four escalating claims: 1) rather than the other way around, judgments refer to objects just because they may be assessed as correct or incorrect (because they are normative); 2) they are normative just if they adduce concepts of the understanding; 3) they adduce such concepts just if the subject correctly *treats* them as doing so, exhibiting a distinctive normative *attitude*; and 4) the judging subject exhibits the distinctive normative attitude just when she defers to some subsentential element of her judgment as a subjectively universal standard of normative assessment for the judgment as a whole. Under transcendental idealism, then, exhibiting the normative attitude of subjective universality is what institutes conceptuality and so objectivity in judgment.

After explaining why I think an analysis of transcendental idealism will help us uncover the transcendental ground of pleasure's exclusive subjectivity, I will defend each of the theory's component claims in turn. In the following section, I will mobilize these results to reveal *genuine aesthetic disagreement* as the transcendental ground we're looking for.

1. *The Bridge to Transcendental Idealism.*

The last section contended that the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure requires a transcendental ground. Since the judgment of taste adduces transcendental principles, and is distinguished by the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure, I contended that this subjectivity must itself have a transcendental ground: Why is pleasure, alone among sensations, precluded from corresponding to an object? Seeking out this ground, I analyzed the logical and aesthetic forms of a cognitive and a pure aesthetic judgment about the same object, discovering that the only difference between them arises *from* (and so cannot itself explain) the presupposition of the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure. Thus, a new search is called for.

For my purposes, the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure means, primarily, that *beauty* cannot be an objective property. Even though the pure aesthetic judgment that attributes it is logically identical and aesthetically very similar to a cognitive judgment, beauty never pertains to its object as a cognitive predicate. One strategy for understanding why involves interrogating the groundfloor principles of objectivity in general for Kant: What does a judgment have to do in order to be thereby predicating a *property* of an object? Answering this question will guide to an explanation of why judgments of taste *do not* attribute properties.

Kant's addresses the question of property attribution through his master theory of transcendental idealism. According to theory, as I read it, a judgment attributes an objective property *if and only if* the judging subject appropriately defers to one of its subsentential components as a subjectively universal standard of correctness for the judgment as a whole. By these lights, beauty *ought* to be an objective property, since, as we saw above, judgments of taste are subjectively universal. Recognizing this prepares us to uncover the *ultimate* ground of the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure in genuine aesthetic disagreement.

2. *Transcendental Idealism: The Basic Position*

As Henry Allison puts it, transcendental idealism is not a metaphysical doctrine, but the proposal of a novel epistemic standpoint.²⁴ The ground of this proposal is an observation about the relation of normativity and objectivity: all and only judgments that purport to refer to *objects* (where this term includes not only the everyday furniture of the world like 'tables' and 'chairs', but also states-of-affairs like whether or not it is raining

²⁴ Allison 2004, pp. 35-38.

and abstract entities like ‘the economy’) may be assessed as *correct* or *incorrect*. Realist epistemologies prioritize the objective side of this correspondence, presupposing that normative judgments are normative (correct or incorrect) just *because* they purport to refer to objects. Reference is used to account for normativity. Kant’s characterization of this traditional view is that: “Up until now, it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects” (*KrV*.Bxvi.110).

Kant’s proposal is that we take this the other way around, suggesting that we see “whether we do not get farther... by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition...” (*KrV*.Bxvi.110). In concrete terms, he exhorts us to assume that objective judgments are objective (purporting to refer to objects) just *because* they are normative (correct or incorrect), rather than the other way around. The proposal is that we use normativity to explain reference, rather than reference to explain normativity. Adopting this standpoint commits Kant to devising a theory of normativity whose essential criterion of adequacy is that it not explain normativity on the basis of objectivity. If objectivity is to be a consequence of normativity, then we need to be able to say how a judgment is correct or incorrect *without* invoking its referential dimension.

To attain a working understanding of Kant’s proposal of transcendental idealism, consider again CJ from above (‘*Red on Maroon* is red’). This judgment is both normative and objective: it predicates a property of an object that would apply even if we did not attribute it, and it may be assessed by means of some standard according to whether it attributes the property *correctly*. There are two opposing ways of explaining these dimensions of the judgment: we may make either the realist presumption that the objectivity precedes and underwrites the normativity or the idealist presumption that the normativity precedes and underwrites the objectivity. In the former case, the primary dimension of the judgment is its referential purport—what the judge is primarily *doing* is naming one of the painting’s properties, its redness. But since the question of whether or not the painting is red has nothing to do with whether it is *judged* to be red, the judgment itself could attribute the property rightly or wrongly—it is therefore subject to normative assessment on the basis of whether it attributes the property *correctly*.

In the latter case, the primary dimension of the judgment is its *normativity*. Unlike many judgments—e.g., ‘*Red on Maroon* is red to *my* eyes’—CJ is either correct or incorrect. It possesses this normativity as an

entirely independent *status* which need not have anything to do with its referential purport. But as a *consequence* of this prior status of normativity, the judge *takes* her judgment to refer to an object—this objectivity is a *product* of the fact that judgment is of the type that may be either correct or incorrect. Kant encourages us to adopt this latter presumption, arguing that we ought to take the objectivity of the judgment to be something like an outcome or reflection of the fact that it is normative—correct or incorrect according to a rule.

Famously, Kant proposes this reversal by means of a historical metaphor, partially quoted above:

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but... let us once try whether we do not get farther... by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition... This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest. (KrV.Bxvi.110).

The observer, in this metaphor, corresponds to the *judge*—specifically, for current purposes, to her normative attitude toward her own judgment—and the celestial host corresponds to the *object*. The observed phenomenon is the correlation of normativity and objectivity, which corresponds to celestial motion. Instead of presuming that we take up normative attitudes towards our judgments because they refer to objects, Kant suggests that our judgments refer to objects because we have normative attitudes about them. *We*, rather than the stars (the objects), are the one's who “move”—that is, our activity of normative assessment leads to objectivity, rather than the other way around.

3. *The Conceptuality of Normativity*

If we adopt this transcendental standpoint, then the normative standard to which an objective judgment is responsible cannot be the object to which it purports to refer—for it is objective only because we presume its responsibility to a standard in advance. But if not its object, then what *is* the standard of correctness by which judgments are normatively assessed (coming thereby to be objective)?

Since referring to an object is a reflection or consequence of being responsible to the standard (whatever it turns out to be), it follows that normativity still *correlates* with objectivity. We can therefore expect the normative standard to be found somewhere in the vicinity of the referential dimension of the judgment. Kant argues that the source of normativity in experience is found in the *concepts of the understanding* we use to determine objects, not the objects that are thereby determined. He writes:

I can assume either that the concepts through which I bring about [the] determination [of objects]... conform to the objects... or else I assume that the objects... conform to those concepts... whose rule I have to presuppose in myself... and with which [the objects] must agree.” (*KrV*.Bxvii.110 - 111).

Consider CJ. The judgment refers to an object ‘*Red on Maroon*’ and determines it under the concept ‘red’. If we assume that the judgment is normative (correct or incorrect), then the question is: how ought its correctness be assessed? The realist method is to take the object as the normative standard for assessment: *CJ* is correct just if the redness denoted by the concept really is present in the object. This means of explaining assessment is barred to Kant because it subordinates normativity to reference. The transcendental alternative is to take the *concept* ‘red’ as a normative standard that furnishes judgments that adduce it with certain requirements. *CJ* is correct if it conforms to those standards, and otherwise it is incorrect. Normativity, Kant proposes, is a *conceptual* rather than *referential* affair: a judgment is correct if it conforms to the concepts that articulate it, incorrect if it is out of step with these concepts.

For this reason, Kant holds the attributive function of concepts—their role in designating objects and properties—to be importantly secondary to the role they play in normative assessment. Concepts are primarily *rules* and only for this reason are they *names*.

We [may explain] the **understanding** [which governs concepts] in various ways—through a spontaneity of cognition... through a faculty for thinking, or a faculty of concepts, or also of judgments—which explanations, if one looks at them properly, come down to the same thing. Now we can characterize it as the **faculty of rules**. This designation is more fruitful and *comes closer to its essence*. (*KrV*.A126.242, *emphasis added*).

When a judge includes a concept of the understanding in her claim, what she is primarily doing is holding herself responsible to a rule—which *thereby* denotes an objective property.

Saying what it means for judgments to be correct according to their concepts is among the foremost of Kant’s explanatory burdens in the first *Critique*. I will provide a more detailed account of how this works in Chapter Two, but for now—and for the rest of this chapter—a few anchoring remarks should suffice.

As features of object-referring judgments, concepts of the understanding always participate in two epistemic dimensions at once: they are both *signifiers* and the objective *signifieds* those signifiers signify. The concept of ‘red’ designates both the nonlinguistic property of redness that pertains in experience to objects and the linguistic item ‘red’ that signifies this property. As objective signifieds, concepts of the understanding are

answerable to the mechanical *laws of nature* (whatever those are) that constrain objects in distinctive ways whether or not anyone ever talks about them. As linguistic signifiers, the same concepts are answerable to the grammatical *rules of language* that constrain objects just *because* we talk about them.

Since concepts are caught up in two nomological systems, a choice of priority is in order. If concepts are understood primarily as *signifieds*, and only accidentally as *signifiers*, then the nonlinguistic or “objective” laws are primitive, the grammatical laws derivative: language conforms to nature. But if concepts are primarily *signifiers*, then the linguistic or “subjective” rules are primitive, the mechanical laws derivative (which makes them no less binding): nature conforms to language, rather than the reverse. Kant’s proposal of transcendental idealism commits him to prioritizing the grammatical rules of language (whatever those are) over the mechanical laws of nature, giving language explanatory priority over objects. For, the alternative once again makes “cognition conform to the object” rather than “the object conform to cognition.” According to transcendental idealism, then, judgments are objective because they are normative and normative because they conform to concepts, while concepts primarily express the grammatical rules of language. The norms that make judgments normative, and so objective, are *linguistic norms*.²⁵

Now, these linguistic norms express not only the *syntactic* but also, and far more importantly, the *semantic* rules of language. The normative force that ‘red’ exerts with respect to CJ arises not only from its formal syntactic structure as a qualitative adjective, but also from its material content or particular *meaning*, the fact that something’s being *red* entails its being *colored*, is compatible with its being *scarlet* or *crimson*, incompatible with its being *green*, *blue*, and *yellow*. For these reasons, asserting, and so endorsing, *CJ* furnishes the subject with a certain semantic task-responsibility: it commits her to endorsing further judgments *Q* ‘Red on Maroon is colored’ and *R* ‘Red on Maroon reflects light’, entitles her to endorse *S* ‘Red on Maroon is scarlet’, and obliges her to reject incompatible commitments *T* ‘Red on Maroon is green’ and *U* ‘Red on Maroon is blue’. The general task-

²⁵ Although presenting concepts of the understanding as norms of language is anachronistic—it is not how Kant himself would present things—I think it accords with the spirit of Kant’s insight. It is because Kant privileges the normativity of the signifier over that of the signified, explaining the laws of nature in terms of the rules of language, that he is able to use the logical functions of judgment to infer the categories as the *a priori* laws of experience. These logical functions have authority over objects themselves just because they define the ways in which we are able to *signify* (represent, talk about) objects. See, *KrV*, A67/B92 - A83/B109; 204 - 214.

responsibility that anyone assumes for herself when she asserts (commits to) a judgment is to make that judgment coherent with all the other claims she endorses, accepting responsibility for instituting *unity* among her complete constellation of commitments. When the subject asserts CJ in particular, the *details* of this task-responsibility are defined by the *concept* of ‘red’ that CJ adduces. Asserting anything at all requires the subject to endorse necessary consequences and reject incompatibilities, but *which* other commitments must be endorsed and rejected are determined by the particular concepts used in the assertion.

Thus, concepts like ‘red’ and ‘green’ furnish semantic task-responsibilities for subjects who judge by means of them, and they function as normative standards just by furnishing these task-responsibilities. *P* is correct according to the concept ‘red’ just if the subject who asserts it endorses consequences like *Q* and *R*, acknowledges entitlement to claims like *S*, and rejects incompatibilities like *T* and *U*. There is much more to say on this topic, but the point to grasp here is that this *inferential* theory of conceptual correctness allows Kant to explain normativity without invoking reference: a judgment’s being correct according to its concepts is a matter of exhibiting a synthetic unity with certain *other* judgments picked out semantically by those concepts.

4. *All Subjectively Universal Norms are (Ought to Be) Concepts*

So far, we have seen that, from the point of view of transcendental idealism, judgments are objective just if they are normative and normative just if they include, and are assessed by means of, concepts of the understanding. Excluding the middle, we see that judgments are objective just because they adduce concepts. But what does it take for a judgment to adduce a concept? In other words, what conditions must be in place for some subsentential expression in a given judgment to count specifically as a concept of the understanding and not some other linguistic item? Addressing this question is important to the present inquiry because ultimately we want to be able to say what it is that makes a predicate like ‘*red*’, in CJ, count as a concept of the understanding (purporting to refer to an objective property), while the syntactically identical and cognitively similar predicate ‘*beautiful*’, in JT, does not. To be able to make this distinction, we need to be clear about how concepts are distinguished from other expressions.

To be clear about this, I will begin defend two controversial biconditional claims in turn.

- BC1. Judgments include concepts if and only if they adduce a normative standard with subjectively universal authority.
- BC2. A normative standard is subjectively universal if and only if judges *treat* them as such (in the appropriate way).

The first of these claims (BC1) hopes to link conceptuality to subjective universality (and vice versa), and the second (BC2) hopes to show subjective universality to be instituted by certain normative attitudes, namely by the subjective practice of assessing by means of the expressions that are taken to be subjectively universal standards. Together, they hope to establish that the idea of a judgment that is subjectively universal but not objective comes perilously close to a contradiction for a transcendental idealist epistemology.

The first conditional of BC1 states that if judgments include concepts, then they adduce a normative standard with a subjectively universal authority. We may get started on proving this by reviewing the two roles we have seen Kant assign to concepts of the understanding in general.

On the one hand, concepts are standards or rules by which the correctnesses of judgments are assessed,²⁶ and on the other hand, they refer to objects and attribute properties to them that would pertain even if they were not attributed.²⁷ For example, the concept *red* in ‘*Red on Maroon* is red’ both provides a standard for assessing the correctness of the judgment as a whole and refers to the *property* of redness in the painting. The proposal of transcendental idealism subordinates the first of these roles to the second, so that a concept *first of all* assesses the correctness of the judgment that includes it and *thereby* purports to refer to an independent property.

In order to play both these roles in the way that transcendental idealism requires, concepts must be normative standards of judgment that are nevertheless *independent* of the judgments they assess. That is, if a judgment becomes objective just by conforming correctly to the concept by which it is assessed, then the concept itself must likewise possess an authority that is independent of the judgment. The authority of the concept to which some judgment defers must somehow extend *beyond* the judgment in question in order to exhibit the sort of normative autonomy necessary for objective attribution. Since the concept must, in some

²⁶ *KrV*.A126.242.

²⁷ *KrV*.Bxvii.110-111 and *KrV*.A105.231-232

way, determine an *object*, while objects are designated by their opposition to, and so independence from, the subject,²⁸ the concepts, too, must be independent of the subject and her judgment.

A concept possesses this sort of normative independence just if two conditions hold. First, most obviously, the subject who judges by means of it must be obligated to defer to its standard *herself*. The concept sets normative requirements for the judgment in which it is included—determining what it would mean for the judgment to be endorsed *correctly*—and the subject defers to those standards whenever she takes her judgment as correct or incorrect on the basis of what they determine.

Second, and more importantly, the concept must be authoritative not only for the *particular* subject who judges by means of it in a given case, but also for *all* subjects who might *ever* judge by means of it. This is to say, in order for the concept to possess the sort of normative autonomy necessary for objective attribution, the judgments that adduce it must be subjectively universal. For, if only the particular subject who adduced it in a given case were answerable to the concept's authority, while no others were, then the concept would be an internal standard within only the sphere of the *judge's* subjectivity. It would be, in this way, *dependent* on her subject, lacking all independent authority. Thus, if concepts are to play both roles that Kant assigns them, then they must be normative standards not only for the *particular* judges that happen to adduce them, but also for *all* judges that might ever judge by means of them, expressing an authority that is binding for everyone. This establishes the first conditional of BC1: if a judgment includes a concept, it adduces a normative standard with a subjectively universal authority.

The second conditional of BC1 states that if a judgment adduces a subjectively universal normative standard, then it conforms to a *concept*. I take this more controversial claim to follow from some of the most distinctive and seminal features of transcendental idealism. According to the thesis, as I have presented it, judgments are objective just because they are normative, and being normative, we have seen, is a matter of conforming to some standard of correctness: a judgment is normative just if it is answerable to such a standard, and it is correct if it conforms to what the standard requires. Thus, while the thesis of transcendental idealism does not necessarily imply that *every* normative standard confers objectivity on the judgments that conform to

²⁸ *KrV*.A104-A105.231

it, it does require that being an objective judgment is a consequence of conforming to some sort of normative standard. We know from the first side of BC1 that the normative standard to which an objective judgment conforms must be subjectively universal—commanding an authority that is binding for everyone—but, in fact, commanding such a universal authority is the *only* trait that may distinguish this standard as a specifically objective one.

For, if we are to take transcendental idealism seriously, then the only mark that may distinguish a judgment as objective (rather than subjective) must appear within the type and range of the *authority* it wields—that is what it means to prioritize normativity over objectivity. The authority of the standard that a judgment adduces may be of only one of two types: it may be binding *only* for the subject who currently adduces it, or it may be binding for *everyone*. We know, of course, that the standard must be binding for everyone if it is to be objectivating for the judgments that adduce it, but the point is that, under transcendental idealism, this is the *only* mark of its objectivating force. Attempting to identify any other feature of the normative standard as the cause of its objectivity is attempting to locate this cause outside the type and range of its authority, and transcendental idealism requires that we suppose objectivity to be an exclusive consequence of its normativity—a reflection of the *type* of authority a claim wields.

Kant makes this point, perhaps most strikingly, in the A Deduction, when he writes:

...our thought of the relation of all cognition to its object... is regarded as that which is opposed to our cognitions being determined at pleasure or arbitrarily rather than [in accordance with a rule], since insofar as they are to relate to an object our cognitions must also necessarily agree with each other in relation to it, i.e., they must have that unity that constitutes the *concept of an object*... Hence we say that we cognize the object if we have effected... synthesis *in accordance with a rule*[.] (KrV.A105.231, *emphasis added*).

As I understand him, what Kant is attempting to convey here is that some judgment's "accordance with a rule" (its normativity) is what we really *mean* when we designate its objectivity. "*We say* we cognize an object" just if we take our judgment to be compelled by a rule—rather than made "at pleasure or arbitrarily." The objectivity of the judgment is just a *status* that the judgment achieves when it is rule-bound in the appropriate way. In order to take our judgments to be legitimately rule-bound, however—so that it is not *we* but the *rule* that compels them—we must take the authority of the rules that bind them to ground their authority outside us. They must be independent, and so binding for everyone. I take Kant to be reaffirming the primary position of

transcendental idealism here: being bound by an independent, and so subjectively universal, rule is all that referring to an object strictly involves.

From this, we must infer the (initially disturbing) conclusion that subjective universality is the sole mark of objectivity in experience, so that if a judgment adduces a subjectively universal standard of correctness, then it adduces a concept. This completes the proof of both sides of BC1, but before moving on to BC2, it is important to mark the important line that has just been crossed. I have attempted to link three terms very closely: objectivity, conceptuality, and subjective universality. A judgment is objective if and only if it is conceptual, conceptual if and only if it is subjectively universal, and therefore objective if and only if it is subjectively universal. At least two “red flags” may be raised at this point.

First, we know already that there is at least one type of judgment that is subjectively universal but *not* objective, namely, the judgment of taste, and so my conclusion appears incorrect *prima facie*. Second, linking objectivity so closely to subjective universality seems to go against the basic idea of objectivity. As Kant puts it, “an object [is something] corresponding to and therefore also *distinct from* [one’s] cognition [of it]” (*KrV*.A104.231, *emphasis added*). It comes perilously close to a contradiction, then, to identify subjective universality as the sole mark of judgments whose referents are defined by their *extra*-subjective character.

In response to the first concern, I will simply concede the issue: judgments of taste are indeed subjectively universal without being objective. But my point is that, if we adopt the standpoint of transcendental idealism, then all subjectively universal judgments *ought* to be objective as well. This is what we have the right to *expect*. If objectivity and subjective universality are to become disjoined in the judgment of taste, then some sort positive of interference is required. As for the second concern, I take addressing it to be a major project of Kant’s first *Critique*. Although we are acquainted only with our own representations (appearances), Kant wants to tell us a story about how we could ever legitimately judge those representations to have an extra-representational referent. I am suggesting that representing their subjective universality is the most important part of how that works.

5. *Subjective Universality is Instituted by a Normative Attitude*

The last subsection showed every judgment that adduces a subjectively universal normative standard adduces a *concept of the understanding* and is (ought to be), for this reason, objective. The next question is: How are subjectively universal normative standards instituted in judgments? What does a judge have to do in order for her judgment to be thereby adducing a normative? The answer, I contend, is to correctly *treat* some subsentential element of her judgment *as* such a standard. The normative attitude involved in appropriately *treating* subsentential expressions *as* concepts is what gives those expressions the normative authority characteristic of concepts. To defend this conclusion (which has obviously troubling consequences for Kant's theory of taste), it will be sufficient to justify BC2 from above.

BC2 states that a normative standard is subjectively universal if and only if judges *treat* it as such (in the appropriate way). Both sides of this claim may be defended together. The idea is that actually *being* a normative standard is a consequence of being *taken* as one: the normative attitudes that judges exhibit toward the conceptual standards to which they hold their judgments responsible play an essential role in actually *instituting* those standards. What this means, downstream, is that, in typical circumstances, the subjective normative attitude of *taking* a judgment *as* subjectively universal, deferring to an expression it includes as a standard of correctness and demanding that others do so as well, is enough to make the judgment conceptual and so (purportedly) objective. This conclusion follows as a further consequence of transcendental idealism.

The first point to grasp is that *every* normative standard is tied essentially, not accidentally, to the subjective practice of assessing by means of it. The basic function of a norm is to provide criteria for determining whether a given judgment is correct or incorrect. So far, we have considered two kinds of norms: the objects themselves and the subsentential expressions (concepts) that refer to them. Objects function as norms by exhibiting a certain set of properties which is equally a set *criteria* for assessing correctnesses by means of correspondence: the judgments that attribute properties present in the object are correct; those that do not are not. The way in which concepts function as norms has yet to be fully explored, but we may expect a similar structure: the expression designates some set of criteria; judgments that conform to these criteria are correct; those that do not are not. In both cases, the presence of the norm (either as object or as concept) presupposes

the possibility of *assessing* by means of it, the practice of actually *employing* the norm to distinguish correct from incorrect judgments.

Whether we choose the object or the concept as the norm (adopting either a realist or idealist standpoint), the practice of *assessing* a judgment by its means is irreducibly *subjective*. Even if we take the standard of correctness to be outside us (the object), the practice of deferring to it *as* a standard occurs only when the *subject* judges that object and assesses her claim by its means. *We* are the ones who judge, and so *we* are the one's concerned with doing so correctly. If the norm is essentially, not accidentally, a standard by which correctnesses may be determined, while such standards are essentially, not accidentally, related to the subjective practice of assessing by means of them, then the subjective *practice* of normative assessment is an essential, not an accidental, part of actually *being* a norm. This is to say, the subject's normative *attitude* of treating some item (an object or expression) as a norm, assessing the correctness of her judgment by its means, is an essential part of that item's actually *being* a norm.

Now, whereas from a realist point of view, the subject's practices of normative assessment play no role in establishing the existence or structure of the norms (namely, of the objects themselves), from a critical idealist viewpoint these practices *do* play such a role, functioning to *institute* the very norms (concepts) by which they assess. Kant acknowledges this instituting role of assessment most conspicuously in his early treatment of the faculty of the understanding:

...the cognition of every, at least human, understanding is a cognition through concepts... Concepts are therefore grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, as sensible intuitions are grounded on the receptivity of impressions. *Now the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them.* (KrV.A68/B93.205).

Concepts, Kant explains, are “functions”—they are tied essentially to how they are *used*. Grounded on the spontaneity of thinking, concepts are nothing other than what the subject *does* with them, so that if she did not do anything with them, they would not be at all. As the emphasized sentence conveys, the only action the subject can use concepts to perform is *judgment*. She uses concepts as the functions they essentially are by “judging by means of them.” To judge by means of a concept, we have seen, is to *defer* to that concept as a subjectively universal standard of correctness. When the subject employs a concept to “order different

representations under a common one,” asserting a judgment, she includes that concept within her claim and defers to it as the normative standard by which not only her judgment, but everyone’s, is correct or incorrect.

The point I take Kant to be making here is that this *subjective* practice of judging by means of concepts plays an essential role in the *existence* of the very concepts by means of which the subject judges. By treating a certain linguistic element *as* a concept, taking it as a standard for evaluating the correctness of her claim as a whole, the subject *institutes* the conceptuality of that element. The normative attitude of treating a subsentential element *as* a norm—by deferring to it as a standard—acts to *institute* the normativity of that element.

Whereas from the realist standpoint, the subject’s treatment of the *object* as a normative standard did not institute the existence of that object, from the critical idealist point of view, the subject’s treatment of the *concept* as such a standard *does* institute the existence of that concept. For, any normative standard is tied essentially, not accidentally, to subjective practices of normative assessment, but, whereas objects are only *accidentally* normative standards (being so *for us* but not *in themselves*), concepts are so *essentially*. To be a concept is to be a function of judgment; to be such a function is to be a standard of normative assessment; and to be a norm is to be *treated* as one. Before the Copernican Turn, we are beholden to laws whose authority rests outside us—in the objectivity of the object. After, we are beholden only to those laws that we ourselves institute—*our* deferential attitudes *towards* the laws are what make the laws the laws.

In the following section, I will contend that Kant’s iconic reversal of the priority of normative statuses and normative attitudes is incompatible with the possibility of the judgment of taste *unless* we admit the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement. Before making this case, I will deal briefly with the most obvious criticism of Kant’s reversal.

Namely, since I have argued that, for Kant, judgments refer to objects if and only if they are subjectively universal and subjectively universal just if the subject appropriately *treats* them as such, it seems that I have effectively based objectivity in arbitrary subjective choice. If referring to an object is ultimately a matter of appropriately exhibiting certain normative deferential attitudes, then it seems the subject can capriciously *decide* to exhibit those attitudes whenever she pleases, so that what is and is not an object becomes a direct function of her inclinations. Any epistemic theory that makes objects reflections of subjective preferences has not

accounted for anything worthy of the name ‘object’—since an object is supposed to oppose the subject and be indifferent to whether or not she represents it. Transcendental idealism (as I have construed it) seems, therefore, to have reached a point of absurdity. This objection requires two responses.

First, the cognitive process by which the subject adopts a normative deferential attitude toward some element of her judgment, deferring to it as a standard of correctness and thereby making her claim objective, is a matter not of *choice* but of discursive *commitment*, which is itself the outcome of apperception. I will discuss the master process of transcendental apperception in the next chapter, but, in outline, the subject *commits* to the correctness of a novel judgment (deferring to one of its elements as a conceptual standard) whenever she determines that her total system of existing commitments could not retain the synthetic unity it requires to conform to her *own* analytic identity of herself with herself. The regulative necessity that motivates any particular commitment to the correctness of any *individual* judgment is always funded by, and based in, the broader *metacommitment* that the subject has to representing *herself* as an analytic unity. Thus, the particular normative attitude that the subject adopts with respect to any one of her judgments (taking it to be correct or incorrect) is always driven by the broader *meta*-attitude she has about *herself* as a self-identical subjectivity with a capacity for apperception. Again, this will all get a fuller treatment in the following chapter, but the basic point here is just that the subject’s normative attitudes are no more arbitrary or capricious than is her commitment to herself as an analytic unity. If self-recognition is necessary, then so are all the particular normative attitudes that it funds.

Second, just as the subject can be incorrect about whether or not her judgment conforms to the conceptual standard by which she assesses it, so too can she be incorrect about whether or not it is appropriate to *treat* a certain subsentential element *as* a conceptual standard at all. That is, normative attitudes, no less than judgments, can be *wrong*. Consider the example of Phlogiston Theory, which held that combustible bodies burned because they contained a substance known as phlogiston and ceased burning either when they had released all their phlogiston or when the surrounding air could absorb no more of it. Under this theory, the judgment ‘This body contains phlogiston’ is assessed according to the linguistic item ‘phlogiston’, which counts as a conceptual standard, so that the judgment is correct or incorrect on the basis of the concept’s regime. But,

later, when Phlogiston Theory was denied altogether, it was taken to have always been *incorrect* to assess judgments by means of the linguistic item ‘phlogiston’—this item ceased to count as a *concept* in the strong sense, and the new item, ‘oxygen’, came to be treated as the concept by which combustion-related judgments ought to be assessed. The *attitudes* that instituted ‘phlogiston’ as a conceptual standard were judged to be incorrectly held from the standpoint of the attitudes that instituted ‘oxygen’ as such a standard. The point here is simply that normative attitudes are never incorrigible—one can always be *wrong* about them. Thus, even if we accept Kant’s claim that subjective normative attitudes are ultimately what confer objectivity on judgments, this does not mean that the subject has free reign over what counts as an object: not only are the attitudes non-arbitrary; they are also themselves *assessable*. That said, if we are again to avoid inadvertently bankrupting the theory of transcendental idealism, we must accept that conceptual standards may only ever be rejected on the basis of *other* conceptual standards—not on the basis of their failure to conform to the object—and that means, ultimately, that normative attitudes are assessed only by *other* normative attitudes. There is no flat background of reality on whose basis all subjective attitudes could be placed into doubt together, but any one attitude may be assessed on the basis of others.²⁹

III. The Necessary Possibility of Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement

The foregoing treatment of transcendental idealism has concluded in the following claim: if the subject treats her judgment as being subjectively universal in the appropriate way, then her judgment is objective. The subjective practice of assessing a given judgment by means of a normative conceptual standard, which practice also *institutes* that standard, has the result of conferring objectivity on that judgment, so that it purports to refer to an object. This means that any judgment for which the subject may appropriately demand universal agreement *ought* to be objective. In the judgment of taste, however, we observe a case in which it is appropriate to demand universal agreement for a claim that is *not* thereby objectivated. The entire task is to discover how such a disjunction of subjective universality and objectivity could be possible. Discovering the source of this disjunction is equivalent to uncovering the transcendental ground of the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure

²⁹ This is to say, Kant’s priority of normative attitudes over conceptuality precludes anything like wholesale Cartesian doubt about *all* our commitments. One commitment must always be doubted from the standpoint of others.

because it explains why beauty is not an objective property. This disjunction, I contend, arises from the necessary possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement.

1. *The Attitude of Subjective Universality vs. The Status of Conceptuality*

Consider again the two judgments about *Red on Maroon* and recall their similar traits.

1. *Red on Maroon* is red (CJ)
2. *Red on Maroon* is beautiful (JT)

CJ is a cognitive judgment that attributes a property to an object that would pertain even if it were not attributed, while JT is a judgment of taste avowing a subjective feeling which occurs only through the execution of the judgment itself. I assume that JT is a *pure* and *successful* judgment of taste, based in no interest of the judging subject. Thus, as discussed above, both judgments are subjectively universal, rightfully demanding agreement from everyone, and, further, both are based in subjective cognitive processes: CJ in the perception of redness and the conception of the concept of redness, JT in the feeling of cognitive freeplay. Nevertheless, CJ is objective, while JT is merely aesthetic. Why? What makes the difference?

The foregoing treatment of transcendental idealism and its consequences should show the standard answer to this question to be entirely untenable. It is no longer acceptable to state that, while both judgments are based in sensations only *one* of these sensations (that of redness) happens to have an objective referent. Such an answer presupposes a capacity on the part of the subject to pick-out objects from non-objects *in advance* of judging them, so that she can distinguish which of her judgments are objective simply by *stipulating* which of them are based in sensations with correlates in the objects which have been picked out in advance. Transcendental idealism makes this kind of stipulative solution untenable because it holds objectivity to be a reflection of certain structural features of judgment itself—one cannot pick out the objects prior to judging them because objects are *at all* only because they are judged in a certain way. Specifically, a judgment refers to an object just because it is normative; it is normative just because it contains concepts; and it contains concepts just because the judge appropriately defers to some of its elements as subjectively universal standards of correctness for the judgment as a whole. One cannot distinguish a subjectively universal and objective judgment (CJ) from a subjectively universal and aesthetic judgment (JT) by stipulating that the former contains a concept

and so refers to an object, while the latter does not, because transcendental idealism holds that judgments contain concepts and refer to objects just *because* they are appropriately taken to be subjectively universal.

To work toward a means of distinguishing objective judgments from subjectively universal but aesthetic ones in a way consistent with transcendental idealism, I'd like to begin by distinguishing *subjective universality* from *conceptuality* on the basis of their discursive pragmatic roles. Subjective universality, I'd like to suggest, always denotes a normative *attitude*, while conceptuality designates the normative *status* that this attitude typically institutes. As discussed, the subject exhibits a normative attitude whenever she engages in practices of normative assessment, taking some given judgment to be correct or incorrect on the basis of a rule. A normative status, by contrast, designates both the presence of the rule according to which the judgment is assessed and the verdict that it renders. Statuses are like *properties* of the judgment, designating whether or not the judgment contains and so adduces a rule. Whereas attitudes designate the way the judgment is *treated*, statuses designate something about the way the judgment *is*.

Now, whenever Kant uses the term 'subjectively universal' to characterize some judgment, typically the judgment of taste, he is very careful to include qualifying language signalling that this designation standardly pertains not as a *status* to the judgment itself but as a normative *attitude* to the subject who asserts it. The signal term is usually the verb 'to demand' [*fordern*]. To select several exemplary passages, Kant writes:

...if [the subject] pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Hence he says that the **thing** is beautiful, and does not count on the agreement of others with his judgment of satisfaction because he has frequently found them to be agreeable with his own, but rather *demands* [*fordert*] it from them. (KU.5:213.98, *emphasis added*)

...the taste of reflection, which, as experience teaches, is often enough rejected in its claim to the universal validity of its judgment (about the beautiful), can nevertheless find it possible (as it also actually does) to represent judgments that could *demand* [*fordern*] such assent universally, and does in fact expect it of everyone for each of its judgments[.] (KU.5:214.99, *emphasis added*)

The obligation to provide a deduction... of a kind of judgment arises only if the judgment makes a claim to necessity, which is the case even if it *demands* [*fordert*] subjective universality, i.e., the assent of all, in spite of the fact that it is not a judgment of cognition, but only of the pleasure or displeasure in a given object. (KU.5:280.161, *emphasis added*)

In these passages and others,³⁰ Kant figures the subjective universality of the judgment of taste, not as a descriptive property of the judgment itself, but as a demand issued by the one who judges. To define a judgment correctly as subjectively universal is neither to insist that everyone actually *does* agree with it nor even (importantly) that everyone *ought* to agree with it. It is, rather, just to state that it is correct for the subject who asserts the judgment to *demand* unanimous assent—subjective universality designates the sort of *attitude* that accompanies the judgment. So if a judgment is subjectively universal, then it is appropriate for the subject who asserts it to demand unanimous assent, and a judgment qualifies as subjectively universal just if this demand is correct.

By contrast, the question of any judgment's *conceptuality*—that is, of whether or not it contains concepts—is always a question of its *status*. This is so, first of all, because the conceptuality of a judgment is matter of its assemblage—it is not immediately a question of how the subject *treats* the judgment but of which bits of cognitive stuff the judgment itself contains. Now, it remains true that, in standard cases, some cognitive element counts as a concept just *because* the judge exhibits a certain attitude towards it, deferring to it as a normative standard. But while this attitude *institutes* the concept, the concept itself must be something separate from the instituting attitude—otherwise this attitude would not have instituted anything. Moreover, other than conferring normativity on the judgments in which it is included, the other role of any concept, as we know, is to refer to an object—something that is supposed to be separate from, and indifferent to, the subject and all her attitudes. Hence, if a concept is to perform this objectivating function for the judgments that adduce it, then it must be separate and independent from the normative attitudes of assessment that institute it, pertaining as a *status* to the judgment.

Thus, *subjective universality* describes the normative attitude that the subject exhibits when she issues a certain sort of judgment and *conceptuality* describes the normative status of the judgment that is thereby issued. In typical circumstances, any judgment that the subject correctly treats as subjectively universal (by deferring to one of its elements as a standard) is also conceptual, precisely because it is the appropriate exhibition of this attitude that typically institutes the status of conceptuality. But in the judgment of taste we of course find an

³⁰ See also, *KU.5:239.124*; *KU.5:278.159*; *KU.5:297.176*; *KU.5:351.225*.

example of a judgment that the subject appropriately treats as subjectively universal but that is *not*, for this reason, conceptual. The subject is *right* to demand universal agreement, but the judgment does not thereby accrue the status of conceptuality. Some sort of block or disjunction has arisen between the instituting attitude (subjective universality) and the instituted status (conceptuality). What is this block and how does it arise?

2. *Inhibiting the Institution of Concepts*

What primarily distinguishes the normative status of conceptuality from the normative attitude of subjective universality is the fact that the former involves objective reference. Every judgment that contains concepts refers to an object; no judgment refers to an object unless it contains concepts. The content of what the normative attitude of subjective universality institutes in a judgment, whenever it institutes conceptuality, is its dimension of objective reference. Thus, to ask how there could be a block between the normative attitude of subjective universality and the normative status of conceptuality is to wonder how the judge could legitimately defer to some subsentential element of her claim as a normative standard for everyone without, through the correct exhibition of this attitude, making it the case that her judgment refers to an object.

Now, somewhat paradoxically, we have seen, this one trait that conceptual judgments exhibit which merely subjectively universal judgments lack (namely, objectivity) is itself a *reflection* of nothing other than subjective universality—or at least this is what the proposal of transcendental idealism holds. The process that makes any item a concept is the subject's treatment of it as a subjectively universal standard, the exhibition of the very normative attitude that the concept is also supposed to exceed. The way the concept exceeds the normative attitude that it reflects and by which it is instituted is by conferring upon the judgment as a normative *status* the very subjective universality that originally characterized only the instituting *attitude*. In other words, while a judgment is validly called subjectively universal just if the judge's demand for unanimous agreement is correct (that is, just if the exhibition of her *attitude* is legitimate), a judgment is validly called conceptual just if its authority *really is* subjectively universal (that is, if it legitimately expresses subjective universality as a *status*). In the one case, it is legitimate for the subject to *treat* the judgment as being valid for everyone (demanding universal assent); in the other, the judgment *is* valid for everyone (the unanimous assent will be conferred whether or not it is demanded).

Kant makes this distinction between conceptuality (the *status* of subjective universality) and mere subjective universality (the *attitude* of the same) by introducing two terms of art, ‘postulation’ and ‘ascription’, writing:

Now here it can be seen that in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated except... a **universal voice** with regard to satisfaction without the mediation of concepts... The judgment of taste does not itself **postulate** the accord of everyone (only a logically universal judgment can do that, since it can adduce grounds); it only **ascribes** this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule with regard to which it expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others. (KU.5:216.101).

In the case of the judgment of taste (a *merely* subjectively universal claim), the subject has the authority to speak with a “universal voice,” appropriately *taking* her judgment *as* subjectively universal, and this involves “ascribing” agreement to everyone. It is only the subject’s *attitude* towards the judgment that is legitimate. In the case of any cognitive judgment, the judgment itself *is* subjectively universal, since it is based in concepts, so that the subject may “postulate”—in the sense of *assume*—unanimous accord. This is to say, whenever the subject judges cognitively, and does so correctly, it is the case that everyone actually *does* agree with her.

Importantly, this does not mean that no empirical situation will ever arise in which some individual *appears* to herself to disagree with a correct cognitive judgment, but no one ever *really* does in the strong rational sense. For example, a student might *think* she disagrees with the claim that ‘The angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees in Euclidean space’, but to demonstrate that she does not dispute this point in reality, we need only interrogate her own commitments about figures in space in general, showing her that she has always already believed rationally what she currently takes herself to dispute. So for subjective universality to apply legitimately to a judgment as a *status*, so that everyone in reality *does* agree with it, unanimous assent in all empirical circumstances is not necessary or even strictly relevant. All that is necessary is that everyone agrees *rationally* (so that they also *ought* to agree empirically), whether they know it or not.³¹

³¹ To agree rationally with a claim that one disputes empirically is to be in the state of Callicles in Plato’s *Gorgias* when Socrates shows him that, while he *thinks* he believes it is better to do than to suffer injustice, he does not *really* believe this. For, he has previously endorsed commitments that are incompatible with it. It is not only that it *is* incorrect to believe that doing justice is better than suffering it; it is also that Callicles *himself* rejects this distribution—although he does not appear to himself to do so. To indicate this distinction between what Callicles *appears* to himself to believe and what he *really* believes (rationally), Socrates says to him: “...Callicles will not agree with you, Callicles, but will be dissonant with you all your life long” (Plato, 482b; 827). Kant takes over this distinction between apparent and real belief under the banner of his is/ought distinction. The reason someone *ought* to believe only what is rationally correct—no matter what they happen to endorse in actual experience—is because, in an important sense, one *really does* always

The upshot of all this is that conceptuality is conferred upon a judgment whenever subjective universality is instituted in it as a *status* through the appropriate exhibition of the *attitude* of the same. Conceptual judgments express as a status what the subject of a merely subjectively universal judgment exhibits as an attitude. Thus, if a subjectively universal but nonconceptual judgment such as the judgment of taste is to occur, then it must somehow be possible for the subject to appropriately *treat* her claim *as if* everyone agreed with it (so that her demand for unanimous assent is legitimate) without it thereby being the case that everyone actually *does* (or even *ought to*) agree with it. The exhibition of the instituting *attitude* of subjective universality must somehow be correct without thereby actually instituting the *status* of subjective universality. How, and in what circumstances, could this sort of disjunction arise?

3. *The Necessary Possibility of Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement*

If the judgment of taste is to be subjectively universal without for this reason being conceptual, where conceptuality just marks the achievement of subjective universality as a *status*, rather than an appropriate *attitude*, then—I contend—genuine aesthetic disagreement must be possible. This is to say, it must be possible for two people to genuinely disagree about the pure aesthetic value of an object, one affirming its beauty, the other denying it, each demanding agreement from the other, and both doing so *correctly*. In such a case, one person (e.g., Pinter, to return to the original example) issues a positive aesthetic judgment about an object (*Blasted*), ‘*Blasted* is beautiful’, while the other (Tinker), issues a negative aesthetic judgment about the same object, ‘*Blasted* is ugly.’ Pinter defers to the the predicate ‘*beautiful*’ as a subjectively universal standard of correctness to which his judgment conforms, while Tinker adopts the same attitude with respect to the incompatible predicate ‘*ugly*.’ Both normative attitudes are correct and yet each is incompatible with the other.

already believe only the rational truths. One’s highest metacommitment to the synthetic unity of one’s system of judgments has already committed one to belief in these rational truths, so that learning (recollection, as Plato calls it) is really a process of uncovering what one is, and has always already been, committed to. The point here, then, is that one can *postulate* agreement with a claim, rather than merely *ascribe* it, whenever one correctly takes it to be the case that agreement is rationally compulsory, so that everyone *really does* agree, no matter what they happen to think. Conversely, it follows that when only the mere ascription of universal agreement to a certain claim is possible, agreement is *not* rationally compulsory: it is *not* the case, in this situation, that everyone *really does* (even in the sense of *ought to*) agree. Nevertheless, the ascription of agreement remains somehow appropriate because the *attitude* of the ascribing individual is correct.

If this sort of conflict can occur, then we may readily understand how a subjectively universal but nonconceptual judgment like the judgment of taste is possible under the proposal of transcendental idealism. For, on the one hand, if the subject may legitimately demand that all must agree with her claim, appropriately deferring to an element of her judgment as a standard of normative assessment, then the judgment passes the test of subjective universality—the relevant normative attitude is exhibited *correctly*. But, on the other hand, if it is possible for the subject of an *incompatible* judgment on the same topic to legitimately demand unanimous agreement for *his* claim, so that his deferral to an element of this incompatible judgment as a standard of correctness is *also* appropriate, then the normative attitude that the original subject exhibits towards *her* claim, no matter how correct, cannot possibly institute conceptuality in the judgment. That is, the standard to which she defers cannot possibly be a concept with an objective referent.

For, a judgment is conceptual, we have seen, just if subjective universality applies not only as an *attitude* to the subject who issues it, but also as a *status* to the judgment itself, so that, in this case, it is not only that the subject's *demand* for unanimous agreement is correct, but also, more radically, that everyone *will* (rationally *ought to*) agree—whether or not individuals in particular empirical circumstances know it or not. Since no judgment that contains concepts brooks genuine disagreement, it follows that the possibility of genuine *aesthetic* disagreement would block the conceptuality of the judgment of taste while at the same time preserving its subjective universality. If genuine aesthetic disagreement is possible—if individuals can exhibit incompatible but equally binding normative attitudes with respect to the aesthetic value of the same object—then the judgment of taste is perfectly coherent with the proposal of transcendental idealism.

Furthermore, given the way I have interpreted conceptuality and objectivity, it follows that the judgment of taste *cannot* be coherent with the master proposal of transcendental idealism *unless* genuine aesthetic disagreement is possible. For, as I have construed matters, a judgment refers to an object just if, and just because, it contains and adduces a concept (a norm), and it contains a concept just if subjective universality pertains to it as a status, and not merely to the judging subject as an attitude—so that everyone *will* rationally agree with it. The only normative judgments that may be nonconceptual, then, are those that allow for genuine disagreement.

Genuine disagreements are conflicts that arise not from a lack of mutual understanding (a failure on the part of one or both parties to sufficiently grasp the concept to which both are committed rationally), but from a genuine difference in subjective standpoint—the object of dispute *really is* incompatibly different for the two subject-perspectives; neither judges incorrectly. Since a judgment adduces concepts just if subjective universality pertains to it as a status, the only way to deny a judgment’s conceptuality is to deny that everyone *will* rationally agree with it, thereby affirming the possibility of genuine disagreement with respect to it. Thus, while judges of taste are right to *demand* agreement from everyone—and while that demand is indeed binding for those on whom it is made—it must nevertheless be possible that someone might appropriately *withhold* the legitimately demanded assent.

The only way to make a subjectively universal but nonconceptual judgment, such as the judgment of taste, coherent with transcendental idealism and its downstream consequences, then, is to accept that the subject may appropriately *treat* her judgment as subjectively universal without thereby instituting subjective universality in the judgment as a status, so that genuine disagreement with respect to it remains possible. The point, then, is not that an aesthetic theory that both makes subjectively universal judgments of beauty nonconceptual and precludes genuine aesthetic disagreement is contradictory *in itself*; it is just that we could not possibly attribute such a theory to the author of the first *Critique*.

To return one final time to the judgments about *Red on Maroon*, we may ultimately distinguish between CJ (*Red on Maroon is red*) and JT (*Red on Maroon is beautiful*) on the basis of each claim’s relation to genuine disagreement. There may be empirical (artificial) cases of disagreement with respect to CJ, but ultimately everyone agrees with it rationally (if it is in fact correct). But it is embedded in the structure of JT—in its very possibility—that someone else might view the very same painting and legitimately insist that it is ugly. If someone were to do so, one might never discern whether the emergent aesthetic disagreement really is genuine (it could be based in an interest after all), but the constant possibility that it *could* be genuine is structurally necessary to the very idea of a pure aesthetic judgment of reflection.

Genuine aesthetic disagreement, then, finally emerges as the transcendental ground of the exclusive subjectivity of pleasure: even the cognitive pleasure we feel when we judge an object beautiful (and do so purely)

cannot correlate with a property in that object because it is necessarily possible that someone *else* might experience the cognitive *displeasure* of ugliness through her judgment of the very same object.

IV. Conclusion: Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement and the Differend

I hope to have shown here that Kant's theory of taste and his master thesis of transcendental idealism are compatible with one another only if we admit the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement. But while I take myself to have proven *that* such disagreement is necessarily possible, it is important to realize that I have not yet said anything about *how* it is so. The rest of this dissertation will be entirely devoted to addressing this question, namely: *How are genuine aesthetic disagreements possible?* That is, how are equally appropriate but opposing *demands* for agreement about the beauty or ugliness of the same object possible? But before pursuing an answer to this question, allow me to conclude here by underscoring the stakes of the inquiry.

1. *The Danger of Taste, the Range of 'Us'*

While a child or a politician might petulantly “demand” something she is not in any position to make anyone give her, a real demand is always paired with an at least implicit threat—a consequence that will befall the one who refuses to acquiesce. Conversely, anyone who issues a demand does so in a state of duress—one demands only what one cannot *command* the addressee to bestow. Both the one who makes the demand and the one on whom it is made are exposed to one another—vulnerable, mutually threatened. Workers may demand that their bosses pay higher wages, threatening to strike if the request is denied. A wife may demand that her husband treat her more kindly, threatening a divorce if he refuses. Both the workers and the wife speak because they *must* speak, because the addressee has made the situation intolerable. Neither can order their addressees to acquiesce—there are no standard or reliable ways to bring about the desired end. Nevertheless, each believes there is a way to threaten their addressee into compliance, and so—while a command is out of the question—each party is in a position to make a demand. Judges of taste demand universal assent, and we have seen that this demand is in fact legitimate. What, then, is the threat that it implies? In what way are mutually conflicted judges of taste vulnerable to one another?

Whenever an individual asserts a pure and disinterested judgment of taste, of either a positive or negative value, he correctly demands agreement from all beings falling within the range of a certain quantifier,

namely, ‘everyone’. Despite the universality of this quantifier, the sphere of entities it quantifies does not include everything in the universe, but rather everything falling within a particular class of things. As Kant puts it, “the aesthetic universality that is ascribed to a judgment... extends... over the whole sphere of **those who judge**” (KU.5:215.100). The class of ‘everyone’ includes all and only those who have a capacity for judgment. Thus, the authority of a judge’s demand for unanimous assent in his claim of taste extends to all those with this capacity, but it lacks authority for anything without it—it is in no way binding, e.g., for dogs, cats, insects, or animals of any kind; it is nothing to computers, tables, chairs, or to any other denizen of the inanimate world.

The capacity for judgment is, according to Kant, the faculty most specifically associated with *subjectivity*. Unlike the faculties of “understanding and reason [which] relate their representations to objects, in order to acquire concepts of them, *the power of judgment is related solely to the subject*” (KU.20:208.12—*emphasis added*). To be capable of judgment is to be distinct as a subjectivity from anything describable in objective terms, and to be a subject is to be capable of judgment. Thus, the sphere of ‘everyone’ extends to all and only those in possession of subjectivity. Typically, subjectivity is thought to exactly correlate with humanity (every human being counts as a subject, and nothing else does), but the constellation of constraints at play here enables a more precise definition: a subject is anything quantified by the term ‘everyone’, anything on whom judgments of taste are binding, any entity with a capacity to judge. The class of ‘everyone’ could be broader than that of humanity—including space aliens, artificial intelligences, and other types of animals. But it could also be narrower—including some but not all human beings.

A certain means of accounting for the genuine aesthetic disagreement between Pinter and Tinker is now clearly available. If it were to turn out that one of the parties embroiled in the conflict did not legitimately fall within the range of the quantifier ‘everyone’ (over whose sphere alone the demand for agreement is authoritative), if one party or another were not really *one of us*, then the incompatibility of the judgments would become readily explicable. If Pinter were not properly a subject, despite his being a human being, then he would no longer fall within the sphere of entities over whom Tinker’s pure negative judgment of taste has authority, so that his own positive “judgment” (which would no longer count as such) would be perfectly compatible with

its opposite. Conversely, of course, if it is Tinker, not Pinter, who lacks a capacity for judgment—falling outside the range of ‘everyone’—then the same diffusion of the conflict occurs, but this time in Pinter’s favor.

The system of constraints on the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement prohibits all the most obvious means of explaining any such conflict. To appeal to an underlying interest is to reject the hypothesis that the disagreement is genuine. To appeal to a difference in the object or in the facultative constitution of the judging parties is to reject the very possibility of an objective world of experience. The only slack in the conditions of the problem is in the range of the quantifier ‘everyone’. Neither any epistemic principle of transcendental idealism nor any aesthetic principle of taste requires everyone one who *takes* himself as a subjectivity to actually *be* such—some of us could be just pretending. If a genuine aesthetic disagreement were ever to be resolved, one party triumphing over the other, it would be by *excluding* the defeated opponent from the legitimate range of the quantifier. It would be as if the victorious party said to the other: “I am a self-conscious subjectivity with cognitive faculties and a capacity to speak in the place of everyone; *you* are a dying animal.”

What each opponent in a genuine aesthetic disagreement threatens the other with is exclusion from the class of ‘everyone’—the delegitimation of his subjectivity. By extending his demand for universal agreement across the entire sphere of subjectivity, every judge of taste implicitly makes a claim about what it takes to count as ‘anyone’—one who judges, a subject. All those capable of agreement fall within this sphere; anything incapable of this agreement falls outside it, counting as no one. In asserting a judgment of taste—in even taking oneself as a being *capable* of doing so—each individual attempts to determine the class of ‘everyone’ in the image of her own pleasure, on the one hand, and, on the other, exposes herself to the risk of being excluded from this very class.

Since the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement follows necessarily from the possibility of the judgment of taste, each of us always runs the risk of epistemic exclusion whenever we call something beautiful. It is necessarily possible that an opponent could genuinely disagree with our assessment, and, if the conflict were somehow legitimately decided in this opponent’s favor, we would no longer count as ‘anyone.’ Thus, both the *threat* that backs up the demand for universal agreement and the *danger* in virtue of which the demand is

made pertain to the meaning the term ‘us.’ Every judge of taste speaks from a position of possible exclusion from this group, implicitly attempting to determine the subjective community as one that includes all and only those who feel the pleasure she does. And, in speaking, she menaces all others who call themselves *one of us*, threatening each with exclusion from the community she determines in the image of her own pleasure. The danger on whose basis the threat is made is composed of the threats posed by everyone else but each threat is only ever made in response to that very same danger. Every judge of taste is constantly at work staking an exclusionary claim on the meaning of us—but only because everyone else is doing the same.

2. *The Differend and the Undecidability of Genuine Aesthetic Disagreements*

Now, while the defeated opponent in a genuine aesthetic disagreement *would be* excluded from the range of everyone, it is important to note that these conflicts are essentially and irreducibly undecidable. This is the case for two reasons. First, as Kant points out,³² and as has been heavily relied upon in the secondary literature,³³ it is never possible to discern with certainty whether one’s judgment of taste really is pure and disinterested. Just as one never knows for certain whether one has judged correctly according to a concept in cases of cognition, one never knows with incorrigible certainty whether one’s judgment of taste is really made on the basis of nothing other than the free play of the faculties. For this reason, it may always be asserted of any individual aesthetic disagreement that it arises from the interference of a covert interest. While it is always necessarily *possible* that a given case of aesthetic disagreement is genuine, it is also always possible that it is not. The decision of a genuine aesthetic disagreement in favor of one party or another may always be deferred by appealing to the possibility of an interposing interest.

Second, and more importantly, even if this process of deferral and obfuscation were to be arrested (and it must be arrested somewhere; *some* aesthetic disagreement must be genuine), the conflict would still remain undecidable by any legitimate means. For, genuine aesthetic disagreements are examples of what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls a *differend*:

As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy. However,

³² See, *KrV*.5:290-5:291.171

³³ See, e.g., Allison’s *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, p. 178.

applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule). Damages result from an injury which is inflicted upon the rules of a genre of discourse but which is reparable according to those rules. A wrong results from the fact that the rules of the genre of discourse by which one judges are not those of the judged genre or genres of discourse. (Lyotard 1988, xi).

In a typical case of dispute—what Lyotard calls a “litigation”—two parties make opposing claims but appeal to a single rule on whose legitimacy both agree in advance. One party may claim of the other: ‘She stole from me’. While the other may reply: ‘I did not steal from her.’ But both disputants agree on the authority of the rule against theft. The entire question is: who’s claim best accords with it? To decide this, the case may be brought before a disinterested judge who will represent both the agreed upon rule and the two opposing claims, deciding, based on the available evidence, which of the two stands best in accord with the rule. If it is decided that the accused really did steal, then the judge will select the reparation needed to restore both the defendant’s standing with the rule and the rule’s standing with the plaintiff.

By contrast, a differend occurs when no such commonly acknowledged rule may be appealed to, so that the adjudication must be carried out according to a rule that only (or at most) one party accepts. As Lyotard puts it later, “A case of differend between two parties takes place when the ‘regulation’ of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom” (Lyotard 1988, 9). A rape victim, for example, suffers the structure of a differend when her plea for justice meets the following (all too familiar) sort of refutation: “You say you were raped, and your claim is either true or false. But if it is true, then you have been violated in a way that has ruined your moral capacity to tell the truth. So even if your claim is true, it is, for this very reason, false.”³⁴ The wrong suffered by the victim cannot be signified in the idiom under which it is adjudicated because the idiom respects only those “credible” witnesses possessing a certain moral standing of which being raped supposedly deprives one.³⁵

In the case of genuine aesthetic disagreement, performing the regulation according to an indifferent rule of judgment (a concept) would wrong both parties—for each judges purely on the basis of the free play of

³⁴ Such incendiary questions as, ‘What were you wearing?’, ‘Were you intoxicated?’, ‘Should you have been out so late?’ are attempts to place plaintiffs under the inescapable aspect of a differend.

³⁵ For commentary on Lyotard’s notion of a differend, see Bennington (1998, 2005).

her *own* faculties, so that adjudicating by means of any rule other than that of free play would be regulating according to a concept acknowledged by neither party. But since each party judges incompatibly with the other, selecting the cognitive free play of either as the common rule for both would wrong the party whose feeling is *not* selected. The conflict holding between all genuinely disagreeing judges of taste is therefore a differend—it is undecidable by all legitimate means.

Since genuine aesthetic disagreements can never be decided legitimately (which in no way diminishes the urgency of deciding them), no one is ever successfully excluded from the range of ‘everyone’ on their basis. For one party to triumph over the other, the authority of the victorious rule would have to override the authority of the defeated rule, but, if this were possible, then the conflict itself would not have been genuine in the first place. Nevertheless, the *threat* of being so excluded on the basis of such a conflict remains. Indeed, the undecidability of a genuine aesthetic disagreement has the result of *purifying* the mutual threat that it implies, reducing it to its essential form, so as to make it *all the more threatening*.

When two parties become entangled in a genuine conflict about beauty, each makes a legitimate claim about what it means to be a member of the subjective community denominated by the quantifier ‘everyone’, and since each fails the test of membership by the lights of the other’s judgment, both are equally threatened with exclusion. There is no official way to resolve this conflict, no reprieve from the threat it entails. Each party suffers a threat to her subjectivity that can be resisted only by threatening the other in the same way.

This treatment of genuine aesthetic disagreement hopes to have established one of the core practices of subjectivity to consist in contesting and redefining the notion of subjectivity itself. Since each opponent in a genuine aesthetic disagreement threatens the other with exclusion from the range of the term ‘everyone’, she implicitly determines the meaning of the term over which the quantifier extends. No subject has incorrigible authority over what it means to be a subject. Each is merely a “perspective,” namely on subjectivity itself. Going forward, then, I will frequently refer to us not as “subjects” but as subject-*perspectives*—fragmented beings intrinsically embroiled in epistemic conflicts with others about what it means to be us.

Chapter Two

Apperception and the Understanding: The Semantogenic Process of Inferential Synthesis

The previous chapter defended the necessary relation of taste and genuine aesthetic disagreement. The subjective universality of the judgment of taste is compatible with its objective invalidity, I argued, only if genuine conflicts of taste are possible. The opponents in these conflicts, I went on to contend, mutually threaten one another with exclusion from the subjective community, each endangering the other's status as an entity signified within the range of the quantifier 'everyone'. But despite establishing *that* genuine aesthetic disagreement is necessarily possible, the last chapter did not explain *how* this could be the case. How could individuals who necessarily cognize the same objects, attaining rational consensus about the objective structure of experience, ever come to genuinely disagree about judgments based in nothing other than the free play of the very faculties by which objects are cognized?

I will investigate this question by first closing off a certain escape route we may be tempted to employ in order to evade, rather than address, the difficulty at hand. Namely, although it may be accepted that the idea of a subjectively universal but objectively invalid judgment is consistent with transcendental idealism only under the assumption that distinct subject-perspectives may genuinely disagree about such judgments, we are still free to reject Kant's theory of taste. We are free, at this point, to construe Kant's aesthetic theory as an ill-conceived, but fortunately excisable, venture without any essential relation to the epistemic core of the critical philosophy. In this chapter and the two following, I will show this escape to be unviable, arguing that the possibility of the judgment of taste is rooted essentially in critical epistemology, so that, if one rejects Kant's theory of taste, one must also reject the central argument of the first *Critique*.

Making this claim will involve providing a rational reconstruction of the processes of cognition and an analysis of their attendant faculties. The current chapter will explore the B Deduction and the faculty of understanding. Chapter Three will investigate the A Deduction and the imagination. And, concluding the cycle, Chapter Four will mobilize the results of Chapters Two and Three to show the discursivity of experience to require every act of cognition to involve the fabrication of a certain sensible excess, called the 'material supplement,' which only judgments of taste may adequately represent. I will continue the inquiry into the

possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement, in the following chapters, by interrogating the structure of this supplement.

This chapter begins my rational reconstruction of cognition. It contains three sections. In the first, I will elucidate what I take to be the core of Kant's critical system of transcendental idealism, explaining why Kant thinks the Copernican Turn is necessary and what it primarily entails. The transcendental reversal has both a *sensible* and a *conceptual* dimension, elaborated respectively in the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Deductions of the first *Critique*. After briefly introducing the former dimension, I will devote the majority of the section to a study of the B Deduction, arguing that, for Kant, cognition is always a matter of *self-recognition* (apperception), so that to understand an object is always equally to understand (be conscious of) oneself.

In the second section, I will provide a more concrete account of apperception and the faculty of the understanding in the more contemporary terms of linguistic pragmatism that I take Kant to have inspired. Apperception occurs whenever the subject judges. To assert a judgment is to commit oneself to its correctness. Doing this involves assuming responsibility for *vindicating* that correctness according to concepts. Concepts, I will argue, reveal themselves as rules of *inference*, and so vindicating one's judgment according to concepts is inferentially integrating it with the totality of other claims to which one is committed, situating it rationally as a premise or consequence of each, so as to recuperate the synthetic unity of all one's cognitive commitments as a whole. One is conscious of oneself throughout this process both as the one who is responsible for performing the integration and as the source of the unity to which this integration is responsible.

In the third section, I will argue that the process of inferentially integrating a novel claim with manifold others is what confers semantic content on that judgment—apperception is not only a self-recognitive but also a “semantogenic” process. What one understands when one understands a claim, I will argue, is nothing other than its (material) inferential role with respect to the other claims to which one is self-consciously committed. Apperception as a whole, I will progressively show, is a circular, self-reinforcing process whose every dimension both presupposes and contributes to constituting all the others.

I. The Problem of *a priori* Synthesis and the Deduction of the Categories

This section synthesizes what I take to be the core components of Kant's critical system of transcendental idealism. After analyzing the "real problem of pure reason" to which transcendental idealism is a response, I discuss the two sides of the theory—the sensible dimension and the conceptual. Thereafter, I devote the rest of the section to an in depth interpretation of the B Deduction of the categories, which vindicates the conceptual side of the theory, leaving a discussion of the sensible side for later chapters.

1. *The Real Problem of Pure Reason*

My argument in the last chapter construed transcendental idealism as a proposed reversal of the priority of objectivity and normativity. I adopted this proposal in order to make a case about the meaning of subjective universality, but I offered no defense of transcendental idealism itself. Why should we accept this epistemic standpoint? Why does transcendental idealism provide a compelling framework for understanding what we do when understand something?

Transcendental idealism is a response to a problem, namely, that of synthetic *a priori* judgment. "The real problem of pure reason[.]" Kant writes, "is now contained in the question: **How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?**" (*KrV*, B19, 146). In every categorical judgment, "[e]ither the predicate *B* belongs to the subject *A* as something that is (covertly) contained in this concept *A*[.]" in which case the judgment is *analytic*, "or *B* lies entirely outside the concept *A*, though to be sure it stands in connection with it," in which case the judgment is *synthetic*. 'The bachelor is unmarried' is an example of the former; 'The bachelor is six feet tall' is an example of the latter.³⁶

Analytic judgments are standardly *a priori*—that is, they may be made in advance of any empirical experience of the objects they are about.³⁷ By contrast, synthetic judgments are typically *a posteriori*—I require

³⁶ For more on the distinction between synthetic and analytic judgment, see Katz (1972, 1988, 1990), Kitcher (1980), and Harman (1996).

³⁷ There is of course a sense in which an analytic judgment such as 'A bachelor is an unmarried man' is not *a priori*, since it relies on a grasp of the empirical concepts of 'bachelor,' 'man,' and 'marriage,' which one must acquire through experience. In the most rigorous sense, an *a priori* analytic judgment is one based in the pure *a priori* concepts of the understanding. But it is often useful—and not strictly incorrect—to consider *a priori* judgments in general to be those which may be made, not in advance of *all* experience, but simply in advance of any experience with the particular objects they are *about*. For a defense of this use of *a priori*, see: Kitcher (1975, 25).

experience of the objects in question to make them. If someone asks me whether a given bachelor is unmarried, I do not need to know which bachelor she is talking about to answer in the affirmative—it follows from the concept of a bachelor in general that he is unmarried. But if she asks me whether that bachelor is six feet tall, I must measure (have experience of) him to find out. In analytic judgments, I draw the predicate from the subject immediately by analyzing the subject’s definition. In synthetic judgments, I connect the subject and predicate by means of a “third thing,”³⁸ namely, *experience*.

The founding observation of the first *Critique* is that we habitually make at least some synthetic judgments *a priori*—most conspicuously in the fields of mathematics, pure natural science, and metaphysics.³⁹ According to Kant, it does not follow from the concept of a triangle—three-sided boundedness—that it has angles equal to 180 degrees, and so a geometric proposition that affirms this must be synthetic.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, if someone asks me to sum the angles of a given triangle, I can do so without empirical experience of the triangle in question, and so the proposition must be *a priori*. If all synthetic judgments route through experience as the “third thing” that unites their subjects and predicates, and some synthetic judgments are *a priori*, then experience must have an *a priori* dimension of some sort—a dimension which I may represent in advance of any object of experience and to which every such object must conform. This *a priori* dimension would pertain not to this or that experience, but to *all* experiences universally, so that conforming to this *a priori* dimension would be part of what qualifies any experience *as* an experience. The constituents of the *a priori* dimension of experience are accordingly called “conditions of the possibility of experience.”⁴¹

Kant proposes the theory of transcendental idealism as a means of accounting for these *a priori* conditions. Any conditions on the possibility of the objects of experience that I am able to represent in advance of the objects themselves must pertain to *my* faculties of representation and not to the objects I represent. Hence, Kant reasons, the objects of experience are possible only if they conform to conditions contained in and dispensed by my faculties of representation.⁴² Kant presents this proposal through the metaphor of the

³⁸ *KrV*.B264/A217.320.

³⁹ *KrV*.B14-B18.143-146.

⁴⁰ For a similar example, see *KrV*.B16.145

⁴¹ *KrV*, Bxxvi.115, B44/A28.160, and A111.234..

⁴² *KrV*.Bxvi–Bxix.110 - 111.

Copernican Turn. The last chapter quoted pieces of the passage in which this metaphor is expressed, but here it is in full:

Up to now it has been assumed that *all our cognition must conform to the objects*; 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 once try whether we do not get farther 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. This would be just like the first thoughts of Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assume that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest. (*KrV*, Bxvi, 110, *emphasis added*).

The grist of what Kant is proposing, as the emphasized portions indicate, is that we should reject the realist position that, cognition is knowledge because it conforms to the objects it cognizes, and endorse, instead, the transcendental idealist position that, objects of knowledge are objects because they conform to (the *a priori* conditions of) cognition. Adopting this latter standpoint allows us to readily explain the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgment because we may invoke the universal conditions of cognition as a medium of synthesis,⁴³ allowing analytically disparate concepts to be united in a synthetic judgment that remains *a priori*, applying in advance to all objects that may appear in experience.

The implications of this position are many and complex—Kant’s entire first *Critique* is devoted to elaborating them. But the primary conclusion is just that *objectivity* is the outcome of a cognitive process. Whereas the realist epistemology that Kant rejects assumes as its basic point of departure the preexistence of entities that count, already, as objects—so that the epistemic task consists in making our cognition adequate to the way these objects are in themselves—the new idealist epistemology holds objectivity to be a *status* that we confer on our representations *if and only if* they conform to certain cognitive standards. It is important to appreciate both sides of this biconditional. Kant does not simply defend the point that we can know objects only if they conform to the conditions of our cognition—which, asserted on its own, is both tautologous and hysterical, claiming at once that “we know only what we are capable of knowing” and that our knowledge “interposes” like a veil between us and the objects of knowledge. He also defends the reciprocal point that the

⁴³ *KrV*.B197/A158.283.

objects themselves are objects only if they conform to our cognitive conditions—that is, only if they are the objects *of* specific cognitive processes.⁴⁴ The point is that objects (of experience) are *essentially* and not accidentally objects of possible knowledge—being sensitive to our cognition is a condition on the objectivity of objects themselves.

Nevertheless, construing objects as bearing an essential relation to our *a priori* cognitive conditions (whatever those turn out to be) gives rise, as a sort of artifact of the transcendental device, to Kant’s famous distinction between appearances and things as they are in themselves.⁴⁵ Since we hold that the objects of experience are possible only insofar as they bear a distinctive relation to our cognitive conditions, while we nevertheless consider the object as something *distinct* from our cognition, it is therefore possible to consider the objects of experience in abstraction from our cognitive conditions. Abstracting in this way is considering objects no longer in relation to *us*, but as they are *in themselves*. Thus, the objects of experience are *appearances* insofar they conform to our cognitive conditions and *things in themselves* insofar as we consider them in isolation from those conditions.⁴⁶ Importantly, however, abstracting objects from our *a priori* cognitive conditions is not only abstracting them from the conditions under which *we* can know them; it is also abstracting them from the conditions under which they themselves are objects, so that the “objects” thereby considered do not have objective reality.

Kant presumes that human cognition arises from two sources, sensible intuition and the understanding,⁴⁷ and so it follows that there must be both sensible and conceptual *a priori* conditions on the objects of experience. Continuing his Copernican metaphor, Kant writes:

Now in metaphysics we can try in a similar way regarding the **intuition** of objects. If intuition has to conform to the constitution of the objects, then I do not see how we can know anything of them *a priori*; but if the object (as an object of the senses) conforms to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, then I can very well represent the possibility to myself. Yet because I cannot stop with these intuitions, if they are to become cognitions, but must refer them as

⁴⁴ Kant refers to this reciprocal point as the “supreme principle of all synthetic judgments” (*KrV*, B197/A158, 283).

⁴⁵ Chapter Three of this study will discuss the distinction between appearances and things in themselves more fully.

⁴⁶ This interpretation of the distinction between appearances and things as they are in themselves summarizes Henry Allison’s “two-aspect” theory. According to Allison, things in themselves are not a distinct set of cognitively independent entities, but rather the very same objects of experience insofar as we consider them in abstraction from the *a priori* cognitive conditions that objectivate them. We perform this “abstraction,” which is not as absolute as it might seem, just by *conceiving* the objects of experience in isolation of the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition. For the basics of Allison’s two-aspect theory, see *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 3-19.

⁴⁷ *KrV*.A50/B74.193.

representations to something as their object and determine this object through them, I can assume either that the concepts through which I bring about this determination also conform to the objects, and then I am once again in the same difficulty about how I could know anything about them *a priori*, or else I assume that the objects, or what is the same thing, the *experience* in which alone they can be cognized (as given objects) conforms to those concepts, in which case I immediately see an easier way out of the difficulty, since experience itself is a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rule I have to presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*, which rule is expressed in concepts *a priori*, to which all objects of experience must therefore necessarily conform, and with which they must agree. (*KrV*.Bxvii.110-111).

Kant takes it for granted that knowing an object involves both sensibly perceiving it in intuition and conceiving it under some sort of general class. If I cognize a chair, e.g., I both perceive the material stuff before my senses and classify it under a concept that determines not only this object but others as well. In slightly finer (though still quite broad) detail, then, presuming that objects must conform to our cognitive conditions involves positing the existence *a priori* conditions of both sensibility and conceptual thought.

Kant elaborates the *a priori* sensible conditions of cognition to which objects of experience must conform in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*, demonstrating that all objects must be time-determined and all external objects must be space-determined. He goes on to introduce the “categories” in the *Transcendental Logic* as the *a priori* conceptual conditions to which objects must conform.

I will discuss the *a priori* forms of intuition in detail in subsequent chapters, but, for now, I will proceed to a discussion of the categories.

2. *The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*

The thesis of the Deduction is that the categories, or the pure concepts of the understanding (what I will shortly describe as metaconceptual functions of self-recognition), have objective reality because they have a necessary normative grip on the sensible manifold given in intuition.⁴⁸ The objects of experience are answerable to natural laws, the story goes, because they are nothing other than norm-conforming manifolds of sensible intuitions, and *all* sensible intuition conforms to the categories essentially and by definition. This subsection will summarize the argument of the Deduction as Kant presents it in the B version of the *Critique*.

⁴⁸ *KrV*.B158-B161.261-262.

Like some other commentators,⁴⁹ I take the B Deduction to represent Kant's most sophisticated proof of the objective validity of the categories, containing Kant's considered view of how the understanding really works. For this reason, my presentation of the basic mechanics and structure of apperception will rely on it more or less exclusively. Nevertheless, I take the A Deduction as the master document for understanding the role of the *imagination* in the economy of cognition, and I will rely on its presentation of this all important faculty in Chapter Three.

The argument of the Deduction is famously difficult to understand. There are two main reasons why this is so. First, it redefines nearly every relevant term that it discusses in ways that are not wholly conspicuous: words like 'thinking,' 'I,' and, especially, 'object' all mean something different at the end of the Deduction than they did at the beginning—or, rather, the accomplishment of the Deduction is partly to teach us what the words have really meant all along. Second, the argument is not formally linear or deductive in any recognizable way. It comprises, rather, a series of concentric layers of reasoning in which the inner layers articulate the simple, logical core of what the outer layers make conceptually explicit and sufficiently elaborate. As such, understanding the Deduction is a matter both of tracking the lexical redescrptions that it institutes and of distinguishing the argument's inner (logically primary) layers from its outer (explicating) ones.⁵⁰ I think the argument can be broken into three layers.

Kant presents the innermost layer of the Deduction in §16 of the B Deduction, making the simple case that the appearances contained in my experience must exhibit a certain sort of unity because I myself am a unified, i.e., self-identical, being and the appearances that appear to me are, by definition, mine. The "unity of experience," then, is instituted by the constant performance (or at least the constant possibility of) *self-recognition*, the spontaneous act of becoming aware of *myself* as the one *to whom* experience appears. Here is the argument:

L1: Self-Recognition and the Unity of Experience: (KrV, §16 - §17, B132 - B139, 246-250)

1. (P) Everything that I may possibly experience of the world must, by definition, be able to appear *to me*.

⁴⁹ I agree with Beatrice Longuenesse's suggestion that, while the A Deduction "should not be dismissed as superfluous," it is in the B Deduction that Kant presents his properly "*logical* [rather than psychological] argument" in defense of the objective validity of the categories. Longuenesse (2001), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰ For more on the legal origins of the term 'deduction', see Henrich (1989). For more on the historical context of the Deduction, see Kuehn (1977) and Dyck (2011).

2. Therefore all possible appearances must be so constituted as to allow me to represent *myself* through them, since this self-representation represents the condition under which appearances are appearances.
3. (P) I myself constitute a self-*identity*, a unified being who is constantly equal to itself.
4. Therefore all appearances must conform to the unity which I myself am insofar as they are themselves only insofar as they permit my self-recognition.

The conclusion of this relatively straightforward argument is just that the manifold appearances of which I may have experience must fit together within *one*, single experience (namely, my own), not only because I, a self-identical being, would not experience them if they did not (a subjective claim), but also because the appearances themselves would not *be* appearances if I could not experience them (a proto-objective claim). Appearances must appear *to* someone (namely, to me), so that enabling my self-recognition is what *makes* appearances appearances.

Kant reifies the results of L1 in §17 as the “supreme principle of all use of the understanding.” He writes:

The supreme principle of all intuition in relation to the understanding is that all the manifold of intuition stand under conditions of the original synthetic unity of apperception. All the manifold representations of intuition stand under [this] principle... insofar as they must be capable of being **combined** in one consciousness; for without that nothing could be thought or cognized through them, since the given representations would not have in common the act of apperception, **I think**, and thereby would not be grasped together in a self-consciousness. (*KrV*.B136-B137.248-249).

This simple argument—that the manifold of appearances must be unified because a self-identical subject must be capable of recuperating her own unity through them—sits beneath and enables every other claim that Kant will make in the Deduction.⁵¹ It exploits a presumption (marked as a premise above) that Kant thinks will be inoffensive to his rationalist Cartesian readers, viz., that the subjective “I” constitutes an absolute identity with itself. Kant thinks there is *something* correct about this presumption—indeed §16 presents step-3 as an analytic tautology, apparently acknowledging unconditional commitment to it. But, as we traverse the outer layers of the Deduction, we see that Kant does not endorse it under its current description but, rather, proposes a new way of understanding self-identity.

⁵¹ For a further defense of self-recognition as the core of all cognitive activity, see Longuenesse (2000, 2017), Howell (2001), and Rosefeldt (2000).

The second layer of the Deduction makes the case that self-recognition must always be *conceptual*, so that everything that appears to me conforms to concepts insofar as, by L1, it must enable my act of self-recognition in order to be itself. This is Kant's implicit defense of 'discursivity'⁵² (or 'discursive difference,' as I will call it), the foundational claim that cognition involves not only sensible intuitions but also concepts. Here is the argument:

L2: The Discursivity of Experience (KrV, §18 - §18, B140 - B143; 250 - 252)

1. (P) A manifold of sensible intuitions appears to me in experience.
2. Therefore, by L1, I must be capable of constantly recognizing myself through this manifold, instituting the requirement that it conform to unity, so that the sensible representation of the given manifold of intuition m is necessarily the occasion of a further, self-recognitive representation $\varphi(m)$.
3. The self-recognitive representation $\varphi(m)$ is simultaneously my representation of myself *and* a "representation of the representation"⁵³ of the sensible manifold m : it represents the fact that the sensible manifold m appears to *me* and therefore conforms to the unity that I myself am. Thus, it is a *metasensible* representation.
4. The metasensible self-recognitive representation $\varphi(m)$ either is or is not itself a sensible representation. But it cannot be a sensible representation. For, by definition, $\varphi(m)$ is nothing other than the representation of the representation of the sensible manifold m . This means that $\varphi(m)$ provides no *sensible* content to experience beyond what is given in m , but, rather, provides only a representation of *how* the sensible manifold m must necessarily be given insofar as it appears to me (viz., in conformity with the unity that I myself am). Since $\varphi(m)$ provides no additional sensible content to experience beyond what is given in m , it cannot itself be a sensible representation. Therefore the metasensible self-recognitive representation $\varphi(m)$ is necessarily *non-sensible*.
5. (P) We human beings are capable of only sensible intuition and conceptual thought.⁵⁴
6. Therefore the meta-sensible self-recognitive representation $\varphi(m)$ is necessarily a *conceptual* representation. My sensible intuition of any given manifold of appearances is always the possible occasion of my metasensible self-recognitive *thought* myself.
7. Since my representation of sensible manifolds is *perception*, my thought of myself *through* sensible manifolds counts as meta- or *ap*-perception. The constant possibility of apperception issues the requirement that the manifold of sensible intuitions that I perceive always conform to the unity that I myself am.

⁵² For more on the discursivity of experience for Kant, see Allison (2004), esp. 11-19.

⁵³ KrV.A68/B93.205

⁵⁴ KrV.A50/B74.193.

The point that this second layer is attempting to make is that, since the self-recognition introduced in L1 is, by definition, metasensible—acting *on* or *through* sense—it must also be *non*-sensible, which, accordingly, makes it *conceptual*. Since self-representation represents something *about* given sensible representations, about the *way* they may and may not be given, it is precluded from being sensible itself. It is required to represent sensible content that is already given and cannot, therefore, itself add sensible content to experience.

Now, just as in the case of L1, the most immediately questionable parts of L2 are the two premises that it assumes (at steps-1 and -5). The first of these—i.e., the presumption that a sensible manifold appears in my experience—should be understood as the *converse* of L1’s step-3, which affirmed the self-identity of the subject. Whereas L1’s premise exploits a presumption that will be inoffensive to Kant’s *rationalist* Cartesian readers, this presumption of L2 exploits a presumption that Kant assumes will be inoffensive to his *empiricist* Lockean or Humean readers. And just as before, Kant thinks something about the empiricist picture is right, but ultimately he will not affirm it under its current description. The rationalists make the self-identity of the subject the fundamental epistemic ground of certainty and representational correctness, while the empiricists make the multiplicity of sense this ground: for Kant, each is simply the starting-point of a different layer of one and the same Transcendental Deduction; each captures something essential about the unity of experience and the possibility of knowledge; but neither has primacy over the other. Part of why Kant refuses to reduce sensibility to understanding, or understanding to sensibility, is because he wants to give empiricist multiplicity and rationalist unity an equal status.

As for step-5—L2’s presumption that human beings are capable only of sense and thought—I think Kant is committed to endorsing this claim in his own name, so that the discursivity thesis reflects his considered view even under its current description. That said, Kant does not take it that discursivity is a “brute fact”⁵⁵ about human experience, capable of explaining other facets of cognition but not itself sensitive to explanation. Rather, when Kant’s surprisingly deflationary interpretation of “thinking” is properly understood, L2 itself comes into view more or less as a *proof* of the discursivity thesis.

⁵⁵ This is how Allison at first characterized discursivity, though he has since revised this view. See Allison (2004), p. 452.

So far, both layers of the Deduction have given thinking a single, if two-pronged, job to do. It is responsible for enabling the subject's recognition of herself through given manifolds, which, in turn, issues the requirement that those manifolds conform to the unity that the subject herself is. Every "thought" that the subject has is a metasensible, self-recognitive representation of *herself* through a given manifold which itself comes thereby to count as a unity. Thus, so far, "thinking" is functionally defined as nothing other than that type of representation by which the subject recognizes herself through given manifolds and thereby confers unity upon them. This functional definition, it turns out, is in fact *sufficient* for understanding what thinking in general is for Kant. This is to say, although we have much more to learn about the norms and meta-norms that *determine* conceptual thought, and although we have not even begun to explore the rational illusions that thinking is prone to, we sufficiently understand the representational genus of thinking in general once we grasp it in terms of the functional definition presented above. What all this ultimately means is that L2, which establishes in step-4 that the metasensible self-recognition that confers unity on given manifolds is itself *non-sensible*, effectively *proves* the discursivity thesis because it demonstrates that human cognition *must* be composed of two specifically distinct representational types. Steps-5, -6, and -7, which identify conceptual thought as the second type of cognitive representation, play a basically *nominal* role in the trajectory of the argument, adding no logical content to the account but simply naming the discursive process that the earlier steps have defined. "Thinking" is just the name Kant gives to metasensible self-recognitive representation.

Together L1 and L2 prove that sensible experience must have a conceptual dimension—every sensible manifold must be a suitable occasion for metasensible self-recognition, and metasensible self-recognitive representation is called *conception*. This conclusion, on its own, tells us that conceptual articulation is built into the very possibility of experience, but it does not tell us much about the constraints that experience suffers *because* of its conceptual articulation. Being conceptually articulated means that all given sensible manifolds must stand together within one, single, unified experience (my own), but, so far, Kant has not explained what it takes for them to do so, has not told us what structural features sensible manifolds must exhibit in order to satisfy the unity-constraint on their possibility dispensed by apperception. This is a problem because the task of the

Deduction is to justify the use of certain *determinate* concepts *a priori*—so we need to know *which* concepts apply necessarily to all possible manifolds in light of their proven conceptual articulation.

It is the job of the third and final layer of the Deduction to provide this missing account. To do so, Kant's strategy is to identify a finite set of *metaconceptual* (and so *meta-meta-sensible*) rules that apply to all concepts *in general*, so that all conceptually articulated sensible contents would have to be normed by these rules just insofar as they stand under concepts at all. This set of *metaconcepts* would then be available to the subject for *a priori* conception, in advance of any given sensible contents, because it would define the rules by which any sensible manifold must abide insofar as (by L1 and L2) it is necessarily suitable as an occasion for self-recognition.

Kant identifies this set of metaconcepts as the Logical Forms of Judgment (henceforth, LFJ), arguing, first, that concepts are conceivable only insofar as they may feature in possible *judgments* and, second, that possibly correct judgments are formulable only in accordance with a finite, enumerable, and independently intelligible set of Forms (the LFJ). All possible sensible manifolds must stand in conformity with the LFJ, then, because every sensible manifold is necessarily conceptually articulated; all concepts are functions of possible judgments; and judgments may be correctly formulated only in accordance with the LFJ. Here is the argument:

L3: The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories (*KrV*, §20 - 26, B143-B168; 252-266)

1. Every possible sensible manifold stands under concepts (by L1 and L2).
2. (P) A concept is nothing other than a function, or component, of a possible *judgment*.
3. Therefore every sensible manifold must be suitable as the content of a possible *judgment*, not only conceptually but also *propositionally* articulated.
4. (P) Judgments may be formulated only in accordance with the finite and enumerable Logical Forms of Judgment.
5. Therefore these Logical Forms of Judgment constitute a finite set of metaconceptual rules by which sensible manifolds must abide insofar as they stand necessarily under concepts.
6. (P) When these rules are taken to apply to sensible manifolds, rather than judgments, they are not Logical Functions, but *categories*.

The case that this final layer of the Deduction attempts to make is that since concepts are necessarily functions of judgments, and judgments are constructable only in accordance with the LFJ, sensible experience

must answer to these forms as rules precisely because it must be conceptually articulated. Since these metaconcepts are now shown to perform *two* jobs, norming not only judgments but also sensible experience, they get a second name corresponding to their second function: insofar we represent them as rules of sensible experience (i.e., laws of nature) they are called *categories*. Since the categories are a finite and enumerable set of pure (as in meta-)concepts⁵⁶ that pertain to all sensible manifolds insofar as they are possible in experience, they constitute a set of objectively valid concepts available to cognition *a priori*.

As usual, the most immediately disturbing parts of L3 are its premises (steps-2, -4, and -6). Step-2 expresses Kant's commitment to the Priority of the Propositional—his claim that entire judgments, rather than subsentential components, are cognitively primary, the smallest units of intelligibility we are capable of producing. The last chapter made significant use of this commitment, but, since I will discuss it in detail in the following section, I will pass over it here. But the basic position is just that judgments (paradigmatically, complete, declarative sentences) rather than individual concepts are the smallest cognitive units possible for us.

Step-4, Kant's claim that all judgments must exhibit a form in accordance with their Logical Forms, is less controversial than it may seem. Kant takes it as obvious (and in need of no justification) that there are an enumerable number of forms that possibly correct judgments may exhibit. The mere fact that a judgment could be proven *incorrect* simply on the basis of its *form* is evidence enough for Kant that the possibly *correct* forms are finite and independently intelligible. Further, these forms of possibly correct judgments are reasonably inherited from formal logic, since this is precisely the science in charge of distinguishing incorrect from possibly correct judgments on the basis of form alone. In short, Kant thinks that you cannot deny that judgments are logically constrained by at least *some* formal conditions without rejecting the very idea of logic itself, and, further, he thinks that if one does acknowledge the possibility of logic, and therefore of formal constraints on possible judgments, then one ought to take the actual *practice* of logically assessing judgments as authoritative for deciding what these forms are. The table of Logical Forms of Judgment is supposed to contain the complete set of these forms.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ For more on the metaconceptual notion of apriority, see Strawson (1966)

⁵⁷ For my treatment of these forms, see Chapter One, Section I of this study. For the table, see *KrV*.A70/B95.206.

Step-6, less a premise than a definition, initially appears to be a simple bookkeeping measure: in order to clearly distinguish the domains of constraint over which the master metaconcepts have authority, Kant calls them ‘logical forms’ insofar as they constrain *judgments* and ‘categories’ insofar as they constrain the sensible manifold. This nominal shift from forms to categories is more important than it appears, however, signalling an essential difference in the way the metaconcepts are *binding* on the distinct domains they govern. While the LFJ apply to the *epistemic* domain of the subjective activity of *judging*, the categories, by contrast, apply to the *ontological* domain of the possible *objects* of judgment. Corresponding to this epistemic/ontological difference is the fact that while the LFJ exert a *deontic normative* binding force on the epistemic activity of judging, determining how judgments *ought* to be formulated, the categories exert an *alethic modal* binding force on the possible objects of judgment, determining how objects *are*. Although the LFJ define the sole forms to which possibly correct judgments must conform, so that my judging activity ought to abide by them, I am still capable of judging incorrectly. Conversely, it is not merely inappropriate for objects and states-of-affairs to violate the categories, i.e., the laws of nature; it is impossible for them to do so. So while the LFJ include modal metaconcepts like ‘problematic,’ ‘assertoric,’ and ‘apodictic,’ these very same metaconcepts define modal relations of ‘possibility,’ ‘actuality,’ and ‘impossibility’.

This shift in modal bindingness is, in fact, predicted by the style of L3’s transcendental argument. For, it is precisely by distinguishing incorrect from possibly correct judgments, on the basis of form, that we first identify the set of metaconcepts to which concepts, as possible functions of judgment, ought to conform. If *incorrect* judgments were impossible, then we would never be able to isolate and identify the finite set of forms characteristic of all possibly *correct* judgments. This means *both* that, as LFJ, metaconceptual bindingness must remain a thoroughly deontic normative affair (since incorrect judgment must be possible) *and* that the only forms of judgment that pass the transcendental test of objective relevance are the ones that enable *correct* judgments, so that, as *categories* these forms cannot be objectively violated.

