UiT The Arctic University of Norway

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The Ethos of the Environment

A Metaphysics of Man and Nature for the Anthropocene

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Morten Wasrud

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Thanks

Abbreviations and Greek words

Heidegger: *Gesamtausgabe*

SZ (GA 2) = *Sein und Zeit*

GA 3 = *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysi*k

GA 6.1 = *Nietzsche I*

GA 7 = *Vorträge und Aufsätze*

GA 9 = *Wegmarken*

GA 31 = *Vom Wesen der menschlinchen Freiheit*

Kant: *Akademie Textausgabe*

GMS = *Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten*

KdpV = *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*

KdrV = *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*

KdU = *Kritik der Urteilskraft*

MdS = *Metaphysik der Sitten*

Greek words

ἀλήθεια (*aletheia*) = truth, unconcealment

ἀληθές/ ὄν ἀληθές (*aletes/ on aletes*) = true/ being true

ἀνάμνησις (*anamnesis*) = recollection

δυνάμις (*dynamis*) = potentiality

εἶδος (*eidos*) = idea/presence

ἐμπειρία (*emperia*) = experience

ἐνέργεια (*energeia*) = activity, actuality

ἐποχή (*epoche*) = epoch, holding back

ἦθος/ηθος (*ethos*) = accustomed place, character, custom, habit

ἰδέα (*idea*) = idea

μεταβολή (*metabole*) = change

οὐσία (*ousia*) =substance

παρουσία & ἀπουσία (*parousia & apousia*) = presence & absence

ποίησις (*poiesis*) = poetry, production

πρώτη φιλοσοφία (*prote filosofia*) = first philosophy

τέχνη (*techne*) = craft, art

Figures

One of the major tasks of contemporary philosophy is undoubtedly to rethink freedom in a different way than this wrenching away from natural determinations, to explore what may be infinitely enriching and emancipatory in those attachments that link us with other beings on a finite Earth. What infinitely remains in a finite world?

<div align="right">

Christophe Bonneuil & Jean Baptiste Fressoz
The Shock of the Anthropocene, page 41f

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We begin to approach an answer when we understand human freedom as woven into the fabric of nature-as-a-whole, and how that truth was forgotten when we became besotted with our demands for freedom and power over nature. It is only through a deep, pre-ethical sense of responsibility, lodged in the agent who accepts our collective embeddedness, that humans and nature can live together. This sense cannot belong to the individual or to the citizen of a nation (who is always inclined to shift responsibility to other nations), but to the human who feels the inescapable responsibility that comes with the unique and extraordinary place of humankind on planet Earth.

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Clive Hamilton
Defiant Earth, 149

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INTRODUCTION: Environmentalism and the Unification of Ontology and Ethics

1. Environmentalism as a Metaphysical Problem

If we define *environmentalism* in the most general way as a normative concern for nature, then we simultaneously presuppose that nature is somehow an object of normative significance. One of the primary tasks of *environmental philosophy*, which is an academic discipline born mainly out of twentieth century environmentalism, has been to inquire into the normative meaning of nature.[1] What is it that makes nature an object of normative concern? Does the valuation of nature ultimately refer to a supreme value of human beings – reflecting an *anthropocentric* ethics? Or can we think nature in normative terms without being centered on man?[2] Does the valuation of nature presuppose the existence or cognitive abilities of human beings – reflecting an *anthropogenic* ethics?[3] Or is there a way to imagine an ethical origin that transcends all things human?

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[1] In the attempt to summarize modern environmental ethics, as one of the major subdisciplines within environmental philosophy, Clare Palmer writes: "One central area of debate concerns value theory in environmental ethics. What is considered to be valuable, and from where does such value come?". Palmer, C. (2003), "An Overview of Environmental Ethics", published in *Environmental Ethics – An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, page 16.

[2] The question of a possible *non-anthropocentric ethics* is one the most important question of modern environmental philosophy. See Weston, A (2003), "Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics", published in *Environmental Ethics – An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, page 308.

[3] As Holmes Rolston states: "There is excitement in the beholder; but what is valued is what is beheld. If the value-ability of humans is the source of this valued excitement, then value is anthropogenic even though it is not

When asking questions like these, environmental philosophy also finds itself within a broader context of Western philosophy of nature and metaphysics. If we define *modernity* as a historical period of the Western world, defined by its intellectual and cultural developments, which begins with the renaissance, and continues with the project of enlightenment, scientific revolution, and the advent of industry, capitalism, and technology, then we are still today predominantly modern. But modernity has brought about a fundamental split in our world view. Through such developments like the specialization of the sciences, by the division of labor, distribution of power and bureaucratization, and thereby an overall fragmentation of expertise, our understanding of reality itself has been compartmentalized.[4]

The response of philosophy to this compartmentalization has been twofold. In one respect, philosophy has itself also become modern, a feature that is reflected in the ever-stronger specializations of philosophy into distinct disciplines and traditions of intellectual inquiry, making categorical distinctions between separate and independent domains of reality. However, philosophy has also seen numerous attempts to counter the compartmentalization of reality, sometimes under the explicit banner of anti-modernism. Perhaps most predominant in the German and French intellectual movements of the nineteenth and twentieth century, philosophers have presented radical critiques of the prevailing dogmas on truth, objectivity, God, morality, and politics, sometimes resorting to unconventional forms of anti-metaphysics and anti-philosophy, presented through poetic language and by appealing to subjective experience. This is an intellectual countermovement represented by thinkers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Adorno, and Foucault.

Environmental philosophy also finds itself within this dynamic between the advocates and critics of modernity because much of its claims to the normative meaning and origin of environmentalism seems to radically violate our modern conceptions of nature and its

anthropocentric." Rolston, H. (2003), "Value in Nature and the Nature of Value", published in *Environmental Ethics – An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, page 143.

[4] Vernon Pratt et al. for example, identifies the concept of modernity with the environmentalist critique of the division between the subject and 'objective nature': "They argue that, for the pre-modern world, nature was always thought of in relation to human beings, whereas from the seventeenth century onwards an interest developed in nature as it was independently of the 'meaning' it carried for human beings." Pratt, V. et al. (2000), *Environment and Philosophy*, page 11. In his famous critique of 1993, Bruno Latour connects modernity to the creation of "two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; and that of nonhumans on the other." Latour, B. (1993), *We Have Never Been Modern*, page 10f. As we will see in our review of the Anthropocene literature in part one, Latour later transforms this critique into a contribution of contemporary environmental philosophy. See Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*.

relationship to man. If the hegemonic ideologies of modernity ascribe normative phenomena to an exclusively human sphere, then environmental philosophy also represents various efforts to shift away from anthropogenic and anthropocentric ways of thinking about nature and normativity. Familiar and foundational categories are thereby also subjected to radical examinations; deconstructing dichotomies like subjective/objective, nature/culture, fact/value, descriptive/normative (*is* and *ought*), as well as challenging the divisions between ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and politics. Representing perhaps the most paradigmatic narrative for environmental philosophy is its opposition to Rene Descartes. Disregarding whether this French philosopher deserves the antagonistic position appointed to him, the Cartesian legacy remains its infamous subject/object dualism, setting the stage for a mechanistic reduction of nature to its quantitative, mathematized, and thereby ultimately nihilistic representations, which prevails as a constant and seemingly irrefutable thorn in the side of contemporary environmental philosophy.[5]

Enter the Anthropocene. Originally introduced as a scientific term for a possible geological classification, this new conceptualization of *nature in the time of man* has simultaneously emerged as one of the most prominent (and to some, over-hyped) topics in the environmental humanities during the last decade. It represents a novel and arguably enticing take on the old problems of environmental philosophy and metaphysics of nature in the age of modernity, and it is precisely the metaphysical implications of this new epoch which is the topic of interests in this dissertation. The novelty of the Anthropocene, as a philosophical concept, lies not in the problems it is supposed to solve. And perhaps, not even in the technical details of its solutions. In fact, much of the claims and arguments made in the Anthropocene debate, appear largely as new renditions of an intellectual ground already covered during the last fifty years. If earlier versions of environmental philosophy have painstakingly tried to reimagine the human relation to nature, in a way that transcends conventional perception of normativity as an

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[5] Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "Modern philosophy, beginning with René Descartes, is governed by the subject-object binary unfolding out of scientific reason, where the world is construed as a set of objective conditions divorced from human involvement and meaning, a divorce accomplished by the disengaged subjectivity of rational reflection." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 2. Vernon, Pratt et al. writes that "Responsibility for the drawing apart of the human subject, or 'experiencer', and the world experienced is usually attributed to the seventeenth-century thinker, René Descartes." Pratt, V. et al. (2000), *Environment and Philosophy*, page 7. On a similar note, Timothy Morton writes that "Environmentalist thinking frequently condemns Cartesianism as a prototype of the dreaded dualism that separates mind and body, self and world, subject and object." Morton, T. (2010), *The Ecological Thought*, page 7. See also Silvio Vietta on Heidegger's ecological criticism of Descartes: Vietta, S (2017), "Heidegger's ecological criticism", published in *Ecological Thought in German Litterature and Culture*, page 81.

anthropocentric and anthropogenic concern, then the substantive contribution of the Anthropocene is mainly its audacity to claim this reimagination as an already established fact. And that the validity of this fact is supported by the alleged scientific authority of the Anthropocene as a geological discovery. No short of irony, as we acknowledge that the new geological epoch has in fact not (yet) been ratified. **The basic argument of the Anthropocene goes like this:** *Scientific consensus on the now significant anthropogenic impact on nature confronts us with an imperative of environmental responsibility. In its philosophical interpretation, the incorporation of "Anthropos" into our scientific determination of nature give rise to an epochal transformation in our conceptualization of the man-nature relation, in a manner that presents nature with an irrefutable normative meaning. In coming to an awareness of our impact on nature and its mechanisms, and what is at stake in this causal relationship, we also stand faced with a form of morality that is no longer confined to a human sphere – a morality which may in fact ultimately transcend human subjectivity. In the narratives of the Anthropocene, it is as if the longstanding fight against modernity and Cartesianism has already been won.*

If one chooses to take the claim of the Anthropocene serious, which is the path we intend to embark on in this dissertation, then the alleged facticity of its conceptual and normative transformation still confronts us with the absence of a matching metaphysical framework. How so? Most people do not get to indulge in the seductions and angst of academic metaphysics. But metaphysical frameworks are nonetheless present, with varying degrees of transparency, in all our lives. Concepts, ideas, and principles at play in our everyday functions, in public debate, in rigorous analysis, scientific investigation, and philosophical contemplation, all invoke metaphysical understanding, from implicit intuitions, well-defined conceptions, to comprehensive ideological systems. The molding of Anthropos and nature into a new unity entails that the things we traditionally view as pertaining to a strictly human sphere – things like norms, values, feelings, virtues, social relationships, and political engagement – are now suddenly integrated into our determination of natural phenomena. In what way? Our current historical situation is marked by an acute sense of environmental concern and responsibility. But this new emerging form of normativity challenges our previously held categorical distinctions between what is 'human' and what is 'natural', tracing the foundation of morality back to nature itself. Precisely because the *origin* of this new environmental morality is not an emancipated subject facing the environment as an opposing object, but rather the irrefutable causal interconnection between man and nature, and the existential vulnerability revealed in this radical form of causation. If the basic philosophical claim of the Anthropocene is that the

relationship between man and nature has been transformed, by recognition of a radical causal interconnection between human activity and its environment, in a way that reveals a normative meaning of nature itself, then **the Anthropocene also comes with a metaphysical challenge:** *If ethics is an inquiry into the moral essence of man – as the normative basis for all things human. And if ontology is the inquiry into that which is – and thereby into nature, as the sum total of existent entities. Then the facticity of the Anthropocene reflects the claim to an already transpired unification of ethics and ontology.*

However, a metaphysical system that may harbor a unification of ontology and ethics is surely not readily available to us. Our contemporary conceptions of nature, which above all else are informed by natural science, presents the objects of natural phenomena as something radically different from the objects of ethics, politics, and aesthetics. No doubt does modern man also indulge himself in the pleasures and excitements of animal and wildlife interactions, and encounters with pristine landscapes and areas of wilderness. But we take these interactions merely as forms of subjective experiences, originating and confined to the interests and sentiments of human beings. In the end, we represent nature as an object, which we as subjects *stand against*, and which is fundamentally different from ourselves. Metaphysically, we are all still Cartesians of modernity. And so equally do the claims of the Anthropocene ultimately remain philosophically unfounded. Like a political program to be embraced and advocated by its committed followers, but understandably rejected by anyone with a critical sense of current 'metaphysical realities'. This is the predicament in which the present dissertation finds itself. *The Anthropocene, in its philosophical interpretation, lay claim to a transformation of the man-nature relation, and a normative meaning of nature. But this claim is also directly at odds with the metaphysical conceptions that are currently available to us.* **The basic task of this dissertation is therefore as follows:** *To develop a metaphysics of man and nature that unifies ethics and ontology, giving a proper foundation to the alleged transformation of our new epoch.*[6] In other words: the task of the present dissertation is *not* to develop an ethics that can

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[6] Some may object to my widespread use of the word "man" (as in the phrase "man and nature"). The English word harbors both a gender-specific meaning, referring to *adult males*, and a gender-neutral meaning, referring to *all humans* regardless of age and sex. My use of the word "man" utilizes the latter meaning. Although in the few cases where my argument calls for a corresponding pronoun, I have chosen to use "he" and "his" (as in "man and *his* environmental responsibility"). The choice of "man" is strictly pragmatic, as I see no suitable alternative. As opposed to terms like "human" and "human being", the term "man" is more suited to single out the *individual as representative* for all humans, similar to the Germen "der Mensch" and the Norwegian "mennesket". The term "person" has explicit *moral connotations* in the Kantian vocabulary, which is frequently

meet the challenges of our contemporary environmental situation. For the existence of such an ethics, as the normative significance and commitment of our environmental situation, is already claimed by the Anthropocene. Rather, our task consists in a *philosophical groundwork*, which strives to provide a metaphysical framework that can accommodate the alleged ethical meaning of our time.

What does it mean to develop a metaphysics that can match the philosophical claims of the Anthropocene? What is the role of environmental philosophy in relation to environmentalism? These questions accentuate a broader problem of establishing and clarifying the role of philosophy in general. In the Platonic sense of the word, we take metaphysics to be a matter of *recollection* – ἀνάμνησις – as opposed to novel invention. When developing a metaphysics, we do not attempt to create a new theory which in turn may correspond to reality. Philosophy is not a science. Rather, we seek to articulate the conceptions and structures of reality that are already present in our understanding. Metaphysics is an internal adventure of *self-disclosure*. The same goes for the metaphysics of environmental philosophy. The task is not to create a new theory on the normative meaning of nature, which in turn may be utilized for the benefit of environmentalism. On the contrary, our ambition can only be to articulate the normativity that is already at play in environmentalism.[7] If the Anthropocene represents a claim to a radical metaphysical transformation in our understanding of nature and its relation to man, in a manner that ultimately entails a unification of ethics and ontology, then the validity of this claim must somehow mirror a conceptual and normative understanding that is already operating in the environmentalist concern and commitments of our time.

But have we now not put ourselves in a predicament, making two conflicting statements about the project? On the one hand, we started by claiming the need for a new metaphysics of man and nature that can remedy the compartmentalization of reality that is prevalent in our own time. On the other hand, we also suggested that our new metaphysics can only be an articulation of a conceptual and normative understanding of man and nature which is somehow already

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used in this dissertation. Whereas the term "individual" fails to reflect that man's existence is a dynamic between *acts of individualization* and the *participation of communal relationships* to other human beings and things.
[7] On a more general note, regarding a possible Heideggerian ethics, Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "The task for ethics should not be the search for a theory or principle that can survive rational scrutiny, that can satisfy objective cognitive standards inherited from traditional logic and the sciences, or that can provide clear and certain criteria to guide adjudication. Such an orientation shows that ethics has been distorted from the start. We already *are* shaped by ethics, before we reflect on it. Given a situated, socialized self, we are ethically *thrown*." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 57.

present and operating in contemporary environmentalism. That is, we now claim that the normative meaning of nature, which makes ethics and ontology into one, must be extracted from a historical time where nature seems utterly detached from the normative domain of all things human. Our point, however, is not that nature has *lost* its normative meaning in the age of modernity. It has only been *forgotten*.

And the significant role of the Anthropocene, as the epochal event of our contemporary environmental situation, is to make us *remember*. The Anthropocene provides a diagnosis of our own time. It is marked by a general state of environmental *crisis*. The philosophical significance of this crisis is that it manifests the untenability of modernity. What is modernity? Simply put, it is a compartmentalization of reality which falsely disconnects that which is essentially *human* from that which essentially *is* – that is, the separation of ethics and ontology. The current environmental crisis breaks down this shroud of compartmentalization and reveals a foundational normative meaning of nature. As philosophers, our task must be to articulate this epochal revelation. The title of this dissertation – *The Ethos of the Environment* – signifies the normative meaning of nature that has now been brought out of oblivion. This is a meaning that confronts us, not as an object opposing the human subject, but as the primordial *residence* of our very own existence.

2. *Heidegger and Environmental Thought*

Martin Heidegger was not an environmental thinker. His own philosophical project developed and matured before the emergence of modern environmentalism and environmental philosophy.[8] We can place him in conjunction with early twentieth century phenomenology, Neo-Kantianism, hermeneutics, and the advent of existentialism.[9] And perhaps even more so in relation to a general history of Western metaphysics and its genesis in Greek antiquity. But his fundamental ontology, his *later* thinking of being, not to say his matured analysis of technology, has nonetheless lent itself productively to the environmental thought that came after his time.[10] However, this appropriation is not without its tensions. For it is not a given that Heidegger's fundamental project aligns with the political and ethical program of modern environmentalism.[11] Confronted with Heidegger's extensive philosophical corpus, we suggest

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[8] See Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy", page 433.

[9] See Kisiel, T. (1993), *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, page 18.

[10] E.g., Warwick Fox presents Heidegger as one of the most invoked Western thinkers in relation to *deep ecology* and the criticism of mechanistic materialism, see Fox, W. (2003), "Deep Ecology: A New Philosophy of our Time?", published in *Environmental Ethics – An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, page 253. Timothy Morton similarly refers to Heidegger as "deep ecology's favorite philosopher" Morton, T. (2010), *The Ecological Thought*, page 7.

[11] Or as Kalpita Bhar Paul puts it: "On one hand, Heidegger is one of the most referenced philosophers in environmental ethics, on the other, there is an ongoing debate regarding the formulation of any kind of ethic based on Heidegger's philosophy as he himself was skeptical about the same". Paul, Kalpita Bhar (2017). "The Import of Heidegger's Philosophy into Environmental Ethics: A Review", published in *Ethics and the Environment*, page 1 (abstract).

three contributions that immediately stand out as potentially relevant for modern environmental philosophy, and which have arguably played a role in shaping modern environmental thought.[12] The first two concerns Heidegger's radical conceptualization of human subjectivity, and the third is his critique of technology. However, as we now will demonstrate, these three contributions are first and foremost *auxiliary* components in service of a far more profound concern of Heidegger's thought, namely the question of *the meaning of being* – a concern for which a possible connection to environmental philosophy is far less obvious.

We find the first two contributions in the magnum opus of Heidegger's so-called *earlier* period of thought, *Being and Time*. **First**, is the establishing of *Dasein* as a concept of man through which Heidegger claims to offer a theoretical framework that transcends the Cartesian dualism of subject and object.[13] **Second,** is the emphasis in the *analytic of Dasein* on a phenomenology of everyday practical experience, as opposed to the theoretical representations of traditional metaphysics. These two contributions, one could argue, sets the stage for a thinking that can merge our understanding of natural phenomena with the experiences and valuations of human subjectivity.[14] But Heidegger also consistently describes the initial analysis of Dasein and its everyday life as a mere preliminary work for the subsequent transition into the question of being itself. In fact, Heidegger's famous depictions of Dasein in the first section of *Being and Time*, as a *being-in-the-world* through the use of its readily available tools (*Zeug*), only reflects an inauthentic understanding of being. But what insights relevant for environmentalism is offered by the far more esoteric depictions of Dasein's authentic understanding of being in the second section? Or the intended culmination of *Being and Time* in the unpublished third section, where Heidegger was to expose the meaning of being itself? If we take the existential analysis of Dasein as only a preparatory and thereby provisional contribution to the ultimate question of being, then Heidegger's purported status as an environmental thinker becomes much more dubious.

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[12] For an overview of Heidegger's impact on environmental philosophy, see Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy".

[13] On the use of Heidegger's alternative notion of the human subject for environmental philosophy, see Vernon, Pratt et al., (2000), *Environment and Philosophy*, page 68.

[14] As Trish Glazebrook puts it: "In contrast to the objective indifference of scientific theory, humans can encounter natural phenomena with a sense of wonder." Glazebrook further adds that since *Dasein* is ultimately defined as *transcendence*, the existential analysis of *Being and Time* holds a potential applicability for animals as well as humans, making Heidegger relevant for environmental ethics. See Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy", page 437 & 434.