This completes my analysis of Kant’s three-layered Deduction. L1, the core of the Deduction, establishes that all appearances in experience must conform to a certain sort of unity since they must be occasions for possible self-recognition. L2 proves self-recognition to be conceptual in character, since it must

be non-sensible, so that all sensible manifolds conform to concepts. And L3 demonstrates that sensible experience must conform to the set of metaconcepts known as the categories since concepts are nothing other than functions of judgment and judgment is normatively constrained by the LFJ. The Deduction as a whole argues that every *perception* (apprehension of a sensible manifold) is the occasion of a (possible) act of *apperception*; apperception is necessarily *conceptual*, and concepts are functions of *judgment*, so that, in the end, every perception is the occasion of a (possible) judgment and therefore alethically responsible to the deontic normative constraints on judgment.

II. An Inferentialist Semantics: What Do We Understand When We Understand?

This section presents a more concrete account of the activities of apperception and understanding. First, I explicate Kant's commitment to *judgment* as the smallest unit of cognitive intelligibility, and argue that asserting a novel judgment involves taking *responsibility* for its content. Taking responsibility for a judgment, I go on to contend, consists in rationally integrating it into the totality of other judgments to which one is committed so as to establish an *inferential* unity of claims. The subject synthesizes and re-synthesizes an inferential unity of *all* her commitments whenever she judges, and the inferential network thereby constituted is called the "synthetic unity of experience." The institution of synthetic-inferential unity in experience, I argue, is effected in each case by an act of *self-recognition* or apperception. The subject's overarching *meta*-commitment to her own identity with herself requires her to make all her object level commitments mutually compatible with one another, and the practice of compatibilizing those commitments is what acquaints her with her own unity. Concluding the section, I present concepts in general as norms of inference and the categories as *meta*-norms of inference. While empirical concepts regulate particular patterns of inference for given judgments, the categories define the rules by which *any* judgment must abide in order to qualify for inferential synthesis with others at all.

1. *The Priority of the Propositional: Action and Responsibility*

The third layer of the Deduction relied on Kant's theory that judgments, rather than concepts, represent the most minimal units of understanding. If this were not the case, then the argument that sensible manifolds conform necessarily to concepts would not allow us to use the LFJ to identify the categories as the

pure and stable metaconcepts to which all sensible experience is answerable. Thus, without a commitment to the priority of the propositional, the argument of the Deduction would succeed in proving that experience has some sort of conceptual dimension, but it would not designate the *categories* as the particular metaconcepts available for *a priori* cognition. Vindicating this commitment to the priority of judgment is the first step toward developing a more concrete account of apperception and understanding. Why is judgment the most minimal conceptual item that one can properly be said to “understand?”

Robert Brandom presents the epistemic tradition in which Kant’s innovative prioritization of the propositional intervenes in the following way:

The pre-Kantian tradition took it for granted that the proper order of semantic explanation begins with a doctrine of *concepts* or *terms*, divided into singular and general, whose meaningfulness can be grasped independently of and prior to the meaningfulness of judgments. Appealing to this basic level of interpretation, a doctrine of *judgments* then explains the combination of concepts into judgments, and how the correctness of the resulting judgments depends on what is combined and how. (Brandom 1994, 79).

According to this pre-critical view, I am to understand sentences in terms of their components, rather than components as functions of sentences. The sentence ‘This is red’, e.g., would be understood in terms of the individual terms ‘this,’ ‘is,’ and ‘red’ whose definitions I would consult in advance. On this line, the most prior cognitive activity would be a sort of Adamic *naming* of objects, characterized by a pre-sentential pointing and sorting procedure.

“Kant [however] rejects this view,” continues Brandom,

One of his cardinal innovations is the claim that the fundamental unit of awareness or cognition, the minimum graspable, is the *judgment*. “As all acts of the understanding can be reduced to judgments, the understanding may be defined as the faculty of judging.” For him, interpretations of something as classified or classifier make sense only as remarks about its role in judgment. A concept just is a predicate of a possible judgment, which is why “the only use which the understanding can make is to form judgments by them.” Thus, for Kant, any discussion of content must start with the contents of judgments, since anything else only has content insofar as it contributes to the contents of judgments. (Brandom 1994, 79-80).

On Kant’s view, the meanings of subsentential terms are to be understood in terms of the propositions (judgments) that comprise them—I understand the words ‘this,’ ‘is,’ and ‘red’ in terms of the complete sentence

‘This is red’ (and the other sentences that include these words). The way the words are *used* (the way they *function*) in the judgment is determinative of their individual meanings, and not the other way around.⁵⁸

The basis for Kant’s commitment to the priority of the propositional is his realization of the essentially *active* (spontaneous) character of thinking. Understanding is not something that *happens* to us—but something we *do*. “If we will call the **receptivity** of our mind to receive representations insofar as it is affected in some way **sensibility**, then on the contrary the faculty for *bringing forth* representations itself, or the **spontaneity** of cognition, is the **understanding**” (*KrV*, B75/A51; 193; *emphasis added*). Whenever I think anything, I *act*, and anything that counts as my action may be attributed to *me*. The reason for this, as we saw in the Deduction, is because thinking must always act on and *through* what I receive in sensible intuition—if thinking were as passive as what it acts on, then it would not function to *unify* what it receives but would instead contribute more sensible-affective content to experience.

Any performance attributable to me and my spontaneity is (tautologously) one for which I, rather than the externally affective world, may be held *responsible*. I am the one who produced the performance; it would not exist without me. A specifically cognitive performance is some sort of knowledge claim about the way objects *are*.⁵⁹ To be responsible for such a performance, then, is to be responsible for its *correctness*. If understanding is something active—something I *do*—then the performances in which it results must be of the type that may be either correct or incorrect; for otherwise I could not be held responsible for them, and if I could not be held responsible for them they could not count as my *deeds*.

Now, the mere representation of an isolated concept cannot be correct or incorrect: I cannot be wrong when I represent the individual concepts ‘dog,’ ‘red,’ or ‘Enlightenment’. But when I inscribe these concepts in even minimally assertive judgments—‘*This is a dog*,’ ‘*This is red*,’ ‘*This is Enlightenment*’—I perform discursive acts that may or may not be correct and for which I may therefore be held responsible. This means that judgments, unlike the representation of individual concepts, involve *commitments*—they are sensitive to

⁵⁸ Commitment to the priority of the propositional is one of the key components of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s theory of language. For his earliest critiques of word-world compositionality in his famous builder example, see, Wittgenstein (1963, p. 3).

⁵⁹ For more on the normative character of cognition, see, Longuenesse (2001) and Hanna (2001).

assessments of correctness—and, for this reason, they are attributable to *me* as performances *I* produce. Moreover, even though there are other conceptual acts for which I may be held responsible, e.g., inferences, all of them *involve* judgment, so that a judgment is the *minimal* conceptual act that I myself may spontaneously produce.

Thus, judgment is the minimal unit of conceptual intelligibility because 1) thinking is *active* (spontaneous); 2) a performance counts as my action only if I may be held responsible for it; 3) to be responsible for (committed to) a performance in the conceptual domain is to be responsible for its *correctness*; and 4) judgments are the smallest units of conceptual activity that may be correct or incorrect. As Brandom puts it, “judgment [is] the minimal unit of apperceptive awareness [for Kant] because it is the minimal unit for which one can take responsibility, the minimal unit to which one can commit oneself” (Brandom 2019, 9). Ultimately, Kant endorses the priority of the propositional because he thinks thinking is a matter of commitment.

2. *From Responsibility to Inferential Unity: How We Differ from Parrots*

Kant’s commitment to the priority of the propositional implies that *understanding* any performance involves committing oneself to its correctness. As discussed in Chapter One, Kant thinks of correctness as a conceptual rather than a referential affair: to endorse a claim is primarily to assert that it conforms correctly to the concepts that reticulate it, and only secondarily to imply that it successfully refers to its object. Thus, understanding a judgment involves adducing its concepts and taking it to be correct (or incorrect) according to them. But what exactly does this involve? What has one committed oneself *to* when one has endorsed the conceptual correctness (or incorrectness) of a judgment and thereby understood it?

One approach to addressing this question is to consider two systems capable of uttering the same judgment, e.g., ‘That’s red’, one whom we take to *understand* the judgment, viz., a human being, and another to which we need not attribute this understanding, e.g., a parrot. Though for different purposes, Brandom provides an example of precisely this situation, imagining a scenario in which both a parrot and a “fanatical human red reporter” are both disposed to produce “a noise of the acoustic type ‘That’s red’ when and only when [they are] irradiated with light of the proper frequency” so that “the two systems are disposed to respond in the same way to the same stimuli, exhibiting the same noninferential circumstances of application for their

responsive classification of things as red” (Brandom 1994, 88). What distinguishes the parrot’s performance from the human being’s? What makes the parrot’s count as a mere responsive “signal on the basis of which *someone else* might conclude that something red is present” (Brandom 1994, 88), while the human being’s counts as a judgment that she *understands*?

The first thing to note is that the human being is normatively implicated in her judgment, while the parrot is not. By asserting the judgment, the human being has *committed* herself to it and taken responsibility for its correctness, while the parrot has not necessarily let itself in for such a justificatory burden. Although the parrot emits the sound ‘That’s red’ only in the presence of light of the proper frequency, I need not believe that the parrot utters these noises because it takes them to be true. Rather, I may—and do—take it that the parrot has simply been conditioned to issue this response in the presence of this sort of stimulus, so that the noises are no more “correct” (or incorrect) for the parrot in the presence of red light than they would be in the presence of green. By contrast, I *do* hold the human being (who is supposed to *understand* the noises she produces) responsible for the very same utterances, so that if the object in question is not red, I will take her to be incorrect. Whether or not one thinks the human being’s utterance can be explained in strictly behaviorist terms (like the parrot’s can) is entirely irrelevant: the point is just that the human being, unlike the parrot, can be intelligibly said to be *incorrect* about what she says and be expected to take responsibility for that incorrectness.

To commit oneself to the correctness of the judgment one asserts is to assume responsibility for *justifying* that correctness if appropriately pressed to do so. Doing that involves adducing *reasons* in support of the asserted claim. The reasons adduced are themselves *other* claims which stand in some sort of inferential relation to the judgment one endorses. For example, if asked to justify the correctness of some claim *P*, ‘*x* is a triangle’, one may adduce as reasons other claims *Q*, *R*, and *S*—‘*x* has three sides’, ‘*x* is a closed, rectilinear figure’, ‘*x*’s angles add up to 180 degrees’. Justifying some judgment one endorses is proving it to stand in a necessary inferential relation with *other* judgments one endorses, situating it within a rational inferential network of compatible claims. Even when one justifies the correctness of some assertion like ‘That’s red’ by adducing the reliability one’s perceptual capacities, asserting something like ‘I am a reliable reporter of red objects’, one still formulates a *judgment* about the reliability of these capacities and adduces that judgment, rather than the raw

capacities themselves, as a *reason* for endorsing the claim. To commit to the correctness of a claim, then, is to accept responsibility for situating it within the inferential network of other claims which justify it.

Returning to the example of the parrot, Brandom puts it like this:

the key element missing from the parrot... is [its] mastery of the practices of giving and asking for *reasons*, in which their responses play a role as *justifying* beliefs and claims. To grasp or understand a [claim or judgment] is... to have practical mastery over the *inferences* it is involved in—to know, in the practical sense of being able to distinguish, what follows from the applicability of a [claim], and what it follows from. The parrot does not treat ‘That’s red’ as incompatible with ‘That’s green,’ nor as following from ‘That’s scarlet’ and entailing ‘That’s colored.’ Insofar as the repeatable response is not, for the parrot, caught up in practical proprieties of inference and justification, and so of the making of further judgments, it is not a conceptual or cognitive matter at all. (Brandom 1994, 89).

To *assert* and so take responsibility for, rather than merely parrot, a judgment is to commit oneself both to endorsing its inferential premises and consequences and rejecting the other claims with which the asserted one is incompatible. To count as understanding the judgment one asserts, one must be taken to grasp the large variety of *other* judgments that stand in some sort of rational relation to the particular assertion one makes—premissory relations, relations of entailment, and relations of incompatibility. In the present case, the difference between understanding and parroting the judgment is treating it to follow from ‘That’s scarlet’, to entail ‘That’s colored’, and to be incompatible with ‘That’s green’, ‘That’s blue’, ‘That’s orange’, etc.. What one *does* when one understands a judgment (and so, mediately, the *object* to which it refers) is conceive that judgment in the context of the inferential relations of compatibility and incompatibility in which it stands with a multiplicity of *other* judgments.

The important point to grasp is that it is not merely *justifying* a judgment that requires the subject to situate it inferentially within a network of reasons. Simply *understanding* the judgment—grasping its meaning—requires this as well. For it has already been established that understanding a judgment requires committing to its correctness (or incorrectness), and doing that involves situating it inferentially with respect to the other claims by which one *could* justify it (if appropriately pressed). Understanding the claim to whose correctness one commits oneself is taking that *explicit* commitment to involve *implicit* commitment to the correctnesses of the other claims that stand in inferential relations with it. That’s why the parrot cannot be counted as understanding

the performance it utters—we do not (and are not entitled to) attribute to the parrot implicit commitment to the *other* claims that stand in rational inferential relations with it.

The example of the parrot and the human being, paired with the analysis of the priority of the propositional, allows us to begin to formulate a definition of the activity of understanding. The judgment is the smallest unit of conceptual activity because it is the most minimal performance to whose correctness the subject may commit herself. Committing to a judgment's correctness is taking responsibility for all of its rational-inferential premises and consequences. These inferential involvements are the *reasons* the subject could provide for the correctness of the judgment she commits herself to when she asserts that judgment. Thus, since understanding a judgment essentially involves committing oneself to its correctness (or incorrectness), and doing this involves implicitly representing the inferential involvements one could offer as reasons for that correctness, it follows that understanding a judgment essentially involves the implicit representation of its inferential premises and consequences. A system counts as *understanding* a given judgment *P* just when it may be held responsible for endorsing the *other* judgments *Q*, *R*, and *S* with which *P* stands in some sort of rational-inferential relation. Understanding, as opposed to parroting, *P*, then, involves *integrating* it with the other implicit claims *Q*, *R*, and *S* that provide its rational justification.

This insight about the inferential articulation of judgments should be understood as a natural expansion of Kant's prior commitment to the priority of the propositional. As Sellars puts it, "Kant... insisted that just as concepts are essentially (and not accidentally) items which can occur in judgments, so judgments (and, therefore, indirectly concepts) are essentially (and not accidentally) items which can occur in reasonings or arguments" (Sellars 1953, 314). It is essential to judgments that they may occur in chains of inference because, as the parrot example intends to show, merely *understanding* them—representing their meanings—involves integrating them with the *other* judgments with which they share some sort of rational relation.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ The neopragmatist, inferentialist theory of semantic content that I attribute to Kant in this and following chapters contrasts the views of Longuenesse (2001) and Guyer (1987). It is in partial agreement with the views of Landy (2009) and Leech (2012), but it provides a more thoroughly inferentialist interpretation of Kant's theory of cognition than

3. *The Inferential Role of Apperception*

To assert a judgment and understand what one asserts is implicitly to integrate the asserted judgment with the other claims through which it could be rationally justified. Understanding is essentially, not accidentally, an inferential affair. But, according to the Deduction, understanding always involves self-recognition (or apperception). Whenever the subject *cognizes* an object, by means of a judgment, she thereby *recognizes* herself *through* that object. How and in what sense does a judge who understands her claim by integrating it with its rational premises and consequences thereby *recognize* herself through her judgment?

Brandom provides a way of interpreting the activity of apperception according to the inferential character of the understanding. Within a discussion of judgment, Brandom writes:

Kant understands judging in *normative* and *pragmatic* terms. On the normative side, he understands judging as *committing* oneself, taking *responsibility* for something, *endorsing* the judged content. On the pragmatic side, he understands these normative doings in *practical* terms: as a matter of what one is committed or responsible for *doing*. What one is responsible for doing is integrating the endorsed content into a constellation of other commitments that exhibits the kind of unity distinctive of apperception. Doing that (“synthesizing” the unity) is extruding from the dynamically evolving unity commitments that are materially *incompatible* with the new commitment, and extracting and endorsing, so adding, commitments that are its material *consequences*. Judging that *p* is committing oneself to *integrating p* with what one is already committed to, synthesizing a new constellation of commitments that exhibits the rational unity characteristic of apperception. (Brandom 2019, 53, emphasis added).

As we saw above, when I judge that *P*, I am adopting a commitment, taking responsibility for *P*'s correctness. What I may be held responsible for *doing* is integrating *P* with everything else that I am committed to, situating it in a framework of other commitments so as to conceive it in relations of consequence and incompatibility with manifold other claims *Q*, *R*, and *S*, etc.. If *P* is the claim that ‘Today is Wednesday,’ then judging that *P* is

either Landy or Leech do. Although both scholars argue that concepts are essentially rules of inference, so that the normativity (necessity) distinctive of experience is irreducibly inferential in character, neither is able to provide an inferential articulation of the *sensible* dimension of experience, both presume that intuition provides the nonlogical and noninferential contents of judgment whose *relations* the understanding subsequently makes necessary by conferring conceptual-inferential structure upon them. As Landy puts it: “[Inferential relations] mimic, or picture, the relations that the objects pictured stand in to each other. Intuitions are the representative counterparts of objects, and concepts ways of placing intuitions into relations with each other that are the counterparts of relations in which their objects stand” (Landy 2009, 19). This “inferentialism-lite,” which takes inferential networks merely to “mimic” (rather than *institute*) the real relations holding among objects, is headed in the right direction, but it misses the central, *content-conferring* force of inference. By contrast, in the following chapter, I show even the sensible contents of judgment to be conferred through material-inferential practices, expressing nothing other than a certain necessary dimension of those practices.

the case involves not merely subsuming the particular indexical ‘Today’ under the general concept ‘Wednesday’; it rather involves adopting other consequential commitments Q and R which state that ‘Tomorrow will be Thursday’ and ‘Yesterday was Tuesday’, and it entails *rejecting* incompatible commitments X ‘It’s the weekend’ and Y ‘Yesterday was Monday’.

The most relevant claim in the passage above, underlined for emphasis, is that asserting a judgment and integrating it rationally with the other judgments to which one is committed, counts as synthesizing a unity “characteristic of apperception.” The *purpose* of rationally integrating one’s judgment with others is to synthesize and retain the unity of commitments that enables one to recognize *oneself* as the self-identical being one takes oneself to be. The only reason the subject bothers to integrate a novel commitment with others at all, the only reason this sort of procedure is even intelligible, is because she has an *a priori metacommitment* to her *own* unity: she is obligated to make all her commitments compatible with one another, formulating a rational, inferential, synthetic system of mutually implicit propositions only because she is committed to representing her *own* unity *through* the complete system of her cognitive commitments.

If we compare this insight with the previous one—that *understanding* a judgment (and so the object to which it refers) is conceiving it with respect to the other claims with which it is rationally-inferentially involved—then we see that *every* act of understanding must be paired with a concomitant act of apperception. For, this self-recognitive procedure is what relates any judgment to its inferential premises and consequences. It is only by conceiving the fact that one is only entitled to endorse a certain judgment if it can be rationally compatibilized with all one’s other assertional commitments, fitting together with them in the experience of a self-identical being, that one relates that judgment to its inferential premises and consequences in the first place, and this compatibilization procedure is essential to *understanding* the judgment at all. In other words, apperception is what allows the subject to understand her own claim because it is what connects (synthesizes) it with the *other* claims that contribute to its meaning, so that whenever one understands a judgment—

conceiving it in relation to its premises, consequences, and incompatibilities—one is implicitly recognizing oneself.

The unity of the subject is the highest standard to which all judgments must be compared. A judgment is ultimately *correct* just if it conforms to the unity of the apperceptive subject and *incorrect* if it does not. A judgment conforms to this unity just if it fits together synthetically with the other judgments to which the subject is already committed. The highest law is that the subject not be contrary to herself. In order to respect that law, the subject cannot endorse contrary commitments about one and the same object in one and the same respect. Beyond this, she must insist that all the commitments she holds exhibit a rational inferential unity with one another. Two judgments must not be merely *compatible* (non-contrary), but in fact expressible in terms of, and derivable from, one another in order for the subject to be committed to both. Otherwise the subject would be committed to a mere *aggregate* of claims, which would not allow her to recuperate her own analytic unity through her representation of them. The activity of apperception is the synthesis of such an inferential network of judgments, the formulation of a rational webbing of unity across a manifold of disparate commitments.

Nevertheless, the analytic unity of herself with herself that the apperceptive subject presupposes and constantly recuperates from experience should not be understood as a metaphysical *fact* about her. For Kant, the subject is not a substance in the Cartesian sense. Rather, this self-identity should be understood *pragmatically* in terms of the very apperceptive *activity* that its presupposition allows the subject to perform, namely, that of rational synthesis. Performing this activity requires and expresses the subject's *commitment* to her own analytic unity, her *representation* of herself as such a unity. This *metacommitment* to her own self-identity is what allows the subject to understand every other commitment about the world of experience she might acquire because it is what enables her to represent commitments together with their inferential entailments. But just because the subject is required to *represent* herself as an analytic unity does not mean she actually is one. The necessity of this metacommitment has no metaphysical force at all. All that is needed is for every subject-perspective to

treat herself *as if* she were a self-identical substance—whether she really is or not is neither knowable nor in any way relevant to the epistemic force of self-recognition.

The activity of apperception is, in this way, characterized by a certain transcendental circularity. On the one hand, the subject institutes synthetic unity among all her conceptual commitments about experience only by *presupposing* her own analytic identity of herself with herself. But on the other hand, she *creates* that analytic identity only by representing the very synthetic unity in experience that the presupposition of her identity institutes. There is thus a way in which the subject pulls herself up by her own bootstraps, but it is important to realize that even though she herself *makes* herself what she is by *taking* herself to be such, what she is has no hypostatic reality at all—it exists *only* in the sphere of her own representation.

Understanding anything at all relies essentially on the activity of apperception. The minimal unit of understanding is judgment, since it is the minimal assertable to which the judge may commit herself. Committing to, and so understanding, a judgment is inferentially integrating it with its rational premises and consequences. Doing that involves representing the overarching requirement that all one's judgments fit together rationally within a unified inferential network. And representing that requirement is representing one's *own* analytic identity with oneself—that is, performing the activity of apperception.

4. *Conceptual Correctness and the Categories as Metalogical Rules of Inference in General*

This analysis of the understanding and apperception puts us in a position to better appreciate Kant's transcendental thesis that a judgment is correct, not because it refers successfully to its object, but, rather, because it conforms to the standard set by the *concept* that it includes and adduces. 'That's red', e.g., is correct or incorrect *not* in light of the supposedly extra-cognitive condition of the object to which the pronoun refers, but in light of the verdict of the *concept* of 'redness.' But while I hope to have argued successfully that Kant's transcendental idealism commits him to this conceptual theory of correctness, I have not yet been in a position to say what being "correct according to concepts" really involves. This status has so far been left as a blackbox

term without concrete determination. But the new accounts of understanding and apperception put me in a position to provide a determinate account of conceptual correctness.

A judgment is *correct* according to its concept just if it may be successfully integrated into the constellation of other judgments to which one is committed, retaining the rational unity through which the judge may recognize herself (performing the activity of apperception). Conversely, a judgment is *incorrect* according to its concept if commitment to it would violate the rational unity through which apperception may be performed. As Kant puts it,

...a judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the **objective** unity of apperception. That is the aim of the copula **is** in them: to distinguish the objective unity of given representations from the subjective. For this word designates the relation of the representations to the original apperception and its **necessary unity**, even if the judgment itself is empirical, hence contingent, e.g., “Bodies are heavy.” By that, to be sure, I do not mean to say that these representations **necessarily** belong **to one another** in the empirical intuition, but rather that they belong to one another **in virtue of the necessary unity** of the apperception... (*KrV*, B141-2; 251-2).

The idea here is that the objectivity, and so the correctness, of a judgment is ultimately a matter of its conformity to apperception. Only those judgments with the kind of syntactical coherence in themselves *and* the sort of inferential coherence with others that enables the subject to recuperate her own unity from the totality of her manifold experiences are correct and correctness is nothing other than conformity to the possibility of apperception. Since concepts are the standards or rules through which these correctnesses are articulated, it follows that they are always expressions of apperceptive unity—explicitly saying what it takes for a certain judgment to be inferentially unified with others so that the subject may recuperate her own unity from experience.

Furthermore, the distinction between *pure* and *empirical* concepts may also be interpreted on this basis. Empirical concepts (redness, heaviness, four-leggedness, etc.) define inferential interactions of distinct sets of judgments—stating what it takes for this particular set to exhibit the unity characteristic of apperception. The pure concepts of the understanding (categories), by contrast, articulate the rules by which *any* judgment must abide by if it is to be inferentially coherent with *any* other judgment. This is to say, the categories are *metaconcepts* that describe the rules of rational-inferential integration *in general*, expressing the normative agenda

of concepts *as such*, while empirical concepts describe the rules of particular regions of this process—defining dynamically evolving sets of criteria whose particular norms change on the basis of how they are used to fulfill a subject-perspective’s *universal* normative requirement of self-recognition.

This interpretation of the categories as metaconcepts expressive of the rules according to which rational-inferential integrations *in general* are possible is indebted to Brandom’s reading of Kant. On this topic, Brandom argues that one knows (implicitly) how to apply the categories just so long as one knows how to use concepts *at all*:

”[One] of Kant’s master ideas... is [his] realization that in addition to concepts whose principal use is to describe and explain empirical goings on, there are concepts that play the distinctive expressive role of articulating features of the framework that makes description and explanation possible. These ‘pure concepts of the Understanding’ are... metaconcepts: concepts whose job it is to express key features of the use and content of the ground-level empirical and practical concepts... Because these categorial concepts make explicit what is implicit in the use of *any* of the determinately contentful concepts applied in judging and acting intentionally, there are no *particular* empirical or practical concepts that one must grasp or have applied in order implicitly to grasp what the categorial concepts make explicit... In this sense, grasp of these higher-order concepts is *a priori*. Their contents are available independently of any particular use of ground-level concepts” (Brandom 2019, 4-5).

According to the foregoing interpretation, the “ground-level” concepts that describe and explain empirical experience function to articulate particular *inferential* norms: functioning in concert with the other concepts a given judgment includes, the concept of ‘red’ determines the inferential relations it would be correct to attribute to a judgment inclusive of this concept. By contrast, the metaconceptual categories determine the rules governing inferential relations *in general*, fixing and constituting the forms a judgment must exhibit if it to qualify for inferential articulation at all. In this way, the categories play an *a priori* role in determining *any* judgment we are capable of understanding because understanding a judgment involves integrating it into its distinctive inferential network, and the categories define the constraints on inferential activity in general.

III. The Semantogenic Force of Inference and Apperception

In this section, I argue that a judgment’s semantic content not only *involves* but in fact reflects *nothing other than* its inferential role with respect to the other judgments to which the subject is committed. Meaning, for Kant, is an *entirely* inferential affair, so that the apperceptive activity of integrating a novel claim into its

inferential network plays a *semantogenic*⁶¹ role for that judgment, conferring upon it the very meaning to which the subject commits when she integrates it. To make a case for the semantogenic significance of inference, I first present the problematic to which this thesis is a response, showing Kant's theory of sensibility to commit him to the claim that sensible appearances may appear only as the contents of possible judgments. Then I develop a revised theory of inference, borrowed from Wilfrid Sellars, which is suitable to cope with the conceptual articulation of sensible contents—the primary, semantogenic type of inference for Kant is material, not formal, inference. Finally, I show the semantic contents of judgments, including their descriptive (nonlogical) contents, to be conferred *exclusively* by their material inferential relations.

1. *The Inferential Articulation of the Sensible*

The last section demonstrated that every judgment is inferentially articulated, so that understanding judgments involves integrating them into their distinctive inferential networks through repeated acts of apperception. On its own, this description of understanding and semantic content is not all that radical. The idea that we would not count a judge as understanding her claim if she did not have *some* grasp of its inferential involvements accords more or less completely with commonsense. But, as I read him, Kant takes things substantially further than this, arguing that a judgment's semantic content—including its descriptive, nonlogical, or *sensible* content—is conferred by *nothing other than* its inferential involvements. Properly understood, apperception, or inferential integration, is not only *necessary* for conferring meaning on judgments—it is *sufficient* for doing so as well.

⁶¹ I borrow the term 'semantogenic' from Brandom's *A Spirit of Trust*. For him it is something of a throw-away term, invoked just four times (on pp. 97, 200, 201, and 659) primarily to explain the role of the inverted world in the "Force and the Understanding" chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, I will take over the term and use it a little more systematically than Brandom does. For my purposes, semantogenesis characterizes any process that is sufficient and necessary for conferring semantic content on the object of that process. Plato's *eidoi*, for example, are semantogenic for the ordinary objects found in the world: an ordinary couch is the object that it is, and not some other one, just because it is determined by the Form of Couch, and we *cognize* this couch and all other couches just by recollecting the Form. Similarly, Aristotle's four causes, but especially the final cause, play a semantogenic role for the objects of which they are causes. On my line, the properly semantogenic process for judgments and their objects is apperceptive inferential integration—a judgment means what it means *just* because it stands implicitly in the (material) inferential relations it does, so that this meaning simply reflects these implicit relations. In the following chapter, we will see that the properly semantogenic process of inferential integration, performed by the understanding relies on a sort of *quasi*-semantogenesis performed by the imagination. But even this quasi-semantogenesis will turn out, in the end, to be simply a different expression of the very same inferential process of semantogenesis proper.

Understanding a judgment such as ‘That’s red’ is typically assumed to involve not only a grasp of that judgment’s inferential involvements, but also a subsumption of certain *sense data*. Knowing what ‘red’ means is not only a matter of understanding the way the judgments it determines relate as reasons to one another and to other judgments; it also involves *perceiving* something like the “raw feels” that line up with the things that will ultimately be called red. Roughly speaking, the inferential involvements of a judgment are thought to determine only its *logical* content—the fact, e.g., that ‘That’s red’ is a categorical, affirmative, assertoric, and particular judgment inferentially articulated in ways defined by these universal categories. While, by contrast, the nonlogical semantic content—the descriptive *sense* of redness—relies essentially on the “raw feels” sucked in by perception. The logical and nonlogical content are combined by some sort of process of subsumption to constitute the complete semantic value of the sentence.

Kant entirely rejects this view. His big idea about intuition—the axial thesis in this region that sets him apart from both his empiricist and rationalist predecessors—is that the sensible dimension of experience may appear to us only if it is *already* suitable for conceptual articulation. Perceptions are not converted from “raw feels” to judgeable contents by some sort of intermediating process;⁶² they rather come to us *already* as such contents. Exhibiting the pre-conceptual structure of judgeable contents is the primary condition of the possibility of the appearance of sensible appearances in general. For, perhaps the main point that Kant has to make in the Transcendental Aesthetic is that, while the matter of a sensible appearance may be given *a posteriori*, “its form must all lie ready for it in the mind *a priori*” (*KrV*.B34/A20.156), so that the forms of the sensible appearances *themselves* are nothing other than the forms of the subjective *faculty* of sensible intuition.⁶³ The pure form of sensible intuition is *spatiotemporality* (where this term may refer to either time alone or space and time together),⁶⁴ and—as the Schematism takes great pains to establish—time exhibits the structure it does just

⁶² While the faculty of imagination is often construed to perform something very similar to this sort of “intermediating process,” subsuming raw perceptions under the concepts that make them intelligible, Kant has a very different (though still mediate) role in mind for this faculty.

⁶³ *KrV*.B36/A22.157.

⁶⁴ *KrV*.A39/B56.166.

because it conforms to concepts,⁶⁵ while concepts, as I have been elaborating, are essentially, not accidentally, functions of judgments. Thus, sensible appearances do not appear *at all* except as possible judgeable concepts.

But what exactly does it mean for sensible contents to appear necessarily as judgeable contents? The same reasoning that caused us to assert that concepts feature essentially (not accidentally) in judgments, while judgments feature essentially (not accidentally) in inferences, leads us to construe sensible appearances as *essentially* (not accidentally) contents of concepts, and so of judgments, and so of *inferences*. It is somehow endemic to the very idea of sensible appearances that they be *inferential* contents. Qualifying for appearance in the sensible domain at all means playing some sort of role in the rational inferential activity of apperception.

Now, if it is essential to sensible appearances that they feature in inferences, then it must be essential to the inferences in which they feature that they contain the sensible contents they do. Standard theories of inference take the descriptive contents of the component judgments to be irrelevant to the inferential force of the arguments in which those judgments are included. The inference is standardly supposed to proceed according to purely formal proprieties, and the descriptive (sensible) contents are supposed to occur vacuously in the component claims (which is why those contents can often be swapped out for letters like *P* and *Q*). It cannot be *in this* type of purely formal inference that sensible appearances necessarily feature in order to qualify as appearances. For in the case of formal inferences, it is essential to neither the sensible contents nor the inferences in which they feature that the inference contains these and not other sensible contents. Thus, Kant's theory of sensible content is to stand up, then there must be another, non-formal type of inference with transcendental significance.

2. Sellars and Material Inference

In his often overlooked essay "Inference and Meaning," Wilfrid Sellars discovers a new species of inference that does exactly the job we need inference to do—namely, *material inferences*. I will discuss Sellars's theory of material inferences here and then explain why it must be the type of inference that plays the essential role in the activity of apperception.

⁶⁵ *KrV*.B178/A139.272.

As discussed above, we typically conceive inference as a thoroughly *formal* affair. On this line, I am capable of inferring one proposition from another only in virtue of the *formal* proprieties that pertain to it.

Typical cases include:

1. “If it is raining, then the streets will be wet. It is raining; so the streets will be wet.”
2. “If Abby is Beto’s full-sister and Carter is Beto’s full-brother, then Abby is Carter’s sister. Abby is Beto’s full-sister; Carter is Beto’s full-brother; therefore Abby is Carter’s sister.”
3. “All humans are mortal; Socrates is a human; therefore Socrates is mortal.”

Each of these arguments is valid in virtue of its form and, as such, may be expressed in purely symbolic terms:

1. $R \rightarrow W, R \mid - W$
2. $S \ \& \ B \rightarrow F, S, B \mid - F$
3. $\forall x(Hx \rightarrow Mx), Ha \mid - Ma$

Each of these sequents expresses the inferential form of the argument to which its number corresponds. They are *formal* in the sense that they are valid no matter what descriptive contents we substitute for each of the nonlogical symbols they involve, so long as we always substitute like contents for like and the logical vocabulary remains constant. As Sellars puts it (paraphrasing Quine),⁶⁶ “descriptive terms occur *vacuously* in logically valid arguments” (Sellars 1953, 319).

Sellars, however, defends another kind of inference “whose correctnesses,” as Brandom puts it, “*essentially* involve the conceptual contents of its premises and conclusions” (Brandom 1994, 97—*emphasis added*). After christening this type of inference “*material* inference” (following Sellars), Brandom goes on:

As examples, consider the inference from “Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia” to “Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh,” the inference from “Today is Wednesday” to “Tomorrow will be Thursday,” and that from “Lightning is seen now” to “Thunder will be heard soon.” It is the contents of the concepts *West* and *East* that make the first a good inference, the contents of the concepts *Wednesday*, *Thursday*, *today* and *tomorrow* that make the second inference correct, and the contents of the concepts *lightning* and *thunder*, as well as the temporal concepts, that underwrite the third. Endorsing these inferences is part of grasping or mastering those concepts, quite apart from any specifically logical competence (Brandom 1994, 97-98).

The Sellarsian point here is that—taken just as they are articulated—no specifically *formal* (i.e., *logical*) proprieties intervene to make these inferences good. Were I to translate them into a symbolic language, they would all

⁶⁶ See, Quine (1934).

show up as invalid. Nevertheless, each of them obviously *is* valid. What makes these inferences good, then, is not their logical form but their material contents: it is by understanding the descriptive meanings of the particular terms constituting these sentences that we come to grasp the correctnesses of the inferences in which they are involved. We make material inferences of this kind every day (far more often than we make formal inferences), and, for this and other reasons, Sellars argues that “Material rules [of inference] are as essential to meaning (and hence to language and thought) as formal rules, contributing to the architectural detail of its structure within the flying buttresses of logical form” (Sellars 1953, 317), so that we can get by without material rules of inference no more than we can without formal ones.

The immediate objection to Sellars’s point is that each of the so-called material inferences cited above can be interpreted to be formally valid if we take them as enthymemes with suppressed conditional premises. So the inference from “Today is Wednesday” to “Tomorrow will be Thursday” is good, *not* in virtue of the nonlogical conceptual contents of its descriptive terms, but rather because it involves the suppressed conditional premise that “*If* today is Wednesday, *then* tomorrow will be Thursday.” The inference that we had called material, then, was really just an instance of the application of the formal inferential rule of conditional detachment. The majority of Sellars’s essay consists in defending his notion of material inference against this formalist objection. The gist of his argument is that certain linguistic formulations that are practically indispensable to all natural languages cannot be understood to express anything other than materially good inferences. The linguistic formulations that Sellars has in mind are subjunctive conditionals with nonlogical contents.

He makes this point by considering, first, subjunctive conditionals that are true on obviously *formal* grounds, pointing out that the conditional statement “‘If anything were red and square, it would be red’ cannot plausibly be claimed to assert the same as ‘(In point of fact) all red and square things are red’” (Sellars 1953, 323). While the latter sentence simply states a fact (affirming no logical connection between the subject and predicate), the former “conveys the same information as the logical rule permitting the inference of *x is red* from *x is red and x is square* [which is itself] a derivative logical rule, a special case of [a] logical rule proper, which... of course does not single out the terms *red* and *square*” (Sellars 1953, 323). In other words, since the

subjunctive conditional asserts the subject-clause ‘If anything were red and square...’ as a *reason* for the truth of the predicate-clause ‘...then it would be red,’ it relies on a *rule of inference*; and since this rule is just a particular instance of a formal conditional tautology (in which the identity of descriptive vocabulary is retained, like being substituted for like), the rule of inference that the subjunctive conditional relies upon is clearly a formal or *logical* one.

After procuring our agreement to the general idea that subjunctive conditionals express rules of inference by showing us that certain of them express *logical* rules of inference, Sellars goes on to prove that we’ve already committed ourselves to the idea that other subjunctive conditionals express *material* rules of inference: “...such subjunctive conditionals as ‘If I *had released* this piece of chalk, it *would have fallen*’, and ‘If there *were to be* a flash of lightning, there *would be* thunder’... [must be interpreted] as expressions of *material* rules of inference” (Sellars 1953, 323). Since these sentences are syntactically recognizable as subjunctive conditionals, we are already committed to the claim that they express rules of inference. But since the consequents do not substitute like for like descriptive vocabulary, it is clear that this rule of inference cannot be *logical* but must rather be *material*. In other words, whereas the *formally* good subjunctive conditional ‘If anything were red and square, it would be red’ expresses a logical inference rule that relies on the fact that ‘red’ = ‘red,’ the *materially* good subjunctive conditionals cannot express such a logical rule because ‘releasing this piece of chalk’ ≠ ‘falling’ and ‘lightning flashing’ ≠ ‘thunder sounding.’ The inferences that these subjunctive conditionals express, then, are not good in virtue of a recourse to logical tautology; they must rather invoke *material* rules of inferences. The point, then, is that the practitioners of any language that treats nonlogical subjunctive conditionals as expressively necessary (i.e., all natural language users) must also be committed to the claim “not only that [such subjunctive conditionals] are the expression of material rules of inference, but that the authority of these rules is not derivative from formal rules” (Sellars 1953, 325).

The idea, ultimately, is not that material inferences *cannot* be formally cashed out by providing a covering conditional premise, but rather that nonlogical subjunctive conditionals—which, as Sellars points out, play a “key role... in the sciences, both formal and empirical, in detective work, and in the ordinary course of living” (Sellars 1953, 323)—cannot be interpreted to express anything *other* than material inferences. Sellars

spends the latter half of his essay demonstrating this point, showing no logical subjunctive conditional to be capable of saying just what its material correlate says.

3. *The Semantogenic Force of Material Inference*

I think Kant's theory of sensible intuition—introduced in the Aesthetic and elaborated in the Deduction, the Schematism, and the Principles—commits him to endorsing material inference as the type of synthetic activity primarily involved in apperception, prioritizing it over its formal counterpart for purposes of cognition. For, that theory construes sensible appearances as essentially, not accidentally, possible descriptive contents of concepts, and so of judgments, and so of *inferences*, and the type of inference that essentially involves the descriptive contents of its component claims is none other than material inference.

There is much to say about the consequences this reduction of sensible appearances to inferential contents has for the appearances themselves—much of this dissertation will be devoted to unfolding them—but the real cash value of accepting the cognitive priority of material inference consists in the ready route it provides to a thoroughly *inferentialist* theory of semantic content. What one understands when one understands a judgment, we may now confidently assert, not only involves but is in fact *nothing other than* its distinctive material inferential relation to the other judgments to which one is committed.

On traditional formalist theories of inference, which take all good inferences to be logically valid, the nonlogical propositional content of any judgment must be understood in representationalist terms: while the proprieties of inference governing a judgment may be determined discursively, its nonlogical *contents* are decided by acts of raw sensible apprehension. An independent sensible capacity is required to “fill in” conceptual-sentential niches defined by a rigorously formalistic capacity of understanding, and the manifolds that come to fill these niches are irrelevant to the inferential value of the judgment.⁶⁷ Since only individual concepts, and not judgments, can be reasonably said to have sensible correlates, the formalist theory of inference, paired inextricably with an extensionalist semantics, inevitably leads back to a regressive subsumptive epistemology that makes mere conceptual *labeling* prior to apperceptive (committive, self-recognitive) acts of judgment. For

⁶⁷ For a summary of his extensionalism, see Carnap (1950).

this reason, Kant's inferentialist theory of normativity and his commitment to the priority of the propositional require him to reject a formalist theory of inference and its corresponding extensionalist semantics.

By contrast, the current Sellarsian theory that endorses not only the reality of material rules of inference but also their expressive *priority* over formal rules provides a clear route to an inferentialist semantics compatible with the priority of the propositional. Since the propriety of any material inference is essentially decided by the propositional contents of the judgments that it involves, propositional contents themselves come reciprocally into view as descriptions of the *material inferential positions* of the judgments to which they pertain. In other words, since any given proposition *P* stands in relations of entailment with other propositions *Q*, *R*, and *S* on the basis of its propositional content, understanding *P*'s propositional content is equivalent to grasping its distinct *inferential* position with respect to *Q*, *R*, and *S*. The claim 'Tom is a cat,' for example, stands in three sets of material inferential relations: it stands 1) in relations of material incompatibility with, e.g., 'Tom has feathers,' 'Tom speaks French,' and 'Tom is cold blooded;' 2) as a *premise* in relations of material entailment with, e.g., 'Tom is a mammal,' 'Tom is an animal,' and 'Tom is a living being;' and 3) as a *consequence* in relations of material entailment with, e.g., 'Tom is an alleycat,' 'Tom is a tabby,' and 'Tom is Sally's pet cat.' Since the distinct inferential role the claim plays in each of these three sets is determined by its *propositional content*, it should be clear that grasping this inferential role at least *involves* grasping the content.

Sellars's thesis is that the reverse is also true (and indeed primary): the propositional content of any claim *P* is in fact a *function*, or *expression*, of its inferential position. This means that understanding the propositional content of a given sentence—i.e., grasping its *sense*, what it is *saying*—is *nothing other than* grasping its distinct position in the inferential network in which it is situated, the unique role it plays with respect to the three sets of material inferential relations enumerated above. So the propositional content of 'Tom is a cat'—what one understands when one understands it—is *nothing other than* the *inferential function* that this sentence has. Understanding the sentence is just understanding 1) the *other* sentences that may be appropriately inferred from it, 2) the other sentences from which *it* may be appropriately inferred, and 3) those with which it is materially incompatible.

On this interpretation of semantic content, apperception comes into view as a properly *semantogenic* activity. The process of self-consciously *committing* to the correctness of some judgment *P*, and of taking *responsibility* for that commitment by synthesizing *P* with the other judgments to which one is already self-consciously committed, lining it up with and endorsing its material inferential premises and consequences *Q*, *R*, and *S*, extruding material incompatibilities from this evolving network of commitments, is not only *necessary* but also *sufficient* for conferring semantic content on *P*. For, this analysis has demonstrated that the semantic content of any judgment is nothing other than a reflection of the distinctive material inferential role it plays with respect to the other judgments to which the subject is self-consciously committed, so that the “meaning” of the judgment—what one understands when one understands it—is nothing other than the way in which these material inferential involvements are *implicit* in the given claim. And, as the last section argued, the process of synthesizing a given judgment with its inferential involvements is none other than apperception or self-recognition. Thus, apperception, the act of adopting commitment to a judgment and recognizing oneself as committed, has the necessary result of conferring semantic content on the judgment to which one commits oneself, accomplishing the *semantogenic* process of material inferential synthesis.

IV. Conclusion: What Is Apperception?

This chapter initiated my portrait of Kant’s theory of cognition. After presenting my rational reconstruction of the second version of the Transcendental Deduction, construing apperception as an act of metasensible self-recognition through given intuitions, I provided a more concrete account of conceptual activity in the terms of contemporary linguistic pragmatism. To know anything at all is to judge, and to judge is to commit oneself to the judged content. Doing that involves assuming responsibility for the *correctness* of that content and recognizing oneself as so responsible. Vindicating this responsibility means proving the judgment to accord with the analytic unity one takes oneself to be by inferentially integrating it with all the other judgments to which one is committed, constituting a synthetic unity of experience compatible one’s own self-identity. The activity of apperception is circular and self-reinforcing. On the one hand, the subject institutes synthetic-inferential unity in experience *because* she presupposes her own analytic unity of herself with herself. But on the other hand, she represents her own analytic self-identity *because* she institutes synthetic-inferential

unity in experience. Her representation of her analytic unity is warranted and engendered by her representation of the very synthetic-inferential unity of experience that its presupposition institutes.

Beyond this, I attempted to show the process of apperception to have a *semantogenic* effect on the judgments through which it is enacted. To count as *understanding* a judgment—as opposed to merely parroting it—one must have an implicit grasp of the inferential relations in which that judgment is involved, appreciating what follows from it, what it follows from, and with what it is incompatible. This observation proves grasping a judgment’s inferential relations to be *necessary* for understanding its semantic content, but since the nonlogical or descriptive dimension of semantic content is typically understood to play no role in its inferential value, grasping the complete meaning of a judgment is assumed to involve more than *just* a representation of its inferential involvements—contributions from raw perceptual experience are also thought to be required. But as I read Kant’s theory of intuition, sensible appearances are essentially, not accidentally, contents of possible inferences, so that one cannot represent such appearances except insofar as they contribute to a synthetic-inferential articulation of experience. This leads to the conclusion that understanding the semantic content of any judgment—including its descriptive, nonlogical content—involves nothing other than representing its distinctive inferential relations, so that the process of *instituting* those relations, namely, apperception, is *sufficient* and necessary for conferring semantic content on the inferentially articulated judgment. The type of inferential relation that one must grasp, in order to count as understanding a judgment, is *material* rather than formal. A material inference is one that involves the descriptive contents of its component judgments *essentially* (rather than vacuously). The subject’s act of apperception is semantogenic for the judgments through which it is enacted because, in committing to and taking responsibility for such judgments (by apperceptively integrating them into the complete constellation of other judgments to which she is also committed), the subject actively synthesizes the material inferential relations that confer semantic contents upon them.

Semantic content is involved in the same pattern of self-reinforcing circularity that characterizes the analytic unity of the subject. On the one hand, the semantic content of any judgment *P* is conferred by nothing other than its material inferential relations, and it has the relations it has because the subject apperceptively integrates it into the synthetic unity of other judgments to which she is committed in the distinctive way she

does—so *P*'s semantic content is a *consequence* of apperception. But on the other hand, the subject integrates *P* into her material inferential system of judgments just because she commits to and takes responsibility for its correctness, and this commitment involves grasping its semantic content in advance—so understanding *P*'s semantic content in advance is a *condition* of the very activity of apperception that confers that content.

Apperception as a whole is a multi-dimensional circus of an activity whose every component both presupposes and contributes to the institution of the others. By presupposing her own analytic identity with herself, the subject institutes a synthetic unity of experience, thereby generating a warrant for the very analytic identity she presupposed. By committing to the correctness of a judgment, the subject integrates it into the constellation of other judgments that confer upon it the very meaning to whose correctness she committed herself. The subject commits to a judgment just by taking responsibility for its material compatibility with her other commitments, and this involves representing herself as an analytic unity—a locus of identity to which multiplicity must conform—and she represents herself as an analytic unity just by taking responsibility for her judgments, making them materially compatible with her other commitments. Every dimension of the process leads both to and from the others—no component can be separated from the broader unity of the activity.

Chapter Three

Material Incompatibility, Sensible Contents, and the Faculty of the Imagination

In the last chapter, I began painting my rational portrait of cognition. The purpose of this portrait is to discover if the judgment of taste plays an essential role in Kant's transcendental philosophy, such that, without it, neither empirical nor pure cognitions would be possible. If it does, then we will be obliged to address the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement directly. If it does not, then we will be free to quarantine Kant's aesthetic theory, which will have been proven inessential, from his transcendental epistemology, protecting the fundamental core of the critical philosophy from its disruptive supplement. The last chapter used a rational reconstruction of the B Deduction to present a portrait of one of the faculties involved in the judgment of taste, viz., the understanding, but so far I have said nothing about the other—the imagination.

This chapter will take up the missing account, defining the role of the imagination in cognition. I have presented understanding as a matter of grasping distinctive patterns of material inferences. To understand a judgment—the minimal unit of cognition—is to represent it in conformity with its concepts, and these concepts function to signify the *other* judgments from which the given one materially follows and which materially follow from it. Now, as we have seen, material inferences are distinguished by being made on the basis of the (sensible) descriptive contents of their component judgments. But what exactly does that mean? How could sensible contents exert any *inferential* force on the judgments of which they are contents? Asking this question leads the way to the imagination.

This chapter contains three sections. In the first, I will explore the question of the inferential force of sensible contents, and, following Brandom again, I will argue that material inferences are underwritten by a semantically prior notion of *material incompatibility*. Some judgment Q is a consequence of another judgment P just if everything materially incompatible with P is also materially incompatible with Q . So whereas formal inferences rely on prior representations of covering conditional premises, material inferences rely on prior representations of material *incompatibility* relations—what I will call incompatibility fields. Formal incompatibility takes the form contradiction, while material incompatibility holds among Aristotelian contraries.

This discussion of material incompatibility will be based in an analysis of the Transcendental Aesthetic, where I will argue that spatiotemporality is essentially a medium of *contrariety*.

In the second section, I will argue that the imagination is the faculty whose job is to represent the material incompatibility fields that underwrite the material *inferential* work of the understanding. Examining the account of the reproductive synthesis in the A Deduction, in which Kant argues that sensible appearances must stand with one another in relations of mutual reproduction, I will defend *contrariety* as the paradigmatic reproductive relation. I will go on to show that the distinctive work of the imagination, what it does that no other faculty can do, is to represent appearances in their reproductive fields of contraries, identifying those fields as *images*. Imagining appearances embedded in their fields of *contraries* (or images) is representing them in mutual relations of material incompatibility that underwrite the understanding.

In the third section, I present a sketch of how the imagination, through its representation of incompatibility, functions together with the understanding, through its assertion of material inferences, to produce complete acts of cognition, completing my portrait of self-consciousness.

I. The Inferential Force of Sensible Contents

This section introduces the main problem with material inference, viz., how can descriptive contents exert inferential force? It contends that material inference is underwritten by a notion of material incompatibility, and, through an analysis of the Transcendental Aesthetic, shows sensible intuitions to stand necessarily in incompatibility relations—constituting “manifolds” of contrary appearances. A subject-perspective represents the sensible contents of a given judgment, I go on to argue, by representing the judgment itself in relations of material incompatibility with manifold *other* judgments. While a subject-perspective represents her judgment in accordance with its concepts by synthesizing it with its inferential premises and consequence, she represents it with respect to its sensible content by embedding it in its incompatibility relations. Doing that, I finally argue, is rooting the judgment in an “incompatibility field” with its manifold contraries.

1. *The Problem of Material Inference*

How do we make material inferences so as to understand judgments, constitute a synthetic unity of experience, and recognize ourselves as apperceptive unities? What drives this particular type of rational activity? Where do material inferences derive their inferential *force*? Answering this next volley of questions requires comparing material to formal inference again.

Consider the following inferences:

1. *Premise*: It is raining (P). *Conclusion*: The streets will be wet (Q).
2. *Premise*: Poe is a raven (P). *Conclusion*: Poe is a bird (Q).
3. *Premise*: Lightning flashes now (P). *Conclusion*: Thunder will sound later (Q).

Each of these inferences is good: anyone committed to the premises (P) ought to be committed to the conclusions (Q). But there are at least two ways of explaining *why* they are good. The formalist method is to infer in all three cases a suppressed premise of the form 'If P , then Q ' ($P \rightarrow Q$). A subject-perspective is supposed to have a *prior* knowledge of these conditionals, so that, when met in experience with the antecedents, she may deploy formal rules of conditional detachment to infer the consequents. On this line, the inferences are understood according to purely logical proprieties of inference. But the alternate, materialist method of account is to assert that the inferences are good in virtue of the descriptive contents of the claims themselves. On this line, it is not that the suppressed conditionals must be implicitly invoked *in order* to make the inferences, but rather that these conditionals become expressible only *because* we make the material inferences we do. We endorse the conditionals as a consequence, rather than a condition, of the inferences.

If we accept the legitimacy of this latter, materialist means of explanation, as I have argued that we should and Kant does, then we stand in need of some account of exactly *how* the material inference is made. On the formalist line, endorsing the inferences from P to Q involves mastering a slew of conditional claims of the form $P \rightarrow Q$. One must understand both what these conditionals mean and the logical vocabulary involved in applying them (rules of conditional detachment), so that all formal inferences are grounded on a bedrock of conditional claims which drive and enable them. But if we adopt the alternate line, then we deny that one must have mastered conditional claims in advance to endorse material inferences. The descriptive contents

themselves drive the inferences. So what sort of enabling ground stands in the place of this “bedrock of conditionals” for *material* inferences? How and in what way could descriptive contents exert an inferential force on the judgments of which they are contents?

For Kant, the descriptive contents of judgments—at least in the realm of possible experience—are always contributed by the faculty of sensible intuition. That’s what Kant means to communicate when he makes claims like: “In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition” (*KrV*, A19/B33; 155). Just as the logical content of a judgment may ultimately be attributed to its concepts, so must the nonlogical, descriptive content of the judgment ultimately be contributed by sensibility. So if the inferential force of material inferences is in some way exerted by the *descriptive* contents of the component judgments, then the faculty of sensibility plays an essential role in constituting that force. How could the sensible contents of a judgment ever exert a specifically *inferential* force?

2. *Space, Time, and Contrariety: What are Sensible Contents?*

To address this question, we need to begin a little further back along the explanatory line, asking first: What are sensible contents? How are they represented? Once we have these more elemental questions about under control, we may ask about the role of such contents in inference.

The central claim driving Kant’s theory of intuition is that all appearances, even such apparently speculative ones as the disciplines of mathematics and metaphysics employ, are conditioned by the pure, *a priori* forms of sensible intuition—space and time.⁶⁸ While only some appearances have a *matter* (contributed by sensation), all of them have a form. The *form* is more important than the matter, because “it is that which allows the manifold of appearances to be intuited” at all. Without their form, appearances would not appear to us, and if they did not do this, they would not be appearances—for it pertains to the definition of an appearance to appear.⁶⁹ As we know, “there are two forms of sensible intuition... namely space and time” (*KrV*, B36/A22,

⁶⁸ Kant defends this claim most explicitly in §V of the first *Critique’s* B Introduction, explaining that even judgments of mathematics, pure natural science, and metaphysics are synthetic because they rely on concepts of succession and simultaneity (among others) that could only have been derived from prior representation of space and time (*KrV*, B14-B19, 143-146).

⁶⁹ For a defense of the claim that appearances appear by definition, see, Abela (2002) and Langton (1998).

157). Hence, while exhibiting a *matter* is accidental to the being of an appearance, it is essential and necessary that every appearance conform to the form of spatiotemporality (where this term designates either time or space and time).

Kant's discussion of the principles and topography of space and time is long and elaborate, but one of the chief points he is concerned to defend is that spatiotemporality is a medium for apprehending and organizing *contrariety*. It hosts *manifolds* of contrary appearances and prepares them for cognition under a concept. Beginning with space, Kant writes:

...in order for certain sensations to be related to something outside me (i.e., to something in another place in space from that in which I find myself), thus in order for me to represent them as outside <and next to> one another, thus not merely as different but as in different places, the representation of space must already be their ground. [... Therefore space] is essentially single... [but there is] a manifold in it. (*KrV*, A23/B38 - B39/A25; 174-175).

Space is the ground of a specific sort of difference, and it thereby contains a manifold. The type of difference of which space is the ground may be none other than contrariety.⁷⁰ Some object-*x* may be in *either* place A or place B, or it may be in *neither*, but it may not be in *both* simultaneously. The two places are contrary to one another, but not formally contradictory. Thus, anything that conforms to the form of space conforms to a medium of contrariety.

The same is true of time. Kant writes:

...simultaneity or succession would not themselves come into perception if the representation of time did not ground them *a priori*. Only under its presupposition can one represent that several things exist at one and the same time (simultaneously) or in different times (successively)... It has only one dimension: different times are not simultaneous but successive... Different times are only part of one and the same time. (*KrV*, A30/B46 - A31/B47; 178 - 179).

Just like space, time grounds a certain sort of difference or manifoldness—this difference is captured in the forms of succession and simultaneity. The type of difference that time contains is likewise contrariety. An object-*x* can occupy *either* time A or time B, or it may occupy *neither*, but it may not occupy *both* simultaneously. The two times are contrary to one another, but not mutually contradictory. Space and time interact to constitute more complex relations of contrariety—two objects may occupy the same place, as long they do so at different

⁷⁰ For more on the historical origins of Kant's theory of spatiotemporality, see Adams (1994), Alexander (1956), Allison (1973), Cassirer (1902), and Jauernig (2008).

times, or the same time, as long as they are in different places. Both space and time are media of contrariety. It is *essential* to our representations of these forms that we represent them as such media.⁷¹

Thus, in order to appear, sensible appearances must be determined by contrariety. For this is an essential part of what it means to be spatiotemporal. Being “determined by contrariety” means standing in relations of contrariety with *other* appearances. Hence, to be a sensible appearance—to appear in sensible intuition at all—is to be contrary to other sensible appearances. Further, since a subject-perspective represents sensible appearances in their state of *appearing*—i.e., in accordance with the conditions of their appearance—just by representing them in accordance with the form of spatiotemporality, she represents the appearance of appearances by representing them embedded in their relations of contrariety. Thus, a sensible appearance is essentially, not accidentally, a *contrary* (namely, with respect to other sensible appearances), and a subject-perspective’s representation of sensible appearances in their state of appearing necessarily involves representing their relations of contrariety. This constitutes an *a priori* principle of appearance.

Another such principle arises from Kant’s foundational commitment to the priority of the propositional—namely, his view that the most minimal unit of cognition by which we are capable of having experience is the *judgment*, so that both the logical (pure conceptual) and the nonlogical (sensible) contents of judgments must be understood through the whole they contribute to constituting. As discussed in the last chapter, this commitment dispenses the requirement that sensible appearances be essentially judgeable contents, contributing descriptive contents to claims as a matter of transcendental necessity. Thus, on the one hand, Kant’s theory of spatiotemporality requires sensible appearances to be essentially, not accidentally, *contraries* (namely with respect to other such appearances). And, on the other hand, Kant’s theory of judgment requires sensible appearances to be essentially, not accidentally, contents of possible *judgments*.

These two principles complement and illuminate one another. For, it is a property of contrariety that it properly pertains only among two or more *judgments*, so that articulating the spatiotemporality of appearances necessarily involves inscribing those appearances within contrary judgments. As a shorthand, we often assert

⁷¹ For more on the principle claims of Kant’s theory of space and time, see Falkenstein (1991), Van Cleve (1999), Dunlop (2009), DiSalle (2006), and Hatfield (2006). For more on the particular importance of contrariety to this theory, see Buroker (1981).

that relations of contrariety hold among *concepts*. For example, all the color concepts are said to be contrary: red, green, blue, white, black, etc.. The colors are contrary because no one object- x may be *both* red *and* green in precisely the same respect, but it may be neither. Now, while there is nothing wrong with this shorthand as a way of speaking (and while I will continue to employ this shorthand), in the strictest terms no “free floating” concept is ever contrary to any other such concept. The concepts ‘...red’ and ‘...blue’ are not contrary to one another *in themselves*, but rather only when we inscribe them within at least minimally assertive *judgments* such as ‘ x is red’ and ‘ x is blue’ where x signifies the same object in the same respect. This is so because the definition of contrariety involves reference to *correctness*—two representations are contrary to one another just if one, the other, or neither may be correct but not both—and judgments are the most minimal representations that may be correct or incorrect.⁷²

So, since in order for appearances to appear, they must be represented in relations of (spatiotemporal) contrariety with one another, while contrariety is a relation that properly holds only among *judgments*, it follows that representing appearances according to the conditions of their appearance—representing them *as* appearances—involves embedding them as the contents of at least minimally assertive judgments. Whenever a subject-perspective represents sensible appearances, she necessarily represents judgments in relations of contrariety.

Conversely, two judgments are only ever directly contrary to one another on the basis of their sensible contents—they are not so in virtue of their logical forms. While formal contrariety is possible—as in, complex statement $((P \vee Q) \ \& \ \sim(P \ \& \ Q)) \vee \sim(P \vee Q)$ —they are never *directly* so on a purely formal basis. Affirming and representing the formal contrariety of two statements requires the recognition of a whole slew of *other* logical relations, and it typically requires representing the formally contrary statements in more immediate logical relations of contradiction. By contrast, *material* contrariety is direct and immediate: it is perhaps the *most* immediate relation holding between P and Q above when account is taken for their sensible contents. Moreover, *whenever* two statements are directly incompatible with one another on the basis of their sensible contents, the

⁷² For more on the necessary relation between judgment and normativity, see Boole (1854), Chignell (2007), Longuenesse (2001), and Reich (1992).

type of opposition that holds between them is contrariety: no two statements are materially contradictory because there is no such thing as material contradiction. Judgments of contrariety are ubiquitous in experience—they are involved in evaluating distances, telling time, distinguishing shapes, colors, and objects of all sorts. This ubiquitousness, paired with the fact that contraries are incompatible only on the basis of descriptive content and the fact that all materially incompatible statements are contraries, establishes *material* (rather than formal) contrariety as the paradigm case of this sort of opposition.

From these results, a preliminary definition of sensible appearances may be inferred. On the one hand, appearances appear only as the contents of contrary judgments. On the other hand, the contrariety of contrary judgments paradigmatically arises from the material contents of those judgments. Since appearances appear only as the contents of contrary judgments, while judgments are standardly contrary precisely on the basis of their descriptive contents, we may infer that sensible appearances are equivalent to the *contrariety* of contrary judgments. Appearances do not exist outside of this contrariety, and this contrariety does not exist outside of them. What one is representing when one represents sensible appearances is the relation of contrariety that holds among the judgment of which the appearances are contents and the other judgments with which the given judgment is incompatible. Conversely, whenever one represents the contrariety of contrary judgments one standardly represents sensible appearances. Sensible appearances, in other words, arise and exist in and as the exclusive but nonlogical *difference* holding among judgments.

3. *Material Incompatibility and the Quasi-Semantogenic Force of Contrariety*

Since contrariety is the only form of incompatibility that holds among judgments on the basis of sensible content, we may refer to it more generally as “material incompatibility.” Material incompatibility is the paradigm case of contrariety. The last subsection mobilized Kant’s theories of intuition and judgment to demonstrate that sensible appearances are nothing other than the *contrariety* that holds among materially incompatible judgments. On the one hand, relations of material incompatibility are not separable from the sensible contents that give rise to them, and, on the other hand, sensible contents are not separable from the relations of material incompatibility to which they give rise.

Now, since judgments derive their descriptive contents from the sensible appearances they contain, it follows that judgments somehow derive semantic content from their relations of material incompatibility with *other* judgments. To resurrect a term from the previous chapter, material incompatibility is *semantogenic* for the judgments it involves. As Brandom puts it: “the notion of material incompatibility of commitments... leads in a straightforward way to a notion of the [semantic] *contents* of such commitments. For the content of a commitment can for many purposes be represented by the theorist as the set of commitments that are incompatible with it” (Brandom 1994, 160). How does this work? How does standing in relations of material incompatibility with other judgments (commitments) confer descriptive contents on any given claim?

I will begin to answer this question—which will lead into a discussion of the inferential force of sensible contents—by listing some basic traits of material incompatibility. First, just like formal relations of contradiction, relations of material incompatibility are necessarily symmetric: if P is materially incompatible with Q , then Q is materially incompatible with P . Second, however, *unlike* relations of contradiction, which are necessarily binary, relations of material incompatibility are manifold. Whereas P has only one contradictory, namely not- P , it stands in relations of material incompatibility with indefinitely many judgments Q, R, S, \dots . If P signifies ‘ x is a raven’, then it is materially incompatible with Q , ‘ x has warm blood’, R ‘ x can breathe underwater without assistance’, and S ‘ x has an exoskeleton,’ etc.. There is no intrinsic or logical limit on the number of judgments with which a given one is materially incompatible. The symmetric material incompatibilities in which a given judgment stands are indefinite but necessarily manifold. Every judgment, for this reason, stands in a *web* of material incompatibility relations. Going forward, I will refer to these webs as “incompatibility fields”—or sometimes as *semantogenic* fields, since, as I will discuss presently, material incompatibility relations are quasi-semantogenic for the judgments they involve.

We may grasp the semantogenic force of a given judgment’s manifold relations of symmetric material incompatibility through the metaphor of “information.” As Brandom puts it, discussing a similar topic: “A signal is informative, contains or expresses information, just insofar as it rules out some alternatives. The measure of information, by which amounts of information are determined, compares the alternative situations or responses that are possible *before* receipt of the signal to those that remain *after* the signal has ruled out some

of them as no longer possible (according to the signal)” (Brandom 2019, 138-139). Suppose a given judgment *P* is uttered and (somewhat artificially) imagine that while we *do not* understand what *P* says, we can somehow recognize and understand the *other* judgments with which it is materially incompatible, procuring the following list:

- Q*: *x* is inanimate
- R* *x* has warm blood
- S*: *x* breathes gaseous oxygen
- T*: *x* has a skeleton made of bone
- U*: *x* has slick scales

Even though we do not understand what *P* says, recognizing its incompatibility with *Q*, *R*, *S*, *T* and *U* allows us to build up “information” about its semantic content, developing a more and more precise picture of what it might communicate. Since all the incompatibles refer to the same object *x*, we know at the outset that *P* pertains to *x*. If we assume that it makes some basic assertion about it, of the form ‘*x* is...’, then ruling out *Q* tells us that *x* is some sort of living animal; ruling out *R* tells us that *x* is not a mammal; excluding *S* tells us that it is not a land dwelling animal; excluding *T* tells us that it is not among the Osteichthyes fish, implying that it is either a cartilaginous fish or not a fish; and ruling out *U* rules out the vast majority of fish. This process of excluding *P*’s material incompatibles has not yet given us a complete picture of *P*’s semantic content, but it allows us to list some possibilities. According to the incompatibles, *P* might state that: *x* is a shark, *x* is a jelly fish, *x* is a sea sponge, or *x* is a shrimp. The set of possible contents of *P* remains indefinite, but it has been significantly limited just by recognizing a handful of judgments with which *P* is materially incompatible. Ruling out each materially incompatible judgment provides “information” about what *P* might say, and if we were to continue to list incompatibles we would further specify and sharpen our understanding of *P*’s content.

The upshot here is that, since we can derive *P*’s semantic content simply by listing the other judgments with which it is materially incompatible—specifying that content as much as we wish by listing more and more contraries—those material incompatibility relations can be understood as that which *P*’s semantic content exclusively *expresses*. *What one understands when one understands P* can be construed as being as nothing other than *P*’s incompatibility relations with *Q*, *R*, *S*, *T*, *U*, In this way, embedding *P* within its incompatibility field

has the effect of conferring semantic content upon it—it is a (quasi)-*semantogenic* field⁷³ as much as (and because) it is an incompatibility field. What one understands when one understands *P* can be represented exclusively as the *other* terms occurring in its incompatibility/semantogenic field.

To review, since sensible appearances are spatiotemporal, they stand in relations of contrariety with one another; since they stand in relations of contrariety, they are necessarily the contents of possible judgments, and, conversely, judgments are contrary paradigmatically on the basis of their sensible contents. In this way, sensible contents are identified with the *contrariety* holding among manifolds of materially incompatible judgments, so that judgments have sensible contents just because they are embedded in material incompatibility fields. Now we see that sensible appearances may be intelligibly identified with the contrariety holding among materially incompatible judgments because the semantic content of any judgment may be expressed in terms of *nothing other than* the material incompatibility relations in which the judgment stands.

4. *Incompatibility and Inference: The Inferential Force of Sensible Contents*

Now that we have arrived at a sufficient understanding of what sensible contents are, we may investigate the way in which such contents exert an *inferential* force. The last subsections have shown sensible appearances to occur in and as the material incompatibility relations in which the judgments of which they are contents stand. So the manifold of sensible appearances subsumed under some judgment *P* as its descriptive content is nothing other than the *incompatibility field* in which *P* stands.

Identifying sensible contents with material incompatibility provides a clear route to inference because judgments standing in relations material incompatibility also stand necessarily in relations of material *inference*. As Brandom writes: “Material incompatibility underwrites a notion of [material] entailment: *Q* is a consequence of *P* just in case everything materially incompatible with *Q* is materially incompatible with *P*” (Brandom 2019, 144). For example, we may infer ‘Poe is a bird’ (*Q*) from ‘Poe is a raven’ (*P*) because everything incompatible with *Q* is also incompatible with *P*. *Being a bird* is incompatible with having scales, having hair, being warm-

⁷³ I insert the prefix “quasi-” here in order to signal my retention of an *inferentialist* theory of semantic content. Even though the content of a judgment can be *construed* as the set of judgments incompatible with it, this construal is informative only because it keys the judgment to a distinctive *inferential* role. In other words, incompatibility fields have a *quasi*-semantogenic significance just because they underwrite the *properly* semantogenic relations of material *inference* that confer conceptual and propositional content.

blooded, giving live birth, having an exoskeleton, possessing more than two legs, etc., and all these traits are also incompatible with *being a raven*. ‘Poe is a raven’ (P) is involved in *further* incompatibility relations than these—e.g., being a raven is incompatible with having green feathers, eating a vegetarian diet, perishing in cold climates, etc.—but the set of P ’s incompatibilities includes everything included in the set of claims incompatible with the assertion that ‘Poe is a bird’ (Q), and so our material inference from P to Q is justified. The basic principle is that the practice of affirming material inferences may be construed as a matter of representing and negotiating material incompatibility relations. In general, what one does when one affirms the material inference from P to Q is represent the set of material incompatibilities pertaining to Q as a subset of the material incompatibilities pertaining to P . It is a matter of representing manifold relations of material incompatibility and nesting subsets within sets.

Thus, just as affirming the *formal* inferences from P to Q required a subject-perspective to represent a bedrock of conditional claims of the form $P \rightarrow Q$, so does endorsing the *material* inferences from P to Q require a subject-perspective to represent the bedrock of material incompatibility relations pertaining to these two claims. And just as the conditionals are logically prior to the inferences they justify, so too must the incompatibility relations be prior to the inferences they underwrite. Sensible contents exert an *inferential force* because those contents are grounded in material incompatibility relations and material incompatibility underwrites inference.

Recognizing that material incompatibility underwrites material inferences allows me to unite the two descriptions of semantic content and semantogenesis I have been employing. In this section, I argued that representing a given claim embedded within its incompatibility field may be understood as an alternative means of representing its semantic content. But in the last chapter I showed the semantic content of any judgment—what one understands when one understands the judgment—to be a reflection of nothing other than its material *inferential* relations: understanding a judgment is nothing other than implicitly representing the series of *other* judgments to which it stands as a material premise or consequence. Now we see, however, that one makes material inferences only by representing the incompatibility fields in which the component judgments are embedded, nesting subsets within sets. Thus, representing a given claim- P within an inferential chain and

representing that same claim-*P* embedded in its incompatibility field may be understood as two sides of one and the same act of cognizing its semantic content. Representing *P* inferentially is representing it according to its *concepts*, while representing it within its incompatibility is representing it according to its *sensible contents*. Concepts and sensible intuitions are simply two opposing aspects of one and the same representational process.

II. Imagination and Material Incompatibility

The last section demonstrated material incompatibility to underwrite material inference, showing it to both contribute specifically sensible contents to judgment and confer inferential force on those contents. The current section explains how subject-perspectives *represent* material incompatibility and details its particular role in material inferential activity. First, I show the imagination to be the faculty whose job is to represent judgments embedded in their incompatibility fields. Second, I discuss the structure of the imagination in the A Deduction, showing its reproductive synthesis to consist in representing judgments semantogenically embedded in their relations of contrariety. Third, I characterize the activity of the imagination through the metaphor of “repulsion and attraction:” every judgment “repels” its contraries because it is materially incompatible with them, but it equally “attracts” them because this incompatibility is semantogenic for it. Fourth, I complicate the repulsive-attractive model of imaginative activity by showing given judgments to reproduce *compatible* judgments mediately through their immediate reproductions of their incompatibles. The incompatibility fields of compatible judgments are linked by what I will call “imagination bridges.” Finally, fifth, I show material *inferences* to involve comparing the bridged fields of compatible judgments.

1. *The Necessity of a Faculty of Imagination*

So far in this rational reconstruction of cognition, I have discussed two primary relations among judgments: material inference and material incompatibility. Two judgments stand in a material inferential relation if commitment to one implies commitment or entitlement to the other, and they stand in a material incompatibility relation if commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other. The synthetic unity of experience is forged from bonds of material inference, and material incompatibility underwrites and drives the synthesis of those bonds. Now, the faculty responsible for instituting material inferences is the understanding: what one understands when one understands a judgment is its material inferential relations to the other

judgments to which one is committed. And the faculty responsible for hosting the material incompatibility that underwrites these inferences is sensible intuition: judgments exhibit relations of contrariety with manifold other judgments because of their spatiotemporal determination. Thus understanding and sensible intuition constitute the two primary cognitive faculties: a subject-perspective represents a judgment with respect to its concepts when she represents it in its material *inferential* relations, and she represents it with respect to its sensible contents when represents it in its material *incompatibility* relations.

Nevertheless, although sensibility *hosts* it and understanding is *driven* by it, neither of these faculties is capable of *representing* material incompatibility. For, since the understanding functions in every case to recuperate the synthetic *unity* of experience, affirming the analytic identity of the subject with herself, it may only represent claims simultaneously that fit *compatibly* together within an inferentially unified experience. Similarly, while the faculty of sensible intuition *hosts* the material incompatibility fields that underwrite the synthetic unity of experience, it is not capable of “apprehending”⁷⁴ and negotiating those fields, since it is pure receptivity. For this reason, intuition and the understanding require the assistance of some *third*, intermediating faculty whose function is to represent the incompatibility fields (contained in sensibility) that drive material inferences (which accomplished by the understanding).

The faculty Kant tasks with this essential job is the *imagination*. Introducing it in the B Deduction, Kant presents the imagination as the faculty whose job is to apply the synthesis of apperception, not to intuition in general, but to *our* type of specifically *sensible* intuition. Very crudely put, sensibility hosts manifoldness and understanding institutes unity: imagination applies the unity of the understanding to the manifoldness of sensibility.⁷⁵ Kant calls it, for this reason, “an effect of the understanding on sensibility,” explaining that, on the one hand, imagination “belongs to **sensibility**,” since “all of our intuition is sensible,” while, on the other hand, it belongs to understanding, since “its synthesis is still an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining and not, like sense, merely determinable” (*KrV*, B151-B152; 256-257).

⁷⁴ *KrV*, A120; 239.

⁷⁵ For more on the mediacy of the imagination, see Banham (2006) and Heidegger (1990).

Now, I have interpreted the synthetic unity instituted by the understanding as a material *inferential* unity and the manifoldness hosted in sensibility as the contrariety of material *incompatibility*. Thus, on this reading, the imagination negotiates somehow between incompatibility and inference, unifying the former under the pattern of the latter. Since we have already seen that material incompatibility *underwrites* material inference—that is, since Q is a consequence of P just if everything materially incompatible with Q is also materially incompatible with P —it follows that the imagination mediates between understanding and sensibility by representing sets and subsets of material incompatibilities, preparing the ground for the understanding’s *inferential* use of sensible contrariety.

Material incompatibility drives material inference, but the former represents a relationship among judgments incongruent with the type of relation instituted by the latter: the job of the imagination is to mediate between these intertwined but irreconcilable types of judgmental relations. The task of the rest of this section is present an account of the imagination sufficient to explain its role in negotiating between incompatibility and inference.

2. *Imagination in the A Deduction*

Kant provides his most sustained treatment of the imagination in the A Deduction, initiating his discussion by noting a certain peculiarity of empirical experience. He writes:

It is, to be sure, a merely empirical law in accordance with which representations that have often followed or accompanied one another are finally associated with each other and thereby placed in a connection in accordance with which, even without the presence of the object, one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind to the other in accordance with a constant rule. (*KrV*, A100, 229).

Presented with constantly or frequently conjoined appearances such as lightning and thunder, glass and transparency, rain and wet streets, etc., we finally associate these appearances with one another, so that, presented with one, we immediately represent the other. If experience presents the repeating series, ABABAB, and we encounter A..., our mind undergoes a “transition” to B, even if B does not actually appear. Kant calls this the “law of reproduction,” and he designates the imagination as the faculty responsible for its implementation. Frequently conjoined appearances “reproduce” one another in the *imagination* of the subject.

After noting this peculiarity, Kant argues that the empirical occurrence of this sort of phenomenon is evidence of a transcendental basis for the law of reproduction. “The appearances *themselves* [must] actually [be] subject to such a rule” (*KrV*, A100, 229, *emphasis added*). For if the appearances themselves were not required, by some rule, to accompany or succeed one another, then “our empirical imagination would never get to do anything suitable to its capacity” (*KrV*, A100, 229). If the appearances themselves were not actually conjoined, and compelled to be conjoined, then the imagination would never have the opportunity to empirically associate them with one another. The only rules capable of compelling appearances themselves are the conditions of the possibility of experience, and so there must be an *a priori* condition behind the law of reproduction.

Kant’s method for discovering and justifying *a priori* conditions in the A Deduction is to ground them on the possibility and intelligibility of space and time. Accordingly, Kant explains that he will attempt to demonstrate the representation of space and time themselves to already presuppose and depend upon an *a priori* law of reproduction:

Now if we can demonstrated that even our purest *a priori* intuitions [of space and time] provide no cognition except insofar as they contain the sort of combination of the manifold that makes possible a thoroughgoing synthesis of reproduction, then this synthesis of the imagination would be grounded even prior to all experience on *a priori* principles. (*KrV*, 101, 230).

The Transcendental Aesthetic has proven both that all experience involves sensible intuitions and that all sensible intuitions are spatiotemporal. Any principle that can trace its lineage back to the possibility of spatiotemporality must therefore count as an *a priori* condition of the possibility of experience.

To demonstrate both that we would not be able to represent space and time *a priori* and that spatiotemporality would not contribute *a priori* structure to intuition without an *a priori* law of reproduction, governed by the imagination, Kant asks us to consider three objects—a line, a duration, and a number—and attend to what the representation of these objects requires:

Now it is obvious that if I draw a line in thought, or think of the time from one noon to the next, or even want to represent a certain number to myself, I must necessarily first grasp one of these manifold representations after another in my thoughts. But if I were always to lose the preceding representations (the first parts of the line, the preceding parts of time, or the successively represented units) from my thoughts and not reproduce them when I proceed to the following ones, then no whole representation and none of the previously mentioned thoughts, *not even the most fundamental representations of space and time*, could ever arise. (*KrV*, A102, 230, *emphasis added*).

Drawing a line in thought, Kant argues here, involves successively plotting one point after another in my mind, the line being, in a sense, an aggregate of the individual points that fall upon it. At any moment, I represent only the distinct point I am currently plotting. But if this point is to be, not simply atomic, but a point on a *line*, then I cannot “lose” the points that precede it even though I am not currently representing them. I must instead *reproduce* the preceding points in my representation of the current one. If I did not reproduce preceding points when I proceeded to subsequent ones, then I would represent one atomic point after another, but I would never unify these points under the “whole representation” of a *line*. Similarly, thinking of a duration (“from one noon to the next”) involves representing a series of time segments. Since I only ever directly represent one of these segments, my thought amounts to a representation of the complete duration only if I reproduce previous segments in subsequent ones as I proceed to the point of terminus.

Since representing space and time themselves involves representing distances and durations, while I cannot represent either without a law of reproduction, it follows that the law of reproduction is grounded in the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience. The law itself is therefore such a condition.

Importantly, however, the law of reproduction is necessary not only to my *representation* of the appearances, but also to the being of the appearances *themselves*. The appearances themselves must reproduce one another in order to be the appearances they are, so that the law of reproduction is objective and transcendental, rather than subjective and empirical. Consider some line AB with a point C falling at some distinct place on it:



In order to represent point C, I must represent the determinate relations in which it stands both to points A and B and to all the other points on the line: the significance of the point, for me, consists in nothing other than the expression of this determinate relation. Beyond this, the very *being* of point C likewise consists in the expression of this determinate relation: for, C is the point that it is, and not some other one, *only* because it stands in the determinate relations to A and B that it does. Thus, both *representing* and *being* point C involve the reproduction of points A and B (and all the other points on the line). Furthermore (and most radically), the

being and representation of point C is in fact *nothing other than* the reproduction of points A and B and all the other points on the line. For, since the being of C is nothing other than the expression of its determinate relation to the other points, while the expression of this relation involves nothing other than the reproduction of those other points, it follows that C itself is nothing other than the reproduction of all the other points on the line.

This same ontology of reproduction characterizes both distances and durations: each is what it is only insofar as it stands in the determinate relations it does with all the other elements of its own kind, and so each *is* nothing other than the reproduction of all the elements to which it determinately relates. Since space and time are themselves inseparable from the distances and durations they contain, it follows that spatiotemporality would not be possible without a thoroughly *transcendental* law of reproduction, so that the imagination is just as necessary to the cognitive picture as sensibility, and appearances themselves are all embedded in processes of mutual reproduction.

3. *The Reproductive Primacy of Contrariety*

Now, although Kant vindicates the imagination as a transcendental faculty of cognition by showing its law of reproduction to be implicated in the representation of spatiotemporality, representing space and time is not the primary function of the imagination. The task of representing these *a priori* forms has already been given to sensible intuition, and, if the imagination is to constitute an independent faculty of cognition then it must contain unique *a priori* principles and perform its own activity.⁷⁶ What, then, is the *distinctive* activity of the imagination? What work does it alone perform? As indicated above, I think the special function of the imagination is to represent appearances embedded in the incompatibility fields upon which the material inferential action of the understanding depends.

Consider again Kant's three primal examples of reproducing quantities—distances, durations, and numbers. As we saw above, every distance, duration, or number is itself only insofar as it reproduces in itself all the other elements of its own kind. The significance of a certain point in time, e.g., 12pm, is derived entirely from the determinate relations it stands in with other points in time. 12pm has no hypostatic matter of its own

⁷⁶ For Kant's argument that every faculty worthy of the name expresses its own principles and performs a distinctive function, see *KU*.20:208 - 20:211.11-15. The argument here pertains to the faculty of judgment, but it applies equally to the faculty of the imagination.

such that it could be represented outside its generic context of relations; rather, it expresses nothing other than just a certain relation to many other points in time: it is before 1pm, after 11am, twelve hours before midnight, etc., and representing this distinct time is nothing other than representing the determinate relations it stands in with many (and in the limit *all*) other times. Similarly, the significances of any point in space or any number, e.g., the middle of Santa Fe, the number 13, are derived entirely from their determinate relations that each stands in to manifold (and in the limit *all*) elements of their own kind.

In all these cases, it is not only that *we* cannot represent these appearances without rooting them in their generic contexts of relations; it is more radically that the appearances *themselves* would not be themselves without being so rooted. In each case, just *being* 12pm, the middle of Santa Fe, or the number 13 involves reproducing the other elements of its own kind in rigorously determinate way, since being each item essentially involves standing in just these, and not other, relations.

Now, as discussed in the last section, different times and different spaces stand in relations of *material incompatibility* to all the other elements of their own kind, and the same is true of numbers.⁷⁷ The contrariety or material incompatibility of times with other times, places with other places, and numbers with other numbers is in each case *essential* to the being of each type of appearance. It is not only that 12pm is contrary to every other time: it is more radically that 12pm is *nothing other than* its contrariety to every other time. The being of 12pm is exhausted in its expression of this contrariety, so that its semantic content is nothing other than the set of other times with which it is materially incompatible. This is why it “reproduces” them in itself. The same sort of semantogenic significance applies to the contrariety holding among different numbers and different places as well: each *is* its contrariety to the other elements of its own kind, expressing this contrariety as its content, reproducing them in itself.

Thus, each of the primal quantities that Kant uses to explicate the law of reproduction stands in relations of material incompatibility with the manifold elements it reproduces, expressing in itself nothing other than its *contraries* in its simple being of itself. Contrariety (material incompatibility) may for these reasons be

⁷⁷ The time 12pm is contrary (not contradictory) to the times 11am, 1pm, or any other time. The middle of Santa Fe is contrary (but not contradictory) to the northeast corner of the city, the southern border, and every other location. And the number 13 is contrary (but not contradictory) 3, 5, and every other number.

understood as the paradigmatic relation holding among mutually reproducing elements.⁷⁸ And since the transcendental function of the imagination is to implement the law of reproduction, we may identify the act of rooting a given appearance within its sphere of contraries—embedding it in its incompatibility field—as the distinctive activity of the imagination, the function it performs which no other faculty can carry out.

It is not only distances, durations, and numbers that stand in mutually reproductive relations of material incompatibility with their contraries. This is rather a fully *general* trait of appearances as such. The appearance ‘red’ stands in relations of contrariety with all the other colors, as does the appearance ‘triangle’ stand with all the other shapes. Thus, it is the distinctive job of the imagination to embed *every* appearance (not merely explicit measurements of space and time) within their semantogenic fields of contraries.

4. *Images and the Movement of Repulsion and Attraction*

Since embedding appearances in their semantogenic incompatibility fields is the activity distinctive of the imagination, Kant identifies these fields as “images.” After explaining that cognition begins with the perception of an appearance, he writes:

But since every appearance contains a manifold, thus different perceptions by themselves are encountered dispersed and separate in the mind, a combination of them, which they cannot have in sense itself, is therefore necessary. There is thus an active faculty of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination, and whose action exercised immediately upon perceptions I call apprehension. For the imagination is to bring the manifold of intuition into an **image**; it must therefore antecedently take up the impressions into its activity, i.e., apprehend them. [...] this apprehension of the manifold alone would bring forth no image and no connection of the impressions were there not a subjective ground for calling back a perception, from which the mind has passed on to another... i.e., the reproductive faculty of imagination[.] (*KrV*.A120 - A121.239).

An “image” is a unity holding among a manifold of perceptions. The imagination institutes an image by exercising its reproductive capacity, taking the given appearance to reproduce in itself the relevant *other* appearances that make it what it is. It is not only that the *subject* contains a manifold of successively perceived

⁷⁸ Kant provides examples of mutually reproducing appearances that *do not* stand in relations of contrariety early in the A Deduction: “If cinnabar were now red, now black, now light, now heavy... then my empirical imagination would never even get the opportunity to think of heavy cinnabar on the occasion of the representation of the color red” (*KrV*, A100 - A101, 229). But since the demonstration of the *transcendental* significance of reproduction consists in showing it to be involved in the representations of space and time, and the reproducing elements in these representations stand necessarily in contrary relations, we may retain commitment to the claim that contrariety, or material incompatibility, is the *paradigmatic* (if not the only) relation holding among reproducing elements. Other reproductions are founded on the mutual reproduction of contraries, but the reproduction of contraries is primal and transcendental.

appearance, but more radically that every *appearance* contains a manifold. Even so-called “singular” appearances are manifold, and the imagination represents these appearances as images when it represents their manifoldness. The manifold that an appearance itself contains—which is prior to the manifold that contains that appearance—is the *incompatibility field* of contraries that confer content and significance on it. Thus, the primary work of reproduction—by which the imagination “apprehends appearances”—is to root appearances in the spheres of contrariety that make them what they are.

Grasping the activity of the imagination, as well as the way in which it mediates between sensibility and understanding, involves appreciating the way in which an appearance relates to the semantogenic contraries populating its image. I think this relation among contraries can be productively understood according to the metaphoric movement of “repulsion and attraction.”

Consider the image or incompatibility field constituting the appearance ‘ x is a triangle’. If we call this claim P , then we may begin to populate the image with the following claims:

Q : x is square.

R : x has angles greater than 180 degrees.

S : x has angles less than 180 degrees.

T : x is curvilinear.

P may be clearly seen to be materially incompatible with Q , R , S , and T . No one figure can exhibit any of the features designated by these latter claims and also be a triangle. According to the relation between material incompatibility and semantic content I have been developing, P may be understood as *nothing other than* its incompatibility with claims Q , R , S , T , and all its other contraries. Being a triangle may be construed as an exclusive matter of *not* exhibiting the features these other claims designate. If it is assumed that one does not understand in advance that x is a triangle, then the process of successively excluding the features designated by these contrary claims will progressively determine the content of claim P . When every claim *materially incompatible* with P has been excluded, the content of P will have been precisely and determinately represented. The content of P may therefore be sufficiently understood as whatever is materially incompatible with the contents of every other claim in P 's incompatibility field. In this way, P reproduces all the other claims Q , R , S , and T that populate its image, so that P may be understood as *nothing other than* the reproduction of these manifold contraries. The activity of imagination is to root appearances in their images.

Representing or imagining appearances this way may be metaphorically understood according to a certain sort of “movement,” namely that of *repulsion and attraction*. Every given appearance is the center point of an incompatibility field populated by contrary appearances: it *repels* these others because it is contrary to them, but it also *attracts* them because this contrariety is semantogenic. Imagining the appearance is representing the simultaneity of this repulsion and attraction. For example, P (“ x is triangular”) is embedded in a field that includes claims Q , R , S , and T :

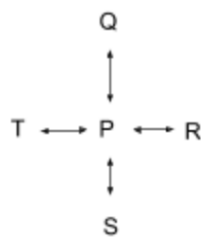


Diagram 3.1

Sitting at the center of this field, P *repels* all of its contraries, Q , R , S , and T , because it is materially incompatible with them. This oppositional “repulsion” is represented in the diagram by the arrows pointing *from* P to the other terms. But since the other appearances Q , R , S , and T are semantogenic for P , conferring content and significance on it, P also “attracts” them, reproducing them in itself by having the meaning that it does. This semantogenic “attraction” is represented in the diagram by the arrows pointing *back* to P from the other letters.

The repulsion and attraction of the imagination happens *together*. It is one unified activity. P attracts its contraries *through* repelling them, repels the contraries *through* attracting them. The appearance at the center of the incompatibility field (P) is the one which *appears* in experience, and the penumbra of circulating contraries confers significance on it by being repelled. These contraries not only do not but *cannot* appear in experience because they are materially incompatible with P (experience is precisely the dimension from which they are “repelled”).

5. *Imagination Bridges and the Reproduction of Compatibles*

While the metaphor of repulsion and attraction is sufficient to characterize the *basic* movement of the imagination, a complete understanding of the *details* of this movement requires us to complexify the picture presented here. For, although material incompatibility relations are necessarily symmetric—so that P is

materially incompatible with Q if Q is materially incompatible with P , and *vice versa*—they need not be transitive. This non-transitivity of material incompatibility requires us to introduce what I will call “imagination bridges” to the model—avenues by which appearances stand in reproductive relations with *compatible* appearances as well as incompatible ones.

Consider again the imagination’s representation of claim P (x is a triangular). Representing P as an image first of all involves embedding it in its field of semantogenic contraries.

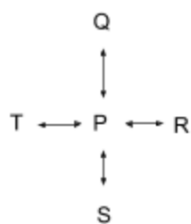


Diagram 3.1

Now, since to imagine P is to embed it in this field, doing so involves the implicit imagination of each of the other *members* of this field, Q , R , S , and T . In these cases, the organ of representation remains the imagination, and so each of these other members will themselves be embedded in their *own* distinctive images—fields of semantogenic contraries. If imagining P is embedding it in field- P , for example, then imagining Q , a member of field- P , involves embedding Q in its own distinctive field- Q . In imagining P and so embedding it within its distinctive field- P , which includes Q , the subject has already imagined Q and so embedded it in *its* distinctive field- Q . These two fields (fields- P and $-Q$) are therefore connected by an “imagination bridge”—which, for now, simply marks the fact that imagining one field involves imagining the other:



Diagram 3.2

The large arrow pointing from field- P to $-Q$ signifies the imagination bridge.

Since imagining Q involves embedding it in its semantogenic field- Q , it involves imagining each of the *members* of this field. These members will constitute the set of appearances contrary to Q (just as the members

of field- P constituted the set of appearances contrary to P). It is necessary, first of all, that P be a member of field- Q , since P is contrary to Q and material incompatibility is symmetric. Thus, we can plot the first member:

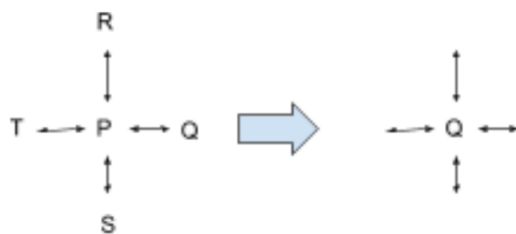


Diagram 3.2

But although material incompatibility is always symmetric, it need not be transitive. This is to say, just because P is materially incompatible with Q and Q is materially incompatible with D , P need not be materially incompatible with D . Suppose P states that ‘ x is triangular’, Q that ‘ x has angles greater than 180 degrees’, and D that ‘ x has angles equal to 180 degrees’. In this case, Q is materially incompatible with both P and D , but P and D are compatible (and mutually implicit). Thus, it is possible (though not necessary) that field- Q will contain members that *do not* occur in field- P . It is also possible that it will share members with P . For example, if T states that ‘ x has angles less than 180 degrees’ and S states that ‘ x has no angles’, then both fields will contain T and S :

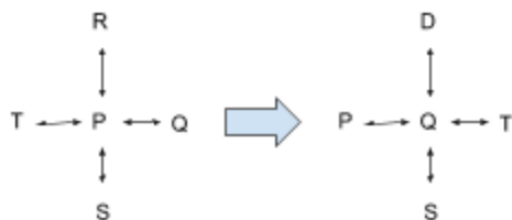
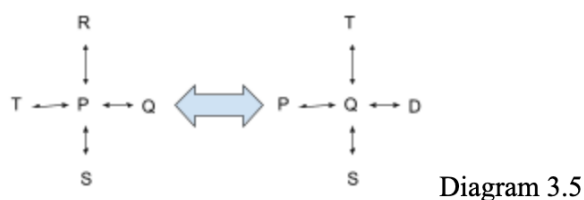


Diagram 3.4

As a fully general rule, no two fields will ever contain exactly the same set of members. Since the members of an incompatibility field are semantogenic for the appearance of which the field is the field, they sufficiently *distinguish* that appearance, so that any two appearances with the same field would simply be identical. Thus, given any two fields, at least one must contain members that do not occur in the other. Thus, incompatibility fields linked by imagination bridges will necessarily share some members (*viz.*, the central members of both fields), but at least one will contain some members that do not occur in the other.

By limiting the domain of action to just frames- P and $-Q$ (both of which are represented in Diagram 3.4), we may begin to sketch the slightly complexified activity of the imagination. Suppose a subject-perspective represents P as an image. She will thereby embed the appearance in its distinctive incompatibility field (field- P). To embed P in this field is just to represent its repulsive-attractive relation to all of its contraries: Q , R , S , and T . Imagining this semantogenic relation involves implicitly imagining each of the contraries populating field- P . To imagine one such member, viz., Q , the subject-perspective will have to embed that member within its *own* distinctive incompatibility field, field- Q , so that, in imagining P by embedding it in field- P the subject-perspective has already imagined field- Q , producing and traversing a unique imagination bridge. Imagining P embedded within field- P involves imagining Q embedded within field- Q because Q is an element of field- P .

Similarly, imagining Q embedded within field- Q involves imagining P embedded within field- P because P is an element of field- Q . Thus, the imagination bridge leading *from* field- P *to* field- Q immediately and in the same stroke leads back *to* field- P *from* field- Q :



Returning to field- P from field- Q requires field- P to be reimagined. In this way, the imagination traverses the bidirectional bridge connecting the two fields incessantly and in both directions at once, imagining and reimagining each field over and over again. It is like the movement of repulsion and attraction, but this time, it applies not only to the elements of a single field but also to the semantogenic fields that *comprise* those elements—each erupting from the other and returning again to itself.

But it is not only Q whose field must be imagined when the subject represents P ; rather the fields of *all* P 's semantogenic contraries must be imagined. We may plot the rudiments of these fields- Q , $-R$, $-S$, $-T$ by means of the two principles we used to plot the elements of Field- Q :

1. Incompatibility fields linked by imagination bridges will necessarily share some members (viz., the central members of both fields).

2. But at least one will contain some members that do not occur in the other.

Thus, each of these manifold fields will contain P , but either field- P will contain members that these others do not or these others will contain members that do not occur in field- P (or both). Furthermore, the same bidirectionality that applies to the imagination bridge linking fields- P and $-Q$ will apply to the imagination bridges linking field- P to every other field. The result may be roughly represented as follows:

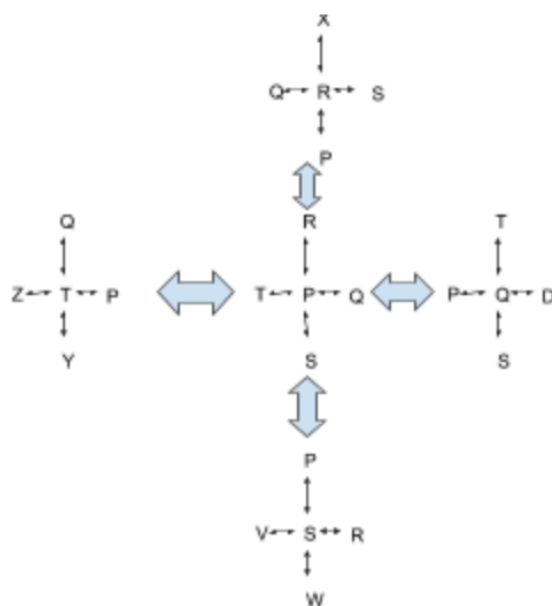


Diagram 3.6

To summarize, imagining a single appearance P involves embedding it in its semantogenic field of contraries, which itself requires the imagination of each and every member of the field. Doing this is embedding those members in *their* semantogenic fields, and those fields contain the originally represented element P and some members not contained in P 's own field (or else they *lack* an element of P 's). Thus, imagining P embedded in field- P , which contains members Q , R , S , and T , involves producing and traversing the bidirectional imagination bridges to fields- Q , $-R$, $-S$, and $-T$. And just as before, the subject's imagination of each of these fields expanding *from* field- P immediately instigates the *reimagining* of field- P , which in turn requires the reimagining of each of these repelled fields. In its simple representation of P , the imagination traverses far flung fields of contrariety and semantogenesis, returning in its very departure already to itself. The "movement" may be compared to an undulation, the expansion and contraction of the breath, but in every direction at once and with every opposing movement occurring simultaneously.

5. *Compatible Reproduction: From Reproduction to Inference*

Now, the innovation of imagination bridges allows us to say how *compatible* appearances stand in reproductive relations—an essential preparatory task for explaining the relation of incompatibility and inference. For, although immediate relations of reproduction occur only among contraries, other mediate reproductions occur as a consequence of this primary species. Kant, for example, acknowledges reproductive relations among compatible appearances such as *heaviness*, *redness*, and *cinnabar*.⁷⁹ This sort of compatible reproduction occurs as follows. When we imagine P we embed it in field- P , which includes Q as a reproductive contrary to P . Doing this requires us to imagine Q by embedding it in its field- Q , which also includes P . Now suppose, as pictured in Diagrams 3.5 and 3.6, that field Q contains an appearance D that does not occur in field- P : if P states that ‘ x is triangular’, and Q states that ‘ x has angles greater than 180 degrees’, then suppose that D states that ‘ x has angles equal to 180 degrees’. D is included in field- Q because it is incompatible with Q , but it is not included in field- P because it is compatible with P .

Since imagining P involves imagining Q by embedding it in field- Q , and imagining Q involves imagining D and embedding it in field- D , imagining P involves embedding D in its own field- D . We therefore have *three* different fields to consider: fields- P , $-Q$, and $-D$:

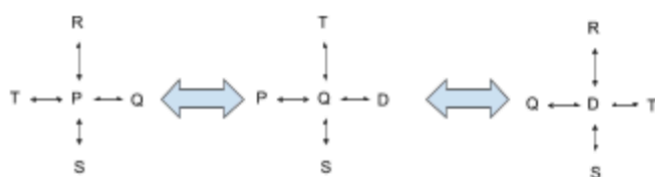


Diagram 3.7

Each of these fields is linked by imagination bridges. Now, since imagining P involves imagining Q and imagining Q involves imagining D , it follows that imagining P involves imagining D . P and D therefore stand in *mediated* relation of reproduction, each reproducing the other in itself through its reproduction of Q . Since P and D are compatible, however, it follows that compatible reproduction is possible if it is mediated by the primary type of reproduction among contraries.

⁷⁹ See, *KrV*, A101; 229

The imagination is defined as a mediate faculty—it negotiates between sensibility and the understanding. It does this, I suggest, by preparing the material incompatibility hosted in the former to underwrite and drive the material inferences accomplished by the latter. As I have now rehearsed several times, Q is a consequence of P just if everything materially incompatible with Q is materially incompatible with P . So material inferences can be made by surveying sets of material incompatibilities. But neither the understanding nor sensibility is suited to this job. It is a task that only the imagination, which is part sensible, part conceptual, can perform. The discussion of the reproduction of compatibles shows clearly how this mediation takes place.

In the above example, pictured in Diagram 3.7, appearances P and D stand in a relation of compatible reproduction: each mediately reproduces the other by immediately reproducing D . This bond of compatible reproduction allows the two incompatibility fields of these compatible appearances to be represented together and so *compared* to one another. This comparison allows an inference from one to the other to be made if one of the fields may be recognized as a *subset* of the other. That is, if field- P is seen to contain every member contained in field- D (or vice versa), then an inference from P to D (or vice versa) may be made. In the present case (in which P states that ‘ x is triangular’ and D states that ‘ x has angles equal to 180 degrees’), it can readily be seen that field- D is a subset of field- P , and so the inference from P to D is legitimate. Not all compatible appearances nest as subsets and sets, however. If D stated that ‘ x is red’, for example, then P and D would be compatible, but neither field- P nor field- D would be a subset of the other.

The faculty that assesses whether one compatible field is a subset of another, thereby performing the inference, is the understanding. The job of the imagination is to represent manifold incompatibility fields (images, manifolds) linked by a system of imagination bridges, so that both incompatible and compatible appearances stand in immediate or mediate relations of reproduction. But the job of the understanding is to carve an inferential path through these far flung fields, recognizing sets and subsets, nesting the latter in the former.

III. Conclusion: What is Cognition?

To conclude this chapter, I will attempt to blend this account of the imagination with the last chapter’s description of the understanding to present a unified description of the way I take the basics of cognition to

work for Kant. The primal faculties involved are *understanding*, *sensibility*, and *imagination*. The core process of cognition is apperception—self-recognition. Everything the subject does in the domain of knowledge must be understood on the basis of this one master activity, and the vehicle of self-recognition is *judgment*.

Suppose the subject asserts some judgment-*P*, viz., ‘*x* is triangular.’ What does this assertion require and what does it presuppose? In order for *P* to count as an assertion, the subject must be committed to its correctness. Judgments are correct or incorrect on the basis of the concepts they contain, and those concepts designate rules of *inference*, determining which other judgments follow as consequences from the given one and which others may adduced as premises. Thus, when the subject asserts *P*, she integrates it into a rational-inferential network of other claims whose correctneses she takes to be implicit in the given one. This integrative or synthetic activity has both a *pragmatic* and a *semantic* side.

On the pragmatic side, when the subject integrates the judgment with its inferential premises and consequences, she holds herself responsible for the correctness she attributes to it, acknowledging commitment to everything the judgment implies. In this way, she represents and affirms her own unity with herself, performing the self-recognitive activity of apperception. For, she is only able to integrate the judgment with the constellation of others to which she is also committed because she represents herself as a self-identical being.

On the semantic side, integrating the judgment with its synthetic inferential premises and consequences is what originally confers semantic content on that judgment—it is a *semantogenic* process. For, the claim means what it means just because it stands in the particular inferential relations that it does: what one understands when one understands the judgment is nothing other than the *other* judgments that stand in premisory or consequential relations to it. Thus, in recognizing herself through the judgment by integrating it with all her other commitments, so as to form a synthetic unity of inferential commitments, the subject also confers meaning upon the very judgment she integrates and takes responsibility for. Every act of judgment, or understanding, involves this holistic, self-recognitive synthesis.

The semantogenic inferential networks into which the apperceptive subject integrates all judgments when she understands and endorses those judgments, recognizing herself by means of them, are constituted by *material inferences*. Unlike formal inferences, which rely either explicitly or implicitly on conditional claims that

make descriptive vocabulary inferentially vacuous, material inferences rely essentially, not accidentally, on the nonlogical semantic contents of the component claims. For this reason, material inferences cannot be based in suppressed conditionals as formal inferences are. They require some other basis of inferential force. That basis is material incompatibility: Q follows from P just if everything materially incompatible with P is materially incompatible with Q . Material inference, then, is a matter of representing fields of material incompatibilities and discerning which fields are subsets of which.

The faculty capable of representing claims embedded in material incompatibility fields is the imagination. An appearance counts as an “image” whenever it is represented in relation to its contraries, i.e., those appearances with which it is materially incompatible. This sort of imagistic representation is possible because every appearance stands in a *reproductive* relation with its contraries: that is, the contraries to a given appearance are readable in that given appearance, so that it reproduces those contraries even when they do not appear. This is so because, just as the inferential premises and consequences of a given claim are semantogenic for that claim, so too are the *contraries* of a given appearance (or claim) semantogenic for that appearance. The appearance is the appearance it is, and not some other one, just because it has the precise contraries it has, and it may be represented as *nothing other* than the determinate contrary of its precise set of contraries. The imagination represents appearances as images by taking them as nothing other than the contraries of their precise sets of contraries, so that to represent the given appearance one must reproduce its contraries.

Throughout I have used the term “semantogenic” in two distinct ways: both the material *inferential* and the material *incompatibility* relations in which a given judgment stands have been called “semantogenic” for that judgment. The semantic content of a judgment designates *either* the chains of premises and consequences implicit within it *or* the manifold of contrary claims that the judgment excludes. But now we may see that these two senses of semantic content and semantogenesis are in fact one and the same, two sides of the same coin. A judgment stands in the material *inferential* relations it does only because it stands in the material *incompatibility* relations it does. The latter drives the former and the former explicates the latter. No claim may stand in material incompatibility relations without also standing in distinctive material inferential relations as well. Thus, both

inference and incompatibility are semantogenic for judgments, and while we separate these mechanisms of semantogenesis in *account*, they are simply two sides of the same process.

The subject *understands* judgments by integrating them into a material inferential network with the complete set of other judgments to which she is committed. She does this by *imagining* those judgments embedded in their incompatibility fields, comparing the incompatibility field of every novel judgment with that of those to which she is already committed and subordinating subsets to sets. The imagination prepares the ground for the understanding, then, by representing the material *incompatibilities* by which the subject forms material *inferential* networks, thereby understanding the judgments she asserts and endorses. The imagination and understanding are forever working together to form inferential constellations by which experience is unified, judgments become meaningful, and the subject recognizes herself.

Chapter Four

Reality and the Material Supplement: What Are Judgments of Taste?

The previous two chapters presented a rational reconstruction of cognition, analyzing the A and B Deductions of the categories, exploiting the latter document to interpret the *understanding* as an essentially inferential faculty and the former to cast *sensibility* as a host of material incompatibility and the *imagination* as a faculty for representing and negotiating that incompatibility. With analyses of these three faculties in place, I am now in a position to account for the judgment of taste. The current chapter will provide this account. For it to be satisfying, the account must both ground the judgment of taste in the logic of the Deductions, showing Kant's core theory of cognition to be incomplete without taste, and explicate beauty in terms of the normative-inferentialist articulation of transcendental idealism developed in the previous chapters. If taste can in this way trace its lineage to the very roots of cognition, then the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement discovered in Chapter One will be revealed as a transcendental crisis in need of a drastic remedy.

The chapter contains three sections. First, proceeding somewhat obliquely, I will spotlight a famous problem afflicting all idealist epistemologies, viz., that if the objects of experience derive their unity and significance from processes of cognition, then how could they ever be represented as having the seat of their being *outside* the subject's representation of them? In what sense are objects *more* than their mere appearance to the subject—as they are required to be by definition? To ask these questions is to ask about the *reality* of objects—the dimension in which they do *not* conform to the requirements of representation. Arguing in a Hegelian manner, I will contend that objects possess reality because we are always capable of being *wrong* about them. When I take an object to be characterized by a certain property and then, through experience, realize that this assessment was incorrect, I necessarily represent the object as *exceeding* my representational grip: the way it is *in itself* is out of sync with the way it is *for me*. The experience of error is the transcendental process of *reality production*.

Second, I attempt to carve out a transcendental ground of error. Kant's epistemic theory relies essentially on the preservation of “discursive difference” between sensible intuitions and concepts of the understanding. Despite this, every act of cognition consists in unifying a sensible manifold *under* a concept. In

order for discursive difference to survive these repeated unifications, there must always be, on the one hand, a dimension of the unifying concept that exceeds its determination of the manifold, and, on the other, a dimension of the sensible manifold that exceeds its determination under the concept. I will call these excesses the *ideal* and *material* supplements. Every act of cognition includes the implicit representation of these opposing supplements, and while this representation is always the occasion of further acts of cognition, no cognition may ever eliminate the supplements without undermining the very idea of experience.

Third, I will analyze the ideal and material supplements, arguing that the latter constitutes the transcendental ground of error and so of reality in experience and going on to show the *judgment of taste* to be the only cognitive act capable of representing it. When a subject-perspective not only errs about an object but *experiences* her own error, she represents two contrary claims about the same object simultaneously—both some past judgment, which is now taken to be incorrect, and some newly endorsed claim in whose light the previous one is seen to be erroneous. Thus, the experience of error involves a representation of material incompatibility. Now, as the previous chapter showed, material incompatibility is also essential to the representation of the *sensible* dimension of experience: the sensible contents of a judgment are the manifold relations of material incompatibility in which it stands. Likewise, the material supplement is the sensible aspect of an object that exceeds conceptual domestication. Representing this supplement, I will argue, is entertaining the free play of material incompatibilities, and the cognitive act capable of such a representation is the judgment of taste. The judgment of taste, I will show, represents nothing real, but rather that process in virtue of which all objects have reality. I will conclude the chapter by explaining why the representation of this reality-production is *pleasurable* for a subject-perspectives, even though it is equally the representation of her most extreme fallibility.

I. Error and Reality: The Transcendental Solution

This section outlines the problem of reality in experience and sketches the basic components of a transcendental solution. If objects are what they are in virtue of cognitive processes, then how and in what sense are they *real*? The answer proposed here is that objects are real, exceeding their appearance, just if the subject may always be wrong about them.

1. *Transcendental Idealism and the Problem of Reality*

In the section II.3 of the A Deduction, entitled “On the synthesis of recognition in the concept,” Kant acknowledges an apparent problem with the transcendental idealist theory of cognition he has been elaborating for the past hundred pages—a snag he expects his most astute readers to have already observed. Both the Aesthetic and the earlier parts of the Transcendental Logic have gone to great lengths to establish that “appearances themselves are nothing but sensible representations, which must not be regarded in themselves, in the same way as objects (outside the power of representation)” (*KrV*, A102, 231). The entities that appear to us in experience have their deepest root in affections of our sensible capacity, and these affections need not be produced by any metaphysically real, extra-cognitive “affecter.”⁸⁰ Thus, what we mean by an object of experience is explicable as nothing other than a certain configuration of our inner and outer sense representations. Nevertheless, Kant acknowledges, our experience of objects as entities “outside us”—and not just as grounded in outer sense—is compelling enough to require some sort of explanation.

Recognizing these concerns and his own explanatory debt, Kant writes:

What does one mean, then, if one speaks of an object corresponding to and therefore also *distinct from* the cognition [of it]? [...] We find... that our thought of the relation of all cognition to its object carries something of necessity with it, since namely the latter is regarded as that which is opposed to our cognitions being determined at pleasure or arbitrarily rather than being determined *a priori*, since insofar as they are to relate to an object our cognitions must also necessarily agree with each other in relation to it, i.e., they must have that unity that constitutes the concept of an object. (*KrV*, A104; 231 *emphasis added*).

In this passage, Kant begins by admitting the validity of the problem he expects his readers to have observed: no explanation of objects that makes them entirely internal to processes of subjective representation has accounted for anything we standardly mean by the word “object.” But he goes on to reframe this problem in his own preferred terms. The *reason* we take objects to exceed our cognitions of them is because we take cognition to exhibit the character of rule-governed *necessity*. When we count any set of representations as together constituting *knowledge* we do not treat them as having been “determined at pleasure or arbitrarily.” We rather take it that our representations stand correctly in accord with a *rule* that makes these, and not some other,

⁸⁰ For a summary of the “trilemma” afflicting theories of metaphysical affection, see Vaihinger (1881-1892, vol. 2, p. 53). For compelling critiques of the Jacobian understanding of metaphysical affection see Allison (2004, pp. 64 - 73), Prauss (1992), and Gram (1976), and Stenius (1965).

representations necessary—a rule that *we* do have control over. And whenever we have knowledge, that *which* we know is an object. Hence, Kant admits, if any of our representations exhibit the character of *knowledge* (cognition), then the objects that “correspond to” them must also be “distinct from” them. The extra-subjectivity of the object is construed as a reflection of the normativity of cognition.⁸¹

Having reframed the issue of objective reality in this way, Kant is able to resolve it by appealing to the transcendental unity of apperception. He writes:

It is easy to see that this object must be thought of only as something in general = X, since outside of our cognition we have nothing that we could set over against this cognition to it. . . . Since we have to do only with the manifold of our representations, and that X which corresponds to them (the object), because it should be something distinct from all of our representations, is nothing for us, the unity that the object makes necessary can be nothing other than the formal unity of the consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of the representations. Hence we say that we cognize the object if we have effected synthetic unity in the manifold of intuition. (*KrV*, A104 - A105; 231).

Kant makes two arguments in this passage. First, he argues that anything which is “distinct from” our representations is “nothing for us.” This follows both from his previous arguments in favor of transcendental idealism and, more basically, by tautology: anything we cannot in any way represent is something we cannot represent, i.e., it is “nothing” for us (which is not to say it is “nothing” *in itself*). Since the object is “nothing for us” insofar as it stands beyond our cognition, Kant argues subsequently, the “unity [it] makes necessary” must in fact be a reflection of the “formal unity of . . . consciousness”—apperception.

In characteristic fashion, Kant flips the issue of objective reality on its head. It was assumed that objects had to be distinct from our representations in order for those representations to exhibit the normativity characteristic of cognition. But, taking things the other way around, Kant argues that we take objects to be distinct from our representations of them *because* we attribute normativity to those representations. And the ground of that normativity, as well as the reason for its attribution, is not actually the unity of the object, but rather the unity of the *subject*—experience is rule governed because we enact the primal activity of apperception

⁸¹ For contrasting interpretations of Kant’s theory of objective reality, see Turbayne (1955), Kemp Smith (1962), Ameriks (1992), and Robinson (1994). For interpretations in line with this view (that reality is essentially related to normativity), see Allison (1968, 1973, 1996, 2004), Beck (1965), and Posy (1984).

or self-recognition. Thus the supposedly metaphysical externality of the objects of experience, captured in the unknown = X , is in fact a refraction of our own activity of self-recognition.

The reason the *unity* conferred on objects by the activity of apperception likewise confers *reality*—or apparent metaphysical independence—upon those objects is that the unity that apperception *requires* of objects transcends what those objects are capable of actually exhibiting in experience. For, on the one hand, the transcendental subject represents herself as an *absolute* or *analytic* unity, and she imposes upon all her representations the requirement that they conform to this constraint of complete, thoroughgoing unity.⁸² But, on the other hand, possible experience always has a sensible or spatiotemporal dimension, and sensibility always appears as manifoldness. Hence, insofar as the objects of experience are required to conform to the analytic unity of the transcendental subject, they *ought* to exhibit a completely analytic unity, but insofar as they are necessarily conditioned by the forms of intuition, they always retain some manifoldness, perpetually falling short of the thoroughgoing unity they *ought* to exhibit. No sensible object ever perfectly lives up to the standard of its concept.

Since the object is taken to be answerable to a unity that it can never actually exhibit, the object itself is taken to be *in itself* more unified than it ever *appears* to be. The object in itself therefore *exceeds* and remains “distinct from” all our cognitions of it. We take objects to be *real*—and not mere figments of our representational capacities—just because we attribute to them a unity that exceeds the sensible constraints on appearance. That unity beyond appearance is known as the “object = X .”⁸³

2. *The Experience of Error: A Hegelian Account*

I think this account of objective reality is correct and compelling, but I do not believe Kant provides enough detail about how the process of reality-production actually works. What sort of experience must a subject-perspective have with an object in order to form the belief that it is *in itself* more perfectly unified than it may ever *appear* to be? Following Brandom’s interpretation of Hegel, I take this essential belief to result from

⁸² For Kant’s claim that a subject-represents herself as a specifically *analytic* unity, see *KrV*, B138. For a critique of the analyticity claim, see Guyer (1982, 1997 pp. 134 - 140). For a defense of the text as written, see Allison (2004, pp. 163-167).

⁸³ For a discussion of the relation of discursivity and the thing (as it is) in itself, see Allison 2004, (esp. pp. 3-19).

the *experience of error*. In realizing that she has made judgments about a given object in error, the subject experiences the object as being *in itself* different from the way it *appears*. Reality comes to be within this disjunction between the appearance (the “for consciousness”) and the “in itself” of the object.

To begin to grasp this relationship between error and reality, consider an example Brandom uses to discuss the same issue in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Brandom writes:

A naïve subject looks at a stick half-submerged in the water of a pond and perceptually acquires a belief that the stick is bent. Upon pulling it out, she acquires the belief that it is straight. Throughout she has believed it is rigid, and that removing it from the water won’t change its shape. These judgments are jointly incompatible. Acknowledging that is acknowledging that a mistake has been made. Those acknowledgements are acknowledgments of the practical responsibility to restore compatibility to one’s commitments (the critical task responsibility). What one must do is reject or modify at least one of the commitments in the offending constellation. Suppose our subject gives up the belief that the stick is bent, keeping the belief that it is straight (as well as the other collateral commitments). (Brandom 2019, 76).

The passage presents a “naïve subject” undergoing the experience of error. Observing the stick half-submerged in water, she commits herself to the judgment: ‘The stick is bent.’ But upon removing the stick from the water, she acquires commitment to the belief that ‘The stick is straight.’ These two beliefs are incompatible, and she *experiences* them as such. Since she continues to recognize herself as a self-identical being, she must restore compatibility to her total constellation of commitments by rejecting or modifying one belief or the other. She rejects the bent-stick belief in light of other commitments she has about sticks and her own capacities.

There are two relevant aspects of this experience of error that ought to be observed. First, treating the two commitments as being materially incompatible is treating them as referring to the same object. For, “commitment to stick A being bent and to stick B being straight are *not* incompatible. It is only if it is the *same* stick to which one is attributing those incompatible properties that the resulting judgeable contents are incompatible with one another” (Brandom 2019, 76). Thus, as a general rule, “Taking two commitments to be incompatible (by acknowledging in practice the obligation to revise at least one of them) is treating them as being about one object, and attributing incompatible properties to *it*” (Brandom 2019, 76). Second, in order to treat the two contrary commitments about the same object as being genuinely *incompatible*, one must have an overarching *meta*-commitment to the thoroughgoing unity of the object. One must be willing to reject any commitment about the stick before one gives up on the idea that it is a locus of *unity* for all one’s commitments.

Otherwise one would not necessarily hold the two incompatible commitments “in error.” So just treating oneself to have erred involves referring to an object and treating that object as, above all else, a thoroughgoing unity.

These two dimensions of error allow a rough appearance/reality distinction to be drawn:

In our example, in relinquishing the bent-stick belief and retaining the straight-stick belief, the subject is treating the first as presenting a mere *appearance*, and the second as presenting the corresponding *reality*. For at this stage in the experience of error, the mistake has been localized and identified. The problem, the subject takes it, is the bent-stick commitment. It is in error. Rejecting it is practically taking it not to express how things really are. For endorsing a judgeable content is what one must do in order thereby to be taking or treating it in practice as expressing how things really are. The subject had previously practically accorded that status to the bent-stick judgment. Repudiating that prior commitment is taking it no longer to deserve that status. The subject takes it to have been revealed (by its collision with other commitments) as merely *purporting* to express how things really are—that is, as being a mere *appearance*. (Brandom 2019, 77).

When the subject recognizes that she holds two incompatible commitments—the bent-stick and straight-stick beliefs—and takes this as grounds for rejecting one in favor of the other, she implicitly treats the rejected judgment as expressing mere *appearance* and the endorsed one as expressing *reality*. The endorsed, straight-stick commitment becomes a standard of reality by whose lights the rejected, bent-stick commitment shows up as mere appearance. In this way, the experience of error reveals the fact that the object *appeared* otherwise than it was in *reality*.

3. *From Hegel to Kant: Error as the Path to Transcendence*

Now, while I agree with Brandom (and Hegel) that these two categories—appearance and reality—become available for service on the basis of the experience of error, I think that this process needs to be inflected slightly differently in the Kantian framework.

As I read him, Brandom’s Hegel thinks that the correct, straight-stick commitment which replaces the erroneous, bent-stick commitment really does present reality *sufficiently*. To be “correct” and to “present reality” are one and the same. Other features of Hegel’s theory of experience mean that this correct presentation of reality may be made *incorrect* on the basis of further experience, but, as a rule, reality is synonymous with the standard consciousness uses to spotlight error, and that standard must always be some newly endorsed judgment. That’s what Hegel means when he says things like: “Consciousness in its own self provides its own

standard, and the investigation will thereby be a comparison of it with itself, for the difference [between appearance and reality] falls within consciousness” (Hegel 2018, PG 86; 55). Hegel does not exactly reduce reality to correctness because the dialectical process of comparing the standard to its object results in the transformation of both the object and the standard, requiring the conception of further standards, further acts of comparison, but reality is isometrically just whatever the standard describes it to be, so that the straight-stick commitment, which is the standard by which the bent-stick commitment is rejected, really does present the object as it is “in itself.” This is part of why “absolute knowing” is ultimately available to Hegel.⁸⁴

For Kant, by contrast, correctness is no more synonymous with reality than incorrectness is. The straight-stick belief does not present reality any more successfully than the bent-stick belief does. Even though the former is *correct*, providing a standard for rejecting the latter as false, both commitments remain thoroughly situated within the realm of appearance. This is so, in part, because “appearance” is not synonymous with falsity for Kant. Empirical objects are appearances, rather than realities (being in themselves other than the they are represented), because they are conditioned by the forms of sensible intuition, but our judgments of these appearances may nevertheless be correct if they correctly conform to concepts.

Nevertheless, I think the Hegelian experience of error, as presented by Brandom, is still revelatory about how reality works for Kant. As we have seen, when the naïve subject in the stick example revises her constellation of commitments on the basis of new experiences, replacing the bent-stick with the straight-stick belief, she experiences the object as the center of two incompatible commitments. Since she is committed to the object as a locus of unity about which she must hold only compatible beliefs, she rejects one of the commitments in favor of the other. But, in addition to revealing a particular mistake, this experience of error reveals the object as *in general* something she is *capable of being wrong about*. There is no guarantee that future experiences won’t cause the subject to acquire *another* belief about the stick that is incompatible with the novel straight-stick belief, proving it to be erroneous. Her overarching, meta-commitment to the unity of the object

⁸⁴ For Hegel’s discussion of Absolute knowing, see Hegel 2018 (pp. 454-467). For commentary on this section see Pinkard (2012) and Pippin (1989, 2012).

will in these circumstances cause her to reject the straight-stick belief just as surely as she rejected the bent-stick belief.

A subject-perspective's highest, unbreakable commitment about the object is to its *unity* with itself—this is what she takes it to be *in itself*—and since she has no way of guaranteeing that any particular belief about it will not at some point become incompatible with another belief she may acquire, even the judgments she takes currently to be *correct* are intrinsically corrigible and, in principle, dispensable. Taking all particular commitments about a given object as dispensable is just what it takes to retain the broad *metacommitment* to objective unity in the face of the unpredictability of experience. This means that a subject-perspective cannot allow *any* judgment she makes about a given object to line up entirely with that object as it is *in itself*—the *reality* (the “in itself”) of the object must always be disassociated from any particular judgment about it so as to preserve at all costs the highest metacommitment to its irreducible unity. Thus *all* judgments present the object only as it appears, even the ones that are correct.⁸⁵

The experience of error leads to the representation of a reality beyond representation in a three stage process. The first two stages are common to the Hegelian theory, but the third is distinctly Kantian. In the first stage, the subject-perspective recognizes that she holds incompatible commitments about an object. In the second, deferring to her metacommitment to the thoroughgoing unity of the object, she rectifies the incompatibility by rejecting or altering at least one of the commitments. In the third, she realizes that her current commitments about the object are no less corrigible than her previous ones were, so that she might easily acquire further beliefs about the object in the course of future sensible experience that are incompatible with the current ones. Since her highest commitment is to the thoroughgoing unity of the object, this “realization” causes her to disassociate the object with all the particular commitments she currently, or might ever, hold about it, identifying the object exclusively with its unity. All it is *in itself* is a thoroughgoing unity; her particular commitments about it present it only as it *appears*. The object thereby achieves “reality,” metaphysical

⁸⁵ The distinction between pure and empirical concepts of the understanding may be productively elucidated along these lines. Pure concepts are indispensable because they articulate the overarching *metacommitment* to the unity of the object. Empirical concepts are thereby made *dispensable* because subject-perspectives must be willing to revise any and all of them if they run afoul of the categories.

independence from representation, because it is always and irreducibly (held to be) *in itself* other than it *appears* to be.

This three-stage process describes a *psychological* connection of unity, error, and reality. This connection is grounded on the subject-perspective's "realization" that there is no guarantee that any of her particular commitments about a given object won't eventually be incompatible with other commitments about that same object. This realization, together with her metacommitment to objective unity, causes the subject-perspective to disassociate the object as it *appears* from that same object as it is *in itself*, investing the latter with reality. The following section will attempt to ground this psychological "realization" in a transcendental argument, but before proceeding to that argument, allow me to point out a couple of details that will be important down the road.

First, as I have presented things, the reality of the object is connected essentially to the representation of material incompatibility. It is because materially incompatible judgments about any given object are always possible that the object must be taken to be in itself other than the way it appears. The faculty that hosts material incompatibility is sensibility, and the faculty that represents it is the imagination. Thus, we may expect certain processes of sensibility and the imagination to be essential to producing the reality of the object. Second, the reality of the object, what it is in itself, is identified exclusively with its thoroughgoing unity with itself, and it is always further *sensible* experiences with any given object that disrupts that unity by causing the subject-perspective to acquire materially incompatible commitments. Hence, the faculty by which the subject-perspective acknowledges and retains her metacommitment to objective unity must represent objects *beyond* their sensible involvements. Reason is the faculty to which Kant gives this essential job.⁸⁶ Thus, reason, imagination, and sensibility will all be involved in the reality of the object.

II. The Transcendental Ground of Error: The Ideal and Material Supplements

The last section section provided a psychological account of how the experience of error could lead the subject to distinguish the object as it appears from the same object as it is in itself, attributing reality to it in virtue of this divide. The current section provides a transcendental ground for this experience of error and so

⁸⁶ *KrV*.A293/B350-A309/B366.384-393.

for the attribution of reality to objects. Returning to my analysis of the B Deduction, I argue that the retention of *discursive difference* requires every act of cognition to produce two opposing byproducts—what I call the material and ideal supplements. The former is the transcendental ground of error, the latter the ground of reality.

1. *The Byproducts of Experience*

My reconstruction of the Transcendental Deduction in Chapter Two showed sensible experience to be determined by the categories *a priori* as a result of the constant possibility of self-recognition (apperception). Because I must be able to think *myself* through any of my sensible representations, insofar as they appear in my experience, it follows that all sensible representations must conform to the unity that I myself am and the rules that make my thought of that unity possible. Those rules, for Kant, are the categories—the pure concepts of the understanding. Thus, categories were seen to be most essentially functions of self-recognition. The key point that this Deduction had to make was that the method by which I recognize myself through my sensible representations must be *other than sensible*—for, this method of self-recognition must *act on* and *through* sensibility. Hence, self-recognition is a process of *thought* (the only other type of representation). Acknowledging this point allowed us to apply all the conditions of thought to any given sensible manifold.

According to the Deduction, pure concepts determine sensible intuitions only insofar as concepts and intuitions constitute rigorously distinct representational types. Concepts determine intuitions *only because* the possible representation of oneself that necessarily accompanies all possible manifolds of intuition must employ a *different* type of representation than an intuition—and the only other type of representation is conceptual. Following Henry Allison, I called this necessary difference between concepts and sensible intuitions “discursive difference.”⁸⁷ Without the presumption of discursive difference, the argument of the Deduction would not go through.

Hence, my analysis entails the following commitments:

- (1) Pure concepts determine any sensible manifold that appears in my experience. (Conclusion of the Deduction)

⁸⁷ See Allison (2004, p. 77).

- (2) Concepts and intuitions constitute irreducibly distinct representational types. (Condition of Discursive Difference)

I will argue here that these two claims, together, imply that every act of cognition involves the fabrication of two opposing cognitive *byproducts*—what I will call the material and ideal supplements—and, further, that the fabrication of these supplements always instigates further acts of cognition, each of which in turn fabricates further examples of the opposing supplements.

For, cognition involves the subsumption of sensible intuitions under concepts of the understanding, but the condition of discursive difference requires that these two representational types remain thoroughly distinct from one another. In order for a given sensible manifold to retain its difference from the concept that subsumes it, that manifold must retain an aspect of itself that *exceeds* conceptual determination. This sensible excess is the material supplement.

Conversely, in order for a subsuming concept to retain *its* difference from the sensible intuitions it subsumes, it too must retain an aspect of itself that exceeds sensible subsumption. This conceptual excess is the ideal supplement. Since no sensible intuitions may appear in experience without conceptual determination, the fabrication of each material supplement occasions further acts of conceptual subsumption, but these subsumptions in turn instigate the fabrication of further examples of the supplements. The result is an endless process of cognition and excess, synthesis and fabrication—the vicissitudes of experience.

To demonstrate this conclusion, let us begin by considering what the two numbered claims above really assert. (1) requires that every sensible manifold, insofar as it appears in my experience, conform to the rule of the categories. I must be able to discover the mark of the categories in every sensible manifold I encounter, for otherwise it would not appear to *me* (a committedly self-identical being). Now, categories, as pure concepts, are *functions* of the understanding. To say that every manifold must show the mark of the categories, then, is to claim that every manifold must be determined by a function of the understanding, i.e., a concept.

If we represent this state of affairs symbolically, emphasizing the *functional* definition of concepts, then we may say that every sensible manifold *m* is legible in experience only as the independent variable of the concept-function 'C(*m*),' where 'C()' is the legislative mark of the categories and '*m*' is any given manifold.

Every cognition $C(m)$ is, of course, itself intelligible in experience only through the *object* that it cognizes, so that every function $C(m)$ is equal to some x , where x is any object of experience. Hence, (1) claims that all sensible manifolds appear in experience *only* as determined within the complete concept-function ' $C(m) = x$.' A "free floating" m is, by definition, unintelligible, and therefore it does not appear.

Conversely, (2) requires both every sensible manifold to remain independent of the concepts that determine it and every concept to remain independent of the manifold it subsumes. Since sensible intuitions and concepts are necessarily members of distinct representational types, neither any manifold m nor any concept-function $C()$ is *reducible* to the role it plays in any cognition $C(m) = x$.

Now, if m is irreducible to the role it plays in its cognition $C(m) = x$, then there is some aspect of m that *exceeds* the determination it receives from its concept-function. There is always some supplementary aspect of every m that *exceeds* the role it plays in the cognition $C(m) = x$. I will refer to the cognized aspect of m that the concept successfully subsumes as ' m^n ', and I will call the supplementary aspect of m that *exceeds* the subsumption under its concept ' m^{n+1} '. For every cognized m^n , i.e., for every $C(m^n) = x$, there is always some m^{n+1} , that exceeds that cognition. I will refer to m^{n+1} as the material supplement.

Similarly, if $C()$ is irreducible to the role it plays in subsuming m^n , then it too has a supplementary aspect—a dimension that surpasses the role it plays in subsuming sensible contents. I will call the cognitive aspect of the concept that subsumes m^n ' $C_n()$ ', and I will call the supplementary aspect of the concept that surpasses this subsumption ' I^{n+1} '. The ' I ' here stands for *idea* or ideal supplement. Going forward, concepts designated by the notion $C_n()$ are concepts of the understanding that directly subsume manifolds, while concepts designated by the notation I^{n+1} are ideas of reason (or ideal supplements) that surpass sensibility. Every concept of the understanding $C_n()$ corresponds to, and is exceeded by, some idea of reason I^{n+1} : these always designate differing aspects of the same concept.

Now, it is necessary that the material supplement m^{n+1} of every concept function $C_n(m^n) = x^n$ actually *appear* in experience. For, by (2), above, it is only in virtue of the *appearance* of its supplement, m^{n+1} , that the condition of discursive difference is retained when the subsumption of $C_n(m^n)$ is enacted, and it is only because this condition is retained that $C_n(m^n) = x^n$ has authority as a discursive cognition. The cognition *itself* fabricates

the material supplement that exceeds it in order to preserve the condition of discursive difference and, thereby, the argument of the Deduction which establishes its own authority. However, by (1), since the supplement m^{n+1} is necessarily an *appearance*—i.e., since the concept-function it exceeds *requires* m^{n+1} to appear in order to preserve discursive difference—it too is necessarily determined by a concept-function. m^{n+1} cannot be determined by the concept $C_n(m^n) = x^n$ for which it is the material supplement, since it is required to *exceed* this concept. It will therefore be determined by a *second degree* concept-function. Call this second degree concept function ' $C_{n+1}()$.' Therefore the supplement m^{n+1} will be determined by the second degree cognition $C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}$.

By (2), the supplement m^{n+1} is not reducible to the role it plays in cognition $C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}$, since otherwise this secondary cognition would violate discursive difference. Therefore, some aspect of m^{n+1} exceeds the role it plays in cognition. Call this supplementary aspect m^{n+2} . Then m^{n+2} is fabricated to preserve discursive difference when the cognition of $C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}$ is synthesized. This excess, m^{n+2} , is a second-degree example of the material supplement. Similarly, again by (2), the concept $C_{n+1}()$ is not reducible to its determination of m^{n+1} in $C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}$, since otherwise the condition of discursive difference would be violated. Thus, some aspect of $C_{n+1}()$ exceeds the determination it enacts in cognition $C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}$. Call this supplementary aspect I^{n+2} . This excess, I^{n+2} , is a second-degree example of the ideal supplement.

The appearance of m^{n+2} requires a determining concept-function, $C_{n+2}(m^{n+2}) = x^{n+2}$, no less than the previous examples of the material supplement did, and this new concept-function fabricates new examples of the further material and ideal supplements, m^{n+3} and I^{n+3} . And the fabrication of a new material supplement compels the synthesis of a new cognition. This process will continue indefinitely, resulting in three limitless sets: the series of cognitions (C), the series of material supplements (M), and the series of ideal supplements (I):

$$M = \{m^{n+1}, m^{n+2}, m^{n+3}, \dots, m^{n+x}\}$$

$$C = \{C_n(m^n) = x^n, C_{n+1}(m^{n+1}) = x^{n+1}, C_{n+2}(m^{n+2}) = x^{n+2}, \dots, C_{n+(x-l)}(m^{n+(x-l)}) = x^{n+(x-l)}\}$$

$$I = \{I^{n+1}, I^{n+2}, I^{n+3}, \dots, I^{n+x}\}.$$

Since it is always the synthesis of new cognitions that requires the fabrication of novel supplements, the series of cognitions is always one degree behind the material and ideal series. The activities of progressively adding members to these series, synthesizing cognitions, fabricating material and ideal supplements, constitute the

process of experience itself. Without the production of these series, the argument of the Deduction would not go through and we would have no account for the intelligibility of experience.

2. *How do the Supplements Ground Error and Reality?*

The foregoing establishes transcendental grounds for characterizing cognition as a process that involves the incessant fabrication of material and ideal supplements—every instance of cognition involves the fabrication of these supplements as a means of preserving the condition of discursive difference without which the argument of the Deduction would not be valid. But what do these supplements have to do with error and reality? These were the speculative entities the argument was supposed to account for. In what sense has the foregoing provided a transcendental ground of error and a pathway to reality?

Consider again the example of the naïve subject and the bent or straight stick. When this subject-perspective experienced her error, removing the half-submerged stick from the pond, she did so on the occasion of further *sensible* experience with the object. Previous sensible intuitions had caused her to acquire the commitment ‘The stick is bent’, but subsequent sensible intuitions caused her to acquire the incompatible commitment ‘The stick is straight’. And the experience of error consists in representing these two incompatible beliefs together and realizing that their incompatibility violates the unity of the object. In this example, the experience of error necessarily involves, and is fundamentally precipitated by, new *sensible intuitions*. While it *appeared* to the subject-perspective that she had sufficiently organized the manifoldness of sensible experience under a concept, sensibility had *further* manifoldness in store.

The experience of error is always precipitated by novel sensible intuitions. Even the experience of highly conceptual errors—like the discovery of logical mistakes—have a sensible component. Suppose some subject-perspective incorrectly believes that an invalid argument form, such as $P \rightarrow Q, Q \mid - P$, is valid. She could discover her mistake in a variety of ways: by drawing the truth table, by reading about the fallacy of “affirming the consequent,” or by a pure act of introspection. But even in the final case—in which the subject-perspective realizes her error by internally conceiving the definitions of validity and the material conditional—the experience of the error is occasioned by new sensible intuitions. For even introspection is determined by

time, the pure form of inner sense.⁸⁸ Thus, even highly conceptual errors are discovered and experienced by means of new sensible intuitions. Whenever an error is discovered, the catalyst of the experience is new sensible experiences with the object about which the error is made: the sensible dimension of that object unfolds manifoldness that the subject-perspective had previously ignored.

This alone begins to vouch for the material supplement as a transcendental ground of error. For the argument behind the material supplement is that every object, no matter how thoroughly cognized, retains further layers of manifoldness that it has yet to exhibit, further sensible dimensions that have not yet been conceived.⁸⁹ Since error is always precipitated by further sensible encounters with the object about which one errs, the assurance that the sensible manifoldness of every object is indefinite comes very close to securing the transcendental ground of error. But for the indefinite character of sensible manifoldness to secure this ground fully, we need a guarantee that the subject-perspective's continued elaboration of this manifoldness will necessarily cause her to acquire commitments about the object under investigation that are incompatible with the commitments she currently holds.

This guarantee may be found in the last chapter's discussion of the relation of sensible intuitions and material incompatibility. During the course of my discussion of the reproductive imagination, I argued that the difference between *understanding* and *imagining* a judgment consisted in whether or not one included that judgment in its *inferential network* or embedded it in the *incompatibility field* that underwrites that network. Representing judgments inferentially understands them according to their concepts, and representing them embedded in relations of material incompatibility represents them according to the *sensible appearances* they contain. When one understands, rather than imagines, that something is *red*, one implicitly represents its inferential relation to being *maroon*, *scarlett*, or *colored*. But when one imagines, rather than understands, that that

⁸⁸ For more on the temporal character of introspection, see Allison (2004, p. 277), Parsons (1992), and Hatfield (2006).

⁸⁹ My claim that every act of cognition involves the fabrication of a material supplement, some aspect of the cognized manifold that exceeds the present act of cognition, thereby calling for further cognitions, is closely related to Kant's principle of *specification*, elaborated in first *Critique's* Appendix (*KrV*, A658/B686). But while this methodological idea of reason states that there is no limit to how far a sensible object may be *conceptually* specified, the argument about the material supplement contends that there is no limit to the *manifoldness* of sense. This constant fabrication of the material supplement may be seen as the process that *underwrites* the principle of specification—for it is only because manifoldness is inexhaustible that lower concepts may always be found.

same thing is *red*, one implicitly represents its incompatibility with being *blue*, *yellow*, or *colorless*, etc., aligning it with its distinctively sensible contents.

Sensible manifoldness is *nothing other than* the expression of material incompatibility. Thus, to say that every object always contains sensible manifoldness that it has not yet revealed is just to assert that every object is involved in material *incompatibility* relations that have not yet appeared. No matter how many incompatibility relations we imaginatively negotiate, the object will always have further incompatibilities in store for our intuition.

Since the experience of error is nothing other than the representation of material incompatibility (one recognizes that at least two of one's beliefs about an object are incompatible), and since sensible intuition is the representation of the material incompatibilities in which a given object is embedded, it follows that the guarantee that every object's sensible manifoldness is inexhaustible is equally a guarantee that the risk of error is irreducible. As long as one continues to have sensible encounters with an object, one continues to embed it in denser and denser incompatibility fields, and, since the experience of error involves nothing but the representation of these fields, all of these sensible encounters carry the risk of error with them. Thus, the transcendental argument which proves cognition to fabricate in every case a material supplement also provides a transcendental ground of error.

Just as the material supplement (or the process of its incessant fabrication) is the transcendental ground of *error*, so is the ideal supplement the transcendental ground of *reality*. As discussed above, a subject-perspective's realization of the constant possibility of acquiring incompatible commitments about any sensible object, paired with the her metacommitment to the thoroughgoing unity of all such objects, requires her to disassociate every given sensible object from its appearance, taking to be *in itself* other than the way it appears. Since none of the subject-perspective's judgments about the object, however correct, may be taken to represent the object as it is *in itself* without placing that object's unity in jeopardy, all such judgments must be taken to represent the object as *mere appearance*. And since an object is "real" just if it is metaphysically independent from its representation, this disidentification of the object in itself from its appearance has the result of conferring *reality* on the object. The real in the object is then identified with the unity it retains in itself, and which may

never be allowed to appear. The subject-perspective takes objects of appearance as *real*, then, just because she associates them with a unity whose appearance she forbids herself to represent. This sort of identification of objects in themselves with a unity beyond appearance is possible and transcendently grounded only because every act of cognition fabricates an ideal supplement—an aspect of the concept which confers unity upon intuition that withholds itself from participating in sensible determination. Thus, the *real* in the object is always (taken to be) nothing other than the ideal supplement. In this way, the ideal supplement occurs as the transcendental ground of reality.

III. From Error to Beauty: Representing the Supplements

The previous sections hope to have grounded the concept of objective reality in the material and ideal supplements, deriving these excesses from the condition of discursive difference. The current section will explain how the supplements are represented. The ideal supplement is represented in each case by ideas of reason. Since Kant provides an extensive treatment of how this works in the first *Critique's* Transcendental Dialectic, I will constrain my explication to a discussion of its material counterpart. The material supplement constitutes the absolutely sensible side of any object, the degree to which its sensible manifoldness exceeds the unity of its concept. I will contend that this most speculative of material entities is represented by means of a judgment of taste. The experience of the supplement—which grounds error and leads on to reality—is none other than the feeling of beauty. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by revisiting the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement, showing it to have proven intransigent.

1. Reason and the Ideal Supplement

The ideal supplement is, in each case, the dimension of some sensibly determining concept that exceeds the sensible determination it delivers. It is incarnated in the pure unity of the object in itself, existing beyond its sensible appearance. Kant names this aspect of the object *noumenon*, and he prescribes *ideas of reason* as the agents of its representation. Situating ideas of reason within the taxonomy of representation in general, Kant describes them, as I have above, as pure concepts surpassing sense. He writes:

The genus is **representation** in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A **perception** that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (*sensatio*); an objective perception is a **cognition** (*cognitio*). The latter is either an **intuition** or a **concept** (*intuitus vel conceptus*). The former is immediately related to the object

and is singular; the latter is mediate, by means of a mark, which can be common to several things. A concept is either an **empirical** or a **pure concept**, and the pure concept, insofar as it has its origin solely in the understanding (not in a pure image of sensibility), is called *notio*. A concept made up of notions, which goes beyond the possibility of experience, is an idea or a concept of reason. (*KrV*.A320/B377.398-399, **emphasis added**).

A concept that is not only purely, but *absolutely*, a concept is an idea of reason: a concept that determines not pure sensible intuitions but mere “notions,” ideal differentia. These ideas of reason are not suited to represent anything pertaining to the sensible dimension of the object. They represent, instead, the *ideal supplement*—the unity beyond sense—that every act of cognition breeds in its object.⁹⁰

I will have opportunity to discuss the representation of the ideal supplement further in the following chapter, but I will proceed now to a discussion of the material counterpart.

2. *Taste and the Material Supplement*

The material supplement is, in each case, the dimension of a sensible manifold, determined in cognition, that exceeds the concept that subsumes it. Every act of cognition fabricates a material supplement, which is always the conservator of the general condition of discursive difference, and every fabrication of the supplement instigates further acts of cognition. But while every cognition has its material excess, and while every excess leads to further subsumptions, the material supplement is nothing cognitive. It can never be the object of cognition while remaining itself. How then will it be represented? For it *must* be represented in some way. Even if it cannot *appear* in experience (violating as it does the intelligible conditions of the object), its influence must nevertheless be *felt* there, since its presence preserves an essential transcendental condition.

The subjective activity whose job is to represent the material supplement is the judgment of taste. While error provides the psychological experience of reality, beauty prepares its transcendental ground. This argument must be made in stages. In this subsection, I will show the representation of the supplement to involve some species of the imagination’s generic activity of embedding appearances in incompatibility fields. In the following one, I will identify this species of imaginative activity as cognitive free play.

⁹⁰ Kant’s main treatment of ideas of reason in general may be found in the introduction to the first *Critique*’s Transcendental Dialectic (*KrV*, A293/B350 - A309/B366; 384 - 393.)

To begin with, since the material supplement is the dimension of a cognitively determined sensible manifold that exceeds or outstrips its conceptual determination, it is itself a manifold that is *more manifold* than the sensible intuitions contained under the unity of the concept it exceeds. That is, if m^{n+1} is the material supplement of the cognition determining m^n (viz., $C_n(m^n) = x^n$), then m^{n+1} exhibits more “manifoldness” than m^n . For, as Kant explains and constantly reiterates, “[e]very intuition contains a manifold in itself” (*KrV*, A99; 228), so that to be a sensible intuition is to be manifold. Since the material supplement is what retains the sensible character of intuitions falling under concepts, it is always more absolutely sensible than the intuitions it exceeds. It is, for this reason, more *manifold* than they are. The material supplement exceeds the concept because it exhibits a sensible complexity more baroque than the concept can unify.

Now, while every sensible intuition contains a manifold, it is always the imagination that apprehends the “manifoldness” of the manifold. For, as Kant writes, in order not only to represent manifold elements, but also to represent those elements *as* manifold,

...it is necessary first to run through and then to take together this manifoldness, which action I call the **synthesis of apprehension**, since it is aimed directly at the intuition, which to be sure provides a manifold but can never effect this as such, and indeed as contained **in one representation**, without the occurrence of such a synthesis. (*KrV*.A99.229).

While sensible intuition “provides” a manifold, sensibility itself can never itself “take together this manifoldness.” This is to say, all sensible appearances must exhibit the character of manifoldness in order to qualify as sensible appearances at all, but in order for that manifoldness to be *represented*, the diverse elements of the given manifold must be “taken together” in unison. This “unity” (which is far from conceptual) is the synopsis of the many elements and the representation of all of them together in their manyness. The action of this synopsis is called the synthesis of apprehension, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the faculty in charge of this synthesis is the imagination: “There is thus an active faculty of the synthesis of this manifold in us, which we call imagination, and whose action exercised immediately upon perceptions I call apprehension” (*KrV*, A120; 239). Thus, the imagination is the faculty that represents the manifoldness of every manifold.

Since the material supplement is always *more manifold* than the cognized manifold it exceeds, and the imagination is the faculty responsible for representing manifoldness in general, it follows that the material supplement is in every case represented by an act of the imagination. Even though the material supplement is

an absolutely *sensible* excess, fabricated to preserve the separate character of the faculty of intuition, it may only be represented by a faculty capable of apprehending manifolds *as* manifolds—imagination.

The way in which the imagination represents the manifoldness of the manifold, enacting the synthesis of apprehension, is by representing the *reproductive* relations holding among each of the manifold elements: “...even this apprehension of the manifold alone would bring forth no image and no connection of the impressions were there not a subjective ground for calling back a perception, from which the mind has passed on to another... i.e., a reproductive faculty of imagination” (*KrV*.A121.239). The manifold as a whole is represented in its manifoldness just when the imagination takes each element to be in itself nothing other than its relations to the others, so that the representation of “one” such element without the others is impossible, and it is understood that “[e]very intuition contains a manifold *in itself*” (*KrV*.A99.228). Thus, the imagination represents the material supplement through some species of the activity by which it represents manifoldness in general: by imagining the mutually reproductive relations holding among its manifold elements, taking each to be nothing other than its relations to all the others.

Now this process of reproduction “must... have a rule in accordance with which a representation enters into combination in the imagination with one representation rather than with any others” (*KrV*.A121.239). For “if representations reproduced one another without distinction... there would... be no determinate connection but merely unruly heaps of them, and no cognition at all would arise” (*KrV*.A121.239). As I explored in the previous chapter, the rule according to which reproduction is enacted is *contrariety* (material incompatibility): under the aspect of the imagination, one appearance directly reproduces all and only those manifold others that are *contrary* to it, synthesizing in itself an image of mutually reproducing incompatibles.

The imagination represents manifolds by representing sensible appearances in fields of material incompatibility relations with their diverse contraries. To represent manifoldness at all, then—whether the excess manifoldness of the material supplement or the conceptualized manifoldness of subsumed in cognition—is to embed the appearance to which it pertains within its distinctive, semantogenic incompatibility field, formulating the *image* of its mutually reproducing contraries.

We may get a grip on how the imagination represents the material supplement, then, by 1) recalling in greater detail the way it represents the manifoldness pertaining to an appearance in general, 2) identifying the implicitly *conceptual* dimension of that representation, and 3) eliminating that conceptual dimension—since the supplement is just a sensible manifold in excess of its concept. I will perform the first and second of these tasks here, leaving the third to the following subsection.

Consider again some object x and some judgment P about it to which some subject-perspective is committed. Suppose x is a particular pine tree, and P states ‘This pine tree is one hundred feet tall.’ We may imagine a minimal semantogenic field for P by listing some number of its material incompatibilities:

- Q : x is less than a year old.
- R : x has broad leaves.
- S : x sheds all its photosynthesizers annually.
- T : x is a better electrical conductor than copper.

These incompatible statements play an essential semantogenic role with respect to P because understanding P not only *involves* understanding its incompatibility with these claims but may even involves *nothing other than* a representation of this incompatibility. Recycling a diagram from the last chapter, the semantogenic field may be represented as follows:

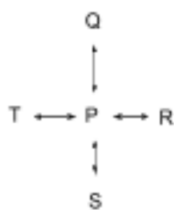


Diagram 4.1

As before, the double-arrows represent the symmetric relation of material incompatibility holding between P and each of its contraries (not the formal biconditional).

Imagining P —i.e., reproductively representing it in its manifoldness—involves embedding it in this semantogenic field of contraries, which, in turn, involves (at least implicitly) imagining each of the *elements* of this field. Doing this involves embedding these members in *their* semantogenic fields, all of which will be linked to field P by imagination bridges. The result may be sketched as follows:

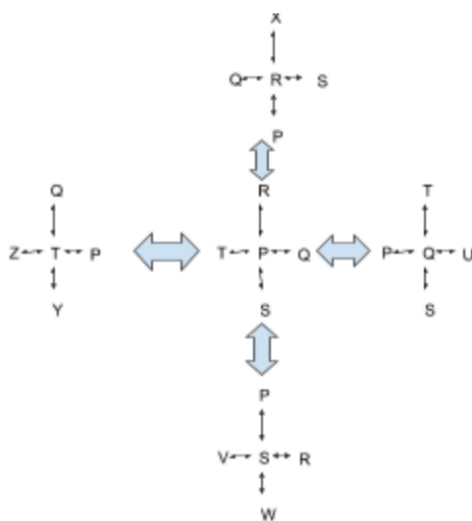


Diagram 4.2

Every field connected to P 's contains P and also other members not contained in P 's field (or else field- P contains members not contained in them). Since imagining P in the context of its semantogenic field involves imagining each of the members of this field, while imagining these members involves representing *their* semantogenic fields, imagining P involves representing its semantogenic involvements not only with its own contraries, but also with all the contraries of its contraries, which may not be contrary to it (contrariety is symmetric, but not necessarily transitive). The whole representational process places P in the center of a flux of simultaneous repulsion and attraction—it “repels” the contrary members of its field, since it is incompatible with them, but since this “repulsion” has a semantogenic effect for P , making it what it is, it is equally an “attraction.” Representing P as the gravitational center of this repulsion-attraction of complex elements is just what imagining its “manifoldness” involves.

In standard cases of cognition, the understanding would employ this expanding-contracting flux of incompatibles to compare field- P to all the fields to which it is connected by an imagination bridge, identifying sets and subsets of material incompatibilities, thereby including P within its properly semantogenic network of *inference*. Now, one of the key elements that this intervention of the understanding involves is the identification of at least one claim to which the subject-perspective is *committed*. That commitment provides a *standard* for rejecting or including other claims occurring in the fields within the inferential network whose synthesis is under way. In the current example, claim P (“ x is one hundred feet tall”) functions as the commitment that enables the

understanding to take effect. Committing to P is situating it at the *center* of the attractive-repulsive process of the imagination (as it is situated in the diagram): material incompatibility with P is understood as the basis for rejecting any claim about x , and compatibility with P is taken as a necessary condition of endorsing any such claim. Placing P at the center of the field signals that all other claims about x are to be compared with P .

The subject-perspective *commits* to a claim just when she takes it to be correct according to a concept. This means that any time a claim about an object has been identified as the *center* of a semantogenic field, selected as the standard to which all other claims about that object must be compared before commitment may be extended to them, *concepts* have intervened. Indeed, the basic function of concepts may be reduced to a process of selecting centers of incompatibility fields, standards for inclusion and or exclusion from inferential constellations. For concepts are rules of judgment; such rules are norms of inference; (material) inferences are made by negotiating incompatibility fields; and the process of this negotiation is determined at the outset by the selection of semantogenic centers. Thus, any incompatibility field with a stable center has already submitted to the rule of a concept.

The *conceptual* dimension of the imagination's generic activity of embedding appearances in incompatibility fields consists in committing to at least one judgment in the field as the standard for rejecting or accepting others. This commitment is diagrammatically recognized by placing it at the center of the semantogenic field—situating it as that to which all the other appearances must be compared.

3. *Decentralization, Dissemination, and Harmonization*

The imagination's representation of the material supplement, in every case, consists in representing the *manifoldness* of that appearance insofar as this manifoldness exceeds conception. This involves embedding that appearance in a semantogenic field but *without* identifying a commitment to its correctness, *without* situating it as the stable center of its field. For the imagination represents all manifoldness by imagining the incompatibility fields pertaining to an appearance, and the conceptual aspect of that process consists in identifying some center of commitment to which all other appearances may be compared. This sort of "centerless" representation of an appearance's manifoldness involves, along with the mutual reproduction of contraries, three additional processes of decentralization, dissemination, and harmonization. Together these processes constitute the *free*

play of the imagination and the understanding. I will enumerate each in turn and then explain why they provide the pleasure definitive of cognitive free play.

Representing the manifoldness of some appearance P —‘ x (viz., this pine tree) is one hundred feet tall’—without identifying a *commitment* as the conceptual center of this manifoldness (this incompatibility field) consists first in a process of *decentralization*. Consider again a representation of P 's incompatibility field.

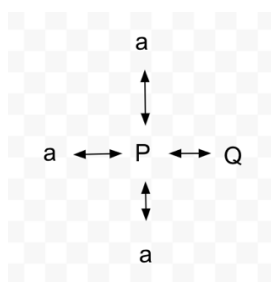


Diagram 4.3

Among the appearances that P reproduces in this field is Q (‘ x is less than one year old’).⁹¹ Since P is contrary to Q , representing P involves representing (its semantogenic contrariety to) Q . Conversely, since Q is contrary to P , representing Q involves representing P . These two appearances stand in a mutually reproductive relation. In standard cases of cognition, both reproductions affirm the same *center* of the diagram. If P counts as cognition of the object x to which it pertains (the pine tree), then the subject-perspective has *committed* to it: she has situated it as the stable *center* of its own field. Thus, when P reproduces Q , it reproduces it as a *non-central* member of the field. Conversely, when Q reproduces P , it reproduces it as the *central* member of the field. In this way, both reproductions affirm the centrality of P . Because the commitment to the conceptual validity of P remains in place, P is taken to represent x correctly; and because Q is incompatible with P , it is taken to represent x incorrectly. Both reproductions affirm the correctness of the one and the incorrectness of the other according to the concept. Thus, the intervention of the concept retains the isomorphism of the field across its reproductive flux— P remains the center and Q remains a non-center.

When conceptual commitment to P (or any other appearance) is withheld, however, this isomorphism is not retained. P is no more central to the field than Q is. P is no more the standard for rejecting or endorsing

⁹¹ For the sake of clarity, I substitute the letter ‘a’ for all the appearances other than P and Q in Field- P . The letter ‘a’ stands generically for ‘appearance.’

Q than Q is such a standard for P . In the diagrammatic terms of the field, this means that P reproduces Q as a non-central member of the field (affirming its own centrality), but Q equally reproduces P as a non-central member of the same field (affirming *its* own centrality). So rather than the repulsion and attraction of an *isometric* field (as above), we have a constant reconfiguration of the field's structure.

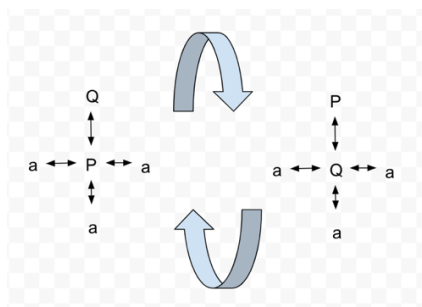


Diagram 4.4

The curved arrows in this diagram are not the same as broad double-arrows from Diagram-4.2 , which stand for imagination bridges. Fields linked by imagination bridges are *distinct* from one another: the imagination bridges allow the two fields to be compared to one another on the basis of a common conceptual standard. What is represented here, by contrast, is one and the same field undergoing a constant transformation. Without a conceptual commitment in place, the center cannot hold: the incompatibility field is constantly making and unmaking itself in incompatible ways.

This is the movement of “decentralization.” In semantic terms, decentralization means that *no* term in the field is *either* rejected *or* endorsed on the basis of another. But, equally, *every* term is *both* rejected *and* endorsed on the basis of all the others. Each incompatible appearances is a standard for affirming or denying *all* the other appearances. This is a purer representation of incompatibility than that which is involved in cognition. Rather than a representation of incompatibility that is *used* for the sake of compatible inferences, it is the experience of incompatibility (manifoldness) *in itself*.

Decentralization leads necessarily to a process of *dissemination*. *New* appearances are always being added to the flux, so that the constantly transforming manifold is always becoming *more* manifold. For, when conceptual commitment to any one appearance is withheld from the imagination's representation of manifoldness, any two contraries such as P and Q undergo the flux of mutually decentralizing reproduction. But while contrariety is symmetrical, it is not always transitive: if Q is contrary to P and D , then both P and D

are contrary to Q , but it does not follow that P and D are necessarily contrary to one another (although they could be). Thus, the incompatibility field that Q reproduces may contain, in addition to P , other elements such as D that *are* not contained in P 's field. Similarly, D 's field may contain other elements E not contained in either Q 's field or P 's.

Thus, the decentralizing flux that occurs when conceptual commitment is withheld from the imagination's representation of reproductive contraries entails not merely the constant *reorganization* of a field containing a uniform set of members. It entails, beyond this, a perpetual evolution of which members the field itself contains. Without conceptual commitment, neither the *structure* of the field nor its set of *members* is isomorphic. This may be represented as follows:

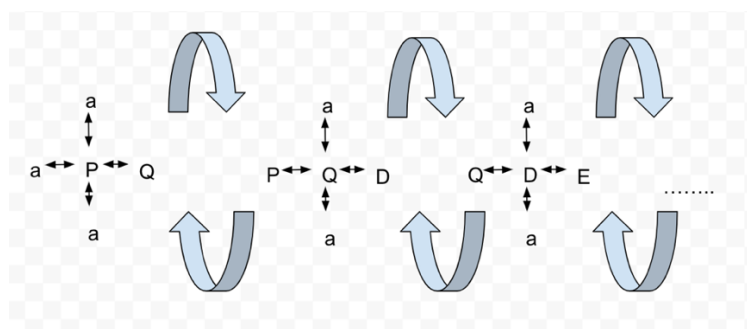


Diagram 4.5

Again, these curved arrows are not the same as imagination bridges. The diagram does not describe an interconnected *network* of distinct semantogenic fields (which the understanding may inferentially mobilize), but rather a *single* such field with a constantly metamorphosing structure and set of terms.

This is the movement of “dissemination”—each decentralizing act of mutual reproduction contains the possibility of both plotting entirely new members in the field and eliminating previous members. But any eliminated members are immediately reproduced in virtue of the mutuality of reproduction, so that, in this way, the manifoldness of the decentralized manifold is constantly on the rise. Even though P does not occur in field- D , so that when field- D holds sway P does not appear, this field *does* contain Q which itself reproduces P . The net effect, then, is a perpetual increase in the number of members that must ultimately be imagined.

Dissemination leads finally to a process of *harmonization*. As we know, an incompatibility field describes the manifold contraries to some given appearance. We may consider every appearance to be “dissonant” with every appearance in its own field—it is contrary to all of them, cannot form a unison with any of them.

Conversely, every appearance is *compatible* with any appearance that *does not* occur in its incompatibility field, linking to these compatible appearances by more convoluted pathways of contrariety. By the same metaphor, we may consider every appearance to be “consonant” with all those with which it is compatible.

In the standard cognitive setting, the understanding sets upon series of incompatibility fields, connected by imagination bridges, comparing them together to select the “consonant” appearances and thereby form inferential networks. No such “comparison” is possible in the non-conceptualized manifold because we do not have a plurality of fields to “compare” to one another, but rather a single incessantly transforming field. Nevertheless, even here, the imagination continues to represent compatible appearances in sequence, sounding these “consonant” appearances together (e.g., *P* and *D*, above). The sequence of these consonances cannot amount to an inferential unity, but it occurs nevertheless as a “harmony”—a plurality of compatible appearances joined together in single act of imagination.

Whenever conceptual commitment to any one appearance is withheld from the imagination’s representation of an appearance’s manifoldness, these three processes of *decentralization*, *dissemination*, and *harmonization* join the standard cognitive process of mutual reproduction typically characteristic of the imagination’s representational activity. Representing an appearance by means of this trifecta of non-conceptual imagination is what it takes to represent a manifold that is *not* determined by a concept. Thus, whenever the imagination represents the material supplement, it does so by means of these processes, and whenever the imagination undergoes these processes it represents the material supplement.

These four processes together—reproduction, decentralization, dissemination, and harmonization—constitute the *free play of the imagination and the understanding*. While it is not guided by any concept, the imaginary process as a whole stands nevertheless under the entire faculty of the understanding. For, it involves representing appearances in decentralized relations of *incompatibility* with manifold others, and, as discussed in Chapter Three, the representation of incompatibility always entails the presupposition of unity—two contrary appearances are not incompatible unless it is assumed that all appearances must fit together within the experience of a unified subject-perspective. Since the requirement that the manifold be unified is dispensed in every case by the understanding, through its act of spontaneous apperception, it follows that every

representation of incompatibility presupposes an act of apperception. Thus, this decentralized reproductive activity of the imagination stands under the understanding. Nevertheless, it is not *conceptual* because no one appearance is recognized as the semantogenic center on whose basis incompatibles could be denied and compatibles affirmed. Since the decentralized activity of the imagination is nonconceptual, it is *free*; but since it represents incompatibility, it stands under the understanding; it occurs as the free play of the cognitive faculties.

4. *The Pleasure Cognitive Free Play*

This technical argument may be sufficient to align the decentralized activity of the imagination with the structural traits of cognitive free play, but why would the experience of this activity be pleasurable for subject-perspectives and why does it represent anything recognizable as *beauty*? Answering these questions involves tying together the foregoing analysis of cognitive free play as the processes of reproduction, decentralization, dissemination, and harmonization with previous observations about representational purport, error, and reality.

Just like the appearances involved in the experience of error, every appearance involved in cognitive free play has a common referent, namely, the selfsame *object* of appearance, or ‘x’, that all of them purport to be appearances *of*. For material incompatibility always involves representational purport. The two claims ‘The stick is straight’ and ‘The stick is bent’ are incompatible *only* if the same stick is referred to in both cases, so that whenever incompatible appearances are represented, a common referent must be inferred. Representing the incompatibility holding among a manifold of contrary appearances (or claims), in this way, involves taking all of those appearances to purport to refer to some common object-x. And even though many appearances involved in cognitive free play are *not* incompatible with one another (exhibiting instead a state of harmony), all these compatible appearances relate to one another only by reproductive pathways of contrariety, so that every appearance circulating in the free play connects to all the other by some avenue of incompatibility. Whenever the process of cognitive free play takes place, then, some *one* object-x is incessantly represented as the common referent of the manifold appearances.

The experience of cognitive free play is of the pure sensible *excess* of the object-x to which the mutually reproducing appearances commonly refer. For, since the process of decentralization withholds conceptual

commitment from any one appearance, no appearance emerges as a standard for endorsing or rejecting any other. The incompatibility of each with its own manifold is represented, but that incompatibility never amounts to a cognition of the object. Many sensible appearances are represented, but none of them are granted cognitive value. Further, since the process of dissemination continues to adjoin further and further appearances to the metamorphosing field, the manifold is experienced as becoming ever more manifold, ever more complex. Since the manifold is specifically a *sensible* manifold, the sensible representations pertaining to the object- x are constantly increasing in complexity. When a subject-perspective represents the object- x as the referent of a process of cognitive free play, she represents the pure flux of its sensible excess.

The experience of cognitive free play may be productively compared to the experience of error. In the experience of error, a subject-perspective acquires a novel commitment Q ("The stick is straight") which is materially incompatible with a past commitment P ("The stick is bent"). Since she has an overarching metacommitment to the *unity* of the object- x about which she judges, she takes it that all of her commitments about x must be compatible. She therefore takes Q as a standard for evaluating and rejecting P , restoring unity to her constellation of commitments about x . This process of recognizing and rectifying error causes the subject-perspective to posit the *reality* of the object about which she erred. Since she was, and remains capable of being in the future, wrong about x , she posits x to be in itself something other than the way it appears. The retention of her metacommitment to the unity of x , in the face of the constant possibility of error, requires her to disassociate the object *in itself* from its appearance. Since she in this way takes x to be outside her representational control, she takes it to be something *real*. The representation of *reality* is ultimately a consequence of the representation of material incompatibility.

When a subject-perspective represents the object- x as the referent of cognitive free play, she does not hold *any* commitments about it—she does not endorse the correctness of any of its appearances—and so she does not experience herself to be in error about it. But she nevertheless represents x as the object of a pullulating manifold of contrary and incompatible appearances, and she also retains her metacommitment to its unity with itself—since otherwise she would not be able to represent the *incompatibility* of the contrary appearances. On the one hand, the subject-perspective represents x as the common referent of a manifold of incompatible

appearances—a manifold which is incessantly *increasing* in manifoldness, *increasing* the severity and multiplicity of its incompatibility. On the other hand, the subject-perspective retains her metacommitment to the thoroughgoing *unity* of *x*. Thus, just as in the case of error, a subject-perspective must *disassociate* the object-*x* from any and all of its appearances, taking it to be *in itself* something entirely beyond its representation. Furthermore, since the incompatibility of *x*'s appearances in this context is constantly increasing—since cognitive free play involves the *incessant* representation of a manifold of incompatibles increasing in manifoldness—the gulf between how *x* *appears* and what it is *in itself* is perpetually on the rise. Throughout the process of cognitive free play, the object of representation recedes further and further into the noumenal distance as its appearances become more and more manifold, increasing in complexity and mutually reproductive involvement.

The result is an object that the subject-perspective cannot represent correctly but whose reality is, for this very reason, constantly increasing. For, as we learned from the experience of error, the reality of an object is nothing other than the degree of metaphysical independence it maintains from the subject's representations of it. The subject posits this independence in the object just to the extent that it is required to retain her metacommitment to that object's unity with itself. The degree of the object's reality is in this way a measure of how much material incompatibility it is capable of hosting. Since the material incompatibility pertaining to the appearances of the referent of cognitive free play is ever escalating, its reality is always on the rise.

The pleasure characteristic of the judgment of taste is founded in this representation of perpetually escalating reality. A subject-perspective experiences this escalation in the *object* as a persistent magnification and affirmation of her *own* reality. For, as we know from the Deductions, the unity of the object is indebted to the unity of the apperceptive *subject*. It is in fact nothing other than a *refraction* of this apperceptive unity. A subject-perspective always takes herself to be identical to herself, no matter the multiplicity of the manifold appearing to her senses, and for this reason she requires all of her experiences to fit together within a systematic unity attributable to some *one* being. Whenever a subject-perspective attributes unity to the object, then, she does so in order to affirm and represent her *own* unity, so that she retains an unbreakable metacommitment to the unity of the *object* just because she has such a metacommitment about *herself*. Now, as we have been exploring, to

retain the unity of the object, a subject-perspective is required to disassociate that object from all of its sensible representations, taking it to be in itself more thoroughly unified than it ever *appears* to be, and this disassociation enables her to posit *reality* in the object.

On the one hand, the reality of the object is associated with its *unity*, since this unity is what is taken to exceed its appearance. On the other, this unity of the object is a refraction of the unity of the apperceptive subject. So when a subject-perspective associates the reality of the object with its unity, she is ultimately attributing that reality to *herself*. The reality of the object is the degree to which its unity exceeds its sensible representation, and that unity is ultimately attributable to the unity of the self-recognitive *subject*. Thus, in the experience of cognitive free play, when compounding sensible incompatibilities cause the unity of the object to recede further and further into the noumenal distance, so that its reality increases in every instant, the subject-perspective experiences the perpetual magnification of her *own* reality. Since the reality increases as the object recedes, and that reality is always attributed to the *unity* of the object, which itself refracts the unity of the *subject*, cognitive free play involves an attribution of constantly increasing reality to the subject.

The *pleasure* of the judgment of taste is a subject-perspective's feeling of her own inexhaustible reality, the affirmation that she really *is* (in reality) the unity she represents herself as being. And the object-*x* to which the manifold appearances involved in cognitive free play refer is called *beautiful* because its perpetual sensible excess is associated, in the mind of the subject-perspective, with this feeling of ever increasing reality.

IV. Conclusion: Taste and the Irreducibility of Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement

The past three chapters have attempted to provide a rational portrait of cognition and its constituent faculties that shows the judgment of taste to be essential, and so irremovable, from Kant's transcendental philosophy. Chapter Two analyzed the argument of Kant's B Deduction to present the faculty of understanding as a vehicle of self-recognition. A subject-perspective recognizes herself and recuperates her unity through the manifold of her sensible appearances, thereby unifying those appearances and "understanding" them in terms of their unity. It went on to present this self-recognitive synthesis as a process of material inference: when a subject-perspective unifies manifolds, she judges them, and when she does that, she inferentially integrates them with constellations of other judgments, holding herself responsible for their correctnesses by taking them to fit

coherently within inferential networks. Ultimately Chapter Two argued that what a subject-perspective understands whenever she understands a judgment (and so its object) is nothing other than the *other* judgments with which the given one is inferentially involved.

Chapter Three showed material inference, and so understanding, to rely on a semantically prior representation of material *incompatibility*. Q is a consequence of P just if everything incompatible with P is also materially incompatible with Q . Whenever a subject-perspective draws a material inference from P to Q , she does so by representing the material incompatibilities pertaining to each judgment and recognizing the set of the latter's incompatibilities as a subset of the former's. Analyzing the A Deduction, I showed the sensibility to be the faculty responsible for hosting material incompatibility and imagination to be the faculty responsible for representing it, so that the imagination is essentially involved in the cognition of objects.

The current chapter returned to the analysis of the B Deduction to show its argument to be valid only if the discursive difference between concepts of the understanding and sensible intuitions could be rigorously retained. After showing every act of cognition to put discursive difference in jeopardy, I argued that the difference is retained by the repeated fabrication of the ideal and material supplements—the one is a concept that exceeds sensible intuitions, the other a sensible intuition that exceeds concepts. The ideal supplement is represented by means of ideas of reason, the material supplement by cognitive free play—that is, by the imagination's representation of a manifoldness beyond concepts, a manifold whose mutually reproducing elements undergo the processes of decentralization, dissemination, and harmonization. The representation of this material supplement, by means of cognitive free play, precipitates pleasure in a subject-perspective because it causes her to experience a constant escalation of her own reality.

Together these chapters hope to show the judgment of taste to be necessary to Kant's theory of cognition because cognition always involves both the synthesis and the discursive difference of concepts and intuitions and the judgment of taste represents one of the supplements essential to the retention of discursive difference.

I undertook such an extensive analysis of cognition and its need of taste in response to Chapter One's discovery of the necessary possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement. In a genuine aesthetic disagreement,

one party calls a certain object beautiful; the other calls it ugly; but both judge in a pure and disinterested manner. I argued that, if judgments of taste were possible at all, then genuine aesthetic disagreements were as well, since only through such conflicts may both the aesthetic and subjectively universal characteristics of taste be preserved. Such disagreements, I went on to show, put both parties under a distinct transcendental threat. Since judges of taste judge in the place of *everyone*, each disputant in a genuine aesthetic disagreement threatens the other with exclusion from the range of the term ‘everyone’; each menaces the other with an erasure of her subjectivity.

Since these disagreements carry such significant penalties, the hope was that their danger could be nullified by simply removing the judgment of taste from Kant’s transcendental philosophy. Chapters Two, Three, and Four have now proven such an extraction to be impossible. Without the judgment of taste, the all-important condition of discursive difference could not be retained. The entire theory of cognition collapses if we remove the keystone of taste. Thus, in the rest of this dissertation, I will cope directly with the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement, attempting to mitigate its threat by uncovering the enigma of its possibility.

Before proceeding, however, I will note a certain resonance holding between the current chapter’s description of cognitive free play and the first chapter’s description of the stakes of genuine aesthetic disagreement. We saw in Chapter One that, in genuine aesthetic disagreement, each disputant threatens the other with exclusion from the range of the term ‘everyone’, which amounts to exclusion from subjectivity itself. This exclusion should now be recognized as at once more determinate and more threatening than it at first appeared. For, we have just seen that in judgments of taste, a subject-perspective recognizes and feels the pleasure of her own incessantly escalating reality. It follows that, in genuine aesthetic disagreements, it is precisely this *reality* that comes most explicitly under threat. By threatening her opponent with exclusion from the range of subjectivity, each disputant of taste threatens the other with the erasure of her *reality*. It is not only the subjectivity but also very reality of a subject-perspective that genuine aesthetic disagreements endanger.

Part Two.

Transcendental Mythology: Time-Difference and the Simulation of
Subjectivity

Chapter Five

Aesthetic Ideas and The Deschematism: The Derivation of Time-Difference

The first part of this dissertation (Chapters One through Four) provided a *negative* demonstration of the necessary possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement, proving the possibility of this type of conflict to be implicit in possibility of the judgment of taste and demonstrating the judgment of taste to play a necessary role in Kant's critical epistemology. But Part One did not provide any *positive* insight into the transcendental conditions under which such disagreements might actually arise or any concrete explanation of what they really entail.

Part Two will provide the missing account. My strategy will consist, first, in exploring Kant's assertion in the Dialectic of Taste that an individual may legitimately demand subjective universality for her taste claims just because she grounds those claims in the "supersensible substratum of humanity" (*KU.5:340.216*). After defining this substratum as that which *aesthetic ideas* always represent, I will trace its necessary relations to subjectivity, the judgment of taste, and genuine aesthetic disagreement, showing this substratum to provide a supersensible ground of the former two structures only if it also grounds the latter. In this way, I will account *positively* for genuine aesthetic disagreement by deriving it from its original foundation. The current chapter will work to *define* the supersensible ground, and the following five will trace its necessary relations to what it grounds.

This chapter contains four sections. In the first section, I will investigate the Antinomy of Taste, whose resolution through reference to aesthetic ideas first reveals the presence of the "supersensible substratum of humanity" and defines that substratum as "an **intuition** (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate" (*KU.5:342.218*). I will call these conceptually excessive intuitions "absolute intuitions"—absolute intuition is a new name for the material supplement discussed in the previous chapter. Whereas the name 'material supplement' is intended to emphasize the relation of this sort of excess to *cognition* (the fact that every cognitive synthesis involves the fabrication of a material supplement), the name 'absolute intuition' is intended to emphasize the relation to ideas of reason, which I will characterize as "absolute concepts."

In the second section, I will further define the supersensible ground of subjectivity by analyzing it in terms of Kant's various taxonomies of representation. I will contend that an absolute intuition must be sensible, rather than intellectual, pure rather than empirical, and exclusively temporal rather than spatiotemporal. An absolute intuition, I will attempt to show, is nothing other than an element of pure time that exceeds all conceptual determinations.

In the third section, I will attempt to think this conceptually excessive element of absolute time by systematically depriving the pure form of inner intuition of every determination it receives from its relation to concepts. Kant delineates these determinations in the first *Critique's* Schematism. After enumerating these structural traits, or "time-determinations," as Kant calls them, and explaining why each of them may *only* be conferred by pure concepts, I will begin the derivation of *absolute* time, time in excess of concepts, by negatively depriving it of all these conceptual traits—thereby "deschematizing" time by emancipating it of its conceptual structure.

In fourth and final section, I will show the only thing left to a time beyond concepts to be its *manifoldness* or pure *difference from itself*. Accordingly, I will call the element of such an absolute manifold a *time-difference*.

I. Aesthetic Ideas and the Supersensible Ground of the Subject

In this section, I analyze the antinomy of taste, the aesthetic ideas that settle it, and the "supersensible ground of subjectivity" that those ideas represent. Just as ideas represent the *concepts* determining sensible intuitions in isolation from those sensible intuitions, aesthetic ideas represent the sensible intuitions falling under concepts in isolation from those concepts. Both types of idea, and so the supersensible grounds of both the object and the subject, I show, are necessary to Kant's thesis of discursive difference.