If we move on further to his *later* period of thought, after the turn of the 1930s, we find a **third** apparent contender for a possible application of Heidegger for environmental philosophy. His analysis of technology, most notably in the short essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*, depicts the hubris of our assumed mastery of the Earth, reducing nature to the standing-reserve of our willful demand and order. On the immediate surface of this text, many of the depictions and examples given of modern technology seems to resonate with the environmentalist concern for our destructive exploitation as well as our incorrect representation of nature. But Heidegger's diagnosis on the danger of technology remains obscure, making it difficult to see what his own alternative to technical thinking in fact represents, and thereby to what extent this alternative bears any relevance for the traditional virtues of environmentalism. In the end, Heidegger's analysis of technology seems somehow more concerned with the essence of man, and the possible forgetfulness and revelation of being. In this context, the pursuit to solve the pressing environmental problems of our time may just as well end up representing the kind of technical thinking that Heidegger tries to overcome.[15]

What is hopefully illustrated through our brief account of these three contributions, is that although Heidegger offer analyses and conceptual themes that undoubtedly resemble certain sentiments of contemporary environmentalism, it is not thereby a given that Heidegger's philosophy as a thinking of being is either relevant or even compatible with the program of environmental philosophy. And if we are to fully understand whether Heidegger is relevant for environmental thought, we are also forced to confront a thinker that is notoriously difficult to comprehend, and even more so to articulate in a manner that makes his thought communicable in relation to other philosophers. In the first chapter[16] we introduced the Anthropocene as a metaphysical challenge to unify ethics and ontology. As we now introduce Martin Heidegger, it is with the presumption that his philosophy will prove relevant to meet this challenge. However, an underlying position in this dissertation will also be that if there is any point to

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[15] See Rune Fritz Nicoliasen on Heidegger's ambiguous relationship to 'philosophical ecology': Nicolaisen, R. F. (2007), *At være undervejs – Introduktion til Heideggers filosofi*, page 298.

[16] This dissertation is structured by three main levels of division: as *parts*, *chapters*, and *subchapters*. According to this division, the general introduction (*"INTRODUCTION: Environmentalism and the Unification of Ontology and Ethics"*) functions as a preliminary *part zero*. All parts, including the general introduction, consist of several chapters, which are all titled by number (e.g., the present chapter two is titled *"2. Heidegger and Environmental Thought"*). Most chapters are also divided further by subchapters, with a *centered title*, but without a number (for example, the next chapter three contains the subchapter *"Four Steps on the Way Towards a new Metaphysics of Freedom"*).
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reading Heidegger in the context of environmental philosophy at all, it will not be in the form of exploiting certain auxiliary aspects of Heidegger's works for the benefit of an environmental philosophy that may in fact end up contradicting his original thought. Rather, it must be in a manner that takes his thinking serious, in its own right. And by doing so, it also becomes clear that a Heideggerian way of thinking quickly elevates the problems of environmental philosophy to the general and arguably far more profound level of Western metaphysics. That is, it puts environmental thought in connection with the very roots of philosophy itself. Let us therefore begin by giving a brief account of Heidegger's own thought, before we reconnect our analysis to the initial interpretation of the Anthropocene, and then conclude this chapter by presenting our own suggestion for a possible Heideggerian environmental thought.

So, what is Heidegger's philosophical project? If our first guiding principle towards a Heideggerian environmental philosophy is to let such a thinking emerge on the fundamental premises of Heidegger's own thought, then our second principle relates to the connection between the so-called *early* and the *later* Heidegger. That is, the infamous and enigmatic *turn* (*die Kehre*) in Heidegger's intellectual development. We approach the transformation of Heidegger's thought in the 1930s, and the continued maturation throughout the 40s, and 50s, as a radicalization yet still a continuation of the fundamental question that motivates the incomplete work of *Being and Time*.[17] In some respect, the *later* Heidegger represents his relentless efforts to re-think and re-articulate that which remains a mere unfulfilled promise of the unpublished third section: *the meaning of being*. It is this mature version of Heidegger, from the late 1930s and beyond, which will be the center of our attention in this dissertation.[18] But because we understand the maturation of Heidegger's thought as a development that maintains the same fundamental question, we may also utilize the contributions of the early Heidegger in

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[17] I cover the developments and connections of Heidegger's intellectual developments extensively in my MA-thesis. See Wasrud, Morten (2011), *Veien til Væren – En eksistensiell vandring gjennom Heideggers værenstenkning*, https://bora.uib.no/bora-xmlui/handle/1956/4975

[18] At what point exactly do we see the definitive transition from the early to the later Heidegger? Jeff Malpas traces the inception of the later Heidegger back to 1930 and the text *On the Essence of Truth*. He also refers to Gadamer's report that Heidegger himself acknowledged "that the terms of his thinking had begun to slip" as early as in 1928. Whereas *Contributions to Philosophy* from 1936, according to Malpas, stand to represent the culmination of this shift. See Malpas, Jeff (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 151. Bret Davis generally mirrors this depiction, as he accentuates the long period of development in the 1930s, where the fully matured later Heidegger do not emerge until late 1930s and early 1940s. See for example chapter 3 in Davis, Bret W. (2007), *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*.

our quest to illuminate his later period of thought.[19] In the early work of *Being and Time*, Heidegger's question of the meaning of being was inherently connected to the temporal structure of phenomenal appearance – that is, the meaning of being was thought to be time itself. The analytic of Dasein begins from the premise that man is the only existent entity (*Seiende*) which asks the question of being, and therefore that an understanding of being must somehow be available to him.[20] The very concept of Dasein corresponds ultimately to a determination of *man as an openness to being*. The analysis culminates in the second section with the exposition of the temporal structure of Dasein's authentic openness to being. But in what sense did time reflect the meaning of being itself? Heidegger never truly answers this question. And although Heidegger's question of being remains connected to history (*Geschichte*) and historical fate (*Geschick*), the developments throughout the 1930s and beyond soon loses the initial focus on time and temporality. Instead, we see above all else an articulation of the meaning of being through two central notions – *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis*.[21]

If man qua Dasein is openness to the meaning of being, then the meaning of being itself is the *phenomenal presence* that shows itself to man. The question of the meaning of being does not ask about *what* is shown, as the factual *content* of appearance, but addresses instead the *manner* in which this phenomenal presence shows itself, as a precondition for any subsequent inquiry into the whatness of that which is presented. *Unverborgenheit* translates into unconcealment, which Heidegger also relates to the Greek ἀλήθεια, and as such becomes synonymous with the *truth of being*. The true meaning of being is the *event of unconcealment*, through which all existent entities are brought into our phenomenal presence. The distinction between that which is unconcealed, and the event of unconcealment itself, reflects Heidegger's radical yet foundational thought: the *ontological difference* between existent entities (*das Seiende*) and the meaning of being itself (*das Sein*).[22]

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[19] This idea, of using Heidegger's earlier philosophy in support of understanding his later period of thought is encouraged by Heidegger himself. See Heidegger's *preface* in Richardson, W. J. (1963/2003), *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, Fourth edition, page XXII.

[20] See Schmidt, D. J. (2016), "Being and Time", page 192.

[21] Andrew J. Mitchell would add the notion of the fourfold (*das Geviert*). In fact, Mitchell seems to suggest that the fourfold is the most important idea of the later Heidegger. See Mitchell, A. J. (2015), *The Fourfold – Reading the Late Heidegger*, page 3.

[22] As William J. Richardson puts it: "For if it is clear that metaphysics thinks beings as beings, it must be equally clear that they appear as what they are only by reason of some strange light that renders them un-concealed (*unverborgen*) before, to and in the metaphysical gaze. Furthermore, this light as such, in rendering beings unconcealed, remains itself concealed (*verborgen*) within them, for it is not a being but merely the light by which they shine forth. What is this light, the concealed source of non-concealment? This is the question that

We understand the second central concept, *Ereignis*, as a further elaboration of the true meaning of being, focusing specifically on its relationship to man. If translated as the *event of appropriation*, unconcealment is the event through which *man comes to himself*.[23] In the *Letter on "Humanism"* of 1946, where the *later* Heidegger has found its maturity, *Ereignis* becomes the foundation for a new radically oriented humanism. The essence of man – *das Wesen des Menschen* – is to reveal the phenomenal presence of being as his own existential residence, and thereby to confront his finitude. Especially relevant for our own project, the *Letter on "Humanism"* is also one of the few places where Heidegger puts his later thinking of being in explicit connection with the question of ethics. Heidegger suggests that this new and radical orientation for humanism presents us with a common ground for ontology and ethics.[24] This connection between human morality and some form of primordial normative significance of being itself remains a persistent element in Heidegger's later thought, but it also remains an element which he never attempts to articulate systematically.

If the true meaning of being is the event of unconcealment where man returns to his existential residence, then being also represents an event that *conceals* its meaning and thereby an event through which man is disconnected from his own essence. That is, being also harbors an *untruth of forgetfulness*. In *Being and Time*, this untruth was presented in the form of *Dasein's* inauthenticity through his everyday industriousness and activity. In his later thought, untruth is most notably reflected by Heidegger's inquiry into the history of Western metaphysics as a history of forgetfulness of the true meaning of being.[25] Accentuating the etymology of the Greek ἐποχή, Heidegger now understands the *epochs* of our own history since antiquity as the different ways in which the true meaning of being is *held back* in oblivion. It is only through this backdrop – of the untruthful forgetfulness of history – that we finally come

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metaphysics has never posed. […] The lightning-process by which beings are illuminated as beings – this is what Heidegger understands by Being." Richardson, William J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page 5f.

[23] In support of our translation of *Ereignis*, and juxtaposition with *Unverborgenheit*, Jeff Malpas writes: "[Heidegger's attention is on] the ground of the truth of being, and so as integrally bound up with the 'Event,' the 'Ereignis,' to which human being is itself 'appropriated,' but which is certainly no merely human happening." Malpas, Jeff (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 155. Thomas Sheehan similarly refers to Ereignis as the appropriation "of human being to sustaining the clearing." Sheehan, T. (2016), "The Turn: All Three of Them", page 33.

[24] For as François Raffoul puts it, Heidegger "seeks to capture ethics in relation to being itself, for it is precisely the thinking of being that is defined as an originary ethics [*ursprüngliche Ethik*]." Raffoul, F. (2016), "Ethics", page 291.

[25] Thomas Sheehan makes a similar distinction, between the "intrinsic hiddenness" of Dasein in its thrown-ness, and the "metaphysical hiddenness" in the epochal sending of Western history. He also adds a third category of the "technological hiddenness of the present age". Sheehan, T. (2016), "The Turn: All Three of Them", page 35.

to understand Heidegger's diagnosis of the danger of modern technology. Heidegger's fundamental concern is not for the destruction of ecosystems, or for the extinction of its species. He does not address the incorrectness in our representations of natural phenomena through science. Neither does he speak out against our use of technological instruments, against industry or innovations of engineering. No – to the extent that any of the traditional environmentalist issues mentioned above has any bearing on Heidegger's analysis of technology, it is only because they somehow can be traced back to the ultimate concern and supreme danger of technological thinking, which is man's forgetfulness of the meaning of being and thereby the loss of his essence.[26]

How can we get out of this modern predicament, finding our way back to the home in the presence of being and thereby also to a more truthful understanding of ourselves? On the one hand, it seems natural to interpret Heidegger's philosophy on the whole as an attempt to push Western thought back towards a more truthful understanding of its own existential origin.[27] On the other hand, there is also an irrefutably fatalistic element to Heidegger's thinking, which suggests that any attempt on the part of the individual to counter the forgetfulness and untruth of modern technical thinking is futile. That to put ourselves in the position of savior will in fact only reflect the kind of subjectivist thinking that lay at the heart of modern situation of existential homelessness. Nowhere is this latter sentiment more blatantly articulated then in the famous interview with *Der Spiegel*, where Heidegger declares that *only a god can save us*.[28] It is at this point, while waiting for a true revelation in the fateful sending of the history of being, that we now suggest a connection between Heidegger and contemporary environmental thought. Can we interpret the emerging environmental awareness at the hearth of the Anthropocene as a saving god in the history of being?

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[26] On a similar note, Trish Glazebrook present a Heideggerian environmental philosophy as envisioning "an alternative conception of nature as a home in which human beings dwell." Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy", page 437.

[27] As Jeff Malpas puts it: "At its simplest and most direct, one can say that what Heidegger hoped to accomplish in his thinking was 'homecoming' – a turning back toward our own dwelling place – as such, Heidegger's thinking also expresses the hope for the convalescence, understood as a returning home, for thinking as such, a convalescence from the homelessness of technological modernity." Malpas, Jeff (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 310.

[28] The Interview was conducted in 1966, but not published by *Der Spiegel* until 1976, five days after Heidegger's death. Heidegger, M (1966), "Only a God Can Save Us": The *Spiegel* Interview, translated to English by William J. Richardson, published in *Heidegger – The Man and the Thinker* (1981/2010), edited by Thomas Sheehan, page 57.

How to understand this audacious coupling of Heidegger and the Anthropocene? We have earlier stated that the new epoch presents us with the facticity of environmental responsibility, as the emerging of a new form of normativity that traces its origin, not to an exclusively human sphere, but to a causal interconnection between human existence and its environment. And that this normativity calls for a metaphysics of man and nature that is able to unify ontology and ethics. What we now suggest, is that the environmental thought of the Anthropocene – as the molding of man and nature into a new unity – may find a foundation in the later Heidegger's philosophy of being. That this new form of normativity as environmental responsibility corresponds to Heidegger's depiction of the human essence as an event of coming to oneself in the phenomenal presence of being. And that the wave of environmentalist concern that has become a predominant political phenomenon in our own time, can ultimately be viewed as an historical event that rips man out of his metaphysical slumber, and confronts him with his existential situation. Our point is not to detract from the importance of cultivating an empirically oriented form of environmentalism – that is, as an environmental concern informed by science, technology, and current political realities. But if we are to understand the normativity at play in all forms of empirically oriented practices and concerns, a normativity which have now become accentuated to the point of a global political phenomenon, shaping our current epoch, we must ultimately look beyond all things empirical, and into a metaphysical ground. And to lead us into this metaphysical ground, we have now presented Heidegger's thinking of being as the foundation for our environmental thought.

This way of integrating Heidegger into contemporary environmental thought is problematic on two fronts. **First**, it begs the question of whether Heidegger's own philosophy, which found its conception under considerably different historic circumstances, can have any meaningful bearing on contemporary environmentalism. A critic may object that the connection to Heidegger entails a distortion of the original environmentalist concern of the Anthropocene, with the ulterior motive of promoting Heideggerian thought. Suffice it to mention the most obvious mismatch: Most versions of modern environmental thought invoke a concept of "nature" that represents either the *sum total of existent entities*, or the group of existent entities that demonstrate some kind of *independence from humans*. Consequently, to identify the environmentalist concern for nature with Heidegger's question of being would be in direct contradiction with the *ontological difference*. Heidegger's aim is precisely to elevate his thinking beyond the matters of existent entities, thereby disregarding most traditional environmentalist concerns for such things as ecosystems or global warming.

Second, reversing the concern of the first objection, it is also questionable whether the philosophical interpretation of the Anthropocene is able to speak to Heidegger's grandiose claims regarding the history of being and the anticipations of a saving god. If we accept that Heidegger has proven to be one of the most important (continental) philosophers of the twentieth century, precisely because of his ability to diagnose the human condition, then we may ask if the Anthropocene debate of the twenty-first century can make a similar claim of disclosing our environmental situation. The Anthropocene originates as a suggested geological epoch, but in its philosophical interpretations it also speaks to the emergence of a global phenomenon of environmental awareness. But is it not possible that we will look back on the Anthropocene, in a few years' time, as only a fad, abandoned in favor of other political and societal issues that will turn out to be far more pressing? Surely, the historical significance of the Anthropocene narrative is not yet available to us but must ultimately be evaluated by future thinkers with the benefit of hindsight.

Neither of these two objections can be easily dismissed. Whether the contemporary environmentalist movement reflected by the Anthropocene debate will prove to be significant in a broader historical context can perhaps only truly be answered sometime in the future. But the relevance of using Heidegger's philosophy as a theoretical foundation for our environmental thought will hopefully be demonstrated throughout this dissertation. Despite the fact that Heidegger's philosophy seems to circumvent the specific topics that one usually associates with modern environmental thought, addressing instead a broader concern of Western metaphysics, we make the following claim: *If the Anthropocene presents an alleged conceptual and normative transformation in our understanding of nature and its relationship to man, which demands a new metaphysics of man and nature that unifies ethics and ontology, then the radicality of the later Heidegger's thought will in fact prove fruitful as a foundation for such a metaphysics. The Anthropocene presents us with a claim of a grounding normative meaning of nature itself. It is our intention to articulate such a meaning, through a Heideggerian environmental thought.*[29]

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[29] What about Martin Heidegger's involvement with German national socialism and antisemitism? The recent publications (2014-2018) of the so-called Black Notebooks (*Schwarze Hefte*) have reinvigorated the long-standing debate regarding Heidegger's philosophy and his obviously problematic connections to the NSDAP. As Berdinesen & Torjussen writes: "*Yes*, Heidegger *was* a Nazi and an anti-Semite. With the publication of the Black Notebooks, the question has changed from '*was* Heidegger anti-Semitic and a Nazi'? to '*what kind* of anti-Semite and Nazi was Heidegger, and what are the consequences of this'?" Berdinesen, H. & Torjussen, L. P. S. (editors) (2019), *Heideggers testamente – Filosofien, nazisismen og de svarte heftene*, page 13 (my translation).

3. A Heideggerian Thought in a Kantian System of Metaphysics

The full title of this dissertation reads: *The Ethos of the Environment – A Metaphysics of Man and Nature for the Anthropocene*. This indicates an intent to develop our basic environmental thought into a system of metaphysics. We began by presenting our environmental thought as an interpretation of the Anthropocene, taking the environmental responsibility that conditions

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In this dissertation, I have chosen *not* to address this part of Heidegger's life, and its possible connections to his academic work. I do not believe that the political connections now made unequivocal by the Black Notebooks are central to Heidegger's fundamental philosophical project. But I do accept the depiction of Heidegger given by Berdinesen & Torjussen above. And in doing so I also recognize that, as a student engaging with Heidegger's philosophy, I must do so with an utmost critical attention to the political and ideological implications of his thinking. However, here are two main arguments for why I believe this dissertation has not become a victim to the potential nationalistic and antisemitic connotations of Heideggerian thought: (1) This dissertation is not a homage to Martin Heidegger, nor an exegesis of his works, with an attempt to uncover his 'true and original' thought. Rather, I engage with his works as an *act of appropriation*, extracting and transforming his thought for the benefit of my own philosophical project (for further methodological reflections, see chapter 6, *On Hubris – Aspirations and Shortcomings*). The most obvious and overarching example of this appropriation is my coupling of Heidegger and Kant (see next chapter, *3. A Heideggerian Thought in a Kantian System of Metaphysics*). If Heidegger's original philosophy contains nationalistic and antisemitic elements, then these are certainly not elements that are appropriated in this dissertation. (2) The philosophical project of this dissertation does not offer a political philosophy, nor does it reflect a *normative* theory of ethics. That is, my philosophical project does not present *normative imperatives*, explicit or implicit, for human actions of everyday life, of moral and social interactions, or of political engagements and activity. I approach the philosophical question of ethics, and thereby also the question of environmental ethics, as a *strictly descriptive concern*. I do not think that it is the role of philosophy to *develop* new normative principles for human action, nor does the task of *choosing* between existing normative principles fall on the philosopher. Rather, this dissertation conforms with the notion that the only valid task of philosophy in general, and of ethics in particular, is to articulate the descriptive and normative elements that are *already at play* in the human condition.

our own time as the emergence of a new form of normativity, which traces the origin of human morality back to a radical notion of our environmental belonging. We then introduced Heidegger and his later thinking of being as the foundation for our environmental thought, presenting the normativity of environmental responsibility as an event where man is confronted with his existential residence in the face of the meaning of being. When now faced with the imminent task of developing our Heideggerian environmental thought into a metaphysics of man and nature, we will make use of another great philosopher – namely, Immanuel Kant. By exploiting the systematic connections of Kant's critical philosophy, centered on *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as mediator between his *theoretical* and *practical* philosophy, we find a radical possibility to articulate Heidegger's thought on the truth of being as a *metaphysics of freedom*. That is, as a system of thought which transforms the essence of human morality into a revelation of fundamental ontology, tracing the *idea of free will back to a transcendent ground of a causally determined nature*.

However, by choosing to develop Heidegger's philosophy into a new metaphysics of man and nature, we now also find ourselves facing a problem. For the later Heidegger defines his own thinking in explicit opposition to metaphysics. Before we can even begin to elaborate on our metaphysical aspirations, and the role that Kant will play in the task of systematizing our initial Heideggerian thought, we must start by confronting this tension between Heidegger and our own intent. Let us begin with the meaning of the word itself. Metaphysics is *first philosophy* (πρώτη φιλοσοφία), inquiring into the *primary and foundational principles of reality itself*. Heidegger extends this definition by stating that metaphysics inquires into existent entities *as existent entities* (*das Seiende als Seiende*), which renders metaphysics synonymous with ontology.[30] However, by doing so, he simultaneously points to the inherent risk that metaphysics runs of forgetting the question of being itself. A thinking that confronts the true meaning of being must, in some way, transcend the scope of metaphysics.[31] Heidegger's thinking thereby finds itself in an inherent tension with traditional philosophy qua metaphysics.