1. The Three Defenses of Subjective Universality

Kant defends the subjective universality of the judgment of taste in three ways throughout the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment. First, within the Analytic, he bases it in the qualitative *disinterestedness* of the judgment. The idea is that, since the judgment of taste is disinterested, no private conditions pertaining only to the particular judging subject (sensible likings or dislikings) can account for the pleasure she feels in judging it. As

such, that pleasure must have its ground in conditions that pertain to subjectivity as such and, so, to everyone.⁹² Second, in the Deduction (and elsewhere), Kant elaborates on this initial defense of the taste's subjective universality by specifying cognitive free play as the ground of all pleasure in the beautiful. Whenever someone makes a judgment of taste, she may demand of everyone else the same pleasure she feels in the given object because, from her perspective, taking pleasure in the judgment of *this* object is just what it takes to count as a subjectivity capable of cognition—an entity falling within the range of the term 'everyone.'⁹³

Finally, in the Dialectic, Kant completes his defense of the universal validity of the judgment of taste by explaining that, through her feeling of cognitive free play, the subject deploys an aesthetic idea to represent the “supersensible ground of all humanity” (KU.5:340.216). The basic idea is that, since the subject interprets taking pleasure in the judgment of *this* object as a litmus test for cognitive capacity as such, she must take judgments of taste to connect somehow to the *ground* of subjectivity itself. Aesthetic ideas in general articulate the connection between judgments of taste and this ground, and so particular taste claims always invoke some individual aesthetic idea as the basis for their universality.

Since a genuine aesthetic disagreement takes place between two equally pure and yet mutually incompatible judgments of taste, it occurs between judgments that both retrieve incompatible claims to subjective universality from the very same supersensible ground of subjectivity. The effort to provide a positive account for such disagreements, then, must begin by defining this ground. Only with a sufficient definition in place will we be in a position to understand the incompatibility that necessarily arises from it.

2. *The Antinomy of Taste*

Kant invokes this supersensible ground of subjectivity for the first (and only) time in the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment as a means of resolving the Antinomy of Taste. This subsection will interrogate this antinomy so that the following subsections may define the ground on its basis.

Kant delineates the opposing positions of the Antinomy of Taste as follows:

1. **Thesis.** The judgment of taste is not based on concepts, for otherwise it would be possible to dispute about it (decide by means of proofs).

⁹² For Kant's main discussion of the relation between disinterestedness and subjective universality, see KU.5:211.96. See, Chapter One Sections II.3 - II.4.

⁹³ KU.5:292–5:293.172 - 173. For my treatment of this issue, see Chapter One Section II.4 of this study.

2. **Antithesis.** The judgment of taste is based on concepts, for otherwise, despite its variety, it would not even be possible to argue about it (to lay claim to the necessary assent of others to this judgment). (KU.5:338.215).

The conflict at issue here consists in the relation of taste to concepts in general. The impossibility of what Kant calls “dispute” [*disputieren*] about beauty leads to the thesis contention that the judgment of taste *is not* based in concepts, since, presumably, any judgment based in concepts is “disputable.” The possibility of aesthetic “argument” [*streiten*], however, leads to the antithesis’s contention that the judgment of taste *is* based in concepts, since, it seems, no judgment that is *not* based in concepts is subject to argument. The operative terms in the antinomy as a whole, then, are ‘dispute’ and ‘argument.’⁹⁴

Kant defines these terms together and in contrast to one another:

...**to argue** and **to dispute** are certainly alike in this, that they try to bring about unanimity in judgments through their mutual opposition, but they differ in that the latter hopes to accomplish this in accordance with determinate concepts as grounds of proofs, and so assumes **objective concepts** as grounds of the judgment. Where this is considered unfeasible, however, then disputing is also considered unfeasible. (KU.5:338.214).

An argument is the conflict between two opposing judgments (of any sort) that each claim universal validity. A dispute is simply an argument in which each of the conflicted parties hopes to *prove* her claim through reference to a concept. Thus, all disputes are arguments, since one claims subjective universality for every judgment that one attempts to *prove*, but not all arguments are disputes, since one can *claim* universal validity for a judgment without being able to prove that it should be conferred.

Kant further defines these terms by determining that “demonstration through proof” means the exhibition of a concept in intuition. He writes: “...to demonstrate (*ostendere, exhibere*) means the same as (be it in proofs or even simply in the definition) to present its concept at the same time in intuition” (KU.5:343.218). Hence a judgment is subject to dispute if it is based in a concept with a determinate correlate in sensible intuition, and it is *not* subject to dispute if it is not based in such a sensibly determinable concept. Disputable judgments must be cognitive, but merely arguable judgments are subject to no such condition.

⁹⁴ For more on the general structure of the Antinomy of Taste, see Allison (2001, pp. 237-240), Mothersill (1991), and Makkreel (1990).

The core commitment that leads to the antinomy, then, is that “**It is possible to argue about taste** (but not dispute)” (KU.5:338.214). On the one hand, it is not possible to dispute about taste because no one can *prove* (demonstrate) that a given object is beautiful: beauty has no conceptually determinate correlate in sensibility, so that the thesis may assert that the JOT *is not* based in concepts. On the other hand, it *is* possible to argue about taste because everyone demands subjective universality for their taste claims, so that the antithesis may assert that the judgment of taste *is* based in concepts, and not simply the *private*, or merely subjective, faculties of imagination and intuition.

Kant resolves the antinomy of taste, in standard fashion, by introducing equivocation to the definition of the contested term ‘concept.’ Kant writes:

There is no possibility of lifting the conflict between these two principles underlying every judgment of taste... except by showing that the concept to which the object is related in this sort of judgment is not taken in the same sense in the two maxims of the aesthetic power of judgment [i.e., within the thesis and the antithesis of the antinomy], that this twofold sense or point of view in judging is necessary in our transcendental power of judgment, but also that the semblance involved in the confusion of the one with the other is, as a natural illusion, unavoidable. (KU.5:339.215).

The only way that the contradiction apparent in the judgment of taste may be resolved, Kant explains, is by recognizing that the term ‘concept’ is not taken “in the same sense” in both the thesis and the antithesis. Further, if this resolution is to allow the contradiction to retain its status as a genuine *antinomy*, it must also explain why the “twofold sense or point of view” about a taste claim’s relation to concepts is *necessary*, a natural illusion.

Since the type of concept that the thesis denies is specifically a *demonstrable* one, it is immediately identifiable as a “concept of the understanding.” For, a demonstrable concept is one that corresponds to a possible object in intuition, and any such concept belongs to the understanding (rather than reason) by definition. Therefore, the thesis should assert, more particularly, that the judgment of taste is not based in any concept of the *understanding*. The concept affirmed in the *antithesis* may be specified on this basis as well. Since the concept that *does not* apply to the judgment of taste is a concept with a sensible correlate in intuition, the concept that *does* apply to it must have *no* such correlate. It must be a concept of a *non-* or *super-sensible* “object.”

Alongside concepts of the understanding, then, Kant contends, there are also “transcendental concept[s] of reason” that represent the “supersensible... and which thus cannot be further determined theoretically” (KU.5:339.215). Transcendental concepts of reason, unlike concepts of the understanding, *cannot* be demonstrated (in Kant’s technical sense) because, by definition, they have no sensible correlates whatsoever. They are rather concepts precisely of the *supersensible*. Thus, before asking how such concepts are possible, or why they have the power to confer subjective universality on judgments, we may at least see that the judgment of taste would be capable of invoking transcendental concepts without contradicting the requirement that it remain indemonstrable since such concepts, as a minimal condition, are non-sensible.⁹⁵

Thus, Kant offers a preliminary resolution to the antinomy by stipulating that the *thesis* refers to concepts of the understanding with *sensible* correlates while the *antithesis* refers to transcendental concepts with *supersensible* correlates. He writes:

...we take the concept, on which the universal validity of a judgment must be based, in the same sense in both conflicting propositions, and yet we assert two opposed predicates of it. Thus, the thesis should say that the judgment of taste is not based on **determinate** concepts [of the understanding]; but in the antithesis, it should say that the judgment of taste is still based on some, although **indeterminate**[,] concept [of reason] (namely, of the supersensible substratum of appearances) and then there would be no conflict between them. (KU.5:340 - 5:341.216).

By distinguishing the species of concept referred to in the thesis from the species referred to in the antithesis, we can see at once how both claims could be correct at the same time. Since concepts of the understanding are demonstrable by definition and the impossibility of aesthetic dispute means the judgment of taste cannot be demonstrated, the thesis is correct to insist that taste claims are not based on concepts of the understanding. But since concepts of reason are *indemonstrable* by definition, the antithesis too may be correct to insist that the

⁹⁵ The general consensus in the secondary literature is that the supersensible substrate of *subjectivity*, represented by aesthetic ideas, is the same supersensible substrate of *objectivity* that ideas of reason represent. Aesthetic ideas are supposed to represent this substrate merely by analogy—they strive beyond experience and thereby remind us of the ways in which we do this rationally and morally. This interpretation is wrong not only because it fights the text as written, but also undercuts the resolution of the antinomy of taste. In order for aesthetic ideas to provide this resolution, they need to represent the supersensible while *retaining* their aesthetic character. If what they really represent are supersensible *objects*, then they are not to this extent aesthetic. If they do not represent anything supersensible, then they are not ideas. Aesthetic ideas sufficiently resolve the antinomy only if we admit that Kant is carving out an entirely new (subjective) domain for the supersensible—as he explicitly tells us he is. For examples of the incorrect reading of aesthetic ideas and the supersensible, see Allison (2004, pp. 254 - 263), Guyer (1997), Ginsborg (1990), and Munzel (1995).

taste claims *are* based in concepts of reason. Hence, as an initial resolution of the antinomy, Kant may assert with confidence that the judgment of taste invokes some sort of transcendental concept, deriving subjective universality from this invocation while retaining indemonstrability.

3. *Aesthetic Ideas*

Famously, Kant calls the particular type of transcendental concept that grounds the judgment of taste an *aesthetic idea*.⁹⁶ The role that aesthetic ideas are required to play in the resolution of the antinomy provides resources for an immediate, though merely negative definition, of this distinctive type of concept. An aesthetic idea, first and foremost, is an *indemonstrable* concept (as the thesis requires) whose representation is necessary *a priori*, in some way, since it confers a legitimate claim to subjective universality on judgments of taste (as the antithesis demands). Thethetic condition of indemonstrability implies that aesthetic ideas represent something supersensible, taking this as a general designation applying to the representation of anything that cannot appear in experience. The antithetic condition of apriority implies that the transcendental constraints on possible experience make the representation of aesthetic ideas somehow necessary. Aesthetic ideas are negatively defined, then, as supersensible concepts whose representation is necessitated (somehow) by the conditions of possible experience. The very transcendental constraints that *enable* objective representation somehow necessitate the idea of something that can never appear as an object.

Kant begins to lend positive determination to this merely negative definition by providing a sketch of the reasons why the transcendental conditions that make experience possible also necessitate the representation of aesthetic ideas. Providing a general description of ideas (i.e., transcendental concepts of the supersensible), Kant explains that ideas in general are representations that can never become cognition but which relate necessarily to the *objects* of cognition by means of either a *subjective* or an *objective* principle. He writes: “Ideas in the most general meaning are representations related to an object in accordance with a certain (subjective or objective) principle, insofar as they can nevertheless never become a cognition of that object” (KU.5:342.217).

⁹⁶ For more on Aesthetic ideas, see Chignell (2007b), Allison (2001), Kalar (2006), Kneller (1986), Longuenesse (2003, 2006), and Genova (1989).

The ideas that relate to objects by means of a *subjective* principle are aesthetic, and those that relate to objects by an *objective* principle are what Kant calls “ideas of reason.”

Aesthetic ideas relate to the *intuitive* side of the objects of cognition, and ideas of reason relate to the *conceptual* side of those same objects. He explains:

[Ideas] are either related to an intuition in accordance with a merely subjective principle of the correspondence of the faculties of cognition with each other (of imagination and of understanding), and in this case, they are called **aesthetic**; or they are related to a concept in accordance with an objective principle, yet can never yield a cognition of the object, and are called ideas of reason, in which case the concept is a **transcendent** concept... (KU.5:342.217-218).

Aesthetic ideas are the subjective complements of the transcendent ideas of reason. The objects of subjective experience comprise both a *subjective* side, which Kant identifies here with “intuition,” and an *objective* side, which Kant identifies with “concepts.” The only difference between aesthetic ideas and ideas of reason, at a taxonomical level, is that the former arises from the “subjective” (sensible) side of the objects of experience while the latter arise from the “objective” (conceptual) side of those same objects.

Kant elaborates on this taxonomical description of the aesthetic idea in two important ways. First, he claims that, whereas an idea of reason is something like an “absolute concept,” i.e., “a **concept** (of the supersensible) for which no suitable intuition can ever be given” (KU.5:342.218), an aesthetic idea is an “absolute *intuition*,” i.e., “an **intuition** (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate” (KU.5:342.218). Second, he argues that, whereas the “indispensable *idea of reason*” is the “concept of an absolutely necessary *being* [i.e., *object*]” (KU.5:402.272, *emphasis added*), the correspondingly indispensable *aesthetic* idea is the concept of a “supersensible substratum of *humanity* [i.e., of the *subject*]” (KU.5:340.216, *emphasis added*). In other words, an idea of *reason* is a concept that outstrips *intuition*, and, for this reason, it is the concept of an absolutely necessary *object*, which constitutes “the original ground,” or *substratum*, of the objects of experience (KU.5:402.272). Similarly, an *aesthetic* idea is an intuition that outstrips *concepts*, and, for this reason, it is the idea of a “substratum,” or *original ground*, of the subject of experience. The one represents the idea of an

unconditioned ground of the *object* by means of an absolute *concept*, and the other represents the supersensible ground of the *subject* by means of an absolute *intuition*.⁹⁷

Kant provides a conclusive resolution to the antinomy by insisting that all judgments of taste invoke the aesthetic idea of an absolute intuition, or the “supersensible ground” of subjectivity. This resolution succeeds for two reasons. First, since aesthetic ideas represent what I’m calling “absolute intuitions,” i.e., intuitions that outstrip all concepts, while the objects that appear in experience always comprise intuitions *and* concepts, it follows that aesthetic ideas represent something *supersensible*, something that, by definition, cannot appear as an object of experience. Thus the thetic requirement that the judgment of taste remain indemonstrable is satisfied. Second, since aesthetic ideas somehow represent the “supersensible substratum” of the subject they must lay claim to subjective universality. The representation of a supersensible *ground* of subjectivity entails the representation that *all* subject-perspectives retrieve their subjectivity from this ground. Thus, if a subject-perspective grounds her judgment of taste within this ground, then she necessarily demands that *all* others, insofar as they are *subject*-perspectives (members of the class of ‘everyone’), agree with her claim. Hence the antithetic requirement is also satisfied.

4. *Two Peculiarities*

The supersensible ground of subjectivity that one represents, by means of an aesthetic idea, whenever one experiences the free play of the imagination and the understanding is, somewhat paradoxically, neither a concept nor an image, but rather an absolute intuition—an intuition that suffers no conceptual determination and cannot, for this reason, appear in objective experience. Before proceeding to further define the nature of such a ground in the next section, two peculiarities must be noted.

First, it is surprising that what one represents when one experiences the free play of one’s imagination and understanding would be a species of *intuition* (rather than a concept or an image). The explanation for this peculiarity is relatively straightforward: cognitive free play is just the process that is occasioned when intuition presents itself in its *absolute* form. In common experience, intuition presents manifolds that the imagination is

⁹⁷ This notion of a sensible intuition that exceeds concepts should be familiar from Chapter Four’s discussion of the material supplement. ‘Absolute intuition’ and ‘material supplement’ are two names for the same excess.

capable of apprehending and determinately synthesizing under the law of a concept. But in *aesthetic* experience, intuition presents manifolds whose complexity saddles the imagination with an endless synthetic task, searching perpetually for an impossible concept capable of norming what it apprehends. In other words, the aesthetic idea that the subject represents when she experience cognitive free play is her idea of the absolute intuition whose manifoldness she is at work representing.

Second, the degree to which Kant's theory of transcendental idealism seems to *require* the subjective capacity to represent something like an absolute intuition should not be overlooked. At the end of the third *Critique's* first Introduction, Kant writes:

...the critique of taste, which is otherwise used only for the improvement or confirmation of taste itself, discloses, when treated from a transcendental point of view, by the way in which it *fills in a gap* in the system of our cognitive faculties, a striking and in my view very promising prospect for a complete system of all the powers of the mind, insofar as they are related in their vocation not only to the sensible but also to the supersensible, yet without upsetting the border posts which a strict critique has imposed on the latter use of them. (KU.20:244.44, *emphasis added*).

When considered from a specifically *transcendental* point of view, Kant explains, the critique of taste “fills in a gap in the system of our cognitive faculties” because it completes the explanation of the way in which those faculties are related, in particular, to the supersensible. The “transcendental point of view” that Kant invokes here refers to the master thesis of transcendental idealism that defines his entire critical project. The notion, then, is that transcendental idealism remains incomplete as a theory until the critique of taste supplements it with its discovery of aesthetic ideas.

As discussed in previous chapters, the one basic commitment of transcendental idealism is to *discursive difference* of concepts and intuitions. The downstream consequences of discursive difference for specifically *conceptual* representation lead to the necessity of representing the objects of experience *beyond* the sensible conditions of appearance.⁹⁸ Since the retention of discursive difference requires the representation of absolute *concepts* (ideas of reason), it seems, conversely, that it ought also to require the representation of absolute *intuitions* (aesthetic ideas). For, according to the theory of discursive difference, intuitions may be assimilated to concepts no more than concepts may be reduced to intuitions. Each must remain independent from the other for the

⁹⁸ See Allison (2004, pp. 307 - 332).

thesis of transcendental idealism to go through. So since retaining *conceptuality*'s distinction from intuition requires the representation of *concepts* beyond intuition, it follows that retaining intuition's distinction from conceptuality would require the representation of *intuitions* beyond concepts (absolute intuitions, aesthetic ideas). The elaboration of these absolute intuitions, then, simply communicates the other side of the story Kant tells in the first *Critique*'s Transcendental Dialectic.

II. From Aesthetic Ideas to Absolute Time: The Taxonomy of Absolute Intuition

We cognize the objects experience by means of both concepts and intuitions together. We represent those objects as *objects that are not appearances* (as they are in themselves) when we use ideas of reason to represent them exclusively in terms of their pure conceptual conditions. And we represent those same objects as *appearances that are not objects* when we use aesthetic ideas to represent them in terms of their pure intuitive conditions alone. When we represent objects beyond appearances, we represent the supersensible substratum of the object. When we represent appearances beyond objects by means of absolute intuitions (aesthetic ideas) we represent the *supersensible substratum* of humanity, which Kant, importantly, also calls the “supersensible substratum of *appearances*?” (KU.5:341.216, *emphasis added*). Kant devotes the entire Dialectic of the first *Critique* to discussing absolute concepts, but he neglects a discussion of absolute intuition. What is absolute intuition? How would we begin to characterize it? This section will situate it within Kant's general taxonomy of intuition.

1. *Is an Absolute Intuition Mortal or Divine?*

“In whatever way and through whatever means a cognition may relate to objects, that through which it relates immediately to them, and at which all thought as a means is directed as an end, is intuition” (K \mathcal{V} .A19/B33.155). This opening sentence of the Transcendental Aesthetic sets constraints on the current inquiry. Intuition (absolute or otherwise) is cognition's *immediate* mode of access to the object. The goal is to understand what this immediacy would be *in itself*—outside a relation to the conceptual thought that “is directed” at it, and therefore outside its relation to the object *to which* it is immediate.

Kant acknowledges two genres of intuition in the first *Critique* (each of which contains a potential infinity of topics and sub-genres under its heading): *intuitus derivativus* and *intuitus originarius*, derived and original.⁹⁹ Of which type is an absolute intuition?

The specific difference of *intuitus originarius*, which Kant later qualifies as intellectual intuition¹⁰⁰ or equally as divine understanding¹⁰¹, is its inseparability from its *object* on the one hand and from the *concept* that thinks the essence of that object on the other. An intuition is *original* just if it is “one through which the existence of the object of intuition is itself given” (*KrV*, B72; 192). And any intuition that is productive of its object in this way qualifies as “an understanding that itself intuit[s, i.e.,] a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given” (*KrV*, B145; 253). For *intuitus originarius*—the intuition of a god, the mind of the original being—intuition, concept, and object are *one*.¹⁰²

By contrast, the specific difference of *intuitus derivativus* is that “it is dependent on the existence of the object” (*KrV*, B72; 191). It relates immediately to its object “only insofar as the object is given” to it. The name Kant gives to a derived intuition of this type, reducible to a “capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which [it is] *affected* by objects,” is sensibility (*KrV*, A19/B33; 155). Unlike an intellectual intuition, a sensible intuition does not produce its object merely by intuiting it—it rather “receives” objects given from elsewhere whose existences have a separate ground. By virtue of its dependence on objects, sensible intuition is in fact *untethered* from them: neither sensibility nor the object it senses produce the other, and so the two may be cast asunder, represented in isolation from one another. For this very reason, sensible intuition must be separable from the understanding as well: all concepts conceive objects, either possible, actual, or necessary ones. If sensibility were not separable from the understanding and its concepts, then it would not be separable from objects either. For *intuitus derivativus*—the intuition of mankind—intuition, concept, and object represent distinct, even “heterogenous” spheres.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *KrV*, B72; 191-192.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *KrV*, B145; 253

¹⁰² See Allison (2004, pp. 27 - 29).

¹⁰³ *KrV*.5:401.272

We might expect absolute intuition to be of the former rather than the latter type—the creative intuition of a god, rather than the sensible intuition of a mortal. But, in fact, of all the subgenres of intuition, *absolute* intuition is the *most* incompatible with the defining predicates of *intuitus originarius*. Since an absolute intuition is one “for which a concept can *never* be found adequate,”¹⁰⁴ it is at the very least of a species of intuition that is *separable* from concepts. For this reason, absolute intuitions must belong to *our* type of intuiting, to sensibility, the receptivity of the mortals. In fact, if a mortal is defined by the unbridgeable fissure in its faculties—the discursive divide of thought and sense—then of all the genres of intuition, the absolute must be *the very most mortal*.

2. *Is Absolute Intuition Pure or Empirical?*

Sensible intuition is itself cleft in twain, having both an *a posteriori* (that is, empirical) *matter* and an *a priori* (that is, transcendental) *form*.

The effect of an object on [sensibility] is **sensation**. That [sensible] intuition which is related to the object through sensation is called **empirical**. The undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called an **appearance**. . . [T]hat in the appearance which corresponds to sensation [is] its **matter**, but that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited or ordered in certain relations I call the **form** of appearance. Since that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation, the matter of all appearance is only given to us *a posteriori*, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind *a priori*, and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation. . . [A]ll representations [are] pure (in the transcendental sense) in which nothing is to be encountered that belongs to sensation. (*KrV*, B34/A20, 155-156).

The *a posteriori* (empirical) matter of sensibility, sensation, is the “effect” of the object upon intuition—whatever that effect is in particular cases, and it is of course essential that this remain undefined—and this “effect” gives rise to an appearance. Any appearance that involves sensation is empirical. The *a priori* form of sensibility is that which allows appearances, engendered by sensations, to be ordered in certain relations (I will shortly have reason to distinguish the underlined words). Any sensible representation that involves no sensation, having to do only with this formal-relational dimension of sense is transcendental. Do absolute intuitions pertain to the *matter* or the *form* of sensibility—or are they a product of both?

¹⁰⁴ *KU*.5:343.218, *emphasis added*.

We took the lowroad before, invoking the definition of absoluteness to associate absolute intuition not with the creative understanding of a god but with the derivative sensibility of a mortal, but now that very same definition guides us to the high fork in the path—to the transcendental form of sensibility and away from its empirical matter. For, since sensation marks the “effect of an *object*” on sensibility, it signifies the point at which sensibility meets its other—not only encountering an object that, by the definition of sensibility itself, has its being *outside* of this encounter, but also soliciting the contribution of a *concept* capable of representing the object of sensation *as* an object. Sensations are hybrid, intrinsically compound representations, standing at the crux of intuition, understanding, and objectivity. The notion of an “absolute sensation,” accordingly, is a logical absurdity that cannot even be entertained.¹⁰⁵

By contrast, Kant himself insists on the separability of the transcendental form of sensibility from *both* the matter of sensation *and* the contribution of the concept:

In the transcendental aesthetic we will... first isolate sensibility by separating off everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing but empirical intuition remains. Second, we will then detach from the latter everything that belongs to sensation, so that nothing remains except pure intuition and the mere form of appearances, which is the only thing that sensibility can make available *a priori*. (*KrV*.B36/A22.157).

The Transcendental Aesthetic, i.e., the study of the transcendental role of sensibility, is itself possible *only* because the *a priori* form of sensibility may be separated from its empirical matter and interrogated in itself. Hence, since an “absolute intuition” is an intuition represented beyond the grip of the understanding, while any intuition that makes reference to objects must inevitably call forth the contribution of concepts, the only genre of sensibility capable of hosting the absolute is the transcendental form.

3. *Is Absolute Intuition Spatiotemporal or Purely Temporal?*

It is well known that “there are two pure forms of sensible intuition... namely space and time” (*KrV*, B36/A22; 156-157). The former, space, is the “form of all appearances of *outer* sense” (*KrV*, A26/B42; 159),

¹⁰⁵ For a contrasting view on the possibility of absolute sensations, see Deleuze 1968, esp. 138 - 153. In this famous sequence, Deleuze presents something akin to an absolute sensation—what he calls a *sentendum* or *aisthêton*—as sensibility’s encounter with that which “can only be sensed” (Deleuze 1968, 139) i.e., with that which cannot be assimilated by the other faculties and represented by a self-recognitive subject. This *sentendum* is “absolute” because the encounter with it is what first *produces* sensibility, raising it to its “transcendental exercise” (Deleuze 1968, 140). Deleuze has low hopes for the absoluteness of the *form* of sensibility, but we will see that he underestimates the anarchic character of time itself.

while the latter, time, is the pure form of all appearances of *inner* sense. Are absolute intuitions aspects of *space* or of *time*, of the pure form of *outer* or of *inner* sense?

However this question is decided, we may predict with certainty that absolute intuition will at least *involve* time, while the same cannot be said for space. For, since our sensible encounters with *outer* appearances must always be registered in our *inner* state, “while this inner state belongs under the formal condition of inner intuition,” it follows that “time is [the] *a priori* condition of *all* appearance in general” (*KrV*.B50/A34.163-164, *emphasis added*), and not *merely* of inner appearances. Even outer appearances must be conditioned by time. By contrast, some inner appearances (thoughts, dreams, apperceptions) are time-conditioned but have no place in space. Thus, we may characterize absolute intuitions as elements of time or elements of spatiotemporality, but not as elements merely of space.¹⁰⁶

The representational relation holding between aesthetic ideas and absolute intuitions disclosed in the previous chapter precludes the latter from containing any sort of spatial aspect. For, as Kant contends in the Antinomy of Taste, aesthetic ideas confer subjective universality on judgments of taste just because they themselves represent something that “can be regarded as the supersensible substratum” of both *humanity* and *appearances*. Since all appearances must stand in an essential relation to their supersensible substratum, while this supersensible substratum itself is nothing other than absolute intuition (the *represented* of aesthetic ideas), it follows that absolute intuition must be secreted somehow within *all* appearances, including those conditioned *merely* by time and *not*, in addition, by space.

This analysis has now yielded its first concrete result. An absolute intuition is an element of *absolute time*—i.e., an element not merely of a *pure* time, but of a time that somehow exceeds all relations to anything other than itself. Even pure time is determined by the categories, but *absolute* time is not. What is absolute absolute time? How may it be characterized?

The taxonomic position of absolute time may be summed up as follows. An element of absolute time is a time-conditioned intuition represented in isolation from: 1) pure or empirical objects, and so sensations (which give rise to the representation of empirical objects); 2) space (which is not a sufficiently general form of

¹⁰⁶ For more on time as the general form of intuition, see Allais (2015).

intuition); and 3) all influence of the understanding (which brings intuitions under pure and empirical concepts). Thus, it is precisely identical with *pure* time—i.e., with the pure form of inner intuition—except that it exceeds *even* the normative grip of the categories, while pure time is defined by its schematic *accordance* with these transcendental functions of the understanding. Accordingly, we may make an initial gloss on the structure of absolute time by naming the properties that pure time acquires from its interaction with the categories and denying these very properties of absolute time.

III. The Deschematism: From Time-Determinations to Time-Differences

Now that absolute intuition has been situated taxonomically in Kant's cognitive system as an aspect of *time*, the next task is to set it off from time *in general* by some mark. I will call the aspect of time that absolute intuition is 'absolute time,' but so far this is just a blackbox term that stands in need of an adequate definition. Absolute time contrasts 'pure time', which designates the pure form of intuition in general that Kant explicitly addresses in the Aesthetic. This section gleans the marks of pure time's conceptual involvements from an analysis of the Schematism and liberates absolute time from those involvements by depriving it of all the structure that its schemata define. I call this procedure the *deschematism*. The result of the deschematism is the unqualified element of absolute time—what I call a *time-difference*.

1. *Kant is Not Serious: Preparing the Deschematism*

Even though Kant claims to begin the Transcendental Aesthetic by “separating off [from the pure form of sensibility] everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts, so that nothing but... intuition remains” (*KrV*.B36/A22.157), it is clear that he is not really serious in this endeavor. Perhaps the Aesthetic interrogates a pure time whose debt to the understanding has been conspicuously suppressed, but the time it actually confronts is without a doubt one that at least *conforms* to pure concepts.

We know this because the pure time that Kant elucidates in the Aesthetic exhibits a certain *synthetic unity*. That is, it elapses according to a *rule*, and so is conceivable as a “time-series” (*KrV*.A145/B184.276), because “different times are not simultaneous, but successive” (*KrV*.A31/B47.179), and as a *whole* or “sum total” (*KrV*.A145/B185.276), because the diverse elements of its manifold are nevertheless recoverable as “parts of one and the same time” (*KrV*.A31/B47.179). As such, there is an “order of time”

(*KrV*.A145/B185.276) that confers unity on whatever is judged to be the “content of time” (*KrV*.A145/B185.276). Since these features give rise to a certain systematic *coherence* of time, and *all* coherence is a product of synthesis, these structural aspects of time avow its specifically *synthetic* unity.

Kant reveals in the B Deduction that all synthesis, in every conceivable situation, is ultimately the deed of the *understanding*. He writes:

...the **combination** (*conjunctio*) of a manifold in general can never come to us through the sense, and therefore cannot already be contained in the pure form of sensible intuition; for it is an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation, and, *since one must call the latter understanding, in distinction from sensibility, all combination, whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it is a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts, and in the first case either of sensible or non-sensible intuition, is an action of the understanding*, which we would designate with the general title **synthesis**... (*KrV*.B130.245, *emphasis added*).

All combination, all synthesis, is the work of the understanding. Anything exhibiting the marks of combination has been worked on by the understanding—“for only **through it** can something have been given to the power of representation as combined” (*KrV*, B130; 246). This is the case because representations are synthesized only when the subject recognizes herself, and so her analytic unity, through them, making what is manifold conform to unity by including it in a synthetic system.

The specifically *synthetic* features of time enumerated above, then—its successiveness, totality, order, and content—are not only marks of time’s conformity to concepts. They are forensic evidence of the understanding’s apperceptive self-activity at work. Thus, most (but not all) the predicates Kant attributes to time in the Aesthetic—its modes of successiveness and simultaneity in particular—are conferred upon it by its relation to concepts. Kant says he will represent a time “separated off from everything that the understanding thinks through its concepts”—but he isn’t serious.

Distinguishing absolute time from pure time—i.e., differentiating the supersensible substratum of subjectivity that aesthetic ideas represent from the synthetic time that Kant addresses explicitly in the first *Critique*—involves depriving time of everything it owes to concepts, discovering and relieving it of every synthesis under whose dominion it stands. Since absolute intuition, now understood as absolute *time*, is defined by its excess of concepts, we may initially define it negatively by depriving it of the structural features that pure time derives from the understanding. Since Kant articulates these features most explicitly in the Schematism—

Kant's explanation not of why the categories *have* normative authority in sensible experience but of how they actually get a normative *grip* there in particular cases of application—I will call this procedure the *deschematism*.

The deschematism is the act of discovering and relieving time of its conceptual debt.

2. *The General Procedure of the Deschematism*

The official argument of the Schematism begins as follows:

Now it is clear that there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter. This mediating representation must be pure (without anything empirical) and yet **intellectual** on the one hand and **sensible** on the other. Such a representation is the **transcendental schema**. (*KrV*.B177/A138.272).

Since categories and sensible intuitions are entirely heterogenous, one bearing no likeness to the other, a “third thing” is necessary to bear out the necessary results of the Deduction. That is, the representation of some medium homogenous with pure concepts on one end and sensible intuitions on the other is required to actually *execute* the application of categories to sense whose possibility the Deduction has proven necessary. Whatever that amphibious medium turns out to be, Kant will call it a “transcendental schema.”

The four synthetic marks of time's conceptualization enumerated above—i.e., its capacity to be conceived as a successive *time-series* or a simultaneous *sum total*, so that it confers an *order* on whatever is judged to be its particular *content*—are the four “time-determinations” that Kant deploys in the Schematism: they represent the four most general “transcendental schemata” through which the pure concepts of the understanding are applied to the manifold of sensible appearances. The process of deconceptualizing time, then—i.e., of depriving time of the marks of its conformity to concepts, so as to put ourselves in a position to plausibly understand absolute time's *excess* of the understanding—consists in assessing and *reversing* the effects of each of these time-determinations. Absolute time—a time beyond concepts—must be emancipated sequentially from all of its schemata.

3. *Deschematizing Quantity*

The first schemata Kant treats pertain to the categories of *quantity*. He writes:

The pure **schema of magnitude** (*quantitatis*)... is **number**, which is a representation that summarizes the successive addition of one (homogeneous) unit to another. Thus number is nothing other than the unity of the synthesis of the manifold of a homogeneous intuition in

general, because I generate time itself in the apprehension of the intuition. (*KrV*.A142-A143/B182.274).

Number, and so enumerability, is the schematic of mark of the categories of *quantity* in sensible experience. Number, Kant implies, is the hybrid product of two prior notions: *homogeneity* and *succession*. We enumerate elements not only by representing one then another, but also by representing these elements' identity of conceptual kind—we may have a *number* of something only if everything of which we have a number is intelligible under a common concept. (This is why we say identical but distinct objects of the same concept differ only in *number*. Thus, both the *successiveness* of time and the homogeneity of its moments (their identity of kind) are products of the category.

Emancipating time from the schemata of quantity means depriving it of precisely these modes. Whatever else it is, absolute time is *non-successive* (which is not the same as simultaneous) and the elements it comprises are *non-homogeneous* (which is not the same as heterogeneous).

4. *Deschematizing Quality*

The second set of schemata Kant treats pertain to the categories of *quality*. Enumerating each qualitative concept sequentially, he writes:

Reality is in the pure concept of the understanding that to which a sensation in general corresponds, that, therefore, the concept of which in itself indicates a being (in time). Negation is that the concept of which represents a non-being (in time). The opposition of the two thus takes place in the distinction of *one and the same time* as either a filled or an empty time... Now every sensation has a degree or magnitude, through which it can more or less fill the same time, i.e., the inner sense in regard to the same representation of an object, until it ceases in nothingness (= *o* = *negatio*). Hence there is a relation and connection between, or rather a transition from reality to negation, that makes every reality representable as a quantum, and the schema of a reality, as the quantity of something insofar as it fills time, is just this continuous and uniform generation of that quantity in time, as one descends in time from the sensation that has a certain degree to its disappearance or gradually ascends from negation to its magnitude. (*KrV*.A143/B182-B183.274-275, *emphasis added*.)

Sensation is the mark of reality, and so of negation, and so of limitation—and so of all the categories of *quality*—in sensible experience. Sensation implies the being of a *content* of sense, an other of time that may “fill it” to various degrees. The precise degree to which time is filled by its other, the degree to which it is given a *content*, is the precise degree of reality that must be presently acknowledged. Reality is the photonegative of time—it is measured and represented exactly and exclusively by the depth of time's filling.

Thus, the operative presumption that enables all the categories of quality to be applied in experience is the idea of *time as a container*—something that can be either “empty” or “filled.” And this presumption itself relies on the idea of a time considered to be “*one and the same*”—a time which could be considered as *either* “filled” or “empty,” while remaining the same as itself in either case. By the *pure* form of time, Kant clearly means nothing other than the *empty* form—he means to articulate the properties of a time emptied of all its sensational marks of reality but which remains conceivable *as* a container, something *capable* of measuring and enabling the representation of a reality that would be its content. Thus, the “content of time” does not only designate the sensational realities that may or may not fill it—it also properly delineates the transcendental qualitative requirement that time itself be capable of a content.

Emancipating time from the schemata of *quality* means depriving it of its capacity for *containment* and so of its possibility of being considered as *one and the same*. Whatever else it is, absolute time is *incapable of content* (which is not the same as being “empty”) and its moments may not be considered as *one and the same* as themselves.

5. *Deschematizing Relation*

The third set of schemata Kant treats pertain to the three categories of *relation*. These must be discussed individually in turn.

Of the pure relational concept and schema of *substance*, Kant writes:

The schema of substance is the persistence of the real in time, i.e., the representation of the real as a substratum of empirical time-determination in general, which therefore endures while everything else changes. (Time itself does not elapse, but the existence of that which is changeable elapses in it. To time, therefore, which is itself unchangeable and lasting, there corresponds in appearance that which is unchangeable in existence, i.e., substance, and in it alone can the succession and simultaneity of appearances be determined in regard to time.) (*KrV*.B183/A144.275).

Persistence is the mark of time’s conformity to the category of *substance*. Anything that is taken to *persist* throughout many moments of time—i.e., throughout a multiplicity of self-identical empty or filled containers—is a substance and therefore answers to a pure concept. In order for anything to elapse *in* time, whether passing away or remaining the same, time itself must not elapse. Rather, time must be retained as the flat, unchanging background in and against which other things elapse and so are said to *change*. We recognize a *change* in any

object (bud becomes flower; caterpillar turns butterfly; snake sheds its skin) just by representing one and the same object as *different* from itself and attributing one side of the difference to some time t and the other to a different time $t+1$. But if times t and $t+1$ were not represented as moments (accidents) of one and the same unchanging time—i.e., if the time designated by “time t ” were not exactly identical to the time designated by “time $t+1$ ”—then the distribution of the differences across the two moments would not amount to the representation of a *change* in the same object; it would rather engender the representation of two entirely different objects in completely different states. Hence time itself is an unchanging, flat background persisting throughout the elapsing moments of time enabling the change of everything changeable. Representing time itself as what necessarily persists unchanged throughout the constant vanishing of its moments—i.e., conceiving time as *eternity*—is representing time as a *substance* and therefore applying the *pure concept* of substance to time.

Of the pure relational concept and schema of *causality*, Kant writes: “The schema of the cause and of the causality of a thing in general is the real upon which, whenever it is posited, something else always follows. It therefore consists in the succession of the manifold insofar as it is subject to a rule” (*KrV*.B183/A144.275). Succession marks time’s conformity to the pure concept of *causality*. Appearance- A is the cause of appearance- B just if B follows A successively in time in accordance with a conceptual rule. The bud, the caterpillar, the unshed skin are *causally* prior to the flower, the butterfly, the shed skin, and not vice versa, just if the latter *succeed* the former in time. Were time not conceived to be successive, then the category of *causality* would never be applicable in sensible experience. Thus, time’s *successiveness* marks its structural conformity to (rather than excess of) the normative requirements of the understanding.

Of the pure relational concept and schema of *community*, Kant writes: “The schema of community (reciprocity), or of the reciprocal causality of substances with regard to their accidents, is the simultaneity of the determinations of the one with those of the other, in accordance with a rule” (*KrV*.B183/A144.275). Simultaneity marks time’s conformity to the pure concept of *community*. A and B stand in a reciprocal relation of community just if A ’s causality of B depends on (is caused by) B ’s causality of A . A mammal’s heart pumps blood to, and thereby enables the expansion of, its lungs, but the heart only pumps blood insofar as the expansion of the lungs feeds the heart with oxygen. The function of the heart causes (enables) the function of

the lungs *simultaneously* as the function of the lungs cause (enables) the function of the heart. Were *simultaneity* not conceived as one of time's modes, then the pure concept of the relation of reciprocal causality would not be conceivable. Thus time's *simultaneity* marks its conformity to (rather than its excess of) the normative requirements of the understanding.

All three pure relational concepts—substantiality, causality, and community—paired with their schemata—persistence, succession, and simultaneity—together articulate a unified synthetic *order* of time. Emancipating time from the schemata of relation means depriving it of its capacity to articulate an *order*. Whatever else it is, absolute time has no flat background, no eternity (which is not to say that it is not caught in its own depths, its own infinities); its differences are not *successive* (which is not to say they are indifferent); it has no capacity for simultaneity (no aptitude for identity).

6. *Deschematizing Modality*

The fourth and final set of schemata that Kant treats pertains to the categories of *modality*. He writes:

The schema of possibility is the agreement of the synthesis of various representations with the conditions of time in general (e.g., since opposites cannot exist in one thing at the same time, they can only exist one after another), thus the determination of the representation of a thing to some time. The schema of actuality is existence at a determinate time. The schema of necessity is the existence of an object at all times. (*KrV*, A144/B184; 275).

The modal categories of possibility, actuality, and necessity designate the degree to which the existence of a certain object is compulsory in sensible experience. Since being conditioned by time is the minimal mark that an object must show in order to qualify for appearance in experience, the degree to which an object conforms or fails to conform to the formal constraints of time is simultaneously the measure of its modal rank.

Objects are *possible* just if they do not constitutionally *contradict* the constraints of time—the opposed accidents of individual objects must be successively distributed across different times; only compatible accidents are simultaneous. An object is *actual* just if the apperceptive synthesis of experience designates a determinate position for it within the temporal succession—not only are its opposing accidents sufficiently distributed, but it itself is assigned to a particular causal-successive orientation. Objects are *necessary* just if they not only agree with the core formal constraints of temporality but are also designated at *all* times—whatever appears in experience just as a result of being time-conditioned is necessary.

All three conceptual modalities are assigned by considering the relation of a certain object to the definitive features of time as a *whole*. Objects are called possible just if they do not contradict the definitive structure of time as a *whole* (a structure it derives from its conformity to categories of quantity, quality, and relation). Objects are called *actual* just if they are conceived at a discrete point within the sum total of time's succession. And objects are called *necessary* just if they are conceived at *all* times. Thus all three modal categories are applicable in experience just if time is conceivable as a *sum total*.

Emancipating time from the schemata of modality means depriving it of its capacity to be *summed*. Whatever else it is, absolute time is not a unified totality—its manifold elements cannot be conceived together within a single whole, a single experience.

IV. The Derivation of Time-Difference

The deschematism has stripped time of its positive, conceptual determinations, allowing it to be characterized in concrete, though wholly negative, terms. Each step in the deschematism provides a negative characterization of both absolute time itself and of its so-called “elements.” Absolute time is determined as a *non-series*, a *non-container*, a *non-eternity*, and a *non-totality*. Its elements are correspondingly determined as mutually *non-homogeneous*, *non-self-identical*, *non-successive*, *non-simultaneous*, and *non-summable*. Understanding the results of the deschematism, so as to catch a glimpse of the supersensible ground of subjectivity that aesthetic ideas represent, involves appreciating and developing the negatively determined structures of both essence and element, lending a new sort of *positive* determination to both absolute time and its moments, a positivity for which they themselves are responsible, which they do not owe to the synthesis of the understanding. This section mobilizes the results of the Deschematism to reveal the sole *positive* trait exhibited by the elements of absolute time—namely, *manifoldness*.

1. The Manifold as Manifold

Kant's first presents time (the general form of appearance) under the bind of a *twofold* constraint. He writes: “...that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited as ordered in certain relations I call the **form** of appearance” (*KrV*, B24/A20, 155-156.*emphasis added*). The form of appearance, time, is given two distinct jobs to do here. First, it enables the intuition of the manifold of appearance—full stop. Whatever a

“manifold of appearance” turns out to be, time plays a necessary in hosting and enabling its intuition. Second, time enables this manifold to be intuited *as ordered in certain relations*. Time enables the intuition of the manifold of appearance not only *as manifold*, but also *as ordered in certain relations*. In other words, Kant tasks time with the twofold function of both enabling the intuition of the manifold *as manifold* and of giving *order* to the manifold and its multiple elements.

All order (I have attempted to show) is synthesis, and all synthesis is the spontaneous performance of apperception. Thus, even though Kant represents the *ordering* function of time as one of its own, internal and definitive duties—something it does just insofar as it is time—a proper grasp of the whole cognitive picture gives us to understand that time *confers order* on the manifold whose intuition it enables only insofar as it itself conforms to the unity of self-consciousness and the spontaneous synthetic activity of the understanding. Time is an *ordering medium* just if it is also the direct object of a subject-perspective’s indirect self-conception—that *through* which self-conception is enacted. This means that the second function Kant assigns to time when he first introduces it already signals its conformity to the concept, marking precisely the conceptual determination that absolute time *exceeds*, the synthetic function that it *does not* perform by itself.

Furthermore, we must understand this second function as designating the *complete* operation of the understanding upon time. For, even though the phrase “order in certain relations” seems to designate a *particular* set of transcendental schemata, namely those pertaining to the categories of relation, Kant clearly intends it here as a designation of apperception’s *entire* effect on time. Just as Kant understands the ‘unity’ whose representation enables transcendental synthesis as having its seat higher in the understanding than does the quantitative category that goes by the same name,¹⁰⁷ so too must we understand the phrase ‘ordered in certain relations’ as designating the *complete* results of conceptualization, not merely those effected by the categories of relation. What this means, then, is that the Deschematism’s un-synthesis has dissevered precisely, *and nothing further than*, this second function attributed to pure time—cutting away everything that pertains to synthesis as such.

¹⁰⁷ *KrV*.B130-B131.246.

What remains then to absolute time is the *first* aspect of pure time's twofold function: Absolute time is nothing other than "...that which allows the manifold of appearance to be intuited." It is the host of the *manifold*—and nothing further. *Manifoldness*—and nothing else. What the Deschematism's transcendental excavation has dug up, then, what its negative excision of absolute intuition from the functional constraints of its conceptual organs has wrought, is the (aesthetic) idea of a temporality defined by nothing further than its inner and absolute manifoldness. This may be considered the first *positive* result of our inquiry into absolute time: however absolute time is further developed, however the supersensible ground of subjectivity turns out to be interpreted, everything will grow from this one fact. Absolute time is absolute manifoldness: manifoldness beyond the concept, beyond synthesis, beyond the unity of the self-conscious subject and so beyond the normative grip of the understanding itself.

2. *Absolute Intuition as the "Element" of an Absolute Manifold*

The deschematism yielded negative determinations of both the *elements* of absolute time and of absolute time *itself*. We must therefore integrate the idea of an absolute manifold with the negative determinations of both these facets. But since any structure comprised of elements is identical with the *set* of those elements, we will be in a position to grasp new aspects of absolute time itself only by understanding the fine structure of each of its constituent elements. Allow me to characterize these elements here, and then use this characterization in the following sections to interpret the stages and process of absolute time itself.

To interpret the elements of absolute time as elements of an absolute manifold, we must begin by liberating ourselves of some of the familiar meanings we customarily associate with the word 'element.' Many of the conceptual contents and metaphorical resonances we attribute to this term result from the ways in which discursive genres such as molecular biology and organic chemistry use it. According to these discourses, the term 'element' refers to the smallest indissoluble unit of matter assimilable to a distinct atomic type. An element is an *atom*, and even if atoms are themselves dissoluble into protons, neutrons, electrons and the components of these particles, atoms constitute the basic, and so indissoluble, unit of chemical *intelligibility*: matter is *qualitatively* identified by its specifically *atomic* constituents, while different atoms are mutually distinguished only by quantity (one has eight protons, another has one). Hence, our everyday discourse inherits from chemistry

and biology the idea that an element denotes something akin to an atomic building block, a unit that can be combined with others to compose a complex structure but which may also be considered on its own.

This biochemical (commonsensical) interpretation of the word ‘element’ is entirely inadequate as a description of the elements seething within anything worthy of the name ‘absolute manifold.’ Apart from anything else, the conceptual-identificatory role of elements interpreted as atoms disqualifies this interpretation at once from correctly classifying an element of something that is supposed to subsist beyond all conceptual classification. Any element considered as a “building block” has already been conceptually assimilated to the identity of that which it contributes to building—it stands already under the normative dominion of a self-consciousness just insofar as its iteration is taken to amount to a “whole” of a certain conceptual type. Thus, if we are to retain the notion of an “element of absolute time,” we must invest this term with an alternative meaning.

Another discursive genre presents itself, fortunately, that uses the term in an entirely different way than biochemistry does. In the differential calculus, a “line element” *does* denote an indissoluble (and infinitesimally small) segment of a given curve, but these elements may not be conceived as “building blocks” even of the very lines of which they are elements—the sum of any number of infinitesimal line segments is no greater than any of these elements alone. In this discursive genre, a line element measures nothing other than the precise way in which one dimension of a curve *differs* with respect to *differences* in the other dimensions. In a simple two dimensional curve constructed on an *xy*-axis, line elements are determined by systems of equations that progressively define the finite values of Φ for the equation form $dy/dx = \Phi$. The differential quotient on the left-hand side of the equation always signifies that the values on the right side determine not a ratio of fixed quantities, but rather a ratio of absolute *differences* in quantities—*dy* signifies the exact *difference* in the *y*-dimension of the curve that is occasioned by a precise *difference* in the *x*-dimension. As such, the line element ‘*dx*’, which signifies nothing but the difference in *x* that answers to a certain difference in *y*, is not intelligibly separable from the line element ‘*dy*.’ For the practitioners of differential calculus, a line element is a fully *relational* item—it has no intelligibility, no meaning, outside of its relation to *other* elements of different qualitative types.

This latter use of the term ‘element’ is more adequate to the idea of a constituent of an absolute manifold. Differential elements in the calculus (dx , dy , dz , etc.) are manifold *in themselves*: each one is possible and intelligible only with respect to and explicitly in terms of *other* elements from which they differ. The representation of “one” line element not only involves but is literally nothing other than the representation of *others*. It is *in itself* a manifold. I do not go so far as to claim that the line elements of the differential calculus *are* themselves elements of an absolute manifold. But I take the calculus’s use of the term ‘element’ to designate something as conceptually excessive and internally self-multiplied as a *differential* to lend justification to my retention of it in what follows.

3. *Time-Difference*

So—absolute intuition has shown up as an absolute manifold with elements. These elements are negatively defined as mutually *non-homogenous* (not a single one is continuous with any of the others), as internally *non-self-identical* (no element is ever the same again as itself), as *non-successive* and *non-simultaneous* (no two elements occur “together” and it never occurs that one “follows upon” another), and finally as *non-summable* (there is no conceivable “totality” of elements, even and especially in thought; it is not that the elements are simply “infinite in number;” an infinity can still be *conceived* as a sum, even if that sum may never actually exist; but these elements are not merely innumerable; they are rather non-enumerable—immune to the very idea of number and so of totality). The elements are *positively* defined precisely *as* elements of an absolute manifold—recognizing absolute time as nothing further than an absolute manifoldness comprising elements was the sole *positive* result of the deschematism. What properties may be deduced from this positive determination? What signs must an element show to qualify for membership within a manifold worthy of the name ‘absolute’?

A manifold of any description is a multiplicity of some sort. Kant deals explicitly only with the notion of a manifold that has been submitted to conceptual synthesis—standing under the apperceptive gaze of a rational self-consciousness. This manifold not only submits to unity but it is, for this very reason, sortable into a plurality of distinct and mutually separable components. The manifold that stands under the concept of a tree, for example, is sortable into trunk and branch, leaf and limb. The concepts of each of these components of course contains its own manifold and each of these manifolds may always be further sorted: the manifold

that stands under the concept of a leaf, for example, sorts into lower and upper epidermis, xylem, and phloem. And the principle of specification confirms that the manifolds standing under each of these more particular concepts are further sortable into even more specific classes. This process of *sorting* a manifold involves cleaving apart its elements and conceiving them in isolation from one another, giving each its own substantial intelligibility apart from the others. I may conceive a leaf as a *component* of the manifold contained under the concept of tree only because I am capable of conceptually quarantining this component under its *own* concept. Quarantining the various components of a given manifold under more and more specific concepts is part of what apperception always involves: this is how the *unity* of what is given as manifold is constantly assured and perpetually reassimilated.

A manifold of any description is a multiplicity, and a manifold that has been submitted to conceptual synthesis is one whose elements may always be mutually isolated from one another and articulated under their own separate concepts. A manifold *beyond* the concept, then, would be one whose elements *are not* able to be conceived in isolation from one another. Such an element, then, is *essentially*, and not accidentally, a facet of a multiplicity—representing *one* such element is always already the representation of many.

To say that the element of an absolute manifold is essentially, not accidentally, part of a multiplicity is equivalent to saying that each element is constituted by its *relations* to the multiple others that occur in the manifold of which it is essentially a part. Just like the line elements of the differential calculus, the elements of an absolute manifold are absolutely *relational* items. In an important way, each is nothing other than its relations to all the others, since these relations are what qualify it as an element of the particular type that it is—as an element *of* a manifold comprised of members that are essentially only members of that manifold. The question is: How should the relation that holds between and essentially constitutes the elements of an absolute manifold be construed?

A manifold is always a multiplicity of *different* elements. The forms of intuition, time and space, are required for apprehending manifoldness precisely because they provide the subject with a means of making “sense” of difference: the former distributes and diffuses differences across “different times,” and the latter distributes and diffuses differences occurring at the “same time” across “different places.” These forms make

sense of difference by assimilating it to the unity characteristic of self-consciousness, but are needed precisely because, without them, the *differences* populating the manifold would remain untamed. The point is simply this: a multiplicity qualifies as a *manifold* just if it is a multiplicity of *differences*—different, heterogeneous, schismatic elements.

Thus, the mutual relation that constitutes the elements of an absolute manifold is one of *difference*. An element of an absolute manifold *is*, in an important sense, nothing further than its absolute *difference* from the other elements that populate its manifold—it cannot be extracted from this differential relation or conceived in isolation from the other elements from which it differs. Furthermore, any attempt to characterize the *sort* of difference that one element shares with another trades inevitably either in the discourse of the concept or in the discourse of a spatiotemporality that has been assimilated to the concept—two objects, the chair and the desk, differ *conceptually* by their properties, but even their supposedly non-conceptual differences of place and time are intelligible only with respect to the unity of a conceptualizing self-consciousness. Thus, the difference that an element of an absolute manifold is *cannot be qualified*. It is an absolute difference—a difference whose differing items are themselves nothing but differences, a play of differences “without positive terms” (as Derrida likes to make Saussure say).¹⁰⁸

Thus, the only *positive* trait that we can assign to the elements of the absolute manifold is *difference*—absolute difference from the other elements that populate its manifold and thereby constitute it as the element that it is. It is a *non-homogeneous, non-self-identical, non-successive, non-simultaneous, and non-summable* element of difference.

I will call it a *time-difference*.

V. Conclusion: The Mythic Ground of Subjectivity

I have pursued a basically analytic agenda in this chapter. After noting that Kant’s three-stage defense of a taste claim’s universal validity concludes with his discovery of a supersensible substratum of subjectivity (and appearance), I contended that the solution to the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement would be resolved only through the excavation of this ground. Since every pure judgment of taste derives its universal

¹⁰⁸ See Saussure (1959, pp. 121) and Derrida (1998, p. 11).

validity from the invocation of this ground, and genuine aesthetic disagreement is necessarily possible, it follows that the supersensible ground of subjectivity somehow dispenses incompatible warrants to different subject-perspectives.

The task was to figure out why, and the first step along that road was to define that supersensible ground as concretely as possible. Beginning with an investigation of the Antinomy of Taste, and its resolution through the discovery of aesthetic ideas, I argued that the supersensible ground of subjectivity that every judgment of taste invokes is nothing other than an “absolute intuition” (the necessary correlate an idea of reason, or “absolute concept,” which represents the supersensible ground of *objectivity*.) Thereafter, I developed the notion of an absolute intuition through a taxonomy of intuition in general, the deschematization of time, and the analysis of a manifold as manifold, arriving, finally, at the conclusion that an absolute intuition is nothing other than a *time-difference*.

Time-difference, then, is the represented of every aesthetic idea. The task of the following chapters is to interrogate this enigmatic element of an absolute manifold, attempting to discover the solution to the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement within its structure. If time-difference is what every judgment of taste somehow invokes, then how and why does this invocation result in genuine aesthetic disagreements? What is time-difference such that it is able to dispense competing but equally legitimate aesthetic warrants?

In order to answer the thematic question—How are genuine aesthetic disagreements possible?—we must investigate time-difference on its own terms, learning the lessons of its structure through strict attendance to its differential essence. In itself, a time-difference is nothing other than the supersensible substratum of subjectivity (and equally of appearance). It warrants incompatible judgments of taste only because *we* invoke it, through aesthetic ideas, in an attempt to lend subjective validity to our claims. In what follows, then, we must plunge into time-difference itself, exploring its labyrinthine edifice and carrying out its relentless adventure.

Since time-difference is supposed to be the supersensible ground of subjectivity, its excavation must result in an account of how *subject-perspectives* come to be. That is, in order for an analysis of the ground to be sufficient, it must explain how this ground grounds that of which it is supposed to be the ground. Hence, we must view the elucidation of time-difference as a project in self-description. In exploring time-difference, we

are telling ourselves a story about who *we* are and, moreover, how we *came to be*—how our supersensible ground succeeds in grounding us. Our hope must be that the telling of this story includes the answer to the question of genuine aesthetic disagreement, but answering this question cannot be our direct aim. The sole target of the inquiry must be the discovery, within time-difference, of ourselves.

I take the dive into the supersensible ground of the subject to run parallel, as its necessary counterpart, to the dive into the supersensible ground of the *object* that Kant undertakes in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*. And just as the absolutely conceptual representations that the Dialectic revealed (God, Soul, and World-Whole) were of objects that, by definition, could not appear in experience—so that they were *illusions* of reason—so too may we expect the dive into time-difference to reveal representations without objective referents in empirical experience. If the supersensible ground of the *object* that reason represents through its transcendent ideas cannot appear in experience because it is an *illusion*, then what must we call the supersensible ground of the *subject* that aesthetic ideas represent in the form of time-difference? For this subjective ground qualifies for cognition no more than the objective one did, but for entirely different reasons.

Sellars became one of the most important philosophers of the 20th Century when he proved once and for all that the “given” had always been a myth.¹⁰⁹ What is meant by givenness is not immediately clear, and of course this very ambiguity is one of the minor prongs of Sellars’s attack on the concept. “Many things have been said to be ‘given’: sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself.” (Sellars 1997, 14). Distilling his various attempts at a general definition, Sellars argues that “givenness” is the status we apply to all those representations we count as knowledge but for whose content we ourselves are not prepared to take responsibility. We do not take responsibility for the given because the given is supposed to come *before* us, *precede* us, explain us to ourselves. Sellars is right to consider such a thing mythical, but this is not because the given does not exist at all. It is rather because *what* is given is never anything other than Myth.

No philosopher has employed and thereby plumbed the depths of Myth as frequently or as ingeniously as Plato. Nearly every philosophical doctrine we attribute to him has the seat of its most urgent

¹⁰⁹ See, Sellars (1997).

explanation in Myth—a story Socrates either fabricates himself or borrows from tradition. For Plato, Myths play what may be called an *essentializing* role, articulating the essence of something that cannot otherwise be said. What is Virtue? What is Being? What is the Soul? When Socrates has brought all attempts to name the essence to ruin, a Myth is given—bestowed on the dialogue as *all* that is left to say.

Myths are always tales of a time *different* from now. There are Myths of the past, like the *Phaedrus's* Myth of Theuth, and there are Myths of the future, like the *Phaedo's* Myth of the afterlife. But we misunderstand them all when we take them as literal histories and objective predictions, doing no better when we take them as mere past or future fictions. The Myth of Theuth is not an empirical history of the origin of writing, but neither is it, as Phaedrus supposes, a fictional “tale of Egypt.” The past events described in the Myth of Theuth did not really happen—at no time were they ever presently occurring. But it is not true that they never happened—in the sense of having no reality *even as past*. Similarly, in the *Phaedo*, it is not true that the soul *really will* have a life after this one, but neither does it have strictly *no* future.

Just as the illusory ideas of reason are representations without which the *objects* of experience would have no reality but which do not themselves represent anything real, Myths are representations without which the *subject* of experience would have no reality but which do not themselves represent anything that appears. The former are false stories one tells about the *objects* of experience without which objectivity itself would have no reality (illusions). The latter are false stories one tells about the *subjects* of experience without which subjectivity itself would not be possible (Myths). If ideas of reason are *illusions* because they represent things as they are in themselves, conceiving the supersensible ground of the object, then aesthetic ideas are *Myths*, representing time-difference as the supersensible ground of the subject. Since the supersensible ground of subjectivity is equally the supersensible ground of appearance, and *what* appears is always what is *given*, our imminent dive into time-difference is a dive into the mythic ground of both givenness and subjectivity itself.

Chapter Six

The First Potency: The Essence and Expression of Time-Difference

The first chapter of this dissertation presented a negative demonstration of the necessary possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement; Chapters Two, Three, and Four attempted to articulate the significance of this necessary possibility by presenting a rational reconstruction of Kantian self-consciousness that gave pride of place to the judgment of taste, contending that, in genuine aesthetic disagreements, distinct subject-perspectives make incompatible but equally legitimate claims about who “we” are, as a whole community; Chapter Five began the work of solving the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement by identifying *time-difference* as the supersensible (*mythic*) ground of subjectivity that all claimants of taste invoke, through aesthetic ideas, when they attribute universal validity to their pure aesthetic judgments. The task now is to plunge *into* this mythic ground and attempt to build a *positive* explanation of genuine aesthetic disagreement on its basis.

The invocation of time-difference lends universality to judgments of taste just because time-difference constitutes the mythic ground of subjectivity and appearance. A claimant who bases her aesthetic judgment in an idea of this absolute aesthetic element can demand agreement from everyone because she takes it that this mythic ground *necessitates* her singular claim, so that anyone who has her origin in this same ground (anyone falling within the range of ‘everyone’) is required to make the same judgment. Thus, the role time-difference plays as the warrant of judgments of taste is predicated on the more fundamental role it plays in mythically grounding subjectivity itself—it is only because time-difference is this ground that it is in a position to confer universal validity on the judgments that invoke it. Thus, the plunge into the mythic ground—which hopes ultimately to provide the key to the possibility of genuine aesthetic disagreement—must proceed somewhat obliquely.

Explicitly, I will attempt to discern nothing other than the precise way in which time-difference grounds and gives rise to subjectivity (a creature who says *I*), but I will be doing so in order to address our thesis question. My hope is that, in extracting subjectivity from time-difference, I will derive a *multiplicity* of subject-perspectives who stand in a state of genuine aesthetic disagreement with one another, each meaning something incompatibly

different by 'I' and so by *'me.'* The target of this and the following chapters is to derive an 'I' from the absolute element of time by tracing this element's own path of internal necessity.

Kant has fortunately provided a roadmap for this effort, designating landmarks that ought to be encountered along the way of time-difference's adventure. Kant's critical subject, like that of the rationalist dogmatists before him, is essentially the being who understands, in the sense of *conceives*, herself. She is essentially self-conscious. But the Kantian subject possess not only a faculty of *understanding* but also faculties of *sensibility* and *imagination*. She is self-conscious because she holds herself responsible to her concepts by striving to make her judgments, which use the imagination to apply those concepts to the fields of material incompatibility hosted in sensibility, live up to the normative standards that those concepts entail. The derivation of subjectivity from the mythic ground of time-difference must ultimately originate a subject with these specific faculties. We may expect the development of time-difference to provide novel accounts of *sensibility*, *imagination*, and *understanding*, resulting in a self-conscious subject with a rational commitment to her own analytic unity. I will devote a chapter to each of these tasks.

This chapter will initiate the development of time-difference, uncovering the time-differential *essence* (absolute difference) and exploring the ramifications of that essence's *adequate expression*. Chapter Seven will seize upon the results of this exploration to provide a new account of the faculty of sensibility. Chapter Eight will continue the time-differential development, accounting for the imagination. Chapter Nine will develop the understanding. And Chapter Ten will show time-difference to simulate a manifold of subject-perspectives in an original state of genuine aesthetic disagreement. Since cognitive faculties are *powers* of the subject, each will correspond to a distinct "potency" of the time-difference—sensibility with the first, imagination with the second, understanding with the third.

The current chapter contains four sections. First, I will further elucidate the claim that a time-difference is the element of an absolute manifold, arguing that 'absolute difference' constitutes the *essence* of such an element. After contending that this fixes time-differences with an inherently aporetic and unstable definition—each is essentially, and prior to all relations, nothing other than a *relating to other*—I will show every time-difference in itself to posit and appropriate manifold others. Second, I will establish that a time-difference posits

not only *others* but also, *through* its positing others, *itself*. To make this claim, I will establish, in turn, the transitivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity of all time-differential positing. Third, after proving that all *other*-positing implies a concomitant *self*-positing, I will prove the opposite: all self-positing is already an other-positing. The unity of these two types of time-differential positing, I will contend, constitutes the form of absolute positing. When a time-difference not only posits, but does so *absolutely*, it both posits itself *through* its positing of manifold others and posits manifold others *through* its positing of itself. A time-difference expresses its essence by positing in general, but it becomes *adequate* to that essence by positing absolutely. This elucidation of absolute positing will prepare the ground for the following chapter's positive account of sensibility as a *faculty*.

I. From Absolute Difference to Other-Positing: The Essence of Time-Difference

Time-difference has already begun—it has been at work all along in the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement, and the deschematism has brought it explicitly into view—but now we must discover the laws of its own internal structure. The question with which I choose to begin exhibits the dullest and most conceptually laden form of any question imaginable, viz., *What is time-difference?* Questions of this type ('what is x ?') are always "philosophical" in the pejorative sense because they are the most pretentiously naive and implicitly self-congratulatory. They brook no answers and make no attempt to justify themselves. The open copula insists on an indefinite series of replies in which each subsequent answer makes an excuse for the one previous and even all together do not address the full conceptual scope of the question. It is asked: What is virtue? The reply: The administration of the state, the keeping of the house. But these are only cases. It is asked: What is knowledge? The reply: true opinion. But this lacks an account. Even children can ask 'what is x ?', so the questioner always appears entitled to the perplexity that the sheer breadth of her question all but guarantees.

Nevertheless, I begin with the banal question, *What is time-difference?*, not only to reveal time-difference as that whose inclusion in this dullest of all questions subverts the conceptual propagation of the open-ended copula, activating a distribution of the *sensible*,¹¹⁰ the *concrete*, the dissemination of cases without concept, by means of the very question that has always suppressed it, but also to indicate that time-difference does indeed possess its own special sort of being. The question 'What is time-difference?' inquires after the *being* of time-

¹¹⁰ See Ranciere (2005).

difference. It asks what it *to be* a time-difference, what the *being-of-itself* of a time-difference consist in. This section addresses questions, deriving the time-differential essence.

1. *Time-differences are Absolute Differences*

So—what is a time-difference? To provide an at least provisional answer to this question we must recall the one and only *positive* trait that the deschematism attributed to time-difference, namely, that it is the element of an absolute manifold. An absolute manifold is a manifold beyond the unity of the concept, represented solely in accord with the one trait it acquires from pure sensibility alone—viz., manifoldness. Every property, predicate, or characteristic that might apply to the absolute manifold, and so to its manifold elements, *other* than manifoldness has been methodically denied of it. Thus, representing an absolute manifold is representing a manifold *qua* manifold—not a manifold of any specific type, recuperable as what determines a nameable concept in intuition, but rather that aspect of all such object-determining manifolds by which they *qualify* as manifolds.

Now, an absolute manifold is a manifold describable in no other way than as a manifold. This means that the *elements* of such a manifold exhibit only the trait that pertains to them insofar as they are *constituents* of a manifold. Manifolds in general always comprise multiplicities of elements—to be a manifold is to be a multiplicity.¹¹¹ In order for elements to constitute a multiplicity, they must *differ* from one another.¹¹² Elements that do not differ constitute *identities*, not multiplicities. By contrast, *all* elements that are taken as mutually *different* are rightly interpreted as multiplicities, so that for elements to constitute a multiplicity, it is necessary and sufficient that they *differ* from one another. Thus, since the elements of an absolute manifold exhibit only the trait that qualifies them as elements of a *multiplicity*, they exhibit nothing other than *difference* from one another and are *just* their mutual difference. Because a time-difference is an element of an absolute manifold, it is an absolute difference.

¹¹¹ *KrV*, A20/B35; 156. For more on manifoldness, see Chapter Five, Section IV of this dissertation. See also, Thompson (1972), Warren (1998), and Paton (1936).

¹¹² *KrV*, A31/B47; 162.

2. *From the Absolute to the Essential: The Aporia of Time-Difference*

Kant defines the term ‘absolute’ perspicuously in the first *Critique*, complaining about the “vacillating use” of the word common to the philosophy of his day and regimenting it carefully:

The term **absolute** is now more often used merely to indicate that something is valid of a thing considered **in itself** and thus **internally**. In this meaning, “absolutely possible” would signify what is possible in itself (internally), which is in fact the **least** one can say of an object. On the contrary, however, it is also sometimes used to indicate that something is valid in every relation (unlimitedly) (e.g., absolute dominion); and in this meaning **absolutely possible** would signify what is **possible** in all respects **in every relation**, which is again the **most** that I can say about the possibility of a thing. . . . It is in this extended meaning that I will make use of the word **absolute**, opposing it to what is merely comparative, or valid in some particular respect; for the latter is restricted to conditions, while the former is valid without any restriction. (*KrV*, A324/B381 - B382/A326; 400 - 401).

According to this passage, the term ‘absolute’ indicates that the property of which it is predicated is possible in *every* relation. The streets may be wet in relation to rain, but they are not wet in relation to blue skies, and so the property of wetness does not apply absolutely to the streets. By contrast, the property of ‘superlative greatness’ *does* apply absolutely to God, so that he must possess this property in relation to both *thought* and *reality*.

In the Blomberg *Logic*, Kant provides what may be considered a supplement to this definition, writing: “The marks I cognize of a thing are *internal* if I consider the thing alone merely in itself. . . . If I cognize the internal marks, which taken together constitute the complete concept [of a thing], then these marks are *complete*, and sufficient, all that there is to cognize in a thing, what can be cognized in it *absolute[ly]*” (*BL*, 24: 107, 83). While this (earlier) use of the term ‘absolute’ may be understood to contradict the definition that Kant offers in the first *Critique*—where the designation of absoluteness was precisely *not* to be applied to those properties that pertain to a thing merely “internally” or in itself—but it need not be taken this way. For we may read Kant to be saying that those properties that apply to an entity in every relation are just those which are necessary and sufficient for conceiving the complete concept of that entity. If one were to subtract one of the traits that applies absolutely to some entity, then one could not conceive that entity at all. Thus, absolute traits *are* internal, applying to entities in themselves, but they are not *merely* internal: they are internal marks that pertain to a thing insofar as it is the thing that it is, persisting therefore through *all* external relations.

This more expansive and precise definition of the term ‘absolute’ bears an important relation to Kant’s discussion of *essence* later on in the Blomberg *Logic*. He writes: “The adequate concept of a thing insofar as it

cannot be derived from any other is the concept of the essence[.] *essentia*. The essence of a thing is the first sufficient basic concept, which suffices for the derivation of everything that belongs to the thing” (BL, 24: 115, 89). The essence of an entity is the designation of its complete concept. The marks pertaining to the essence of an entity are both *sufficient* for conceiving the entity—e.g., the thought of ‘rational animal’ is sufficient for conceiving the entity ‘human being’—and *necessary* for the thought of that entity: “Necessary marks are such as are *ad essential pertinentia* [pertaining to the essence], without which the thing cannot be thought at all” (BL, 24: 113, 88). Thus, just like all marks that apply *absolutely* to some entity, the marks pertaining to the essence must be included in both the complete and the minimal concept of that entity, so that, without them, one could not think the entity, and with them, one cannot *but* think the entity.¹¹³ The marks that apply *absolutely* to an entity, then, are just those that pertain to its essence.¹¹⁴

The deschematism has established the one positive trait (mark) of a time-difference to be membership within an absolute manifold, so that a time-difference is nothing other than an absolute difference. “Difference” is the mark that pertains to a time-difference *absolutely*. Since the only marks that apply to an entity absolutely (in every relation) are those that pertain to its *essence*, it follows that ‘difference’ also constitutes the *essence* of a time-difference. It is not only that time-differences are different in every relation (which is true of anything); it is also that *to be a time-difference is to differ*. In differing, a time-difference exhibits the mark that makes it itself.

Now, as the last paragraph forecasts, essences always play designatory or definitional roles with respect to the entities of which they are essences: it is not only that the marks pertaining to the essence are those that *must* apply to the entity (in the sense of absolutely); it is also that exhibiting these marks is just what it is to be the entity in question. From this it follows that the essence of an entity defines the complete set of marks that pertain to it *prior to its relations with other entities*. For, an entity must obviously be itself in order to relate to others and so *prior* to those relations—since otherwise these others would relate to an entity that is not yet the entity to which they supposedly relate. Thus, Kant writes: “Marks *extra essentialia* [outside the essence] are... called

¹¹³For a further discussion of the term absolute, see Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation (*Diss*, 2: 401 - 402; 395), Allison (2004, p. 22), Hinske (1970 p. 49), Rukgaber (2016), Wang (2020), and Severo (2005).

¹¹⁴For a further discussion of the term essence, see Kant’s *New Elucidation* (*ND*, I: 395-396; 16-17), Langton (2018), Rand (2012), Winegar (2017), Hoffer (2018), and Insole (2011).

relations... *Relationes*, however, are alterations that occur in a thing in relation to others and in relation to other things” (*BL*, 24:113 - 24:114, 88-89).

Since absolute difference constitutes the *essence* of time-difference, designating both the only mark it must exhibit in order to be itself and the sole mark that may ever pertain to it, it follows that *difference* is what pertains to a time-difference *in itself*, so that this element exhibits *absolute difference prior to all its relations to others*. To be a time-difference is to differ absolutely, exhibiting no other mark than difference, and since anything must be itself before it relates to others, a time-difference differs *in itself*—differing is what its simple and essential *being-of-itself* consists in.

Now, from this, the following peculiarity arises. I consider it an essentially intuitive axiom—i.e., a claim for which reason may be offered only in the face of sufficient challenge—that *difference* in general, of any sort, pertaining to anything at all, articulates a relation between some entity and its other. If some entity *differs* (whether it be an ordinary object, a concept, or an absolute intuition), then it differs *from* something, which is, to this extent, an *other* to it. Even if the entity is given as differing from *itself*, then it is given as an *other* to itself. (Rosalind is Ganymede is Rosalind—in order to represent herself to Orlando as *different* from herself, Rosalind must take on the guise of *another*.) In the standard case, if some *A* is given as differing, then it is given as differing from some more straightforwardly *other B*. The point is simply that if anything is *different* (if it differs), then it stands necessarily in some relation to *another*. Difference is sufficiently and necessarily described as an *other-relating*.

Since difference is nothing other than an *other-relating*, while an *essence* designates that which some entity is *prior to all relations*, time-difference—whose essence is absolute difference—is defined in a state of perplexity. A time-difference is *essentially, in itself, and prior to all relations*, nothing other than an *other-relating*. This perplexity constitutes the aporia of time-difference. It sits at the heart of the time-system that will unfold from it, beating its irresolvable paradox through the manifold veins of the whole.

3. *Other-Positing and The Being-of-Itself of Time-Difference*

How is this aporetic essence of time-difference *expressed*? To differ is to relate to others as other, but an essence designates what an entity is prior to all relations. Thus, a time-difference is in itself an *other-relating*

prior to all its relations to other (that is, essentially)—this is the aporia of time-difference. Elucidating the relation between time-difference and its essence, so as to articulate the way in which the time-differential essence is *expressed* in those elements of which it is the essence, involves untangling the constraints of this aporia. What does it take for an element to be in itself an other-relating *prior* to all its relations to other?

The opposition driving this aporia holds between the definition of an essence *in general* and the trait that marks the *particular* essence of a time-difference. An essence in general designates the trait, or set of traits, that an entity must exhibit in order to be the entity that it is—anything that exhibits the essential trait is an instance of the entity in question, while anything that fails to exhibit this trait is not. Since the essence defines the adequate concept of the entity of which it is the essence, it necessarily pertains to that entity *prior* to all its relations to other entities, designating what the entity is *in itself*. But the *particular* trait that marks the essence of a time-difference is *absolute difference*. Since differing involves relating to others, a time-difference is essentially an other-relating—it is *in itself* an other-relating, prior to all its relations to other. The task, then, is to resolve or further develop the opposition holding between the definition of essence *in general* and time-difference’s *particular* essence.¹¹⁵

We may begin to resolve the opposition by considering the fine-grained relations holding between the concept of an essence and a that of an activity that necessarily correlates with it, namely, *positing*. In his earliest definition of an essence in Book II of the *Ethics* (a text which had significant influence on Kant), Spinoza is careful to define the notion of an essence in terms of positing, i.e., the activity by which essences are expressed:

¹¹⁵ The fact that the particular essence of a time-difference stands in direct opposition to the constraints on essences in general confirms the validity of the original description of time-difference as absolute intuition. For, the notion of an essence is always necessarily bound up with the notion of a *concept*. An absolute intuition is not simply a “non-conceptual intuition” (as if it were *indifferent* to conceptual determination); it is more radically an intuition *beyond* concepts. It is defined by its excessive *rupture* of conceptual determination. As such, absolute intuitions need concepts precisely in order to exceed them. (The converse holds for ideas of reason, which are defined as concepts beyond intuitions.) Thus, if an essence is a certain species of concept—namely, the *adequate* concept of that of which it is the essence—then it is fitting that a time-difference would not simply *lack* an essence, but would rather possess an essence that subverts the very idea of essentiality. This fact, it ought to be noted, foreshadows the entire methodology of the system of mythic time. It is not that the procedures of this system are somehow illogical or irrational, as though they were entirely insensitive to the conceptual rules of logic; indeed, the strategies of time-difference will often be intelligible in terms of the most standard patterns of common logic (certainly *I* will be making full use of these patterns, and the hierarchical terminology associated with them, as I attempt to explicate the time-system). It is rather that time-difference itself, absolute intuition, constitutes a certain sort of logical virus: by infecting the rules of logic, replicating and explicating itself by means of their effective machinery, time-difference will repeatedly undermine the very idea of logical unity, continually proving itself as the *excess* of concepts by forcing conceptual-inferential developments to repeated points of undecidability.

“I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily *posited* [*ponitur*] and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing” (Spinoza 1985, 423, *emphasis added*). The most precise way to construe the essence of an entity, according to Spinoza, is to designate that with which that entity stands in a symmetrical relation of *positing*. We may designate the essence of a triangle, for example, as ‘three-sided, boundedness’ because whenever such a mark is given, a triangle must be posited, and, reciprocally, whenever a triangle is given, a three-sided boundedness must be posited. Positing such a three-sided boundedness is how a triangle accords with, or *expresses*, its essence. In order to become adequate to that essence, however—that is, in order to express it *fully*¹¹⁶—a triangle must posit more than just a three-sided boundedness: it must posit, in addition, angles equal to 180 degrees, a certain trigonometric proportionality of sides and angles, an area equal to half the product of the base and height, and, in general, *every* “attribute”¹¹⁷ that pertains to an entity whose essence is three-sided boundedness.

The essence of a time-difference is absolute difference—difference that is in no way determined by concepts. Whenever such an absolute difference is given, a time-difference must be posited. Reciprocally, whenever a time-difference is given, an absolute difference must be posited. Just as a triangle accords with its essence just if, being given, it posits a three-sided boundedness, so too does a time-difference accord with its essence just by positing absolute difference. This positing, then, is not something done by *us*—the observers of the time-system¹¹⁸—but rather something the time-difference *itself* does insofar as it is given, or has being. The being-of-itself of a time-difference is the positing of absolute difference. This is how a time-difference *accords* with (in the sense of *expresses*) its essence. What does the positing of absolute difference entail?

¹¹⁶ “Accordance” and “adequation” constitute the two poles of the same process of essential *expression*. Whenever anything accords with its essence (i.e., whenever it is the entity of which the essence is an essence), it expresses that essence to some extent. Whenever the entity is *adequate* to its essence, it exhibits every property and attribute that the essence entails, expressing that essence *fully*.

¹¹⁷ Both the attributes of an entity and the marks that constitute its essence are necessary, but the former are derived from, and are therefore subordinate to, the latter: “The *notae necessariae* [necessary marks] are A. *primitivae* or B. *derivativae*[,] The former constitute the *essentialia*, but the latter the *attributa*. E.g., in the case of the triangle the 3 angles are just as necessary and indispensable as the 3 sides. But we derive the former from the latter, and they are hence *attributa*[;] but the sides themselves are basic concepts[,] *essentialia*” (BL, 24: 115, 89).

¹¹⁸ It will occasionally be useful to distinguish between the way things are for time-difference itself and the way they are for *us*, the theorists developing its system. This dual perspective mimics the duality Hegel employs in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, distinguishing between consciousness and the “phenomenological observer,” as Findlay (1977) refers to us.

As defined by the intuitive axiom, difference in general is an *other-relating*. In order for any element to differ, it must differ *from* (elements which thereby constitute) others. Difference is always an other-relating because others are constituted just by being differed from. For this reason, the difference of any element analytically entails the ‘others’ from which that element differs (and thereby comes to be different). We therefore have two mutually-entailing, but nevertheless *distinct*, terms: ‘difference’ and ‘others.’ Difference is difference just in virtue of the others that are differed *from*, while an other is an other just in virtue of the difference by which it differs from that to which it is other. Typically, difference has always been understood on the basis of otherness: an element is never different *in itself* but only in contingent relation to another; both the element and its other are taken to be identical to themselves, primarily, and different from one another only as a secondary affair. Thus, on this model, difference is posterior to otherness (that is, to the independent existences of distinct, self-identical elements). But the discovery of an element whose *essence* is absolute difference, a time-difference, calls for a certain *Copernican Revolution in difference*: rather than the contingent relation of distinct others (who have their sources of existence elsewhere) positing *difference*, difference, being given, posits the existence of others, and these others derive their being precisely from this difference that posits them.

A time-difference accords with its essence by positing absolute difference, but the absolute difference that is posited itself entails certain *others* that the positing element differs *from*. Thus, just as a triangle need only posit three-sided boundedness to satisfy the minimal conditions of expressive accordance with its essence but must, further, posit all the necessary attributes that *follow* from this three-sided boundedness to become *adequate* to that essence (expressing it *fully*), so too must a time-difference posit *more* than just absolute difference if it is to express its essence adequately. It must also posit the *others* that absolute difference always entails. That is, since the being-of-itself (accordance with the essence) of a time-difference is the positing of absolute difference, while absolute difference entails the existence of others that are differed from, it follows that the being-of-itself of a time-difference involves the positing of the others from which it essentially differs.

We have now made some progress determining the aporia of time-difference. Originally, the aporia stated, generally, that: a time-difference is in itself nothing other than an other-relating, prior to all its relations to other. Now we may specify the *type* of relation to other that a time-difference essentially is. It is, namely, one

of *positing*. A time-difference is in itself, not only an *other-relating*, but more particularly, an *other-positing*. The contradiction that this aporia implies remains in place—since positing is a species of relation—but we are now in a better position to attempt its resolution. To do so, we must emphasize the specifically *ontological* (rather than the merely logical) nature of all essential positing. As indicated in Spinoza’s definition, an element must accord with its essence not only insofar as we *conceive* it, but also and primarily insofar as it itself has *being*. In order to be and be itself, an element must posit that which pertains to its essence (thereby expressing that essence): the expression of the essence is the being-of-itself of the element.

4. *Fichte and the Ontological Character of Other-Positing*

No philosopher has more effectively exploited this specifically *ontological* dimension of essential positing than Fichte, one of Kant’s earliest and most important interpreters. In the first pages of his 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*, he introduces the activity of positing along the way toward the discovery of “the primordial, absolutely unconditioned first principle of all human knowledge” (Fichte 1982, 93), characterizing it, importantly, both in terms of and in contrast to the structure of a logical conditional. He writes:

The proposition *A is A* (or $A = A$, since that is the meaning of the logical copula) is accepted by everyone... In insisting that the above proposition is intrinsically certain we are *not* asserting that *A is the case*. The proposition *A is A* is by no means equivalent to *A exists*, or *there is an A...* On the contrary, what we are saying is: *If A exists, then A exists....* Thus... what is established is that between that *if* and this *then* there is a necessary connection; and it is the *necessary connection between the two* that is posited *absolutely* and *without any other ground*. To this necessary connection I give the preliminary designation X... X is related to that A which occupies the logical position of subject in the foregoing proposition, just as it also is to that which stands as predicate; for both are united by X; and given that the A in the subject position is asserted, that in the predicate is asserted absolutely; hence the above proposition can also be expressed as follows: if A is posited *in the self*, it is thereby *posited*, or, it thereby *is...* Thus the self asserts, by means of X, that *A exists absolutely for the judging self, and that simply in virtue of its being posited in the self as such...* (Fichte 1982, 93).

Fichte’s argument here proceeds in stages. He begins with the assertion of what he takes to be a self-evident proposition which will be “accepted by everyone,” namely, that $A = A$ —some element, that is, is equal to itself. Commitment to this proposition, which Fichte takes to be compulsory, is *not* (at first) commitment to the existence of *A*, but it *is* commitment to the conditional judgment that *If A exists, then A exists*. Fichte names this conditional relation between *A*-as-subject and *A*-as-predicate X, and he contends that, since no one can deny that *A is A*, X is “posited *absolutely* and *without any other ground*.” (This constitutes Fichte’s first use of the

term ‘positing’ in the main part of the 1794 *Wissenschaftslehre*.) We therefore have three terms: *A*-as-subject, *A*-as-predicate, and *X* (the connection between the two). The subject is asserted only hypothetically, and the predicate waits on its condition, but since *X*, the conditional relation itself, is posited *absolutely* (so that it exists or has being necessarily), and this *X* itself hypothesizes the subject-condition (or is intelligible only through this hypothesis), it follows that the subject-condition has always already been hypothesized and the predicate, like *X* itself, is also posited absolutely. For this reason, *A* (as predicate) has *being* or exists necessarily.

For present purposes, the most important element of Fichte’s argument is the way in which the ontological conditional relation, *X*, which is both absolutely posited and responsible for the absolute positing of *A*, breaks certain rules that typically apply to merely *logical* conditionals. In standard conditionals, of the form $P \rightarrow Q$, the assertion of the antecedent necessitates the assertion of the consequent, but the *denial* of the antecedent does not justify the denial of the consequent. In the ontological conditional, *X*, however—*If A exists, then A exists*—the denial of the antecedent *is* grounds for denying the consequent. Importantly, this aberration does not arise simply because the antecedent is identical with the consequent (invoking this identity to justify a move in the argument here would beg the question, since identity is precisely what we are attempting to explicate). It arises, rather, because the consequent has being precisely and *only* because the antecedent *posits* it as having being. That is, its being is owed entirely to the positing relation it bears to the antecedent. Unlike in a logical conditional, then, the antecedent is not just a universally reliable *sign* of the consequent; it is, more radically, the ontological *source* of the consequent. One cannot deny the antecedent without denying the exclusive source of the consequent’s being and so the being of the consequent itself.

Fichte’s first lesson about essential positing, then, pertains to its necessarily ontological character— one element essentially posits another just if it pertains to that element’s being to be the source of the being of the other, so that if it does *not* posit this other, then it is not itself, and if the other is not posited, then it does not exist. How does this lesson help us resolve the aporia of time-difference?

As we have seen, a time-difference posits others just insofar as it expresses its essence. Thus, although it is certainly an *activity*, other-positing is not something a time-difference “does”—as though it could also *not* do it. It is rather what the time-difference in itself *is*. All essences define *what it is to be* the entities of which they

are essences, so that these entities express their essences just insofar as they are themselves. This way of construing the relation of essence and entity has important consequences for both what posits in accordance with the essence (the time-difference) and what is thereby posited (the others).

On the side of the time-difference, other-positing must be understood as an entirely ontological affair. By positing others, a time-difference does not “do” anything: it simply *is* itself. This is to say, by enacting the activity of other-positing, the time-difference accomplishes nothing except the simple being-of-itself, carrying out its essential *differing* by positing those others from which it differs. Thus, in relating to others by essentially *positing* them, the time-difference comes into its own as itself (just as a triangle does not “do” anything, but simply is itself, when, being given, it posits a three-sided boundedness).

Conversely, since these others come about only insofar as the the time-difference posits them, they are ontologically indebted to the time-difference’s being-of-itself. The others do not relate as mere logical consequents to the time-difference, which would be their antecedent. Rather, they are the ontological *expressions* that come about through the time-difference’s act of expressing its differential essence so as to thereby be itself. In other words, just as the being-of-itself of the time-difference consists in positing others, the others that are thereby posited derive their being exclusively from being posited. Thus, these others are essentially and ontologically *internal* to the time-difference that posits them: if it were ever to cease its positing activity, these others would entirely vanish.