This critical relationship to metaphysics is amplified by the turn of Heidegger's later thinking. The published sections of *Being and Time* is concerned with an analysis of an existent entity, namely Dasein, and is therefore still technically metaphysics according to Heidegger's

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[30] See Heidegger, M. (1998), *Introduction to "What is Metaphysics?"*, page 278 (GA 9: 367).
[31] As Richardson puts it: "Since metaphysics by reason of its nature cannot mediate the Being-process which is its ground, then to ground metaphysics we must pass beyond it. This is the sense of 'overcoming' metaphysics." Richardson, William J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page 14.

definition. But since this is the unique entity for whom the meaning of being is in question, it was also considered a metaphysics that was ultimately able to transcend the forgetfulness of traditional philosophy. This relationship, of working from within metaphysics in order to find its ultimate transcendent basis is also reflected in the name *fundamental ontology* – that is, still ontology, but simultaneously inquiring into its foundation. However, from the developments of the 1930s and onwards, Heidegger eventually abandons the earlier ambitions of an analytic of Dasein and fundamental ontology. He no longer identifies his own intellectual project as metaphysics, or even philosophy – it is now merely a *thinking of being*.

So, what is the nature of this post-metaphysical thinking of being? If the metaphysical project of *Being and Time* was to reveal the event of unconcealment through a systematic articulation of the ontological structures of Dasein, then the later Heidegger abandons all attempts at systematicity, resorting instead to poetic and suggestive language, merely hinting at that which language ultimately cannot convey.[32] Despite the unquestionable gravity and rigor of his intellectual endeavor, the later Heidegger remains incomplete, tentative, searching, always only on the way to thought.

When we now present our own task to develop a metaphysics based on a Heideggerian environmental thought, this entails an intent to re-envision the original ambition of the early Heidegger to articulate the meaning of being according to a system of existent entities; only now based on the matured insights of the later Heidegger. But why translate the intellectual achievements of the later Heidegger into a metaphysics at all? The anti-metaphysical nature of the later Heidegger makes his thinking deeply esoteric, unable to communicate with an audience outside the inner circle of Heideggerians who have already internalized Heidegger's terminology and poetic approach to the question of being. But the very same Heideggerians may also object to our metaphysical aspirations and attest that Heidegger's fundamental insights are inherently connected to its anti-metaphysical form and style. And to some extent, they would be right to object. However, the original anti-metaphysical expression of the later Heidegger is not able to accommodate the philosophical challenge of the Anthropocene. What does our demand for a new metaphysics entail? We need a new set of clearly defined concepts – of *man*, *nature*, and *normativity* – which can accommodate the conceptual and normative

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[32] This representation of *Being and Time* is anachronistic. For even though Heidegger presents something akin to an early draft of the truth of being in this work, most notably in § 44, it also seems clear that locus of Heidegger's intended articulation of the meaning of being in the third section was to be time, and not truth.

transformation that is reflected in our new epoch. In response to this particular demand, the later Heidegger cannot help us. And it is in this peculiar predicament – that Heidegger, as originally a proponent of an anti-metaphysical thought, but simultaneously a thinker that we believe can serve as the foundation for our new environmental philosophy – that we now present our project of developing the insights of the later Heidegger into a metaphysical system. That is, to organize the profound insights of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis* into a system of concepts, assertions, and inferences, so that Heidegger may stand to offer a radically different and perhaps more truthful framework for contemporary environmental philosophy.

But how can we make sure that the later Heidegger, whose profound insights is originally tied to its equally obscure language, does not lose its potency once illuminated by the rigor of a metaphysical system? Why is the later Heidegger so enigmatic? I believe that all true philosophy finds itself at the very boundary between the transparent and the opaque – between being and non-being. That is, that philosophy is ultimately an attempt to articulate the fundamental condition of human existence – our *finitude*. And that the later Heidegger is enigmatic because he has allowed his thinking to immerse itself completely in the incomprehensible abyss that demarcates this finitude. To bring Heidegger into the light of a metaphysical system cannot therefore represent an attempt to save philosophy from the incomprehensible. Rather, we must try to build a system of thought that remains grounded on our finitude. It is with this challenge in mind that we now look for assistance in the intellectual achievements of Kant. For here we find another true philosopher, whose elaborate metaphysical system remains equally grounded on the finitude of man.[33] Through the coupling of Heidegger and Kant, our intent is to systematize the insights of the later Heidegger, without thereby losing touch with the enigma at the heart of his thought. Or borrowing from Kant's concluding remark at the end of *Groundwork*: in our task to develop a metaphysics on the ground of human morality, we can but "comprehend its *incomprehensibility*; [which] is all that can fairly be required of a philosophy that strives in its principles to the very boundary of human reason."[34]

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[33] Addressing the influence of Kant on Heidegger's development of his own philosophy, identifying the Kantian problem of *time* with the Heideggerian problem of *finitude*, Frank Schalow writes: "Perhaps more than any philosopher within the Western tradition, Kant offers Heidegger a blueprint for developing his own fundamental ontology and thereby the key for rediscovering the hidden connection between being and time." Schalow, F. (2016), "Heidegger and Kant: Three Guiding Questions", page 111.

[34] GMS 4: 463

Four Steps on the Way Towards a new Metaphysics of Freedom

The Anthropocene presents us with a sense of environmental responsibility that traces the essence of human morality back to a normative meaning of nature itself. The later Heidegger's thinking of being provides a foundation for our environmental thought that can match the metaphysical claims that is implied by the conceptions reflected in our new epoch. However, even though we have now made the case for the task of developing our Heideggerian environmental thought into a proper metaphysical system, we are still faced with a major challenge. For we do not yet know anything about how we can go about developing such a system, or even where we can start to look. We will not venture on the path of temporality of Dasein, and the meaning of being as time, which was originally offered in *Being and Time*. We approach the later Heidegger from the perspective of a radical environmental thought, which traces the moral essence of man back to the normative meaning of our environmental origin. This means that our new metaphysics must be a direct response to the task of unifying ethics and ontology. But the later Heidegger does not offer such a system – in fact, he explicitly rejects all metaphysical aspirations. So, the question remains: through what intellectual pathway can we hope to achieve our intended metaphysical construction?

In the following, I will present the *four steps that has shaped my own venture towards the achievement of a new environmental philosophy as a metaphysics of freedom*. These steps do not make up the parts of an argument. Rather, they correspond to the actual steps in the genesis of my own philosophical project as a PhD student; – how I began to approach its underlying objective, and the somewhat contingent discoveries that ended up defining my path towards its realization. This also means that the project I am about to lay out, does not make the claim to be *the one and only* pathway for a metaphysics of the Anthropocene – or even to be the sole viable pathway for a Heideggerian metaphysics. It is rather *a possible pathway*, but nonetheless one which I hope will offer a fruitful contribution to contemporary environmental philosophy, and therefore a pathway that I now invite the reader to partake in. It is a pathway that – as **step i** – starts with the assumption of freedom as the ultimate ground of philosophy; which – as **step ii & iii** – takes up a challenge of a Kantian framework for fundamental ontology, suggested by Heidegger himself; and which – as **step iv** – ends on an unorthodox appropriation of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as the ultimate foundation for our new environmental metaphysics. Once all four steps are presented, I will end this subchapter by

providing some *concluding remarks* on the methodological nature of our appropriation of both Heidegger and Kant.

(**i**) The first step on our path comes in the form of an *assumption*, which will guide us on our way until the very end. Presented with the task of unifying ethics and ontology, I began by looking into the ultimate foundation of ethics. I assumed this foundation to be *freedom*. There is no hiding that this assumption reflects my own previous dealings with Kantian ethics. I must also admit that not all traditions of practical philosophy will be happy to accept this premise. But I nonetheless suggest that by assuming that freedom is in some way fundamental to our notions of morality, I tap into an understanding of modern Western thought that extends far beyond Kant or even deontological ethics.[35] And given that my assumption is correct, then surely my metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene must demonstrate freedom as the ultimate ground of *that which is*, as well as the foundation for *that which ought to be*. That is, my metaphysics must be able to articulate freedom as the ultimate and common ground of ethics and ontology.

(**ii**) The second step comes in the form of a *choice*. Once the initial assumption of freedom as the basis for our Heideggerian metaphysics has been made, then the next step is as pragmatic as can be. Running quickly through Heidegger's collected works, I looked for what is most explicitly connected to the subject of freedom. I found three works of particular interest. Two on Schelling, and one on Kant.[36] I choose Kant, initially based on the fact that my own previous dealings with Kant is far more extensive than of that with Schelling. In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, a lecture series from 1930, Heidegger sets out to read Kant's philosophy of freedom through the lens of his own fundamental ontology. Heidegger accentuates the historical novelty and radical ingenuity of the Kantian connection between *freedom*, as a problem of man's moral essence, and *causality*, as an ontological problem of the lawful presence of nature. That is, Heidegger sets the stage for an articulation of his own fundamental ontology through the metaphysical system of Kant's philosophy of freedom.

(**iii**) The third step on my path to a metaphysics for environmental philosophy presents our project with a *direction*. This direction is born out of the *underdeveloped* nature of Heidegger's own interpretation of Kant. That is, we translate the incompleteness reflected in

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[35] Alternative to a deontological ethics, the most obvious example of a predominant modern practical philosophy that is centered on freedom would be *liberalism*.
[36] GA 42 and 49 on Schelling, and GA 31 on Kant.

The Essence of Human Freedom into a challenge of developing our own metaphysics. There are two ways in which Heidegger's interpretation of Kant remains incomplete. The first way corresponds to the unfulfilled promise of the work itself. Throughout the entire lecture series, Heidegger continues to hint at a possible reversal for Kantian philosophy of freedom, which would reveal a hitherto unknown radicality of Kant's critical philosophy. More specifically, Heidegger suggests that we approach freedom, not as a problem of causality, which makes Kant's theoretical philosophy the ultimate basis for his practical philosophy. But instead that we view causality as a problem of freedom, which would transform *Kant's ethics into fundamental ontology*. But Heidegger never really goes through with this reversal. A fact that becomes most clear in the final four-page conclusion, where Heidegger once again presents his alternative for a new and radical Kantian pathway, only to leave the reader hanging in suspense.[37]

The second way in which *The Essence of Human Freedom* remains incomplete, is reflected by the premature stage of Heidegger's own thinking. As a lecture series from the summer semester of 1930, Heidegger is at this stage still largely oriented towards *Being and Time*. And as we now look back with the hindsight of Heidegger's thinking from the late 1930s and onwards, we come to acknowledge that Heidegger's suggested reversal for Kantian metaphysics was not yet in a position to fully internalize the matured ideas of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis*. As we now choose to face the challenge reflected by the unfinished state of *The Essence of Human Freedom*, taking advantage of the full extent of the later Heidegger's intellectual developments, we do so with the recognition that our own attempt to interpret Kant is unlikely to match the intended vision of Heidegger's original lecture from 1930.

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[37] Why does Heidegger not complete his suggested metaphysical reversal of Kant's philosophy of freedom? I do not know. But what I do know, is that in the years following the lecture series on Kant, Heidegger's own thinking undergoes a significant transformation – that is, what is now known as the turn (*die Kehre*). This turn drastically removes Heidegger's intellectual endeavor from the kind metaphysical project that is presented in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. Following Bret Davis's interpretation, Heidegger's turn also involves a certain evolution and ultimately a rejection of a *philosophy of the will*. Although present in *Being and Time* and the central notion of resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*), Heidegger's philosophical emphasis on the will is most visible in the early parts of the 1930s, e.g., in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. But according to Davis, this emphasis is gradually overtaken by a more mature Heidegger of the late 1930s and beyond, whose primary mood is instead characterized by such concepts as *non-willing* and *Gelassenheit*. If we now take our own and Davis's depiction of Heidegger's turn together, it becomes clear, at the very least, that a reversal of Kant's philosophy of freedom for the benefit of Heidegger's own later thinking of being would have to be realized in a significantly different way than what is originally depicted in the 1930-lecture. See Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, chapter 3.

If we now combine these two ways in which *The Essence of Human Freedom* remains incomplete, we end up with a direction for our own metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. Heidegger presents us with a challenge to interpret his own fundamental ontology through Kant's critical philosophy. More specifically, he suggests that we reverse Kant's philosophy of freedom, so that the grounding phenomenon of Kant's ethics becomes the ultimate foundation for a critical system of metaphysics. However, as we now accept this challenge, we do so based on the later Heidegger's matured insights of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis*. What does this entail? It means that we will attempt to articulate the true meaning of being – that is, the event of unconcealment where man comes to his own self – through a *Kantian system of freedom and causality*. We do so with the intent to present a metaphysics where the foundation of human ethics is revealed as a normative meaning of nature itself.

(**iv**) The fourth step comes in the form of a *concretization*. In short, it takes the metaphysical challenge that was revealed through the incomplete state of *The Essence of Human Freedom*, and then suggest that we find a basis for the transformation of Kantian ethics into fundamental ontology in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. More specifically, we suggest that the *transcendental idea of a natural technique*, which remains a foundational yet enigmatic element in Kant's third critique, presents us with the necessary basis for our own metaphysics of the normative ground of nature. In order to understand this step, we shall yet again begin with a brief recapitulation of our overall project, which will hopefully clarify the reason for choosing to concretize our metaphysical project in the way we do. Once we have established the intent and purpose of this fourth step, it will be the sole focus of the next chapter of our introduction to inquire deeper into our appropriation of Kant's philosophy of a natural technique.

Where has the previous three steps taken us? Environmental responsibility is a normative phenomenon which directs human morality towards nature as its object of concern. The radical claim of the Anthropocene is not that we show concern for the environment, but that the origin of this concern is somehow reflected in a normative meaning of nature which grounds human existence. It is our intent to articulate this normative ground of nature according to a proper metaphysical system. In our pathway towards the realization of such a system, we found Heidegger's suggested reversal of Kant's philosophy of freedom, so that the ground of human morality becomes the ground of nature itself – or more specifically, freedom becomes the ground of the causal appearance of nature, which in turn represents the existential residence of man. This reversal transforms Kant's moral theory into fundamental ontology, and thereby serves to unify ontology and ethics.

However, the immediate and pressing fact that confronts us when presenting Heidegger's radical suggestion, is that Kant's own grounding of morality is inherently connected to his analysis of the human subject and its capacity for *pure practical reason*. That is, the ground of Kantian morality is the *will* as a faculty of the human mind, and *freedom* as its transcendent property. This gives us an ethics that is not only anthropogenic and anthropocentric, but one wherein which Kant discriminates categorically between human beings, as the sole proprietor of moral worth, and everything else. In fact, this unique position of human morality translates into a split between man and nature that is integral to Kant's entire system of thought; a split between *two fundamental yet separate domains of legislation*, corresponding to the primary objects of concern in the first and second critique.[38] It therefore becomes clear that our Heideggerian metaphysics must confront the very foundation of Kant's critical philosophy.

In seeking to develop our Heideggerian environmental thought into a Kantian system of metaphysics, what becomes the ultimate task of our philosophical project? Kant's ethics is grounded on free will. If the will by itself represents the ability to act according to the representation of laws, thereby reflecting the causal determination of nature, then a free will represents a particular form of causality, where the will is able to act from a law of its own that is independent from natural causation. If this Kantian notion of morality is to serve as the foundation for our own metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene, then we must be able to transform the elements of freedom and will, from a capacity of the human mind to a ground of nature itself. That is, if contemporary environmentalism calls for the unification of ontology and ethics, then the ultimate response of this dissertation will be to develop the later Heidegger's thinking of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis* into a *metaphysical system of free will*.

So far in our exposition of the metaphysical challenge that confronts us, we have simply followed the pathway already presented to us by Heidegger. That is, by presenting our intent to transform Kant's ethics into fundamental ontology, and by stating the radical implications for our understanding of will and freedom that follows from this transformation, we have only done what is suggested in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. However, in our task of realizing this intent, we are now forced to seek beyond Heidegger. Simply because Heidegger himself never ended up developing the kind of Kantian metaphysics alluded to in the lecture series from 1930.

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[38] On the two domains of legislation in Kant's system of thought, see KdU 5:174.

So how do we proceed? It is at this point that we look to the third and final major work in Kant's critical corpus – the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. If the first and second critique is concerned with the two separate domains of legislation reflected by our *concepts of nature* and our *concept of freedom*, then the third critique is widely considered as inquiring into a transcendental ground that serves to *mediate between theoretical and practical philosophy*. But the manner and meaning of this mediation is also subject to great dispute amongst Kantian scholars. In this dissertation, we will confront the radical idea of a *natural technique*, which Kant connects to the foundation of lawfulness in nature, as well as the ground of human morality. A technique is the willful effectuation of something into existence. A natural technique (or 'technique of nature'[39]) presents the determining ground of this willful effectuation as somehow reflected in nature itself. It is through this radical idea that we hope to develop our own Heideggerian notions of willing and freedom as the ground of the normative meaning of nature.

(**v**) *Concluding remarks*. By turning to *The Essence of Human Freedom* in the hope of finding a possible foundation for our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene, we found the outline of a suggested metaphysics, which transforms Kant's moral theory into fundamental ontology. In accepting this challenge, we also identified its most significant task. We must develop a concept of *willing and freedom* – the two foundational elements of Kantian ethics – so that they reflect a normative ground of nature, as opposed to the faculties of the human mind. In our fourth and final step towards a new metaphysics, we suggested that Kant may in fact offer a framework for such transformation of willing and freedom, in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its idea of a natural technique.

In our search for a metaphysics that unifies ontology and ethics, our four steps have led us to a *Heideggerian thought in a Kantian system*. However, in laying out this novel intellectual pathway, we must also admit that we have committed to a rather peculiar *hermeneutical situation*. For on the one hand, we have chosen to build an environmental philosophy on the foundations of two great German thinkers. But on the other hand, we have also outlined a new metaphysics of man and nature which clearly extends beyond the original scope and intent of both Heidegger and Kant. That is, the initial pathway in *The Essence of Human Freedom* presents us with Heidegger's own radical transformation of Kant's philosophy of freedom. In

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[39] I use the terms "natural technique" and "technique of nature" interchangeably.

aspiring to carry out this transformation, which Heidegger himself never did complete, we introduced an adittional element of Kant's philosophy that is certainly not presented in *The Essence of Human Freedom* – namely, Kant's third critique of reflecting judgment. We thereby end up with a metaphysics that not only exceeds the scope of Kant's own writings, but which is also developed in a way that, although grounded on a Heideggerian thought, remains equally unconstrained by Heidegger's original analysis. In other words, if Heidegger has presented a *method of appropriation*, which transforms Kant's philosophy for the benefit of his own fundamental ontology, then we have now ended up on an intellectual pathway that extends this method of appropriation to Heidegger as well, transforming his original idea for the benefit of our own metaphysical construction. Thus, we find ourselves in the ambiguous middle position of invoking the intellectual achievements of Heidegger and Kant, while simultaneously allowing for a significant leeway in the way we appropriate the ideas at play in their works. It is for this reason that we present our intended project as a *Heideggerian* thought in a *Kantian* system of metaphysics – as opposed to *Heidegger's* thought in *Kant's* system. By acknowledging this strange ambiguity in our approach to both Heidegger and Kant, we have in fact indicated a more general and underlying methodological choice concerning this dissertation in its entirety. Namely, that our task of developing a new metaphysics has internalized Heidegger's own *hermeneutical method of philosophical interpretation*. In the sixth and final chapter of this introduction, we will dig deeper into the meaning and implications of this methodological choice.

4. A Natural Technique: The Ground of Nature as Willing and Freedom

Our project begins with the environmental thought of the Anthropocene. It makes a daring claim about our current historical epoch. We now live in a time where nature, initiated through a state of environmental crisis, has revealed its own inherent normative meaning, in a manner that confronts us with an acute sense of responsibility for the environment as our own existential foundation. This claim entails a radical transformation of our modern conceptions of nature and its relationship to man. And because of this radicality, the Anthropocene also comes with a challenge to develop a metaphysics that can match this alleged transformation – that is, as a system of thought that can accommodate the unification of ethics and ontology, tracing the moral essence of man back to an environmental origin. In our effort to meet this challenge, we began by presenting the later Heidegger's thinking of being as the foundation for our environmental philosophy. But we also came to realize that Heidegger lacks the systematicity required for our intended metaphysics. However, in a lecture series from 1930, we found a pathway to articulate the meaning of being through the metaphysical framework of Kant's philosophy of freedom. Kant's ethics is ultimately based on his theoretical philosophy, defining the idea of freedom as an extrapolation from the transcendental concept of causal determination in nature. But Heidegger suggests that we reverse Kant's philosophy, so that freedom now instead becomes the ground of natural causation, transforming Kantian ethics into fundamental ontology. However, in our endeavor to develop such a metaphysics, which Heidegger himself never sought out to complete, we immediately found ourselves facing a problem. For in Kant's

analysis of morality, the concept of willing corresponds to the faculty of desire in the human mind, and the practical reality of freedom is presented solely as a transcendent property of human volition.[40] In order to realize Heidegger's suggested metaphysics, we are required to transform the elements of willing and freedom, so that they instead represent a ground of nature. It was at this point that we introduced Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its foundational idea of a natural technique.

In our depiction of the four steps taken towards the realization of a metaphysics of man and nature that can accommodate the alleged transformation of our new epoch, we have tried to be honest about the contingent circumstances that has led us to the present dissertational project. That is, our violent appropriation of Kant's philosophy of freedom does not claim to be the only way forward for the Anthropocene as a field of environmental philosophy. Rather, our suggested metaphysics is the result of a PhD student who has approached the works of Heidegger and Kant with an open mind, with the intent to see whether these two great thinkers may offer a new intellectual pathway that can provide a serious contribution to contemporary environmental thought. However, now that the basic premise for this dissertation has been presented – that is, in the form of an *assumption*, *choice*, *direction*, and a *concretization* – it is time to demonstrate more precisely how our Heideggerian interpretation of Kant's philosophy of freedom, which finds its ultimate expression with the help of *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* may answer the metaphysical call of the Anthropocene.