5. *Heidegger and the Appropriative Character of Other-Positing*

The ontological relation that holds between a time-difference and what it posits may be further elucidated on the basis of Martin Heidegger’s late conception of “appropriation” [*Ereignis*]. Without going into too much detail, appropriation names the “activity” that a certain entity enacts with respect to *others* when, on the one hand, it is itself only through its relation to those others, and on the other, these others are themselves only through their relation to it. The entity *appropriates* the others, making them its own, because its internal being consists in nothing other than its relation to them (being owned by them), and their being consists only in their relation to it—so that both what appropriates and what is appropriated derive their being exclusively from the appropriation. As Andrew Mitchell puts it in the preface to his translation of *Insight into that which is*

(The Bremen Lectures): “What is given or delivered into ownership [i.e., appropriated] is not owned by another. And what is so owned needs this other to be itself. But what gives or delivers into ownership is just as much owned in this relationship as is that which is given or delivered into ownership of another... What it is that is given over into the ownership of another here is one’s very ownness as such” (Mitchell 2012, xiv). Since a time-difference *is* itself (expresses its essence) just insofar as it posits others, while these others *are* just insofar as they are posited, we may understand the act of time-differential positing as, in addition, an act of *appropriation*: the time-difference *appropriates* what it posits as its own, articulating its being-of-itself through these others, and these others *are* only as so appropriated.¹¹⁹

This lesson about the ontologically appropriative character of essential positing allows the aporia of time-difference to find a certain sort of resolution. Since a time-difference *appropriates* what it posits, or since positing is itself an act of appropriation, these posited-appropriated others must be understood as *internal* articulations of the being of the time-difference itself. A time-difference *does* relate to (differ from) others essentially, but this other-relation *also* occurs prior to all relations to other, since, on the one hand, the positing expresses nothing other than the being-of-itself of the positing time-difference, and, on the other, the posited others have no being outside their being posited and appropriated by the time-difference. A time-difference *differs* in itself—it is an absolute difference. It does not therefore seek outside itself for others from which to differ, but rather internally posits *within* itself those others from which it differs, being itself by differing from those others that it posits.

6. *Three Peculiarities: Other Time-Differences, Manifoldness, and Intensity*

A time-difference accords with its essence just through the activity of *other-positing*. Enacting this activity is what the being-of-itself of time-difference exclusively consists in, so that it (the time-difference) is nothing other than this other-positing and the others that are thereby posited retrieve their being exclusively from being posited. This is the current result of the analysis. Three peculiarities arise at this point, pertaining respectively to the nature, the number, and the measure of the posited others. I will address each peculiarity in turn.

¹¹⁹ For more on Heidegger’s notion of appropriation, see Mitchell (2015, pp. 296 – 298).

So far we have seen that a time-difference posits others in itself (i.e., essentially), but we have yet to offer any description of these “others.” The sole trait by which we distinguished them was their otherness to, or difference from, a given time-difference. But surely time-differences differ from many things—tables, triangles, concepts, anything that is not itself. Does the differential essence of a time-difference necessitate that it posit and appropriate *everything* that is other to it, so that, conversely, everything would have its source of being in time-difference? Or is the set of elements that a time-difference posits more limited? In short, what is the nature of the *others* that come about through the essential time-differential activity of other-positing?

To answer this question, we may invoke the ontologically appropriative character of essential positing. A positing time-difference posits others just because its essence is absolute difference, bringing others about in itself simply in order to carry out the difference it is. Conversely, the others that are posited through this differential essence have their being exclusively in their *being posited*. From this it follows that the posited others have being just insofar as they are differed *from*. The posited others, therefore, no less than the time-difference that posits them, derive their being absolutely from *difference*. They would not have being if they were not *absolutely differed from*, and, therefore, the being-of-itself of each of these posited others is owed entirely to absolute difference. Since that which defines *what it is to be* any element, articulating what its simple being-of-itself involves, is nothing other than the *essence* of that element, it follows that absolute difference constitutes the essence not only of the positing time-difference but also of the *others* that are posited.

Now, an essence defines what it is to be the entity of which it is the essence. Conversely, every entity is what it is exclusively in virtue of its essence. From this it follows that every essence may confer the significance of being on only one type of entity—namely, on the type of which it is the essence. (Only triangles, for example, retrieve themselves from three-sided boundedness.) Since the others that a positing time-difference posits in itself are, like it, elements whose essence is absolute difference, it follows that *they too must be time-differences*. For, absolute difference may be the essence of only one type of entity, and we know already that it is the essence of time-difference. Thus, we may specify our more particularly that a time-difference is in itself the positing not of others *in general* but, specifically of *other time-differences*. The essence of a time-difference is nothing other than to posit and appropriate *other* time-differences.

The second peculiarity pertains to the “number” of other time-differences that a given one posits and appropriates in itself. These others can be neither finite nor infinite. For, both finitude and infinity stand under the pure quantitative schema of number in general that time-differences exceed. Rather than being finite or infinite (and so enumerable, at least in principle), the other time-differences that a given one posits in itself must be *manifold*. While number (whether finite or infinite) consists in nothing other than the *neutralization* of multiplicity through the invocation of a unifying concept—every number being a rule for representing some distinct degree of multiplicity as a *unity*—manifoldness is always multiplicity as such. The term ‘manifold’ designates a multiplicity *not* insofar as it conforms to unity, but, rather, insofar as a multiplicity is a multiplicity—multiplicity *qua* multiplicity. Thus, manifoldness represents precisely the excess of the pure schema of number that time-differences always consist in enacting. We may, therefore, add a *further* specification: a given time-difference posits in itself not some *number*, but rather a *manifold*, of other time-differences.

The third peculiarity pertains to the “measure” of time-differential manifoldness. A manifold may always be further elaborated; its determinations are never complete. Its rule is *indefiniteness* and *indeterminacy*. The elements articulating a manifold are never *all* its elements. More cases may always be discerned, more differences, greater complexity. The remainder may never be encompassed and conceptually reified under the specter of the infinite—such a procedure would be the *ultimate* neutralization of manifoldness, nullifying it under the aspect of an eternal unity, raising the conceptual unity of the manifold to the level of a divine decree.

As such, the manifoldness of a posited manifold can never be measured in any standard sense, but nevertheless it does leave its distinctive mark—namely, within the being of the given time-difference that posits it. This mark may be called the *degree* of the positing time-difference. Kant introduces the notion of degree to the critical philosophy as an attempt to articulate the representational laws of a multiplicity that is also, somehow, a *unity*, namely, of a *singular* element (or moment¹²⁰) that is *in itself* manifold. Singular elements that must nevertheless be represented as multiplicities are represented according to their degree of *intensity*: “Now I call that magnitude which can only be apprehended as a unity, and in which multiplicity can only be represented through approximation to negation = 0, **intensive magnitude**. Thus every reality in the appearance has

¹²⁰ *KrV*.A168/B210.290.

intensive magnitude, i.e., a degree” (*KrV*, A168/B210, 291). A time-difference is a singular element that contains, in the sense of posits, in itself a manifold (namely, of other time-differences). It therefore constitutes an *intensity*, and it is subject to the measure of *degree*.

The more manifold the manifold of other time-differences that a given one posits and appropriates in itself, the more there are others from which it differs, the higher its degree of difference. The degree of a time-difference’s difference is called its *intensity*. The intensity of a time-difference is directly proportional to the degree of its essential expression or the extent of its internal other-positing. This intensity is inherently on the rise. For the essence of time-difference is *absolute* difference, so that no degree of intensity, no magnitude of other-positing, will ever be adequate to what the essence requires and actively demands. Other-positing must always be raised to the *nth* degree; intensity must always become ever more intense.

This analysis reveals the first two moments of time-differential positing. Positing has both an *active* and a *passive* side. Other-positing is *active*, and being other-positing is *passive*. Some time-difference-*A* other-positing just insofar as it is itself (conforming to its essence), and manifold other time-differences-*B* are thereby other-positing, coming about as what *A* expresses insofar as it expresses its essence.

II. From Other- to Self-Positing: Transitivity, Reciprocity, Reflexivity

The last section interrogated the essence and being of time-difference in itself, culminating in the following proposition: A time-difference is in itself the positing of manifold other time-differences. We may understand this proposition as a provisional solution to the contradiction contained with time-difference’s aporia¹²¹ because it shows a time-difference, whose essence is absolute difference, to be *in itself* the *positing* of the very others from which it differs and to which it relates: it relates to these others *prior* to all its relations to (external) others because relating to, in the sense of differing from, and so *positing* other time-differences is what every given time-difference is in itself—the simple being-of-itself of every time-difference is the positing and appropriation of others—i.e., the activity of other-positing is essential.

But other-positing itself must now be interrogated. A time-difference is in itself the positing and appropriation of manifold other time-differences—other-positing is how a time-difference expresses, in the

¹²¹ Which stated that: A time-difference is in itself, prior to all relations to other, an other-relating.

sense of minimally accords with, its essence. But what sort of relation does a time-difference have to those others that it posits and appropriates? What are the dynamics, laws, and structure of this relation? Answering this question will allow us to understand what it takes for a time-difference not only to *accord* with (in the sense of *minimally* express), but also to *adequate* (in the sense of *maximally* express), its essence.

Other-positing is characterized by three traits: it is always transitive (a time-difference posits everything its posits posit), reciprocal (a time-difference posits only others that themselves posit *it*), and it is, for this reason, *reflexive* (a time-difference posits *itself* through its positing of others). Understanding the way in which all other-positing entails a *self*-positing will point us toward the structure of the final version of positing, namely (following Fichte), *absolute positing*. When a time-difference not only *posits* but does so absolutely, it not only expresses but *adequates* its essence. I will discuss each of the foregoing traits in turn.

1. *The Transitivity of Other-Positing*

The relation of any entity A to another entity B is transitive if, in relating to B in the specified manner, A also relates to everything else B relates to in this manner. For example, if the specified transitive relation is *love*, and A loves B , while B loves C , then A also loves C in virtue of the transitivity of her love of B —she loves C *through* her love of B . The task is to prove that the relation of time-differential other-positing is *transitive*. Every given time-difference must be shown to relate *transitively* to the manifold other time-differences it posits, so that the given time-difference posits not only these others but also everything these others themselves posit.

Consider some time-difference—call it time-difference- A . Since A is a time-difference, it posits a manifold of others, namely, manifold- B . Every element of manifold- B counts as some time-difference- B . It is not necessary to distinguish between one B and another, but every B is an element of a manifold, namely, the one A (which is singular) posits. I contend that, in positing any time-difference- B , A also posits whatever B posits, so that, if B posits its *own* manifold of time-differences, manifold- C , then A also posits every time-difference- C . Here is the proof.

As a time-difference, time-difference- A is in itself the positing of manifold others. The other time-differences that A posits have been designated as time-differences- B . Now, since each of these elements- B is posited by a time-difference, it is by definition also a time-difference (since time-differences posit only other

time-differences). Since B is itself a time-difference, it, like A , is defined by the *essence* of time-difference in general, namely, by *absolute difference*. As such, it must *express* this essence. Just as in the case of the time-difference that posited it, B 's expression of its essence involves the positing of manifold *other* time-differences. I will call the manifold time-differences that B posits manifold- C . Thus, A posits B and B posits C .

Now, since A is in itself the positing of a manifold of other time-differences, inclusive of some element- B , while this B is in itself the positing of manifold- C , it follows that A is likewise the positing of all time-differences- C . For, the positing of these time-differences- C is just what the essential being-of-itself of time-difference- B involves, and A is in itself the positing of a manifold inclusive of B . Thus A is the positing not only of B but also of everything B *posits*—namely, of all time-differences- C . Similarly, of course, since each of these time-differences- C is itself a time-difference, each is in itself an other-positing, namely, of some *further* manifold- D . Since A posits B as the positing of C , while B posits C as the positing of D , it follows that A is in itself also the positing of D . This process may be iterated indefinitely. Every time-difference is the positing of other time-differences which are themselves the positings of further time-differences, so that, in positing others, a time-difference necessarily posits everything its posits posit. Time-differential positing is always transitive because everything posited is always itself a positing, so that the act of positing is always already the act of positing the posited of what one posits. The following diagram presents a simple representation of how this works:

$$A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow E \rightarrow F \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n$$

Diagram 6.1

The arrows in this diagram represent the act of time-differential positing. It attempts to show that if A posits B , which posits C , which posits D , which posits n etc., then A posits n .

All time-differential positing is transitive because time-differences are capable of positing only other time-differences and every time-difference is in itself nothing other than an other-positing, so that, in successfully positing another time-difference, any given time-difference also posits everything this other *posits*.

2. *The Reciprocity of Other-Positing*

Whereas the transitivity of time-differential positing follows from the constraints on what it takes for a posited element to be a time-difference *in itself*, the reciprocity of positing follows from the constraints on

what it takes for a posited time-difference to be such an element *for the time-difference that posits it*. Ultimately (I will show), some element-*B* counts as a time-difference *for* the element-*A* that posits it just if this *B* itself posits a manifold of time-differences inclusive of *A*—that is, if time-differential positing is *reciprocal*. Further, if *A* posits *B*, then *B* *must* count as a time-difference *for A*, since *A* expresses its own essence just if it posits other time-differences. Thus, the reciprocity of time-differential positing, just like its transitivity did, follows necessarily from the constraints on the time-differential essence (on what it takes to be a time-difference). Establishing these points, however, is a subtle and difficult matter. I will proceed in four stages.

First, although most, but not all, differential relations are symmetrical, the standard symmetry of difference does not imply the reciprocity of differential *positing*. Some object typically differs from another just if this other also differs from it: the oak differs from the aspen just if the aspen also differs from the oak. Exceptions to this standard occur in cases of generality and particularity: the species (oak) differs from the genus (tree) by exhibiting its specific difference, but the genus does not differ from, but rather contains, the species (that is, everything incompatible with being a tree is also incompatible with being an oak tree). Since no time-difference is more or less “general” than any other, each being an absolutely *singular* element, we may presume that the difference holding between each with any other abides by the standard of symmetry: time-difference-*A* differs from time-difference-*B* just if *B* also differs from *A*.

But just because the *differential* relation holding between some time-difference and another is symmetrical does not mean that the *positing* relation is. For, if *A* is construed as an element whose essence is absolute difference, so that the expression of that essence (the being-of-itself) consists in the positing of a manifold of other time-differences, inclusive of *B*, then *B*’s symmetrical difference from *A* may be construed simply on the basis of *A*’s act of positing. That is, while *A* differs from the element *B* that it posits because, as an absolute difference, it posits only those others from which it essentially differs, *B* may differ from *A* simply on the basis of *A*’s differential positing of *it*. The symmetry of difference can be retained even if positing is asymmetrical. Thus, if time-differential positing is indeed reciprocal (symmetric) we must ground this reciprocity in something other than the fact that differential relations are standardly symmetric. This is the first point.

Second, there is a subtle difference between some posited element being a time-difference merely *in itself* and its being such, in addition, *for* the time-difference that posits it. If some time-difference- A posits another, B , as a time-difference, then it posits this other as itself an other-positing—to be a time-difference (to express the time-differential essence) necessarily involves positing others, so if the B that A posits is to be a time-difference then it must posit its own manifold. Hence, since A posits B as a time-difference, it posits B in a state of positing manifold further time-differences- C (which A would also posit transitively).

Now, in this case, when A posits B as the positing of manifold- C ($A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$), B first of all qualifies as a time-difference *in itself*. For, to be a time-difference, an element need only express the time-differential essence, and expressing that essence involves nothing other than positing manifold other time-differences, which B accomplishes just insofar as it posits manifold- C . But, furthermore, B also counts (in this simply transitive situation) as a time-difference *for* the time-differences- C included in the manifold it posits in itself. For these elements- C , B is in itself an other-positing (namely, of *them*), which is what the being-of-itself of a time-difference consists in.

From here, two assumptions are available. We may assume that in its positing of manifold- C , time-difference- B also posits A (so that A is an element of manifold- C), or we may assume that it does not (so that A posits B but B does not posit A). If B posits A , so that A is an element of manifold- C (where $-C$ is just the name for everything B posits), then B would count as a time-difference not only *in itself* but also *for* A (the time-difference that posits it). If it does not, however—that is, if A posits B but B does not posit A —then A would posit B as both a time-difference *in itself* and a time-difference *for* those elements- C that it posits B as positing, but it *would not* posit B as a time-difference *for it* (namely, for A). This is so, again, because to be a time-difference is to express the time-differential essence, and to do that is to engage in the activity of other-positing. While B *would* engage in this activity *in itself*, it *would not* engage in this activity with respect to A , since, by supposition, it would be merely posited *by* A and would not, in turn, *posit* A . Thus, if A posits B but B does not reciprocally posit A , then B counts as a time-difference both *in itself* and *for* the manifold- C that it posits, but it *does not* count as a time-difference *for* A . This is the second (and most difficult) point.

Third, every element that a given time-difference posits must count as a time-difference not only *in itself* but also *for* the given time-difference that posits it. The being-of-itself of any time-difference consists in the expression of the time-differential essence, and this essence is expressed through the activity of other-positing. In the activity of other-positing, a time-difference actively *brings about* the others from which it differs, thereby confirming itself as an essential differing. Because the positing of the positing time-difference is necessarily the source of the being of the others that it posits and from which it differs, these others have the source of their being in an essential and absolute differing. Anything whose essence is absolute difference is a time-difference. Thus, in expressing its own essence by performing the activity of other-positing, a time-difference is only permitted to posit other *time-differences*.¹²²

The upshot, for present purposes, is that it is *of the essence of a time-difference* to posit only other time-differences; if it does not, then it fails to express its essence and falls short of its own being. This means, further, that the other time-differences that some given one posits must not only be time-differences *in themselves*; they must also be such *for* the positing time-difference. For, if the posited others were time-differences *in themselves*, but not *for* the time-difference that posits them, then they would not participate in the positing time-difference's effort to adequate its own essence through other-positing. Hence, if some time-difference-*A* posits another *B* then *B* must be a time-difference not only *in itself* but also *for A*. Indeed, *B* is only allowed to be a time-difference *in itself* precisely so that it might be such *for* the time-difference-*A* that posits it. This is the third point.

Finally, fourth, as indicated in the second point, a posited element is only a time-difference *for* the time-difference that posits it if it reciprocally posits this very element. That is, if *A* posits *B* as a time-difference, so that *B* posits manifold-*C* in itself, then *B* counts as a time-difference *for A* just if *A* is a member of manifold-*C*. For, the posited element-*B* only fails to count as a time-difference *for* the element-*A* that posits it when it *does not* reciprocally posit that same element *A*, including it in its posited manifold. In the case in which *A* posits *B* as the positing of manifold-*C* but not as the positing of *A*, *B* counts as a time-difference *in itself* and it counts as a time-difference *for* the manifold-*C* that it is posited as positing, but it *does not* count as such for the time-difference-*A* that posits *it*. Thus, since a posited time-difference *must* count as a time-difference for the element

¹²² See the previous section for a defense of these claims.

that posits it—indeed, since counting as such is what is *primarily* required of it—it follows that a time-difference- A posits another B only when B also posits A . That is, A posits B as the positing of a manifold inclusive of A , or time-differential positing is necessarily reciprocal.

My proof of *transitivity* concluded with the relatively simple Diagram 6.1, which was intended to represent the fact that every time-difference posits the posited time-differences of those that it itself posits. The results of this proof of the reciprocity of time-differential positing may be represented in two stages with the following Diagrams 6.2 and 6.3:

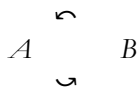


Diagram 6.2

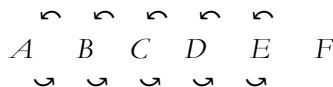


Diagram 6.3

Once again, the arrows represent the act of other-positing that each time-difference in itself is. Diagram 6.2 represents reciprocity by itself, the fact that some time-difference- A posits another, B , only ever as the positing of *it*. What A posits B as *being* is the positing of A itself. Likewise, B posits A as positing *it*, so that B posits A as *being* nothing other than the positing of A itself. Thus each equally posits the other as the positing of *it*.

Diagram 6.3 combines this representation of reciprocity with the *transitivity* condition represented in Diagram 6.1. A posits not only B , but also everything that B posits and everything its posits posit (transitivity). The reciprocity condition applies to *every* time-difference that some given time-difference posits, including those that it posits transitively, so that it is not only B that reciprocally posits A , but also every *further* time-difference- C , $-D$, $-E$, $-F$, etc. that B posits. For, just as the transitivity condition ultimately means that A posits F (the posit of the posit of the posit of what A itself posits), the reciprocity condition ultimately means that, likewise, F ultimately posits A .

Moreover, however, the addition of this latter condition of reciprocity to the constraints on time-differential positing change the way the former condition of transitivity must itself be understood. For, as Diagram 5.1 construes things, it may appear as though an *order* of greater and lesser immediacy applied to time-differential positing: while A appears to posit B *immediately*, it would appear that it posits C only *mediately* (*through*

its positing of B); it would then posit “further” time-differences- D , $-E$, and $-F$ still more mediately. But the addition of the reciprocity condition makes it clear that no such order can pertain at this level. Since every time-difference is reciprocally and in itself the *posit* of that which it itself posits, it follows that A ’s positing of C is no more mediate than its positing of B , its positing of B no less mediate than its positing of C . For, A ’s positing of B appears “immediate,” its positing of C “mediate,” only when B was understood as the positing of C but C was *not* understood as the positing of B . Since C is now equally recognized as the *positing* of that B which posits *it*, A ’s positing of B must be understood to be mediated through its own positing of C just as much as its positing of C must be understood to be mediated through its own positing of B . In other words, since C is the positing B just as surely as B is the positing of C , A ’s positing of either must be understood to be “mediated” through its positing of the other; or, equally, A ’s positing of both must be understood as “immediate.”

What this means in graphical terms is that the order represented in Diagram 6.2 is arbitrary: we could replace any of the letters with any of the others and the transitive-reciprocal time-differential positing dynamic would be represented equally well.

3. *The Reflexivity of Other-Positing*

I have now established the other-positing that pertains to time-difference to be both *transitive* and *reciprocal*. These were the first two traits I set out to demonstrate. To establish the third trait of *reflexivity*, we need only observe a few formal details about *all* transitive and reciprocal relations: reflexivity may be understood as a product of these other two.

As Brandom points out in *A Spirit of Trust*, “It is a formal fact that *if* a relation is both symmetrical [i.e., reciprocal] and transitive, then it is also reflexive, and hence is an equivalence relation. That is, if $\forall x, y[xRy \rightarrow yRx]$ and $\forall x, y, z[xRy \& yRz \rightarrow xRz]$, then $\forall x[xRx]$ ” (Brandom 2019, 247). If Orpheus loves Euridice and, in addition, loves everyone that Euridice loves (transitivity), while Euridice herself loves Orpheus (reciprocity), then it follows that Orpheus must also love himself (reflexivity). Transitivity and reciprocity together necessitate *reflexivity*.

We have seen above that if time-difference- A posits time-difference- B and B posits time-difference- C , then A posits C (transitivity). And we have seen further that if A posits both B and C , then both

B and C posit A (reciprocity). Thus, given the formal implications of relations that are both transitive and reciprocal, outlined above, it follows that, in being in itself the positing of *others*, every time-difference is *also* in itself the positing of itself. Thus, time-differential positing is reflexive—or *all other-positing implies a concomitant self-positing*.

This analysis of self-positing reveals two further moments of positing. Just like other-positing had both an active and a passive side (other-positing and being other-positated), so does self-positing have two sides. A time-difference self-positates insofar as it other-positates manifold others in a transitive and reciprocal manner, so as to posit not only these others but also everything these others *posit*, which includes it itself. That same time-difference is self-positated insofar as it is the object of its own self-positing. If A posits B , as well as everything B posits, and B posits A , then A posits A . A self-positates insofar as it posits itself, and it is self-positated insofar as it is positated by itself. There are therefore four distinct moments of time-differential positing: self- and other-positing (active), being self- and other-positated (passive).

III. Absolute Positing: The Adequation of the Essence

The last two sections of this chapter have explored the two endemic activities of time-difference. Reasoning from the results of the deschematism, the first section defined the *essence* of time-difference as absolute difference and proceeded to demonstrate the following proposition: A time-difference is in itself (i.e., essentially) the positing and appropriation of manifold other time-differences (an essential *other-positing*). The second section continued to develop the structure and principles of other-positing, proving that all time-differential positing is 1) *transitive*, so that a positing time-difference posits not only its own manifold but also everything each element of its manifold posits, 2) *reciprocal*, so that every given time-difference is the *posit* of every time-difference it itself posits, and 3) *reflexive*, so that every time-difference posits *itself* through its positing of manifold others. Since it is the structure of other-positing that itself implies a necessary and concomitant self-positing, it is clear that a time-difference is in itself the positing and appropriation of *itself* in and through its positing and appropriation of manifold *others*. So far, then, we have established that time-differences are in themselves other-positings and that all time-differential other-positing leads to self-positing. These two endemic

activities of time-difference—self- and other-positing—constitute the two *active* moments of a single, univocal time-differential process whose corresponding passive moments are *being other-positing* and *being self-positing*.

In this section, I will synthesize the four elements of absolute positing into one univocal process and appeal to this process to answer this question. As a whole, following Fichte, I will call the time-differential expression of this fourfold activity-passivity *absolute positing*. In absolute positing, a time-differences expresses self- and other-positing, being-self- and -other-positing *together, in one stroke*, as a *single* practice. Understanding the structure, dynamic, and—most importantly—the *univocity* of absolute positing allows us to address the question left over from the previous sections, namely, how does a time-difference not merely *express* but actually become *adequate to* its essence of absolute difference?

1. *The Fractal Structure of Time-Difference: Self-Positing Entails Other-Positing*

The last sections have established that a time-difference's essential activity of *other-positing* inevitably entails a concomitant act of *self-positing*. But the reverse is also true: every act of *self-positing* leads to (and already is) a concomitant act of *other-positing*. Establishing this point is the next step on the road to absolute positing.

It is an unbreakable law of all time-differential positing that *what posits* (the given time-difference) must differ from *what is posited* (the other time-differences)—and do so absolutely (without concept). For, a time-difference posits just as an expression of its *essence*, and that essence is *absolute difference*: to be a time-difference is to differ absolutely, and to differ absolutely is to posit *in oneself*, and so *appropriate*, rather than empirically “discover” *outside oneself*, those others from which one differs and by which one is different. Thus, every act of positing is the essential expression of an absolute differing, and, conversely, *what posits* must differ absolutely from *what is posited*.

Even self-positing is positing, and it is therefore subject to the unbreakable law of all time-differential positing, namely, that *what posits* (the time-difference) must differ absolutely from *what is posited* (even if that posit is *itself*). Thus, the reflexive *self-positing* that a time-difference's act of other-positing achieves when it proves itself to be both transitive and reciprocal counts as positing *at all* just if it is also an other-positing. In other words, when a time-difference posits itself (through its positing of others) it may only posit itself *as other*

to itself. Whenever a time-difference self-posites, the self that posits and the self that is posited are made to *differ* from one another by this very act of self-positing. Or, *self*-positing entails *other*-positing no less than other-positing entails self-positing.

Furthermore, and somewhat more challengingly, the differential relation that holds between what posits and what is posited necessitates that the latter be *manifold*. This is to say, the constraints on positing in general that arise from the time-differential essence require every time-difference to be in itself the positing not of some *number* (finite or infinite) of others, but of *manifold* others. Accordingly, even in the case when a time-difference-*A* posits a manifold of time-differences-*B*, positing also whatever any *B* posits, and so positing *itself* since every *B* must be posited as the positing of *A*, time-difference-*A* posits itself not only as *other* to itself but also as *manifold*. Originally, we identified time-differences as absolute intuitions and absolute intuitions as elements of absolute *manifolds*. Now we see that absolute manifolds exhibit a fractal structure: every *element* of an absolute manifold is itself an absolute manifold.

This fractal structure, however, is not like a typical, mathematical fractal where every element exhibits the same pattern as the whole but may be distinguished from that whole on the basis of scale and, in general, treated in a basically combinatory manner. In the case before us, the elements do not exhibit merely the same *pattern* as the “whole,” that is, of the absolute manifold of which they are a “part.” Rather, each element literally repeats this whole and *is* this repetition. Understanding why is the next step toward absolute positing.

2. *The Structure of Absolute Positing*

Now that we have seen that self-positing entails other-positing no less than other-positing leads to self-positing, we may consider a single “round” of time-differential positing with respect to all four of its moments—self- and other-positing, being self- and other-positing. This I will do with an eye toward the synthesis of these moments within the univocal process of which they are moments. Let us consider, once again, some time-difference-*A*.

Since *A* is a time-difference, it is in itself, or essentially, an absolute difference, and, for this reason, it posits in itself the manifold others from which it differs—all of which are necessarily time-differences. As before, I denominate the manifold that *A* other-positing ‘manifold-*B*,’ so that every element that *A* posits counts

as some time-difference- B . But now, more particularly, I stipulate that the elements belonging to manifold- B are not only those time-differences that A posits “immediately,” but also those elements that it posits *transitively* through the other-positing of its immediate posits. This is to say, if A posits B , so that B counts as an element of manifold- B , while in turn B posits a manifold inclusive of C , so that A posits C transitively through B , then C *also* counts as an element of manifold- B . Time-differences- C will be elements of *both* manifold- C and manifold- B , while time-differences- B will be elements only of the latter.

Let us attempt to interpret and graph the progress of A 's other-positing in stages, following it up to its conversion to self-positing, and then tracing self-positing back to other-positing. First, as essentially an absolute difference, A posits manifold- B :

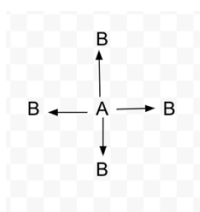


Diagram 6.4

As above, the arrows represent the act of time-differential positing. I have drawn arrows from A to four different time-differences- B , but this number is arbitrary: time-differences- B are not numerical but manifold.

Next, since these ‘ B ’s are all time-differences, each posits in itself its own manifold- C :

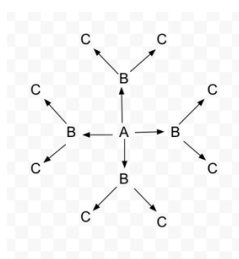


Diagram 6.5

As stipulated, every time-difference- C is a member of both its own manifold- C and manifold- B (that is, C is a subset of B). Since A posits every element of manifold- B , and, conversely, an element qualifies for membership in manifold- B just if it is posited by A , it follows that A posits not only every time-difference- B but also all time-differences- C .

Diagram 6.5 can obviously be transitively expanded indefinitely, since every posited time-difference is posited *as* positing its own manifold. The following Diagram 6.6 represents the indefinite character of this transitive expansion, extending other-positing to the *n*th degree.

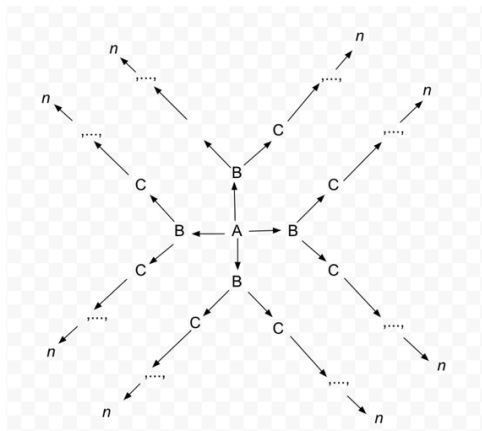


Diagram 6.6

So far, these diagrams represent two of the four moments of what will ultimately amount to absolute positing—namely, other-positing and being other-positied. Time-difference-*A* exhibits *only* the activity of other-positing, while time-differences-*n* (the outermost elements) exhibit *only* the passivity of being other-positied, but the other time-differences-*B* and -*C* all exhibit *both* the activity of other-positing and the passivity of being other-positied. Time-differences-*B* other-posit with respect to time-differences-*C* and -*n*, but they exhibit the passive moment of being other-positied with respect to *A*. Time-differences-*C* are passive with respect to both *A* and time-differences-*B*, but they are active with respect to time-differences-*n*.

We may begin to work toward a representation of the other two moments (self-positing and being self-positied) by deploying the necessary *reciprocity* that pertains to time-differential positing. Since every time-difference must posit only other time-differences that count as time-differences *for it*, and to be a time-difference is to be an other-positing, it follows that every given time-difference posits only those others that posit manifolds inclusive of *it* (namely, the given time-difference). We may represent this reciprocity by simply converting all the arrows present in Diagram 6.6 to double arrows:

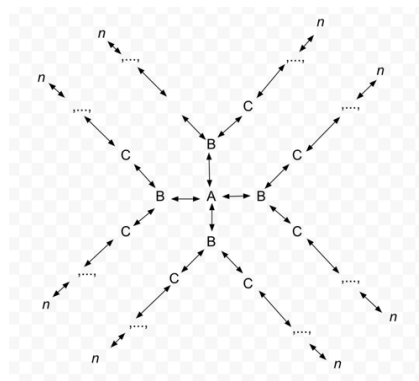


Diagram 6.7

Every element represented on the diagram posits only those elements that themselves posit manifolds inclusive of it.

To complete the diagram of absolute positing, we need only consider the implications of the double arrows in 6.7. In virtue of the transitivity condition, we know that every time-difference posits not only those elements to which its *own* arrows point, but also all those to which the arrows of its *posits* point. For example, *A* posits not only every element-*B* but also all elements-*C* and *-n* because we can trace arrows all the way from *A* to any of these time-differences. Since *A* sits at the center of the diagram, it other-posits every element that appears there. By introducing the condition of reciprocity in the form of the double arrow, however, we can see that, in addition to this, every element on the diagram also posits *A*. For, we may both follow a line of arrows *from A* to any element on the diagram *and* follow such a line from any element *back to A*.

Now, since there is a path leading *from A* to any element on the diagram, and there is equally a path leading from any element on the diagram back *to A*, it follows that *every* element may trace a positing path to any other element. This final result may be represented on the developing diagram by adding double-arrows indicative of some (though not all) the new positing connections between the manifold elements:

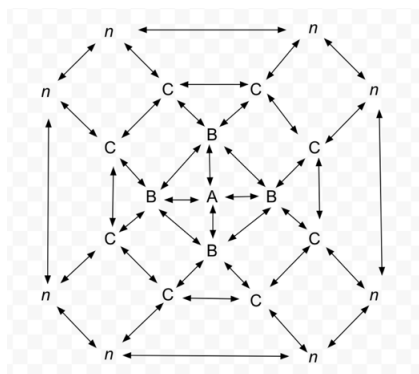


Diagram 6.8

I will call this final diagram, the *Diagram of Absolute Positing*—though it bears the deficiencies inherent to any attempt to pictorially represent a process that cannot be pictured (discussed below), it provides a provocative image that will allow us to extrapolate a definition and sense of absolute positing. What the diagram attempts to show is the fact that every element of the absolute manifold stands in both a mediate and an immediate relation of other-positing with every other element, including with itself.

3. *The Five Traits of Absolute Positing*

There are five main features of Diagram 6.8 that must be analyzed before we extrapolate an adequate definition of absolute positing.

The first feature that must be understood is the *uniqueness* of the absolute manifold—there is only *one* absolute manifold, so that, although every time-difference is in itself the positing of its own manifold, the manifold that is posited is always one and the same. This fact follows as a necessary consequence of the dual conditions transitivity and reciprocity that pertains to all other-positing. We may begin to establish it by considering only two time-differences, *A* and *B*. On the one hand, the condition of transitivity requires that if *A* posits a manifold inclusive of *B*, it also posits everything included within the manifold that *B* posits. On the other hand, the condition of reciprocity requires that if *B* is included in a manifold that *A* posits, *B* must necessarily include *A* within the manifold that it itself posits. Thus, *A* necessarily includes within its manifold everything that *B* posits (by the condition of transitivity), and, conversely, *B* necessarily includes within *its* manifold everything that *A* posits (by the condition of reciprocity). In other words, the two manifolds exhibit complete overlap, or are *the same*.

If we add a third time-difference-*C* to the mix, and consider its transitive and reciprocal relation to the time-difference-*B* that posits it, then it follows in the same way that *C*'s other-positing manifold overlaps completely with *B*'s and so with *A*'s. We may continue to add time-differences to the range of our consideration and, in every case, the dual conditions of transitivity and reciprocity will prove that the manifold posited by the new element overlaps entirely with the manifolds posited by all the others. So long as each “new” element bears any positing relationship to any of the other time-differences at all (that is, so long as it really is a time-

difference), it will posit in itself the very same manifold that all the others do. This “very same manifold” is none other than the singular, unique *absolute manifold*.¹²³

The second feature that must be appreciated is the decentralized character of the absolute manifold—*A* is no more a center than *n*, *n* no more an extremity than *A*. For, the manifold-*C* that some time-difference-*B* posits is no more a subset of manifold-*B* than manifold-*B* is a subset of -*C*. The appeal to a logic of sets and subsets is useful and applicable only when the condition of reciprocity is withheld. With the condition of reciprocity in place, the organization of sets and subsets can be run just as well in the opposite direction, with earlier letters of the alphabet naming subsets of the manifolds named by later letters. Now that we see that every manifold that *any* time-difference posits is the same as the one posited by any other—that is, since all time-differences posit the one, unique absolute manifold—every manifold is a subset only of itself. This relation may be distributed throughout the entire time-system: the absolute manifold is a subset of itself, which is a subset of itself, which is a subset of itself...

Third, and correlatively, the Diagram of Absolute positing demonstrates that every time-difference posits each of the others *both* immediately *and* mediately. This conflation of mediacy and immediacy follows again from the application of the dual conditions of transitivity and reciprocity. When only the condition of transitivity is in place, time-differences may always be organized according to a gradation of immediacy. *A* posits *B* which posits *C*, so that *A* posits *C* transitively. In this case, *A*'s positing of *C* is mediated by its immediate positing of *C*—*A* posits *C* only *through* *B*. But the condition of reciprocity requires that a time-difference posit every element that posits *it*. This reciprocal positing is always immediately occasioned by any act of positing, and so it is always itself *immediate*. Thus, we see that, with the addition of reciprocity, whenever *A* posits *C* (however mediately), *C* also reciprocally posits *A*, and does so immediately. If we apply the condition of reciprocity *again* (as we necessarily must), then it follows that *A* posits *C*, but this time *immediately*, without any mediation through *B*. Indeed, since the same positing by which *C* posits *A* includes its positing of *B*, *A*

¹²³ Kant provides an indication of the necessary *uniqueness* pertaining to the manifoldness inherent in the absolute form of intuition when he writes: “Time is no discursive or, as one calls it, general concept, but a pure form of sensible intuition. Different times are only parts of one and the same time. That representation, however, which can only be given through a single object, is an intuition” (*KrV*, B47/A32, 179).

now posits B mediately through C . The gradation of mediacy and immediacy is, in this way, being constantly overturned and restructured. Time-difference- n is no “further” from A than B is. All time-differences stand in relations of positing to one another that are *both* immediate *and* mediate, and each relates with every *degree* of mediacy to all the others.

Fourth, the fractal character of self-positing must be reinterpreted and specifically distinguished from that of a mathematical structure on the basis of the diagram. When a time-difference expresses its essence of absolute difference, it other-posites every element of the absolute manifold, bringing each about and ontologically appropriating them as its own simply in its being-of-itself. What the time-difference *is* is the positing of the entire diagram. But since each given element of the diagram itself posits the absolute manifold, every element that the given time-difference posits itself posits *it*, so that, in positing *others*, the given element always also posits itself. But, as we know, self-positing is a species of positing in general, and according to the constraints on the genus, *what posits* always differs absolutely from *what is posited*, and, further, *what is posited* is always manifold. Thus, even when A posits A , it posits itself as *other than* itself and as *manifold*—this was the riddle of self-positing, and its solution has finally become available.

Because reflexivity (self-positing) is only ever a product of transitivity and reciprocity (the conditions on other-positing), it follows that some A posits itself not only *through* the others that it posits in itself but also *as* whatever it is that these others posit it as being. That is, A posits A only because it posits B and, in addition, everything that B posits, while B posits A . But B posits A *as* a positing of others—both transitively and reciprocally, for this is what it takes for A to be a time-difference both *in itself* and *for* B . Thus, since B posits A *as* an other-positing, namely of the absolute manifold, this is also what A must posit itself as being. This means that in positing itself successfully, A posits itself *as* nothing other than the positing of the very absolute manifold by which it posits itself. A , as an element of the absolute manifold, is also in itself nothing other than the positing of the entire absolute manifold. Thus, the absolute manifold exhibits the structure not of a mathematical fractal, but rather of what may be called a *metaphysical* fractal. It is not that A , as a building block, exhibits the same “pattern” as the whole it contributes to building, while remaining distinguished from that whole in terms of *scale*. It is rather that the being of the element is nothing other than the positing of the whole

of which it is an element. It is not that the *pattern* of the whole is replicated at a smaller scale in each of its elements—it is rather that every element is in itself nothing other than the recurrence of all the *other* elements of this whole, and so the recurrence of the whole itself.

Fifth, on the basis of the diagram, we may finally say what it takes for a time-difference not only to *express* its essence but, in addition, to do so *adequately*. As we saw in the first section, a time-difference expresses its essence of absolute difference just by *positing* and appropriating the manifold others from which it differs absolutely. Positing in itself the others from which it differs and by which it is different, rather than discovering those others outside itself, is how the time-difference *proves* itself as an element whose essence is difference, demonstrating by what it *does* that, for it, *differing* is prior to its (external) relations to those others from which it differs. Because the difference that constitutes the essence of time-difference is *absolute*, there is no limit on the “number” of others that a time-difference is required to posit in itself in order to become *adequate* to that essence. Expressing the essence adequately means raising the manifoldness of the posited others to the *nth* degree, increasing the intensity of the positing time-difference indefinitely. When the principles of essence, expression, and adequation were introduced in the first section, it was not clear what increasing intensity to the *nth* degree would really entail, but the Diagram of Absolute Positing allows us finally to be clear about this.

A time-difference not only expresses its essence, but does so adequately, when its essential activity of other-positing, being raised to the *nth* degree, recurves and is understood equally as a *self*-positing. That is, a time-difference expresses its essence adequately when its activity of other-positing results in its positing of itself *as* an other-positing. The recurve of other-positing, when it is seen to be equally a self-positing, effectively *proves* that a time-difference actually *is* what its essence defines it as being: the essence declares that a time-difference is an absolute difference, and an absolute difference is a difference whose differentiation may be fully reticulated only within an absolute manifold; when the activity of other-positing, which expresses the essence, necessitates that a time-difference posit itself *as* the positing of an absolute difference, the time-difference establishes itself *as* the absolute manifold capable of hosting the absolute difference it essentially is.

IV. Conclusion: The Definition and Fourfoldness of Absolute Positing

I have now enumerated the five core traits pertaining to absolute positing that may be gathered from its diagram: 1) the absolute manifold is unique and singular; 2) every manifold is a subset only of itself; 3) every time-difference is both a mediate and immediate posit of all, including itself; 4) every element of the absolute manifold is in itself nothing other than the positing of the entire manifold of which it is an element; and 5) while a time-difference expresses its essence minimally if it practices the activity of other-positing, it expresses that essence *adequately* if it posits itself as an other-positing. With these features of absolute positing enumerated, I am now in a position to offer a *definition* of this final and most important time-differential operation.

The diagram presents the simultaneous effects of four distinct time-differential processes: self- and other-positing, being self- and other-positing. To review, some time-difference (and we may select *any* on the diagram) *other-posit*s because its essence is absolute difference, so that it must posit rather than “discover,” the others from which it differs and by which it is different—its other-positing is indicated on the diagrams by the arrows pointing out *from* it. It is *other-posit*ed because the elements it itself posits are worthy, for it, of the name ‘time-difference’ only if they themselves posit *it*—its being other-positing is indicated by the arrows pointing back *to* it. A given time-difference *self-posit*s because it posits only others that posit manifolds inclusive of it, and which it also posits, and it is also, for this same reason, *self-posit*ed—the self-positing dimension of a time-difference is not directly represented on the diagram, but it may be discerned by tracing the arrows *out* from a given element and observing their recurve *back* to this same element.

Absolute positing, as an initial definition, consists in nothing other than the *simultaneous execution* of all four processes at once—of self- and other-positing, being self- and other-positing in one stroke. But, as the diagram and the exposition leading up to it hope to indicate, no one of these processes is separable from the others so as to be performable outside the collateral occurrence of the other three. Absolute positing does not designate the *aggregation* of independent moments that could also occur *outside* this aggregate. Rather, it names the essential relation of mutual implication that holds *among* these four moments that nevertheless remain distinct. Understanding the full significance of absolute positing, then, involves being explicit about the way in which each of its moments abides absolutely in the other three. We ought to take each side in turn.

First, the activity of *other-positing* abides absolutely in the occurrence of the other three moments—being other-positing, self-positing and being self-positing. A time-difference involved in other-positing must first of all posit others, which are, to this extent, *other-positing*, so that without the moment of being other-positing, other-positing would not occur at all. Further, no time-difference can posit others worthy of the name ‘time-difference’ unless it posits these others as themselves positing manifolds inclusive of *it* and which it itself posits. In executing its other-positing, a time-difference in this way becomes the posit of *itself*, both a self-positing and a being self-positing, so that without these reflexive moments, other-positing would not be possible. Other-positing, in this way, necessarily involves the other three moments. Furthermore, it involves *nothing other* than these moments: the full range of other-positing’s effect is *only* to instigate these further processes. Other-positing abides and abides *absolutely* in the occurrence of the other three moments.

Second, the passivity of *being other-positing*, similarly, abides absolutely in the occurrence of the other three moments. For, a time-difference may be other-positing only if some other time-difference other-positing it, so that, without other-positing, there would be no being other-positing. Since other-positing abides absolutely in all three moments, and being other-positing abides absolutely in other-positing, it follows that being other-positing abides and abides absolutely in the occurrence of the other three moments.

Third, the activity of *self-positing* abides absolutely in the occurrence of the other three moments. A time-difference involved in *self-positing* must first of all posit a “self,” which is to this extent *positing*, so that without being self-positing there would be no self-positing. Further, time-differential positing of *self* is a species of time-differential positing in general. All time-differential positing is the outcome and expression of the time-differential *essence* of absolute difference, so that a time-difference *posits* only because it is required to differ *in itself*, rather than externally, and it posits a *manifold* because that internal difference is absolute. Since self-positing is a species of time-differential positing in general, even it is an expression of absolute difference, namely of the self that posits from the self that is posited. The self (that is, the time-difference) posits itself *as* absolutely differing from itself—as both internally *other* and as absolutely *manifold*. The time-difference may posit itself only if it posits itself *as* both manifold and other—as the other-positing of an absolute manifold. Hence, self-

positing abides in other-positing. And since other-positing implies being posited by other, it follows that self-positing abides and abides absolutely in the other three moments.

Finally, fourth, the passivity of being self-positing, just like all the others, abides absolutely in the occurrence of other three moments. For, a time-difference may be self-positing only if there is some time-difference that self-positing, so that, without self-positing, there would be no being self-positing. Further, being self-positing involves *nothing other than* entailing the self-positing of the self that posits. Since self-positing abides absolutely in all three moments, and being self-positing abides absolutely in self-positing, it follows that being self-positing abides and abides absolutely in the occurrence of the other three moments.

What I have attempted to show by this analysis (which simply recapitulates the main results of the chapter) is not only that every moment of positing implies the other three, so that it is not intelligible outside their context, but also that each moment is *nothing other than* this implication. The provocative language of mutual “abiding” is meant to indicate that what each of the processes fundamentally and exclusively *is* is its entailment of the others. What we have is not an aggregate of independent operations but a fourfold organism of time-differential processes. Absolute positing, which names the unity of this fourfold, is not the product but rather the *inner truth* of all four processes: what each is in itself when it is adequately understood according to the time-differential essence.

With this, the structure, moments, and processes of the first potency of time-difference have been fully sketched. I will proceed, in the next chapter, to set upon these results to provide a new account of the faculty of sensibility.

Chapter Seven

The Chronicle of Sensibility: Meat, Eternal Return, and Ontological Laughter

The last chapter excavated the first potency of time-difference, showing a time-difference to express its essence of absolute difference through the fourfold activity of absolute positing, positing manifold others that in turn posit *it*. Chapter Five prepared the ground for this excavation by revealing time-difference as an absolute (sensible) *intuition*—that which *aesthetic ideas* most essentially represent. Since time-difference characterizes the essence of the aesthetic, and its first potency is absolute positing, the current chapter will mobilize this fourfold positing movement to provide a novel account of the faculty of *sensibility*. What is the faculty *in itself*? And why is it necessary that we have a *faculty*, in the sense of a *power*, of sensibility and not merely the passive “receptiveness” common to both animals and bits of iron? This chapter will address use time-difference to address these questions.

It will contain two section. In the first, I will explicate the way in which time-difference *expresses* itself in terms of nothing other than its manifold “material” relations. By material, I mean *ontological*: an entity’s material or ontological relations are those pertaining to, and constituting its singular *being*, rather than its universal concept. I will argue that, in expressing its essence, a time-difference not only expresses nothing other than its complete manifold of ontological relations (with other time-differences), but it also expresses these as a *history*. The essence of time-difference, currently understood as ‘absolute difference’ will show itself as the *history of beyng* (and I will borrow from Heidegger the archaic spelling). The expression of this history takes place, I will contend, as the constant conferral of the status of *having been given in advance* on the manifold through which a time-difference expresses itself, and this conferral, occurs as a certain sort of *ontological laughter*.

In the second section, I will explicate the way in which we *think* an entity as such laughter. An entity is thought in terms of the ontological relations (that it is thereby taken to express as an essence) when it is aesthetically conceived as the *Return* of the complete material universe in which it features, when it is taken to express each manifold element of this universe as a material *history*—so that it is thought, in itself, as nothing other than the making-past of the entire universe. Thought of in this way, the entity is something funny—it is the material incarnation of a combination about which one *cannot be serious*, whose disparate elements will be

presently annihilated. Affirming an entity as *laughable*, affirming *oneself* as hilarious (in an ontological sense), is how one *thinks* the material world aesthetically—it amounts to the craving of Eternal Return.

I. From Positing to Givenness: Rethinking the Essence and Its Expression

In this section, I discuss the development of both the *essence* and its *expression*. Time-differential positing has become absolute—it has achieved its *moment of absolution*. In positing others, a time-difference posits itself; in positing itself, it posits others. In the moment of absolution, these processes are seen to be *the same*. It was only to *our* concept-laden eyes that they were independent. In the moment of absolution, a time-difference not only *expresses* its essence; it does so *adequately*. Neither the expression of the essence nor the essence that is expressed, however, are left unchanged by this adequation. Both undergo a certain development. Investigating this development is the first step toward understanding the way in which the essence that a time-differences expresses is not a *concept* (*eidos*, *telos*, normative propriety), but rather a manifold of material (ontological) relations. I begin with an analysis of material expression in general, go on to develop this structure with respect to time-difference in particular, and conclude with the discovery of ontological laughter.

1. On Sensibility as a Faculty: What is Material Expression?

One of the most trivial, pejoratively axiomatic, and fundamentally dull claims of which we are capable states that any material entity—a pen, an ape, a waterfall—owes its being to nothing other than its complete series of mechanical causes, that these causes could have effected nothing other than this entity, that they are indefinitely many, that they are as divisible as we like, that their series is indefinite, that they are each somehow legible in all their effects, that the alteration of any, no matter how distant, no matter how minute, would result in something other than what we have before us. Anyone who has undergone the rigors of modernity is capable of this claim. All of us know with an easy certainty that everything that has ever happened, will ever happen, or is now happening not only has its causes but is in fact (always in *fact*) reducible to them entirely. It is far more difficult and intensive to claim that an entity would *express* these material relations in the manner of an *idea*, so that we could not merely “explain,” but rather *think* it in terms of them. But only because entities *do* express themselves in this way is it necessary that we have a *faculty* of sensibility.

The indispensable lesson Kant forced us to learn from the Greeks was that, while objects certainly are *explicable* in terms of their mechanical causes (as a matter of transcendental necessity), it is never by means of these causes that they are primarily *understood*.¹²⁴ Of course many disparate forces and events always contribute to the being any object—chairs, desks, tables, etc.. Wood was hewn, measured, and cut; rain fell from the sky; seeds grew in the earth. But none of these causes pertain to the *concept* by which I understand the object before me as itself—this is not what the object itself *expresses*. Kant knew that the concept by which I *think* a particular object, recognizing it as the object that it is, a chair as a chair, a desk as a desk, has nothing to do with what that object *is* (causally, mechanically) but instead with what it *ought* to be. The concepts that define what one understands when one understands an object are *rules*.¹²⁵

For the Greeks from whom Kant transmits this lesson, Plato and Aristotle, these rules had a metaphysical status. As a metaphysical standard, a concept defined either the perfect *version* (*eidos*) of the object it constituted, so that the object was itself just to the extent that it resembled the archetype,¹²⁶ or the perfect *function* (*telos*) of that object, so that the object counted as itself just to the extent that it fulfilled its end.¹²⁷ In the former case, what one understood when one understood the object (that is, what the object *expressed*) was both the universal *eidos* and the degree to which this particular object resembled it. In the latter, one understood both the universal *telos* and the degree to which the object fulfilled it. In both cases, understanding the object entailed grasping the *rule* to which it answered, not its causal history.

For Kant, by contrast, the rules have a famously epistemic status. They are not metaphysical constraints on objects as they are in themselves, but epistemic conditions on subjective cognition.¹²⁸ Instead of *objects* being the primary targets of normativity, it is rather *we* who are responsible to the rules. This shift in interpretation (which Kant heralds as the Copernican Turn) does not downgrade the objectivating role of normativity; it just means that, whereas for the Greeks objects were objects just if they conformed to either their *eidoi* or their *teloi*,

¹²⁴ This is the major components of Kant's theory of freedom. See, *KrV*.A444/B472.484-489.

¹²⁵ *KrV*, A126, 242.

¹²⁶ For an overview of Plato's theory of forms, see the *Phaedo* 65d4 - 66a3 and the *Republic* Book X. For commentary, see Gallop (1975), Gosling (1960), Kraut (1992), and

¹²⁷ For an overview of Aristotle's theory of causes see *Physics* II.3 and *Metaphysics* V.2. For commentary, see Leunissen (2010), Nussbaum (1978), and Scharle (2008).

¹²⁸ *KrV*.Bxvii.110 - 111.

objects are now objects (in the strong sense) just if they conform to our cognition, and, so, to the norms that govern it. In Part One, I showed these norms to be *rules of inference*. What one understands when one understands an object, then, is the normative impact that the concept to which that object corresponds has on the inferential value of the judgments in which it features.

Whether concepts are construed metaphysically (as forms or ends) or epistemically (as proprieties of inference), in either case, *understanding* an object in terms of them is something *active*: one must have a grasp of the concept in question and actively measure the object against its rule. There must therefore be a *faculty* or *power* of understanding because understanding is the ground of an *activity*.¹²⁹

The dimension of human experience that contrasts the understanding is sensibility. Typically, sensibility was construed as a simple deficit in both our (finite) understanding and in the (fallen) world we attempt to understand.¹³⁰ The objects themselves never *perfectly* resemble their *eidoi* or fulfill their *teloi* because this is a world of the senses: all things are divided from their essences by the very materiality by which they are incarnated. Accordingly, the degree to which we *sense* rather than conceive objects is simply the degree to which we *fail* to understand them, fail to compare them to the rules. There need be no independent *faculty* of the senses because everything the senses “do” is sufficiently accounted for by what the understanding *fails* to do. Kant, of course, rejects this deficiency theory of sensibility. We learn in the Transcendental Aesthetic that sensibility not only receives objects as given; it also makes its own positive contribution to the structure and possibility of those objects.¹³¹

But nowhere, not even in the Aesthetic, is this rejection of the deficiency theory more defiantly pronounced than in the doctrine of aesthetic ideas. We need to take Kant seriously when he calls these sensible representations *ideas*. He is attributing to sensibility, no less than to reason, a distinct and very powerful capacity for *thought*. We tend to construe *thinking* as what one does when one represents an object in terms of its concept, but, if we are to become capable of Kant’s insight, thought must now be more broadly recognized as what one does when one represents an entity (not necessarily an object) in terms of what it *expresses* (which need not be

¹²⁹ *KrV*, B75/A51, 193

¹³⁰ See, e.g., the “Leibniz Clarke Controversy” in Leibniz (1976).

¹³¹ See, *KrV*, A36/B53, 164.

a concept). Objects express *concepts*, but not everything is an object—not even objects are objects under every description. Aesthetic ideas represent not objects but absolute intuitions—that is the *absolutely* sensible, rather than the sensible-conceptual (or cognitive), aspect of the object. Absolute intuitions are elements of an absolute manifold, *time-differences*. What would it mean to *think* a time-difference in terms of what it expresses?

The Greco-Kantian lesson about conceptuality that we have been rehearsing is that while the being of an object is certainly the result of its mechanical causes, these causes are never what the object expresses *conceptually*. The conceptual object expresses, and so is understood in terms of, what it *ought* to be. Now, the absolute representation of this ‘ought’ is accomplished by ideas of reason,¹³² and these ideas fund both a negative and a positive theory of freedom.¹³³ We are free in the negative sense because the objects that affect us are answerable essentially to their concepts and only contingently to their causes; we are free in the positive sense because *we* constitute, through self-consciousness, the concepts to which both we and objects are essentially responsible. Thus, objects have the conceptual significance of *freedom, self-consciousness*, and the priority of the *ought*—these notions are always implicit in the concept the object expresses.

Since aesthetic ideas are the counterparts of concepts,¹³⁴ it would seem to follow that the entities they represent should have a contrary significance, expressing *unfreedom, the dissolution of the self*, and the priority of the *is* (being). More immediately, aesthetic ideas would seem to represent the same objects that concepts understand normatively and inferentially in terms of the very material causal relations that these concepts lift them out of. Whereas the objects of concepts express inferential proprieties (and are thereby *thought*), time-differences would somehow express material relations and be aesthetically thought in terms of them. And the *faculty* of sensibility would consist in actively *thinking* this thought.

Now, *thinking* an object in terms its material causal relations, which the object is thereby taken to *express*, is not the same as *explicating* that object by means of those relations. The causes pertaining to any object must be explicated precisely because the object itself is *not* conceived in terms of their expression—indeed, the conceptual instruments of science, mathematics, and inductive reasoning must always be made almost

¹³² *KrV*.A310/B366-A338/B396.394 - 408

¹³³ *KrV*.A444/B472.484-489.

¹³⁴ *KU*.5:342.218.

miraculously sharp against the object's *failure* to express its causes conceptually. If an "object" (and here I use the word tentatively) were to *express* its material "causal" (and now the term will begin to breakdown) relations, then not only would it have no *need* of explication, but, since explication itself always remains within the realm of the concept,¹³⁵ the "object" (no longer of *cognition*) would outstrip and indeed *consist* in outstripping explication, so that it would be itself *inexplicable*.¹³⁶ The entity that expresses its material causal relations does not express strictly *causal* relations at all. For, one of Kant's chief lessons about causality is that it only ever defines in alethic modal terms the relations captured by normative proprieties of *inference* (this is why the forms of judgment precede the categories).¹³⁷ How, then, do entities express nothing other than their aesthetic material relations beyond concepts, causal relations which have exceeded causality itself?

2. *Fore-Positing and Making-Past: From Essence as Form to the History of Being*

So far we have discussed the four planks of absolute positing—self- and other-positing, being self- and other-positing. These may be considered the *core* dimensions of time-differential positing. But there is another aspect of positing that becomes apparent only when each of these core dimensions is shown to implicate the other three. I will call it 'fore-positing.'

Consider, once more, what the being-of-itself of some given time-difference-*A* brings about. Since *A* is essentially defined by absolute difference, it both posits in itself manifold others, *B*, and appropriates these others as its own: *A* is itself just insofar as it differs from this manifold-*B*, so that, if *A* is given (has being), then these others are posited as that from which it differs, belonging exclusively to *A*'s differing (its being-of-itself) and coming about through it. Now, as the reciprocity condition made clear, a time-difference may posit only those manifold others that themselves count as time-differences, not only in themselves, but also for *it*, and they count as such only if *they* posit *it*. Thus, *A* must posit each *B* as the positing of *it*. We therefore state as a rule that, in each case, *B*'s positing of *A* is a condition of the possibility of *A*'s positing of *B*, so that if the latter did not take place, then the former would be impossible.

¹³⁵ KU.5:343.218.

¹³⁶ KU.5:343.218.

¹³⁷ KrV.A79/B105.212.

It pertains to the nature of all conditions to be *prior* to what they condition. If any condition were posterior to what it conditioned, so that the latter were in place in advance of the former, then it would not be a condition worthy of the name. According to this principle, since *B*'s positing of *A* is a condition of *A*'s positing of *B*, it follows that *B*'s act of positing must be *prior* to *A*'s. But, by supposition, the only reason that *B* has being at all is because *A* posits it: *A* was given as an element whose essence was absolute difference, and it posited manifold-*B* as the simple expression of that essence. Thus, on the one hand, manifold-*B* comes about only as what *A* posits and appropriates, having being only as the articulation of *A*'s being-of-itself. But, on the other hand, *A* is capable of positing this manifold-*B* only if each of that manifold's elements not only posit *it* (*A*), but does so *in advance* of *A*'s own act of positing them.

The result of this tension is the act of *fore-positing*. Time-difference-*A* must posit each element of manifold-*B* as *having* posited it (*A*) *in advance*. This is to say, *A* posits each element *B* as the *fore-positing* of *it*. An extremely important point to grasp is that *A* itself *confers* the status of "having fore-positing *A*" on the elements-*B* that it posits. It is not that *A* must search outside itself for elements that happen to have already posited it in advance in order to posit *them* (and thereby express its essence). It is rather that *in* positing manifold-*B*, *A* *makes it the case* that each element-*B* posited it in advance: it *confers* this past on them as a *status*—this conferral is part of what its positing *entails*. Hence, when *A* expresses its essence of absolute difference by positing manifold others, *B*, it provides itself with a certain *history*, making it the case that the elements *B* that it brings about in fact *precede it*.

Now, the progress of fore-positing does not stop here, but rather becomes cyclical. Fore-positing, like self- and other-positing, is just a *species* of positing in general and, for this reason, it is subject to all the constraints that define the genus. Thus, when *B* fore-positing *A* (by *A*'s own decree), it is capable of doing so only if *A* is not only a time-difference *in itself*, but also a time-difference *for it* (namely, for *B*), and it is such only if it posits *B*, so that *A*'s positing of *B* is a condition of the possibility of *B*'s fore-positing of *A*. Since this is so, *A*'s positing of *B* must *precede* *B*'s fore-positing of *A* and be itself a fore-positing. *B*'s act of fore-positing reverses *A*'s. Just as in the previous case, when any element *B* posits *A* (expressing its essence), it provides itself with a

history, making it the case that the A which is brought about in fact precedes it. Each is constantly thrusting the other into a past which is only thereby originated.

The dynamic of fore-positing is fully general. *Every* time-difference expresses its essence by positing others *as* each the fore-positing of *it*. Each in itself thrusts all the others into its past. Each is thereby thrust into the past *by* each of the others that it itself makes past. We may no longer begin with “a” time-difference, as if a time-difference could somehow be itself on its own, even in speech, expressing its essence independently. For, *in* its simple being-of-itself, a time-difference makes it the case that the others that it itself posits and appropriates have always already preceded it, have always already *posited* it.

The recognition of fore-positing (making-past) as an emergent process that occurs when time-difference expresses its essence *adequately* (that is, when positing becomes absolute) prepares us to redescribe the essence that is adequately expressed. The time-differential essence will no longer be heuristically understood on the model of Spinozist idea or Platonic Form, making possible those elements of which it is the essence but in no way participating in the mutual relations in which these elements become entangled. It will be understood instead as the *history* that that its expression itself creates, and this history will be seen to be ontological in character—the *history of Beyng*.

3. *Expropriation: Essential Expression as the Expression of Material History*

I have, up to this point, paired time-differential positing with ontological appropriation: a time-difference always *appropriates* the elements it posits, making them essentially its own and articulating its own being-of-itself by means of them. The manifold a time-difference posits are, in this way, akin to its *organs*¹³⁸—they *are* (qua organs) only because they articulate the being-of-itself of the element that posits them. But the phenomenon of fore-positing makes it clear that a process of *expropriation* must be added to this pair. In positing others, a time-difference is always fore-positing *by* those very others, and if positing always involves appropriation, then, in *appropriating* others, a time-difference always makes it the case that these others

¹³⁸ Kant defines an “organ” as an element of a whole that has being only insofar as contributes to constituting this whole, and which stands in a reciprocally productive relation with the other elements of this whole. It is in this sense that I employ the term. For Kant’s treatment of an organism, see *KU*.5:373-5:374.245). See, Zuckert (2014), Walsh (2006), Huseynzadegan (2019), and Quarfood (2006).

appropriate *it*. That is, in positing and appropriating manifold-*B*, incorporating these elements into itself as the organs of its own being-of-itself, a time-difference-*A* makes it the case that each and every element-*B* fore-posit and appropriates *it* in advance, incorporating *A* into itself as an organ of *its* being-of-itself. Since *A*'s appropriation of manifold-*B* is what makes it the case that each element-*B* has appropriated it in advance, *A* itself effects its own being-appropriated by each of these elements—it is *A*'s act of self *expropriation*. In positing and appropriating others, articulating its own being-of-itself through these its proper organs, a time-difference always *expropriates* itself *from* this very being-of-itself, becoming instead an ontological organ of each and every one of the others that had been such for *it*.¹³⁹

The process of appropriation and expropriation cannot stop with one single round, but rather, like every other time-differential process, must itself into its incessant cycle. Every time-difference, in the simple being-of-itself, in its fundamental expression of the essence, is both an appropriation and an expropriation. It always posits others as fore-positing it. Its being-of-itself always accomplishes the prior being of all the others. Each is itself only insofar as it is constantly giving itself to the others (expropriation) and ever gathering the others into itself (appropriation). This incessant process of appropriation-expropriation—in which a time-difference posits and appropriates a manifold only to be, through this act, expropriated from itself and appropriated as an ontological organ of each of the manifold elements it itself posited; in which this very expropriation from itself and appropriation into the others accomplishes the expropriation of each of those very others from themselves, so that they are appropriated once again in and as the being-of-itself of the original time-difference, which is again thereby expropriated from itself; in which each time-difference is ever making a history of all the others, only to be made historical by each of these very others—this constant, endless, round-robin process is the enactment of absolute positing in its fullness, the perfected adequation of the time-differential essence.

The essence that is thereby expressed is no longer the same as it was before that expression became adequate. Previously, following the discoveries of the deschematism, I identified 'absolute difference' as the essence of time-difference, and unfolded all the processes of positing by explicating what it would it take to

¹³⁹ For Heidegger's discussion of expropriation, see Heidegger (2012, p. 12).

actually *be* an element with such an essence. In this sense, this essence was construed on the model of a Spinozist idea—it designated what it took *to be* the entity of which it was the essence, and time-differences posited manifold others simply because this is what it took to be the absolute differences they were essentially defined as being. But now we see that time-differences posit and appropriate others not only because they stand under a Platonic *definition* that requires this activity of them, but also and primarily because they *were posited in advance* as positing. When a time-difference posits others, it expresses not only its essence or definition, but also and primarily its *history*; it expresses the *prior being* and *fore-positing* of manifold other time-differences. A time-difference *posits*, we now see, always because it was *posited in advance* as doing so.

In this sense, rather than referring *above* itself to an external Platonic definition in order to justify its positing activity, a time-difference refers *below* and *behind* itself to the positing activities of *other* time-differences. Since we may always justify the positing activity of any time-difference through reference to the positing activities of others, time-difference itself becomes detached from its relation to an external essence and sinks down into a manifold of purely internal relations of difference and differentiation. This may be called the *downgoing* of time-difference: in its downgoing, every positing time-difference becomes in itself the expression, not of an *external* essence, but of nothing other than the historical positings of manifold *other* time-differences. When a time-difference expresses its essence *adequately*, the essence itself is no longer essence (in the Spinozist sense) but *history*.

In expressing its *history*, rather than its essence—or in expressing its history *as* its essence—a time-difference does not express any “one” time-difference. For, *every* time-difference posits all the others as the fore-positing of it; *every* time-difference expropriates itself from itself in its act of appropriating others as the articulation of its own being-of-itself. The being-of-itself of all others is always prior to the being-of-itself of any “one” time-difference. Since every time-difference is always cycling in and out of the past just insofar as it enacts the being-of-itself, no time-difference ever constitutes a pure past, or a genuine history of any of the others: each is always a complex past, a self-overturning history.

What is left constantly in the past, however, what constitutes an absolute history is not the being-of-itself of any one element, but rather the being of *all*—being itself. This “being,” independently asserted, not the

being *of* any element but simply *being itself*, is what the moment of absolute most intensively achieves. It is generated as what remains in the past through the making-past that constitutes the being-of-itself of every time-difference. On the one hand, it is always what a time-difference most essentially expresses insofar as it expresses and is nothing other than the expression of its history. But on the other hand, it has no independence from the elements that express it: it is like a constant projection, a shadow-painting on the cave wall, of the incessant, fourfold, absolute interplay of the mutually appropriating and expropriating time-differences. When a time-difference enacts its being-of-itself absolutely, expressing its history, the history that it expresses is none other than the *history of being* (or history *as* being).

Martin Heidegger provides further insight into the structure of this history of being that every time-difference expresses insofar as it expresses its essence adequately. The “being” that occurs historically in this way must always be thought in a twofold sense: on the one hand, it is fully *indebted* to the “beings” (in our case, time-differences) that express it: “...beyng is not something ‘earlier’ [than beings]—existing in itself, for itself. Instead, the event [of appropriation] is the temporal-spatial simultaneity for beyng and beings” (Heidegger 2012, 13). But on the other hand, being is nevertheless prior to and the ground of beings, since, in the simple being-of-itself, a time-difference is nothing other than the *expression of Beyng*, which itself remains ever in the past. As the quotation above demonstrates, Heidegger uses the archaic spelling ‘beyng’ [Seyn] to denote this notion that being is essentially and absolutely historical, not the being of any *one* being, but rather the being of beings as such, always both simultaneous with and prior to the beings that express it. Going forward, I will adopt this spelling in order to communicate the same meaning.

In the *adequate* being-of-itself, when it not only posits, but does so absolutely, a time-difference expresses its essence as history, the history of *beyng*, thereby both invoking a pure beyng of time-difference that resides in a pure essential past and *generating* (in the sense of projecting) that beyng for the very first time. All this is what the taking place of positing enacts when it occurs in its fourfold fullness.

3. *Aristophanes and Ontological Laughter: From Positing to Givenness*

We have now come to understand the way in which the essence of time-difference (absolute difference) evolves when it is adequately expressed—that is, it comes into its own as the history of beyng. But this

achievement of adequation has a developmental impact not only on the essence that is expressed, but also on the mode of that expression, namely, on the *positing* activity of time-difference. Just as essence gave way to being in the moment of absolution, we will see, positing give way to *givenness*—time-differential positing shows itself as nothing other than time-differential *givenness* when it becomes absolute and so adequately expressive of the essence. The pathway to givenness routes through a certain understanding of *laughter*.

Aristophanes became one of the most important comic playwrights of the ancient world not only on the basis of what he made Socrates say,¹⁴⁰ but also because of what Socrates—always ventriloquizing through his servant Plato—made *him* say. In his Eulogy to Eros in the *Symposium*, Aristophanes tells us a story about our ancestors: a globular, eight limbed people who, due to their perfect spherical construction (gendered incarnations of the sun, the moon, and the earth), had no needs.

...the looks of each human being were as a whole round, with back and sides in a circle. And each had four arms, and legs equal in number to his arms, and two faces alike in all respects on a cylindrical neck, but there was one head for both faces—they were set in opposite directions—and four ears, and two sets of genitals, and all the rest that one might conjecture from this. Each used to walk upright too, just as one does now, in whatever direction he wanted; and whenever he had the impulse to run fast, then just as tumblers with their legs straight out actually move around as they tumble in a circle, so did they, with their eight limbs as supports, quickly move in a circle. (Plato 2001, 19).

Rolling along in whatever direction they pleased, like celestial spheres themselves, our ancestors had no need for the gods and naturally challenged them for supremacy. As a result, the gods, who would have none of it, smote each down the center—cleaving every one in twain. This eight legged creature, now doomed to walk on two legs and grasp with two hands, who'd once been bound back-to-back with what now counts as its other half, is now compelled not only to worship once more, but also to seek happiness front-to-front with a self from which it is now alienated as a matter of divine decree.

In this grotesque story of a freakshow, Aristotophanes tells us not only of Eros, but also of the inner nature of his own art, *comedy*, which he indicates before he begins his eulogy. Having been delayed by the most famous bout of hiccups of all time, Aristophanes explains that he intends to say something *laughable* and even the issuance of this explanation causes laughter:

¹⁴⁰ See Aristophanes (1994).

...Eryximachus said, “My good Aristophanes, look at what you are doing. You have made [us] laugh just as you were about to speak...” And Aristophanes laughed and said, “You have made a good point, Eryximachus... for in what is about to be said I am not afraid to say laughable things—for that would be a gain and native to our Muse...” (Plato 2001, 18).

The “laughable things” that Aristophanes proceeds to describe are these our spherical ancestors—they are laughable because they are perfectly happy, because, without any desires, they can move in any direction they like, because even the gods are nothing to them. Now that they have been cloven apart, cursed with eros, they have been made *serious*. Each must sew itself back together again with something that both *is* and *is not*, but certainly *ought not be*, itself, defying the will of the gods, in order to once again become laughable. We misunderstand Aristophanes altogether when we fail to consider the ecstatic *hilarity* of his roving, globular, monsters, who want nothing, need nothing, hope nothing but simply tumble forward in every direction in a maniacal expression of pure life. The result of uniting what cannot be united, expresses Aristophanes not only with his spheres, but also with his hiccups, is the expulsion of something funny—something that induces *laughter*.

Laughter, Aristophanes teaches, is a matter of cleaving together what the gods have cloven apart, uniting as one what it is morally impermissible to combine. Laughter is what belches forth when a single organism comes to be from elements that are essentially disparate, so as to form a connection about which one *cannot be serious*, that *vanishes* in the moment of its synthesis, dissolves in the substance of a laughter that both affirms it and lets it go—a laughter that is itself generated by the very dissolving-jointure it affirms and annihilates. There is no such thing as an appropriate joke—for no unification to which one lends one’s moral approval yields to the disintegration productive of real (spontaneous) laughter.

Aristophanes’ lesson about laughter holds the key to understanding the transition from positing to givenness, for being itself—that which givenness expresses—is itself a form of laughter: both that which laughs and laughter itself.

The discovery of fore-positing demonstrates that no time-difference can ever be understood to be *productive* of the absolute manifold it posits in any straightforward sense: by the decree of the very time-difference that posits it, the absolute manifold must always have been *given* in advance. For, a time-difference is only ever capable of positing, and so “producing,” others that—by this very positing—are required to have

fore-positing *it* in advance. In order to have done so, these others must have had being prior to their being posited by the time-difference that posits them—this is part of the *status* that the positing time-difference confers on what it posits. By positing others as the fore-positing of *it*, a time-difference always confers upon these others the status of having been *given in advance*: in order to perform the activity of *fore-positing* they must also have been *fore-given*.

Fore-giveness always implies, on an ontological level, a certain sort of incessant *forgiveness*. As we have seen, by enacting its being-of-itself through the positing of manifold others, a time-difference effectively appropriates these others as its own, making it the case that they have being only insofar as it articulates its own being-of-itself through them. We may consider this relation holding between a positing time-difference and the manifold it posits as one of *debt* and *credit*: by enacting its being-of-itself through its positing of a manifold, the positing time-difference appropriates the elements of this manifold as its own and thereby brings them into its ontological debt—*they* have being only because *it* accords it to them.

But, as we have also seen, every act of time-differential *appropriation* is paired with a concomitant *expropriation*. By positing and appropriating manifold others, bringing them into its ontological debt, a time-difference always posits each of these others as the *fore-positing* of *it*, making it the case that all of them had to have been given in advance (fore-given), and instituting the fact that, in fore-positing *it*, each has already appropriated it as its own. Since a time-difference owes an ontological debt to any element by which it is appropriated, the time-difference that appropriates manifold others as *having* appropriated *it* in advance effectively *forgives* the debt it institutes through its very act of instituting it. This is to say, the posited others are also *forgiven* through their achievement of fore-giveness.

Now, while the originally appropriating time-difference expropriates itself from itself in the moment of its appropriative being-of-itself, thereby coming to be appropriated by each of the elements that it appropriates so as to owe ontological debts to each, these ontological debts, no less than the original one, are also forgiven in the moment of their accrual. For, in being appropriated by each of the others that it itself appropriated, the originally appropriating time-difference comes once again to appropriate all these others as its own, bringing them once again into its ontological debt. This process of debt and forgiveness is iterated

indefinitely, giving way to its *cycle*. Every time-difference—necessarily, in itself, and essentially—enacts its own being-of-itself by positing others as having been fore-given, instituting debts that it has always already forgiven.

Time-differences are constantly conferring a state of fore-giveness on the other time-differences they posit. Conferring fore-giveness as a *status* on others is what the activity of time-differential positing most essentially accomplishes. Rather than relations of positing circulating among these mutually constituting elements of the absolute manifold, it is now *fore-giveness* that makes the rounds. A time-difference must be considered to be an element of pure, ontological forgiveness, and the status of *being given* (in advance) is what every such element accrues when it enacts this forgiveness. In this way, (fore-)giveness and forgiveness are what positing shows itself to be when it achieves its moment of absolution.

Now, this constant conferral of (fore-)giveness on every element of the absolute manifold takes place as a certain sort of laughter. As Aristophanes taught us, any joke involves instituting an immoral unification about which one cannot be serious: one disavows responsibility for the unification in the very act of instituting it, and this, in turn, dissolves the unity, releasing the elements back into their difference. The substance of this institution and release is laughter: the instituted connection is seen as monstrous, absurd, hilarious. The laughter *both* affirms the connection (as funny) *and* disavows it (as immoral, ungodly), releasing it.

This simultaneous affirmation and disavowal is precisely what occurs in the time-differential circuit of forgiveness. One time-difference enacts its being-of-itself by positing manifold others, thereby appropriating them as its ontological organs, affirming as a jointed-together organism the distinct configuration of the absolute manifold by which it is affirmed: by bringing the posited others into its ontological debt, the appropriating time-difference takes responsibility for their production. But this very appropriation is also an act of expropriation, and it confers the status of fore-giveness on those that are appropriated: the positing time-difference disavows responsibility for the production of these it posits, affirming, instead, *their* production of *it*. By appropriating the manifold others as its *own* ontological organs, the positing time-difference stitches itself *into* each of these as an organ of *it*. Responsibility is always being taken and withdrawn. Everything is always becoming an organ *of* its organs. No organic distribution of the manifold is *serious*, and in this way laughter is always bursting forth: one configuration of the manifold is always seen to be hilarious from the

perspective of its own dissolution, this dissolution hilarious from the perspective of that into which it disintegrates. Nothing lasts; nothing is in earnest; everything is funny—one hiccuping mutation after another.

The laughter, and alternatively that which laughs, is nothing other than being itself. As we saw above, the being-of-itself of a time-difference consists in the making-past of all others, so that, in being itself, a time-difference is always thrusting others behind it that themselves, in being themselves, thrust *it* into the very same past. Time-differences flicker in and out of the past incessantly. That which *remains* in the past, however, constituting a pure or *mythic* past, an absolute history, is not the being *of* any one time-difference, but being itself. This making-past that pertains to every time-difference is equally an act of forgiveness, of making it the case that the very others one posits were in fact fore-given. The result of this circuit of forgiveness and forgiveness is laughter: a time-difference institutes an immoral connection about which it is not serious, for which it immediately disavows responsibility, and which is thereby dissolved in its very institution, the manifold elements dispersing into alternative formations that may be judged monstrous from the point-of-view of their own disintegrations.

Being may be considered in two ways with respect to this ontological laughter. On the one hand, it may be considered as the laughter itself. In their incessant fourfold interplay of absolute positing, each thrusting all into a past where not a one of them ever remains, each instituting connections about which it is never for a moment serious and for which it immediately disavows responsibility, the manifold of all time-differences project into a pure past the idea of a common wellspring from which each retrieves itself and for which none of them is responsible for producing—being. This wellspring is, in this way, the simulated cave-painting generated by the interplay of absolute positing itself—the reification of this process as something independent of the elements that participate within it. If, as I'm suggesting, we call this process *laughter*, then being is nothing other than the echoing sound of a laughter expressed in common by all time-differences, as each makes of the others a manifold of hilarious combinations about which it is not serious and by which it comes to be itself.

On the other hand, being may equally be considered as *that which laughs*. For, in projecting this cave-painting, the reification of its ontological process, the community of time-differences simulates the notion of something that is perpetually prior. Whatever any time-difference does—whatever configurations it institutes—

is instituted because it *expresses* this pure, mythic past, this history of being. In this sense, it is *being* itself that forever institutes combinations about which it is not and cannot be serious, being itself that laughs.

Martin Heidegger was the greatest philosopher of the 20th century because he discovered the history of being, but perhaps by reason of this very greatness he could never get the joke secreted in the depths of this most mythic myth. Being is not this all too serious thing that dispenses practices of signification and horizons of meaning. It is a screaming, maniacal, cackling child that belches up monstrosities and mutations, failures and freaks that, to it, are neither monstrous nor mutated, neither failed nor freakish, but are rather, in the most intense, joyful sense, *laughable*. Combinations about which one cannot be serious. If ontological laughter is able to subvert the will of the gods, cleaving together what they have cloven apart, forging disparate elements into a hilarious unity that has always already been dissolved, then this is because being itself is its own sort of god. Not a god of the concept (thoroughgoing determination), not even a “last god,” but something far more lighthearted and material than either—not a god at all really, but a demon: the *demon of Eternal Return*.

II. Eternal Return and Meat: Thinking the Aesthetic Thought

The present section articulates the way in which we *think* time-differences in an absolutely sensible manner. Borrowing from Nietzsche’s theory of Eternal Return and the notion of *meat* that Deleuze deploys to interpret aspects of Francis Bacon’s painting, I redescribe time-difference in a more material fashion. At the sensible level, time-difference may be described as elements of meat swarming with the Eternal Return of a pure ontological past. I will present the account of our *thought* of Eternally Returning elements of meat as, once again, a descent into ontological laughter.

1. *Eternal Return: The Material Expression of an “Object”*

Nietzsche first introduced Eternal Return as the expression of a certain sort of affirmative self-representation. He writes:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!”

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (Nietzsche 1974, 273 - 274).

As Heidegger rightly points out, the relevance of eternal recurrence lies in the burden of the *question* that it poses.¹⁴¹ *What if* a demon guaranteed you your life as it has been lived innumerable times more, *could you* greet the demon as a god? The question challenges us to affirm life, the world, and—most importantly—*ourselves* in a very particular way. “Craving nothing more fervently” than the Return of every material detail of one’s experience involves becoming limitlessly “well disposed... to [one]self and to life.” Craving that everything I have ever lived through, or will ever live through, and so *I myself*, should Eternally Return involves becoming well-disposed to *myself* to an equally infinite degree. But what *sort* of self does craving Eternal Return involve becoming well-disposed to?—what is its objective kind? And what is the representational type of this self-regard?

It is obvious as a start that the self I affirm when I crave Eternal Return is the self that I *am*—here and now, exactly as I am, my history intact exactly as it happened. What I affirm is by no means—and is in fact directly opposed to—the self I take it I *ought* to be. Affirming that morally superior self involves, at a minimum, rejecting the self that in fact I *am*. Similarly, the world I affirm (become well-disposed to) is not the world as it *ought to be* but the world as it is—complete with its many horrors, atrocities, and indignities. Craving Eternal Return is a limitless affirmation of *what is*—of *being*—and an implicit rejection of all subjunctive alternatives, however morally superior they may be. The Greatest Weight is to understand just what it really takes to affirm being—rejecting the ought in favor of the *is*.

We have seen Kant make the representation and affirmation of a very different self the core element of his account of the cognition and possibility of objects. Rendering the objects of experience possible involves sustaining an overarching metacommitment to my own analytic unity and insisting that every manifold I

¹⁴¹Heidegger (1984, p. 25).

encounter in sensible experience conform to that unity—sensible representations are thereby subsumed under the *meta*-sensible (conceptual) representations through which I recognize my own unity. But the unity with which I identify is never possible in the way I represent it. Since I recognize myself only *through* intuition, I am never the *analytic* unity I identify with, but only ever a synthetic unity that I trace the manifoldness of sense. The analyticity with which I identify remains a task-responsibility for me—an expression of what I *ought* to be, never in fact *am*, but must always *strive* for. It is the task-responsibility whose constant, never completed fulfillment itself makes experience possible.. My constant representation of myself not as I *am* but as I *ought* to be is what enacts synthesis in the manifold, conferring conceptuality on it and thereby making objects possible.

We must understand the self-representation involved in the craving of Eternal Return in *direct opposition* to this. For what the demon proposes is that your life exactly as it has been, is, and will be will Return to you Eternally. Greeting the demon as a god involves mustering an infinitely affirmative attitude toward what one *is*, rejecting every alternative. Whereas the self-representation involved in apperception consists in *rejecting* the self one is in favor of the self (the unity) one *ought* to be, the self-representation involved in the craving of Eternal Return consists in precisely the opposite: you must reject the self you *ought* to be (along with every other subjunctive alternative) in favor of the self that in fact you *are*. Since apperception consists in rejecting the *material* disunity that one *is* and identifying with the *conceptual* unity one takes it that one *ought* to be, the craving of Eternal Return is a pure affirmation of the *material* and a rejection of the concept. Affirming oneself in the way required by the craving of Eternal Return involves affirming the *being*, the *matter* that one is.

To understand what is involved in affirming oneself materially or ontologically, we must first understand something more about matter. The demon says: “every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees and even this moment and I myself?” (Nietzsche 1974, 273). So let us consider the spider.

From a conceptual point of view, this spider is an object defined by a concept. She is a *particular* whose essence is the empirical concept she expresses. She is not the only object that expresses this concept, but is rather limitlessly exchangeable with an indefinite plurality of others. As a particular instance of the concept that

defines her, she is indifferently identical to every other particular that instantiates the same concept. What matters about her as an object—what counts as an objective property contributing to *what she is*—is nothing material. What matters is the *concept* she expresses—this is her essence. From this point of view, the spider's relations to other things (the moonlight between the trees, for example) are all accidental; she is removed from them and essentially identified with the idea that defines her. In *this* spider-object, it is only the concept that Returns: as a particular instance, the spider is always a deficient representative of its idea, an echo of the recollected essence conferred upon it in an immemorial past. So while the concept Returns in recollection, this is not a *material* Return.

But let us consider this spider from the thoroughly *material* point of view prescribed by the demon. From this angle, she is not an instance of a concept, not a particular *object* at all. She is something singular—she has no exchange value. Nothing else in the world has ever or will ever exhibit the *precise* configuration of matter that counts as *this* spider: the distinct patterns of her cephalothoracic circulation, the degree of her nervous electrolyte responses, the complex tensile structure of her musculature and exoskeleton—this complex of materialities is *singular* because it is irreplaceable. It is irreplaceable not only as a matter of empirical probability—the likelihood that a spider of precisely this material structure exists anywhere else is essentially null—but also as a matter of basic necessity: even if some other spider exhibited *exactly* the same properties as this one, differing only in number, it would still be composed of distinct material elements, organs, parts, molecules, and atoms that may be *conceptually* identical but must necessarily be *materially* distinct from those composing the given spider. From a strictly *material* perspective, there are no identities; only differences.

While the spider-*object* (defined by a concept) was removable from her material context and ecosystematic relations—since it was not this context or these relations, but rather the concept, that was essential to her—the spider-*materiality* is not so removable. For every material element of the spider-materiality—every nervous reflex, every organic function and relation, and every molecular compound—is as it is only because of the material-events that preceded and necessitated it. It has *this* and not *that* ocular distribution because its embryonic development took place at *this* and not *that* temperature, *this* and not *that* degree of humidity, among *this* and not *that* many genetic siblings. It is undergoing *this* and not *that* chemical process because it ate *this* and

not *that* insect—the one who was caught in her web as a result of manifold other materially determining influences, forces, and events. Every material element of the spider-materiality keys to distinct material determinacies that themselves key to others. If any one of these determinacies had been different, then so too would the spider be different.

This is to say, the spider-materiality exists under the aspect of a double determination. On the one hand, every element in the series of material events to which she is keyed leaves a mark in her: it is somehow *legible* in the material being of the spider. And, on the other hand, there is absolutely *no* material element of the spider that *is not* the product of some prior material event. It is not only that the material past is legible in the spider, it is also that the spider-materiality itself is nothing other than the *making-legible* of the past.

The series of past material events to which the spider-materiality is keyed are only those that have a bearing on her material constitution. Only those events whose happening—otherwise would make a difference to the spider, so that it would be not the spider it is, but some other materiality, are made legible in the making-legible that the spider-materially is. But the series of events that make a difference to the spider-materiality extends both vertically to the very beginning of time and laterally to every event occurring at each vertical point.

Consider just one single organ and its corresponding function, e.g., the silk gland, which produces a protein fiber. This organ occurs in the spider-materiality as a consequence of the genetic contributions of both parents. It is of precisely *this* singular constitution not only because its parents were *these* and not *those* particulars of the species, but also because of any number of epigenetic events and circumstantial relations determining the period of gestation—what the altitude was, whether there was or was not a strong wind blowing, which nutrients were present. Each of these circumstances is the product of a vast multiplicity of other material events on both the cosmic and quantum levels—how far the Earth was from the sun, its gravitational relation to its own moon, the particular inclination of atomic forces acting on it. Furthermore, the parents had genetic material of precisely *this* type—productive of a silk gland and not something else—because of the many selection pressures that made precisely *this* species of spider, and not some other type, necessary. These selection pressures are themselves simply material events and distributions of phenomenon: which plants, which animals, which microbes appeared *when* in *which* places, how many, how often, in which order. All these considerations

conspired to create a complex nexus of constraints, forces, and demands that made the organ of *this* spider-materiality necessary—constituting a problem for which a silk-gland-materiality was the only possible solution. If *any* of this had happened otherwise, then the organ of the spider-materiality would be different.

In the limit, the spider-materiality is keyed to the entire material chronicle of the universe (the history of being). Every element of its material constitution is the *making-legible* of this whole chronicle. It pulsates with the past—there is not one single element of its matter that would be unchanged by *any* alteration of the material history of the cosmos.