If Kant's philosophy, with the third critique at the forefront, is to serve as the framework for our new environmental philosophy, it must succeed on two accounts. First, it must be able to bring Heidegger's foundational thought into the light of a rigorous system of metaphysics. Second, it must offer the kind of unification of ontology and ethics that is implicitly reflected in the environmental responsibility of our own time. By utilizing Kant's framework of a natural technique, we will be able to articulate Heidegger's notion of the truth of being as unconcealment according to a ground of nature as willing and freedom. That is, if we understand freedom as the abyss of concealment, and willing as the disclosure of a lawfully determined nature into our phenomenal presence, then Heidegger's truth of being takes on the form of a natural technique. F**igure 1** (below) illustrates this metaphysical translation of Heidegger's thought. The major achievement of this framework is that the basic metaphysical questions of

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[40] Technically speaking, Kant defines his concept of free will so that it extends to the general class of beings that possess pure practical reason, for example angels. See GMS 4: 425.

causality and free will are now transformed into one single concern of fundamental ontology. That is, if we take the notion of causality to reflect the metaphysical inquiry into the lawfulness of nature, epitomizing the basic concern of ontology. And if we take the notion of free will to reflect the moral essence of man, epitomizing the concern of ethics. Then Kant's theory of a natural technique offers a framework where the ultimate concern for ontology and ethics are seen as one and the same. Or rephrasing in Heideggerian terminology: *The truth of being is the primordial event where nature, as the lawful appearance of all things, comes into our phenomenal presence through the grounding movements of willing and freedom, and the moral essence of man is to reflect on this primordial event.*

Un-concealment

↙   ↘

Freedom   **Willing**

as   as

Concealing   **Unconcealing**

causally determined nature   causally determined nature

↘   ↙

Technique of nature
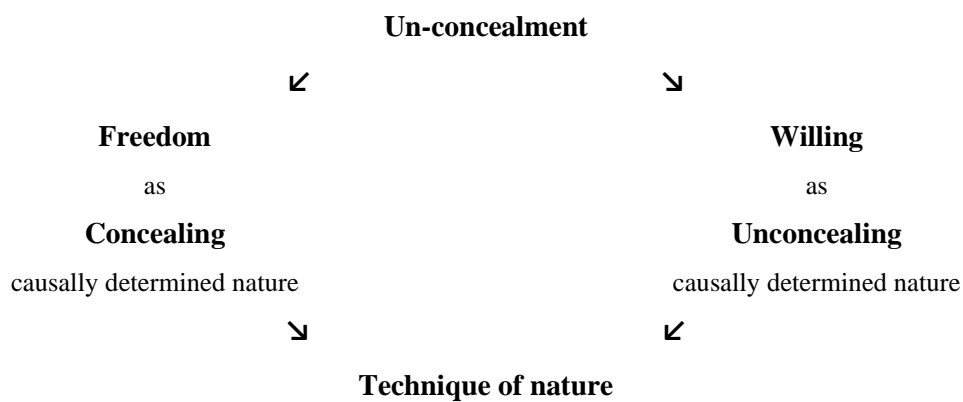
Figure 1: Articulating unconcealment as a technique of nature.

In presenting the task now ahead of us, the first thing to notice is that although our intended appropriation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is sure to exceed Heidegger's own readings of Kant, the general idea of a natural technique is arguably in keeping with many of the statements and analyses that we find in Heidegger's later thought.[41] If the truth of being as *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis* represents the two most significant notions of the later Heidegger, then we find several instances where he articulates the event of unconcealment and appropriation by appealing to ποίησις and τέχνη. That is, suggesting that the meaning of being is reflected in some primordial understanding of *art* and *technological production*.[42] We may

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[41] Despite Heidegger's extensive dealings with Kant, which above all else is devoted to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, surprisingly little attention is given to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Most notably is perhaps his short analysis of *Kant's Doctrine of the Beautiful*, in *Nietzsche I* (GA 6.1).

[42] In the words of Trish Glazebrook: "By the mid-1930s, Heidegger […] argues, art is truth – *alêtheia*, a world-opening event, unconcealment of beings – that can only arise on the ground of earth […]. The creative act is

therefore regard our own project as an attempt to incorporate the rigor of a metaphysical system into Heidegger's original analysis.[43] The task of the present chapter is to unpack this specific coupling of Heidegger and Kant, for the benefit of our environmental philosophy. We will begin (**i**) by giving a rudimentary depiction of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its major components of reflecting judgment, the principle of purposiveness, and the radical idea of a technique of nature which accompanies the power of judgment in its reflection. We will then (**ii**) proceed by presenting a general outline of our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant's third critique. This appropriation demands that we reinterpret several central components in Kant's philosophy, in a way that no doubt violates standard Kantian orthodoxy. Instead of showing how this reinterpretation is possible, we will limit the task of this chapter to (**iii**) presenting the technical steps that the main parts of the dissertation will need to accomplish. Given the expected success of these technical steps, we then (**iv**) jump forward and present the general framework of our environmental metaphysics of man and the normative ground of nature, which are built on the foundation of our Heideggerian interpretation of Kant. Once these four steps are completed, we will end with a separate subchapter that reflects on the nature of our new metaphysics, comparing Heidegger's foundational claim of *ontological difference* with the ontological enigma of Kant's *transcendental ideas*.

(**i**) Kant's philosophy is *transcendental idealism* and centers on the human subject, analyzing its transcendental conditions for the possibility of cognition as well as action. In the third critique, the transcendental condition in question is the *reflecting power of judgment* and its *principle of purposiveness – Zweckmäßigkeit*. According to Kant, the power of judgment is initially defined as the capacity to *determine* objects of appearance according to concepts we already possess – that is, both transcendental and empirical. But the power of judgment also holds a capacity to engage with phenomenal appearance without determining its objects according to preconceived concepts, entering instead a state of *reflection*.[44] And when the power of judgment reflects on phenomenal appearance through the principle of purposiveness,

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poiêsis, and Heidegger will say almost 30 years later, '*physis* is indeed *poiêsis* in the highest sense'[…]". Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy", page 436.

[43] In this dissertation (especially in part two, chapter 4) we will highlight Heidegger's interpretation of ποίησις and τέχνη in *The Question Concerning Technology*. Also noteworthy is Heidegger's articulation of the truth of being through as the primordial event of the work of art, in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (GA 5).

[44] Or as Paul Guyer puts it, the power of judgment is reflecting, as opposed to determining, if there is no universal given for us to subsume the particular object of appearance. Guyer, Paul (2003)*,* "Kant's Principles of Reflecting Judgment", page 1.

it gains a susceptibility to a radical form of lawfulness revealed by nature itself. In what sense is this new lawfulness *radical*? Our understanding of something as *lawful* is ordinarily connected to the conceptual determination of either humans or things according to rules, laws, and principles. But the lawfulness in nature that is revealed by the reflecting power of judgment does not only elude all conventional forms of conceptual classification; it also conditions conceptually determined lawfulness. Thus, we invoke a twofold meaning of the word 'radical' as meaning both the *breaking with convention* as well as *going to the roots* (*radix*).

The meaning and role of this new radical lawfulness uncovered by reflecting judgment varies significantly across the different parts of the critique, corresponding mainly to three different formulations of the principle of purposiveness. (1) In the general introduction, Kant initially presents the reflecting power of judgment through the use of the principle of a *formal and logical purposiveness*, which serves a heuristic function in the (scientific) development of our understanding of nature as a unified system of empirical lawfulness. (2) In the first major part of the critique, the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, the principle of *aesthetic purposiveness* serves a purely subjective purpose, in judging the mere form of sensible appearance as either *beautiful* or *sublime*, accompanied by a feeling of pleasure and displeasure. (3) And in the second major part, the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*, the principle of *objective purposiveness* is used to judge objects of nature (i.e., *organisms*), as well as nature as a totality, through the teleological relation of the parts and the whole.[45]

The separate meanings and the possible interconnections between the principles of *formal and logical*, *aesthetic*, and *objective* purposiveness are all subject to interpretation.[46] But irrespective of their differences, they all seem to contribute to the revelation of a new form of radical lawfulness in nature, which in turn leads Kant to an idea that permeates the entirety of the third critique, namely the notion of a transcendent *technique of nature*. Kant defines technique as the *willful effectuation of something into existence* – that is, as the production of art.[47] When the power of judgment reflects on the phenomenal appearance of nature through its

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[45] By making this division, we align with the interpretation of Paul Guyer; although he presents the bifurcation of both aesthetic and objective (or 'teleological') judgment as representing numerically distinct forms of reflecting judgment, thereby counting the total number of principles as five instead of three. Guyer, Paul (2003)*,* "Kant's Principles of Reflecting Judgment", page 2.
[46] Despite his comprehensive study of *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Henry E. Allison deliberately avoids "the thorny question of the unity of the *Critique of Judgment*" and the possible connections between the three principles of purposiveness. Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 6.
[47] See KdU 20:200.

principle of purposiveness, it invokes the idea of nature as art – *Natur als Kunst*.[48] Not as a product effectuated by the will of the subject, but instead as a will reflected in our concept of nature itself. That is, if technique proper is the event of bringing something into existence through willful action, then the concept of natural technique identifies the foundation of this event as a ground of nature, which in turn functions as a precondition for the subject's willful engagement and cognition.

(**ii**) How can we use the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as a framework for our Heideggerian metaphysics? Heidegger's fundamental thought is reflected in the notion of the true meaning of being as unconcealment. We now intend to articulate this primordial truth through a novel interpretation of Kant's analysis of reflecting judgment, in a way that utilizes an already existing but subtle connection between the two principles of *formal and logical* and *aesthetic* purposiveness. In what way? The principle of formal and logical purposiveness speaks to the original generation of nature as a unified system of causal determination. If we connect this principle to our Heideggerian thought, it means that what is shown in the phenomenal presence of being is fundamentally causal in nature. That is, we stand to articulate *the true meaning of being as a causal meaning*. But what are the grounding forces that puts this causal meaning into play? Kant states that the aesthetic judgment of beauty and sublimity represents the most fundamental expression of reflecting judgment in the third critique. On the one hand, the aesthetic judgment itself is neither action nor cognition, but simply a pure form of subjective reflection. But on the other hand, Kant also suggests that the very same subjective lawfulness that is at play in aesthetic judgment is somehow foundational to all cognition. Moreover, Kant also draws a connection between aesthetic reflection and human morality. It is this seemingly profound yet simultaneously enigmatic connection between morality and causal determination which Kant alludes to in his analysis of aesthetic judgment that we now aim to exploit. We present beauty and sublimity as the twofold ground through which the causal meaning of nature is unconcealed. That is, in the Kantian framework of natural technique, the primordial expression of willing and freedom becomes an object of aesthetic reflection. And because the grounding elements of human morality are now transformed into the ground of causal determination, the causal meaning of nature is revealed as a fundamentally normative meaning. In Heideggerian terms: *the event of unconcealment reflects a twofold ground of nature as*

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[48] KdU 20:204.

willing and freedom, whose radical lawfulness is foundational for the organization of all things into a system of normative causal meaning. **Figure 2** (below) shows the basic layout of this aesthetic articulation of the truth of being as a natural technique.

Aesthetic

Ground of Nature

↙   ↘

Sublime Abyss   **Willful Ground**

of Freedom   **of Beauty**

↘   ↙

Causal & Normative

Meaning of Nature

Figure 2: The aesthetic ground of nature.

(**iii**) What have we put forward thus far? We have taken the metaphysical framework in *Critique of the Powe of Judgment*, and then appropriated the idea of a natural technique for our own Heideggerian metaphysics on the ground of nature as willing and freedom. That is, Kant's original analysis of reflecting judgment and the principle of purposiveness contains several claims to a radical connection between the causal determination of nature, the essence of human morality, and a transcendent ground of nature in the form of a natural technique. We have indicated our intent to utilize these connections for a new metaphysics that tries to unify ethics and ontology. But because our utilization exploits these connections for the benefit of a metaphysical system that is surely not expressed by Kant himself, we also need to provide a reinterpretation of Kant's philosophy, so that it can match the requirements of our own fundamental ontology. In essence, we must offer an interpretation where the foundational elements of willing and freedom are revealed as the basic components of a ground of nature. The scope of the present chapter will not allow us to explain how this interpretative transformation of Kant's philosophy is possible; this will ultimately be the task of the final and fourth part of the dissertation, where we go deep into selected parts of *Groundwork*, *Critique of Pure Reason*, and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Instead, we will now limit ourselves to presenting the main technical challenges that our dissertational project relies on solving.

       Our appropriation of Kant contains three main steps – that is, three key components of Kantian philosophy that will be subject to our Heideggerian transformation. This trifurcation

also corresponds to the three main chapters (2-4) of the final part four of the dissertation. The **first step** in our appropriation is to demonstrate that the *formal structure of human morality* in Kantian ethics, focusing on the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, can be preserved even though the foundational elements of willing and freedom are transformed into a ground of nature. In our Heideggerian interpretation, willing and freedom are not the properties of the human soul, but rather a transcendent ground of nature, which in turn reflects the ultimate condition for the possibility of a willful subject. This is obviously a misrepresentation of Kant's own texts on ethics. However, despite this radical transformation of the ultimate ground of morality, we nonetheless suggest that the formal structure of human morality remains the same. That is, the concept of a good will, the categorical imperative, and the idea of moral autonomy, can all be preserved in a metaphysical system where free will is something that ultimately transcends the human subject. This step of our appropriation is essential because its shows that we can utilize the basic framework of Kantian ethics, despite the Heideggerian transformation of its foundation.

The **second step** in our appropriation speaks to the *causal meaning of nature*. We intend to articulate Heidegger's basic notion of the meaning of being as fundamentally a causal structure of nature, utilizing Kant's own metaphysical framework in the first and third critique. We find the initial framing of the problem of nature as causal meaning in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. While securing an absolute foundation for causation through the second category of relation in the *transcendental analytic*, Kant ends the *transcendental dialectic* with an *appendix* that both expands and complicates the question of the lawfulness of nature. The category of causality in the transcendental analytic only provides the basis for an understanding of nature as an aggregate of unrelated lawful events, whereas an adequate concept of empirical nature requires the organization of these unrelated events into a unified system. In the appendix of the first critique, the basis for such a system is suggested through the regulative use of the transcendental ideas of pure reason. However, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the nature of these *regulative principles* is radically transformed by the introduction of reflecting judgment and its principle of purposiveness.[49] That is, the transcendental basis of nature as a

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[49] This relationship, between the regulative principles of pure reason and the principles of reflecting judgment, are widely accepted, but the nature of their connections is contested. As Paul Guyer puts it: "It could be argued that all of the regulative principles of reason that Kant introduces into his philosophy prior to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are recast in the latter work as principles of reflecting judgment, although that claim might seem controversial. Its converse – that all the principles of reflecting judgment are regulative principles – should be less controversial […]." Guyer, Paul (2003), "Kant's Principles of Reflecting Judgment", page 3.

system of causal determination is not found in the inferences of theoretical reason, but through a conceptually indeterminate reflection on a radical form of lawfulness by the power of judgment. Our own notion of the *causal meaning of nature* is based on Kant's original formulation of the problem of nature as a unified system of empirical lawfulness, and the purported solution of the third critique in securing a transcendental basis for such a causal system through the reflecting power of judgment. To the extent that the notion of causal meaning simply refers to the organization of nature according to a unified system, then Kant's original analysis is in fact perfectly aligned with our Heideggerian project. However, the notion becomes a novel appropriation of Kant because we also claim that this causal organization speaks to the meaning of being itself. This identification of the meaning of being as a causal meaning entails that the organization of lawful nature into a unified system is in fact a necessary condition for the possibility of all existent entities. Or in Kant's terms, it means that we will interpret the principle of *formal and logical* purposiveness as an altogether *teleological* principle.

The **third step** speaks to the notion of the ground of nature itself. It follows directly from steps one and two, which both merely presuppose a possible revelation of a ground that is simultaneously the foundation for the formal structure of human morality as well as the causal meaning of nature. That is, as a common ground for ethics and ontology. We suggest that such a ground can be conceived through the framework of Kant's transcendental analysis of aesthetic judgment. More specifically, that the aesthetic object of *beauty* represents a ground of willing, whose radical lawfulness puts into play the causal meaning of nature. And that the aesthetic object of *sublimity* represents an abyss which violently disrupts the same causal meaning, thereby withdrawing existence itself into concealment. These connections between causality, morality, and the aesthetic objects of beauty and sublimity are already present in Kant's original analysis of the aesthetic power of judgment. Beauty is defined as the appearance of nature in a state of radical lawfulness that is fundamentally *purposive* for our judgment, and sublimity is the *un-purposiveness* of nature that violently opposes our powers of cognition. Kant not only puts the lawfulness at play in beauty in connection with our fundamental ability to comprehend nature, but he also points to a connection between the dynamics of beauty and sublimity and the formation of human morality. But these connections are also seriously underdeveloped,

leaving it up to the reader to either complete the argument, or simply to discard their validity altogether.[50] Our own appropriation of Kant seeks to complete the argument, but it does so through Heidegger's foundational thought. Despite the explicit reference to morality in the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, there is no doubt that our identification of beauty and sublimity as the primordial expression of willing and freedom itself goes way beyond Kant's original vision. Thus, the achievement of the third step in our Heideggerian appropriation will be to show that Kant's analysis can in fact meaningfully sustain such transformation.

(**iv**) We have now given a brief presentation of what is fundamentally at play in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; the way we intent to appropriate Kant's analysis of reflecting judgment for the benefit of our own Heideggerian metaphysics; and the main technical challenges that must be resolved for this appropriation to be successful. Our ultimate task is to develop a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene that unifies ethics and ontology. Because we approach this task by way of utilizing the philosophies of Heidegger and Kant in a manner that clearly exceeds the original scope and intention of both these thinkers, it also becomes apparent that one of the major undertakings of this dissertation will be to carry out a combined interpretation of their works in a way that the reader may find persuasive. However, for the purpose of continuing our present introduction, we must now simply take the success of these outlined transformations of Heidegger and Kant for granted. Building on this presupposition, we now present the basic framework of our finalized metaphysics – the *idea of a natural technique and the normative causal meaning of nature*. We begin by giving two separate definitions of (A) the *ground of normativity* and (B) the *causal meaning of nature*, and then conclude by combining these two definitions through (C) the general framework of a *technique of nature*.

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[50] It is arguably the connection between aesthetic judgment and natural causation that is most contentious. Henry E. Allison goes a long way in rejecting the "obscure linkage" between aesthetic judgment and the principle of formal and logical purposiveness. See e.g., Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 59.

(A) GROUND OF NORMATIVITY

What is **normativity**? We begin by juxtaposing normativity and descriptivity. Descriptivity is the exposition of *that which is* – that is, it describes existent entities. Normativity, on the other hand, is the exposition of that which *ought to be*. This means that normativity brings *the descriptive itself into question*. That is, the condition for the possibility that *something* ought to be, is that we are faced with the *simultaneous possibility for this something to be and not to be*. The most straightforward and paradigmatic case of this twofold possibility is the question of affirming or negating the reality of an action. For example, do I effectuate or abstain from the action of killing another person. By defining normativity in this way, we see that it presupposes two grounding components. Normativity must hold a twofold *proclivity to act out* the existential possibilities of being and non-being. We name the proclivity towards the existential realization of something as **willing**. That is, willing reflects the *imperative of the ought for something to be*. Whereas the proclivity towards the nihilation of something, we name **freedom**. That is, freedom reflects a kind of counter-willing or disposition for something not to be. The essence of normativity comes to the fore when we put these two proclivities together – revealing a sense of **responsibility**, as a reflective awareness of the present existential situation.

(B) THE CAUSAL MEANING OF NATURE

The concept of **nature** itself we define simply as the *sum total of all existent entities*. That is, forming the highest of genera in ontological classification. But if nature is the totality of existence, what does it mean to be? The first partial answer to this question is that all existent entities are *lawfully structured*. This fundamental property is reflected by the general concept of **causation**. That is, causality is a category in service of articulating the meaning of being. We can analyze this lawful structure according to different levels of comprehension: Causation may reflect the internal temporal development of a *single entity*; it can be the lawful relation between *two distinct entities*; and it applies to the lawful interrelation between a *group of things*. If we extrapolate from the third variation of causation, so that the lawfulness accounts for the interrelation between the totality of *all things into a unified system*, then we arrive at our own concept of **causal meaning**. This is a *teleological* concept, in the sense that the lawfulness of nature as a system of things is simultaneously the condition for the possibility of each individual existent entity. This gives us a more comprehensive definition of the words *cause and effect*

than the classical billiard ball example. A **cause** is not a single factor that is solely responsible for an effect. It is rather always the sum total of factors responsible for the effectuation of something into existence. And equally is an **effect** never the production of an isolated entity, but always the assembly of a multitude of things into a unified system.