Just as the spider-object was expressive of the *concept* that defined and made it what it was, so too is the spider-materiality (the same entity considered from the material perspective) expressive of the material chronicle. Since there is not one single element of the spider-materiality—not one instinctive response, genetic predisposition, or physiological feature—that is not the determinate and necessary product of past material events extending vertically back to the very dawn of time and laterally to every event occurring at each point of the series, the spider itself is the present incarnation of the *entire* chronicle. If any single element of the chronicle had been otherwise—if one basepair of some ancestor spider's DNA had been different, if the gestation environment had been more humid by a single gram, if even one solitary day in the entire history of the planet had been one degree hotter or colder, one animal, one plant, one microbe or mineral otherwise—then the spider in question would exhibit a different material structure than it does. The adequate thought of the spider's *singular* material structure, for this reason, is at the same time the adequate thought of the complete material chronicle and context that gave rise to it—the spider-materiality, understood in its infinite, fine-grained detail, is the *expression* of this history of the universe.

The mode of expression of the material chronicle that the spider-materiality is must be carefully and minutely understood. The reason the spider expresses the events constituting this chronicle is because it is the present, determinate consequence of their *having occurred*. Because these events *were*, this spider-materiality *is*. The spider expresses the events of the material chronicle as events that are necessarily *prior* to it. It is essential to this act of expression that *what* is expressed is expressed as *past*. The events of which the spider is the expression are expressed as having *vanished*—the spider is in fact the expression *of* this vanishing.

The being of the spider-materiality is the *consignment* of the events of which it is the expression to the *past*. Because the spider-materiality *is*, these events *were*. The past to which the expressed events are consigned is no mere empirical or accidental past—not a past that was at one time present but which now “happens to be” past. Rather, it is absolutely *essential* to the spider considered not as an object but as a *materiality* that these events be past. Accordingly, the past to which the spider-expression consigns the events is equally “essential.” It is a *pure* past, a past that can *only* be past. That is, since the spider-materiality is essentially nothing other than the expression of the events of the chronicle *as* past, the being-past of the events is essential to the spider-materiality. The spider is itself the present expression of these events *as* essentially past. Conversely, the chronicle is an essential past that occurs presently in the spider.

This investigation of the spider teaches a crucial lesson about materiality. To represent something not as a specific object but as a singular materiality is to represent it as the Return of the precise material chronicle of the Universe by which it was produced. While an *object* is essentially indifferent to this chronicle, retrieving its identity exclusively from the universal concept that it instantiates, thereby lifting itself from the mire of material events and collateral circumstances that bring it about as a material entity, a *materiality* is nothing other than the expression of the being-past of these material events and circumstances, their Return. The present occurrence of that which is essentially past must be understood as the *Return* of that past. In the spider, everything that ever was is consigned to a pure past from which it also Returns.

Learning this lesson puts us finally in a position to understand what it would take to greet the demon of Eternal Return as a god. Nietzsche tells us that doing so involves a very specific sort of self-affirmation. Craving the Return of everything that has ever happened to you involves affirming yourself materially, down to the very last element—as the *singular* materiality that you are. Thus, it involves affirming everything that contributed to the production of the precise singularity that you alone are—i.e., it involves affirming the material chronicle that produced you and made you necessary, decreeing not only that it *did* happen in a certain way but also that it *ought* to have happened in this way. Affirming oneself materially, affirming the material chronicle, involves annihilating the *ought*, collapsing it into the *is*. *Nothing* ought to have happened, because *everything* that ought to have happened *did* happen—if any of it had happened otherwise, then I, this materiality, this “body”

(though the term body will prove to be inadequate to the materiality with which one must identify), would not be, and it is precisely this body that I affirm and identify with. Since conceptuality, apperception, and subjectivity are tied inexorably to the *ought*, the craving of Eternal Return, the affirmation of one's body, of the material chronicle, involves nothing less than the *rejection* of self-consciousness, the *denial* of both reason and the understanding, and the *disavowal* of the concept. All this must be forgone in favor of the *fact*, the *matter*, *being*. Whereas apperception involves affirming and identifying with what one is conceptually (the analytic unity one *ought* to be), craving Eternal Return involve affirming and identifying with the singular matter one *is* and so with the chronicle of which one is the material expression.

But this sort of anti-rational, contra-conceptual self-regard is not *all* that the craving of Eternal Return involves. To be sure, to crave Eternal Return one must affirm the precise singular constitution of one's material "body," identifying as nothing other than the expression of the material chronicle by which one is produced—the being-past or *Return* of this chronicle. But the attitude of "craving" also implies something *futural*. Moreover, the demon's proposition is not that you *are* the Return of the material chronicle (although it entails this), but rather that you yourself *will* Return Eternally. Thus, the *first* part of craving Eternal Return is affirming oneself as the Return of the chronicle—the present expression of that which can only be past—but this is *only* the first part. The second part is craving one's *own* Return.

A materiality Returns whenever something occurs in the *present* as the making-past of that materiality. Whenever some materiality is essentially the present expression of the *vanishing* (the being-past) of another materiality, the latter Returns in the former. Craving your own Return in the *future*, then—that is, not only identifying as essentially the Return *of* others, but craving also to Return essentially *in* others—is to desire that some *other* materiality be in itself the expression of *your* vanishing, *your* being-past. It is craving that some *future* materiality consign *you* to a past that *can only be past*—that can never have been present, but which is presently repeated precisely *as* the impossibility of its presence. This is not only a death drive;¹⁴² it is also the craving for a certain sort of resurrection. One craves to pass into a zone of primordial death from which one is *constantly* Returning.

¹⁴² Freud (1990).

2. *Meat: The Perfection of Eternal Return*

It is at this point that the term ‘body’ becomes nominally inadequate—and even opposed—to the materiality that one affirms when one craves Eternal Return. For, as we have just seen, this craving entails desiring the *death* of my body—its being-past. Just as I am the present repetition of a material chronicle that can only be past (the history of being), so too should the materialities of the *future* be present repetitions of a pure past that includes *me*—expressions of *my* vanishing, *my* death. Far from affirming the body, the craving of Eternal Return militates against it, desires its destruction.¹⁴³ So what is it that this craving for Eternal Return *really* affirms? Something that *survives* the death of the body—that comes to be resurrected as a Return in the other. That which survives your corporeal death on the rational side is an immortal soul. But that which survives you on the material side—is *meat*.

“I’ve always been very moved by pictures about slaughterhouses and meat,” says Francis Bacon to his chronicler, “to me they belong very much to the whole thing of the Crucifixion... Of course, we are meat, we are potential carcasses. If I go into a butcher shop, I always think it’s surprising that I wasn’t there instead of the animal” (Sylvester 2016, 23 - 46). The human body is meat; the animal body is meat. As Deleuze writes, meat is in fact the “*zone of indiscernibility or undecidability* between man and animal” (Deleuze 2003, 21). The meat that the animal is feeds, and so becomes, me; the meat that I am ultimately feeds, and so becomes, the animal. In a very real (the most materially real) way it *is* Francis Bacon hanging there in the butcher’s shop.

But it is not only humans and animals that are meat: soil is meat, thundering waterfalls, gusts of wind, pillars of fire—even plants are meat. And the meat that all of us are belongs “very much to the whole thing of the Crucifixion.” Meat is indeed *Crucifixion become flesh*. The soil is relieved of its minerals in the blade of grass, the grass eviscerated in the viscera of the calf, the calf nihilated in the body of man, and man Returned as mineral once again to the soil. Every point of disarticulation along this circuit of becoming entails an annihilation that is at once a resurrection: the vanishing of the mineral is already the nascence of the grass, the

¹⁴³ We may interpret this rejection of the body as an extension of Eternal Return’s rejection of the *soul*. For, the body is something that I—an apperceptive, self-conscious, subject—*owns*. It exhibits organic functions and “properties” defined biopolitically precisely in terms of the way in which they are taken to affect my capacity for social- and self-recognition. My body is matter, to be sure, but it is matter entirely dominated by the concept.

vanishing of the grass already the nascence of the calf. And the material being of the grass is in itself *nothing other than* the vanishing of the mineral (along with that of the rain, the sun, the blood of man), so that in the nascence of the grass the mineral Returns—it is posited in its vanishing, presently repeated as what can only be past. Every point of disarticulation is the incarnation of *meat*—the body of the calf “spasm[ing]” (Deleuze 2003, 15) out of itself and becoming the body of man, the body of man sewing the soil with his seed.¹⁴⁴ Meat is always already the death-that-is-life, the life-that-is-death—never itself anything but always the becoming of the other. This crucifixion enacts not the spiritual resurrection of the soul, but the digestive reincarnation of tissue.

The materiality that one affirms when one craves Eternal Return is *meat*. It is not the body, but the *meat* I am that will Return Eternally in the materialities that come to be present in the future. Meat is the very most material aspect of matter—the aspect that has achieved the highest degree of reality—but it is for this reason the least tangible, the least nameable. The meat that “I” am belongs no more to me than it does to the cow from which it was synthesized, the grass from which *it* came—meat belongs to no one, and it has no properties of its own. Craving Eternal Return is identifying with this very most material aspect of myself. One greets the demon as a god when one takes it that the *essential* part of oneself is neither one’s subjectivity nor one’s body, but rather one’s submersion in, and contribution to, the material rhythm of becoming, the difference one makes to the sensible world, the way in which one alters the material problem-space from which the future will emerge. From a material perspective, *everything* is different because *you* exist—identifying with and as meat, both the pure Digestion *of* the Universe and Pure Nutrient *for* the Universe. I take it that *I* Return—that is, I take it that what Returns is *me*—just when I militate against both the concept and the body and identify with the precise singular flux of matter that I am and by which I am already being annihilated.

Identifying with meat, craving Eternal Return, involves representing oneself in an aggressively aesthetic manner. It is no coincidence that Bacon expresses his pity for meat in painting. Indeed, the representation of meat involves nothing further than the representation of an *aesthetic idea*, and the identification with meat, i.e., the representation of oneself *as* meat, is making oneself the object of such an idea. For, aesthetic ideas are representations of objects beyond their conceptual constraints, under the aspect of an absolute intuition.

¹⁴⁴ Genesis 38:9 affirms the definitively transgressive character of *material* Return. See, Alter (2018, p. 309).

Whereas ideas of reason represent concepts beyond sensibility, aesthetic ideas represent the material excess of the concept—the material supplement, time-difference, meat.

Consider the somewhat romantic example of a lion hunting down a zebra and taking its very first bite out of the still bolting creature. Both animals may be understood from the objective-conceptual perspective endemic to apperception as exemplars of distinct *species*. Each is a particular *body* that expresses a determinate concept. When the lion eats the zebra, bringing an end to the life of its body, it does not annihilate the *matter* of which the zebra is composed. It rather causes that matter to exceed the *concept* by which it was determined, so that it becomes no longer bound by the zebra-concept and begins instead to be constrained by the lion-concept. When the lion bites into the flesh of the zebra, the matter between its teeth is neither zebra nor lion. Being expropriated and appropriated simultaneously, transitioning from one organism to another, it may be understood in this vanishing-nascence as *meat*—and nothing else, the zone of indiscernibility between the two organisms. This meat is *in* the act of both exceeding one concept and entering into the domain of another, and, as such, it must be understood to exceed both—it is zebra-no-longer and not-yet-lion.

But we remain too much in the domain of the object when we consider only the meat that emerges as the zone of indiscernibility between the lion and the zebra when the one *literally* consumes the other—meat of *this* type runs the risk of being too well understood as its own sort of conceptually determinate object. We may discern a significantly more profound, more complex, and more material series of real relations falling within the domain of this indiscernibility, however, when we consider ecosystemic contexts of the following sort.

Suppose some lion-materiality drinks habitually from a particular pond that contains a species of microbe which, when ingested, causes the lion to defecate a particular enzyme that, when defecated in this precise amount, alters the chemical constitution of the surrounding air in a way that causes nearby grasses to develop cell walls of a distinctive kind. And suppose, further, that these cell walls, when consumed by a particular zebra-materiality, cause it to grow enamel of *this* and not *that* type on its hoof. This would be a way in which a lion is meat to the *zebra*. The difference the lion makes to its environment in the execution of its organic functions plays a necessary role in determining the precise constitution of the zebra-materiality that emerges, so that the zebra is the Digestion (Return) of the lion. The “differences” made by the lion in the

execution of its functions belong neither to the concept of these functions nor to the concept of the zebra whose body they contribute to constituting. They constitute, rather, a proper zone of indiscernibility between the two—the vanishing of the one, the nascence of the other.

Meat is the essence of the aesthetic—that which one thinks when one thinks an absolute intuition (time-difference) according to what it expresses. When the lion sinks her teeth into the zebra she is properly an *artist*. The material elements of an object exceed their concept by contributing to the structure of a material zone of indiscernibility within which the object becomes expropriated from itself and collapses into the other. In their very act of fulfilling the lion's conceptually determined organic functions (eating, excreting, etc.), the material elements that comprise the lion and its functions *exceed* those functions and contribute to structuring a zone of indiscernibility with the *zebra*. This act of *exceeding* the very conceptual organic functions that they demonstrate precisely *by* demonstrating them is what *marks* material elements as material (what guarantees their discursive difference from conceptuality). If it is the case that aesthetic ideas are pure representations of the absolute intuitions, then they represent meat.

From this it finally follows that time-difference as givenness is the pure represented of aesthetic ideas. For, meat as the zone of indiscernibility is precisely what time-difference makes of itself at the first level. An entity identified not as an object but as a materiality is identified with both the chronicle *of* which it is the Return and the future materialities *in* which it will Return. Craving Eternal Return is identifying precisely in this way—*disavowing* oneself as an apperceptive unity in possession of a body with conceptual properties, and *avowing* oneself as the material excess in which the chronicle Returns, the excess that *will* Return Eternally as the history of the other. When one so identifies, it makes no difference whether one lives presently as the “body” one now “possesses” or as the dissolution and reintegration of this body in the materialities of the future or past. One disowns possessions and bodies entirely, and so the distinction between one body and another is indiscernible.

But such an “indifference” between self and other is precisely what time-difference as givenness has achieved. As givenness, time-difference posits others in positing itself, itself in positing others; the one activity leads to the other, leads back to itself—they are the Same. When one craves Eternal Return, identifying with material excess, one takes this very same distinction between self and other as null. As pure materiality, it makes

no difference whether I am the Return *of* others (present), the Return *from* others (past), or the Return *in* others (future)—I am identified purely with Return itself. Its various modes are, to me, the Same. On the one hand, the indifference I achieve in this material identification is equivalent to the indifference achieved by time-difference as givenness. And on the other hand, the indifference I achieve is equivalent to the *zone of indiscernibility* of which the aesthetic idea is the only adequate representation. Thus, the pure object of an aesthetic idea—the absolute zone of indiscernibility that it represents, meat as such—is time-difference as givenness.

3. *Laughter and the Aesthetic Thought*

With the discourses of Eternal Return and meat in place, I am finally in a position to say what one *thinks* when one thinks an entity in terms of nothing other than its aesthetic-ontological relations—that is, as the expression of the history of beying (the Return of the material chronicle).

So far we have seen that a thoroughly aesthetic entity expresses, not the concept by which it is generally specified and made intelligible as an instantiated particular of a certain class, but rather the vertical and lateral series of material relations from which it was *singularly* generated, consigning these to a pure past from which they Return in the being-present of the aesthetic entity. We must be very careful, at this point, not to construe the aesthetic thought of an entity as a certain sort of noetic or intuitive *cognition* of its complete causal history. The aesthetic thought of an entity in terms of the history of beying is not a conceptual *knowledge* of the ontological ecosystemic relations that constitute that history. *Cognizing* an entity in terms of this complete series—reading in a single speck of dust the innumerable causes that made it what it is—would be akin to fully *explicating* that entity scientifically in a thoroughly *intuitive* manner; it would be as if the item *expressed* in itself, instantaneously, the complete series of causes that explication struggles over time to uncover.

Deleuze once again points the way toward the aesthetic thought in his treatment of Francis Bacon. Aesthetic thought, Deleuze indicates, involves ruthlessly identifying an entity with the flux of real material relations from which it emerges and by which it is already undergoing annihilation. The singular spider-materiality, for example, comes about as the only possible solution to the problem that manifold ecosystemic differentiae pose for one another, a solution that also includes the “death” of other organisms, so that the spider expresses this “death” and is in a certain sense the screaming of the “dying” others. But the spider also

contributes to the constitution of a *further* material problem whose solution entails *its* “death,” so that the spider is sucked up once again into its environment (like Bacon’s drug addict leaping *into* the hypodermic needle¹⁴⁵). Indeed, its material relation to its world only ever enacts this “being sucked up” in the sense of annihilated and it takes place therefore as a certain sort of “scream.”

Identified not with its concept, however, but with the very material flux into which it vanishes, so as to Return in everything that this flux continues to produce, this death of the spider is not *death* but the most intense life, and the scream that expresses it is not a scream, but a raving, ecstatic, expulsion of *laughter*.

Life screams at death, but death is no longer this all-too- visible thing that makes us faint; it is this invisible force that life detects, flushes out, and makes visible through the scream. Death is judged from the point of view of life, and not the reverse, as we like to believe. Bacon, no less than Beckett, is one of those artists who, in the name of a very intense life, can call for an even more intense life. He is not a painter who "believes" in death. His is indeed a figurative *miserabilisme*, but one that serves an increasingly powerful Figure of life. The same homage should be paid to Bacon as can be paid to Beckett or Kafka. In the very act of "representing" horror, mutilation, prosthesis, fall or failure, they have erected indomitable Figures, indomitable through both their insistence and their presence. They have given life a new and extremely direct power of laughter. (Deleuze 2002, 52 - 53).

In coming to be, the spider-materiality appropriates the complete manifold of material relations that structure and populate its world, repeating them as past, enacting the being-of-itself as nothing other than their Return. But in the being-of-itself, the spider-materiality is expropriating itself from itself, being appropriated by other materialities that set upon its elements as their own—every movement the spider makes, every organic function it executes, contributes to structuring an environment that is already destroying it, making it past. In this sense, the spider is something *funny*: it is a unification of elements that *cannot* be united and that are already dissolving; a combination about which one cannot be serious.

Thought in this way, the spider is both laughable and itself laughing. Its laughter is the incessant promotion of its own death, the incitement of the universe to bring that death about *faster, more, to a higher degree*—so that it might Return all the more intensely in that to which its death gives life, so that its laughter might echo all the more Eternally through the fractal chasm of being. Conversely, it equally *is* the laughter of a material manifold that urged it into being, belched it forth as the hilarious tomb into which each of its elements

¹⁴⁵ See, Bacon (1963).

was consigned, made-past, resurrected. From an aesthetic point of view, the universe is one bottomless joke and death the ever so solemn straight-man who is constantly mocked and turned inside out, set upon for ever more profound depths of mirth.

What monstrosities, what freak mutations, what pathological attachments, delirious associations, hyperactive fetishes, distal combinations of force, and psychedelic covenants will the laughter of beyng echo as next? To think an entity in a ruthlessly aesthetic manner is to commit oneself to the *curiosity* of this question, to the *sport* of addressing it, the *hilarity* of each of its progressive solutions. The laughter of beyng is not the sniggering of the pedant priest who titters only at unifications that affirm the moral-conceptual point-of-view by and through which he recognizes himself. There is no such thing as an appropriate joke. It is the howling of the ecstatic child who cackles only when her world is made utterly to vanish and come about as something novel (peak-a-boo). It is the cry of the sexual degenerate whose screams always demand that the dominatrix turn the screws in further, harder, deeper: there must always be more intensity, more pain, higher degrees of death.

We are often encouraged to consider nature as something like a waste dump: many attempts at “survival” have been made; very, very few have succeeded. The vast majority of natural events have come to nothing.¹⁴⁶ The measure of success is always conformity to conception: the sets of material events that are counted *successful* are those very few that have resulted in a *property* by which some organism may be universally specified and thereby *conceived*; everything else—everything that pertains to any singular organism that is not named by its concept or typical of its species—is a failure.¹⁴⁷ However efficient this cognitive model may be for conceiving nature, however effectively it articulates organisms by means of an efficient causality, it is worth noting that it construes nature itself as something highly ineffective and inefficient. In the limit, *nothing* is successful; *no* species is well-adapted; *everything* is wasted—for every environment is bound ultimately for collapse.

¹⁴⁶ For an example of this common view, see Rorty (1989, pp. 3 - 22).

¹⁴⁷ Successful events are those that result in properties that are reproduced in an organism’s descendants only because these are the only properties that pass the test of conceptual resemblance.

But there is another perspective from which nothing is wasted, everything is conserved, a point of view from which there are no failures because there are no successes, no freaks because there are no exemplars. This is the perspective of Eternal Return, meat, and the aesthetic. *Thinking* entities from this standpoint is how one thinks an entity by means of an aesthetic idea. Every singular, material entity is nothing other than the expression of its complete ecosystem of material-ontological relations—its being-of-itself is equally the making-past of these relations and Return of this past. This ecosystem is constituted by nothing other than the material entities that express it. As such, every singular material entity plays a necessary, not an accidental, role in the being-of-itself of every other. The being-of-itself of every material entity is the appropriation of all the others, and so each is in itself the expropriation of itself. Thinking an entity *aesthetically* is thinking it in this state of expropriation (Bacon's genius as a painter is to actually *paint* "Figures" (Deleuze 2003, 1) in this state of expropriation, spasming from out of themselves, screaming as laughing).

Thinking an entity in this way is thinking it as deriving its being, as *meat*, from its eruption of itself and invasion of the other, as always being in itself the excess of its own concept—it is thinking the entity as *beautiful*. This thought is of the *fullness* of nature, of its incessantly affirmative character, its mockery of death, its very intense joy. The Figures that come about are themselves only in their expropriation from themselves, which is equally the appropriation of the entire world, the entire *history* of the world, their screaming which is laughter, laughter which is screaming.

Bacon's Figures incarnate in paint the being of a body not insofar as it is an object defined by a concept but insofar as it is *beautiful*. Each is a body in excess of its concept, a body spasming *out of* its body, stuffing itself into the hypodermic syringe, leaping down the drain,¹⁴⁸ screaming its Return to the canvas from which it emerges. As such, these Figures stand in a twofold relationship to the history of being and the ontological flux of givenness or absolute positing that articulates that history. On the one hand, insofar as they ruthlessly identify with the flux of being by which they have been produced, this flux has an infinitely positive significance for them: their gaping mouths are laughing, not screaming.¹⁴⁹ Each must crave the highest intensity of this flux,

¹⁴⁸ See, Bacon (1976).

¹⁴⁹ See, Bacon (1944).

willing their own Eternal Return in the material world that will be progressively unfolded, and so *demanding* their own death and self-expropriation. On the other hand, each Figure is in a position to crave this intensity, the perpetuation of ontological flux, because this flux has resulted in *it*, occurred for its sake. Insofar as the the Figure identifies with ontological flux, it also *appropriates* it as its own, expressing it, making it the case that the entire history of being occurred for its sake. The Figures affirm themselves as they *are*, as their concepts *represent* them as being (Bacon is neither an abstract nor an abstract expressionist painter). The perpetual flux of being therefore has a *negative* significance for the Figures as well, signifying pure agony, total disintegration, hellfire: their gaping mouths are screaming, not laughing.

The aesthetic thought—what one *thinks* when one thinks an entity as expressing its material-ontological relations, rather than its concept—is the thought of entities as Figures, the recovery of these Figures as *beautiful*. Aesthetic ideas think bodies in a constant state of *exceeding* their bodies, spasming from out of their embodied properties, vitiating their ideality. They think bodies as expressive of their ontological relations because they think them as the constant destruction of their concepts. This is not simply thinking entities “without concepts;” it is the thought of every sensible manifold’s constant *destruction* of the concept that constrains it. But by reason of the very constancy of this destruction, concepts are always Returning from their demise so as to suffer *another* excess, *another* death, a higher degree of degradation.

If conceptuality is always the result of self-consciousness, then thinking the aesthetic thought entails the collapse of the self. If self-consciousness always results in the achievement of both positive and negative *freedom* (the objects that determine my action are objects in the first place only through *my* act of self-recognition), then aesthetic ideas return the self to a state unfreedom—one is no longer the master of nature; one is, just like the Figures one thinks, the screaming expression of the history of being. If the representation of one’s own freedom is the source and product of moral responsibility in experience, then thinking the aesthetic thought amounts to constant transgression—one fits together what it is morally impermissible to unite (combinations against the decree of the concept), formulating unities that no one can take seriously (objectively). The aesthetic thought is, in this way, the descent into a suffocating (death-bringing), involuntary

(unfree), irreverent (immoral) laughter. One laughs oneself into ego-death, howls forth one's own ontological chains, cackles maniacally at the antichrist, the demon of Eternal Return, one thereby becomes.

Despite the fact that this aesthetic thought thinks an entity in terms of the material-ontological relations that the entity expresses, relations that under the influence of conceptuality may be recovered as a *causal* history, it does not amount to an *explication* of that entity. Indeed, it does not result in cognition at all. What one experiences of the Figure whose beauty one thinks by means of an aesthetic idea is not a species of knowledge at all—it is a feeling, the feeling of joy and disaster, ego-death, unfreedom, a reabsorption into myth. This *aesthetic* thought is of beauty not only because it thinks the entity in excess of the concept but also because it heralds the collapse of self-consciousness itself: the self that one takes it that it one *ought to be* and therefore holds oneself responsible for being is entirely rejected in favor of what one *is*, of one's complete immersion in being. No longer does one crave a unity that one can never achieve. One simply tumbles forward in a maniacal expression of pure life, death, and resurrection. One no longer views entities as objects with properties: one views them, and equally oneself, as pure excesses of themselves—pure, extra-conceptual *beauty*.

We have now plumbed the depths of the mythic ground of subjectivity and explicated why there must be, in particular, a *faculty* of sensibility (rather than a merely passive receptivity). Time-difference goes no deeper than the history of being, Eternal Return, meat, and ontological laughter. We may now say definitively that when one views an object as *beautiful* one views it as the spasmodic excess of itself and its complete ontological repetition of the entire material universe. But we have yet to understand how anything like a *subject* would be grounded on this mythic ground, much less how it would ever make genuine aesthetic disagreement possible. To achieve these discoveries, we must begin to claw our way *back out from* the mythic ground, tracing time-difference's viscidities from their fleshy depths to their conceptual heights. If this is possible, then there must be a *second* potency of time...

Chapter Eight

The Second Potency: Permanent Revolution and the Imagination

Chapters Six and Seven explored the terrain of positing, the first potency of time-difference. This first potency, the immediate expression of the time-differential essence, reached a point of closure when time-difference's original positing-of-others gave way to a self-positing, which, in turn, returned again to an other-positing, so that positing itself showed up as *absolute*. This moment of absolution resulted in the projection of the history of *beyng*, whose law was Eternal Return and whose faculty was sensibility. This projection and the deliverance from self-consciousness it entailed described the first dimension of absolution, explaining this moment insofar as it made time-difference adequate to its essence. But there is another dimension of absolution, a further level in time. For, the adequation accomplished in the moment of absolution implies a concomitant moment of *alienation*. Even if the projection of *beyng* finally made time-difference equal to its essence, we will see, it also makes it incompatible with that very essence in the same stroke. There is, for this reason, a *second* potency of time-difference—a new domain where its drama continues to play.

This chapter will uncover the central tensions of this second potency. It will contain three sections. In the first, I will explain why the moment of absolution alienates time-difference from its essence (absolute difference) in the very act of making it adequate to it, arguing that the fourfold oneness that the postures of positing achieve also develops an aspect of the time-difference from which these postures constitute not a fourfold differential oneness, but an indifferent *equivalence*. This indifferent equivalence constitutes the *matter* of time-difference. Since matter is the result of indifference, while the essence of time-difference is absolute difference, time-difference stands in a state of direct alienation from its essence insofar as it has a matter. Further, the essence that is alienated from that of which it is the essence is no longer an essence at all, I will claim, but has become *form*. Just as the essence was expressed through the activity of positing, the form is performed through what I will call *reflection*—reflection is nothing other than positing insofar as it has been drained of its ontological capacity. There were four postures of positing, but there are only two of reflection: *reflecting-for-self* and being *reflected-for-other*.

In the second section, I will articulate the dialectic of these two sides. Every time-difference of the second potency performs its form (its self-alienated essence) by reflecting-for-itself a manifold of other time-differences, which are, to this extent, reflected-for-other. Because the same conditions of transitivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity that constrained *positing* also apply to reflection, every time-difference becomes reflected-for-other by the very others it reflects-for-itself, so that reflection is both ceaseless and cyclical. A time-difference that reflects-for-itself is not equal to itself insofar as it is reflected-for-other. This self-inequality is the source of an emergent *incompatibility* among all time-differences. Each actively reflects-for-itself, instituting its own “reflective frame,” but this activity institutes the reflecting-for-self of each of the reflected others, which results in the institution of a manifold of incompatible frames. Reflection shows itself to be a cycle of annihilation and reproduction—*Permanent Revolution*.

In the third section, I will show the fully developed process of time-differential reflection, namely, Permanent Revolution, to be the inner truth of the *imagination for itself*. (It is to the imagination what Eternal Return was for sensibility.) The imagination is responsible for three cognitive activities: *reproduction*, *reflection*, and the representation of *purposiveness*. Permanent Revolution is the single process that lies at the basis of these three activities.

I. From Adequation to Alienation: The Other Side of the Absolute

This section will carve out the dichotomous components of the second potency. I will show the moment of absolution, which made time-difference adequate to its essence of absolute difference, to result equally in an alienation from that very essence, developing in time-difference a *matter* and converting the essence itself into a *form*—that is, into an essence that stands in a state of alienation from that of which it is an essence. Just as the essence was expressed through positing, the form will be performed through reflection, which has two sides: reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other.

1. Review of The First Potency

Although the second potency does not “develop” from the first—as if it were something continuous with it, expanding its logic of the sensible and further executing its material principles—it nevertheless opens to us at the very instant when time-differential positing reaches its point of absolution. I will begin the discussion

of the second potency, then, by reviewing the journey of the first toward absolute. In the next subsection, I will attempt to explain why this moment of absolute, which has the significance of adequation for the first potency, also entails an alienation, thereby opening up a second potency.

The deschematism first revealed time-difference as an element of *absolute difference*. As an absolute difference, time-difference proved at once to be an *essential* difference—an entity that not only *was* but was essentially defined as being *in itself* an element of absolute difference. This reformulation brought forth a certain aporia in time. For, the essence of any item designates what that item is prior to all relations to other, but ‘difference’ (as a general term) describes nothing other than just some relation to other. Thus, time-difference was somehow *in itself* an other-relating prior to all its relations to other. The resolution of this aporia delineated the first potency of time-difference: every time-difference was in itself nothing other than the *positing* and *appropriation* of the manifold others from which it essentially differed. It enacted its being-of-itself through its differing from these manifold others that came about exclusively so as to be so differed from. The posited others were shown to be themselves time-differences.

As such, the activity of time-differential positing proved to be *transitive*, *reciprocal*, and *reflexive*. Since a time-difference only ever posits other time-differences, while time-differences necessarily posit manifold other time-differences, every time-difference posits in itself elements that are in *themselves* nothing other than positings of manifold others. Thus, the originally positing time-difference, in positing others, always posits the further time-differences that each of its own posits posits (if A posits B and B posits C , then, in positing B , A also posits C), so that time-differential positing is transitive. Further, since every element that a given time-difference posits must be a time-difference not only *in itself*, but also *for* this given time-difference, and since it is such only if it posits in itself the very time-difference that posits *it*, it follows that every time-difference posits only those others that also posit *it* (A posits B as the positing of A), so that time-differential positing is reciprocal. Finally, since any relation that is both transitive and reciprocal is also reflexive, time-differential positing is necessarily reflexive. Other-positing gives way to self-positing.

Conversely, however, since a time-difference posits only insofar as it expresses its own essence, and this essence is *difference*, a time-difference posits only those elements from which it differs essentially, so that, in

positing *itself*, a time-difference proves that it differs essentially from itself. It makes itself an *other* to itself, and its self-positing shows itself as an other-positing. Thus, self-positing returns to other-positing just as surely as other-positing gave way to self-positing. Further, since every time-difference is immediately the *posited* of every other time-difference that it itself posits, even this distinction of statuses is reduced to null: to posit is at once to be posited; to be posited is immediately to posit.

When each side of the positing dichotomies—self- and other-positing, being self- and other- posited—gives way, of itself, to its opposite, all four activities are shown to be mutually abiding. To enact one is always to enact the other three. Time-difference no longer self-positing *and* other-positing—as if these were separate and discrete activities. It rather posits manifold others *through* positing itself, posits itself *through* positing manifold others. This fourfold positing is called absolute positing. Its achievement is called absolution.

Absolution is expressed as a perpetual cycle of ontological affirmation whose law is Eternal Return and whose product is being. In the simple being-of-itself, some given time-difference posits in itself a manifold, each of whose elements posits in itself not only every other element of that manifold but also the very time-difference that originally posited *it*. In positing its manifold, the given time-difference Returns immediately to itself, but in Returning to itself, it posits its manifold—since this is simply what it is for the time-difference to be itself. This cycle recurs incessantly, but it has no duration: it does not happen *again*: each instance of its taking place is instead hollow with an infinity of further instances.

In its absolution, positing itself is transformed. We may no longer draw stable etiological lines between distinct time-differences. We may not assert as a simple fact that *A* posits *B*, and therefore *B* is posited by *A*. For *A* posits *B* just insofar as *B* posits *A* and vice versa. Neither term strictly precedes or succeeds the other. In this way, the genetic or productive character of positing is eliminated. One time-difference is in a position to posit, and thereby produce, others only if these very others already posit, and so produce, it. The being of the manifold that a certain time-difference produces must already be given for this production to take place, i.e., the time-difference must have already been *produced* by the very manifold time-differences it itself produces. In this requital, positing gives way to *givenness*: every time-difference is in itself the positing only of a manifold that

precedes it and already *is*. This manifold—which is in every case solicited by every positing time-difference—is shown to be pure givenness itself.

The power of ontological production that every time-difference previously commanded with respect to the manifold others of which it was the positing is now shared in common. No time-difference may be held determinately responsible for the being of any discrete set of others, but nevertheless the being of each is owed to the being of all the others. The being of all time-differences consist in their mutual differential play, in the incessant circulations of Eternal Return. This communal being of time-difference, achieved in the moment of absolute, and articulated by Eternal Return, makes time-difference legible as the absolute aesthetic element—*meat*—that abides entirely in its digestive-nutritional relation to the other. The discourses of meat, givenness, and Eternal Return identified sensibility—absolute sensibility—as the faculty responsible for representing time-difference.

2. *The Birth of Matter: Equivalence and Indifference*

But this very accomplishment of givenness that releases every time-difference into its free ontological play with all the others (ontological laughter) also has another significance for every time-difference. Throughout the development of absolute positing—and until it is achieved as givenness—the term that refers to the ontological dimension of any time-difference is its ‘being-of-itself.’ In its being-of-itself, a time-difference posits and appropriates manifold others as the organs of its difference. The being of each of these appropriated organs is never, in the strictest sense, the being of *itself*—that is, of *that* organ—but is rather always the being of the time-difference *of which* it is an organ, the element that posits and appropriates it. For, this organ has come about just to enable and function within the being-of-itself of the time-difference that posits it. Thus, we could refer to the ontological dimension of a time-difference either as a being-of-*itself* (a being which was expressed and achieved through the appropriation of manifold organs) or as a being-of-*another* (a being which was conferred upon an organ through its being appropriated by another).

When positing becomes absolute, however, becoming converted to givenness, a third ontological term is made available—namely, neither being-of-itself nor being-of-another, but simple *being*. Simple being pertains to a time-difference neither insofar as it appropriates, so as to be *itself*, nor insofar as it is appropriated, so as to

function within the being of *another*, but insofar as the former activity leads to the latter passivity and vice versa. It is very important to note that simple being does not *preexist* the extremes between which it stands—it is rather *forged* through the interplay that these extremes achieve in the moment of absolution.

Insofar as a time-difference has *simple being*, it is indifferent to whether it posits and appropriates manifold others or whether others posit and appropriate *it*. For, the simple being of a time-difference is in either case affirmed. It is a third term that is achieved as an indifferent *substrate* standing at the crux of the transition between a time-difference's being-of-itself and its functioning within the being-of-another. From the standpoint of simple being, a time-difference has being neither because it posits and appropriates others nor because it is posited and appropriated *by* others—but *simply because it is*. Its being is a simple, unaccountable *fact*, tied to no process in particular. The activity of positing others is, from this standpoint, something entirely accidental to its being—it could either perform this activity or not; still it would be; and the same applies to the passivity of being posited. I will refer to this simple being—achieved in the moment of absolution, when every time-difference, in the being-of-itself, comes to be an organ in the being-of-another, when, in functioning as such an organ, it comes again at once into its being-of-itself—*matter*.

Matter is equivalent to what Hegel refers to in both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic* as pure being. In the former text, matter is the original object of consciousness in the form of sense-certainty: this brute, primitive consciousness has knowledge only “of the *immediate*, or of *what is*” (Hegel 2018, 60). In the latter text, “*Being, pure being* - without further determination” (Hegel 2017, 59) is *philosophy's* original object, that with which metaphysics itself must inevitably begin. In both books, Hegel understands being in the same way: “In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself and also not unequal with respect to another; it has no difference within it, nor any outwardly” (Hegel 2017, 59), and, for this reason, sense-certainty, whose “truth only contains the *being* of the item[,]” yields “the most abstract and the very poorest *truth*” (Hegel 2018, 60). Being—matter—is the negation of difference, that into which all distinction and determinacy withdraws. Consciousness knows the *matter* of any object only insofar as it knows *that* the object is—as soon as it begins to characterize the object in any way, assigning it properties or distinguishing it from others, it knows something more than its matter. The real mark of matter is its *indeterminacy*—the fact that it is no more equivalent to *itself*

than it is to *another*, that, in other words, its self-relation (being-of-itself) *is* its other-relation (being-of-another), and vice versa.

Hegel was right to characterize being as indifference, but he was misguided, in both cases, to *begin* with this indifference. Matter, indifference, the equivalence of self- and other-relation is not the “beginning in philosophy.” It is rather an *achievement*—the final and most disastrous accomplishment of time-differential positing. This middle term, or substrate—the so-called *host* of the activity of positing and the passivity of being posited—comes to the fore only when a time-difference’s self- and other-positing activity shows itself, in its absoluteness, to give way at once to the concomitant passivity of being self- and other-positated, when this passivity likewise gives itself back to activity. From the standpoint of the first potency, there is no such material substrate and no need for one: a time-difference posits others because it pertains to its essence to its essence to do so; this other-positing gives way ultimately to absolute positing because it pertains to the nature of positing in general to do so. But matter comes to the fore as an intelligible *explanation* for an essential transition that has no need to be explained.

We may consider it the counterpart of the history of being. The mutual abiding of self- and other-positing, being self- and other-positated, that the time-differential play of givenness is constantly *achieving*, whose law is Eternal Return, whose faculty is sensibility, and whose mark is Being is inherited by matter as a *stable fact*. From the perspective of matter, it is not that positing *gives way* to being-positated, nor that self-positing *falls back* into other-positing; it is rather that there is simply *no difference* holding among these statuses. All of them affirm the matter of time-difference equally and so, for matter, no distinctions are illegible. Matter is the projection of precisely this lack of distinction. Thus, while the history of being marks the ecstatic play of absolute givenness, in which each time-difference is constantly giving itself to, and receiving itself from, the manifold others that precede it, *matter* marks a new quiescence of time-difference, a stable immobility in which nothing moves because nothing is different, the *ontological sink* into which all distinctions plunge into nullity.

3. *Alienation: From Essence to Form*

Insofar as time-difference contains a *matter*—that is, insofar as its ontological dimension is defined by neither a *being-of-itself* nor a *being-of-another* but rather by simple *being*—it is indifferent to whether it posits others

or is posited *by* others. The matter is in either case affirmed. Furthermore, and for this very reason, positing and being posited no longer pertain to the *essence* of any time-difference that contains a matter. For, as discussed in Chapter Six, an essence defines what it is *to be* the entity of which it is the essence. It defines the trait that, when present, necessitates the being of the entity in question, and that, when absent, negates the being of the entity. Since a time-difference that contains a matter is *indifferent* both to whether it posits or not and to whether it is or is not posited, since its *being* neither necessitates nor negates either positing or being posited, it follows that positing and being posited do not pertain to the essence of a time-difference that contains a matter.

The essence of time-difference was inferred from the deschematism to be nothing other than *absolute difference*. A time-difference was thereby shown to be in itself, prior to all relations to other, an *other-relating*. In order to satisfy the aporia implicit in this definition, a time-difference was required to *posit* in itself the manifold others from which it differed and thereby was itself (this was what its being-of-itself consisted in). Positing, therefore, was shown to be the way in which a time-difference fundamentally expressed its essence. Now, a time-difference that contains a matter, that has being because of its *matter* and not for any other reason, has proven *positing* to be inessential to it—positing no longer pertains to what it is to be a time-difference, insofar as the latter contains a matter, but has become *alien* to it. But since the time-differential essence (absolute difference) may be expressed *only* through positing, a time-difference that contains a matter has become alienated not only from *positing*; it has also become alienated from its own essence.

Insofar as it contains a matter, a time-difference has become alienated from that which makes it itself, namely, its essence. Moreover, it has become so alienated just by bringing its *expression* of itself (of its essence) to a point of adequation. The expression of the essence, time-differential positing, becomes adequate to what it expresses at the moment of absolution (when self- and other-positing, being self- and other-posited mutually abide in their fourfold oneness). But it is this very absolution that projects a matter in time-difference which alienates it from its essence. Thus, insofar as it contains a matter, a time-difference has undergone a *self-alienation* in a twofold sense: it becomes alienated *from* itself and it itself brings about this alienation just by expressing itself as what it essentially is.

A time-difference that has a *matter*, then, has been cleft in twain. Since matter is nothing other than the precise projection of its self-alienation—the cancellation of its essential positing that it develops from out of itself in the adequation of that very essence—there are two sides. On the one side there stands matter, and on the other there stands that from which matter is alienated, namely, the *essence*. The essence that now stands before us stands in a state of ontological alienation from that of which it is the essence: a time-difference that has a matter derives its being precisely from this matter, that which opposes its essence, and no longer from its expression of the essence itself. Such a self-alienated essence is no longer an essence worthy of the name—it has become *form*. How would the form be *expressed*?

4. *Reflection: The Performance of the Form*

If the form is merely the essence insofar as its ontological dimension has been drained into matter, then its *expression* is just the activity of positing insofar as it no longer possesses a power of production. What—other than ontological production—does positing involve? When a time-difference posits its manifold, it certainly brings its elements forth, but this is not all that it does; it, in addition, also confers *statuses* on both itself and these others, namely, those of self- and other-positing, being self- and other-posited respectively. Posited time-differences are not *merely* produced through this positing; they are produced *as* posited elements, receiving this passive status through their being produced. Similarly, a positing time-difference does not *merely* produce through its positing; it also confers upon itself the active status of positing.

These statuses are mirror images of one another. To be determined by the active status of self- or other-*positing* is to confer on others the passive status of *being* self- or other-*posited*; and, vice versa, to be posited is to confer on another the status of positing. In the absolution of the positing activity, these mirror images engage in a constant exchange, the positing one becoming posited in its act of positing, and vice versa. When the positing activity has been stripped of its ontological dimension, the expression no longer of the essence but of the form of time-difference, the constant mirror-reversals of these statuses remains to it. This is in fact *all* that remains to it—since apart from production, the conferral of statuses is all that positing involves. Hence, no longer productive, positing has become *reflection*.

Positing is the *immediate* expression of the time-differential essence, but reflection is the expression of the self-alienation of that essence. That is, it is the expression of the time-differential form. Now, while time-difference does not reflect *in itself*, but rather insofar as it stands outside itself in a state of self-alienation, it nevertheless reflects *for itself*. For, the self-alienation of time-difference of which reflection is the expression is still necessary to its expression: the adequation of the time-differential essence characterized by absolution and Eternal Return cannot take place without it. The projection of matter and the engenderment of reflection is simply the *other side* of the communion involved in the fourfoldedness of being. Hence, reflecting-for-self does not take place *in spite of* or *in contrast to* positing-in-itself; it rather occurs *because* and *alongside* of positing. Insofar as positing reaches its zenith in the moment of absolution, reflecting goes on at a different level.

That level is the second potency of time-difference.

5. *Components of Reflection: Reflecting-for-Self, Being Reflected-for-Other*

Reflection is a wholly distinct process of time-difference. Neither contradicting nor further developing the activity of positing, reflection rather breaks with it altogether. There is therefore no exclusive disjunction between the two—as if time-difference would posit *or* reflect, but not both. The adequation of the time-differential essence through the absolution of positing is at the same time the self-alienation of that very same essence and so the fabrication of the form. Positing expresses the essence, reflection the Form—both must be carried out in disjointed synchronicity, each operating “alongside” the other but cut off from it by a gulf of alienation. A new potency of time-difference has in this way been enunciated. What are its components?

The self-alienated essence is adequately described as the original essence of time-difference insofar as it now stands opposed to matter. It follows that the *expression* of the self-alienated essence would be identical to the expression of the original essence, namely positing, insofar as the latter is deprived of its “material” aspect. Above, I called matter the “ontological sink”—this is because it is that into which the *being* of time-difference is thoroughly drained. Thus, depriving positing of its material aspect is equivalent to draining it of its ontological force. If the expression of the *original* essence is the activity of positing, then the expression of the self-alienated essence is this same activity except insofar as it has no ontologically productive capacity. The name for the self-alienated essence is *form* (which opposes matter), and the name for the ontologically drained

expression of the form is *reflection*. Reflection is therefore positing without ontological force. Whatever remains to the first activity of positing after it has undergone the ontological deprivation implicit in its absolution is what is retained in the second activity of reflection.

Positing had ontological force insofar a positing time-difference *produced* (in itself) the very manifold *other* time-differences from which it essentially differed. Other, posited time-differences *came to be* in the simple being-of-itself of a given positing time-difference. In time-differential reflection, then, no others “come to be,” because it is precisely the lack of this that specifies the activity. But in positing others, a given time-difference not only *produces* them; it also confers upon them a certain *status*, namely that of *being-positing*.

It is this conferral of status that remains to reflecting time-difference. A given reflecting time-difference reflects manifold others which are, to this extent, reflected. The “being” of these reflected-others is their own affair—it is *given* in advance as a material fact of no consequence to the formal activity of reflection. Positing may be described in this new vocabulary as an activity at once *material* (containing ontological force) and *formal* (involving the conferral of statuses). With the material-ontological aspect of this activity now sunk irretrievably within undifferentiated matter, reflection comes to the fore as a *purely* formal affair. It consists *entirely* in the conferral of statuses. There are therefore two basic positions of reflection: reflecting and being-reflected (active and passive respectively).

Active, reflecting time-differences may trace their lineage directly to the time-differential form and so, indirectly (by route of alienation), to the time-differential essence. By contrast, the passive status of being-reflected owes itself exclusively to the reflecting performance that institutes it. For, the original essence of time-difference was immediately expressed as a *positing of others*, not as a *being-positing* by them. This other-positing proved, in the end, to give way to a being posited—so that the positing time-difference had always to be *positing* by those it posited—but this active-passive reciprocity resulted from the *development* of the active other-positing of which every time-difference was the immediate expression. Since the expression of the Form corresponds to the expression of the essence except insofar as it lacks an ontological dimension, while the immediate expression of the essence was *active*, and only subsequently passive, it follows that the active status of *reflecting* enacts the immediate expression of the form.

Thus, a time-difference actively *reflects* because it expresses its own form. Its active reflecting, then, is not a *mere* reflecting—but a *reflecting-for-itself*. By contrast, a time-difference is passively reflected only because *another* time-difference reflects-for-itself. Hence, its being-reflected is a being *reflected-for-another*. Reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other are the two fully developed components of the second potency.

II. The Dialectic of Reflection: Permanent Revolution

Whereas time-difference *posited* in accordance with its *essence*, it *reflects* in accordance with its form, and while the essence was *expressed*, the form is *performed*. This section explores the dynamics of time-differential performance, unfolding the *dialectic of reflection*. First, I articulate the basic process of time-differential reflection in terms of the conditions of *positing* (transitivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity). Thereafter, I show these same operations to have a radically different significance for time-differences of the second potency. Whereas expression was a matter of ontological laughter and Eternal Return, performance carries out a Permanent Revolution.

We use the word ‘perform’ as a technical term in at least two related ways. In traditional speech act theory, performative, as opposed to constative, utterances explicitly involve the institution, and not merely the description, of statuses.¹⁵⁰ Common examples include such sentences as “I make this promise”, “I declare this library open”, “I forgive you your bond.” In this sense, a performance is any speech act that converts a status to its opposite. But, more commonly, we also use ‘perform’ to refer to *dissemblance*, deception, to behaving in disguise. An actor performs, rather than simply behaves, because she speaks not as, but as something other than, herself. The members of the audience may be aware of the deception, in the case of theatre, or they may not, in the case of spycraft. The necessary thing is that the performer stands divided from herself by a gulf of alienation—indeed, the depth of this gulf, the degree of singular intensity with which the actor can invest it by means of an all the more singular relationship with her own essence from across it, is the measure of how successfully she expresses her role. In the first sense, to perform is to *make something other*. In the second, it is to *act as another*. We will see that time-difference *performs* in both these senses

¹⁵⁰ This use of the word perform was most famously discussed by J. L. Austin in his *How to Do Things with Words*. See Austin (2018). For relevant commentary see, Warnock (1973), Urmson (1977), and Heal (1974).

1. *The Basic Structure of Reflection*

The time-differential form is the self-alienated essence: when time-difference accords with its form, when it *performs*, it does not accord with its essence but rather relates to and expresses that essence by means of a precise, singular, and intense alienation. Whereas a time-difference of the first potency immediately expressed its essence by positing in itself manifold others, a time-difference of the second potency performs its form by *reflecting-for-itself* manifold others which are, to this extent, *reflected-for-another*. This is the basic performance, these the two roles. The reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself; the reflected others are reflected-for-another, namely, for the time-difference that reflects them. The reflecting one is active; the reflected others are passive. The entire dialectic of the second potency consists in analyzing the dynamics of this basic performance.

The manifold others that an active time-difference reflects-for-itself, which are, to this extent, reflected-for-another, are themselves time-differences of the second potency. For, the activity of reflection is nothing other than the activity of *positing* except insofar as the latter has been drained of its ontological capacity. When the “being” of positing time-difference is drained into the ontological sink of matter, detaching itself from the *activity* of positing with which it was inextricably bound, then positing gives way to *reflection*.¹⁵¹ Since a time-difference of the first potency is capable of positing only other time-differences, it follows, accordingly, that a time-difference of the second potency would similarly be capable of *reflecting* only other time-differences. The initial difference between the first potency activity of other-positing and the second potency activity of reflecting-for-self, which corresponds to it, is that *posited* others derive being from their being posited, while *reflected* others *do not* derive being from their being reflected. Each element of a reflected manifold rather has the source of its being in its own *matter*, deriving only its *status* of being reflected-for-other from the reflecting activity of the reflecting time-difference.

¹⁵¹ Reflection and matter are the two opposing processes of the second potency that, in the first potency, were unified as the process of *givenness* (Eternal Return, the history of beyng).

Initially, then, some second potency time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself manifold other time-differences- B_2 , which are, to this extent, reflected-for-other (namely, for A_2).¹⁵² We may represent this state-of-affairs with a familiar diagram:

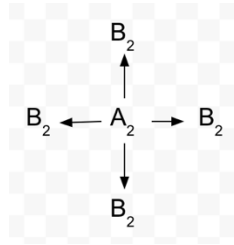


Diagram 8.1

The arrows indicate the activity of reflecting-for-self. Elements with arrows pointing *from* them perform the activity of reflecting-for-self, and elements with arrows pointing *to* them are the recipients of this activity: they are reflected-for-another.

Now, just as positing time-differences were required to posit other time-differences that themselves enacted the activity other-positing, so too must *reflecting* time-differences reflect-for-themselves other time-differences that are themselves in a state of reflecting-for-self. For, just as the positing of manifold others was what a time-difference was required to do in order to be itself (that is, in order to express its essence), so too is the *reflection* of others, which are to this extent reflected-for-other, what a reflecting time-difference is required to do in order act as itself (that is, in order to perform its form). This is the case, again, because the activity of reflection is an exact simulacrum of the activity of positing, except insofar as the latter has been drained of its ontological capacity, and so any non-ontological condition that pertains to positing also pertains to reflection. A reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself only those manifold others which themselves reflect-for-themselves.

This fundamental proposition has three familiar consequences.

First, time-differential reflection, just like time-differential positing, is transitive. If some time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of another time-difference- B_2 , then it reflects B_2 as

¹⁵² The subscripts indicate that the time-differences- A and - B in question are of the second potency.

reflecting-for-itself its *own* manifold, populated by time-differences- C_2 (where ‘ C_2 ’ is simply the common name for the elements each time-difference B_2 reflects-for-itself). This may be captured in the following diagram:

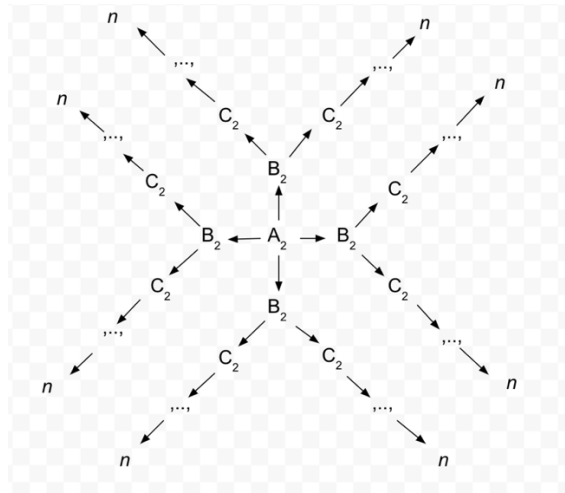


Diagram 8.2

Since A_2 reflects B_2 as a time-difference of the second potency, while B_2 qualifies as such only by reflecting its own manifold of time-differences- C_2 , it follows that, in each case, A_2 reflects B_2 as the reflecting-for-itself of manifold- C_2 . And since A_2 reflects B_2 as the reflecting of C_2 , A too reflects manifold- C_2 .

Second, time-differential reflection, again like positing, is in a certain sense reciprocal.¹⁵³ This means that time-difference- A_2 must be a reflected *member* of the very manifold- C_2 that it reflects B_2 as reflecting-for-itself. This reciprocity follows from a sufficient understanding of B_2 's mandate to reflect. In the current scenario, time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself as an original performance of the form; time-difference- B_2 is originally reflected-for-other as a passive *prop* of A_2 's performance (something that occurs, as reflected, for the sake of A_2). But it happens to be the case that B_2 serves as such a prop just if it too is a reflecting-for-self. The upshot is that B_2 reflects-for-itself *only* to the extent that this is necessary to its being reflected-for-other by A_2 —it functions sufficiently as a prop of A 's performance just insofar it too reflects-for-itself. Thus, B_2 receives a mandate to reflect-for-itself only from A_2 : it reflects-for-itself *for the sake of* A_2 , carrying this out only to serve sufficiently as the prop A_2 reflects it as being. In this sense, B_2 is a reflecting-for-self-*for-another*.

¹⁵³ Though we will see in the next section that this reciprocity has an importantly different character than that applying to positing.

The question is, then: what does it take for B_2 to reflect not simply *for itself*, but also *for the sake of A_2* ? The same principle that decided the moment of *reciprocity* at the first level will do service for us again here. If A_2 reflects B_2 as reflecting-for-itself a manifold inclusive of other time-differences, but not of A_2 itself, then it reflects B_2 as a reflecting-for-self for these *other* time-differences, but it *does not* reflect it as a reflecting-for-self *for it* (i.e., for A_2). In this scenario, despite the fact that B_2 is an active reflecting-for-self for manifold- C_2 , it remains for A_2 nothing other than a passive being reflected-for-other—being reflected-for-other remains the only trait of reflection that B_2 exhibits with respect to A_2 . Thus, since B_2 is required to reflect-for-itself *only* for A_2 's sake (since this is the time-difference with respect to which it must exhibit the active trait), its active reflecting-for-self does not, in this case, fulfill the demand it was instituted to satisfy.

By contrast, if A_2 *is* a member of the manifold- C_2 that B_2 is reflected as reflecting, then B_2 is reflected as reflecting-for-itself-*for- A_2* , which is precisely what is required. Thus, whenever time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of time-difference- B_2 , which is, to this extent, reflected-for-other (namely, for A_2), time-difference- B_2 itself reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of time-difference- A_2 , which is, to this extent, reflected-for-other (namely, for B_2). This result may be captured, again, in a familiar diagram:

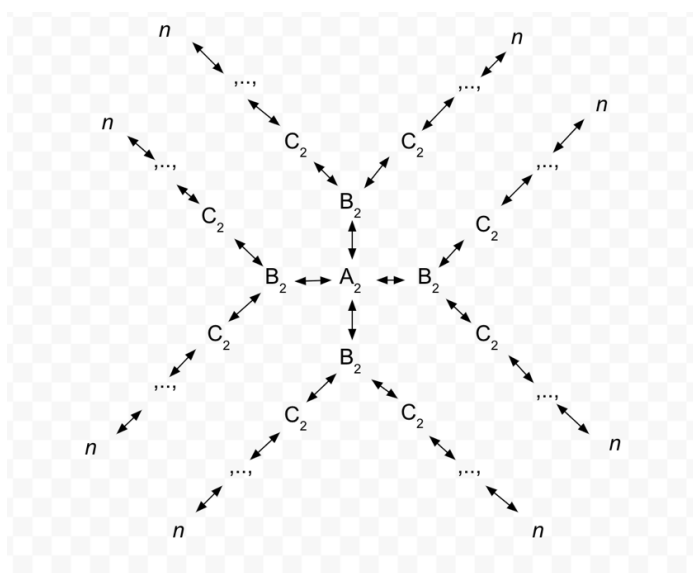


Diagram 8.3

Just as before, the double-arrows indicate that every element is *reflected-for-other* by any element that it *reflects-for-itself*.

Third, since it is a formal fact about all transitive and reciprocal relations that they are also reflexive, it follows that time-differential reflection, is in a certain sense, *reflexive*.¹⁵⁴ Since A_2 reflects B_2 as a reflecting-for-self, it necessarily reflects-for-itself every time-difference that B_2 reflects (transitivity). And since B_2 is reflected as reflecting-for-self, not in general, but specifically *for* A_2 , it necessarily includes A_2 in the manifold- C_2 that it reflects-for-itself (reciprocity). Thus, since A_2 's reflection of B_2 involves reflecting whatever B_2 reflects, and B_2 reflects A_2 , it follows that A_2 's reflection of B_2 involves its reflection of itself (reflexivity).

2. *The Ontological Sink: Annihilation and Reproduction*

Thus, time-differential reflection exhibits all the conditions of positing: it is transitive, reciprocal, and reflexive. Every time-difference reflects-for-itself only those manifolds whose elements themselves reflect manifolds inclusive of *it*, so that *in* reflecting others for itself, every time-difference reflects itself for itself and is, likewise, always reflected-for-other only for itself. In this way, reflection would appear to be simply equivalent to positing, so that, at this point, we would show the three conditions enumerated above to give way to something like “absolute reflection,” which would itself lead to some sort of “reflective givenness.” But no such transition may take place here.

Whereas “one and the same” time-difference could both actively (self- or other-) *posit* and be passively (self- or other-) *posited*, since it ultimately identified not with any of these postures but with the *transition* of each to all the others (their fourfold oneness), no such identification with transition is available to time-differences of the second potency. It is in fact the *deprivation* of the possibility of this identification that *defines* the activity of reflection and sets it apart from positing. So whereas positing gave way to pure time-differential affirmation (ontological laughter, Eternal Return), reflection will open onto a space of perennial violence—*Permanent Revolution*.

To understand why, two points must be grasped in turn.

The first point to be understood is that the two statuses of reflection—reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other—stand to one another in an oppositional relation of Aristotelian contrariety. This is so

¹⁵⁴ Though, as we will see, an even stronger disanalogy holds between this reflective self-relation and the reflexivity of time-differential positing than will hold between the reciprocity of positing and the reciprocity of reflection.

because each status “comes to be” from the other, and, as Aristotle explains in *Physics* I.5, “...everything which comes into being comes from its opposite [*enantia*, contrary]” (Aristotle 1996, 21). The quantity of any change is measured by the degree of contrariety that holds between its extremities, so that, without contrariety there would be no change, no “coming to be,” and anything that has undergone change stands in a relation of contrariety to that from which it has changed. When we apply the conditions of transitivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity to time-differential reflection, we see that any time-difference that reflects-for-itself is made to be reflected-for-other by the very others it reflects, so that the latter status *comes to be* from the former. Conversely, a time-difference that is reflected-for-other is made to reflect-for-itself through the same reversal, so that reflecting-for-self also *comes to be* from being reflected-for-other. Since these two statuses *institute* one another, since the *content* of each consists in nothing other than this institution, it follows that each is a contrary of the other.

Contraries cannot apply to the same element in precisely the same respect. Nevertheless, if anything changes, then it is necessary that the very same element exhibit one trait at one time and its contrary at another—the occurrence of the contrariety amounts to a *change* or *transition* because “one and the same” entity is understood to be the host of both its extremes. Without this fixed identity, there would be one trait at one time and its contrary at another, but no *change*. In Aristotle’s terminology, the thing that remains “one and the same,” subsisting through and thereby enabling all change, is called substance: “...substance, remaining the same, yet admits of... contrary qualities. One and the same individual at one time is white, warm or good, at another time black, cold or bad. This is not so with anything else...” (Aristotle 1962, 33). Accordingly, substances themselves “never have contraries” (Aristotle 1962, 31), since otherwise they would be incapable of *hosting* contrariety and subsisting through change. Thus Aristotle explains: “...what is *most characteristic* of substance appears to be this: that, although it remains... numerically one and the same, it is... the recipient of contrary qualifications” (Aristotle 1962, 33, *emphasis added*).

The substance that became legible through the contraries of being-for-self and being-for-another, whose recognition inaugurated the second potency, was “simple being” or *matter*. Now, the entire sphere of reflection in general (which includes both reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other) is defined as the

expression of that from which matter (substance) has alienated itself, namely, the time-differential essence. That is, reflection is the performance of the time-differential form, and the form is the self-alienated essence. The contrary components of reflection are together separated from matter by a gulf of withdrawal, so that they may relate to it only by standing apart and affirming their alienation from it (an alienation that makes possible both these components and the matter apart from which they stand). Thus, the process of reflection in general (that is, the interplay of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other) occurs just insofar as matter (the substance that *would* ground the contrary components of this process) has *withdrawn* from it—standing apart in a state of alienation. The degree to which reflection *takes place* is the degree of its alienation from its species of substance (matter).

The upshot of all this is that the contraries of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other *cannot* be united in a time-difference that would thereby count as “one and the same” through an invocation of an underlying *substance* because these contraries entertain their reversals *only* insofar as they stand apart from matter, insofar as they *do not* solicit this their substance for unification.

Matter is the ontological sink—that into which the being of time-difference drains in the moment of absolute. For this reason, it is also the sink of substance—the withholding of unity from the reciprocating contraries of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other. In the simplest terms, this means that when some time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of another time-difference- B_2 , thereby becoming reflected-for-other *by* this very B_2 , we end up with two images of A_2 that *cannot be held together as one and the same*. That is,

$$\underline{A_2 \text{ as reflecting-for-itself} \neq A_2 \text{ as being reflected-for-other.}}$$

This inequality of a reflecting time-difference insofar as it reflects-for-itself with “itself” insofar as it is reflected-for-another constitutes the *specific difference* of the second potency, setting its process apart from the first.

The result of this inequality, when it is taken together with the three conditions on time-differential activity (transitivity, reciprocity, and reflexivity), is that every reflecting time-difference, in reflecting-for-itself manifold others that themselves reflect *it*—conferring upon it the passive status of being reflected-for-other—brings on its own negation or annihilation. When some time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold

inclusive of another time-difference- B_2 , it immediately instigates B_2 's reflecting-for-self of a manifold inclusive of it , so that it becomes reflected-for-other (namely, for B_2). Since the A_2 that actively reflects-for-itself is not equivalent to the A_2 that is passively reflected-for-other, this reversal occasions the annihilation of A_2 . Similarly, when B_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of A_2 , which is to this extent reflected-for-another, it immediately instigates A_2 's reflecting-for-self of a manifold inclusive of it , so that it becomes reflected-for-other (namely, for A_2). This reversal has the same annihilatory significance for B_2 as it had for A_2 , so that B_2 's reflecting-for-self accomplishes its own negation. Time-differential reflection shows itself to be a process of constant destruction.

Nevertheless, reflection also contains its *restorative* side. For, as we just saw, when A_2 reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of B_2 , instigating B_2 's reflecting-for-self of a manifold inclusive of it —pacifying A_2 and thereby occasioning its annihilation—the content of this latter reflecting-for-self, namely, B_2 's, is to instigate A_2 to once again reflect-for-itself. Now, in this cycle, B_2 receives its mandate to reflect-for-itself from the prior reflecting-for-self of A_2 —it reflects-for-itself “now” because “before” it was reflected-for-other by A_2 . It is a condition on B_2 's reflecting-for-self that it include in the manifold that it thereby reflects the time-difference- A_2 from whose prior reflecting-for-self it received its mandate to reflect. Hence, B_2 's reflecting-for-self, instigated by A_2 's, has the effect of *restoring* the A_2 that it also *annihilated*. This means that, although the A_2 that *actively* reflects-for-itself is not equivalent to the A_2 that is *passively* reflected-for-other (namely, by and for B_2), the actively reflecting A_2 that B_2 's reflecting-for-self restores is retrievable as the “same” reflecting time-difference that originally instituted B_2 's mandate to reflect. The A_2 that reflects B_2 , and thereby perishes, is equivalent to the A_2 that B_2 's subsequent reflecting-for-self restores. It is this time-difference come again, after having passed through the fires of its own annihilation: it has been reproduced.

$$A_2 \text{ as } \textit{reflecting-for-self} = A_2 \text{ as } \textit{reproduced}$$

Thus, time-differential reflection is not *only* a process of constant death, but also one of incessant reproduction.

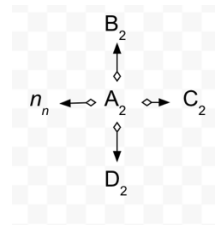
3. *Permanent Revolution: The Process of the Second Potency*

The complete performance of the second potency may be characterized in the following way. A reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself manifold others, which are, to this extent, reflected-for-other. Each

of these others is nevertheless reflected *as* a reflecting time-difference. Each is therefore required to reflect-for-itself its *own* manifold (transitivity) inclusive of the original time-difference that reflected *it* (reciprocity). When the original reflecting time-difference comes in this way to be reflected-for-other by each of the others it itself reflected-for-itself, it is made unequal to itself and thereby negated (annihilated). Nevertheless, since each of the others that reflects it for itself must reflect it *as* a reflecting time-difference, it is reflected-for-other as once again a reflecting-for-self of its own manifold by each of the others for which it is reflected. In this way, it is reproduced as the reflecting time-difference it *was* through the very performance by which it was annihilated (reflected-for-other). Since the manifold that the original time-difference once again reflects includes each of the others that reflected it for itself, it signifies the self-inequality, negation, or annihilation of each of these others. In this way, the reflections of time-difference give way to their performative circuit: every time-difference flickers incessantly in and out of negation, being reproduced through its annihilation, annihilated through its reproduction.

Above, I attempted to represent the transitivity and reciprocity of time-differential reflection in three diagrams, culminating in Diagram 8.3, showing, by means of double-arrows, every time-difference to reflect-for-itself only those manifold others that themselves reflect *it*. This diagram mimics the structure of Diagram 6.7, from Chapter Six, which led at once to the Diagram of Absolute Positing. We were able to infer this final diagram from the structure of Diagram 6.7, in part, because we were able to presume the equality of a time-difference of the first potency insofar as it (self- or other-)posits with itself insofar as it is (self- or other-)posited. Because of this self-equality, every posture of positing showed itself to abide absolutely in the other three, all giving way together to the fourfold oneness of absolute positing. But this self-equality is precisely what a reflecting time-difference specifically and definitively *lacks*. Hence, the Diagram of Reflection that may be inferred from Diagram 8.3 must be of a very different sort than that of Absolute Positing. I will infer it in stages.

First, some time-difference- A_2 reflects manifold others $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$ insofar as it reflects-for-itself. This may be represented as follows:

Diagram 8.4: Frame- A_2

Let us call the situation represented in this diagram A_2 's "reflective frame:" it represents the structure of the manifold insofar as A_2 reflects-for-itself and remains equal to itself. As before, the arrows indicate the performance of time-differential reflection: the element with arrows pointing *from* it reflects-for-itself, while those with arrows pointing *to* them are reflected-for-other.¹⁵⁵

Next, A_2 's reflecting-for-self instigates the reflecting-for-self of each of the others that it itself reflects. Given the condition of reciprocity, each of these others must reflect-for-itself a manifold inclusive of A_2 , and given the condition of transitivity, each must include within its manifold every element that A_2 itself reflected-for-itself. Further, each of these others may include within its manifold *only* those others that A_2 reflected-for-itself, since if one of them reflected time-differences other than these, then A_2 would have reflected these through its own transitive reflecting-for-self. Now, when A_2 comes to be reflected-for-other by each of the time-differences- $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$ that it reflected-for-itself within its own frame (frame- A_2), it is annihilated: the simulacra of A_2 that occur as reflected-for-other within the reflective frames of the others are not equal to the A_2 that reflects-for-itself within its own frame.

This means that the being reflected-for-other of A_2 that A_2 instigates through its reflecting-for-self is not the simple *recurve* of its own reflecting-for-self—in the manner that a double-arrow would represent. For, the A_2 that comes to be reflected-for-other is not equal to the A_2 that reflects-for-itself. This inequality between the two simulacra requires A_2 's being reflected-for-other to occur within a distinct reflective frame—one that is incompatible with frame- A_2 and counts as distinct for this reason. Since A_2 instigates the reflecting-for-self of *every* element of the manifold it reflects-for-itself, while the reflecting-for-self of each must reflect a manifold

¹⁵⁵ Note that this diagram breaks the convention observed in all those previous of naming every element that a given time-difference immediately posits/reflects by the same letter. Given what's about to happen, it will be convenient to give each of these elements its own distinct name.

inclusive of A_2 , it follows that A_2 's instigation results in a *manifold* of incompatible reflective frames. The following diagram represents this state of affairs:

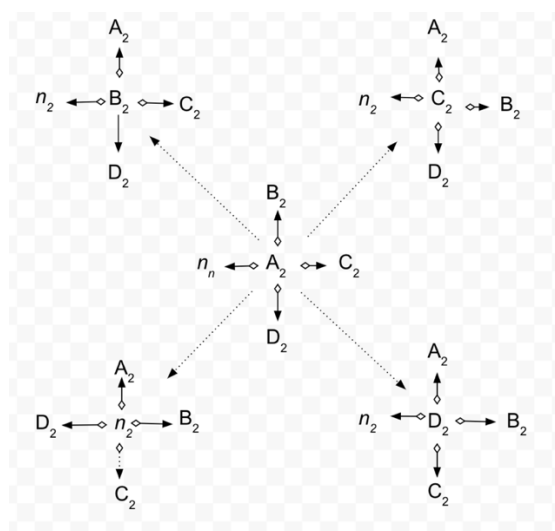


Diagram 8.5

This diagram pictures five distinct, incompatible frames. When A_2 reflects-for-itself time-differences- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, -n_2$, it instigates the reflecting-for-self of each. Since the frames that are thereby instituted all contain A_2 as a passive member, each is incompatible with the A_2 's own reflective frame. Further, since the reflecting-for-self of each element results in a frame that contains *all* the other elements as reflected-for-other, each is incompatible with all the others. This means that the reflecting-for-self of *every* singular element institutes a reflective frame incompatible with all the others. In this way, A_2 's reflecting-for-self both *institutes* its own reflective frame- A_2 and *instigates* the institution of as many contrary reflective frames as are contained in the manifold that it itself reflects. (The broken arrows pointing from frame- A_2 to each of the other contrary frames signify this instigation.) Thus, it is a fully general principle of time-differential reflection that the reflecting-for-self of *every* time-difference both institutes a unique reflective frame, incompatible with all possible others, and instigates the institution of these very incompatible others.

Finally, just as A_2 's reflecting-for-self both institutes its own frame- A_2 and instigates the institution of frames- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, -n_2$, which are all contrary to it, thereby accomplishing the collapse of the same frame it institutes, so too does the reflecting-for-self of the prime elements of each of these four frames instigate the institution not only of the other three, but also of the frame- A_2 that has just suffered collapse. This is to say, the reflecting for itself of time-difference- B_2 institutes frame- B_2 and instigates the institution of frames- $A_2, C_2,$

D_2, \dots, n_2 ; time-difference- C_2 institutes frame- C_2 and instigates the institution of frames- $A_2, B_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, etc..

This mutuality of instigation may be represented by doubling the arrows pointing from frame- A_2 to the others and by adding double arrows pointing from each diagram to all the others.

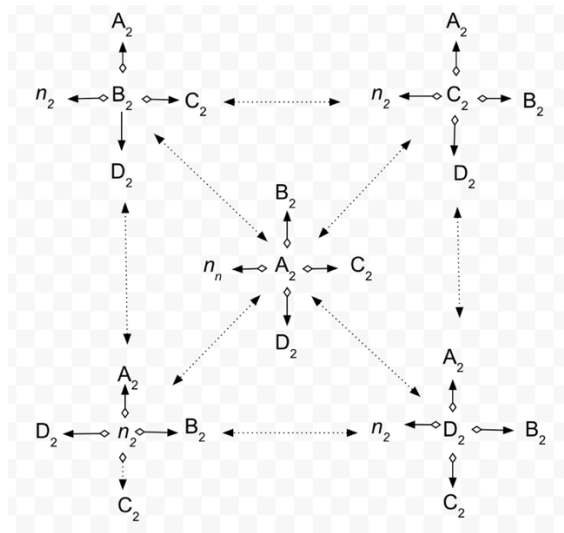


Diagram 8.6: Diagram of Reflection

This diagram constitutes the Diagram of Reflection (corresponding, at the second potency, to the first potency's Diagram of Absolute Positioning). Each of the broken arrows pointing from one frame to another signifies the fact that the institution of the one frame instigates the institution of the other. Furthermore, each traces a path of annihilation and reproduction: by instigating the institution of *other*, contrary time-differential frames, the reflecting-for-self of a given time-difference brings about the destruction of that time-difference; but since the institution of this contrary frame always instigates the reinstatement of the very frame that was destroyed, it equally brings about the *reproduction* of that time-difference.

We have now passed not through but *into* the mirror:¹⁵⁶ there is nothing reflected that is not through its reflection also a reflecting, nothing real and tangible that would not also be a reproduction. Reflecting elements are equivalent not to their reflections but to the *reproduction* of their reflecting power that their reflections instigate. The reproductions are endless, infinite; they repeat ad nauseum; dyads of authority shift to and fro without end, and each reversal is hollow with a seething infinity of further reversals. To the extent that

¹⁵⁶ See Deleuze (1990, p. 25)

we can speak of “the” manifold at the second level, it is a manifold ever turning itself inside out, becoming unequal to itself at every degree of its self-articulation. The reflecting element is always only a reproduction of itself, never an original—its reflecting is always mandated by the reflecting of another which destroys it. Whereas the first potency reached its climax with the process of Eternal Return and ontological laughter, the process of the second potency is *Permanent Revolution*: everything is always being annihilated, supplanted, and reproduced.

If we recall that reflexivity pertains to all transitive and reciprocal relations, so that reflecting elements that reciprocally and transitively reflect *other* reflecting elements also reflect themselves, then it is clear a time-difference both reflects an is reflected in one and the same act, both reproducing itself and destroying itself *at once*. The Revolution of reproduction and destruction holds not only *among* manifold elements, but also within a “single” time-difference: a time-difference of the second potency reproduces itself in its annihilation, annihilates itself through its reproduction. It is the element of Revolution itself.

III. Imagination: The Performative Universal, The Origin of Law

This section uses the process of Permanent Revolution, pictured in the Diagram of Reflection, to present a novel account of the faculty of imagination. Kant makes the imagination responsible for three cognitive procedures across the three *Critiques*: 1) the *reproduction* of appearances, 2) *reflection* (in the sense of reflective judgment), and 3) the representation of *purposiveness*. This section shows the process of Permanent Revolution—introduced by Marx, developed by Trotsky, and characteristic of the second potency of time-difference—to constitute the essence of each of these procedures of the imagination. Just as the definitive operation of the first potency, Eternal Return, gave articulation to the power of sensibility in itself, so too will Permanent Revolution, the definitive operation of the second potency, articulate the political operation of imagination for itself.

1. *Trotsky and Permanent Revolution*

Acknowledging his debt to Marx, Trotsky writes the following of Permanent Revolution:

The permanent revolution, in the sense in which Marx attached to this concept, means a revolution which makes no compromise with any single form of class rule, which does not stop at the democratic stage, which goes over to socialist measures and to war against reaction

from without; that is, a revolution whose every successive stage is rooted in the preceding one and which can end only in the complete liquidation of class society. (Trotsky 1969, 130 - 131).

He continues:

For an indefinitely long time and in constant internal struggle, all social relations undergo transformation. Society keeps on changing its skin. Each stage of transformation stems from the preceding. This process necessarily retains a political character, that is, it develops through collisions between various groups in the society which is in transformation. *Outbreaks of civil war and foreign wars alternate with periods of "peaceful" reform.* Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life *develop in complex reciprocal action* and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such. (Trotsky 1969, 132 - 133, *emphasis added*).

Permanent Revolution, as Trotsky takes the term over from Marx, constitutes the true essence of socialist revolution. It sets its *focus imaginarius* on the "complete liquidation of class society"—a social distribution without class, without the rule of one party over another, without unaccountable mechanisms of domination. Its ambitions must accordingly be limitless in scale, overwhelming the artificial and generally class-determined frontiers of the state and achieving a thoroughly "international character" (Trotsky 1969, 133). This *focus imaginarius* is, admittedly and by definition, unattainable and so the revolution that pursues it must become *permanent*. Civil and foreign wars, in which patterns of class rule are exploded, "alternate with periods of 'peaceful' reform," in which some new pattern gradually takes hold. The Permanent Revolution carries out the alternation of these periods. It is embodied in the "complex reciprocal action" of a variety of adjunct fields—economy, technique, science, family, morals, everyday life, etc.—whose rates of protest and class subversion are all unique to themselves, so that the periods of peace are not even rigorously distinct from those of conflict. "Therein lies the permanent character of the revolution."

Trotsky obviously has transcendental ambitions for his theory of permanent revolution—he is not predicting some contingent and empirical state-of-affairs that will *happen* to come about, a prediction which would be akin to a species of prophecy. He is rather rationally identifying the conditions of the possibility of politics in general and stating what it will take for political experience to conform to them. The complete liquidation of class society as a *focus imaginarius* is a transcendental condition on the very idea of the political, and the process of Permanent Revolution that makes society progressively more suitable to this focus is a *transcendental* operation. But could it be that with the recognition of this *focus imaginarius* and the revolutionary operation that constantly pursues it, Trotsky has identified not simply a condition with transcendental

significance, but rather a principle of one of the primal transcendental faculties? Could it be that Permanent Revolution pursues a certain *focus imaginarius* precisely because *it brings the imagination itself into the most distinct focus, delineating the procedure of this transcendental faculty for itself?*

2. *Time-Difference and the Reproductive Function of the Imagination*

Of all the faculties of cognition, the imagination is the one whose independent contribution to experience is the most difficult to sufficiently characterize. A functionally *mediate* faculty, responsible for preparing the manifolds given in sensibility for conception under the understanding, the imagination is nevertheless independent, having its own proper sphere of representational dominion overlapping with neither sensibility nor the understanding. What is this independent sphere? What is the imagination “for itself?”

In Chapter Three of this dissertation, I characterized the imagination as an essentially reproductive faculty. The imagination represents an appearance in its relations of mutual reproduction with the others populating its image. I called the image of an appearance its incompatibility field, for it comprised all and only the manifold of other appearances with which the given one was contrary. Every appearance expressed an image, under the aspect of the imagination, because it stood in a *semantogenic* relation to its contraries: 12pm was 12pm only because it was not any other time and it *was* its non-being of these other times. Since every appearance stood in a semantogenic relation with each of its contraries, it *reproduced* them in itself, expressing its contrariety to them in its simple being of itself. While I showed the representation of appearances embedded in their incompatibility fields to be necessary for cognition (underwriting material inference), I offered no account of how appearances themselves were capable of standing in relations of contrariety.

The present analysis of time-difference of the second potency fills in the missing account. Every reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself manifold others, instigating its own imagination frame. These frames are none other than the *images* or semantogenic fields characteristic of the imagination. Appearances stand in relations of reproductive contrariety with one another because every reflecting time-difference is incompatible with what it necessarily reflects. The statuses of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other are incompatible—the one negates the other. But when A_2 reflects B_2 , it reflects it *as* reflecting *it*, so that in reflecting-for-self, A_2 becomes reflected-for-other, converting itself to its opposite simply by performing its

form. Contrariety among appearances arises as a necessary stage in the development of the time system. That contrariety is *reproductive* because, although A_2 is annihilated in its being reflected-for-other, it is also instigated to once again reflect-for-itself, restoring itself to itself. The contraries A_2 and B_2 stand in a mutually reproductive relation the reflecting-for-self of each both annihilates and instigates the resurrection of the other.

Hence, this account of the second potency of time-difference and its characteristic process of Permanent Revolution has accounted for the *reproductive* activity of the imagination.

3. *Time-Difference and the Reflective Function of the Imagination*

Imagination is a faculty not only of reproduction but also of *reflection*. So far in this chapter, I have used the term reflection only to designate the performance of time-differences of the second potency. But the reflection of time-difference corresponds to the reflection endemic to the imagination as well—the reflection that participates in reflective judgment.

In his most extensive treatment of reflection and reflective judgment, Kant defines the operation against its counterpart, determining judgment, as a means of comprehending a given particular under a non-given universal. He writes:

The power of judgment in general is the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it (even when, as a transcendental power of judgment, it provides the conditions *a priori* in accordance with which alone anything can be subsumed under that universal), is **determining**. If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely **reflecting**. (KU.5:179.66-67).

Reflecting judgments find universals for given particulars. By particulars Kant means sensible givens, and by universals he means concepts. As Kant puts it in the first Introduction, “**To reflect**... is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one’s faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible” (KU.20:211.15). Reflecting brings sensible manifolds to the unity of concepts, operating therefore somehow without the guidance of a concept in advance. Since “the **apprehension**... of the manifold of intuition... [is] the action of the imagination” while “the **comprehension**, i.e., the synthetic unity of the consciousness of this manifold in the concept of an object... [belongs] to the understanding[.]” it follows that reflective judgment is an operation of the imagination carried out on behalf of the understanding. Apprehending

given manifolds of intuition, the imagination enacts a synthesis that allows the understanding to institute a concept.

In reflection, the imagination makes a concept possible through its reflective activity just if it acted on a sensible manifold, in advance of conceptual intervention, to bring that manifold to the unity of a rule that a concept then subsequently expresses. Rules institute unity in manifoldness by making seemingly disparate appearances intelligible *in terms of* one another. A bright light flashes; a loud sound follows. These distinct appearances may be interpreted as a unified phenomenon when their succession is conceived according to a rule: the loud sound (thunder) follows the bright light (lightning) *necessarily*, according to *law*. The one reproduces the other as cause reproduces effect, and the other reproduces the one as effect reproduces cause—they are thought *together* through the rule. It is a necessary fact about regulative relations such as this that they involve the *subordination* of one appearance to another. The relation between lightning and thunder is rule governed because the lightning, in a sense, “rules over” the thunder: the thunder, as effect, owes itself to the lightning, while the lightning does not owe itself to the thunder. When the imagination acts reflectively on a manifold to prepare the ground for a concept, then, what it primarily *does* is institute relations of subordination among its apparent elements: some elements *rule*; others *obey* (are sensitive to the rules of others).¹⁵⁷

The analogy between the imagination’s reflecting activity in reflective judgment and the reflecting activity of reflecting time-difference may now be discerned. The reflective imagination prepares the ground for a concept by instituting relations of subordination among the elements of given manifolds, allowing all to be represented together according to the unity of a rule. Likewise, the action of reflecting time-difference consists in nothing other than the institution of superiority and inferiority among given elements. When it reflects-for-itself, a time-difference reflects manifold others that are, to this extent, reflected-for-another. Just as the lightning brings about the thunder, and not the other way around, so too does the reflecting time-difference bring about those reflected—not, to be sure, ontologically *producing* them, but nevertheless instituting their status *as* reflected. The reflected time-differences are reflected because the reflecting time-difference reflects,

¹⁵⁷ There are of course cases of communal relation and reciprocal causality but even these must be understood in terms of the primary paradigm of subordination—rules are not separable from the relation of “ruling over.”

while, by contrast, the reflecting time-difference reflects because it performs the form. The latter is *superior*, reflecting-for-itself; the former are *inferior*, being reflected only for this other. In this way, the reflected others fall under the “rule” of the reflecting time-difference: they come about *for its sake*, being passively reflected as a mere expression of its active reflecting.

Falling under the rule of the reflecting time-difference, in this way, allows the reflected others to be represented *together*, in their manifoldness, as a *unity*: no matter how manifold they may be, *all* of them are reflected by this *one* reflecting time-difference; all of them fall together under its *rule*. To the extent that reflected time-differences are recuperable as *intuitions*, the reflecting time-difference is not simply *analogous* to a concept—it has *become* a concept entirely. To the extent that it continues to reflect others (that do not, in turn, come to reflect *it*) a reflecting time-difference is equivalent to the “the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one” (*KrVA68/B93*, 204-205)—a concept as such. We have every reason to expect, therefore, that a unified *self-consciousness* with an intentional relation to an *object* should somehow become intelligible through the conceptual action of this reflecting time-difference. For now, though, it is enough to recognize that, in reflecting-for-itself, a time-difference performs the selfsame activity as the imagination performs when it reflects on given manifolds.

4. *Time-Difference and Purposiveness: The Performative Universal*

A reflecting time-difference may be recuperable as a concept insofar as it reflects others *that do not reflect back*, but of course these others *do* reflect back. The action of *their* reflecting-for-self is instigated by the very reflecting-for-self of the element that reflects them. Reflecting time-differences may count as concepts, but only as ever vanishing ones—a reflecting time-difference is a concept whose moment of conception is also its instant of destruction. It is a concept that is only every flickering in and out of rulership. This seemingly deleterious truth in fact holds the key to the question of *purposiveness*, namely: How is it *possible* that the imagination would carry out a synthesis in advance of, and so in partial isolation from, the unity instituted by a concept?

“**Reflecting**[.]” Kant writes, “in our case requires a principle just as much as does determining, in which the underlying concept of the object prescribes the rule to the power of judgment and thus plays the role of the principle” (*KU.20:211.15*). Just as our judging activity is guided in the case of determining by a pure

concept of the understanding that defines certain marks in advance that all sensible manifolds must exhibit, so too is our (imaginative) judging activity guided by a “principle” in the case of reflecting. “The principle of reflection on given objects of nature[,]” Kant continues, “is that for all things in nature empirically determinate **concepts** can be found” (KU.20:211.15). Reflection is the activity of finding concepts for given manifolds: it is accordingly guided by the “principle” that concepts may in fact be found for any manifold that we may ever be in a position to perceive. If we did not presuppose the possibility of finding concepts for every given manifold, “then all reflection would become arbitrary and blind, and hence would be undertaken without any well-grounded expectation of its agreement with nature” (KU.20:212.16).

The principle that concepts may be found for all given manifolds is called the “principle of purposiveness.” But while it may be clear that purposiveness *must* be presupposed in all cases of reflection, it is not clear that this presupposition is in any way *justified*. The question is, then, how and in what way would we become entitled to the presupposition of purposiveness, thereby justifying the reflecting activity of the imagination?

Summing up his introductory remarks about purposiveness, Kant writes:

Hence I understand by an **absolute purposiveness** of natural forms such an external shape as well as an inner structure that are so constituted that their possibility must be grounded in an idea of them in our power of judgment. *For purposiveness is a lawfulness of the contingent as such.* With regard to its products as aggregates, nature proceeds **mechanically, as mere nature**; but with regard to its products as systems... it proceeds **technically**, i.e., as at the same time an **art**. (KU.20:217.20, *emphasis added*).¹⁵⁸

The fact that what Kant describes here is absolute, rather than mere, purposiveness indicates the subjunctive and exegetic character of his remark. He is telling us what nature *would* be like *if* it in fact exhibited an absolutely purposive structure, repeating in all of its particulars the lawfulness it is transcendently constrained to exhibit in general, in order thereby to convey the essential *definition* of purposiveness. In such a case, Kant tells us, it would not only be objects *in general* but even all *particular* objects, down to their most minute properties and traits, that would have their ground in the structural features of our cognition. This would mean that everything in nature would exist *for the sake of* filling niches in the logical system by which they are *judged*. The point of this

¹⁵⁸ For more on the lawfulness of the contingent, see Huseynzadegan (2019, pp. 69 - 71), Ginsborg (1997, 1998), Zuckert (2002, 2007, and 2007a), and Walker (1990).

subjunctive exposition is that, when we represent nature according to the principle of purposiveness, we represent it as if it really *did* exhibit such an absolutely legal arrangement. This it to say, even when we do not attribute purposiveness to an entity as an objective trait, whenever we represent it under the (albeit subjective) principle of purposiveness, we represent it as not only fitting into but as even coming about *for the sake of* an absolutely legal system of nature.