(C) NATURAL TECHNIQUE: THE CAUSAL AND NORMATIVE MEANING OF NATURE

Having defined the ground of normativity and the causal meaning of nature separately, we can now combine the two through the framework of a natural technique. The fundamental structure of normativity is defined by the simultaneous possibility of being and non-being, and willing and freedom as the grounding proclivities to act out these possibilities. And causal meaning is the foundational organization of all things into a unified system. In the framework of a **natural technique**, what is willed by the ground of nature as willing is not the end of a particular existent entity, but the unity of the causal meaning through which a thing can appear in our phenomenal presence as an existent entity. And freedom becomes an abyss through which the very same causal meaning is nihilated, bringing all existence back into oblivion. The realization of this twofold ground makes the causal meaning of nature fundamentally normative. And the primordial nature of responsibility, as the essential trait of human morality, is not expressed through the actions of a willful subject, but instead by reflecting on the existential ground of nature that ultimately transcends the subject. In revealing the causal meaning of nature as a normative meaning, we articulate the fundamental existential condition of nature – its *finitude*. This meaning is reflected in the concept of **environment**. That is, when confronted with the twofold ground of willing and freedom, thereby acknowledging that the causal meaning of nature is *at stake*, we reveal nature as an environment. And **ethos**, on the other hand, is the reflective awareness of man, who is confronted with the environment as his own existential foundation.

Ontological Difference and Kant's Critical Theory of Ideas

The framework of natural technique and the ground of nature as willing and freedom is our response to the metaphysical challenge of the Anthropocene, and the transformation of Kant's philosophy of freedom that was suggested to us by Heidegger in *The Essence of Human*

Freedom. As a final contribution to our introductory presentation of the dissertational project, we will now address an overarching feature of our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant, in a manner that also speaks to the *nature* of our new metaphysics. That is, we will show how our new metaphysics, on a more general level of analysis, entails that we utilize an ontological ambiguity that haunts Kant's *critical theory of transcendental ideas*, in the effort to illuminate Heidegger's foundational notion of *ontological difference*. And that what is gained by this peculiar coupling, is a metaphysics that is fundamentally oriented towards a *practical understanding of man and nature*.

Our Heideggerian appropriation of Kantian philosophy could easily be misinterpreted as meddling in speculative thinking. That is, if we define philosophical *speculation* as a kind of thinking that detaches itself entirely from an observable and interactable reality, then it is easy to see why the notion of a ground of nature as willing and freedom may be perceived as just that – a system of thought based on a purely intelligible reasoning that transcends all forms of empirical experience. For the sake of argument, let us introduce a simple *straw man* argument, which interprets our proposed technique of nature as a speculative theory of *metaphysical voluntarism*. We take voluntarism to mean that the innermost essence of reality is will. And that the notion of a will refers to the constitutive property of some existent entity, typically as the will of a transcendent and foundational God. This would render our purported ground of nature as willing and freedom into the primordial form of all existence. However, such interpretation would surely violate the basic tenets of both Kantian and Heideggerian philosophy. That is, both Heidegger and Kant present their own philosophies in an antagonistic relationship to traditional metaphysics. And although their respective definitions of 'metaphysics' differ, they both end up rejecting all forms of argument for the existence of supernatural entities, including any concept of a transcendent will of the world.

All forms of metaphysical construction contain a proclivity towards speculation. For a metaphysical system will always remain imperfect – that is, as a mere shadowy reflection of the original phenomena that it tries to articulate. And when haunted by this imperfection, it will always be tempting to shift one's attention away from the goal of illuminating the original phenomena, and instead to lose oneself in the task of solving the puzzles internal to the system itself. Despite our metaphysical aspiration to develop a comprehensive system of ideas, the project is ultimately an effort to engage with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, whose fundamental thought reflects that which is *most near in our everyday phenomenal experience*, and thereby also *what is most simple*. And the part of Kant's philosophy that we have chosen to exploit for the benefit of developing Heidegger's thought into a system of metaphysics,

reflects a similar movement towards a thoroughly practical realm of man and nature. That is, the be-all and end-all of Heidegger's thought is his ontological differentiation between existent entities and the meaning of being. In this dissertation we will attempt to articulate this ontological difference, by appealing to Kant's critical theory of transcendental ideas. Our claim is that Heidegger and Kant, at this particular point of conjunction, share an understanding that philosophy, in its highest form of intellectual endeavor, must ultimately turn to a radical form of practical experience, which transcends conceptual determination. In this subchapter we will utilize the antagonistic position of a metaphysical voluntarism as a means to reflect on (**i**) Heidegger's fundamental thought of ontological difference, as well as (**ii**) Kant's critical theory of transcendental ideas. We will then proceed to (**iii**) show how we can utilize the ontological ambiguity in Kant's transcendental ideas to articulate Heidegger's meaning of being as a *foundational normative praxis*.

(**i**) In what sense would Heidegger reject the position of a metaphysical voluntarism, where the will is seen as the original and foundational existent entity, grounding all other forms of existence? We see this rejection perhaps most explicit in his notion of *onto-theo-logy*. That is, in his historical depiction of Western metaphysics, Heidegger sees the ontological question of existent entities as ultimately tied to the theological question of a supreme entity which serves as the cause of all other forms of existence.[51] But the meaning of being itself, which is the real concern for Heidegger, is ontologically different from all existent entities, and so our articulation of unconcealment and the event of appropriation through the framework of a natural technique cannot relapse into a speculative metaphysics of a transcendent will of the world. But in making clear what our new metaphysics does not represent, the immediate question then becomes: what is the ground of nature as willing and freedom? In answering this question, we must once again turn to the notion of the meaning of being and the ontological difference.

What is reflected in the foundational thought of the meaning of being and its ontological differentiation from all forms of existent entities? We define "ontology" as the inquiry into existent entities *as existent entities*. But a necessary condition for the possibility of such inquiry, is that we already hold an understanding of the *meaning of being*. We define "fundamental

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[51] Alternatively, we can as Ian Thomson does, define onto-theo-logy by the metaphysical distinction between the *essence* and *existence* of a thing: "In sum, metaphysics understands being (*ens qua ens*, being as being) in terms of the being *of entities* (and thereby misses 'being as such,' a crucial point to which we will return), and it understands the being of entities *ontotheologically* by grasping entities in terms of *both* their essence *and* their existence, that is, both ontologically (from the inside-out) and theologically (from the outside-in)." Thomson, Ian (2016), "Ontotheology", page 321.

ontology" to be the inquiry into this meaning of being itself. Because fundamental ontology inquires into the foundation of ontology, it cannot conduct its inquiry by appealing to ontology itself. That is, we cannot answer the question of the meaning of being by way of characterizing the things that we have already claimed to exist. For this would bring our thought in a circle. In order to be successful, fundamental ontology must instead be able to detach itself from the initial concerns of ontology – *differentiating* its thought on the meaning of being from a thinking on existent entities.

This initial definition of the ontological difference should not be controversial. That is, a critical reader may very well discard the distinction as having no philosophical significance, but the reader cannot deny the validity of the analytical distinction between, on the one hand, a specific group of things, and on the other, the meaning that denominates this group of things *as a group*. This point stands, regardless of whether said group is the sum total of hammers, trees or oceans in the world, or simply the totality of that which is – qua existent entities. But Heidegger's notion of the ontological difference does not merely point to an epistemic condition for the possibility of ontology. Rather, he claims that we have an understanding of the meaning of being because this meaning somehow presents itself to us, phenomenally.[52] And in this phenomenal showing of itself to us, the meaning of being serves as the foundation for all existent entities, including ourselves. The question of fundamental ontology is thereby shifted from a (epistemological) concern for a conceptual precondition for our understanding of existent entities, to the (fundamental-ontological) revelation of the ground of existence itself. No doubt does this shift represent a radicalization into an unfamiliar territory of thought. The metaphysical framework of a ground of nature as willing and freedom represent our attempt to articulate this meaning of being as the foundation of all existence. But in doing so, we see that the basic elements of willing and freedom cannot represent the kind of primordial being reflected in the antagonistic position of a metaphysical voluntarism. That is, willing and freedom must be something altogether different from existent entities. But how can we possibly understand this ontological foundation? It is at this point that we turn to Kant.

(**ii**) Heidegger's rejection of *onto-theo-logy* bears a similarity to Kant's critical turn for metaphysics. In a condensed form, Kant's critique of dialectical reason translates into the questions of the *soul*, the *world* (in itself) and *God* – corresponding to the traditional objects of

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[52] On the original phenomenal appearance of the meaning of being, see e.g., Heidegger's identification of fundamental ontology as phenomenology, in the introduction to *Being and Time*, § 7, page 49-63 (SZ 27-39).

metaphysica specialis. The legacy of Kant's critical turn for metaphysics is to differentiate between the *mere ideas* of unconditioned totalities, which remains an inescapable component of human reason, and their corresponding *transcendent objects*, which will forever exceed the finite reach of human understanding. That is, even though our reason finds itself in the possession of certain intellectual ideas about ourselves and the world, it has no access to the kind of supernatural realm that would be able to accommodate these ideas as existent entities. However, in rejecting the *transcendent reality* of these metaphysical ideas, Kant also finds himself in a predicament. For the contribution of his critical turn for metaphysics is not only negative. That is, Kant's analysis does not simply end with the rejection of the dialectical inference to a noumenal realm of understanding. The transcendental ideas of pure reason also provides a *positive function for cognition as well as action* – that is, as a foundation for both practical and theoretical philosophy. The most famous example is arguably the transcendental idea of freedom, which reflects the ground of human morality. Even though the idea of a free will is foundational to our understanding of human morality, any theoretical inference to a transcendent autonomous subject would violate the limits of Kant's critical philosophy.

When choosing to develop our own environmental philosophy as a system of natural technique, based on the framework of Kant's critical metaphysics, we are faced with the same basic problem. If the analysis of aesthetic reflection in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is to hold a concept of a ground of nature as willing and freedom, it cannot appeal to a supernatural reality 'behind' the world of appearance – that is, as a *thing in itself*. And so we must return to the general problem that haunts Kant critical metaphysics: *What is the ontological status of the transcendental ideas?* The answers that have been given to this question are plentiful and often diverging. Some try to downplay Kant's many dubious statements on the foundational reality of the transcendental ideas, effectively reducing Kant's critical metaphysics to an epistemological theory of heuristic principles. Whereas others read the positive invocation of the transcendental ideas as a violation of the critical turn, and thereby ultimately as a testament to the untenability of Kant's project of transcendental philosophy.[53] Our own aim is not to provide a 'historically correct' interpretation of Kant. But we do suggest

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[53] One variation of this rejection, as Henry E. Allison presents its, traces this problem back to the idea of the *thing in itself*: "This is, of course, just the problem posed by Jacobi in his famous and previously cited dictum that '*without* the presupposition [of the thing in itself] I cannot enter the [critical] system, and with that presupposition I cannot remain in it.'" Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 64.

that the *ontological ambiguity* that haunts Kant's critical theory of ideas may in fact serve as a fruitful framework for our own systematic articulation of Heidegger's ontological difference.

In this dissertation, we will focus on two specific ideas. The first is the transcendental idea of *freedom*, which serves as the foundation for Kant's practical philosophy. The second is the transcendental idea of *causal meaning*. Both ideas are initially presented in the transcendental dialectic of *Critique of Pure Reason*; freedom as a *cosmological* idea on the absolute origination of the causal determination of nature; and causal meaning as a regulative principle on the organization of empirical lawfulness into a *unified system*. However, as Kant's own philosophy evolves, so too does his depiction of the transcendental ideas undergo a significant development. The contribution of the transcendental dialectic in the first critique is primarily *negative*, demonstrating the illegitimacy of any inference from the ideas of pure reason to corresponding existent entities of a transcendent noumenal realm. But as Kant later becomes more occupied with the *positive* contribution of the transcendental ideas for action as well as cognition, so too does the nature of the ideas themselves change. This development translates into two, arguably interrelated, intellectual pathways. **First**, in *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, we see a growing emphasis on the practical factuality of freedom. That is, the transcendental idea that was once a mere figment of theoretical reason, is now made manifest through the autonomous actions of a moral subject. **Second**, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we see the unveiling of a radical form of aesthetic lawfulness, through *reflecting judgment* and its principle of purposiveness.[54] Taken together, we thus see a movement of radicalization in Kant's understanding of the transcendental ideas, towards a *practical and aesthetic reality*.

(**iii**) How can we utilize the practical and aesthetic reality of Kant's transcendental ideas to articulate Heidegger's ontological difference? Heidegger points to the meaning of being as something that shows itself to us, phenomenally. As the ground of all things that exists. And yet, as itself categorically different from all existent entities. Kant presents his transcendental ideas as representing *totalities of thought* that are foundational to all appearing objects, without themselves being reducible to objects. In utilizing the framework of transcendental ideas, the general idea is that Kant, in his continuing efforts to articulate the highest and most foundational objects of metaphysics, demonstrates a gradual shift towards a *radical form of praxis*. An idea

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[54] See Guyer, Paul (2003), "Kant's Principles of Reflecting Judgment", page 3.

is something that we *act out*. And this action is not the product of a willful subject. Rather, it is the *response* of a subject to the phenomenal presence of a foundational aesthetic lawfulness. What is *acted out* through the determining ground of aesthetic phenomena is the normative causal meaning of nature. Willing and freedom represents the twofold ground of nature. Willing is the aesthetic lawfulness of phenomenal appearance which instigates the foundational praxis of causal meaning, and thereby grounds all existence. And freedom is the aesthetic presence of an abyss which disrupts the very same causal praxis, which thereby nihilates the foundational meaning of all things real. The transcendental ideas do not represent a transcendent domain of existent entities. Rather, they reflect the putting into play of a normative causal meaning that is foundational to yet ontologically different from all existence.

5. *The Ethos of the Environment: Basic Argument and Overall Layout*

The epochal event of the Anthropocene begins as a state of crisis. What is a crisis? It is an event that confronts us with the possibility of losing something on which we depend. That is, revealing that something which sustains us is *at stake*. However, it is also by virtue of this confrontation that we gain an awareness of our own dependencies. That is, we come to understand our dependency on something, only when we stand to lose it. This transforms the crisis into a state of *moral reflection*. In what way? In the advent of existential destruction – that is, in the possible loss of something through which my way of being cannot sustain without – I also come to see the true nature of my existential situation. That my way of being is fundamentally contingent on the twofold possibility of its continuation and cessation. This is the primordial meaning of moral *responsibility*. My being responsible is not first and foremost reflected through willful action, but rather in a state of contemplating the contingence of my existential situation. It is only because of this initial contemplation that I in turn may translate responsibility into an imperative to act. That is, the effectuation of my willful response is preconditioned by the coming to awareness of my possibility to respond. Such response could then be to fight for the preservation of what is at stake; to reconfigure my existence so as to make it more sustainable; or simply to abandon that which is unsustainable in favor of other forms of being.

What is at stake in the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene? Environmentalism in general is no doubt the concern for such things like plants and animals, for ecosystems,

landscapes, oceans, and climate systems. And the Anthropocene seems only to enforce this *naturalistic rootedness* of modern environmentalism, as it presents its normative concern as a response to an alleged scientific determination of our current epochal change. However, if we are to truly understand the normative significance of nature at the heart of contemporary environmentalism, we must elevate our analysis beyond the technical descriptions of things like species extinction, degradation of ecosystems, imprint on geological stratification, or the rise in global temperature. That is not to say that a technical orientation towards nature is not intrinsic to our contemporary environmental concern. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that normativity itself reflects a foundational dynamic that is ultimately metaphysical in nature, as opposed to empirical. That is, environmentalism does not simply add an additional layer of anthropogenic meaning to an already existing ontological substrate of natural mechanism. Rather, the normativity at play in environmentalism taps into a meaning that is foundational to all things scientific as well as political. That is, the normative concern of environmentalism reflects a common ground for ontology and ethics.

The environmental crisis of the Anthropocene is ultimately metaphysical, revealing the *finitude of nature*. What is finitude? If infinity is the customary veil of innocence and familiarity, marked by the never-ending permanence and all-pervasive transparency of existent entities, then finitude is the violent disruption of this initial state of naiveté. What is the finitude of nature? It is not found in our ability to determine existent entities with a limit, uncertainty, or by their unruliness. Rather, finitude is ultimately made manifest when nature as such stand to lose its foundational meaning, which in turn reveals our inability to determine things *qua things* in general. This is the metaphysical meaning of nature as an *environment*: to accentuate the system of finite causal meaning that sustains all things existing, by revealing the ultimate possibility of its nihilation. Man thereby suddenly finds himself dwelling on the twofold ground of nature. Willing as the foundational causal praxis that generates and conserves that meaning through which all surrounding things may unfold. And freedom as the abysmal disruption of the very same praxis, which thereby withdraws all foundational meaning into oblivion. Willing and freedom represents the twofold ground *of nature* – and not of the subject – because human subjectivity is itself revealed to be at stake in the generation and nihilation of causal meaning. To find oneself abiding in this twofold existential place is the *ethos of the environment*.

Layout: *4 Parts and 17 Chapters*

The basic task of this dissertation is to present nature with its own foundational normative causal meaning; and the essence of human morality, not as an anthropocentric introspection into the faculties of the subject, but ultimately as a meditation on nature as the existential ground of all things human, reflecting an ecocentric orientation for ethics. How do we go about to develop such a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene? In the following we will present the role and achievement of each part and chapter of the main text. The dissertation has a total of 17 chapters, divided into 4 main parts. Each part begins with an introductory chapter, which presents the overall purpose of that part.

PART ONE presents our own metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene. Throughout part two, three, and four, we will utilize the philosophical thought and framework of Martin Heidegger and Immanuel Kant to gradually develop a metaphysics of man and nature that can match the initial interpretation in part one. In **chapter one**, we provide a preliminary discussion on how to interpret our new epoch, corresponding to different ways of connecting the philosophical debate and the origin of the Anthropocene as a scientific concept. We conclude the chapter by suggesting that the Anthropocene, as a philosophical concept, translates into a *metaphysical transformation that reorients our conceptual understanding of the man-nature relation, which reveals nature with a foundational normative meaning*. To demonstrate the validity of this metaphysical interpretation, we approach the contemporary philosophical literature on the Anthropocene according to three general *interpretative narratives*. In **chapter two**, we approach the first narrative, on the Anthropocene as an event of *environmental destruction*. Going through different variations of this narrative – ranging from the literal decomposition of material things to the conceptual collapse of abstract meaning – we eventually end up with a conceptualization of environmental destruction as a metaphysical event through which man comes to see the environment as his own foundation, thereby revealing the fundamentally ecocentric orientation of his existence. In **chapter three**, we investigate the Anthropocene through the narrative of *overthrowing nihilism*. Evaluating the claims that our new epoch entails a rejection of things like *Cartesianism* or *anthropocentrism*, we present the Anthropocene as an event that incorporates the moral essence of man – *Anthropos* – into our determination of nature itself, revealing human morality as fundamentally ecocentric. In **chapter four**, we approach the explicit historical narrative of the Anthropocene as an *epochal event*. We

then present an interpretation of this historical meaning as the coming to awareness of the *contingency of our environmental situation*, in a way that incorporates the structural elements of the two previous narratives. And finally, in **chapter five**, we use the synthesis of the three narratives to present the basic components in our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene.

PART TWO provides the initial groundwork for the development of a metaphysical system that can accommodate the conceptual and normative transformation of our new epoch presented in part one. In **chapter one**, we begin by framing the epochal transformation as an *ecological orientation for humanism*, and then proceed to suggest that this is a form of transformational thought that is offer by the *later* Martin Heidegger. In preparing for a closer reading of the later Heidegger, we begin **chapter two** with a general introduction into Heidegger's philosophy, with an emphasis on the development from the major work of his earlier period of thought, *Being and Time*, and into the infamous turn of the 1930s and beyond. In **chapter three**, we confront the first of two works from the *later* Heidegger, the *Letter on "Humanism"*, in order to establish the foundational thought of the truth of being as unconcealment and the event of appropriation. And finally, in **chapter four**, we connect Heidegger's foundational thought to the Anthropocene, focusing on his analysis of technology and the history of being in *The Question Concerning Technology*, and the possible advent of a *saving God* from within our current epoch of technological thinking.

PART THREE is where we start developing our Heideggerian interpretation of the Anthropocene as an ecological humanism into a proper metaphysical system. In **chapter one**, we present *The Essence of Human Freedom* and make the case for why Heidegger's suggested but unrealized interpretation of Kant's philosophy of freedom as fundamental ontology is a suitable starting point for our own venture of metaphysical construction. In **chapter two**, we use Heidegger's interpretation of *Critique of Pure Reason* to establish a metaphysical framework for the meaning of being through Kant's critical concept of *appearance – Erscheinung*. We then present the concept of *ontological freedom* as a Heideggerian interpretation of the equally foundational concept of the *thing-in-itself*. In **chapter three**, we look to Heidegger's analysis of the relationship between the transcendental idea of negative freedom and the causal determination of nature. In this, we also seek to establish the problem of freedom and causality as a basic framework of fundamental ontology. And finally, in **chapter four**, we confront Heidegger's

interpretation of Kant's concept of positive freedom in *Groundwork*, and the *practical factuality* of this transcendental idea that is reflected in Kant's analysis of free will.