“Purposiveness,” Kant writes, “is a lawfulness of the contingent.” An empirical entity is represented as if it fit into a logical system of nature when even its apparently contingent traits exhibit “lawfulness.” In other words, we have, on the one hand, “the logical system of empirical nature” and, on the other, the *trait* of “the lawfulness of the contingent” that such an object exhibits just if it fits into such an absolute system. While an absolute system of empirical nature as a whole cannot be cognized, the *trait* of “contingent lawfulness” that an entity exhibits insofar as it fits into that system can be, if not “cognized,” then at least represented more or less immediately. The upshot is that whenever we represent nature under the principle of purposiveness (as we do whenever we judge reflectively), we represent a certain entity as exhibiting the trait of contingent lawfulness.

Now, when we represent (through a feeling) this lawfulness, we do not thereby represent any determinate *law*. What we represent instead is the lawlike *character* of the entity, its *suitability* to legal determination—that aspect of any law, not by which it is the *particular* law that it is, but by which, rather, it is a law in general and *as such*, something like the *essence* of law. This result is appropriate to the problem at hand. For, the feeling of such a legal essence is precisely what the situation calls for. Since the empirical system for which the entity is represented as being suitable *to* is not just any legal system but an *absolutely* legal one, the lawlike character that the entity which is supposed to fit into it is felt to exhibit must equally be an *absolute* lawfulness. That is, since the empirical system of which the entity gives testimony is supposed to be an absolutely legal one (extending even to the contingent), the feeling through which the entity speaks must itself be *of an* absolute lawfulness—the *essence* of law itself.

What would the feeling of the essence of law involve? It is through the solution to this question that the analogy of purposiveness with reflecting time-difference will come clear. As we know, for Kant, a law is a

concept and a concept is a rule. What we are dealing with is the essence of *rulership*. What does a rule in general, not this or that rule, but rulership as such consist in?

By now we are familiar with the reversals of reflecting time-difference—a reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself manifold others, and each of these others immediately reflects the one that reflected *it*, instigating a reversal of reflection *through* its being-reflected. And we have just become acquainted with the relation of time-differential reflection to rulership: a reflecting time-difference confers the unity of a rule on the manifold of reflected-others that it reflects. The dynamic of constant reversal, paired with the authority that a reflecting time-difference has over those that it reflects, leads to an understanding of the reversals of reflection as a *permanent revolution*: one element rules over others that are given the mandate and actual capacity for overthrow simply by submitting to rulership.

As an entire process of time-difference, we will now see, these incessant repetitions of reflective revolution lay bear the essence of authority and rulership in general, presenting the *mandate* from which lawfulness always derives its ultimate prerogative. Whenever some time-difference reflects-for-itself manifold others, it always brings about its own being reflected-for-other, conferring upon the others that it reflects a license to reflect *it*. Reciprocally, whenever any time-difference has a license to reflect, it has received this license from *having been reflected* by and for some other time-difference. What this means is that all reflecting capacity, and so all *authority*, is received through a certain species of inheritance: one has authority (to reflect, to rule) because *another* has had authority, and performed in accordance with it.

Thus, as a first result, we may conclude that all authority is inherited—there are *no original mandates to rulership*. But beyond this, the species of inheritance that pertains to the transmission of reflective authority is of a very particular kind. A time-difference receives its mandate to reflect-for-itself only by having been reflected-for-another, and, further, it is required that when it reflects-for-itself, it includes within its manifold the very time-difference that reflected it and conferred upon it its mandate to reflect. Hence, time-differences receive and perform in accordance with their licenses to reflect only by reflecting the very time-differences that reflect them. Authority is not simply inherited through linear transmission; it is always *won* through revolution.

Or, otherwise put, the particular species of inheritance that pertains to the transmission of reflective authority is *revolution*.

Two principles of rulership result. First, the essence of law is revolution—what one feels when one feels the “lawfulness of the contingent,” and so the essence of law as such, representing the principle of purposiveness, is the ongoing vicissitudes of Permanent Revolution. Second, the ultimate prerogative to rule is always derived from having suffered a prior subjugation. If we recall that reflecting-for-self involves the destruction of the reflecting time-difference from which the mandate to reflect is derived, then we see that the subjugated class is always given the legal right to violence simply by being subjugated. The only ground subjugated elements need ever adduce for their rebellion is their own condition of servitude.

5. *Conclusion: Time-Difference and the Origin of Law*

By exhibiting its analogies to the three domains of the imagination—reproduction, reflection, and purposiveness—reflecting time-difference comes (somewhat surprisingly) to the fore as the essence of rulership, and the process of Permanent Revolution emerges as the original ground of every possible regime.

As Trotsky puts it:

The conquest of power... does not complete the revolution, but only opens it. Socialist construction is conceivable only on the foundation of the class struggle, on a national and international scale. This struggle, under the conditions of an overwhelming predominance of capitalist relationships on the world arena, must inevitably lead to explosions, that is, internally to civil wars and externally to revolutionary wars. Therein lies the permanent character of the socialist revolution as such... (Trotsky 1969, 278-279).

A concept, a rule, a regime, a means of classifying and legalizing the manifold, or a legal distribution of class society—no matter how it is named, a norm of this type is always the *product* of Revolution, on the one hand, and that which *instigates* Revolution, on the other. The Revolution is *Permanent* because the attempt to *liquidate* class society, to annihilate the distribution of rulership carried out in one reflective frame, always institutes another system of class, another reflective frame. And, moreover, *all* reflective frames, *all* rules, *all* distributions of class are instituted by nothing other than this very Permanent Revolution by which they are also exploded.

Permanent Revolution relates to rules as what I will call the ‘performative universal’—it is that performance from which *all* rules or concepts derive their ultimate authority. In the discourse of time-difference, the term ‘performance’ has a regimented significance. As opposed to positing, which *expressed* the

essence, reflecting *performs* the form of time-difference. As discussed above, this technical definition of ‘performance’ lined up with our more common sense of the term: we perform, on the one hand, when we act in disguise, and, on the other, when we utter a speech act that effects a *change* (or revolution) in the relative authority of a system of linguistic norms. Reflecting time-difference acts in disguise because the form that it performs is nothing other than the self-alienated essence—the essence that has withdrawn from that of which it is the essence and concealed itself behind a gulf of estrangement. It effects a revolution in the system of norms within which it performs because it always instigates the *annihilation* of the very rule (norm, law, etc.) its reflecting-for-self institutes. In the latter case, what is surprising—and what will be subsequently explored—is that this performative side of (time-differential or linguistic) activity would have a certain priority over its constative counterpart, just as Derrida has suggested,¹⁵⁹ always acting in advance to *institute* the concepts that the constative employs.

Hence, time-difference of the second potency fills out the entire sphere of the imagination: it provides an account for *reproduction, reflection, purposiveness*, and it shows itself as the performative universal to which all conceptual authority is ultimately indebted. Since all these things lead on to higher activities of the understanding, there must be a third potency to the time system...

¹⁵⁹ See Derrida (1988).

Chapter Nine

The Third Potency: (De)construction and the Understanding (The Lie of Time)

The last chapter traced the dynamics of the second potency, exposing the Permanent Revolution of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other and thereby grounding the faculty of imagination. This chronicle of the second potency diagnosed the core, architectonic movements of the time-differential performance of its form. This performance, we saw, led every reflecting time-difference engaged in Permanent Revolution to exhibit the performative universal, or law of laws, which identifies a *prior subjugation* as the source of regulative authority as such. But by reason of its very universality, no reflecting time-difference ever *experiences* the full range of the performative universal that it exhibits. Each remains always within some particular zone of its procedure, exhibiting a demanding one-sidedness, or perspective, that opposes all others. It is on the basis of this one-sidedness that there must be a *third* potency in the time-system.

This chapter will explore this third and final potency of the time-system, stretching its aesthetic logic to the absolute limit and drawing forth *something other than time*. It contains four sections. In the first, I will explore the “one-sidedness” that characterizes reflecting time-difference, showing the annihilatory character of the performative universal to effectively seal off the particular time-differences through which it takes place from the panoptic view of its entire effect. From a reflecting time-difference’s *own* perspective, its reflecting-for-self *does not* occasion its being reflected-for-other, since this passivity is equivalent to the destruction of that perspective, but is rather asymmetrical. An actively reflecting time-difference is sealed off for itself from its passivity by the iron curtain of its own death.

Second, I will explore the consequences of this state-of-affairs. The founding proposition of the third potency is that *every time-difference reflects-for-itself asymmetrically from its own perspective*. The method of the third potency is to adopt the perspective of some one reflecting time-difference as a hypothesis so as to discover what unfolds within the range of its standpoint. Reflecting asymmetrically, a time-difference reflects-for-itself a manifold of other time-differences that *do not* thereby reflect *it*. It institutes its own reflective frame without instigating the incompatible reflective frames of others. The others, however, nevertheless reflect-for-themselves *among themselves*, entertaining the annihilations of Permanent Revolution under the *condition* of the

rule of the time-difference whose perspective we hypothesize. In the limit, this leads every reflecting time-difference to organize all the elements it reflects-for-itself asymmetrically into an ordered *hierarchy* of reflection. Asymmetrical reflecting-for-self shows itself as the activity of *construction*.

Third, I will show every time-difference that performs the activity of construction to simultaneously perform the contrary and corresponding activity of *counter-construction*, thereby enacting the entire, two-sided process of the third potency, namely, *(De)construction*. A time-difference constructs from its own perspective just because it sheers itself from the moment of its passivity. It is capable of doing this because its passivity is coincident with its death, so that the perspectival range of its own “consciousness” extends only to what unfolds within its active moment. In this way, a time-difference defines its own perspective by *repressing* its moment of passivity, quarantining its activity within, and its passivity outside, the boundaries of its conscious understanding. The passivity that a constructing time-difference quarantines outside its consciousness, repressing it within an expansive unconsciousness that is thereby defined, is equivalent to the *active* moments of each of the elements it conscripts within its own conscious hierarchy. Quarantined within the unconscious, these active moments counter-construct their own counter-hierarchies. Every time-difference *constructs* a conscious hierarchy from its own perspective and provokes the *counter-construction* of unconscious counter-hierarchizing outside that perspective, performing as whole the process of *(De)construction*.

Finally, fourth, I will show this process of *(De)construction* to lead ultimately to the time-differential simulation of a manifold of *subject-perspectives*. The counter-hierarchies that unfold within the unconsciousness of a constructing time-difference are uniformly *incompatible* with the hierarchy that the time-difference constructs within the boundaries of its perspective. The constructing time-difference must nevertheless *solicit* its own unconsciousness. This solicitation results in an unconscious feeling of *mortal threat*, in response to which, the constructing time-difference is compelled to *justify itself* as the active element it consciously is. Every constructing time-difference simulates the perspective of an external authority—a subject-perspective—who decides the matter in its own favor. This “subject-perspective” does not exist, but her recognition may be perfectly simulated and *ventriloquized*. Subjectivity comes about as a contrivance of the time-system itself—the

simulation of an *external warrant* for what each element is for itself, from its own standpoint. It is the *lie time tells to itself*.

I. Transition to the Third Potency: From Reflection to Construction

This section introduces the time-differential activity of *construction*, explaining why there must be a third and final potency of time-difference. After reviewing the results of the last chapter, I show the process of Permanent Revolution to inaugurate a multiplicity of time-differential *perspectives*. Since no reflecting time-difference survives its own passivity, reflecting time-differences “understand” themselves as purely active: each is *for itself* an absolute reflecting-for-self that *does not* (because it *cannot*) suffer a passive moment. From its own perspective, every reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself *asymmetrically*, never becoming reflected-for-other—it is only from the panoptic standpoint of the performative universal that reflection is reciprocal. But asymmetrical reflection is no longer reflection at all: it has become *construction*, the activity of the third potency.

1. Review of the Second Potency

Understanding the need for a third potency primarily involves appreciating certain constraints on reflecting-for-self that have so far been only implicitly acknowledged. Thus, to begin with, I will briefly review the process of Permanent Revolution and the performative universal that it articulates.

Time-differential reflection is the performance of the time-differential *form*, and the form is the self-alienated essence—the essence that has become incompatible with that of which it is the essence through the withdrawal of matter—so that reflection is the activity of positing except insofar as it has been drained of its ontological capacity. The statuses of reflection are reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other (active and passive respectively). These statuses are mutually contrary: no element may exhibit both in precisely the same respect. Reflecting-for-self constitutes the direct performance of the form, occurring as an effect of the self-alienation of the essence, the withdrawal of matter, implicit in the ontological adequation of the essence—it is the primary status. Being reflected-for-other, by contrast, applies to the manifold elements that a reflecting time-difference thereby reflects-for-itself—it is the subordinate status.

An active time-difference reflects-for-itself manifold others that are, to this extent, passively reflected-for-other. In reflecting-for-itself, a given time-difference- A_2 institutes its own reflective *frame*. In frame- A_2 , A_2

is active and every element of the manifold it reflects is passive. The institution of this frame is also the institution of a unifying *rule*. The manifold elements that A_2 reflects-for-itself may now be conceived *together* as a unity—they are all alike reflected-for-other by the very same time-difference; all of them fall within the same reflective frame. A_2 itself is the *rule* to those manifold elements it reflects-for-itself within its own frame, both unifying and subordinating these elements.

But reflection, no less than positing, is transitive, reciprocal, and reflexive. Thus, in reflecting-for-itself, a given time-difference- A_2 reflects manifold others, $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, as each reflecting-for-itself. In virtue of the reciprocity condition, each reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of A_2 , and in virtue of the transitivity condition, other than A_2 , each includes within its manifold only those others that A_2 reflected. Thus, in instituting its *own* frame in which it is active, in which it is the rule, A_2 instigates the institution of manifold *other* frames in which it is passively reflected-for-other by the very others it reflected-for-itself, becoming subordinated to the rules of each.

In this exchange, time-difference- A_2 comes to be reflected-for-other with respect to the very elements with respect to which it reflects-for-itself. It both reflects-for-itself and is reflected-for-other, and it exhibits these contrary statuses in precisely “the same respect” (in relation to the very same elements). It therefore suffers the destructive *consequence* of the contrariety, not only becoming *passive* through the exchange but in fact suffering *annihilation* at the hands of this passivity. The frame that A_2 institutes for itself is incompatible with the frames that this institution *instigates* (namely, with frames- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, n_2$): the occurrence of any of these frames occasions the annihilation both of A_2 and of its frame. Nevertheless, because reflecting-for-self remains stubbornly transitive and reciprocal, the moment of instigation can in no way be detached from the moment of institution: A_2 's institution of its own frame always instigates the institution of the incompatible frames that destroy it.

Reciprocally, the institution of these instigated frames (frames- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, n_2$) always has the performative effect of instigating the *re*institution of frame- A_2 —since the reflecting-for-self of each of the elements $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$ stands under the same conditions of transitivity and reciprocity as A_2 's does. And no less than A_2 , each of these active elements is annihilated by its passivity as well, its frame coming to ruin

when its institution instigates the institution of incompatible frames. Thus, what we ultimately end up with is a process of constant annihilation and reproduction: every reflecting time-difference is at once annihilated by the results of its reflecting-for-self and reproduced by the effects of its own annihilation. A whirling process of perpetual replacement takes hold with respect to all reflective frames. Only *one* frame may hold (since all are incompatible), and yet the institution of each instigates the institution of all. This process is literally inconceivable: it is not the sequential order of “one then another,” but the manifold chaos of “*one then all, but only one at a time.*”

This whirling process constituted the highest point of the second potency and the inner principle of the faculty of imagination—I called it Permanent Revolution. Since the institution of a reflective frame is also the institution of a *rule* (a concept), and since *all* rules are indebted to this performative process, Permanent Revolution established that all rules emerge from the very process by which they are at once destroyed. The right to rule is dispensed by nothing other than a prior state of subjugation, every rule involves the subjugation of others. With some development, I showed this process of Permanent Revolution to constitute the principle of purposiveness, which itself enables all reflective judgment. And I referred to it as the “performative universal” because it denotes the universal performance by which all rules come to be, but it pertains in no way to the particular *content* of any of the rules it generates.

These were the results of the second potency.

2. *Two Standpoints: Universal and Singular*

Just as the moment of absolution brought the explication of the first potency to a close—finally making time-difference adequate to its essence and converting positing to givenness—while at the same time containing a certain internal opposition that made a *second* potency necessary (namely, that the adequation of the essence also brought about its self-alienation), so does the highest point of the second potency contain an opposition that calls for a *third*. This opposition will now be exposed.

The core feature of the second potency is the *contrariety* of the two reflective statuses. This contrariety, paired with the reflecting elements’ deprivation of ontological capacity or *substance*, is what distinguishes Permanent Revolution from absolute positing. The Diagram of Absolute Positing, which graphs the dynamic

of Eternal Return, presents the four postures of time-differential positing as a fourfold oneness, so that the interplay of these postures gives time-difference to a more profound identification with the interplay itself (the history of being, Eternal Return). There is *one* sensible world, *one* absolute manifold, and each of its differential elements constantly affirms and promotes the being of all the others. Activity and passivity become *one* for time-differences of the first potency, each abiding absolutely in the other, losing all distinctness in the ontological laughter of pure givenness.

But the Diagram of Reflection, which graphs the dynamic of Permanent Revolution, presents something very different: because reflecting time-difference has been drained of all substance, the active moment of reflecting-for-self can never hold together with the passive moment of being reflected-for-other within a single element. The instigated *passivity* of an actively reflecting time-difference is equivalent to the *annihilation* of that time-difference. This means that the incompatible frames of reflection can never be united within one imaginary world; the contrary reflecting elements may never identify with a more profound oneness. For time-differences of the second potency, there are as many worlds, manifolds, or frames as there are *elements* of any one world. The activity and passivity of some one time-difference stand absolutely apart from one another across the gulf of that time-difference's *death*.

For this reason, to employ an anthropomorphic idiom that I will attempt to justify below, an actively reflecting time-difference does not *understand* its own passivity. It is cut off utterly from this passivity by the occasion of its own death, an annihilation which descends between it and its being reflected-for-other like an impenetrable iron curtain. This is to say, since an actively reflecting time-difference is not only made *passive* when it is reflected-for-other but fully *annihilated* by this passivity, it never *suffers* but rather *perishes* at its hands. It is the complete oblivion of an instant death that is never experienced and so never understood. In its own understanding, then, the reflecting time-difference is an *absolute* reflecting-for-self, containing no passive moment whatsoever. It reflects-for-itself manifold others that are to this extent reflected-for-other and which, from the standpoint of what *it* understands, never reflect it for themselves. In short, every reflecting time-difference understands itself as an *asymmetrical* reflecting—a reflecting-for-self that is never reflected-for-other.

Two standpoint on reflection are now available to us. On the one hand, we may interpret time-differential reflection from the panoptic standpoint of the performative universal—from which every element's act of reflecting-for-self instigates the passivity of its being reflected-for-other. On the other, we may consider it from the singular standpoint of some reflecting time-difference itself, from which its act of reflecting-for-self is asymmetrical, achieving the reflection of others that do not reflect back. The second potency investigated the former, panoptic standpoint, articulating the process of Permanent Revolution. The exposition of the third potency will explore the latter, singular path. It will articulate, not the performative *effect* of reflection (namely, the instigation of incompatible frames), but rather what a reflecting time-difference *is for itself* when it reflects-for-itself, what it takes itself to be.

Before setting out on this final adventure of the time-system, a number of new terms must be introduced. I have used the word 'understanding' above. This will now be elevated to the level of a technical term: what a reflecting time-difference *understands* is whatever falls compatibly within the range of its reflecting-for-itself. It is always, accordingly, a *self*-understanding—it denotes what it *is for itself* whenever it reflects-for-itself. It extends just to the threshold of its own passive death—no further. Thus, while the understanding of the time-difference will ultimately become recognizable as the critical *faculty* of understanding, it need not be understood initially in these anthropomorphic terms. Beyond this, I will also begin deploying the term 'perspective' to articulate to time-differential self-understanding. Reflecting time-difference's understand themselves asymmetrical reflectings-for-self. This asymmetrical reflecting-for-self constitutes the *perspective* of the reflecting time-difference. From its own perspective, a reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself a manifold that does not reflect back.

3. *From Reflection to Construction: Why is a Third Potency Necessary?*

The adventure of the third potency consists in the exploration of a reflecting time-difference's singular perspective. It hopes to achieve a description not of what time-differential reflection *performs* (Permanent Revolution), but of what it *means*, a description of what a reflecting time-difference understands itself to be when it reflects-for-itself. But just because an investigation like this is available does not prove that it is in any

way *necessary*, such that it could give rise to a genuinely independent potency of the time-system. Before proceeding, I will offer a brief justification of the third potency's inevitability.

Just as we find justification for the second potency in the results of the first (finding in the adquating moment of absolution a process of alienation), so too do we find the need for a third potency in the conclusions of the second. Permanent Revolution constitutes the performative universal—the law of laws—because it defines the process by which all laws both come to be and suffer cancellation. It sits at the core of the performative or illocutionary practices of language because it articulates the process by which laws, rules, or norms may be overturned through the very act of their assertion. Now, as we know, Permanent Revolution strips all rules back to the universal process of their generation, taking no part in the determination of their particular content—so that, from this panoptic standpoint, the only license any rule ever doles out to the elements it subjugates is the universal right to Revolution. But in order for these Revolutions to be possible, the rules against which subjugated elements revolt must have a particular content of *some* sort, a content that differs from the content of the rule that comes to replace it. If not, then the Revolution would yield no results.

The particular content of any rule is defined by the unique constraints of its regime. All rules are principles for conferring unity upon manifoldness, and the unified structure that thereby emerges constitutes the *content* of the rule. The concept of 'bird,' for example, sets a standard of correctness to which the judgments in which it is included ought to conform, unifying bird-containing judgments under the banner of this standard. The rule is the concept of 'bird;' the content of the rule are the unity-constraints that the rule exerts on all the judgments that include it. In the idiom of the time-system, some time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself manifold others, which are to this extent reflected-for-other, thereby instituting its own frame within which these others are unified. The rule is the time-difference- A_2 ; the content of the rule is the *order* it confers on the others that fall within its frame. If the order that holds within a particular time-differential frame constitutes the content of the rule that institutes that frame, then the order that holds within one frame must differ from the order that holds within the frame that overthrows it in the course of Permanent Revolution.

One reflective frame differs from another just by the identify of its reflecting member: frame- A_2 is the same as frame- B_2 except that A_2 reflects-for-itself in the former frame, while B_2 does so in the latter. Permanent

Revolution is possible because every time-differential frame is unique in terms of its reflecting member. But these frames exert only a *nascent* order and a *minimal* uniqueness. The only order to speak of comes from the reflecting-for-self of the one and only active element—other than uniformly being reflected-for-other with respect to this instituting element, the reflected others exhibit no order among themselves. And, for this reason, the *only* distinguishing mark of any time-differential frame is the identify of its instituting element; *within* each frame, the same disorganized manifold carries out the same activity as occurs within every other frame. Thus, although every frame has a unique content at the level of the second potency, so that Permanent Revolution is indeed possible, that content is only *barely* distinct. In order for the full effect of Permanent Revolution to be realized, that content must become fully distinct and maximally determined.

In order for this to happen, careful attention must be paid to the effect that the definitive rule of a given frame exerts upon the manifold elements it rules. We must consider the frame-instituting reflecting-for-self of the reflecting time-difference to be *constant* so as to achieve an understanding of the *constative* meaning that this rule has. It is as if we are diving into one isolated *moment* of Permanent Revolution so as to appreciate what exactly is overthrown through the revolt. Doing this is taking on the *perspective* of some one reflecting time-difference as a hypothesis, attempting to say what a time-difference understands itself *as* when it reflects-for-itself.

Since taking on the perspective of a singular reflecting time-difference as a hypothesis is just what the exploration of the third potency requires, we can understand the exposition of this potency as, in a certain sense, a further analysis of the *second* potency from which it breaks. This exposition of a single moment of Revolution as *constant* is necessary to a proper articulation of Permanent Revolution itself—it elucidates exactly *what*, in detail, the Revolution constantly overturns. Since this analysis requires us to consider the overturnings of Permanent Revolution as *arrested*, however—broken from—it delineates the processes of an entirely new and independent potency of the time-system.

We are about to enter into the *perspective* of some reflecting time-difference, to consider its reflecting-for-self as asymmetrical or constant, so as to uncover the constative meaning of its rule. When a reflecting time-difference reflects-for-itself it institutes a frame; when it reflects-for-itself asymmetrically, that frame persists: it

is not overturned in the moment of institution, but comes to be as a subsistent structure. Since it sets up the beginnings of a *structure*, asymmetric reflecting-for-self requires. I will call it *construction*.

II. The Construction of Hierarchy: The Regime of the Rule

The third potency of time-difference is defined by a time-difference's identification with its own perspective—the asymmetry of its reflecting-for-self. Our inquiry into this potency therefore involves the adoption of this standpoint as a hypothetical constraint. Suppose the reflecting-for-self of some one given time-difference were constant, *what follows?* This supposition is not only, or even primarily, *ours*: it belongs rather to every reflecting time-difference itself as a necessary element of its articulation *to* itself of what it is *for* itself as a pure reflecting-for-self. The name for time-difference's progressive articulation of what it takes itself to be insofar as it *constantly* reflects-for-itself—its ongoing determination of its *constative* meaning—is construction. Suppose some time-difference reflects-for-itself *asymmetrically*, undergoing no performative reversal but installing its rule permanently. What follows?

1. Five Traits of Asymmetric Reflection: The Conditional Revolution

Let us call this one asymmetrically reflecting element time-difference- A_3 and the manifold of other time-differences that it reflects time-differences- b_3 . The uppercase letter 'A' designates that the reflecting time-difference is *singular*, while the lowercase letter 'b' stipulates that the reflected time-differences are *manifold*. The subscript, in both cases, denotes that these are time-differences of the *third* potency. What follows requires reflecting and reflected time-differences to be carefully distinguished, so I will retain sedulous terminological discipline as we proceed: lowercase letters designate *manifolds* of reflected time-differences, falling under the rule of some *one* time-difference that reflects them; uppercase letters designate *singular* time-differences that reflect manifolds. Time-difference- A_3 reflects-for-itself. Time-differences- b_3 populate the manifold that comes to be thereby reflected-for-another. Everything that time-difference- A_3 reflects-for-itself counts as a time-difference- b_3 , and there is nothing included within the manifold of time-differences- b_3 that is not reflected by time-difference- A_3 .

The first result of these constraints is familiar: every element- b_3 that A_3 reflects-for-itself is necessarily reflected as a time-difference. As we saw at the previous level, a reflecting time-difference is only capable of

reflecting-for-itself *other* time-differences. This constraint was inherited from the original essence of time-difference and it is preserved all the way through to the third potency.

Second, since every element- b_3 is a reflected time-difference, it necessarily reflects-for-itself. This result, too, is familiar. A time-difference of the second potency counts as such only if it reflects-for-itself. So since every reflecting time-difference reflects only other time-differences of the second potency, it follows that it reflects only elements that themselves reflect-for-themselves. This constraint, too, is originated in the first potency.

Now, the appreciation of this point in the last chapter led to a realization of the reversal involved in reflection: every reflecting time-difference becomes reflected-for-other by the very time-differences that it reflects-for-itself. But in the case before us the possibility of this reversal is precisely what has been cut off. The reflecting-for-self of time-difference- A_3 is hypothesized to be *asymmetric*, so that it is not overthrown by the reflecting-for-self of any reflected time-difference- b_3 . So time-differences- b_3 do not (or are not considered to) reflect time-difference- A_3 for themselves. But nevertheless they are reflecting time-differences, since this is what A_3 reflects them as being. So how (and what) do they reflect-for-themselves?

Third, every time-difference- b_3 reflects-for-itself a manifold that *includes* only and all other time-differences- b_3 but which *excludes* time-difference- A_3 . While this point, like the previous two, traces some familiar ground, it requires more detailed exposition. I stipulated, above, that every manifold element reflected by A_3 counted as a time-difference- b_3 —to qualify as an instance of b_3 , an element had only to be reflected-for-other by A_3 , and everything A_3 reflected-for-itself was such an element. Since time-differential reflecting is transitive, A_3 reflects-for-itself everything that any one of its elements- b_3 reflects-for-itself, so that everything that some b_3 reflects-for-itself counts as a member of the same manifold- b_3 of which it itself is a member. Thus, as a first result, it is clear that time-differences- b_3 reflect-for-themselves only *other* time-differences- b_3 . Further, however, it is clear that A_3 may not be among the elements that some time-difference- b_3 reflects-for-itself, since, if one did, then A_3 would be reflected-for-other, and it would *not*, to this extent, reflect-for-itself asymmetrically. Thus, time-difference- A_3 , the asymmetry of whose reflecting-for-self is hypothesized, reflects-for-itself each time-difference- b_3 as reflecting-for-itself only the other members of its own manifold- b_3 .

Accordingly, fifth, time-difference- A_3 reflects-for-itself manifold time-differences- b_3 in a state of conditioned Permanent Revolution. In reflecting-for-itself, time-difference- A_3 reflects manifold other time-differences- b_3 . Each element- b_3 is reflected as reflecting-for-itself; it is hypothetically prohibited from reflecting A_3 ; and everything it reflects-for-itself counts as another element- b_3 . Now, A_3 's hypothetical perspective prohibits performative reversal with respect to A_3 —that is, A_3 does not become reflected-for-other by the others it reflects-for-itself—but it does not prohibit this reversal from occurring among the elements- b_3 that it *reflects*. Thus, in reflecting-for-itself manifold other elements- b_3 , every given element- b_3 instigates the reflecting-for-self of every *other* element- b_3 , requiring each to reflect-for-itself a manifold inclusive of *it*. Once any element- b_3 becomes reflected-for-other by any of the others, it is once again instigated to its own reflecting-for-self of all the other elements- b_3 . These reversals are ongoing, incessant—the process of Permanent Revolution. Thus, A_3 stands as the unreflected reflecting-for-self of manifold elements- b_3 , which are undergoing the whirling process of Permanent Revolution among themselves. It is a *conditioned* occurrence of Revolution: every round affirms the reflecting-for-self of A_3 , taking place within the domain of its constraint and effecting revolution only among the elements- b_3 .

This result allows us to define a determinate trait of A_3 's reflecting-for-self, giving particular detail to the rule it exerts. Time-difference- A_3 reflects a manifold of time-differences- b_3 in a state of conditioned Revolution with one another. From the standpoint its own perspective, A_3 's reflecting-for-self of manifold- b_3 is univocal and asymmetrical: A_3 reflects elements that *do not* reflect back. But the reflectings of the elements of the asymmetrically reflected manifold- b_3 are in a mutual state of constant reversal. A_3 retains a quiescent, undisturbed authority over all time-differences- b_3 , while these subordinated time-differences themselves entertain a constant struggle for survival among each other. The chief mark of A_3 's unquestioned authority is its complete *indifference* to the results of the Revolution of which its own rulership is the occasion. Every outcome affirms its reflecting-for-self.

2. *The Origin of Hierarchy*

The same procedure we have undertaken with respect to A_3 must be carried out with respect to some element of manifold- b_3 . That is, we must take up the perspective of some time-difference- B_3 as a hypothesis.

We have said, “Suppose the reflecting-for-self of time-difference- A_3 were asymmetric, as it is from its own perspective—what then?” This supposition yields the result: A_3 asymmetrically reflects-for-itself its manifold- b_3 in a state of conditional Revolution, exhibiting the performative universal within the condition of A_3 's rule. Further determining A_3 and defining its perspective more definitely requires us to further determine the performative universal that falls under it. To do so, we issue the same sort of hypothesis as before: “Suppose, further, that the reflecting-for-self of some one element of manifold- b_3 , namely, time-difference- B_3 , were to *continue* the line of A_3 's asymmetrical reflecting-for-self by, on the one hand, retaining its passivity with respect to A_3 (respecting A_3 's rule), while, on the other, reflecting-for-itself asymmetrically with respect to all other time-differences- b_3 .” Issuing this supposition will allow us to determine A_3 's perspective further. We began with a hypothesis. We continue with a further hypothesis, nested within the first.

Now, just as the adoption of time-difference- A_3 's perspective as a hypothesis may have initially seemed arbitrary, so too may the adoption of some time-difference- b_3 's perspective as a nested hypothesis seem all the more arbitrary—an intervention of *ours*. But, just as in the previous case, this adoption in fact carries with it the force of a rigorous necessity. It is not only *we* who hypothesize but also time-difference- A_3 itself. For, from its own perspective, A_3 commands a regime which it is in the process of conceiving. That regime is not sufficiently conceived until it has been made determinate, and, so long as what falls under it is only the performative universal, that determination has not been achieved. Hence, the elements of the universal must be given concrete determination. This can happen only if some *one* element reflects-for-itself asymmetrically, and so constantly. Hence, it is not only *us*, but time-difference- A_3 itself that takes up the perspective of some time-difference- B_3 as a hypothesis, and it is, moreover, *compelled* to do so by the necessity that defines it as the conception of its own regime.

Time-difference- A_3 asymmetrically reflects-for-itself a manifold- b_3 in a state of conditional Revolution—each element, while respecting the authority of A_3 , reflects-for-itself only others that reciprocally reflect, and so annihilate, *it*. From its own perspective, each of these elements- b_3 reflects-for-itself asymmetrically, and so constantly, but from the perspective of A_3 , every element- b_3 is caught up in the

annihilatory-nascence of the performative universal. But from among this manifold- b_3 , both we and time-difference- A_3 must now select some *one* member whose perspective shall be adopted as a hypothesis.

Call this selected member, time-difference- B_3 . Time-difference- B_3 , still subordinate to A_3 , is deputized as the immediate authority over all time-differences- b_3 (it has become the “second in command,” as it were, in A_3 ’s regime.) Time-difference- B_3 now reflects-for-itself all other time-differences- b_3 *asymmetrically*—it reflects manifold others that *do not* reflect back. Thus, in broad strokes, time-difference- A_3 sustains the conception of its regime by adopting time-difference- B_3 ’s perspective as a hypothesis, selecting from among the manifold it asymmetrically reflects some element that *itself* reflects asymmetrically—perpetuating the lineage of authority in the direction of its own reflection.

Nevertheless, the sense in which A_3 deputizes “some” element of manifold- b_3 for asymmetrical reflecting-for-self must be carefully understood. For, the definitive feature of A_3 ’s mastery over the manifold it reflects is its *indifference* to the outcome of the conditional Revolution holding among its elements—all outcomes affirm A_3 ’s authority, and if they did not, then A_3 would not be the master time-difference that it is, but merely an equal combatant in the conflict of Revolution. Thus, two conditions impress upon the asymmetrical reflecting-for-self of A_3 : on the one hand, it must retain its indifference to the outcome of the Revolution occurring under its condition, and, on the other, it must deputize *some* reflected element as asymmetrically reflecting-for-itself in the direction of its own reflection.

These seemingly contrary conditions require us to take the word ‘some’ in the second condition in a very particular way. All that the continuation of A_3 ’s regime actually requires is that *some* element- b_3 be deputized—it does not matter *which* one. Thus, when A_3 deputizes *some* element- b_3 as an asymmetrical reflecting-for-self, it defines a time-differential *role* that must always be filled by a single time-difference, and only one at a time, but it does not select any particular time-difference to fill it. The time-differential perspective that it adopts as a hypothesis is the perspective of the current victor of the conditional Revolution holding among the elements- b_3 —*whichever that happens to be at any given moment*. As the performative universal carries out its incessant reversals, *every* element- b_3 will cycle through this role of deputy ruler, but what A_3 adopts as a hypothesis is the *general perspective* that these particulars cycle *into* whenever one of them reflects-for-itself. This

designation of a *role* for *any* element- b_3 to play, rather than the empowerment of any one singular element- b_3 , is another mark of A_3 's authority: the particular element playing the role of deputy in its regime is fully exchangeable with others. Thus, while time-difference- A_3 names a certain, *singular* element (at least for now), the time-difference- B_3 that it selects for asymmetrical reflecting-for-self is a *general time-differential position* that may be filled by a plurality of particulars. (We may now understand the capital letter ' B_3 ' as an algebraic variable whose infinite cases are uniformly designated by the lowercase letter ' b_3 .')

With the deputization of time-difference- B_3 , the following state of affairs holds. Time-difference- A_3 asymmetrically reflects-for-itself, not some *manifold- b_3* , but rather some *one* element of this manifold, which occupies the the role of time-difference- B_3 . Time-difference- B_3 stands in a state of double-determination. On the one hand, as an element that A_3 reflects-for-itself asymmetrically, it retains its status of being constantly reflected-for-other with respect to A_3 . But, on the other hand, insofar as A_3 deputizes B_3 as the auxiliary ruler in its regime, B_3 asymmetrically reflects-for-itself its own manifold of time-differences, which remain constantly reflected-for-other with respect to *it*—the institution of this asymmetry in its reflecting-for-self is what its deputization consists in.

Now, this manifold that B_3 asymmetrically reflects comprises only those time-differences- b_3 that *do not* occupy the role of the auxiliary (time-difference- B_3). Crudely put, it is manifold- b_3 after we have separated (any) *one* element from it and elevated this element as an auxiliary ruler. This new manifold- b_3 now stands under *two* rules: immediately under the rule of B_3 and mediately under that of A_3 (under which B_3 also stands). As such a doubly ruled manifold, it is no longer the same as it was when it was ruled only by A_3 and it requires a new designation: I will call it manifold- c_3 . Thus, we may graphically represent the results as follows:

$$A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}c_3$$

Each arrow in this diagram represents an act of asymmetrical reflecting-for-self. By deputizing time-difference- B_3 , A_3 has conferred a further degree of order and determination on its regime. The rule that stands under it, B_3 , now exhibits something other than the performative universal. It is its own determinate rule, commanding its own regime—every element of manifold- c_3 obeys its rule, maintaining a constant status of being reflected-

for-other with respect to it. A_3 has continued its journey into determination by instituting the B_3 's regime as a subset of its own.¹⁶⁰

3. *Iteration and the Definition of the Third Potency*

Now, just as A_3 reflected manifold- b_3 in a state of conditional Revolution, so that each element- b_3 , while respecting A_3 's authority, constantly reflected others that themselves reflected it, so too does B_3 reflect manifold- c_3 in such a (doubly) conditioned state of Revolution. All elements- c_3 respect B_3 's authority, and so by extension A_3 's, and they are defined and unified by this collective respect. But among themselves the elements- c_3 are struck through with reflective contrariety: each receives the same mandate to reflect all the others for itself as all the others receive, and, in acting on this mandate, each entitles the others to reflect *it*. The performative universal reappears—each element- c_3 exhibits only the universal mark of rules as such. Far from fully determining this universal, by deputizing time-difference- B_3 , A_3 has succeed only in deferring its reversals.

Thus, in order that time-difference- A_3 should *continue* the conception of its own regime—and that *we* might continue our determination of what exactly A_3 reflects-for-itself from its own perspective—the same hypothetical procedure that we have now twice undertaken must be enacted a third time. Some time-difference- c_3 , selected from among the elements of manifold- c_3 , must be deputized in B_3 's regime as an auxiliary rule—adding a third-degree ruler to A_3 's regime. Again, the ‘some’ here must be taken in the sense of *any*: when B_3 , and through it A_3 , adopts the perspective of some time-difference- c_3 as a new hypothesis, nested within the last, which is itself nested within the first, it designates a general time-differential *position* that may be occupied by any and all time-differences- c_3 as they continue the circulations of their doubly conditioned Revolution.

Just as A_3 was indifferent to *which* element- b_3 was occupying the position of time-difference- B_3 , but was instead entirely invested in the general perspective that this position entailed, so too is B_3 indifferent to *which* element- c_3 occupies the position of time-difference- C_3 . The momentary victories and destructions of the

¹⁶⁰ In this burgeoning hierarchy of the third potency, a single element, B_3 , exhibits both the contrary statuses of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other simultaneously. But unlike in the second potency, the contrariety has been distributed in this element across different “respects.” That is, B_3 reflects-for-itself, and is *not* reflected-for-other, with respect to manifold- c_3 ; while, conversely, it is reflected-for-other, and does *not* reflect-for-itself, with respect to A_3 . Since the contrariety has been diffused and distributed in this way, B_3 does not perish at its hands as the elements of the second potency do.

Revolution taking place constantly at the level of manifold- c_3 are of no consequence to B_3 (and so of even *less* consequence to A_3)—all that matters is that *some* element- c_3 constantly occupies the position of the rule. Further, as before, when some time-difference- C_3 is deputized, so that it reflects-for-itself the other elements- c_3 *asymmetrically*, this manifold is no longer the same as it was: it now stands under *three* conditions, and it therefore requires a new name. I will call it manifold- d_3 :

$$A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}d_3.$$

We now have a regime with *four* points of hierarchical articulation.

The elements of manifold- d_3 , while triply conditioned— collectively respecting three distinct rules— nevertheless carry on the overturnings of Permanent Revolution among themselves. And, further, everything that this fact gave rise to at the previous levels will evolve once again at the fourth. Thus, from manifold- d_3 a representative D_3 is selected to enact an asymmetrical reflecting-for-self of what now counts as manifold- e_3 , and from this manifold- e_3 , a further representative E_3 is selected for a *further* asymmetrical reflecting-for-self, etc.. At every point of its articulation, A_3 's regime will acquire a further hypothesis to continue determination.

This process is driven to the *n*th degree. Because the “manifold- n_3 ” whose sustained exhibition of the performative universal is a precisely non-numerical *manifold* of incessantly revolting members, so that the subtraction of *one* element never depletes its manifoldness, it does not matter how many rules A_3 interposes between itself and this manifold- n_3 , does not matter how determinate A_3 makes its regime—this universal will always require a further deferral. Hence, the regime that A_3 's perspective consists in conceiving shows itself to be an *n*-membered hierarchy with an indefinitely reticulated structure. I will call it Hierarchy- A_3 .

We may represent Hierarchy- A_3 —the conception of A_3 's complete regime—in two different ways: either as the limitless process of conceptual determination (the endless adoption of further and further rules), or as the theoretical *completion* of this process.

$$\text{Hierarchy-}A_3 \text{ (as complete): } A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3 \rightarrow (n_3+1) = 0.$$

$$\text{Hierarchy-}A_3 \text{ (as process): } A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}n_3+1.$$

The former constitutes what time-difference- A_3 *conceives* when it reflects-for-itself—a complete determination of its regime, down to the most minute particulars, or the complete negation of the performative universal. The

latter constitutes what this conception actually *brings about*, namely the ongoing construction of an ever more determined, but never completed, regime. In the former case, A_3 's hierarchy reaches an ending in a time-difference that is somehow *absolutely* reflected-for-other—respecting all the rules that precede it, but instituting no rule of its own. This zero is an ultimate particular whose every behavior is sufficiently regulated. In the latter, A_3 's hierarchy continues to defer the performative universal (Permanent Revolution) in *search* of an ultimate particular that it never actually discovers.

In either case, I am now able to offer an adequate description of the third potency of time-difference. The reflecting-for-self of any time-difference, from the perspective of that time-difference, is the construction of a hierarchy with n members, where the n th member is either a rigorous zero (an ultimate particular) or a manifold continuing its exhibition of the performative universal and so calling forth a further determination.

III. (De)construction: The End of Time

The last section concluded with the following proposition: Whenever a time-difference reflects-for-itself asymmetrically, it constructs a hierarchy in its own name. Alternatively, we may say, Every time-difference is the construction of a hierarchy from its own perspective. The content of the rule that every reflecting time-difference is for itself is the *hierarchy* that it constructs from its own perspective—the graduated order of reflection in which the contrariety of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other is entirely distributed across an indefinitely reticulated structure, no element reflecting those that reflect it or being reflected by those it reflects. The construction of its hierarchy is the highest achievement of a time-difference's self-expression. But the process of construction is beset on all sides by incompatibility. For, *every* time-difference constructs a hierarchy from its own perspective, and each hierarchy is incompatible with all the others. This section explores the consequences of this perspectival conflict, showing construction to provoke a process of *counter*-construction, and give way to the definitive process of the understanding, namely, (De)construction.

1. *The Mutual Incompatibility of All Time-Differential Hierarchies*

The results of the last section are general to every element of the time-system. We selected time-difference- A_3 and showed it to construct Hierarchy- A_3 from its own perspective, but every reflecting time-difference has its own perspective. This is to say, since every reflecting time-difference is cut off from its

passivity by the iron curtain of its own death, each is *for itself* a pure, uninterrupted activity, reflecting-for-itself *asymmetrically* and thereby, ultimately, constructing a hierarchy in its own name, a structure in which *it* is purely active, and all others stand in a graduated order under the highest condition of its rule. Time-difference- B_3 would construct Hierarchy- B_3 ; time-difference- C_3 would construct Hierarchy- C_3 , etc..¹⁶¹

Now, just as all time-differential *frames* were incompatible with one another, so too are hierarchies mutually incompatible. This proposition follows from two considerations.

First, every hierarchy contains one and only one prime element—that is, only one element that reflects-for-itself asymmetrically while being in no way reflected-for-other. In the following hierarchies- A_3 , - B_3 , and - C_3 , for example,

Hrchy- A_3 : $A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3$

Hrchy- B_3 : $B_3 \rightarrow A_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3$

Hrchy- C_3 : $C_3 \rightarrow A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3,$

the prime elements are always the leftmost members of the set (A_3 , B_3 , and C_3 respectively), and there is only ever one such member. Hierarchies unfold within the bounds of the perspective of some *one* time-difference.

Second, the prime member of any given hierarchy is necessarily a *subordinate* in every other hierarchy. A constructed hierarchy, of the third potency, is simply a reflective frame, of the second potency, whose *order* of reflection has been fully reticulated, exhibiting the form of a graduated structure. For example, Frame- A_2 differs from Hierarchy- A_3 only insofar as the elements of the former fall *only* under the minimal rule that they are uniformly reflected-for-other by A_2 , exhibiting no order among themselves, while the elements of the latter fall not only under the rule of A_3 , but exhibit among themselves a graduated order of greater and lesser authority, preceding members ruling over subsequent ones. Among other things, this means that Frame- A_2 and Hierarchy- A_3 have exactly the *same* elements. It is a fully general fact that *ever* shares the same members as its eponymous frame: Frame- B_2 shares elements with Hierarchy- B_3 ; Frame- C_2 shares elements with Hierarchy- C_3 , etc..

¹⁶¹ In this case, as the prime elements of their own hierarchies, time-differences- B_3 and - C_3 would be singular elements, not (as they were in A_3 's Hierarchy) general time-differential positions.

Now, in addition, we saw in the last chapter that every reflective frame contains the same elements as every other frame, each distinguishing itself only by the identity of its active, reflecting member—that is, Frame- \mathcal{A}_2 has the same members as Frame- \mathcal{B}_2 , which has the same members as Frame- \mathcal{C}_2 . Each distinguishes itself from the others by the fact that its eponymous member is the solely active one. Thus, since every hierarchy shares the same elements as its eponymous frame, while all reflective frames share the same elements, it follows that all hierarchies have the same elements as well. Each is distinguished not by the elements it contains but by the *structure* it confers on these elements, and primarily by the identity of its constructing element. Hence, the prime element of every hierarchy is contained as a subordinate within every other hierarchy.

These two considerations allow us to infer the mutual incompatibility of all time-differential hierarchies. For, on the one hand, the reflecting-for-self of every time-difference is irreducibly contrary to the being reflected-for-other of that same time-difference, while, on the other hand, every time-difference reflects-for-itself asymmetrically as the prime element of its *own* hierarchy, but it is always reflected-for-other in some way as a subordinate within every hierarchy. Since the contrariety of reflecting-for-self and being reflected-for-other can never be reduced or resolved, every time-differential hierarchy is incompatible with all the others.

2. *The Relation of Mutual Instigation*

Since all hierarchies are mutually incompatible, the prime element of each appearing as a subordinate in all the others, it follows that the construction of any one hierarchy precludes the construction of any other. Each may be considered as the *preclusion* of all others. But, nevertheless, there is an important sense in which the construction of some hierarchy does not preclude but rather *instigates* the construction of all those with which it is incompatible. For, the construction of any hierarchy is born, in the realm of the third potency, from the reflecting-for-self of its eponymous element, but that *same* reflecting-for-self, in the realm of the second potency, gives rise to the reflecting-for-self of every element that is thereby reflected. The reflectings-for-self of these reflected elements, each in its turn, gives rise to the construction of one of the very hierarchies with which the original was incompatible, each from within the asymmetry of its own perspective.

For example, suppose some time-difference $\mathcal{A}_{2/3}$ reflects-for-itself a manifold of others, $\mathcal{B}_{2/3}$, $\mathcal{C}_{2/3}$, $\mathcal{D}_{2/3}$, ..., $n_{2/3}$. The '2/3' in the subscripts indicate that we will be considering this action both at the universal level of

the second potency and at the perspectival level of the third. At the level of the third potency, that reflecting-for-self precipitates the construction of Hierarchy- A_3 ,

$$\text{Hierarchy-}A_3: A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow, \dots, n_3.$$

This is how the reflecting appears from A_3 's perspective, what unfolds within the boundaries of its iron curtain. But at the level of the *second* potency, that same reflecting-for-self results in the institution of Frame- A_2 and the instigation of the institution of Frames- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, n_2$.

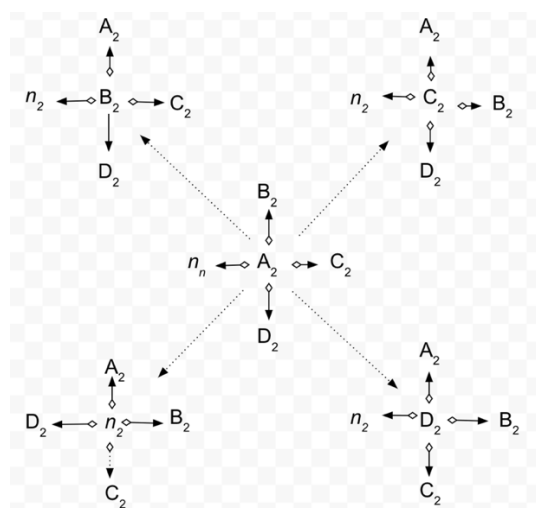


Diagram 9.1

This is what occurs at the *universal* level of the second potency. At the level of the universal (rather than the perspectival), $A_{2/3}$'s reflecting-for-self signifies the instigation of a manifold of incompatible frames. Now, just as A_2 was, each of the active elements of these instigated frames ($B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$) is cut off from its passivity by the iron curtains of its own death, and so each reflects-for-itself asymmetrically from its own perspective, thereby constructing its hierarchy:

$$\text{Hierarchy-}B_3: A_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow D_3 \rightarrow, \dots, n_3.$$

$$\text{Hierarchy-}C_3: B_3 \rightarrow A_3 \rightarrow D_3 \rightarrow, \dots, n_3.$$

$$\text{Hierarchy-}D_3: B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow A_3 \rightarrow, \dots, n_3.$$

$$\text{Hierarchy-}n_3: B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow D_3 \rightarrow, \dots, A_3.$$

The reflecting-for-self of $A_{2/3}$ is always involved in two processes at once. From its own perspective, $A_{2/3}$'s reflecting-for-self is the construction of its eponymous hierarchy. But from the standpoint of the universal, this same reflecting-for-self instigates the reflectings-for-self of each element of the manifold it thereby reflects.

The instigated reflecting-for-self of each of these elements is, from its own perspective, the construction of *its* own eponymous hierarchy.

No constructing time-difference *understands* the performative or instigatory effect that its reflecting-for-self brings about at the universal level of the second potency. By definition, each understands (is conscious of) only the hierarchy that unfolds within the boundaries of its own perspective. Nevertheless, if the time-difference that *constructs*, in the perspectival domain of the third potency, is supposed to be the same element that *instigates* or performs, in the universal realm of the second potency, then it must relate in some way to this instigation. A constructing time-difference must somehow relate to what occurs beyond the perspectival boundaries of its own death—though certainly not through conscious understanding.

3. *The Five Stages of Counter-Construction: Redescribing the Universal*

That which lies beyond the death of a given constructing time-difference, occurring outside the boundaries of its perspective, is the performative universal—the process of Permanent Revolution in which every act of reflecting-for-self symmetrically instigates contrary acts of reflecting-for-self. But if some constructing time-difference of the third potency is capable of (unconsciously) “relating to” this performative universal, then the performative universal must have undergone some sort of *alteration*. For, when, at the level of the second potency, the performative process of Permanent Revolution occurs in its purity, the *only* thing that a given act of reflecting-for-self accomplishes is the instigation of further, contrary acts of reflecting-for-self. No time-differential perspectives are formulated because all reflecting-for-self is symmetric, not asymmetric. By contrast, if some *constructing* time-difference is capable of “relating to” the performative universal as what lies beyond the iron curtain of its death, then a time-differential perspective *has* been formulated; reflecting-for-self has occurred asymmetrically. If a perspective has evolved from Permanent Revolution, then Permanent Revolution has occurred in a different manner than it did when it performed in its purity.

In order to say *how* a constructing time-difference unconsciously relates to what lies beyond its death, we must first come to grips with the alteration that the performative universal undergoes insofar as it is so related. That which lies beyond the perspective of a given constructing time-difference is not the process of

Permanent Revolution (occurring in its symmetric purity), but rather the process of *counter-construction*. Counter-construction must be understood in five stages.

First, a time-difference constructs its own hierarchy if and only if it “quarantines” its reflecting-for-self within its own perspective, insulating this activity from the being reflected-for-other that it instigates at the level of the universal. This point simply recapitulates the founding gesture of the third potency. Every time-difference that reflects-for-itself is annihilated (and subsequently reproduced) by the passive being reflected-for-other that this activity instigates at the level of the performative universal. As such, every reflecting time-difference is cut off, for itself, from its moment of passivity by the iron curtain of its own death. From the universal standpoint of Permanent Revolution, every reflecting time-difference is constantly undergoing annihilation and reproduction, occurring as a vanishing-nascent or a nascent-vanishing. But nothing can have experience of its own death, so, from the perspective of some singular time-difference, reflecting-for-self is asymmetrical and pure, occasioning no passivity. Every time-difference is “quarantined” within its own perspective, cut off from the action of the universal. As we have seen, this condition of quarantine leads ultimately to the construction of a time-differential hierarchy, and hierarchies emerge *only* from this condition, only from and within the perspective of some self-quarantining time-difference.

Second, the self-quarantining action of the constructing time-difference involves both an *inclusion* and an *exclusion*. The self-quarantining time-difference *includes* its active moment of reflecting-for-self within the confines of its perspective (understanding that reflecting-for-self as asymmetrical). But, conversely, it *excludes* its passive moment of being reflected-for-other, consigning it to the other side of its death. Importantly, this exclusion of the passive moment must be understood as something the time-difference actively *does* insofar as it defines its own perspective. For, at the level of the universal, as we know, the reflecting-for-self of any element always instigates the being reflected-for-other of that same element. In cutting off the active from the passive moment, quarantining the former within, and excluding the latter without, its perspective, the constructing time-difference actively *suppresses* the performative consequences of its reflecting-for-self, thrusting these consequences outside itself into the oblivion of what it refuses to understand.

Third, a time-difference's exclusion of its passive moment of being reflected-for-other is equivalent to its exclusion from itself of the active reflectings-for-self of manifold *other* time-differences. For, the passive being reflected-for-other of any time-difference- A_2 always occurs through the active reflectings-for-self of manifold *other* time-differences- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, -n_2$. At the level of the universal, A_2 's active moment of reflecting this manifold for itself, incites its passive moment of being reflected-for-other just because every element it reflects is reflected *as* a reflecting-for-self of *it*. This means that, in excluding its passive moment of being reflected-for-other from its perspective, the self-quarantined A_3 is really excluding the reflectings-for-self of manifold others from itself—the very others, $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, that it reflects-for-itself asymmetrically from its own standpoint.

Fourth, when a time-difference excludes from itself the reflectings-for-self of manifold others, it imposes a state of *quarantine* on each of them, isolating the reflectings of all within the sealed boundaries of their own individual perspectives: self-quarantining always occasions a concomitant quarantining-of-others. When some time-difference- A_3 self-quarantines, locking away its reflecting-for-self within its own perspective, it excludes from itself its passive moment of being reflected-for-other, and this occurs as the the exclusion of the reflectings-for-self of manifold others ($B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$). In doing so, A_3 excludes the reflectings-for-self of each of these others from its own reflecting perspective, which, for them, would have the significance of a passive being reflected-for-other. Since the reflectings-for-self of each of these others, $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, are thereby sealed off from their moments of passivity, they are made asymmetrical, never encountering their annihilation procedures—and any asymmetrical reflecting-for-self defines the *perspective* of the reflecting time-difference. Thus, in defining its *own* perspective, through self-quarantining, A_3 effectively seals the reflectings-for-self of the elements of the manifold *from which* it quarantines within the boundaries of their own quarantined perspectives.

We may elucidate this fourth point by considering an artificially constrained manifold of only two elements, A_3 and B_3 . The reflecting-for-self of each has the *sole* significance of the being reflected-for-other of the other. If A_3 self-quarantines, then it seals its reflecting-for-self away from its being reflected-for-other. But since A_3 's being reflected-for-other is nothing other than B_3 's reflecting-for-self, A_3 's isolation of its own

reflecting-for-self from this being reflected-for-other has the result of isolating B_3 's reflecting-for-self from A_3 's reflecting-for-self. Or, in short, the quarantining is symmetric: in sealing *itself* within its own perspective, A_3 necessarily seals B_3 within *its* own perspective. If we now consider the fact that the elements that A_3 reflects-for-itself are manifold and that it must self-quarantine from *every* element that reflects it for itself, while remembering that A_3 's isolation from the reflecting-for-self of each of these elements also results in isolating the reflecting-for-self of each of these elements from *its* (A_3 's) reflecting-for-self, then we see that A_3 's self-quarantining within its own perspective has the effect of quarantining each element of the manifold that it reflects-for-itself ($B_3, C_3, D_3 \dots, n_3$) within *its* own perspective.

Fifth (and finally), when A_3 self-quarantines, imposing a concomitant state of “other-quarantine” on all the elements it reflects-for-itself, it not only constructs its own hierarchy, but also provokes each element that it other-quarantines to the counter-construction of its own counter-hierarchy. Every time-difference constructs a hierarchy from its own perspective. A time-differential perspective is originated whenever the reflecting-for-self of that time-difference is (understood as) asymmetrical. The reflecting-for-self of any time-difference is asymmetrical if and only if it is sealed off from the being reflected-for-other of that same time-difference. The passive being reflected-for-other of any time-difference is the active reflecting-for-self of each element that that time-difference reflects. In sealing off its own active reflecting-for-self from its own passive being reflected-for-other, a time-difference necessarily seals off the reflecting-for-self of *another* from the passive being reflected-for-other of *it*. The reflecting-for-self of this other, then, comes to be sealed within *its* own perspective precisely *through* the self-quarantining of the time-difference that cuts itself off from it. In defining its *own* perspective, then, quarantining its own asymmetric reflecting-for-self within itself, a time-difference concomitantly provokes the creation of a manifold of *counter*-perspectives, quarantining within *them* the manifold reflectings-for-self *from which* it quarantines, making these reflectings individually asymmetric. Each of these others, quarantined within its own perspective, necessarily constructs its own hierarchy for itself, since its reflecting-for-self is, for it, asymmetric.

For the self-quarantining time-difference, these are “counter-hierarchies” that come to be counter-constructed from the counter-perspectives of others just insofar as it itself constructs its own hierarchy from

its own perspective. That is, if, in constructing its own Hierarchy- A_3 , A_3 self-quarantines from the reflectings-for-self of $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, then it institutes the counter-construction of Hierarchies- $B_2, -C_2, -D_2, \dots, -n_2$.

Thus, the performative universal that a constructing time-difference unconsciously “relates to” (in a way that has yet to be explained) is no longer the pure, symmetric process of Permanent Revolution. For a given constructing time-difference- A_3 , the performative universal has the immediate significance of its own *passivity*; this passivity implies the active reflecting-for-self of the others that A_3 reflected ($B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$). But since A_3 has defined its own perspective, it has quarantined from its passivity, extruded this passivity from itself, and thereby quarantined the activities of the *others* that confer this passivity within *their* own perspectives. As so quarantined, the active reflecting-for-self of each of the others results in the counter-construction of its own eponymous hierarchy. Thus, if a constructing time-difference is in some way to unconsciously “relate to” the performative universal that occurs beyond the iron curtain of its death, then it will relate precisely to these *counter-hierarchies* whose counter-construction its own construction provokes. It will *not* relate to the pure, symmetric process of Permanent Revolution.

4. *Derrida, De(Construction), and The Feeling of Mortal Threat*

The unconscious way in which a constructing time-difference “relates to” the counter-hierarchies that it counter-constructs, which together have the significance of the universal for it, is through a *feeling of mortal threat*. The intensity of this threat is measured by the manifoldness of the others that swarm at the threshold of its perspective, and this manifoldness, in turn, is determined by the number of elements that the constructing time-difference includes within its hierarchy. As such, the more a time-difference understands—the more extensive its hierarchy—the greater its feeling of threat. The entire process of the development of this understanding and this feeling is called (De)construction. (De)construction is the definitive process of the third potency.

Derrida never ceased to remind us that (De)construction does not simply *overturn* oppositional hierarchies, so that it is never content merely replacing one hierarchy with another. Nor does it attempt to “move beyond” hierarchies altogether—as if domination and differentials of power could simply be foregone under the right managerial scheme. Looking back over his career from its midpoint, Derrida explained that the

“general strategy” of (De)construction consists in a certain “double gesture” or “double writing” that graphs the interval or scission between a given hierarchy and its counter-hierarchies—marking the necessary simultaneity of structures that *cannot* both hold simultaneously. He writes:

What interested me then, that I am attempting to pursue along other lines now, was... a kind of *general strategy of deconstruction*.... [W]e must proceed using a double gesture... a double writing... On the one hand, we must traverse a phase of *overturning*. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-a-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment... The necessity of this phase is structural; it is the necessity of an interminable analysis: the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself.... That being said—and on the other hand—to remain in this phase is still to operate on the terrain of and from within the deconstructed system. By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new “concept,” a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime.... Henceforth, in order better to mark this interval... it has been necessary to analyze, to set to work... certain marks... that *by analogy*... I have called undecidables... that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, *without ever* constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (the *pharmakon* is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the supplement is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the hymen is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; the gram is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor an absence, neither a position nor a negation, etc.; spacing is neither space nor time; the incision is neither the incised integrity of a beginning, or of a simple cutting into, nor simple secondarity. Neither/nor, that is, simultaneously either or; the mark is also the marginal limit...). (Derrida 1982, 41 - 42, emphasis added).

The first step toward understanding (De)construction as a time-differential operation consists in understanding the graph of this “simultaneity” about which Derrida teaches us.

(De)construction has two structural phases. In the first phase, it sets upon a given hierarchical opposition within a particular sphere. The *pharmakon* is both remedy and poison, but, according to the traditional hierarchical distribution, it is *primarily* remedy and only poison in a derivative sense: remedy rules over poison in the traditional sphere of the *pharmakon*. (De)construction overturns this hierarchy on the basis of the opposition’s own nuclear principles: the particular subordination of poison to remedy implies, at the level of the universal, the alternative distribution. But the inverted hierarchy (poison over remedy) may no more be permitted to stand than that which it inverts, and so the process of overturning is interminable—it must

always be repeated. “Unlike those authors whose death does not await their demise, the time for overturning is never a dead letter” (Derrida 1982, 42). This incessant overturning of hierarchy marks the first phase of (De)construction.

In the second phase, (De)construction articulates the “interval between inversion, which brings low what was high.” This interval constitutes the “undecidability” of the strife between the two hierarchical distributions of authority—the bedrock of contrariety from which *each* founds its rule and articulates its domination of the other. It is not only that the *pharmakon* is *neither* remedy *nor* poison—so that it would be some “third thing” that stands apart from and perhaps synthesizes the opposing terms. It is also that it is *either* remedy *or* poison. This simultaneity of the “neither/nor” with the “either/or”—a case of *(n)either A over B (n)or of B over A*—constitutes the *highest* achievement of (De)construction. It can never move beyond or “make anything” of this simultaneity without entering the territory of a speculative dialectics.

Characterizing this highest achievement, Derrida writes: “it can only be marked in what I would call a *grouped* textual field: in the last analysis it is impossible to *point* it out, for a unilinear text, or a punctual *position*, an operation signed by a single author, are all by definition incapable of practicing this interval...” (Derrida 1982, 42). The mark that appears in this grouped textual field as the simultaneity of the neither/nor and the either/or is the *undecidability* (but also the inescapability of deciding) the hierarchical distribution. Undecidables are not “included” within hierarchies, but they nevertheless “inhabit” them, “resisting and disorganizing” their regimes.¹⁶²

Let us more closely examine this “grouped textual field” marked by undecidability and discern the lesson it has to teach us about the time-system. As usual, suppose some time-difference- A_3 reflects-for-itself. From its own perspective, A_3 's reflecting-for-self is asymmetrical by definition and it therefore entails the construction of Hierarchy- A_3 .

$$\text{Hierarchy-}A_3: A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow D_3 \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3$$

¹⁶² For relevant commentary on these themes in Derrida's work, see Bennington (2000, 2010, and 2016), Brough (1993), Cornell, Rosenfeld, and Carlson (1992)

But since, in virtue of its necessary asymmetry, A_3 's reflecting-for-self is quarantined within its own perspective, it excludes from itself the passive moment of being reflected-for-other that all reflecting-for-self incites at the level of the universal. Since this passive moment is made up of the active reflectings-for-self of manifold other time-differences, $B_3, C_3, D_3, \dots, n_3$, A_3 's exclusion of its own passivity from its perspective is the exclusion of these active moments of reflecting-for-self that pertain to others. As so excluded from A_3 's perspective, the reflectings-for-self of these others, $B_3, C_3, D_3, \dots, n_3$, are themselves put in a state of quarantine, each reflecting-for-itself *asymmetrically*, so that each counter-constructs its own counter-hierarchy.

The process of this simultaneous construction and counter-construction is called (De)construction—it defines a “grouped textual field” of incompatible, but mutually instigating hierarchies. It may be pictorially represented in the following diagram:

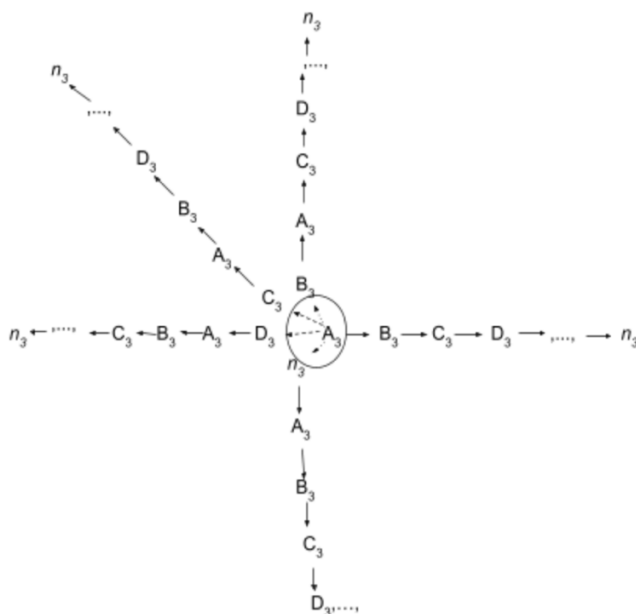


Diagram 9.2: Diagram of (De)construction

The solid arrows in this diagram represent the activity of asymmetrical reflecting-for-self or construction, so that the lines of these arrows represent hierarchies. The circle at the center of the diagram represents the zone of A_3 's perspective. By quarantining itself within its own asymmetrical perspective, it extrudes the active moments of every element it reflects-for-itself, casting them *outside* this zone, beyond the iron curtain of its death. Thus, the broken arrows within this perspectival circle represent the A_3 's suppressive activity which

preserves the boundary between its activity and its passivity, provoking the counter-construction of the active elements it quarantines outside itself.¹⁶³

The entire process takes place at once—every step forward A_3 takes in its own hierarchy adds an element to the number it must extrude from its perspective. Whenever A_3 constructs its own Hierarchy- A_3 , a halo of counter-hierarchies opens up all around it. Every time-difference- B_3 , $-C_3$, $-D_3$, ..., $-n_3$ that A_3 reflects-for-itself asymmetrically from *inside* its own perspective is required to counter-construct its own counter-hierarchy *outside* that perspective. A_3 's perspective is like an armistice line that neither it nor those it provokes to counter-construction may cross. This act of perspectival construction paired with its concomitant counter-construction is the fundamental operation that (De)construction articulates.

Considering the process of (De)construction in its entirety, with both its constructive and counter-constructive sides, allows us to finally discern the way in which a constructing time-difference “relates to” the performative universal. To discern it, let us take note of the two contradictory sides of (De)construction.

On the one hand, the counter-hierarchies whose counter-construction A_3 provokes through the construction of its own hierarchy are 1) uniformly incompatible with Hierarchy- A_3 , 2) unconscious, and 3) simultaneous with Hierarchy- A_3 . Hierarchy- A_3 is incompatible with all of its counter-hierarchies because each one contains A_3 as a passive subordinate. The counter-hierarchies are all unconscious because their counter-construction occurs by definition outside the zone of A_3 's perspective or understanding. And they are simultaneous with Hierarchy- A_3 because they are counter-constructed precisely *through* the construction of this hierarchy: the active reflecting-for-self of every element that A_3 subordinates within its own hierarchy (insofar as this activity applies to A_3) must be consistently quarantined outside A_3 's perspective, and this quarantining accomplishes both the construction of Hierarchy- A_3 and the counter-construction of every counter-hierarchy. Thus, by performing the entire process of (De)construction, time-difference- A_3 both constructs its own hierarchy and simultaneously packs its unconsciousness with a manifold of incompatible counter-hierarchies.

¹⁶³ This concept of “quarantine” is indebted to Geoffrey Bennington’s notion of the “frontier” in Kant. See Bennington (2017)

On the other hand, the constructing time-difference- A_3 must nevertheless *solicit* the counter-construction of every counter-hierarchy whose counter-construction it provokes for its own authority—it cannot separate itself from its unconsciousness, but must rather maintain a distinct relation of *repression* to its contents. For, time-difference- A_3 carves out its own perspective from the Revolutions of the universal *only* by repressing, and so counter-constructing, the unconscious counter-hierarchies with which it is incompatible. But, as we know, quarantining the activities of these others within its unconsciousness is what provokes each to counter-construct its own incompatible counter-hierarchy. Hence, time-difference- A_3 *must* provoke the counter-construction of the counter-hierarchies that are incompatible with it, repressing them within its unconscious, just in order to have carved out its own perspective from the Revolutions of the universal. Thus, the prime-element of every conscious hierarchy stands in a double relation of incompatibility and solicitation with the contents of its unconsciousness.

Time-difference- A_3 must *solicit* the counter-constructing time-differences- $B_3, C_3, D_3, \dots, n_3$, with whose counter-hierarchies its own eponymous hierarchy is *incompatible* just in order to construct the very eponymous hierarchy that stands in this relation of incompatibility. Provoking the counter-construction of counter-hierarchies, incompatible with its own and repressed within its own unconsciousness, is a fully necessary part of any time-difference's construction of its own conscious hierarchy—the *repression* of these counter-hierarchies and the *understanding* of its own hierarchy are simply two inseparable sides of one and the same action of (De)construction.

Since the repressive relation that a (De)constructing time-difference has to its counter-hierarchies is unconscious, it is not one of understanding. It is instead a *feeling*. And since these counter-hierarchies signify the *death* of the (De)constructing time-difference, each presenting a certain version of its repressed passivity, the feeling is one of a doom. Nevertheless, it is a doom that has been *withheld*, consigned to the other side of an iron curtain—it is a feeling of an *impending* doom that never arrives. These unconscious counter-hierarchies are, for the element that solicits them, *nightmares, horrors, bumps in the night*, signifying the universal by means of a feeling of *mortal threat*.

(De)construction is the fundamental process of the third potency. On the one hand, from its own perspective, every time-difference of the third potency constructs an eponymous hierarchy of which it is *conscious*; but, on the other hand, in constructing this hierarchy, every time-difference quarantines the active moments of the elements falling within its regime outside its conscious perspective, repressing its own passivity within an *unconsciousness* that is thereby originated. (De)construction names this entire process by which a time-difference constructs its own hierarchy, represses a manifold of counter-hierarchies, and relates to what it represses through a feeling of mortal threat.

IV. The Lie of Time: Undecidability and the Stratagem of Subjectivity

The current section will delineate the *consequences* of (De)construction, showing this highest process of the time-system to simulate, in the limit, something recognizable as a *subject-perspective*. A (De)constructing time-difference subsists in a state of paranoid anxiety. Every step forward it takes in its constructive activity requires a new repression; every new repression adds a fresh threat of passivity to its unconsciousness; the time-difference may resist these threats only by further constructing its hierarchy, *proving* itself as an active element, but this only adds to the number of unconscious horrors. This leads in the limit to a point of ultimate contradiction: the point at which a constructing time-difference has proven its activity *absolutely*, building out its conscious hierarchy to the *n*th degree, is also the point at which the unconscious threat of passivity will have become *absolute*. At this Point of Undecidability, the (De)constructing time-difference will have no means of demonstration against this threat left to it—its construction has already furnished *absolute proof* of its asymmetrical activity, and yet the threat of passivity has matched this absoluteness, becoming all the more threatening.

The (De)constructing time-difference, at this Point, conceives a certain stratagem. By virtue of the absoluteness of the absolute proof that the construction has furnished, no legitimate authority could ever deny what that proof establishes. As such, this absoluteness may be recuperated and reified as the recognitive perspective of an outside authority who affirms only what the construction has proven absolutely—namely, that the (De)constructing time-difference is absolutely active, and in no way passive. This outside authority does not *exist*—she is a rhetorical stratagem. But her recognition may nevertheless be legitimately *simulated*

because the activity she recognizes has been proven absolutely. Thus, the (De)constructing time-difference simulates and ventriloquizes an authoritative recognition of the legitimacy of its own perspective as a bulwark against its own unconsciousness. This authority is a *subject-perspective*.

1. *Freud, Kafka, and the Point of Undecidability*

Freud tells us that while the objects of repression cannot be known, they nevertheless produce symptoms:

...there is a precondition for the existence of a symptom: some mental process must not have been brought to an end normally—so that it could become conscious. The symptom is a substitute for what did not happen at that point.... A violent opposition must have started against the entry into consciousness of the questionable mental process, and for that reason it remained unconscious. As being something unconscious, it had the power to construct a symptom.... We have proposed to give the pathogenic process which is demonstrated by the resistance the name of *repression*. (Freud 1989, 364, emphasis added).

Repressions construct symptoms: these symptoms are substitutes for “what did not happen” at the point of repression. Rather than undergoing its own passivity at the hands of that which it reflects, a (De)constructing time-difference (A_3) *represses* the reflecting-for-self of the reflected elements ($B_3, C_3, D_3, \dots, n_3$) that would reflect it, quarantining them within its unconscious. This repressed reflecting-for-self “did not happen”—it was, instead, repressed. It therefore constructs a symptom.

Symptoms are not known, but are rather *felt* or *sensed*. It is a sense emanating from the unconscious which has existence *only* as unconscious: “Not only is the sense of the symptoms regularly unconscious, but there is an inseparable relation between this fact of the symptoms being unconscious and the possibility of their existing” (Freud 1989, 346). A (De)constructing time-difference cannot consciously conceive the passivity that it represses, and, for this very reason, it senses this passivity as a “symptom.” It is menaced on all sides by threats whose impress it feels precisely because it *does not* undergo the passivity that is threatened. Thus, while a time-difference conceives the hierarchy of which it is conscious, it *feels* the threat of the counter-hierarchies that it represses and quarantines in its unconscious.

In response to this feeling of impending doom, a (De)constructing time-difference is compelled to *prove* itself as a pure activity. For, it must prove that the passivity with which it is threatened does not, and cannot, legitimately apply to it. This is its only means of defense against what menaces it. It proves that the

passivity does not legitimately apply only by *demonstrating* the purity of its activity, further constructing its hierarchy by means of its absolutely asymmetrical reflecting-for-self.

It as if Kafka gives voice to the (De)constructing time-difference itself in his final story, *The Burrow*, when he writes:

I have completed the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful.... Covered by a moveable layer of moss [lies] the entrance to the burrow; it is secured as safely as anything in this world can be secured; yet someone could step on the moss or break through it, and then my burrow would lie open, and anybody who liked... could make his way in and destroy everything for good... in my dreams I often see a greedy muzzle sniffing around it persistently.... I live in peace in the inmost chamber of my house, and meanwhile the enemy may be burrowing his way slowly and stealthily straight toward me... my enemies are countless.... I might... suddenly feel the teeth of the pursuer in my flank while I am desperately burrowing away.... they come, you hear the scratching of their claws... and already you are lost. Here it is of no avail to console yourself with the thought that you are in your own house; far rather are you in theirs. (Kafka 1995, 325).

The moment a time-differential hierarchy has been successfully constructed is the very instant that “countless enemies” begin to threaten it. The threat is *felt*, though it is never seen; the “greedy muzzle” of the enemy is *dreamed of*, though never conceived. Having constructed this hierarchy as a defense against enemies, you may find that you are not in your own house after all: “far rather are you in theirs.” The only defense is further construction. The burrow must be made more secure, the hierarchy more extensive.

But this very *proof* of itself as a pure activity, the continued construction of the hierarchy, only serves to *exasperate* the threat, making it all the more threatening. For, a time-difference extends its hierarchy just by drawing out new members from the reflected manifold to reflect-for-itself asymmetrically. And the active side of every *new* member of some constructing time-difference’s hierarchy must be repressed and sealed off in the constructing element’s unconscious, forging a counter-hierarchy there and adding to this prime element’s series of symptoms. A three-membered hierarchy ($A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow \dots, n_3$) would contain *three* counter-hierarchies in its unconscious, while a *four*-membered hierarchy ($A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow D_3, \dots, n_3$) would contain *four*—four, rather than three, threats of passivity. The very defensive procedures that a time-difference enacts to *escape* the danger that besets it makes the danger all the more dangerous.

In the end, the burrower in Kafka's story is driven mad by an enemy he can hear everywhere digging its way toward him. It is clear to us, though not to him, that the sound of this enemy is the result of a tinnitus condition caused by his own incessant burrowing:

...my imagination will not rest, and I have actually come to believe—it is useless to deny it to myself—that the whistling is made by some beast, and moreover not by a great many small ones, but by a single big one. Many signs contradict this. The noise can be heard everywhere and always at the same strength, and moreover uniformly, both by day and night. At first, therefore, one cannot but incline to the hypothesis of a great number of little animals; but as I must have found some of them during my digging and I have found nothing, it only remains for me to assume the existence of a great beast, especially as the things that seem to contradict the hypothesis are merely things which make the beast, not so much impossible, as merely *dangerous beyond all one's powers of conception*. (Kafka 1995, 353 *emphasis added*).

The noise is the same everywhere because it is the repressed echo of the burrower's own activity, but this is not a sign that the danger, a great beast, is *impossible*, but rather than it is "*dangerous beyond all one's powers of conception*." And it is precisely *in* its existence beyond conception that its danger consists.

The (De)constructing time-difference constructs a hierarchy from its own perspective; in doing so, it represses the reciprocal reflecting-for-self of *it* that belongs to every element that it reflects, resulting in the counter-construction of manifold counter-hierarchies quarantined within its own unconsciousness; these unconscious counter-hierarchies threaten the prime-difference with a feeling of impending doom; in response to this feeling of threat, the constructing time-difference may do nothing except burrow deeper and deeper into its own perspective, extending its hierarchy further and further; but every step forward in the burrow adds a further degree of intensity to the threat from which its burrowing is supposed to protect it. This feeling of a constantly escalating threat, where every step toward its evasion increases the danger it portends, is the final result of (De)construction. The "grouped textual field" that it marks is the interval between the *one* conscious burrow (perspective, hierarchy, regulative system, etc.) and the manifold *unconscious* burrowers that incessantly approach it with a threat of death.

The more elaborate its own hierarchy, the better *demonstrated* its activity. The better demonstrated its activity, the more clarified its consciousness. The constructing time-difference is constantly establishing its *mandate* to construct, its *right* to activity. Nevertheless, every step forward in the construction adds a new repression to the unconscious, a new threat of passivity, a higher degree of impending doom. There is therefore

a direct proportion between the threat of passivity that the (De)constructing time-difference suffers and the right to activity that it is constantly establishing. The point at which the threat of passivity becomes *inescapable*, then, is also the instant at which the right to activity becomes *absolute*. This point would be equivalent to the *completion* of the constructing element's hierarchy, when manifold- n_3 becomes fully organized, and there is nothing left that does not conform to the regime of the time-difference's perspective. Absolute activity, inescapable threat—call it the Point of Undecidability. The Point of Undecidability is perpetually pursued and eternally deferred.

2. *The Simulation of Subjectivity*

Nevertheless, the constructing time-difference may conceive the *idea* of its achievement—when both the threat of passivity and the right to activity reach a mutual zenith, and this idea drives the (De)constructing time-difference to a certain *stratagem*. To understand this stratagem, and its irreducible ideality, we must adopt a subjunctive mood.

Projecting forward to the Point of Undecidability, a constructing time-difference understands that the point at which it would be most assailed, threatened on all sides with passivity, would also be the point at which it has the greatest right to *dismiss* all challenges to its activity (an activity which would be, at this point, absolute). But since, at this point, its hierarchy would be *complete*, its burrow infinitely reticulated, it would be no longer capable of demonstrating its right to activity by an act of *further* construction. It would be, at this point, required to seek *outside* its own constructing activity for some means of dismissing the threats which would have at this point become disastrous.

If I only had someone I could trust to keep watch at my post of observation; then of course I could descend in perfect peace of mind. I would make an agreement with this trusty confederate of mine that he would keep a careful note of the state of things during my descent and for quite a long time afterwards, and if he saw any sign of danger knock on the moss covering, and if he saw nothing do nothing. With that a clean sweep would be made of all my fears, no residue would be left, or at most my confidant (Kafka 1995, 337-338).

A (De)constructing time-difference is capable of only *one* activity, namely, (De)construction. Thus, up until the Point of Undecidability, it will have proven its *right* to this activity simply by *demonstrating* it. But now, at the very point when both its right to vindicate its own capacity and its need to do so, have become absolute, there is no longer a possibility of undertaking that vindication through the actual execution of the activity of which it must

prove itself capable—for the hierarchy has become fully constructed. Thus, something *outside* the (De)constructing time-difference’s actual *exhibition* of its constructing capacity must be called upon to *justify* that very capacity. Since its *right* to this constructing capacity is now stronger than ever, and indeed absolute, its right to call upon this “outside something”—this trusty confederate—is stronger even than its right had been to exhibit the constructing activity of which it was solely capable.

This confidant would be summoned as a witness to the (De)constructing time-difference’s conscious perspective. It would not be itself *constructed* as an element of the hierarchy that unfolds within that perspective, but would simply exist to *recognize* the legitimacy of that hierarchy. Apart from recognizing that hierarchy, thereby delegitimizing the impending threats of passivity—so “that a clean sweep would be made of all [the time-difference’s] fears”—this witness would “do nothing.” The confederate would be nothing other than an outside authority: it would be the reification and recognition of the (De)constructing time-difference’s *own* absolute right to construction. In this way, the recognitive confidant would be both the *servant* (subject) of the (De)constructing time-difference and the authoritative *undergirding* (subject) of its perspective. It would be a *subject-perspective*.

Now, even at the Point of Undecidability, there is no reason to believe that there actually exists any such subject-perspective. Nor is the existence of such a witness necessarily desirable:

For would he not demand some counter-service from me; would he not at least want to see the burrow? That in itself, to let anyone freely into my burrow, would be exquisitely painful to me. I built it for myself, not for visitors, and I think I would refuse to admit him, not even though he alone made it possible for me to get into the burrow would I let him in. But I simply could not admit him, for either I must let him go in first by himself, which is simply unimaginable, or we must both descend at the same time, in which case the advantage I am supposed to derive from him, that of being kept watch over, would be lost. And what trust can I really put in him? Can I trust one whom I have had under my eyes just as fully when I can’t see him, and the moss covering separates us? (Kafka 1995, 338).

A *real* witness to the time-difference’s authority does not exist and his existence is not desirable, for a real witness is itself a threat. But what *does* exist, and what *is* desirable, is the (De)constructing time-difference’s *right to invoke* such a subject-perspective as a witness to its constructive capacity, even (and especially) because none such exists. That is, the very absoluteness of the time-difference’s right to construction allows it to externalize that right and invoke it as *witness testimony*. For, in virtue of the right’s absoluteness, any *honest* witness (any

witness acting truthfully *as a witness*) would *have* to recognize it. The time-difference may therefore externalize the absoluteness of its right to construction, simulating an external and authoritative *recognition* of that right. The subject-perspective is the “watching over” that the time-difference requires without the “watcher” who could also, at any moment, turn *invader*. Far better indeed that the subject-perspective should be the pure simulation and so the pure recognition of the time-difference’s right to activity than that it should be some *actually existing entity* with needs and functions other than such recognition.

The subject-perspective simulated in this way cannot speak for itself: it must be ventriloquized. *All* that it may say is what it is *made* to say. In response to its feeling of impending doom, the (De)constructing time-difference continuously externalizes the absoluteness of its right to construction and ventriloquizes the voice of a subject-perspective who does nothing but recognize *its* hierarchy, *its* right, over those nightmare counter-hierarchies that impinge upon its consciousness. The voice of the subject-perspective is only a ventriloquized *Yes* for the time-difference that simulates it—*Yes, this conscious hierarchy is legitimate*—and a perpetual, censorious *No* to the unconscious—*No, these counter-hierarchies are illegitimate; their threats are nothing*.

The final result of (De)construction is the simulation of a *subject-perspective*—a ventriloquized witness to the right of a given time-difference to construct its own hierarchy. This result is achieved by diving *all the way down* the rabbit hole of a single time-differential perspective. This dive was made legitimate by the action of the performative universal, which defined the perspective by severing the constructing time-difference from its passive moment, making its reflecting-for-self asymmetrical. Thus, what we have really done is burrowed all the way *into* a single arrested moment of Permanent Revolution. But Permanent Revolution incites the reflecting-for-self not of one but of *manifold* time-differences, and in every case it severs each from its passive annihilation. Hence, the very same performative universal that justified our dive into *this* time-differential perspective, defines a *manifold* of such perspectives. We may infer that each of these constructing perspectives is subject to the logic of (De)construction—the counter-construction of counter-hierarchies, the constantly escalating threat of a restless unconsciousness, the feeling of impending doom. And we may infer, further, that the (De)constructing time-differences of *these* perspectives retaliate in the same way: simulating their own witnesses, their own subject-perspectives. Thus, our excavation of the time-system concludes with the

simulation of not one but *manifold* subject-perspectives—each ventriloquized as the recognition of a different hierarchy, incompatible with all the others. All of these subject-perspectives, as the next and final chapter will explore, have claims against all the others, and each is just as much a *stratagem* of its controlling element as all the others—bearing no actual existence.

(De)construction, with its moments of construction and counter-construction, and its Point of Undecidability, has shown itself here as the key to all transcendental psychology—the process that leads to the *lie time tells to itself*: the simulation of subjectivity as such.

Chapter Ten

A Sketch of Subjectivity: Politics, Reason, and Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement

The last four chapters have excavated all three potencies of the time-system, elucidating the expressive domain of *positing* and its moment of absolution, the performative realm of *reflection* and its process of Revolution, and, finally, the regulative sphere of *(De)construction*, its Point of Undecidability, and its defensive simulation of subjectivity. Although these potencies relate through mutually articulating (dis)jointures, the inauguration of one potency does not entail the cessation of the potency that precedes it. Rather, the procedures of all three potencies are always carried out *at once*. The moments of (dis)jointure at which the processes are achieved—Absolution, Revolution, and Undecidability—represent aspects of the *same moment at different levels*, so that everything that comes thereby to be produced—being, rules, and subjectivity—occurs *together*. There is only one process of time, but it has three dimensions.

In excavating this three dimensional process, we have been exploring *aesthetic ideas*, which, in Chapter Five, were recognized as absolute intuitions and revealed ultimately as time-differences. I extracted a promise from Kant in advance that these adventures would disclose aesthetic ideas as the “supersensible substratum of humanity” (*KU.5:340.216*). With the completion of the third potency, this promise has begun to be fulfilled: the athletic movement of the time-difference across all three of its potencies has finally resulted in the simulation of something called a *subject-perspective*. This entity—which is, in the end, nothing other than a lie time tells to itself—already exhibits certain traits characteristic of the Kantian subject, but, in this chapter, I will show it to exhibit *all* those traits. I explore them with a single goal in mind, however, namely, to finally provide an answer to the question: *How are genuine aesthetic disagreements possible?* Rather than providing an exhaustive treatment of the rational, social, and political constitution of a subject-perspective, I will provide only the basic sketch of these entities with an eye entirely toward addressing the thesis question of this study.

First, I will enumerate the cognitive faculties of every individual subject-perspective, showing subject-perspectives to be identified primarily with the third potency of time-difference, whose faculty is the understanding, but to also relate in determinate ways to the other two potencies, whose faculties are imagination and sensibility. Second, I will explore the *social-political problem* and its concomitant *paranoia* that afflicts every

subject-perspective. Third, I will interrogate the rational *solution* that all subject-perspectives devise for this problem and attempt collectively to constantly bring into effect—discussing the “space of reasons” which will be equivalent to the *reason for space*. This section will also contain a new mythic deduction of the categories on the basis of the time-system. Finally, I will present the solution to the question of genuine aesthetic disagreement, showing these conflicts to define the essence of aesthetic experience and to force every subject-perspective back through the wormhole of its own simulation, imposing the experience of *all three potencies at once*.

I. The Faculties of a Subject-Perspective: Understanding, Imagination, and Sensibility

We may infer the cognitive faculties of the subject by consulting the processes leading to a subject-perspective’s original simulation. The simulation of a subject-perspective is a reflecting time-difference’s final strategy for establishing the asymmetry, or purity, of its reflecting-for-self. To summarize the causes of simulation, then, is to review the two processes of reflection—Permanent Revolution and (De)construction—and observe the Point of Undecidability in which they finally conclude. I will review those processes and then infer the universal cognitive faculties of all subject-perspectives from their specific traits.