PART FOUR is a direct continuation of the metaphysical construction that Heidegger himself did not complete in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. In **chapter one**, we lay out the main components in our new metaphysics on the ground of nature as willing and freedom. We then present the three major technical steps needed to transform Kant's critical philosophy into a framework for such a metaphysics. These steps correspond to the following chapters two, three and four. **Chapter two** seeks to re-interpret Kant's ethics as fundamental ontology. We show that Kant's general outline of the *formal structure of human morality* can in fact sustain a reinterpretation of *Groundwork* where the foundational elements of willing and freedom are revealed as a transcendent ground of nature, as opposed to the properties of the human mind. In **chapter three**, we turn to the idea of the *causal meaning of nature*. The role of this chapter is twofold. First, to show how a concept of nature must contain a principle for the organization of empirical lawfulness into a unified system. And second, to indicate the transcendental basis for such organization of nature in the idea of a *natural technique*. These two points are presented by analyzing the development of Kant's treatment of empirical lawfulness in the *appendix* in the transcendental dialectic of *Critique of Pure Reason*, and in the two introductions of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. And finally, in **chapter four**, we turn to the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. By engaging with Kant's analysis of beauty and sublimity, we seek to establish an ontological concept of willing and freedom, as the ground of the causal and normative meaning of nature, and thereby simultaneously as the ground of human morality and our sense of environmental responsibility.

6. On Hubris – Aspirations and Shortcomings

The main part of the introduction is now complete. I have presented the dissertational project – the underlying idea, its main forms of argument, and the overall layout. However, as a final contribution, before we turn to the main parts and chapters, I would now like to offer some thoughts on the nature of this philosophical venture. The Greek word of *hubris* reflects an attitude of excessive courage or overconfidence which results in the eventual downfall of the hero. But there is often a fine line between courageous adventure and foolish escapades. And the ability to pass judgement, may only come with the benefit of hindsight. This dissertation borders on hubris. First and foremost, because of the extensive scope of its task. In the following, I will address the major aspirations and potential shortcomings of this dissertation, with the intent to deliver a defense for the audacity to engage in grandiose philosophical thought.

The degree of specialization in modern academic philosophy is immense. It takes years of dedication to excel within a single discipline. And an expert within one field of philosophy is often only a novice in another. As a form of academic study that is also deeply rooted in history, the potential for specialization becomes multi-dimensional, covering both a multitude of frontiers in contemporary research, as well as the vast lineage of historical cannons and the traditions of scholarship they have generated. In this dissertation, I begin with a specific debate within contemporary environmental philosophy, namely the Anthropocene. But I also quickly push the debate towards a Heideggerian way of thinking. And ultimately, I seek to develop my

Heideggerian project by appropriating a Kantian framework for metaphysics. This means that the dissertation contains three distinct focus areas: *contemporary environmental philosophy*, *Heidegger*, and *Kant*. The philosophical debate on the Anthropocene has gained significant popularity in recent years but is arguably still small enough to allow for an adequate representation through a manageable selection of texts. The same cannot be said for Heidegger and Kant. The scope of philosophical analysis offered by these two thinkers are no short of staggering. In the case of Heidegger, it is certainly possible to encapsulate his overall intellectual project as an inquiry into the question of being. But the variations in his ways of asking, and the methods employed for giving an answer, in a *Gesamtausgabe* that now covers more than a hundred volumes, makes any attempt to cover the general thought and development of Heidegger's philosophy into a life-long academic endeavor. With Kant it is arguably much worse. If Heidegger could be considered as one of the great thinkers of twentieth century philosophy, then Kant would easily take on the title as one of the great thinkers of Western thought in general. This is not just because of the profundity of his thought, but equally due to the great extent of his philosophical production. Kant pioneered in almost all fields of modern philosophy, in a way that forces most contemporary philosophers to relate their own research to one or several Kantian doctrines – be it in epistemology and logic, ontology and metaphysics, ethics, political theory, aesthetics, philosophy of science and mathematics, philosophical theology, and more. This unique historical position of Kant's philosophy is reflected in an equally vast production of Kantian scholarship, of debate and criticism, which has branched into a multitude of different and often conflicting traditions of philosophical thought.

To engage academically with philosophers like Heidegger and Kant typically means to restrict one's attention to a limited problem offered within their respective corpuses, to be critically analyzed and discussed through extensive interaction with other Heideggerian and Kantian scholars. However, I seek to develop a philosophy of man and nature for the Anthropocene, which unifies ontology and ethics, based on a Heideggerian thought in a Kantian system of metaphysics. This dissertation deviates from conventional academic standards on several accounts. First, by engaging with Heidegger and Kant in a way that operates throughout a vast intellectual landscape, including environmental philosophy, ethics, ontology, and aesthetics. Second, by utilizing several major works by both Heidegger and Kant – which, taken individually, would all be deserving of a standalone dissertation. Third, by not orienting my engagement with Heidegger and Kant from within an already established tradition of Heideggerian and Kantian scholarship. And fourth, by muddling the distinction between Heidegger's and Kant's original arguments, and my own novel but violent interpretation. In the

following, I will present *four objections* which questions the methodological choices of this project. In doing so, it is important to stress that I do in fact acknowledge these objections as *valid academic concerns*. However, in my subsequent defense, I will also argue that the unconventional ways of my dissertational project are warranted. That is, although I fully recognize that my choice of method is not without its costs, I also hope to convince the reader that the potential benefits of my project can be worth the price.

1st OBJECTION: *AN UNSPECIALIZED PHILOSOPHY*

A dissertation that does not conform to conventional divisions of philosophy by distinct disciplines, traditions, and debates, will fail to engage with the specialization of thought that already exists, and is therefore unable to achieve an adequate academic standard.

The irrefutable triumph of empirical science during the last 400 years correlates directly to its specialization. Even though certain objections may be warranted, it seems hard to imagine the future development and success of science without also a continued division of nature into focused areas of attention and experimental practices. Modern philosophy has seen an analogous development of specialization but, I would argue, without the same obvious correlation to its success. If we define *everyday experience* as the seamless integration of our collectively shared customary practices and forms of representation into a continuous and phenomenally immediate whole, then the act of specialization represents a development of practices and representations that are detached from everyday experience. But the specialization of empirical science is nonetheless fundamentally connected to reality through its experimental practices – its meticulous methods of interaction, verification, and falsification. This means that specialized science, despite its detachment from everyday experience, is ultimately justified by virtue of its practical success.

The same cannot be said for philosophy. For in its movement towards the abstract and hypothetical, striving for logical coherence in its internal system of ideas, philosophy does not possess its own field of possible experimental interaction. If the role of philosophical theory is to *re-present*, then the object represented must ultimately *present* itself in some field of phenomenal experience that does not originally belong to philosophy itself. That is, whereas specialized empirical science carves its own unique fields of reality for methodic investigation and interaction, philosophy will always remain parasitic on fields of reality that are already

established and available for analysis. For most philosophers, who are not also specialists in some discipline of empirical science, this means that the field of philosophical investigation is primarily located in everyday experience. The potential benefit of philosophical specialization is therefore not without a cost. For what is gained in technical precision is simultaneously acquired at the expense of detaching one's analysis from the original object in question. This tension between theoretical representation and practical phenomenon is inherent in all systems of philosophical thought.

Underlying this dissertational project is a claim that modern philosophy has strayed too far into an alien territory of specialized thought. That is, that the degree of specialization in academic philosophy has become counterproductive for the general purpose of giving truthful depictions and analyses of ourselves and the world we live in. The problem of introducing 'intrinsic value' to nature, which is a prevalent question of contemporary environmental philosophy, is a striking example of the kind of compartmentalization of reality that follows from such specialization. In a general sense, this critique of modernity is an echo of Heidegger's diagnosis of Western history of metaphysics, which traces the downfall of philosophy all the way back to Greek antiquity. When approaching a thinker like Plato, the modern reader is confronted by a conspicuous naiveté in its holistic approach to philosophy. Speaking in broad terms, as a form of thinking where the ideas on *the true, the good, and the beautiful*, are still largely kept within a single horizon of thought. If the downfall of philosophy already began with Greek antiquity, it was certainly expedited by the advent of modern thought in the 16th century and beyond. The ever-growing specialization of philosophy echoed a matching compartmentalization in our perception of reality itself. Throughout the 19th and 20th century we have seen different attempts towards a reintegration of philosophy into a unified concern of thought. Martin Heidegger is in this respect only one of many philosophers who speak out against modernity.

If the intention of this dissertation is to assume the mantle of anti-modernist thought, then we cannot simply revert to the original naiveté of Greek philosophy. The historical facticity and undeniable achievements of modern specialization demands instead that we reinvent a unity from the myriad of technical analysis and different fields of study in contemporary philosophy. That is, we must allow for a thinking that dares to engage across a wide spectrum of modern philosophy, with the intent to dissolve its established disciplinary boundaries, reimagining the true, the good, and the beautiful from a common phenomenal origin. Such liberal approach to philosophy cannot possibly hope to address the complexities and technical details of each individual field of specialized thought. But it can aspire towards a thinking that is more

successful in articulating the fundamental conditions of human existence. More specifically, as a philosophy that thinks the foundational normativity at play in our radical sense of environmental belonging.

In this dissertation, Heidegger's philosophy represents the primordial thought that restores the fragmented state of modern philosophy back into its original unity. Kant's philosophy, on the other hand, plays a double role. For in one sense, he represents the compartmentalization of modern philosophy – most notably, through his distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy. But Kant is also a Greek thinker, in that he continuously seeks to connect the different parts of his philosophy according to a systematic whole. It is this underlying systematic connection that I seek to exploit through my Heideggerian appropriation of Kant. But in doing so, I must also concede to a significant reduction in my ability to embrace the comprehensive complexities of works like *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Groundwork*, and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

When I insist on a dissertational project that goes counter to the modern division of philosophy by distinct and often unrelated disciplines of thought, it is with an underlying assumption that the original world of phenomenal experience is not itself divided. In presenting my intended unification of ontology and ethics as a Heideggerian appropriation of Kant, I have also tried to be honest about the obvious tradeoff that is made, in sacrificing specialization in favor of unity. However, as a final and brief remark to my defense against the first objection, I would also like to stress that an *inverse* objection is possible – that is, as a criticism of a dissertation that abides by the specialization of modern philosophy. For if one chooses to conduct a philosophical inquiry in a manner that isolates and reduces a given phenomenon according to a distinct discipline of thought, it also seems reasonable to claim that such an inquiry would have to invoke basic concepts, principles, and ideas from other philosophical disciplines. For example, it is difficult to see how a traditional analysis of ethics could be conducted without appealing to basic notions like being, nature, lawfulness, objectivity, freedom, the human subject, et cetera. And as long as notions like these are invoked without critical analysis, one is also at risk of developing an ethics based on flawed or even erroneous presuppositions. One could therefore argue that my dissertational project of environmental ethics does not differ from others because it contains all these connections. For in a sense, all dissertations on ethics would equally do so. Rather, my philosophical project stands out because it brings these connections to the forefront of the ethical analysis itself.

2nd OBJECTION: *BEYOND HEIDEGGERIAN AND KANTIAN SCHOLARSHIP*

A dissertation that does not orient its analysis through existing traditions and debates of Heideggerian and Kantian scholarship will fail to incorporate the achievements in academic understanding of Heidegger and Kant and is therefore unable to offer a substantial contribution to contemporary philosophy.

Throughout parts two, three and four, I gradually develop a new metaphysics through careful analysis and appropriation of several works by Heidegger and Kant. My use of secondary literature in these parts is almost entirely reduced to supplementary comments in footnotes. If I had attempted to complement my own reading of Heidegger and Kant by comprehensive consultation and critical discussion with predominant voices in Heideggerian and Kantian scholarship, the dissertation would easily have doubled or tripled in size, making my metaphysical project unattainable from a simple practical point of view. For example, a contentious question in modern Kantian scholarship is how we should understand the *second analogy of experience* in *Critique of Pure Reason*. In this dissertation, I dedicate around 13 pages to a discussion regarding the analogies of experience in general, including a mere three-paged analysis of the second analogy itself. But a more extensive analysis of Kant's text, in critical consultation with contemporary scholars like Michael Friedman, Henry E. Allison, Paul Guyer, Béatrice Longuenesse, and Eric Watkins, could easily have filled a dissertation of its own.[55]

The second objection argues that my dissertational analysis and appropriation of Heidegger and Kant lacks a proper grounding in Heideggerian and Kantian scholarship. My first and preliminary response to this objection is that such grounding would not have been practically feasible, given the extent of my metaphysical aspirations. However, I will also argue that this is not my most important line of defense. For it is not clear to me that an additional 500 pages of extensive dialogue with secondary literature would have improved the dissertation correspondingly. The reason for this bold statement relates back to the basic objective of my project. This dissertation is not intended as a contribution to Heideggerian and Kantian scholarship. Rather, I seek to utilize these thinkers for the benefit of a philosophy that is clearly

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[55] For example: Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*; Longuenesse, Béatrice (2005), *Kant and the Human Standpoint*; Watkins, Eric (2005), *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, Cambridge University Press.

of my own making. Figuratively speaking, Heidegger and Kant represent the *two main pillars* for my metaphysical system. Whereas Heidegger offers the *fundamental idea*, Kant offers a *conceptual framework* for this idea to unfold. The end result is an intellectual construction that transcends both, – in terms of intention as well as achievement. Throughout the coming parts and chapters, I continuously stress the points where my appropriation of Heidegger and Kant is controversial, lacks textual basis, or even downright contradicts the apparent statements and intentions of their original texts. If the point of consulting Heideggerian and Kantian scholars is to check whether my interpretation of Heidegger and Kant conforms to the original textual basis of these thinkers, then the obvious answer is already given from the outset of the dissertation: *it does not!* That is, it is not the ambition of this project to conform with some perceived notion of the original intent and arguments of Martin Heidegger and Immanuel Kant.

But is not the ability to demonstrate and master the art of communal scholarship an integral part of a PhD dissertation qua research training? My answer to this question is twofold. Let me begin by pointing to the fact that I do engage in academic discourse with my peers in part one. Here, I orient my analysis of the Anthropocene in close interaction with several contemporary environmental philosophers – whom I have chosen to call the 'Anthropocenologists': Clive Hamilton, Bruno Latour, Christophe Bonneuil & Jean Baptiste Fressoz, Jedediah Purdy, Jeremy Davies, Arne Johan Vetlesen, Steven Vogel, and others. However, in claiming that I do meet the requirements of conventional academic standards in part one, I am also tempted to question the very notion of academic craftsmanship which underlies the initial question. Imagine the following counterfactual scenario, where I continue my analysis of the Anthropocene throughout parts two, three, and four, all based on books and articles by contemporary environmental philosophers. Such choice of literature would to a large extent allow me to take the arguments and claims of my peers at face value. That is, as I refer to an argument by Hamilton, Latour, or Vogel, I am not thereby forced to consult my own interpretation of this argument with the interpretation of others. No secondary literature is needed to assess the Anthropocenologists. However, by choosing Heidegger and Kant instead, the rules of engagement are suddenly changed. And in one sense, this change of rules seems perfectly reasonable. For the communal academic understanding of Heidegger and especially Kant has no doubt been honed throughout decades and even centuries of meticulous exegesis. But again, it becomes relevant to stress that my own goal is not to understand Martin Heidegger and Immanuel Kant. I want to develop a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene, which unifies ontology and ethics. In this task, I find that Heidegger and Kant can provide me with a set of concepts and ideas that are far more capable than what is offered by contemporary

environmental philosophers. I therefore choose to engage with Heidegger and Kant as I do with Hamilton, Latour, and Vogel – as peers and partners in crime in an ongoing development towards a better philosophical understanding.

3rd OBJECTION: *INTERPRETATION AS HERMENEUTICAL APPROPRIATION*

The dissertation pretends to utilize the philosophies of Heidegger and Kant, but at the same time it clearly exceeds their original arguments. How can a project be Heideggerian or Kantian if it does not respect Heidegger and Kant?

The third objection is in sense a direct follow-up to the answer I gave in response to the second objection. For in stating that my extensive engagements with Heidegger and Kant does not aspire to understand these two thinkers *in and of themselves*, but rather to exploit their ideas and conceptual frameworks for my own intellectual construction, I also invite a more radical question regarding the interpretation of texts. In short, I engage with Heidegger and Kant with the *hermeneutical principle that all philosophical interpretation of classical texts are acts of appropriation*. This is a principle that was introduced by Heidegger, often expressed as a theoretical position, but equally important as an *attitude* reflected in his novel reading of other great philosophers. After Heidegger, this type of attitude was formalized by thinkers like Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricœur into the philosophical theory we now know as modern *hermeneutics*.[56] If we accept this hermeneutical attitude as the proper way to conduct one's philosophical interpretation – *which I do* – then my lack of conformity with the perceived notion of a 'historically correct' Heidegger and Kant no longer constitutes a deviation from an appropriate academic standard. Aspirations to understand philosophers *in and of themselves* may serve the purpose of philological and historical interest. But an interpretation which strives to uncover the philosophical truth of the text, must do so by a *creative act of appropriation*.

Heidegger's hermeneutical approach to the canon of Western thought is certainly present in his reading of Kant, which forms a central building block in my own dissertational

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[56] That is, even though "hermeneutics" was not invented by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricœur, it was nonetheless reimagined, against earlier renditions like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey.

project. In an earlier reading of Kant's first critique, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger famously depicts his interpretation as an *act of violence – Gewalt*:

> "Certainly, in order to wring from what the words say, what it is they want to say, every interpretation must necessarily use violence. Such violence, however, cannot be roving arbitrariness. The power of an idea which shines forth must drive and guide the laying-out [*Auslegung*]. Only in the power of this idea can an interpretation risk what is always audacious, namely entrusting itself to the concealed inner passion of a work in order to be able, through this, to place itself within the unsaid and force it into speech. That is one way, however, by which the guiding idea, in its power to illuminate, comes to light."[57]

In *The Essence of Human Freedom*, he makes a similar argument, but now phrasing his philosophical interpretation as an *act of destruction*:[58]

> "Kant did not problematize in a sufficiently primordial manner the finitude of man […]. To show this is the task of a Kant interpretation, which, however, does not have the pseudo-philological aim of presenting the 'correct' Kant – there is nothing of the sort. *All philosophical interpretation is destruction*, controversy, and radicalization, which is not equivalent to skepticism."[59]

Both quotes illustrate the ambiguous tension of staying true to the authority of the work, without thereby loosing oneself to the orthodoxy of established ways of interpretation. An approach to great intellectual works whose sole ambition is to reconstruct a historically correct representation of its arguments will fail to uncover its philosophical significance. But Heidegger's method of interpretation by violence does not thereby end up advocating relativism. Ultimately, a classic work of philosophy is not a collection of arguments but the uncovering of a *novel intellectual pathway*. To truly engage oneself with the work therefore means to allow one's thought to traverse the pathway that is presented. This is arguably the basic meaning of Gadamer's concept of a *classic text*.[60] A text becomes a classic, not because it contains doctrines and arguments whose objective validity stands the test of time. Rather, because the intellectual pathway it presents is able to bring the reader to a place of thought that

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[57] Heidegger, M (1990), *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, page 141 (GA 3:202).
[58] As Frank Schalow writes: "Heidegger undertakes a destructive-retrieval of transcendental philosophy, in order to elicit its 'unsaid' ontological implications for re-asking the question of being". Schalow, F. (2016), "Heidegger and Kant: Three Guiding Questions", page 105.
[59] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 119 (GA 31: 168).
[60] See Gadamer, H.-G. (2010), *Sannhet og metode*, page 323.

resonates with his own contemporary situation. This is also the way that Heidegger instructs his readers to approach his own writings, namely as ways and not works – *Wege nicht Werke*.[61]

When I approach philosophers like Heidegger and Kant, I begin by meticulously reading their text; mapping and organizing its central concepts and arguments. In this first encounter, the ideas at play in the text will almost always strike me as alien, if not downright counterintuitive. The key element of the subsequent act of appropriation, where the unfamiliar concepts and arguments are transformed into philosophical insight, is to confront the text by asking: *How can I make sense of these concepts and arguments? How can this text say something that is true about my own life and the world I currently inhabit?* Sometimes I pause and look around in my room, or outside the window. Or I may even take a walk outside. And I ask: *How can the words that are spoken in the text relate to, and even reveal, the meaning of the things that are presented in my immediate phenomenal surroundings?* Only by insistingly dwelling on questions like these do I eventually come to see the philosophical significance of the text.

The truth that is conveyed in a philosophical text by a hermeneutical method of appropriation has therefore ultimately little to do with the conformity of my understanding with the body of interpreters which at a given historical time is considered authority. For a genuine philosophical interpretation must carry itself on the much more treacherous path of consulting one's own ability to recognize the truth in what is made manifest. That is, I must turn to the authority of my own recollection – ἀνάμνησις. But this is also a much more difficult task, because my experience of an insight gained will forever be accompanied by a pressing sense of uncertainty and doubt. That is, if assessed against a body of contemporaneous scholars, I might be led to believe that my understanding of a certain philosophical problem conveyed in the text has been solved and settled. But an interpretation where the ultimate authority is my own ability to critically examine and recognize what is presented, remains groundless, fleeting, always on the way to thought.

My own engagement with Heidegger and Kant has developed and matured for more than twelve years, not because of the answers that they provide, but because the questions they

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[61] As Bret W. Davis interprets his own philosophical project: "Moreover, inasmuch as Heidegger asked for his texts to be read as 'ways – not works [*Wege – nicht Werke*]' (GA 1:437), we are invited to pursue the paths of thought his texts open up, rather than forever attempting merely to faithfully reconstruct his 'system.' In order to genuinely read a great thinker, both critically and 'faithfully,' one must go beyond merely reproducing his or her thought 'in their own terms.'" Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 4. See also: Nicolaisen, R. F. (2007), *At være undervejs – Introduktion til Heideggers filosofi*, page 35.

ask directs me into a profound territory of philosophical thought. The present dissertation is the temporary product of this engagement. Here I attempt to translate the thought instilled in me by these thinkers into a metaphysical system. It is only through their works that I have been able to develop my own philosophical understanding. For this reason, I have deliberately chosen not to write this dissertation as *my* philosophical position, against the separate positions of Heidegger and Kant, but also, against the position of the reader. For that would be a misrepresentation of what I aspire to accomplish by this text. I have instead written the text with "we" as the predominant pronoun. Paul Ricœur speaks about the *triple reference of a text*. It refers to an "extralinguistic reality" – as the thing or phenomenon that the text speaks about. It refers to a reader, to "whom the discourse is addressed". And it refers to the writer of the text, as the one who speaks.[62] Inspired by this notion, I state the following: The speaker of this dissertation is not "I", but the collective unity of Heidegger, Kant, and myself, brought about by my appropriation of their original texts. But the text is also fundamentally an invitation to the reader, to partake in this temporary unity of thought. For just as I, as the one who has written this text, am a product of the appropriation of Heidegger and Kant, so too can only he or she who reads this text stand to understand its meaning by his or her own act of appropriation.

4ᵗʰ OBJECTION: *A HEIDEGGERIAN THOUGHT OF WILLING AND FREEDOM*

The metaphysical system of willing and freedom that is developed in part four, is significantly different from the philosophical position that Heidegger alludes to in The Essence of Human Freedom. What is left of the Heideggerian thought in my finalized Kantian system?

This final objection speaks to a part of my originally intended dissertational project that I was not able to see through. In the third chapter of this introduction, I lay out the four steps that led me to write this dissertation. In discovering Heidegger's novel reading of Kant in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, I saw the potential to transform his *later* thinking of being into a metaphysical system that unifies ontology and ethics. Two auxiliary elements supported me in this belief. The first was my previous dealings with Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, which I believed could be central to carry out the ontological transformation of Kantian ethics,

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[62] Ricœur, P. (1981), *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, page 168.

which Heidegger himself never completed. However, a second but unspoken element in support of my metaphysical ambitions is a part of Heidegger's later thought that has been central for my own philosophical development. This is the part that centers on notions like *Wollen*, *Nicht-Wollen* and *Gelassenheit*. Most notably in his short essay of 1944/45, *Zur Erörterung der Gelassenheit – Aus einem Feldweggespräch über das Denken*, included in the book simply known as *Gelassenheit* (1959).[63] Whereas Heidegger's analysis of Kant in *The Essence of Human Freedom* (1930) relates to the earlier analytic of Dasein and the active comportment of man as the *resoluteness of authenticity*, I saw a potential of transforming the same analysis of willing and freedom through the later Heidegger's sentiment of a *contemplative releasement into the abyss of non-willing*. I had therefore originally envisioned my dissertation with a *final and fifth part*, which was to take the metaphysical framework I had acquired from Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment, and combine it with the later Heidegger's analysis of *Gelassenheit*. I do think that my dissertation is able to stand on its own in its current form. But I also believe that the inclusion of this fifth part would have been more successful in demonstrating the connection between an aesthetic ground of willing and freedom, and the fundamental sentiments of the later Heidegger.

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[63] In English: Heidegger, M. (1966), *Discourse on Thinking*, translated by John M. Anderson & E. Hans Freund, Harper & Row. The essay is also included in GA 13.

PART ONE: A Metaphysical Interpretation of the Anthropocene

1. Introducing the Anthropocene

There is something refreshing about the Anthropocene. The way in which it rearticulates old questions of environmental philosophy and thereby fundamental problems of philosophy in general. The new geological epoch represents *nature in the time of man*. This striking coupling seems to achieve two major things. First, it reorients our understanding of the relation between man and nature, and thereby many of its variant dichotomies, such as subject/object, culture/nature, thought/matter, value/fact, etc. Second, it brings to the fore a normative meaning at the heart of nature itself, radically overthrowing the old problem of projecting value onto a dead nature of mere mechanism. As such, we can say that the epochal event of the Anthropocene, as a philosophical concept, represents a *conceptual and normative transformation*.

The story has been told many a time now. The geological epoch, suggested by Paul Crutzen in 2000, and subsequently in collaboration with Eugene Stoermer, to replace the 12,000-year-old *Holocene*. Many has pointed out the long history of efforts to reconceptualize nature as somehow a product of human activity. Such as Buffon in *Epochs of Nature* (1778), and his notion of a *seventh epoch*, when "the power of Man assisted the operation of nature". The geologist Thomas Jenkyn on the *Anthropozoic* (1854), as a prediction on the future anthropogenic fossil record. Or Andrew Revkin's term "Anthrocene" in his 1992 book on

global warming.[64] Just to name a few. However, the present-day idea of the Anthropocene began as a recognition of the significant human impact on the *Earth System* throughout the latter part of 1900s. It was conceptualized by Crutzen in 2000, and officially taken on as a suggested geological epoch by the *International Commission on Stratigraphy* by forming of the *Anthropocene Working Group* in 2009, which of current date has yet to deliver the final verdict.[65] Since then, the term has taken on a multitude of roles and meanings, spurring research and debate within natural science, but perhaps just as significant within social science and the humanities.

Our concern in this dissertation is for the Anthropocene as a concept of environmental philosophy. I thus find it meaningful to make a general distinction between the term as a *scientific* and a *philosophical* concept. Much will be said on the meaning of and the connection between these two concepts but let us now begin with a simple line of demarcation. Hamilton et al. (2015) lists three main categories for the Anthropocene as a *scientific concept*. (i) Initially suggested as a concept of *stratigraphy* – that is, as a claim that both contemporary and future scientific investigations will find a dominant anthropogenic imprint on the *strata* of our Earths rock and soil, making for a significant transition into a new *epoch* of the planets 4.5-billion-year-old geological history. (ii) The term has also a significant meaning within *Earth System science*, portraying man as now emerging as the dominant force for the planetary system. Assembling expertise from such disciplines as "climatology, global ecology, geochemistry, atmospheric chemistry, oceanography, geology and more", nature is now for the first time in scientific history viewed as a *total unity*, leaving the once stable state situation of the Holocene.[66] (iii) A third category, even more generally sums up the totality of anthropogenic imprint and transformation of nature, such as "transformation of landscape, urbanisation, species extinction, resource extraction and waste dumping, as well as disruption to natural processes such as the nitrogen cycle."[67]

The technical details concerning the scientific definition of the Anthropocene will not be important for our own philosophical inquiry. Based on the three categories presented above, it will suffice to extract the following general meaning: As a **scientific concept**, the

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[64] Grinevald, J. et al. (2019), "History of the Anthropocene Concept", page 5-9. See also Christophe Bonneuil and Jean Baptiste Fressoz (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, chapter 8, (*Pronocene: Grammars of Environmental Reflexivity*).
[65] Zalasiewicz, J. et al. (2019), "A General Introduction to the Anthropocene", page 2.
[66] Hamilton, C. et al. (2015), "Thinking the Anthropocene", page 2.
[67] Hamilton, C. et al. (2015), "Thinking the Anthropocene", page 3.

Anthropocene represents the scientific determination of a *causal relationship between anthropogenic activity and some material change in nature*. By the phrase "material change", we mean the *transformation of some lawful state or order in nature*.[68] The most obvious example of such material change would be the increase in global temperature. In specifying that the material change is *scientifically determined* it is worth mentioning that this dissertation does not view science as something that is distinctly different from other human activities. Rather, science only represents a form of endeavor that is *exemplarily* in its engagements with empirical lawfulness.

By the Anthropocene as a ***philosophical* concept**, on the other hand, we refer to an analysis of the *conceptual and normative meaning* of the Anthropocene, undertaken by the social sciences, the humanities and thereof especially environmental philosophy. The philosophical concept typically begins with some variant of the scientific concept, and thereby proceed to make claims regarding the conceptual and normative ramifications of this scientific discovery. More specifically, we suggest that the dominant narratives operating within the philosophical literature understands the Anthropocene as a *transformative event* containing the following two aspects: **First**, as a transformation that *reconstructs our understanding of the man-nature relation*. **Second**, as a transformation that *reorients our normative understanding of nature*. The task of specifying the meaning of these two aspects of the epochal transformation will be the focal point of the present part one, which in turn will form the starting point for the development of our metaphysics of man and nature in parts two, three and four. Unless we give clear indications of the contrary, the term "Anthropocene" will refer exclusively to the philosophical concept throughout this dissertation.

An initial objection to this conceptual distinction might be that there is really just one concept of the Anthropocene, albeit with different domains of analysis – let's say, as diverging areas of scientific as well as philosophical conceptualizations. And it would probably have been possible to carry out the same analysis based on a single concept instead of two. But, as will become clearer when we introduce the distinction between a *naturalistic and metaphysical*

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[68] By using the term "science" in this dissertation, we primarily refer to the different disciplines of *natural science* (including the *basic research* of physics, chemistry, biology, etc., and the *applied research* of fields like medicine, meteorology, climatology, etc.). However, we do not accept a strict line of demarcation between science and non-science, which means that our claims regarding natural science are ultimately also relevant for any form of inquiry into empirical lawfulness. The notion of empirical lawfulness itself, or nature's *lawful order*, will be subject to comprehensive inquiry throughout the dissertation; in particular, in the third chapter of part three, and in the third and fourth chapter of part four.

interpretation of the philosophical concept, our aim will eventually be to detach the philosophical analysis from the technical details of its scientific conception altogether. That is, making the case that the truth-value of the philosophical analysis is ultimately independent of the truth-value of the Anthropocene as an object of scientific determination. It therefore becomes useful to operate with two different concepts altogether.

Naturalistic Versus Metaphysical Interpretation

The philosophical concept of the Anthropocene has an indisputable *naturalistic connection*, in the sense that its conceptual and normative analysis clearly *originates* from the emergence of new scientific understanding of our environmental situation. This naturalistic connection no doubt constitutes a novelty for the environmentalist debate, refreshingly countering other branches of environmental philosophy that often tend to antagonize scientific determination alongside with technology and industry.[69] But the connection between the Anthropocene as a scientific and philosophical concept is nonetheless riddled with ambiguity, as the philosophers engaged in the debate often tend to insist on a thoroughly naturalistic foundation for their conceptual and normative analysis, while simultaneously making claims that clearly exceed the scope of what is presented in the scientific determination of our new epoch. When inquiring into the Anthropocene as a *transformative event of normative significance*, we must be careful to clarify both the relevant connections and distinctions between a scientific and a philosophical determination of "transformation". That is, to what extent is there a connection between the *material change in nature*, which is originally described by natural science, and the *change in our conceptual and normative understanding*, which is reflected in the philosophical literature. In addressing this issue, we will make a general distinction between a *naturalistic and a metaphysical interpretation* of the philosophical concept of the Anthropocene. In **figure 3** (below), we see a table of categories for the Anthropocene, where the scientific concept (for obvious reasons) only holds the possibility of a naturalistic interpretation, whereas the

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[69] As e.g., Vernon Pratt et al. writes: "Many of those who are worried about the present state of 'the environment', and what they see as the catastrophic breakdown round the corner, blame, in one way or another, *science*." Pratt, V. et al. (2000), *Environment and Philosophy*, page 6.

philosophical concept holds the possibility for both. However, as indicated by a *cross* and a *check marker*, it will be the role of the following chapters to demonstrate that the dominant philosophical analyses made by contemporary environmental philosophers is best understood according to a metaphysical interpretation. Let us now briefly go through the two variations of the philosophical concept in turn.

	Naturalistic interpretation	**Metaphysical interpretation**
Scientific concept	✓	
Philosophical concept	✗	✓

Figure 3: Concepts and interpretations of the Anthropocene.

(**1**) When using terms like "naturalistic" or "naturalism", we generally refer to the philosophical position that a thing *can* be explained by the methods, models, and empirical laws of natural science. And, we might add, that the scientific explanation of the thing in question *should* be given priority to other forms of explanation. For example, if we made the case for a naturalistic account of *love*, we would try to explain this complex social phenomenon by psychometrics and statistical analysis; by the material structures of evolutionary development, epigenetics, hormonal influence, or neural activity; and perhaps even more rudimentary, by the underlying mechanistic functions of human physiology. Whereas a non-naturalistic account of love would appeal to things like immediate sensation and subjective experience, metaphorical and allegorical representations in poetry, paintings and music, or abstract depictions by philosophical theory, while simultaneously insisting that none of these accounts of love could be translated, described, or reduced to explanations of natural science. Some phenomena in the world appear to be more obvious candidates for naturalistic explanations, like the planetary movements of our solar system. Whereas the tenability of a naturalistic approach in other areas might be strongly contested. For example, one might question whether *religion* can be

explained by appealing to mechanisms of empirical psychology, or if the idea of *God* reflects an element of human existence that will forever remain a scientific mystery.[70]

Given this generic meaning of naturalism, as a philosophical position which gives precedence to scientific explanations of the world, we now ask how this meaning applies to an interpretation of our new epoch? In the ***naturalistic* interpretation** of the Anthropocene, the *philosophical concept is dependent on the scientific concept, in the sense that the scientific description of the change from Holocene to Anthropocene is a precondition for the conceptual and normative change depicted in the philosophical analysis. This interpretation also holds an explicit temporal component, in the sense that the philosophical analysis is only valid at a historical time after the transition from the Holocene to Anthropocene.* A few caveats and points of clarification to this definition are in order. **First**, it is important to notice that we do not actually specify the contents of the scientific concept. It is a general concept expressing the scientific determination of some kind of historical change in the relationship between human beings and nature. The perhaps most obvious place to look for a specified content would be in the definition offered by the Anthropocene Working Group. But if we use this definition, we must also remember that the Anthropocene Working Group has not yet concluded that we do live in a new geological epoch, and that the philosophical debate would therefore be contingent on some hypothetical future decision. However, it is also possible to imagine some other definition of the scientific concept, which does not rest on the technical classifications of geology or stratigraphy, for example connected to anthropogenic impact on global climate systems.

Second, although the philosophical concept is dependent on the scientific concept, this does not imply that the philosophical analysis must itself conform to a scientific method or manner of determination. If we claim that the current climate change crisis demonstrates a need to take *responsibility* for the Earth in manner that is unprecedented in human history, or that the environmental ramifications of human activity forces us to reimagine nature itself as demonstrating some *moral significance*, then we have no doubt ventured into a line of reasoning

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[70] This definition of naturalism will suffice for our own forthcoming analysis, but as a general presentation of a philosophical position, that has played a significant role throughout the 19th, 20th and 21st century, it is not doubt superficial and insufficient. For comparison, Joseph Rouse offers the following three-step definition: Naturalism is (1) a rejection of the supernatural or that which transcends the natural world; it is (2) a particular commitment to a scientific understanding of the world; and it is (3) a rejection of "first philosophy" as somehow "prior to or authoritative over scientific understanding." Rouse, J. (2015), *Articulating the World – Conceptual Understanding and the Scientific Image*, page 3.

that extends beyond the realm of science. And the conceptual and normative conclusions made by our inquiry into the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept are unlikely to contribute to the further developments of stratigraphy or Earth System science. But the validity of such claims to the emergence of environmental responsibility or the moral significance of nature would nonetheless be dependent on the objective truth of anthropogenic global climate change. In short, the *transformation reflected in the philosophical concept is contingent on the transformation described by the scientific concept*.

Third, because the naturalistic interpretation of the philosophical concept *depends* on the scientific concept, it becomes an essential task for the philosophers debating the conceptual and normative significance of our new epoch to identify the exact nature of the material change that marks the transformation from the *Holocene* and into the *Anthropocene*. That is, what are the mechanism of nature that has been transformed? In what sense is "Anthropos" responsible for this transformation? Does "Anthropos" represent the entire human species, some subgroup of humankind, or some particular anthropogenic institution, practice, or ideology? Among the Anthropocene thinkers included in this dissertation, Christophe Bonneuil and Jean Baptiste Fressoz offers the most comprehensive analysis of the many ways to interpret the meaning "Anthropos" and its connections to nature.[71]

Fourth, the scientific concept of the Anthropocene contributes to our *historical* determination of nature, marking the transition from the earlier *Holocene* into our current (suggested) geological epoch by some transitional epochal event. This translates into an explicit *temporal* argument for the naturalistic interpretation of the philosophical concept. The new conceptual and normative meaning of man and nature can only be valid at *a point in time after* the historical transition of the scientific concept. For example, if the transition from *Holocene* to *Anthropocene* happened sometime during the 1800s, then according to a naturalistic interpretation, the transformation depicted by the philosophical concept could not have been valid in the 1700s.

(**2**) At first sight, it might seem obvious that a philosophical conception of the Anthropocene must depend on the original scientific concept. The scientific concept reflects an anthropogenic change in nature, whereas the philosophical inquiry appropriates the scientific notion of an epochal change for its own conceptual and normative analysis. That is, as a general

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[71] Bonneuil C. & Fressoz J. B (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

object of analysis the Anthropocene originates as a scientific concept, and it would therefore make little sense to use the term at all if the philosophical application were entirely independent from its scientific origin. However, there is another way to understand the relationship between the scientific determination and the philosophical analysis that goes contrary to the naturalistic interpretation. In the ***metaphysical* interpretation** of the Anthropocene, the *philosophical concept is independent from the scientific concept, in the sense that the conceptual and normative transformation of the philosophical analysis does not depend on the scientific determination of the change from Holocene to Anthropocene. This independence is also temporal, in the sense that the conceptual and normative transformation is not bound to a specific period of history, or to a specific point of historical transition.* In defining the metaphysical interpretation in this way, in a negative relation to the naturalistic interpretation, two questions immediately follow: What is the relationship between the Anthropocene as a scientific and a philosophical concept? And what is the nature of the conceptual and normative transformation if it is independent from the scientific transition from Holocene to Anthropocene? Let us answer the two questions in turn.

First, if the scientific concept determines a historical transition from Holocene to Anthropocene by virtue of some anthropogenic impact on nature, and the philosophical concept analyzes a conceptual and normative transformation that has become a significant phenomenon of our own time, then we now ask about the relationship between these two concepts. Throughout the coming chapters two, three and four, we aim to demonstrate that the predominant philosophical claims that has been made about our new epoch are best understood as a transformation of thought that does not directly correlate to any scientifically determined change in nature or its relationship to man. Instead, we suggest that the original scientific discovery of anthropogenic impact on nature has served as a *catalyst* for philosophical contemplation – that is, *accentuating a need* to reevaluate the philosophical meaning of our environmental situation. But that the conceptual and normative transformation that follows from this reevaluation is both causally and conceptually independent from the original scientific discovery.

Second, so what is the philosophical meaning of the Anthropocene as a conceptual and normative transformation, if it is independent from the scientifically determined transition from Holocene to Anthropocene? To answer this question, we must look into the meaning of metaphysics itself. Defined in the most general way, metaphysics is the inquiry into the *first principles of reality*. By "principles", we mean things like laws, ideas, concepts, structures, values, norms, et cetera. By "first", we mean that these principles somehow articulate,

condition, constitute, or underlie the fabric of reality itself. Metaphysics is therefore not a science, but rather an inquiry into the *a priori* conditions for all scientific qua *empirical* investigation. This *transcendent relation* to all things empirical is expressed by the composition of the word itself, as "meta" – meaning *after* – indicates a transgression of empirical nature – *physis*. In fact, metaphysics is for this reason also often depicted as some kind of *transcendent act of thought*. No example of such transcendent act is more famous than the ascension into the supreme light of the sun by Plato's *allegory of the cave*.

In the metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene, the conceptual and normative transformation represents a *rearticulation of first principles* relating to our fundamental understanding of *man and nature, and the normative significance of their relationship*. This rearticulation does not correlate to a scientifically discovered change in nature, for example by stratigraphy, Earth System science, or ecology. However, even though the transformation of the philosophical concept is independent from the transformation of the scientific concept, they are not therefore unrelated. For our currently perceived state of *environmental crisis*, which is directly informed by scientific discovery, represents the *transcendent act* which elevates our thought to a state of metaphysical contemplation. That is, by coming to an awareness of the *destructive* environmental effects of human activities, we gain an intellectual perspective that is emancipated from the empirical concerns of everyday life, which enables us to critically reevaluate the human-nature relation. But the conceptual and normative transformation that is born out of this *meta-physical* event is not temporally limited to a specific historical period or transition. It simply represents a new fundamental way to view ourselves and our environmental situation.

Towards a Metaphysical Interpretation

The role of the present part one of this dissertation is to establish an interpretation of the Anthropocene, which in turn will provide us with a starting point for the development of a metaphysics of man and nature throughout parts two, three, and four. Confronting the analyses made by several contemporary philosophers engaged in the Anthropocene debate – from now on, also referred to as the *Anthropocenologists* – we will suggest that the philosophical concept

of the Anthropocene is best understood according to a metaphysical interpretation.[72] That is, that the conceptual and normative transformations reflected in the dominant philosophical literature is ultimately independent of any scientific determination of the transition from Holocene to Anthropocene. In the effort to produce a single and all-encompassing theory on the transformative event of our new epoch, we will approach the existing literature according to three general *narratives*. That is, as overarching *stories* that will serve as conceptual frameworks for our philosophical interpretation. These narratives will help us channel the myriad of claims and arguments put forth by the Anthropocenologists, in the interest to present one underlying and essential meaning. However, by dividing our interpretation according to these three different narratives we do not thereby claim that there are three separate components at play in our new epoch. Rather, they merely represent *three different ways to conceptualize the same epochal event*. This trinity of conceptualizations will be mirrored by division of part one itself – as chapters two, three, and four presents the Anthropocene according to each individual narrative, and chapter five ties these narratives together into one single metaphysical event. There is no denying that our take on the Anthropocene is inspired by Heidegger's philosophy. But it will nonetheless be our ambition to strive for an interpretation which the Anthropocenologists can at least recognize as a coherent response to the questions asked and challenges posed by the contemporary debate. The Anthropocene has spurred a set of radical metaphysical claims, which in turn demonstrates a need for a new metaphysical system of man and nature. By encapsulating the metaphysical claims made according to a set of general narratives, the present part one represents the first step on our way to develop such metaphysical system.