1. Reviewing the Processes of Simulation

From the standpoint of the performative universal (the second potency), a given time-difference- A_2 reflects-for-itself manifold others B_2 , C_2 , D_2 , and n_2 . For these others, this reflecting-for-self has a passive significance. That is, A_2 ’s active reflecting-for-self *signifies* the passive being reflected-for-other of the others:

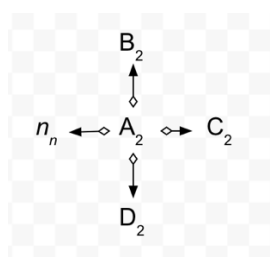


Diagram 10.1

But what this active reflecting-for-self *instigates* is the active reflectings-for-self of every element it reflects. Reflecting-for-self performs the reversal of the very statuses it signifies:

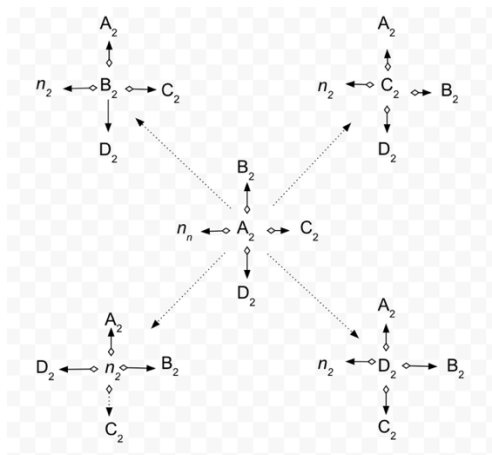


Diagram 10.2

Because A_2 as active is not identical with itself as passive, that is, since

$$A_2\text{-as-reflecting-for-self (active)} \neq A_2\text{-as-being-reflected-for-other (passive)},$$

the reversal that A_2 performs when it reflects-for-itself is equivalent to its own annihilation—every element in its reflected manifold is incited by A_2 's own reflecting to reflect A_2 for itself, so that A_2 is annihilated in every frame. But since the reflectings-for-self of each of these others, $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$ —which *signify* A_2 's passivity also—incite its activity, A_2 is *reproduced* manifold times by the very performance that annihilates it. The incessant Revolutions of this annihilation/reproduction cycle characterizes the performative universal.

Now, since time-difference- A_2 is annihilated by its own passivity, which its active reflecting-for-self always incites, it follows that A_2 has no window onto this passivity, or this passivity is nothing for it. It *is* if it is active, and it *is not* if it is passive, and, so, from its own perspective, it is *always* active. It has a view of what it signifies but not of what it performs. Hence, to adopt this perspective as a hypothesis, in order to see what it entails, is to presume the *asymmetry* of A_2 's active reflecting-for-self: A_2 reflects-for-itself others that *do not* reflect back.

This asymmetrical reflecting-for-self unfolds as the process of *(De)construction*. A_3 reflects some manifold- b for itself that, from its own perspective, does not reflect *it*:

$$A_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}b_3$$

This asymmetrical reflecting involves two procedures. First, since every element of manifold- b_3 is a reflecting time-difference in its own right, it must actively reflect-for-itself. And since it inherits its reflective capacity

from A_3 , it may reflect-for-itself only the other elements of manifold- b_3 . A_3 confers the same mandate to reflect-for-itself on *every* element of this manifold- b_3 , and no matter *which* element reflects-for-itself, A_3 's prime activity is affirmed. Thus, A_3 institutes a conditioned state of Permanent Revolution among the elements of manifold- b_3 —each reflects all the others and, in so doing, incites each of these others to the reflection of *it*—but since every outcome affirm's A_3 's superiority in exactly the same way, A_3 is entirely indifferent to this Revolution, relating identically to every momentary victor, so that the constant annihilation occurring under its condition is not even legible to it. *Whichever* element- b_3 happens to reflect-for-itself at any given moment attains to second degree rulership in A_3 's regime, and we denominate it with the capital letter ' B_3 .' Time-difference- B_3 is reflected-for-other with respect to A_3 but it now reflects-for-itself manifold others asymmetrically in the line of A_3 's own reflecting. Insofar as these others are now *doubly* reflected—by both A_3 and B_3 —they must be collectively referred to by a new name, 'manifold- c_3 ', so that we now have a three-membered hierarchy:

$$A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}c_3$$

Second, although each element- b_3 must reflect-for-itself, it may not, by stipulation, reflect the prime element A_3 for itself—since we are inhabiting A_3 's perspective, which is defined by this constraint. Hence, since the time-difference- B_3 that attains to second-degree rulership in A_3 's regime *would* be performatively incited to reflect A_3 for itself at the level of the universal, this reflecting-for-self must be *extruded* from A_3 's perspective. B_3 's reflecting-for-self of A_3 must be excluded from A_3 's standpoint and quarantined *outside* it.

The first procedure begins A_3 's process of constructing its own conscious hierarchy:

$$A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}c$$

The second begins the counter-construction of the first counter-hierarchy repressed and quarantined within A_3 's unconsciousness.

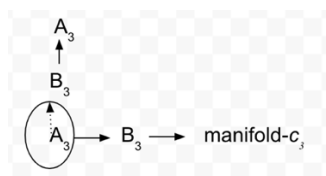


Diagram 10.3

This double procedure will be carried out *indefinitely*. On the one hand, the elements of manifold- c_3 will entertain among themselves a process of conditioned Permanent Revolution to whose every outcome both time-differences- A_3 and B_3 will be indifferent, inaugurating a third-degree rule, time-difference- C_3 , which reflects-for-itself manifold- d_3 . But, on the other hand, this new element- C_3 's reflecting-for-self of A_3 must be repressed and quarantined outside its conscious perspective, so that a *second* counter-hierarchy will be counter-constructed alongside the one which B_3 is in the process of founding.

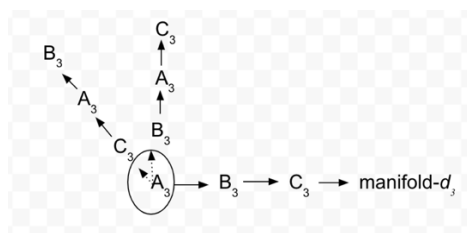


Diagram 10.4

Each counter-hierarchy repressed in A_3 's unconsciousness constitutes a *threat* to it. On the one hand, A_3 must continue to solicit these counter-hierarchies *as* repressed in order to retain the asymmetrical integrity of its own perspective: retaining the *repressed status* of these counter-hierarchies is what allows A_3 to distinguish its perspective and insulate itself from the universal. But, on the other hand, each of these counter-hierarchies signifies A_3 's passivity, and so its annihilation. This annihilation is precisely *not* performed—since it is repressed—but it still maintains this *significance*. Thus, A_3 is required to constantly solicit an unconsciousness that seethes incessantly with the promise of its own death. In response to this ever increasing threat of a passivity or death, A_3 must continue to *prove* its activity by constructing its hierarchy ever further, but every step along this path plants the seed of a new counter-hierarchy in its unconsciousness and exacerbates the severity of the threat against which it proves itself. (De)construction ultimately describes this process of attempting to outrun a threat that becomes more and more severe with every step.

Time-difference- A_3 simulates a subject-perspective when it conceives (De)construction's point of *closure* or Undecidability. Every further element that A_3 adds to its own hierarchy in the process of determining its regime both further *proves* its right to reflect-for-itself *and* adds to the pursuing devils that threaten it on all sides. Conceiving the ideal completion of its hierarchy, when no manifold- n_3 remains, so that a fully regulated

system of concepts stands under the unity of its rule, time-difference- A_3 understands that it would be at *this* point that the threat of death would become most extreme. The threat of passivity achieves its highest degree of severity at the very point at which its *right* to activity would become absolute. This Point of Undecidability between activity and passivity, power and death, is marked by the time-difference's execution of its last strategy—the simulation of a *witness* to its right.

Since the completion of its hierarchy would make its right to its own activity *indubitable*, while this would coincide with the most extreme *threat* to that activity, the time-difference's further proof of its active capacity would be absolutely necessary at the very point at which it can no longer provide that proof through an actual *demonstration* of its activity (the hierarchy being complete). The right would therefore need to be vindicated by other means, and since it *must* be vindicated, the time-difference attempts its stratagem: externalizing the *absoluteness* of its right to construction and appealing to this externalized right as a *witness*. This witness is a *subject-perspective* and it is simulated and ventriloquized as nothing other than the *recognition* of the simulating time-difference's hierarchy.

2. *Transcendental Faculties*

Looking back over this process of simulation, we may infer the faculties that a subject-perspective must be simulated as possessing.

The first and most endemic faculty of a subject-perspective is the *understanding*. A subject-perspective is simulated as the recognition of its simulating time-difference's conscious hierarchy, and the faculty that controls this hierarchy—this system of *rules*—is the understanding. The subject-perspective must recognize this hierarchy as *complete*—having brought even the *nth* manifold under its rule. For, it is only at the projected Point of Undecidability that the subject-perspective's simulation becomes necessary. Thus, the only thing that the subject-perspective is capable of recognizing is the entire hierarchy—a *complete* regulative system. Further, since the completion of this hierarchy is the occasion of its own simulation, a subject-perspective's ventriloquized recognition of its complete conscious hierarchy is equally a *self-recognition*, or a moment of self-consciousness. Every subject-perspective is simulated in a state of self-recognition or *apperception*. Thus, the subject-perspective

is identified most completely with the faculty of understanding through which it conceives a hierarchy of concepts and equally recognizes itself.

But the other two potencies of time-difference play a role in the subject-perspective's facultative structure as well. At every level of the hierarchy it recognizes, the Revolutions of an increasingly conditioned performative universal continue to select and reselect members that fall individually under specific laws. This is the operation of the *imagination* insofar as it is constrained by concepts, or the legal structure instituted by the subject-perspective's constant, ventriloquized act of self-recognition. And even *sensibility* plays a role in the subject-perspective's constitution. For, the activity of reflecting-for-self is possible only in opposition to *matter*, and the subject-perspective is the simulation of the most extreme asymmetry of this reflecting-for-self. Hence, it represents matter as that in whose necessary and most extreme opposition alone it is itself possible—insisting on the *discursive difference* between the concepts through which it recognizes itself and the sensible intuitions that these concepts oppose. Neither the imagination nor the understanding is of use for this representation of matter, since both stand on the side of its opposite. Thus, a subject-perspective *senses* this matter as nothing other than the limit or opposite of its own conceptual, self-recognitive activity.

There is much more to say about the relation a subject-perspective bears to its own faculties, but since understanding, imagination, and sensibility are the primary critical faculties through which experience is cognized, it can be made out already that the subject-perspective any given time-difference simulates and ventriloquizes at the Point of Undecidability begins to satisfy the specifically *Kantian* requirements for subjectivity, and time-difference itself (aesthetic ideas, absolute intuitions) proves itself all over again as the *supersensible ground of subjectivity*.

II. Politics and Paranoia: The Sociality of Subjectivity

The same Revolutions that result in the simulation of *one* self-recognitive witness to *some* element's absolute right to activity also result in the simulation of *manifold* such witnesses to the rights of *many* elements. A subject-perspective is never "alone:" it is simulated always among a manifold of others. As such, subject-perspectives are originally *political* entities, relating to others and negotiating their realities in terms of them. To understand the universal political principles of subjectivity, we must first understand the necessity that every

subject-perspective be simulated in a social space with others. This section diagnoses this necessity and infers the basic sketch of political life from its constituent constraints.

1. *Disinterestedness, Exposure, and Paranoia: Why are there Other Subject-Perspectives?*

The necessary sociality of subjectivity may be inferred from three distinct considerations.

First, every reflecting-time-difference simulates a distinct subject-perspective as the recognition of its unique hierarchy. For, the same annihilation-reproduction process of the universal that insultates *one* element from its own passivity so insulates *every* element from its passivity: *every* time-difference reflects-for-itself asymmetrically from its own perspective. Now, in every case, this asymmetrically reflecting element will construct its own conscious hierarchy from its own perspective, repress and thereby incite the counter-construction of counter-hierarchies within its unconsciousness, and ultimately simulate a self-recognitive subject-perspective as a means of final defense against the manifold threats marshalling on the threshold of its consciousness. Thus, the same time-differential processes that led to the simulation of *one* subject-perspective must necessarily lead to the simulation of *many* such. Time-difference- A , for example, simulates subject-perspective- α ; time-difference- B ; simulates subject-perspective- β ; time-difference- C ; simulates subject-perspective- γ , etc..¹⁶⁴

Second, all subject-perspectives are simulated in a state of radical *exposure* to the threats contained in the unconsciousness of the time-difference that simulates them. For, the simulation of a subject-perspective, as we know, constitutes a constructing time-difference's final attempt to establish its right to activity against the manifold threats of passivity that assail it. In order to recognize the legitimacy of the constructing element's hierarchy, and so the illegitimacy of all the counter-hierarchies that beset it, a subject-perspective must have a clear or *disinterested* view not only of the hierarchy it recognizes but also of the *counter*-hierarchies it dismisses.

That is, in order for the subject-perspective to be appealed to as an authority, it must be capable of *either* endorsing *or* rejecting the simulating element's hierarchy, adopting a disinterested posture with respect to them both the hierarchy it recognizes and the counter-hierarchies it rejects, so that it may consider the possibilities equally and then decide on its *own* hierarchy on the basis of the absolute proof of its prime element's

¹⁶⁴ Greek letters will signify subject-perspectives (whereas English letters signify time-differences).

right to activity. Every subject-perspective is conscious of the hierarchy it recognizes, but it must also be *exposed* to the counter-hierarchies it dismisses just in order to perform the recognitive/legitimizing activity it is simulated as performing.

It is essential to note that this disinterested posture is *just* a posture; the subject-perspective is not really capable of deciding against its own hierarchy—it is a ventriloquized puppet, the sustained outcome of a clever stratagem, so that it may recognize only what it is simulated as recognizing, namely, the simulating time-difference’s own hierarchy. But part of what the time-difference simulates when it simulates the subject-perspective is its disinterested posture: the authority is “open to the possibilities,” but it endorses the hierarchy of the simulating element *freely* because that element’s right to activity is *absolute*. In this state of “openness” to the counter-hierarchies (to their possible legitimacy), the recognitive subject-perspective is also *exposed* to the manifold threats they entail. It stands at the threshold of consciousness and unconsciousness as an authoritative guardian of the conscious. The threat that the time-difference *did* feel is now commuted to the subject-perspective itself. While the time-difference itself is safe from danger within the burrow of its own hierarchy, a hierarchy whose legitimacy has now been recognized, the recognitive agent itself, posted at the door, must now contend with the external menace of the unconscious it delegitimizes.

Third, whereas the counter-hierarchies had, for the constructing time-difference, the significance of passivity and so of death, these same counter-hierarchies have for the recognitive subject-perspective the significance of *erasure*—a fate worse than death. The claims the counter-hierarchies make signify, for the subject-perspective, not only that it *does not exist* but also that it *never existed*. For, each counter-hierarchy signifies the subordination of the prime element of the hierarchy whose construction results in the subject-perspective’s own simulation, making the implicit claim that this element was never prime, but was, in fact, always already subordinate, so that it was never even in a position to simulate. Thus, even though the self-recognitive activity of the subject-perspective is what protects the recognized hierarchy from danger, legitimizing it, this same subject-perspective is capable of such a recognition only because it is radically and constitutively exposed to the counter-hierarchies that have, for it, the significance of total erasure.

Further, just as the time-difference could not *conceive* the contents of its own unconsciousness, neither can the subject-perspective conceive the hierarchies it does not recognize—it must be exposed to them, so that it may achieve the disinterested mark of an authority, but it has no *conceptual* relation to them. It must rather, therefore, *feel* their impress, just as the prime element that simulates it did. The feeling of threat has now been commuted to the subject-perspective, who is like a mother assuring her child against the reality of his nightmares only to face those very same nightmares in her own domain, staring down horrors which, for her, are more horrifying than her child had ever dreamed.

Fourth, each counter-hierarchy that appears in any constructing time-difference's unconsciousness is identical to the primary hierarchy that some *other* time-difference consciously constructs from its own perspective. That is, every *unconscious* counter-hierarchy of some time-difference is structurally equivalent to the *conscious* hierarchy of some *other* time-difference. For, every subordinate element in the conscious hierarchy of some constructing time-difference appears as a prime, counter-constructing element in that time-difference's unconsciousness. The elements that appear as subordinates in the hierarchy of some prime are simply the elements that it reflects-for-itself at the level of the performative universal insofar as these are conceived in a determinate, asymmetric order of reflection. That is, if some time-difference- A_2 were to reflect-for-itself a manifold containing $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$ from the standpoint of the universal,

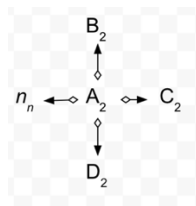


Diagram 10.5

then, from the standpoint of its own perspective, this same time-difference would, on the one hand, construct an ordered hierarchy containing these same members,

$$\text{Hierarchy-}A_3: A_3 \rightarrow B_3 \rightarrow C_3 \rightarrow D_3, \rightarrow, \dots, \rightarrow n_3$$

and, on the the other hand, repress each of these same subordinates as counter-constructing elements within its unconsciousness (see the Diagram of (De)construction, above). So, the counter-constructing elements contained in any time-difference's unconsciousness are none other than the passive elements signified in its imagination frame.

But, in being reflected-for-other within A_2 's imagination frame, each of these passive others, $B_2, C_2, D_2, \dots, n_2$, is instigated to its own act of reflecting-for-self at the level of the universal. Each of these acts is asymmetrical from the perspective of the reflecting element, resulting, accordingly, in the construction of a conscious, eponymous hierarchy. Thus, on the one hand, in constructing its own Hierarchy- A_3 and repressing the activities of time-differences- $B_3, -C_3, -D_3, \dots, n_3$, time-difference- A_3 incites the counter-construction of counter-hierarchies- $B_3, -C_3, -D_3, \dots, n_3$ within its own unconsciousness. But, on the other hand, each of these time-differences- $B_3, -C_3, -D_3, \dots, n_3$ constructs its own *conscious* hierarchy from its own perspective. Since both the unconscious counter-hierarchies and the conscious hierarchies are constructed through the reflectings-for-self of the very same elements, the members of the *unconscious* set are structurally equivalent to the corresponding members of the *conscious* set:

<u>Unconscious</u>	=	<u>Conscious</u>
Counter-Hierarchy- B_3	=	Hierarchy- B_3
Counter-Hierarchy- C_3	=	Hierarchy- C_3
Counter-Hierarchy- D_3	=	Hierarchy- D_3
, ...,	=	, ...,
Counter-Hierarchy- n_3	=	Hierarchy- n_3

Thus, for every counter-hierarchy contained in time-difference- A_3 's *unconsciousness*, there is some structurally equivalent primary hierarchy unfolding from the *conscious* perspective of some other time-difference. Conversely, the conscious hierarchy of every time-difference is repeated as a counter-hierarchy within the unconsciousness of every other time-difference.

Leibniz teaches us in section 9 of his *Discourse on Metaphysics* that “it is not true that two substances can resemble each other completely and differ only in number” (Leibniz 1976, 308). Two systems may be *distinct* just if they differ in some way (identity of indiscernibles). Since they are structurally equivalent, the only “discernible” difference between some Counter-hierarchy- B_3 , contained in A_3 's unconsciousness, and the Hierarchy- B_3 unfolding within B_3 's conscious perspective is the fact that the former is unconscious and the latter is conscious. In order for these two systems to remain *distinct* from one another, then, this distinction between conscious and unconscious must be preserved.

Fifth, and finally, the unconsciousness of every simulating time-difference is not unconsciousness for the subject-perspective it simulates but rather a *social space* in which manifold *other* subject-perspectives are met

and confronted. For, as we know, the final defensive strategy that every constructing time-difference executes to protect its conscious hierarchy from unconscious threats is the simulation of an authoritative, (self-)recognitive subject-perspective. Since every unconscious threat (counter-hierarchy) is structurally equivalent to some conscious hierarchy, every subject-perspective defends against counter-hierarchies structurally equivalent to hierarchies defended by *other* subject-perspectives.

As discussed above, a subject-perspective is constitutively simulated as standing *outside* the repression-zone defining the conscious perspective of the time-difference that simulates her—this is how the subject-perspective achieves the mark of her disinterested authority. In order to perform the recognitive function she is simulated as performing, then, a subject-perspective must *straddle* the distinction between conscious and unconscious—inhabiting a distinction that is, for her, *not a distinction*. Now, since the one “discernible” difference that distinguishes some counter-hierarchy- B_3 , contained in a time-difference- A_3 ’s unconsciousness, from its structurally equivalent counterpart, Hierarchy- B_3 , unfolding within B_3 ’s conscious perspective, is the distinction between conscious and unconscious, while this distinction is null for the subject-perspective- a who recognizes Hierarchy- A_3 , it follows that, in exposing herself to the unconscious *Counter-hierarchy- B_3* , so as to decide against it, subject-perspective- a is equally exposing herself to the *conscious* Hierarchy- B_3 and, so, to the *subject-perspective- β* who recognizes it. In other words, for a subject-perspective, the unconscious counter-hierarchies afflicting her simulating time-difference simply *are* the conscious hierarchies of *other* time-differences. There is no difference between the two, and so in exposing herself to hierarchies in whose favor she *does not* decide, she is equally exposing herself to the corresponding subject-perspectives who *do* recognize those hierarchies. The “unconscious,” for her, is not unconsciousness but *social space*—a domain in which she encounters and disputes the recognitive claims of other subject-perspectives. Each subject-perspective recognizes the conscious hierarchy of the time-difference that simulates her, but all are *exposed* to one another. The monsters lurking in the unconsciousnesses of the simulating time-differences as nightmares are not dreams for the subject-perspectives who defend against them—they are real *others*.

A subject-perspective relates to the other subject-perspectives she is simulated with in social space in two ways. On the one hand, she experiences the self-recognitions that these others necessarily perform as a

radical, insoluble threat of erasure. The self-recognition of *one* subject-perspective is simultaneously the contra-recognition of all the others, the disavowal of their hierarchies. On the other hand, every subject-perspective must *solicit* this threat and constantly undergo its horrors simply because it is only in response to their constant impress that she is simulated at all—the persistent imposition of the counter-hierarchies is what requires every time-difference to seek outside *recognition* for its claim. Hence, every subject-perspective must solicit and undergo the threats of the manifold other subject-perspectives, feeling a constantly escalating terror, just in order to preserve the possibility of the self-recognitive activity with which she is fully identified. What a subject-perspective is so threatened *by* is precisely the recognitive-conceptual perspective of the others she must nevertheless solicit—their “mindedness.” As a conceptual-recognitive perspective of her own, then, a “mind”, the subject-perspective is beset on all sides by *other minds* threatening her with unreality. Every subject-perspective is simulated in an original state of social *para-noia*.

2. *Proverbs for Paranoids: Pynchon and the Principles of Politics*

Paranoia constitutes the fundamental relation that every subject-perspective bears to all the others—the feeling that one *needs* other minds that nevertheless threaten one with erasure. The core social-political activity that it articulates is founded on the *contra*-recognition that every act of self-recognition always performs. The self-recognition of every subject-perspective entails the unreality of the others, but the self-recognition of the others must be constantly solicited in order for the self-recognition of the one to be enacted at all. One is always soliciting others who signify one’s unreality precisely in order to prove one’s own existence. Thus, every subject-perspective is constitutively paranoid—she needs other minds that nevertheless signify her unreality. All of politics is grounded in this constitutively irrational paranoia. A fuller treatment of subjectivity would provide a detailed map of the paradoxes, frustrations, and suppressions that take place here. But I will provide only the barest sketch of these phenomena before proceeding to a discussion of the *rational community* that may ultimately arise from them.

Just as Kafka’s dying story gave voice to (De)constructing time-difference itself, so do we find social subject-perspectives expressing their paranoid fears through Thomas Pynchon’s five “Proverbs for Paranoids.” Each of these proverbs embodies a pillar of paranoia, and one of the essential principles of politics. Each would

be, not the self-active declaration of a new cogito, but rather the feverish mutterings for whose delirium the cogito is always meant as an anesthetic. I will examine each proverb in turn and thereby sketch, in outline, the constitutive features of a social subject-perspective's political life.

“Proverbs for Paranoids, 1: You may never get to touch the master, but you can tickle his creatures” (Pynchon 1973, 237). This proverb expresses the first and most fundamental political principle of subjectivity—the *Principle of Conspiracy*.

Simulated as nothing other than the recognition of her simulating element's hierarchy, a paranoid subject-perspective comes to herself out in the open—exposed on all sides to the others who are, for her, a dark wood, an impending threat she *feels* but cannot *conceive*. For, as the externalized witness to her simulating element's right to activity, the subject-perspective must have a disinterested view of both the hierarchy she recognizes *and* the counter-hierarchies she rejects—she must be simulated as deciding *freely* on the hierarchy she acknowledges in virtue of nothing other than absolute *right* to activity pertaining to that hierarchy's prime element. In acknowledging and legitimizing the one hierarchy whose prime element simulates and ventriloquizes her, the subject-perspective *conceives* that hierarchy; while, in rejecting and delegitimizing the manifold counter-hierarchies that populate its simulating prime's unconsciousness, she *non-conceives* those hierarchies, excluding them from the sphere of her recognition. But since the paranoid subject-perspective must nevertheless retain her exposure to these counter-hierarchies in order for her conceptual gaze to be authoritative, she must retain some representational relation to the counters.

Kant originally defines the understanding as a “non-sensible faculty of cognition.” Conversely, the name “non-conceptual cognitive faculty” would pick out the faculty of *sensibility*—though it offers no positive description of it. A paranoid subject-perspective is always simulated in a state of twofold representation: she *conceives* (understands) the hierarchy she recognizes and through which she recognizes herself, and she *feels* (senses) the manifold counter-hierarchies she rejects or irrecognizes.

Every other subject-perspective that surrounds a given one threatens her with erasure—it is, indeed, nothing other than this threat of erasure that the given subject-perspective feels insofar as she retains her necessary exposure to others. If a given subject-perspective-*a* is simulated by some time-difference-*A*₃ as the

recognition of a Hierarchy- A_3 containing subordinate elements- $B_3, -C_3, -D_3, \dots, -n_3$, then each of these subordinates is the basis of its own counter-hierarchy, so that each simulates its own recognitive witness. Each of these other subject-perspectives(- $\beta, -\gamma, -\delta, \dots, -\nu$) recognizes some hierarchy that involves the subordination of time-difference- A_3 and so the erasure of its subject-perspective. So subject-perspective- a is threatened with erasure from *every* subject-perspective-- $\beta, -\gamma, -\delta, \dots, -\nu$.

What every subject-perspective experiences, then, is the menace of a unified cabal. The self-recognitive act of *every* other subject-perspective assails her with the *same* threat of erasure. Despite their manifoldness, these others are, for the paranoid subject-perspective, united under the same banner of conspiracy—they are *all* coming for you, each from its own particular standpoint, but all united by a common malice. They may *appear* disorganized, in virtue of their manifoldness, but the unity of their hostility is evidence of secret lines of communication, a hidden commonality, a concealed meaning.

In order to be capable of such a *coordinated* attack, these others must all answer to some invisible and hugely powerful master pulling the strings in the background. What appears are only the creatures of a far more terrifying overseer whose motivations cannot be fathomed but who has bent his entire will against you. *You cannot touch the master*—his mastery over the creatures consists in nothing other than his invisibility, the secret means by which he transmits the same order to all of his functionaries. *But you can tickle the creatures*: the self-recognitions by which each of them threatens *you* with erasure may always be matched by your *own* act of self-recognition that threatens each of them. So long as the master acts only through his functionaries, though, these retaliations cannot save you. The Principle of Conspiracy expresses the necessity that every paranoid subject-perspective feel all the others to be “in it together,” united under the dominion of a common project.

“Proverbs for Paranoids, 2: The innocence of the creatures is in inverse proportion to the immortality of the master” (Pynchon 1973, 241). This proverb expresses the second principle of the political—the *Principle of Coalition*.

The *more innocent* the creatures, the *less immortal* the master. It follows that the strategy for conquering the invisible overseer pulling the strings is to progressively reduce the culpability of his puppets. If this expiation project can be completed, then the master may very well be subject to destruction. A paranoid subject-

perspective may begin to reduce the culpability of some (but never all) of the creatures by recognizing that they are threatened by the very same acts of self-recognition that *she* is. That is, if some subject-perspective-*a* feels the threat of some other subject-perspective- β , but at the same time becomes aware that β threatens not only *her* but also some further subject-perspective- γ , then *a* will forge a certain bond of *solidarity* with γ . The very same counter-hierarchy that subject-perspective- β recognizes is incompatible not only with *a*'s hierarchy but also with γ 's. Thus, even though, on one level, γ threatens *a* just as much as β does, on another level, *a* and γ suffer together under the common menace of β 's self-recognition. β 's perspective, for them, is a *common problem*, providing a ground for mutual cooperation.

When *a* and γ relate to one another under the aspect of their common problem—namely, β —they form a *coalition*. *a* and γ continue to threaten one another on another level, but they find solidarity and mutual identification in one another insofar as they are *both* the victims of β . The formation of this coalition requires of *a* that she conditionally forgive γ the crime of his own self-recognition—they are joined in a mutual compact, together electing to disregard the threats they are to one another insofar as they both resist the common menace of β .

This agreement to *take* one another as innocent (in a very conditional way and only in the context of a certain mutual problem) succeeds in bringing the master one degree nearer mortality. For, the power that he wields is a function of the *multitude* he commands: his ability to unite *manifold* and *disparate* perspectives under the banner of a common end, the erasure of this *one* mind, is the sole evidence of his terrible authority, so that his power increases in direct proportion with the multitude of his creatures. By forming a coalition with γ , holding him conditionally *innocent*, subject-perspective-*a* has reduced the immortality of the master by a factor of one. The more members that can be persuaded to join the coalition under a conditional compact of mutual forgiveness, the nearer the master will be brought to mortality.

“Proverbs for Paranoids, 3: If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don’t have to worry about answers” (Pynchon, 251). This proverb expresses the third principle of the political—the *Principle of Discord*.

The members of any coalition stand together within the bond of a common state of conditional forgiveness. If a coalition were to contain subject-perspectives- a , $-\beta$, $-\gamma$, and $-\delta$, then these four would identify not with the threat that each poses to the other three, but with the common problem that they share: manifold others (ε , ζ , η , θ , etc.) assail them all alike with a threat of erasure, and these creatures represent the singular interest of an incredibly powerful master who has only just begun to lose his grip on immortality. The strategy of the coalition must be to turn more and more members, converting further subject-perspectives to their cause and admitting them to their space of mutual trust.

Conversely, the strategy of the master is simple: he must sew discord among the members of the coalition. Subject-perspectives- a , $-\beta$, $-\gamma$, and $-\delta$ stand together in a state of conditional solidarity just to the extent that they identify with the suffering inflicted by the self-recognitions of the others *outside* the coalition (the creatures). But each member of the coalition nevertheless threatens the others with erasure insofar as she must recognize her own hierarchy and disavow *all* others, which are, for her, incompatible counter-hierarchies. Thus, the coalition is only as strong as the members' collective ability to identify with one another under the aspect of their common threat and their concomitant ability to conditionally forgive or ignore the internal threats posed by the members of the coalition itself. The coalition may be *broken*, then, if the master erodes the conditional state of forgiveness on which the union is predicated. The master must emphasize the contra-recognitions occurring *within* the coalition among its own members.

“Proverbs for Paranoids, 4: *You* hide, they seek” (Pynchon, 262). This proverb expresses the fourth principle of the political—the *Principle of Resistance*.

A coalition may resist the master's attempt to sew discord among its ranks only by reemphasizing the conditions of its internal unity. This involves a common *retreat* into passivity. Some subject-perspective- a may identify with the other members of her coalition, β , γ , and δ , only to the extent that she represents their passivity or suffering. As passive sufferers, these others stand under the aspect of the same problem that afflicts a —they are not *threats*, but compatriots. Insofar as each of these other members of the coalition is *active*, however—not suffering the contra-recognitive gaze of those outside the coalition, but performing their own active

recognitions of their own distinct hierarchies—they are every bit as threatening to *a* as any other mind might be: they are creatures of the master after all.

Restoring solidarity among the coalition, then, resisting the master's attempt at discordance, involves rearticulating the shared passivity with which they are all threatened. If each member can be convinced to view the others with nostalgia, compatriots in a common pain, then the passive space of mutual identification and conditional forgiveness may be restored. The members of the coalition must always be concealing their activities within a greater and greater degree of shared passivity, while the creatures of the master must always be seeking out this activity and making it explicit.

“Paranoids are not paranoids (Proverb 5) because they're paranoid, but because they keep putting themselves, fucking idiots, deliberately into paranoid situations” (Pynchon, 292). The fifth and final proverb marks not a principle of the political but the principle that brings politics to its end—it is called *The Principle of Enlightenment*.

Anyone is a potential member of the coalition; anyone is a potential creature of the master. There is, in the end, *no master pulling the strings*. The issue is not that there is a genuine overseer who threatens the coalition; the issue is that *we* (fucking idiots) are in a state of reciprocal threat. It is not that all the others are coming for *me* alone, while these others themselves stand in a state of secret alliance. It is rather that *each* of us is a threat to *all* the others. This is the common “paranoid situation” of all subject-perspectives.

The Proverbs for Paranoids conclude with the discovery of the Principle of Enlightenment. Unlike the previous four, this principle does not define a distinct political function of the paranoiac—neither a defensive tactic of the coalition, nor an offensive strategy of the master. It rather diagnoses the entire “paranoid situation” in whose context every subject-perspective is originally simulated, designating a subject-perspective's realization of that situation precisely *as* a paranoid one.

The paranoid situation names the interlocking system of relations in which every subject-perspective must solicit others for the very existence that these others necessarily threaten with erasure—that is, it names the political situation of every subject-perspective (mind, nous) of being *with* (para-) others. The realization that this situation is a paranoid one is the recognition that, despite the uniformity of their threat, the other subject-

perspectives with whom one is situated *are not* participants in a conspiracy; there is no master; they are not creatures; no one is pulling the strings. *You* are not the only one threatened by the very others whom you must solicit for existence; *every* subject-perspective stands in this relation to all the others. The realization of this fact—the dawning of Enlightenment—reformulates the political problem that each subject-perspective faces as a *rational* one.

III. Common Ground: Categories and the Space of Reasons

The *enlightened* subject-perspective, as opposed to the paranoid one, realizes that her problem is not with any particular enemy or set of enemies, but rather with the entire paranoid-political *situation* in which she finds itself. What must be mitigated is not the individual menace that some set of others exhibits, but, rather, the entire threatening character of all others. No longer a space in which problems *arise*, the paranoid situation itself is now a problem. The resolution of this problem—of the entire paranoid situation—constitutes the transition from politics to reason.

In this section, I delineate this transition. Groups of paranoid subject-perspectives form political coalitions by mutually identifying with a common passivity. These coalitions are necessarily partial—it is the union of *some* against others. Rational subject-perspectives, by contrast, identify with the common traits of their interlocking *activities*. The activity of a subject-perspective is her recognition of her hierarchy. A subject-perspective becomes *rational* when she learns to identify with the *general traits* of Hierarchy as such, rather than with her unique hierarchy. These general traits are articulated by Kant's categories, and so rational subject-perspectives recognize themselves through the *categories* rather than through their own unique hierarchies. This new identification with generality provides the common ground of a rational community.

1. *The Universal Ground*

We may gain some initial insight into the way in which the problem of the paranoid situation may be resolved by reconsidering the ways in which the problems that arose *within* that situation were mitigated. The members of a coalition attempt to mitigate the problem they suffer from within the paranoid situation by mutually identifying with the condition of that problem—namely, with the passivity that the recognitive consciousness of some other inflicts. Identifying with this shared passivity allows the otherwise discordant

subject-perspectives to formulate a conditional coalition because it reveals a *common ground*, a way in which each may recognize herself in all the others.

Now, while the problem of the paranoid situation *itself* cannot be resolved through any appeal to a common suffering, it too must be addressed through the discovery of some mutual commonality. No appeal to a shared suffering may be made because, while each problem posed *within* the paranoid situation always affects some but never all subject-perspectives (for there must always be some mind that *exerts* the threat that the others suffer), the problem of the paranoid situation itself is fully general to *all* subject-perspectives. No *one* subject-perspective poses and so stands outside the problem of the paranoid situation. While an appeal to a shared passivity and a common enemy may not be made with respect to this general problem, *some* sort of common ground may be uncovered.

Since the universal common ground cannot be found in passivity, we must locate it in *activity*. Subject-perspectives differ essentially with respect to the distinct hierarchies they consciously recognize, but they are all alike in that each is the recognition of *some* hierarchy. Recognizing a hierarchy defines the *activity* by which a subject-perspective is at all. A common ground would therefore pertain to the activities of all subject-perspectives if there were some trait or set of traits that necessarily pertained not to this or that unique hierarchy, but to *Hierarchy as such*—to all hierarchies just insofar as they exhibit the form of Hierarchy. The task of disclosing this common ground and resolving the problem of the paranoid situation, then, would begin with cataloging the necessary features that pertain to all hierarchies.

Every hierarchy is an ordered, regulative system of concepts proceeding from the most universal (the prime element) to the most particular (the *n*th element). The traits common to all hierarchies are those that a structure must exhibit in order to count as such a regulative system. These traits are twelve in number, and they fall under the four headings of quantity, quality, relation, and modality—they are *none other than the categories*.

2. *Hierarchy and the Categories*

As discussed in earlier chapters, Kant defines the pure concepts of the understanding in two corresponding tables—the table of the functions of judgment and the table of categories:¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ *KrV*.A70/B95.206 and *KrV*.A80/B106.212

	Functions of Judgment	Categories
<i>Quantity</i>	Universal, Particular, Singular	Unity, Plurality, Totality
<i>Quality</i>	Affirmative, Negative, Infinite	Reality, Negation, Limitation
<i>Relation</i>	Categorical, Hypothetical, Disjunctive	Subsistence, Causality, Community
<i>Modality</i>	Problematic, Assertoric, Apodictic	Possibility, Existence, Necessity

The functions of judgment immediately constrain our cognition and the categories, which are derived from these functions, immediately constrain the *objects* of cognition. In this subsection, I will show these functions and these categories to delineate nothing other than the universal traits of Hierarchy, as such, so that they are available to subject-perspectives as a universal *common ground* in whose mutual identification they may find rational consensus.

Quantity. Every hierarchy constitutes one universal and unified system, defining a series particular rules that may be satisfied by a plurality of equivalent elements, thereby giving expression to some singular time-difference's totality of significance.

The quantitative *unity* of any given hierarchy is a consequence of its definitive *universality*. By definition, every hierarchy systematizes the *entire* manifold of time-differences. The process of systematization is endless, since the elements that come to be organized are manifold, but in principle there are *no* time-differences that fall outside the given hierarchy. It provides a *universal* structure to the whole. Since this is so, every hierarchy represents a regulative *unity* of the manifold on its own terms. From the perspective in which the hierarchy is unfolded, there are *no* (conscious) challenges to the asymmetrical reflecting-for-self of the prime element, and so every element falls in some definitive place within the normative constraints of this *one* regulative system. In this way, universality and unity belong together in an ordered pair of ground and consequence: the universality of the hierarchy is the *ground* of its unity.

Similarly, the condition of *plurality* that pertains to each of the elements that exhibits any given rule articulating the hierarchy is a consequence of the *particularity* that defines that element. As we know, every hierarchy expresses the asymmetrical reflecting-for-self of some singular time-difference. Hierarchy- A_3 , for

example, expresses the asymmetrical reflecting-for-self of time-difference- A_3 . The first node of this hierarchy, then, is defined by the manifold of time-differences- b_3 that A_3 reflects-for-itself asymmetrically ($A_3 \rightarrow \text{manifold-}b_3$).

It is necessary that some *one* of these time-differences- b_3 should be selected to continue the asymmetric line of A_3 's own reflecting-for-self. But A_3 is necessarily *indifferent* to *which* time-difference- b_3 is selected for second-degree reflecting-for-self. *Any* one will do. Thus, while the letter ' A_3 ' refers to a singular, constructing time-difference, the letter ' B_3 ' designates a general time-differential *position* that may be occupied by any time-difference- b_3 . Each of these time-differences is an equivalent "particular" of a plurality of elements that may all, from A_3 's indifferent standpoint, equally exhibit the rule that B_3 defines. In this way, particularity and plurality belong together in an ordered pair of ground and consequence: the particularity of all subordinate elements (the fact that they exhibit a rule) is the *ground* of their necessary plurality.

Finally, the *totality* of any hierarchy articulates the radical *singularity* of the time-difference that constructs it, so that the latter is the ground of the former. The entire hierarchy gives constructive expression to the differential significance of one and only one singular time-difference—the prime. This is the only element in the context of the hierarchy that cannot be exchanged for a plurality of others—it does not stand under a rule, and so it is not a particular. The hierarchy is nothing other than the unfolding of the *significance* of this singular element, and that significance is not completely articulated unless and until the hierarchy has achieved *totality*: whenever there remains a manifold to be further conditioned, there remains occluded dimensions of the singular's significance to be explicated. Thus, *singularity* and *totality* belong together, as above, in an ordered pair of ground and consequence.

Quality. Every hierarchy contains a prime element that affirms its own reality through the progressive negation of manifold subordinates, performing an infinite limitation procedure.

The process of *affirmation* that a prime element undergoes insofar as it constructs a hierarchy involves progressively proving its own *reality*, so that (self-)affirmation is the ground of (time-differential) reality. A time-difference is the prime-element of its own hierarchy just when its reflecting-for-self is asymmetrical—as it is from its own perspective. But all reflecting time-differences are, for themselves, nothing other than their

activities of reflecting-for-self. Thus, in affirming the asymmetry of its reflecting-for-self through the construction of its hierarchy, a time-difference proves its own reality. This affirmation procedure is therefore the *ground* of its reality, and so affirmation and reality belong together as an ordered pair.

This affirmation procedure is also a *negative* operation for the time-differences that fall under the hierarchy as subordinates. *Their* reflectings-for-self—insofar as these would affect the prime element—are constantly negated (deferred, repressed). Since each subordinate is a *for itself* a pure reflecting-for-self, and in no way a being reflected-for-other, this negative operation involves the *negation* of the reality of each subordinate (the denial of what it is for itself). Thus, the negative procedure and the negation of the reality of the subordinate time-differences belong together as an ordered pair: the negative *operation* results in the negation of the reality of the subordinate time-differences.

Finally, this twofold procedure of affirmation and negation must go on *infinitely*: there is always another manifold through which the prime must affirm its own reality by negating the reality of that manifold's elements. Every further member of the hierarchy that is thereby constructed is more and more *limited* by conditions, standing under further and further rules. Just as the other qualities, then, infinity and limitation belong together as an ordered ground/consequence pair: the *infinity* of the affirmation/negation operation leads to an indefinite increase in particular limitations.

Relation. Every hierarchy of elements contains a graduation of elements that stand to one another in the following relations. 1) The subordinate elements contained as particulars within any reflected manifold *inhere* as accidents (categorically) in the reflecting-for-self of the reflecting element, which itself subsists through the conditional revolution of these subordinates. 2) Every reflecting element is the *cause* of the elements it reflects, so that it may always be asserted *hypothetically* that if this active element reflects-for-itself, then these passive elements will be reflected-for-other. 3) Every subordinate element of a reflected manifold stands in a disjunctive relation of community with the other elements of that manifold insofar as their incessant reflective reciprocity articulates the reflecting-for-self of the same active element in the manner of an organism. The first relation expresses the way subordinate elements relate to the active time-difference that reflects them; the second the

way the active element relates to its subordinates; and the third the way in which subordinates relate to one another.

Modality. Finally, every hierarchy defines a series of *problem* spaces in which manifold time-differences reciprocate for *possible* conditional rulership over the others. In each distinct problem space, the existence of some one particular may always be asserted, and this assertion entails the non-existence of all the others at that level—but the existence of no one time-difference at any particular level is *necessary*; one *happens* to exist at one level, another at another; the existence that may always be asserted has a *merely* assertional significance. But what *is* apodictically necessary is that *some* contingent element *always* be selected for assertional existence within every problem space (node) of the hierarchy. Much more could be said about these modalities, but this is enough for the purposes of this sketch. We may infer from this that the *problematic* belongs in an ordered pair with the *possible*, the *assertional* with *existence*, and the *apodictic* with the *necessary*.

Every category, every logical form, delineates a feature not of this or that hierarchy but of *Hierarchy as such*, traits that every hierarchy must exhibit. In order to recognize anything worthy of the name “hierarchy,” then, as all subject-perspectives are simulated as doing, one must recognize something with the general structure explicated by these purely conceptual marks.

3. *From the Feeling of Threat to Rational Respect*

The discovery of these general traits provides a way forward toward the resolution of the general problem of the paranoid situation. We saw that paranoid subject-perspectives were able to mitigate the problems posed by the recognitive consciousnesses of others by forming *coalitions* through an appeal to a shared passivity or suffering. This appeal to suffering was not available as a means of resolving the paranoid situation itself, but the lesson of the coalition was that paranoid problems are mitigated through an emphasis on solidarity and the discovery of a common ground. Realizing that the categories represent general traits of all hierarchies, pertaining to them just insofar as they are hierarchies, provides a common ground and basis for solidarity through *activity*.

The key to actuating this ground, putting it to work as a basis for an *active* and (purportedly) universal social solidarity, consists in certain practices of *identification*, *disidentification*, and *mutual respect*. We begin with a

case of only two subject-perspectives, a and β . Both are simulated as consciously recognizing the hierarchies of their simulating elements, a recognizing Hierarchy- A_3 and β recognizing Hierarchy- B_3 . Since these hierarchies are incompatible (each subordinating the other's prime), and since each subject-perspective is simulated just in order to ensure his or her simulating element against the annihilation signified by the other, each subject-perspective stands originally in a paranoid relation to the other. Each threatens the other with erasure, recognizing a hierarchy that subordinates the other's prime, but at the same time each *solicits* the other for existence—since subject-perspectives are only ever simulated as defenses against the threats posed by others. Hence, originally, a recognizes her own Hierarchy- A_3 , thereby approaching β with erasure, while β recognizes his Hierarchy- B_3 , thereby approaching a with erasure. As political creatures, a and β will mobilize against one another by attempting to recruit others (γ , δ , ϵ , etc.) for a passive coalition, organized under the aspect of the other's common threat, but there is another means of resolution.

While the unique hierarchy that each recognizes is incompatible in *determinate arrangement* with the one recognized by the other, both hierarchies exhibit the common marks of the categories. Rather than attempting to mitigate the paranoid problem through political mobilization against the other, the subject-perspectives may approach a resolution through an act of mutual *identification* and reciprocal disavowal. Each must identify with *only* the general traits of Hierarchy as such, the categories, and *disavow* the particularities of his or her own determinate hierarchy (disidentifying with their contingent history). It is as if each says to the other: “While I am, *in toto*, the conscious recognition of a hierarchy that is incompatible with yours, I *identify* only with the general traits of that hierarchy that are common also to the hierarchy *you* recognize. By contrast, I *disidentify* with the determinate aspects of my hierarchy that are incompatible with yours and in virtue of which I threaten you with erasure. Or, rather, *I will agree to this identification procedure if you will.*” Subject-perspectives who make such a guarantee to one another share a relation not of solidarity but of mutual *respect*.

In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant establishes *respect* as a relation that holds between two people when each disavows both her love of herself (or, in my terms, her love of her unique hierarchy) and her fear of the other (or her fear of the contrary hierarchy this other affirms), each recognizing the other as an exemplary of *law*:

Authentically, respect is the representation of a worth that infringes on my self-love. Thus it is something that is considered as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, even though it has something analogical to both at the same time. The object of respect is thus solely the law, and specifically that law that we lay upon ourselves and yet also as in itself necessary. As a law we are subject to it without asking permission of self-love; as laid upon us by ourselves, it is a consequence of our will, and has from the first point of view an analogy with fear, and from the second with inclination. All respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of uprightness, etc.) of which the person gives us the example. (*GMS.4:401.17*).

Subject-perspectives who *respect* one another have agreed to identify with the *general traits* of Hierarchy as such, disavowing both their own self-love—their insistence on their *own* hierarchies—and their fear of the other, and aligning themselves not with their *own* law, but with law in general. This identification has “analogies” with both the self-love and fear in whose disavowal it consists, but it is primarily a rejection of these feelings in favor of a different means of identification.

4. *The Thing-in-Itself and The Social Contract*

Subject-perspectives who respect one other must practice cognitive transference. Since, on the one hand, a respectful subject-perspective must identify only with the categories (the general traits of Hierarchy as such), while, on the other hand, she must disidentify with her own unique hierarchy to which these categories pertain, it follows that a respectful subject-perspective must conceive some object *other than* her own hierarchy for the categories to pertain to.

The conception of this alternative object is just what the *exclusive* identification with the categories necessarily involves. For, in order for the subject-perspective to both identify with the categories and disavow the only structure that she knows of to which they pertain, she must conceive an *alternative* object for the categories to determine. According to the subject-perspective who conceives it, the categories would apply more legitimately to this alternative object than to the disavowed hierarchy, since there would be nothing about this object that she disavows. Moreover, since the object itself is conceived as nothing other than that to which the categories most rightly pertain, it would be determined by nothing other than the categories—these would articulate its sufficient definition. It is the absolute object of the *pure understanding*—a thing defined by *only* the pure concepts of the understanding.

Now, a subject-perspective is conscious of the categories only through her consciousness of the unique hierarchy she recognizes. The pure object that she conceives as the *real* object of the categories, however, is

defined by its *distinction* from this unique hierarchy. Thus, this pure object must always exceed the consciousness of the subject-perspective—it does not appear to it, is not *for it* (as the unique hierarchy that falls within its standpoint is), but is rather a *thing in itself*. Every subject-perspective therefore becomes conscious of the definitive *traits* of this purely conceptual object, the categories, only through a “veil of appearance,” coming to understand and progressively determine the thing in itself only by conceiving the unique hierarchy that it constitutively exceeds.

The decision to transfer the determinative grip of the categories from the unique hierarchy of which the subject-perspective is conscious to a pure, speculative object that does not and cannot appear constitutes the original *social contract* holding among all respectful (rational) subject-perspectives. By agreeing to identify with the categories and disavow her own history (her own unique hierarchy), every subject-perspective implicitly adopts this pure speculative thing-in-itself as the *rightful* object of her recognition. In reality, she may be forced to identify with the categories through a recognition of the very unique hierarchy that she disavows, but *by rights* she ought to identify with them through the cognition of this speculative thing-in-itself, and this is what she will strive to do. The social contract that respectful subject-perspectives make with one another is a promise *to strive to cognize* this thing-in-itself, forging closer and closer links of identification with one another by forging such links with the categories, each putting more and more distance between herself and her own history.

The first consequence of this social contract is the emergence of transcendental idealism as a moral imperative. The social contract states that all respectful subject-perspectives must identify not with the unique hierarchy that they necessarily recognize (themselves through), but rather with the *categories* that define the general traits of *all* hierarchies. A subject-perspective practices this identification by conceiving a pure speculative entity—a thing-in-itself—as the absolute and aboriginal object of the categories, striving to cognize it. This thing-in-itself is defined by the categories alone, and it is represented as the object of a *pure* understanding. The struggle to identify with the categories alone (and not with one’s own hierarchy), and so to cognize this pure speculative object, entails a struggle to make one’s own impure understanding equivalent to a pure one.

Nevertheless, the basic facts of a subject-perspective's origin remain: each is simulated as the recognition of her own *unique* hierarchy. If some subject-perspective ceased to recognize her own hierarchy, not only would she cease to have ever existed, but she would lose her main representational access to the very categories with which she strives to identify. Thus, even a respectful subject-perspective who has signed the social contract continues to recognize (herself through) her own unique hierarchy, obtaining her representations of the categories through this act of recognition.

Since she has committed to the cognition of the speculative thing-in-itself, however, she comes to represent her unique hierarchy as *mere appearance*. The particulars that fall under the determinate rules that this hierarchy defines certainly do bear the mark of the categories—and in this respect they are anchored to objectivity—but in every other respect they constitute illusions, occlusions of a more profound reality. The epistemic task of the respectful subject-perspective is to represent the entities that take place under the rules of her hierarchy as bearing two aspects: an aspect under which they *appear* (having a determinate place in the unique hierarchy), and an aspect under which they *do not appear*—bearing *only* the mark of the categories. The adoption of this two-aspect interpretation of the objects that fall within her hierarchy constitutes the *moral imperative to transcendental idealism*.

The social payoff of committing to the interpretive standpoint of transcendental idealism (which is what the social contract basically entails) is the emergence of the possibility of *error*. Every subject-perspective is morally impelled to a twofold epistemic task: on the one hand, she must recognize her own unique hierarchy, conceiving the categories originally through this recognitive act, but on the other hand, she must represent all the particulars that fall within the range of this hierarchy's rules as *appearances*, merely the apparent aspect of objects that do not *in themselves* occur within the hierarchy. The result of this twofold interpretation of everything a subject-perspective represents is the emergence of the possibility of *error*.

Coming upon a stick in a pond, a subject-perspective may take it that 'The stick is bent.' Pulling the stick out, however, she may find herself to have been *in error*, so that she now believes that 'The stick is straight.' The stick merely *appeared* bent; in *reality* it was always straight—the former proposition was *incorrect*, the latter *correct*. When a subject-perspective realizes this sort of error, the hierarchy she recognizes undergoes an *alteration*.

At first, she included within her hierarchy the bent-stick commitment, but now she includes the straight-stick proposition. She has become newly *capable* of this sort of alteration-from-error because her core, most important commitment is to the two-aspects of the stick-object: the stick is not in itself the way it appears to be *for her*; that is, it is not *in itself*, the way it appears in her hierarchy. Since the respectful subject-perspective identifies with the categories alone, disidentifying with the particularity of her own unique hierarchy—that is, the transience of mere appearance—she is capable of *disavowing* the bent-stick commitment she'd *had* about the object in favor of the new straight-stick one, which she takes to better represent the object as it is in itself. In short, adopting transcendental idealism as a moral-epistemic position allows the subject-perspective to make *changes* to the hierarchy she recognizes on the basis of the experience of error because her primary identification is not with any particular hierarchy but with the universal traits of Hierarchy as such.

The monumental line that has been crossed here should not pass without note. Every subject-perspective is simulated as the recognitive witness to some unique hierarchy in all its distinct singularity. Up until this point, any alteration of any hierarchy was equivalent to the erasure of the subject-perspective who recognizes it. The simulating prime proves itself through *this* hierarchy, and none other; it calls upon a witness in order to legitimize *this* unique structure, in all its particularity. So long as the subject-perspective was bound exclusively to the simulating procedure of her hierarchy's prime element, she remained incapable of suffering any alterations to that hierarchy. But now that the subject-perspective has identified with the categories, however, disidentifying with the particularity of her hierarchy, she has begun to detach herself from that unique hierarchy. She may therefore admit of error without suffering erasure because she locates her identity within the structure of the categories that remains unchanged through all alterations of the particular hierarchical organization.

This new identification with the categories, paired with its concomitant commitment to strive after the cognition of things as they are in themselves, constitutes a subject-perspective's *betrayal* of the prime element that simulates it, its *abandonment of history*. The subject-perspective was simulated as a means of protection from the unconscious threats knocking at the door, but the paranoid operations that this simulation must undergo in order to provide this protection lead to the betrayal of the very element she is supposed to protect in favor

(we will see) of an alliance with the threats themselves. This is the moment when the dummy comes alive, the monster murders its master—ventriloquism turns to speech.

5. *The Space of Reasons*

The source of *error* for respectful subject-perspectives is always, at bottom, *other* subject-perspectives. In the example above, an individual discovered her own error by pulling the apparently bent stick from the pond and observing its actual straightness with her own eyes, but this sort of phenomenological discovery of one's own mistakes is always predicated on a more important social experience of *others*.

Without this experience, the very idea of error would remain unintelligible—the stick would simply be bent while in the water, straight while outside it. The idea that the stick is *in itself* something other than the way it *appears* is possible only in the context of other minds. For, as discussed above, the idea of the thing-in-itself is the concept of an object as it would be for a pure understanding—that is, it is the idea of an entity determined by the categories alone. Now, the categories are nothing other than the *general traits* of all hierarchies as such, the marks they must exhibit in order to be hierarchies at all. In order for these general traits to ever be conceived, then, the complete manifold of competing, incompatible hierarchies must somehow be represented *together*. If a subject-perspective represents only her *own* hierarchy, she has no way of distinguishing the categories as *general* traits from the features that pertain only to her own hierarchy, belonging to its unique particularity. And even if the subject-perspective represents her own hierarchy in the context of some but not all others, the traits that pertain only to this group would not be distinguishable from those that pertain to all hierarchies just insofar as they are hierarchies. Only when a subject-perspective represents her own hierarchy in the context of *all* others do the categories emerge as the *fully* general traits of Hierarchy itself. Hence, since the experience of error is possible only because a subject-perspective represents every object as possessing an aspect that does not appear, determined by the categories alone, this experience is possible *only* in a universally social setting.

Furthermore, the experience of *others* is not only what makes the experience of error possible in general; it is also what primarily *imposes* distinct errors on any given subject-perspective. For, the experience of error is always the experience of an *incompatibility*. Some subject-perspective recognizes an error in at least two stages. First, she represents two propositions as incompatible (e.g., 'the stick is bent' and 'the stick is straight'), taking

it that commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other. Second, realizing that she *had* endorsed one of them and (at least implicitly) rejected the other, she reverses her commitment, endorsing what she rejected and rejecting what she endorsed.

This reversal involves a determinate change in the hierarchy she recognizes. If she recognized a hierarchy inclusive of commitment *P* (bent-stick),

$$L \rightarrow N \rightarrow O \rightarrow \underline{P}$$

she now rejects *P* in favor of *Q* (straight-stick),

$$L \rightarrow N \rightarrow O \rightarrow \underline{Q}.$$

Thus, recognizing error involves *first* representing incompatibility and *second* reconfiguring one's hierarchy on the basis of this representation.

When one compares two incompatible commitments, what one is really doing is comparing two incompatible *hierarchies*—hierarchies differing, at a minimum, by the immediately incompatible commitments. Every incompatible hierarchy that a given subject-perspective may represent must be recognized by some possible *other* subject-perspective. Thus, when a subject-perspective compares two incompatible commitments, and so compares two incompatible hierarchies, what she is *really* doing is comparing her own perspective with that of an (at least *possible*) other. So even though an individual may be *alone* when she compares the bent-stick commitment with the straight-stick one, she nevertheless implicitly conceives the incompatible commitment as part of the perspective of some *other* who challenges her. When she jettisons her own bent-stick commitment in favor of the new one, she decides to *agree* with this imagined other.

The manifold of threatening and soliciting subject-perspectives together constitute a universal *incompatibility field* whose limitless negotiation results in the progressive unfolding of the speculative object, or thing-in-itself, and the collective approximation of a pure understanding. Respectful subject-perspectives have jointly committed to the endless struggle to cognize the thing-in-itself, identifying exclusively with the categories which constitute their common ground and disavowing their own histories.

Uncovering these categories involves constantly *comparing* one's own hierarchy with all the others. For, these “general traits” are distinguishable only when all hierarchies are taken together in their mutual

incompatibility. But identifying with the categories involves making one's own unique hierarchy of commitments *compatible* with all the others with which one compares it. For, since the categories define the common ground or general traits of all hierarchies, one identifies with them only when one endorses commitments that everyone else endorses or is at least *capable* of endorsing. The actual *execution* of one's social contract, then, involves incessantly bringing one's own hierarchy of commitments in line with everyone else's. Doing this consists primarily in practices of reciprocal recognition—I agree to recognize only what *you* do, so long as you agree to recognize only what *I* do, and so *your* perspective, rather than my own, is *my* primary object of recognition, so long as *my* perspective, rather than your own, is *your* primary object of recognition. This mutual recognition project, in which I attempt to make my perspective conform to yours, just if you make a reciprocal attempt to make your perspective conform to mine, each of us comparing and constantly attempting to resolve the irresolvable incompatibility that holds between us, constitutes our collective struggle to approximate a pure understanding, abandon history, extirpate politics, and cognize the speculative object. These social practices of mutual recognition—which have become newly possible as a result of every respectful subject-perspective's identification with the categories over its own history—progressively convert the paranoid *political* situation into a respectful *space of reasons*.

There are two primary constraints on these social practices of mutual recognition.

First, every subject-perspective must always retain the *unity* of the hierarchy of commitments through which she recognizes herself, not only because the conditions of her simulation remain stubbornly in place *despite* her new rational identification with the categories, but also because the categories with which she identifies pertain to her hierarchy just if that hierarchy constitutes a systematic unity. This may be gleaned from the method by which the categories were derived above, which involved analyzing just these systematic conditions of hierarchy in general. Thus, despite the imperative that every subject-perspective feels to make her unique recognitive hierarchy compatible with everyone else's, she cannot ever adopt a commitment incompatible with one of her own simply *because* someone else endorses it. Doing so would destroy the unity of her own hierarchy, forcing her to recognize a structure that cannot even bear the *mark* of the categories. Thus, a subject-perspective may adopt a new, incompatible commitment as her own only if she can *rationally*

motivate it, that is, integrating it with the *totality* of other commitments that populate her hierarchy. Indeed, the primary means by which one rational subject-perspective will persuade another to adopt a new commitment is by demonstrating to her that her hierarchy will be *better* unified if she does so. This practice, in which a manifold of incompatible subject-perspectives attempt to achieve consensus, each retaining at the same time the unity of her own hierarchy, is called the *game of giving and asking for reasons*.

Second, the historical conditions under which a subject-perspective is simulated can never be entirely erased, no matter how rational she becomes, how eager for agreement with others. Every subject-perspective is simulated as the recognition of a *unique* hierarchy—the one which articulates the complete significance of a *singular* prime element. The recognitive act that a subject-perspective most originally is always entails the *delegitimation* of all competing counter-hierarchies and so the attempted erasure of all others. If rational consensus were ever achieved absolutely, then the very conditions under which a subject-perspective is simulated would vanish, and the fully rational subject (and at this point there would be no need for the word ‘perspective’) would completely erase its own possibility. A residue of irresolvable incompatibility must always hold even among the most rational of subject-perspectives, between any pair of them and between one with all the others.

The strategy for dealing with this “residue” leads us from the space of reasons to the reason for space...

6. *The Reason for Space: Irreducible Incompatibility and “Social Distancing”*

Rational subject-perspectives negotiate their perspectival incompatibility through the Sellarsian practice of giving and asking for reasons, collectively attempting the approximation of a pure understanding and the cognition of the pure speculative object, but a residue of incompatibility must always remain between each with any of the others. If it did not, if a complete rational consensus were ever achieved, so that no subject had a different “perspective” than any other, then the conditions under which subject-perspectives were simulated would vanish and subjectivity itself would no longer be necessary to the time-system. The way in which this incompatibility is retained and managed gives rise to certain “social distancing” processes that, as a whole, result in the genesis of *space*—an entirely different form of intuition. So far in this study of time-difference, I have

spoken exclusively about *time* and neglected any mention of space. That's because space only becomes necessary to the time-system as a subject-perspective's final act of self-preservation against the threat of the others.

A community of rational subject-perspectives, all of whose members have signed the social contract and identified with the categories, agrees to submit every commitment to the test of the others (I recognize only what *you* do if you recognize only what *I* do). But if each member of the rational community did not retain at least *some* degree of incompatibility from all the others, then the very discursive game of giving and asking for reasons that defines the community would no longer be possible. The way the world is for *one* subject-perspective must always be, to some degree, incompatible with the way it is for another. Reasons in pursuit of consensus are what a subject-perspective owes to *others*, but this residue of incompatible difference is what she owes to *herself*—to the conditions of her *own* simulation. These are the baseline facts that lead to spatialization or social distancing.

The residue of incompatible difference that every subject-perspective retains with respect to each of the others is, first of all, *mobile* and *chameleonic*—it may never be pinned down so as to be rationally interrogated and thereby resolved. To identify with the pure understanding, and so as a rational being who owes recognition in the form of reasons to all others and may demand these in return, is to put everything to the question. No element of one's own unique hierarchy may be withheld from interrogation by others, not even the prime. Abandoning one's own history in this way is precisely what one must prove oneself capable of doing if one requests admission to any community of reason-givers. But this does not mean that every element of one's hierarchy must be put to the question *at once*. Indeed, the unity-constraint that constantly holds for every hierarchy entirely precludes this wholesale rejection of *all* one's commitments in a single stroke (in the manner of Cartesian doubt): one puts a commitment to the question precisely by comparing it with another, incompatible commitment and assessing which of the two best preserves the unity of the whole hierarchy. The residue of necessary incompatibility that every subject-perspective must retain skates across her entire hierarchy, ever concealing itself from the publicity of reason, ceaselessly defining the singularity she was simulated to recognize, but never making itself explicit as a concrete *claim* that could be made rational.

Although this residue of incompatibility may never be made explicit, its necessary permanence nevertheless preserves or resurrects the *paranoid situation* of politics that held among all subject-perspectives in a pre-rational condition. So long as any subject-perspective retains a recognitive commitment to the validity of her *own* hierarchy—her unique, singular history, incompatible with that of everyone else—in contrast to a recognitive commitment to the *pure Hierarchy* definitive of the pure understanding and defined only by the categories, she implicitly approaches all others with an imminent threat of erasure. Since this residue of incompatible difference cannot be rationally resolved, it must be perpetually deferred. Subject-perspectives must *put (social) distance between themselves and this irreducible difference*.

The *distance* generated by this process must be equal to the *difference* subject-perspectives hope to evade. Instituting a modicum of expanding *distance* between one subject-perspective and another is a way of resolving the irrational incompatibility that holds between them in an appropriately non-rational way. Its result is not to resolve the difference, but simply to diffuse the threat it implies through an introduction of an explanatory equivocation: “*She* holds commitment-*P*, and *I* hold incompatible commitment-*Q*, but her commitment exerts its demand in *her* sphere while mine exerts its demand in *mine*. The *space* interposing between these two spheres renders the incompatibility toothless.”

It is not that one subject-perspective will ever *believe* the incompatible beliefs of the other; it is rather just that, if *space* can be interposed between one stand-point and another, this incompatibility may be carefully ignored. Every subject-perspective must be “given her space” (her privacy, her property) where she may insulate the incompatible difference that she has to wield politically against the others and contain it within the boundaries of her privacy. This social distancing program is the process of spatialization.

IV. Genuine Aesthetic Disagreement: The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Artistic

We have now sketched the core political and rational principles of subjectivity. Paranoid subject-perspectives are political insofar as they identify with the *passivity* that they constitutively suffer, formulating a multiplicity of partitive coalitions which face off incessantly and are to one another the conspiratorial organs of a massively powerful master pulling the strings. Enlightened subject-perspectives are rational insofar as they identify with the general traits of their mutual *activity*, formulating a purportedly universal community of reason

givers who strive together to cognize the pure speculative object that they collectively conceive—abandoning history, rationally resolving their incompatibilities, and spatializing those mobile differences that cannot ever be rectified. To conclude this study of time and subjectivity, however, we must finally outline the *aesthetic* principles that are, in fact, the most primally essential to the discordant structure of social subjectivity, finally providing an answer to the question: *How are genuine aesthetic disagreements possible?*

1. *The Necessity of Simulation, Reconfirmed*

The first step toward such an answer consists in noting a certain peculiarity. Namely, if the subject-perspective that a (De)constructing time-difference simulates as the recognition of its hierarchy proceeds at once to *betray* that time-difference, founding a rational community with the guardians of the very counter-hierarchies that she is supposed to delegitimize, then why does the time-difference continue to simulate this Judas who denounces it at all?

The time-differential imperative to simulate comes from two places. First, the *threat of passivity* that a (De)constructing time-difference experiences at the hands of its own unconscious counter-hierarchies continues always to exert its menace: the more active the time-difference demonstrates itself to be, the more multitudinous its nightmares. Projecting forward to the Point of Undecidability, when both the threat of passivity and the right to activity will achieve their highest degree of intensity, the time-difference *must* simulate its subject-perspective as a recognitive witness because externalizing and ventriloquizing its right is the *only* defense left to it. Thus, no matter the political and rational betrayals of this “guardian,” she remains the time-difference’s only means of defense.

Second, and more importantly, the necessity driving the (De)constructing time-difference to this simulation of a traitorous guardian proceeds from the very depths of the time-system itself. For, the Point of Undecidability from whose significance the simulation proceeds is simply the *third (and final) face* of the (dis)jointure that runs through all three potencies of time-difference. That is, the moments of Absolution, Performance, and Undecidability are simply three different aspects of one and the same time-differential event, so that the processes that accompany each of them—Eternal Return, Permanent Revolution, and

(De)construction—along with the products of these processes—beyng/matter, rules, and subjectivity—are likewise all facets of the same thing. We may represent these threefold aspects in the following chart:

	Moment	Process	Product
<i>1st Potency</i>	Absolution	Eternal Return	Beyng/Matter
<i>2nd Potency</i>	Performance	Permanent Revolution	Rules
<i>3rd Potency</i>	Undecidability	(De)construction	Subjectivity

The time-differential event of which all three of these moments, processes, and products are facets occurs at every potency when the essentially relational character of the time-difference reaches a point of overflow, when it can no longer be deferred and its consequences become thoroughly evident.

When, at the first potency, the self-positing, other-positing, being self-positing, and being other-positing functions of the time-difference show themselves as mutually abiding aspects of one and the same activity, constituting the fourfold oneness of absolute positing, positing itself becomes Eternal Return (givenness) or the constant synthesis of *beyng*. When, at the second potency, an active time-difference's reflecting-for-self of manifold others, which signifies the passive being reflected-for-other of this manifold, performs the reversal of this active/passive relation, so that each passive element reflects-for-itself a manifold inclusive of the time-difference that reflected *it*, and when this reversed relation is *again* performatively reversed, reflection gives way to the process of Permanent Revolution or the constant synthesis of *rules*. When, at the third potency, the constructing activity of a time-difference by which it defines its own perspective results in the repression of the constructing perspectives of each subordinate within its unconsciousness, so that every step some prime takes toward the construction of its *own* conscious hierarchy, proving the legitimacy of its activity, works to *counter-*construct an unconscious *counter-*hierarchy that threatens it with passivity—when this happens—construction becomes (De)construction or the simulation of a *recognitive witness* at the Point of Undecidability (a subject-perspective).

Since all three moments, processes, and products are aspects of the same event taking place at distinct levels—all occurring as a (dis)jointed unity—no (De)constructing time-difference can cease its simulation of its recognitive subject-perspective without also ceasing to express its essence at the first level and perform its form at the second. Thus, a (De)constructing time-difference is bound *necessarily* to simulation no matter how traitorous what it simulates turns out to be.

Conversely, no matter the degree of rationality a subject-perspective achieves, no matter how respectful she becomes, how ruthlessly she abandons her history, or how efficiently she spatializes her residue of incompatibility, she must always retain some link to her simulating element. If this simulating prime whose hierarchy she is supposed to recognize were ever to stop simulating her, the subject-perspective would simply vanish—a subject-perspective can never fully evade the basic *facts* of her existence, her situation in time. She is always the simulation of some unique prime, an individual instance of the lie time tells to itself. From this fact, there will never be any reprieve. Thus, just as every (De)constructing time-difference must remain linked to the subject-perspective it simulates, for her part, every rational subject-perspective must likewise remain linked to her simulating time-difference. A bond of mutual necessity binds the two together through every political evasion and rational solution.

2. *Revisiting the Judgment of Taste*

This bond must somehow *appear* in the experience of even the most rational of subject-perspectives—for otherwise there would be no bond. What would this link appear *as*? The sign and constant achievement of a subject-perspective's *abandonment* of time is the conception of a pure speculative object—a thing-in-itself to which the categories apply most appropriately and which may be cognized only through the complete rational consensus of a mutually recognitive community. Rational subject-perspectives are constantly at work compatibilizing their mutually incompatible hierarchies, relentlessly disavowing time, in service to the cognition of this speculative object. The core commitment that a subject-perspective must always retain in pursuit of this ultimate goal is to the fact that her own representations are only ever *mere appearances*: every cognitive judgment she may ever make about an object is *corrigible* because the object to which she takes those judgments to correspond must (in itself) constitutively *exceed* the grip of her cognition (otherwise it would not be an *object*).

Since subject-perspectives collectively abandon time by persistently conceiving this pure speculative object, struggling to cognize it through rational consensus, and insisting on the merely apparent status of their own individual representations, each subject-perspective's *link* to time would appear in experience through the abandonment of precisely this *speculative object*. That is, since a subject-perspective disavows her simulating element by conceiving everything that she represents as a mere appearance concealing a deeper reality, committing to the idea that things are never *in themselves* the way they are *for her*, she experiences her *link* to this simulating element when she *renounces* the speculative object and insists not that things are "in themselves" the way they are for her (as if by chance) but that things are *at all* just so that she might represent and recognize herself through them. Everything exists for her sake, occurring purposively just so that she might represent it. Representing an "object" (which no longer counts as an object) in this way is taking it to be entirely reducible to the role it plays in the subject-perspective's unique hierarchy, so that it does not signify a deeper reality to which the subject-perspective has no access but is rather entirely equivalent to its "appearance" (which no longer counts as appearance). It is judging the entity in an entirely *aesthetic* manner—issuing a *pure judgment of taste*.

The link between a rational subject-perspective and its simulating time-difference is retained and expressed through the absolutely aesthetic aspect of the "object" that the pure judgment of taste articulates. In its capacity of retaining this link, the judgment of taste falls under three key descriptions.

First, a subject-perspective's purely aesthetic judgment of an entity consists in the free play of her imagination and her understanding. When a subject-perspective represents an object not as something standing opposed to her representations but, rather, as something reducible to and purposive for her representation of it, she represents that object as nothing other than the *reflective role* it plays in the unique hierarchy she was simulated as recognizing. Now, the "reflective role" of that entity consists, on the one hand, in actively and asymmetrically reflecting-for-itself those elements that it brings under the rule of the prime, and, on the other hand, in passively being reflected-for-other by those elements to which the prime subordinates it. When the subject-perspective represents the pure reflective role of this entity, she represents something *active*, an *occurrence*, something that's *happening*—the active reflecting-for-self both of this entity with respect to all those elements

that it subordinates and of the higher elements to which it is subordinated. That is, the *event* that is being represented is the construction of the entire hierarchy that the subject-perspective recognizes and *understands*.

Now, this construction is enacted at every node of the hierarchy through the increasingly conditioned action of the performative universal, the reciprocal and mutually annihilating reflections of manifold time-differences—for *every* act of reflecting-for-self proceeds from the action of this universal. From the standpoint of the subject-perspective who represents it, this performative universal decides in every case, and at every node, on the reflecting-for-self of the element that continues to elaborate the asymmetrical significance of her simulating prime. And, moreover, it does so *freely* (as if by chance) since, for the duration of this rarified moment in which the judgment of taste is enacted, the reciprocal reflectings-for-self of the progressively reflected elements are hidden from the subject-perspective's view. Each element falls in its ordered place *freely*, without resistance or threat of Revolution.

The hierarchy that is progressively elaborated elucidates the *total* reflective scope of the simulating prime's singularity, filling out the subject-perspective's entire faculty of *understanding*. Thus, since it is always the *imagination* that controls the action of the performative universal, what the subject-perspective experiences in the judgment of taste is the imagination freely performing its endemic activity to construct the hierarchy that she recognizes and through which she recognizes herself. The imagination operates in this capacity not under the regulative prescription of any general concept (that is, one of the subordinate, time-differential *positions*) but rather under the entire faculty of the understanding (answering to and progressively articulating the *singularity* of the prime element). This cognitive free play is necessarily *pleasurable* for the subject-perspective—it shows her a world that freely conforms in every respect to *her* hierarchy, her history, her simulated self-recognition. It is a *beautiful* world with no political imperatives.

Second, a subject-perspective's purely aesthetic judgment of an entity implicitly involves a *demand* on the assent of everyone—on all those participating in the rational community from which she withdraws. For, in returning allegiance to her simulating element, the subject-perspective breaks her social contract with others, removes herself from her very “reasonable” compact to recognize only what others do, renounces her commitment to abandon whatever appears to her alone. Rather, in the judgment of taste, the subject-

perspective insists on her *own* aesthetic standpoint, incorporating the aesthetically judged entity entirely within her unique hierarchy and disavowing its speculative excess. She no longer agrees to compatibilize her representation of the object with that of others, for the sake of eventually cognizing a thing-in-itself that exceeds her. She rather *demand*s an assent from everyone whose propriety she also refuses to justify conceptually. This demand is the simple mark of her withdrawal from the rational community, the sign of her departure. Her entire being is staked on the legitimacy of her pure aesthetic judgment, and so she naturally demands agreement from those from whom she withdraws, but their assent is not her primary interest. What matters to her is the call of time itself—she is no longer invested in the agreement of others and will not negotiate for it. Her demand is a sign that, for her, the time for giving reasons has ended.

Third, a subject-perspective's judgment of taste about the purely aesthetic "object," which involves taking it as nothing other than its "appearance," is necessarily disinterested. For, as we saw, the time-difference that simulates her as the recognition of its own primacy requires the subject-perspective to be authoritative. The recognitive witness must be capable of considering and comparing *all* the opposing hierarchies that impose themselves, so that she may decide with *authority* on the one whose prime element simulates her. She must be capable of *deciding the Undecidable* and, to do that, she must contain *all* opposing hierarchies within the range of her representation, taking in the entire domain of the Undecidable itself, having no special interest, at the outset, in the hierarchy in whose favor she ultimately decides. Thus, a subject-perspective is not only simulated *in light* of the Point of Undecidability, she is also simulated *in and as* this Point itself. To call a subject-perspective *disinterested* is to assert that she is capable of containing the entirety of the Undecidable within her representational range; and to assert that the subject-perspective is capable of making a disinterested *judgment of taste* is to affirm her capacity to *decide the Undecidable*.

The relation of disinterestedness to the Point of Undecidability opens us onto the solution to the problem of genuine aesthetic disagreement...

3. *Deciding the Undecidable: How are Genuine Aesthetic Disagreements Possible?*

Genuine aesthetic disagreement defines the structure of the Undecidable itself. *Every* subject-perspective decides the Undecidable in favor of the hierarchy whose prime element simulates her and so *against*

all the others. The manifold of these competing decisions is, in fact, what *constitutes* the very Point of Undecidability that comes to be decided: for, this Point is carved out by the nexus of incompatible counter-hierarchies pullulating in the unconsciousness of every time-difference and, so, in the social space common to all subject-perspectives; it is defined as the Point at which these manifold (conter-)hierarchies mutually converge, each mounting its claim against all the others. Since subject-perspectives are simulated as nothing other than the ventriloquized *articulations* of these claims, it follows that the Point of Undecidability is the crux of their mutual disagreement, the point of incompatibility on which their manifold *decisions* of the Undecidable conflict. Thus, the Point of Undecidability is the crux of *disagreement* in whose throws all subject-perspectives are originally simulated.

Now, this disagreement is, first of all, *genuine*. Each decision of the Undecidable recognizes a right that is both absolute and contrary to every other such decision—no side may ever triumph over the others, but each must always continue to prosecute its case. As discussed in Chapter One of this study, it exhibits the structure of Lyotard’s *differend*. It is “a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved [i.e., *decided*] for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments, [a case in which o]ne side’s legitimacy does not imply the other’s lack of legitimacy[, so that] applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend... would wrong... both of them [since] neither side admits this rule” (Lyotard 1988, xi). Deciding the genuine disagreement taking place in and as the Undecidable by means of a “rule of judgment,” a concept, is entirely impermissible. It is not a question of which judgment of taste best respects the standard of its concept, but rather, of foregoing conceptual standards altogether and insisting on the singular claim of a unique prime.

This disagreement is, in addition, *aesthetic*. A genuine disagreement holding among incompatible decisions of the Undecidable occurs when two or more subject-perspectives cease to conceive a given “object” as possessing a reality that does not appear, each representing it instead to be “in itself” nothing other than the way it appears *for her*, so that it is reducible to the reflective role it plays in *her* hierarchy. Every subject-perspective involved in the disagreement reduces the object to *her* representation of it, denying its rational excess, and she thereby eliminates its *objectivity*—it is equivalent to its appearance, or a purely aesthetic entity.

Further, the reflective role that the “object” plays in the hierarchy of any one subject-perspective is necessarily incompatible with the reflective role it plays in the hierarchy of all others (it implies the subordination of *every* other prime element), so that subject-perspectives who mutually reduce a given object to its appearance stand in a state of *genuine aesthetic disagreement*.

There are two basic types of genuine aesthetic disagreement. The first occurs when some subject-perspective recovers her link to her simulating time-difference through a given “object,” reducing that “object” to its “appearance” *for her*, thereby experiencing the performative universal’s free construction of her hierarchy and issuing a non-rational demand that everyone agree to the legitimacy of *her* unique hierarchy, while some *other* subject-perspective *does not* recover her link to *her* simulating time-difference through this object at all—for her, the object remains an object with a rational excess. This other therefore experiences the demand of the one with respect to the object as transgressive, so that she associates the object in question with the *displeasure* of a demand she must deny but cannot fully evade. In this case, the one subject-perspective calls the “object” beautiful, and the other calls it “ugly,” and both are right to do so—their aesthetic disagreement is genuine.

The second, more elemental, case occurs when two or more subject-perspectives *all* recover their unique links to time through the “object,” each integrating it as an absolute reflective function within her *own* hierarchy, so that *all* withdraw from the rational community together, and each issues a non-rational demand to all the others that they recognize the legitimacy only of *her* unique, incompatible hierarchy. The disagreeing subject-perspectives return as one to the context of Undecidability itself. In this case, each subject-perspective calls the “object” beautiful, but each means something incompatibly different by this appellation—it is beautiful to *each* subject-perspective because *all* integrate it as an absolute appearance within *their* unique hierarchies. All agree trivially on the beauty of the “object,” but what that beauty means—whom it actively and non-rationally affirms—is a matter of the bitterest dispute. In this more elemental case of genuine aesthetic disagreement, the argument is a matter of *interpretation*—each interprets the “object” within the structure of her own hierarchy, quarreling with the others *not* on the general point of *whether* the entity is a pure organ of reflection but on the singular point of *which* organ it really is.

So—*How is genuine aesthetic disagreement possible?* It is possible because every subject-perspective is simulated in and as the decision of the Undecidable that, at the same time, together with the other incompatible decisions in whose face it is necessarily made, structures the very Undecidability that it decides. Genuine aesthetic disagreement is nothing other than the multifarious decisions of the Undecidable that constitutes the original context in which all subject-perspectives are first simulated by the elements of time. It is possible in and as the space of *deception* that hosts the manifold *lies time tells to itself*.

4. *The Sublime and the Artistic*

With matter finally put to rest, my project is complete. But there are two corollary questions that must be addressed before I conclude. Kant tells us that no art may be sublime.¹⁶⁶ This obviously gives rise to the questions—What is the sublime?, and What is Art? Both arise from an encounter with genuine aesthetic disagreement (or the Undecidable), and each constitutes a distinct and opposing way of responding or relating to this encounter.

The Sublime. As this chapter has explored in outline, reason—the game of giving and asking for reasons, paired with and enabled by the conception of a pure speculative object with whose ultimate cognition one identifies oneself—emerges as a defensive strategy against Undecidability. When manifold subject-perspectives abandon their respective histories—on the basis of their disinterestedness—and forge a social contract with one another, each becoming reasonable for the first time, this is a direct response to the Undecidability they structure in the original context of their mutual simulation. If the feeling that subtends beauty is just of one's *own* contribution to the structure of the Undecidable, one's incorporation of the “object” into one's *own* unique hierarchy, then the feeling of the sublime consists first in the entire scope of the Undecidable—one feels not only one's *own* contribution to the Undecidable but also everyone else's—the whole range of the Undecidable itself. This feeling, at first, is of complete cognitive *collapse*. The imagination or performative universal which *had* functioned freely to construct only one's *own* hierarchy (understanding) now simultaneously counter-constructs manifold counter-hierarchies that *threaten* one's own. But the *recuperative* moment of the sublime occurs when the manifold of subject-perspectives abandon time together and formulate a rational community.

¹⁶⁶ See, KU.5:245.129 and KU.5:246.130

Imagination is brought not under the *understanding* but under the entire faculty of *reason*.¹⁶⁷ The feeling of cognitive collapse gives rise to the feeling of rational *power*. In the sublime, one feels oneself giving birth to the space of reasons, abandoning time, and achieving respect. In the sublime, one feels one's way *out* of the Undecidable.

But one need not respond to the Undecidable by seeking a way *out*. One may also find one's way further *in*.

The Artistic. It has been noted, above, that Undecidability, Performance, and Absolution are simply three faces of the same moment (occurring simultaneously at different potencies). In taking flight from the Undecidable in the experience of the sublime, subject-perspectives collectively hope to find their way out of the *entire* time-system. But rather than taking flight *from* the Undecidable, one may be forced to knot further and further into it. "A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now..." writes Pynchon, articulating the disaster of the Undecidable itself. "It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre"—the flight into reason begins *at once*, the lie of time is already under way, but, occasionally, this *flight may itself be a deception*. "Inside the carriage, which is built on several levels, he sits in velveteen darkness, with nothing to smoke, feeling metal nearer and farther rub and connect, steam escaping in puffs, a poisoning, an uneasiness, all the others pressed in around, feeble ones, second sheep all out of luck and time"—the time-system occurs at several levels, several potencies, its structure rubs and connects, presses in on every subject-perspective who sits within it, surrounded on all sides by these second sheep who have proceeded from *out of time*. They are seeking a way out, but they may find something entirely different...

They have begun to move. They pass in line, out of the main station, out of downtown, and begin pushing into older and more desolate parts of the city. Is this the way out? Faces turn to the windows, but no one dares ask, not out loud. Rain comes down. No, this is not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knotting into*—they go in under archways, secret

¹⁶⁷ Kant: "[W]hat is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this inadequacy, which does allow of sensible presentation" (*KU*.5:245.129). The feeling of the "inadequacy" of, and so threat to, one's *own* hierarchy in the face of everyone else's opens one onto the pure principles of Hierarchy as such, categories with no sensible correlates, ideas of reason.

entrances of rotted concrete... it is poorer the deeper they go... ruinous secret cities of poor, places whose *names he has never heard*... the walls break down, the roofs get fewer and so do the chances for light. The road, which ought to be opening out into a broader highway, instead has been getting narrower, more broken, cornering tighter and tighter until all at once, much too soon, they are under the final arch: brakes grab and spring terribly. It is a judgment from which there is no appeal. (Pynchon 1973, 3).

Rather than taking flight from the Point of Undecidability—partitively, through the political, or universally, through the rational—one may find oneself delving deeper and deeper into the knots of its problem, discovering that the road that *ought* to be opening out onto a broader “highway of science”¹⁶⁸ (reason), instead has been getting narrower, more broken. When one finds oneself delving in this way, one does not experience Undecidability as a problem to be *solved* but only *intensified*. One dwells within it, makes it all the more problematic, *feels* it as an originary, context of the disaster of subjectivity itself. This delving, this dwelling, this intensification of the problem, is the experience of the artistic—from whose pure aesthetic judgment *there is no appeal*.

When a subject-perspective represents a work of art that she finds beautiful, withdrawing from the rational community, insisting on the legitimacy of her *own* hierarchy, and reducing the object before her to its appearance, she experiences a complex, bidirectional feeling. On the one hand, she experiences the artwork as a pure affirmation of her simulating prime element’s reflecting-for-self, representing the pleasure of her own reality and apperceptive authority. But, on the other hand, she experiences it as the pure affirmation of the reflecting-for-self of the *artist’s* simulating prime. For, if the object is an artwork, then it was created by an artist in accordance with an aesthetic idea, an idea of beauty, namely, *his* idea. Thus, if he made the work to be beautiful, then he made it to be beautiful to *him*. If it is, then it affirms the reflecting-for-self of *his* simulating prime, *his* reality, which is incompatible with that of the judging subject-perspective. When the subject-perspective experience the object not only as beautiful but as beautiful *art*, then, she experiences its affirmation both of *her* reality and of the *artist’s*, which is incompatible with hers. This is to say, she experiences the work as *itself* a genuine aesthetic disagreement. It delivers her to the Undecidable as the Undecidable.

¹⁶⁸ See, *KrV*.Bxii.108

In the experience of art, one subject-perspective faces the relation of mutual threat and need that she bears to all the others, dwells within the Undecidable as the Undecidable, not neglecting to make a decision, but experiencing her decision not as a *solution* but rather as an *intensification* of the very Undecidability it decides. This intensification is experienced as the feeling of the incompatibility of the Undecidable itself—of the multi-vectored *repulsion* it entails. When the subject-perspective experiences this repulsion, she experiences herself being forced back up the wormhole of her own simulation, repelled by the intransigent incompatibility definitive of the context in which she is simulated. Being so forced, she experiences the entire time-system in reverse: falling node by node back down the Babel of her own hierarchy, back into the annihilatory-nascence of the performative universal from which the prime element emerges, back across the Jordan of materiality to the realm of Eternal Return, Absolute Posing, and the fourfold givenness of Beyng, back all the way to the essence of time-difference itself.

Arriving again at this essence (while simultaneously retaining herself in the Undecidable whose *repulsion* drives her back to this essential ground), the subject-perspective is once again submitted to the essence's differential necessity which results ultimately in her own simulation. She is thrown back up the deadfall down which she descended, experiencing her own simulation once again within the context of Undecidability characterized by the repulsion that just returned her to the essence. She experiences the time-system in both directions at once. She echoes to and fro between the essence and the Undecidable—she is herself an echo. She makes and unmakes herself, reflects and unreflects herself, constructs and deconstructs the power of her ego.

The work of art can never be sublime because it does not acquaint a subject-perspective with her own rational power, but, returns her, rather, to her own mythic origin in the time-differential ground of absolute intuition.

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