In chapter two, we will evaluate the Anthropocene literature according to the first narrative, which depicts our new epoch as an event of *destroying nature*. On a general level of analysis, this narrative corresponds to an environmentalist concern that is not unique to the Anthropocene, but which we find in all manner of expressions throughout the history of environmental philosophy. However, our claim is that the Anthropocene connects the general concern for environmental destruction with the existential situation of human beings, in a

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[72] Who are the Anthropocenologists? First and foremost, Clive Hamilton, Bruno Latour, Christophe Bonneuil & Jean Baptiste Fressoz, and Jeremy Davies. Also directly relevant, although themselves not outspoken proponents of the Anthropocene debate, are the environmental philosophies of Jedediah Purdy, Arne Johan Vetlesen, and Seven Vogel. I also make significant use of Andreas Malm, although as an outspoken opponent of the Anthropocenologists.

manner that transforms our metaphysical understanding of the man-nature relation. Running through different ways of conceptualizing "destruction", we conclude that the ultimate meaning of environmental destruction reflects a radical experience that identifies nature as the existential foundation for human beings.

In chapter three, we will evaluate the Anthropocene debate according to the second narrative, which presents the new epoch as an event of *overthrowing nihilism*. This narrative too echoes a traditional concern for environmental philosophy. If the overall meaning of nihilism corresponds to a depiction of nature as ultimately *a-normative*, a principal task for environmental philosophy has traditionally been to install nature with some kind of normative meaning or significance. The most canonical variation of this task has been the argument for some kind of *intrinsic value* of natural things. The Anthropocenologists largely continue this tradition of trying to overthrow nihilism, and by inquiring into their claims we suggest the following two central components to the Anthropocene transformation: First, the normative meaning of nature in the Anthropocene does not primarily connect to the properties or status of individual existent entities of nature, but rather the way in which natural things organize into a unified whole – that is, into a *system of meaning*. This meaning is normative, because nature itself contains the ground for its preservation as well as destruction. That is, the very *being* of nature as an organized system is fundamentally at stake. Second, this normative meaning is not something which the Anthropocenologists has successfully developed – that is, as an intellectual response to the environmental challenges of our time. Rather, this is a meaning that *confronts us*, as a grounding trait of nature itself, brought to a point of revelation in our contemporary environmental situation. The notion of environmental *responsibility* – the foremost virtue of the Anthropocene – represents in this respect not primarily a manner of acting out in the world, but rather a *primordial state of recognizing* the normative meaning of nature.

In chapter four, we will evaluate the Anthropocene debate according to the third narrative, which reflects the *historical meaning* of the Anthropocene. The original scientific concept of the Anthropocene corresponds to a historical determination of science – in its most rudimentary form, as the successive transition from "Holocene" to "Anthropocene" according to the partitioning of a temporal axis. Equally in the philosophical interpretation of our new epoch, the *historical-temporal* meaning plays an important role. In continuing to push for a metaphysical interpretation, we will argue that the significant historical meaning of the Anthropocene does not represent some event that has already happened in the past – that is, as the transpiring of occurrences according to a representation of history as an abstract lineage of developments. Rather, the fundamental historical meaning connects to an *ongoing epochal*

event that defines our own *contemporary* situation. We understand this epochal event as manifesting the *contingence* of our own contemporary situation.

In chapter five, we collect and rearticulate the components of the three previous narratives into one single metaphysical event. The destruction of nature, the overcoming of nihilism, and the contingence that defines in the historical significance of the Anthropocene, all reflect a *revelation of the finitude of nature*. In response to this fundamental metaphysical event, we then proceed to introduce the fundamental building blocks of our coming metaphysics. *Environment* as the revelation of the finitude of nature. *Willing* and *freedom* as the twofold ground for the preservation and nihilation of an environment. And the moral essence of man as the coming to awareness of this ground of nature – that is, as environmental *responsibility*.

2. The Anthropocene as a Transformative Event of Destruction

The philosophical debate on the Anthropocene centers on an alleged change in our conceptual and normative understanding of nature and its relationship to man. At the outset, we find this transformation expressed by the simple integration of "Anthropos" in the geological epoch of nature, implying that we need to *include man in our determination of nature*. Our first general narrative tries to elaborate on the meaning of this transformation as an event of *environmental destruction*. In this chapter, we ask: What is destroyed in the Anthropocene and what is the nature of its destruction? What is the conceptual and normative transformation that follows from this destruction? And to what extent is the conceptual and normative transformation reflected in the philosophical concept contingent on a corresponding scientific determination of a material and historical change in nature?

Contemporary environmental philosophy, with the Anthropocene thinkers at the very forefront, has an extensive naturalistic orientation, in that its original concerns for environmental problems are heavily informed by scientific understanding of nature. By claiming a *naturalistic interpretation* to the philosophical concept of the Anthropocene, we mean that the conceptual and normative transformation is contingent on the scientific determination of some material change in the lawful order of nature. For example, by suggesting that there are conceptual and normative implications that follow from the fact that geology now reviews the possibility of redefining contemporary human activity as the dominant factor in shaping of the composition of Earth's *strata*. However, in this dissertation we approach the

Anthropocene with the presupposition that a naturalistic line of interpretation is a dead end for a meaningful philosophical conversation about our new epoch. In the context of the present chapter, this means that the substantial claims regarding environmental destruction that operate within the Anthropocene debate are ultimately best understood as a conceptual and normative transformation that does not correlate to any recent scientific discovery. The *metaphysical interpretation* claims that scientific determination of harmful anthropogenic impact on nature, and the environmentalist movement that has spurred from this recognition, has accentuated a need to reevaluate our fundamental conceptions of man, nature, and the normative meaning of their relationship. This reevaluation is not a recognition that something has changed, but instead a revelation that our long-held conceptions of the human condition on Earth are fundamentally flawed.

Killing Life

The perhaps most literal variation of the environmentalist narrative on anthropogenic destruction is the killing of non-human life. As the hunting of wildlife, extermination of species, deforestation, or the eradication of entire ecosystems. This is also a narrative that speaks to a more general concern of environmental philosophy and environmental ethics, as opposed to the specific notion of an epochal transformation of the Anthropocene. To the extent that it makes any sense at all to speak of a transformation in the human-nature relation based on the act of killing of life, such transformation would simply be the removal of the *relatum*, namely nature, thereby dissolving the relation altogether. The killing of life seems to have two main variations of normative significance. First, as an *anthropocentric* valuation of our own experience, utilization, or otherwise appreciation of a living nature. Or according to Peter Singer: "so that the effects of our actions on nonhumans are morally significant only if they have consequences for humans."[73] Second, as an *ecocentric* argument for the value of non-human life independent of human appreciation. Again, with Singer: "giving the lives and welfare of nonhuman animals an intrinsic significance which must count in any moral calculation".[74] Despite the differences

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[73] Singer, P. (2003), "Not for Humans Only: The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues", page 55.
[74] Singer, P. (2003), "Not for Humans Only: The Place of Nonhumans in Environmental Issues", page 55.

in normative foundation, both variations may result in an imperative to protect and preserve non-human life. If we understand the meaning of our new epoch through this rudimentary and blunt depiction of environmental destruction as the killing of life, and the normative concern which follows, it becomes obvious that the Anthropocene must be given a naturalistic interpretation, as the philosophical conclusions become entirely dependent on the scientific claims to biological annihilation.

Destroying Naturalness

Inanimate things cannot die. For places and things of nature that include both the animate and the inanimate, such as forests, mountains or lakes, harmful human behavior often do not bring about total extermination, but instead we merely *alter their composition*. Human activity brings about massive transformation of landmasses, through practices of agriculture, industry, urbanization, infrastructure, etc. What exactly is *destroyed* in these transformative processes? The claim of environmental destruction often entails, explicit or implicit, some concept of *naturalness*. That is, that the object of environmental destruction is not the killing of life or the literal decomposition of inanimate things, but rather the disruption of its *state of naturalness*. Let us inquire into some variations on the concept of naturalness and the meaning of its destruction.

(**i**) We find a classic example of naturalness in the idea of nature as being *independent*. "Nature's independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us", Bill McKibben writes.[75] It is the idea of destroying naturalness in its most simple form. If we build a cottage community in a forest, mine for metal in a mountain, or construct a highway through a mountain plateau, nature somehow becomes *contaminated*; no longer *pristine*; a place of wilderness deprived of its *wildness*. This is destruction of naturalness in the sense of depriving nature of its independence from human activity. It is a strictly *negative* concept of naturalness, in the sense that it only tells us what nature should *not be* – that is, that it should not be contaminated by humans.

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[75] McKibben, B. (1989), *The End of Nature*, page 50.

(**ii**) As opposed to a mere *static state of independence*, we may also view the naturalness as contingent on the possibility for nature of *evolving independently* from human interference. Eric Katz and Robert Elliot both represents efforts to determine naturalness, and thereby the value of nature, through nature's autonomous or unhindered evolution.[76] In interfering with nature, humans are at risk of, not only contaminating its present state of independence, but the accumulated value gained by unhindered development throughout ecological and geological time. The possibility of environmental *restoration*, which is a particular concern for Elliot, relies on our ability to refrain from interfering with natural developments *throughout time*:

> "The value that the forest actually has would to a large extent depend on just how many of its present characteristics are the product of natural forces and natural evolution. […] The degree to which the value of the restored forest approximates the value of the forest originally there is a function of the time that has elapsed since the restoration is achieved […]".[77]

We find an alternative to the naturalness of Katz and Elliot by the more recent work of Svein Anders Noer Lie, who emphasizes the *natural dispositions* acquired by things of nature throughout historical evolution.[78] According to Lie, human interference with nature violates its naturalness, *only* to the extent that the thing of nature is somehow restricted in its ability to manifest its natural dispositions. Scientific and technological development is endangering naturalness, according to Lie, because it often heavily relies on our ability to suppress the historically developed dispositions of a thing, promoting instead other latent but unnatural dispositions.

(**iii**) Turning to Clive Hamilton's *Defiant Earth*, we finally bring the notion of naturalness in direct contact with the Anthropocene. It should be noted that Hamilton does in fact not use the term "naturalness", but it nonetheless becomes clear that his analysis invokes a similar line of demarcation for nature as that of Katz, Elliot and Lie. Hamilton makes a strong claim for a naturalistic interpretation of the Anthropocene, but with the sole focus on the emergence of *Earth System Science* in the 1970s, as opposed to the *stratigraphic* claim of Paul Crutzen. The transition from *Holocene* into our current geological epoch transcends all previously held narratives on general anthropogenic interference with nature and natural

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[76] Katz, E. (1997), *Nature as Subject – Human Obligation and Natural Community*; Elliot, R. (1997), *Faking Nature – The ethics of environmental restoration*.
[77] Elliot, R. (1997), *Faking Nature – The ethics of environmental restoration*, page 90.
[78] Lie, S. A. N. (2016), *Philosophy of Nature – Rethinking Naturalness*.

development. For Hamilton, it is a matter of a unique and novel transformation of the Earth System – that is, nature determined as a *unitary whole*. Hamilton makes a sharp distinction between nature's own *forces*, which until recently has propelled the development of the Earth System, and human *power*, which now has dethroned nature's rule. This event of dethronement marks a definitive and irreversible *rupture* in the geological history of planet Earth.[79] Hamilton thereby implicitly invokes a concept of naturalness as corresponding to the development of the Earth System through natural forces during the last 4.5 billion years, and the overthrowing of this natural development through present day anthropogenic forces.

How does the destruction of naturalness express a transformation of the human-nature relation? The answer varies depending on the different variations on naturalness. In the first case of the unnatural contamination of nature's static independence, the relation is once again simply dissolved, by removing the latter relatum. This echoes McKibben's original claim on the *end of nature*. Whereas McKibben writes a requiem for a naturalness lost, Katz and Elliot more actively confront the problem of *losing and restoring* an independently evolving nature. We thus understand the human-nature relation, not by a single transformation of irreversible destruction, but as the perpetual risk of losing nature, and the enormity of the task of regaining it. The normative meaning of the transformative event of destruction becomes the human situation in nature, where we are at risk of losing the naturally developed value of nature, and thereby are urged to apply measures that either maintains or restores it.

Lie's main concern does not really correspond to any significant shift in the human-nature relation. In a breath of fresh air, he portrays the dividing line of naturalness and un-naturalness, not as that of "human" versus "nature", but as the manner in which we choose to *act according to or in violation of* the historically developed dispositions of animals, plants, objects, as well as people. Lie's basic claim for the normative meaning of nature is that all normative judgments eventually rest on descriptive premises, and that the *historically developed dispositional facts* about the naturalness of nature provide us with this descriptive foundation.[80] Violation of naturalness is the ontological basis for all environmentalism.

For Hamilton, the transformation of the human-nature relation is not so much a loss of a counterpart, as it is a *shift in power relations*. Natural forces have been the dominant propeller of the Earth System, and now human power has overtaken this role. Although Hamilton himself

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[79] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth – The Fate of Human son the Anthropocene*, page 10.
[80] Lie, S. A. N. (2016), *Philosophy of Nature – Rethinking Naturalness*, page 19.

is adamant in his claim on the irreversibility of this shift in power, it is conceptually just as plausible to imagine that nature once again can reclaim the captaincy of spaceship Earth. The predominant normative meaning of our current situation in the Anthropocene nonetheless translates into an imperative of *responsibility*, which emerge from our growing awareness of being in charge.

If we define the Anthropocene based on a notion of naturalness, then the notion of a transformative event becomes an act of contaminating nature's *independence* (McKibben); as restricting, manipulating, or terminating the possibility of nature's *independent development* (Katz & Elliot); as the non-conformity of human action with the *historically evolved dispositional traits of nature* (Lie); or as tipping the scale of dominance in the human-nature *power relation* (Hamilton). And the normative meaning emerging from this transformation would be reflected in a recognition of our responsibility, and a subsequent moral imperative to restore the naturalness once lost. All these narratives imply a naturalistic interpretation of the Anthropocene, as the philosophical analysis remains contingent on the objective truth of the scientific or otherwise empirical account of such historical transgression of naturalness.[81]

Destroying Nature's Stability

The idea of the Anthropocene as an epoch in which the *stability* of nature has been destroyed is a well-established narrative amongst the philosophical interpretations. In contrast to the largely straightforward naturalistic transformations of killing life and destroying naturalness, we aim to reveal a more pressing ambiguity in the narrative of changing nature into a state of *perpetual crisis and catastrophe*, raising the question as to whether the transformative event of the Anthropocene is in fact naturalistic or metaphysical. We will start at the naturalistic end of the spectrum and gradually work our way towards the more metaphysically ambiguous narratives.

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[81] The case of Lie is here somewhat unclear. Lie has no definitive and explicit notion of a *transformative event* and thus it makes less sense to ask about a naturalistic contra metaphysical interpretation. The inclusion of Lie in this list therefore only makes sense to the extent that we chose to *apply* his framework of dispositional ontology to our interpretation of the Anthropocene, making the transformative event of destruction a change from a state where we act according with the naturalness of nature, to a state where we act in discordance.

(**i**) The approximately 12 000-year-old epoch of *Holocene* is depicted as a time of relative climatic stability, which in turn has arguably been a conditioning factor for the significant parallel development of human civilization. In entering the Anthropocene, assuming for example the point of transition to be the industrial revolution of the 19th century, we see that anthropogenic emission of greenhouse gasses is likely to turn nature into a far more violent and catastrophic environment, unprecedented (at least) in the scope of human history. As such, we can make the claim that humans have *destroyed nature's initial state of stability*.

Clive Hamilton offers a variation of this claim. In his insistence on a naturalistic interpretation of the Anthropocene as a definitive and irreversible rupture in the Earth System, Hamilton introduces the concept of the *antinomy of the Anthropocene*.[82] There is a paradoxical meaning to the Anthropocene. On the one hand, human power has been amplified to the extent of rivaling the forces of nature. But on the other hand, and far from McKibben's claim to the end of nature, we now see nature more empowered, enraged, and terrifying than ever: "Yet Earth System science now tells us that, rather than dying, nature as the Earth System has in fact *come alive* or (perhaps a better metaphor) is waking from its slumber."[83]

Christophe Bonneuil and Jean Baptiste Fressoz makes a similar point in *The Shock of the Anthropocene*. Up until recently, environmentalism has urged for the *sustainable development* of nature as an *external* place to "extract resources and deposit waste".[84] Now the Anthropocene has replaced the notion "environment" with the autonomous Earth System of Gaia:

> "The double reality that the Anthropocene presents is that, on the one hand, the Earth has seen other epochs in the last 4.5 billion years, and life will continue in one form or another with or without humans. But the new states that we are launching into will bring with them a disorder, penury and violence that will render it less readily habitable by humans."[85]

We see the emerging instability of the Anthropocene, according to Bonneuil and Fressoz, manifest in the shape of *unpredictability and limits*. Limits in terms of our ability to manage

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[82] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 45.
[83] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 47.
[84] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 20.
[85] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 21.

and manipulate our surroundings, but also in the sense of limiting the extent of our scientific understanding of the world.[86]

(**ii**) The narrative of destroying nature's stability contains a *conceptual distinction*, which may at first seem insignificant, but which will prove important for the later analysis to come. There are in fact two simultaneous perspectives at play in the narrative that we have just presented. On the one hand, it depicts a *historical transition* into the Anthropocene, relating the instability of the present to the stability of the past. This line of interpretation follows the original historical determination of geology – that is, as stratigraphy or as Earth System science. On the other hand, the narrative also depicts the instability of our *contemporary situation*. These two perspectives are initially complementary, making for a subtle distinction. But the distinction is nonetheless important. For whereas the first perspective simply addresses our understanding of the history of nature, *looking back*, the second carries with it a whole array of concerns – scientific, technological, and political – about the situation we are currently in, *looking forward*. Bonneuil and Fressoz stresses the latter perspective, when claiming that the very term "environmental *crisis*" erroneously depict the Anthropocene as a *transitory state*, whereas it is in fact represents a *point of no return*, "with no foreseeable return to the normality of the Holocene."[87] Andreas Malm makes an analogous claim, in the shape of criticizing Capitalism for its self-contradictory attempt of emancipation from nature, in a time where global warming reveals a nature that is more *autonomous* than ever.[88] This is an autonomy that we desperately need to address and take into account for our current environmental situation. Even though these types of narratives still reflect a naturalistic line of interpretation for the Anthropocene – that is, depicting a conceptual and normative transformation that correspond to some underlying material change in nature – they also demonstrate a significant difference in terms of the conceptual meaning and normative significance of the Anthropocene as either an historical fact or a contemporary environmental concern.

(**iii**) Continuing from the conceptual distinction between, on the one hand, the historic determination of a transition from a state of stability into a new epoch of instability, and on the other hand, the environmental concerns emerging from the recognition of the instability

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[86] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 23.
[87] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 21.
[88] Capitalism's attempt at emancipation from nature is self-contradictory because its own growth and development is also dependent on nature. See Andreas Malm (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 201.

revealed in our contemporary environmental situation, we now ask the following question: *What if the stability of nature was never really there?* What if the transformative event of destruction is entirely conceptual, in the sense of revealing that the notion of a stable nature is but a long-held misconception? In *The Birth of the Anthropocene*, Jeremy Davies offers an interpretation on the meaning of nature's instability through a novel perspective of temporality. The transformative event of the Anthropocene corresponds to our newly acquired environmental orientation through the scope of *deep geological time*.[89] What is deep geological time? First of all, it is a temporal scope that *transcends human history*. Whereas standard histories of humanity usually spans around 10,000 years into the past, the geological history of planet Earth begins 4.5 billion years ago. To view ourselves through the scope of geological time is nothing short of staggering. Second, deep geological time is also a depiction of the history of nature as developing through *crises and catastrophes*. According to Davies, the developments in geology during the last few decades has overthrown the old paradigm of *gradualism*, depicting a stable nature of "slow and continues process", replacing it with the paradigm of *neocatastrophism*, depicting natural processes as undergoing violent and abrupt cataclysmic change.[90]

For Davies the transition into the Anthropocene becomes something like the emergence of an eschatological awareness of our place in geological time as a lineage of perpetual crisis. This puts Davis's depiction of our new epoch in an *ambiguous* middle position between a naturalistic and a metaphysical interpretation. For in one sense, he offers an interpretation which clearly contradicts our initial definition of naturalism. Davis's depiction of the conceptual and normative transformation does not have a corresponding material change in nature. That is, nature has always been a place of instability. However, his interpretation is still heavily naturalistically oriented, in the sense that the conceptual and normative transformation is a direct result of a new scientific discovery. That is, it is only because of the recent advances made in geology that the environmentalist orientation through deep cataclysmic time has become possible.

Even closer to a metaphysical interpretation is Bruno Latour. Latour's analysis of the Anthropocene is multifaceted, but at least one of the narratives gained by his appropriation of Lovelock's Gaia is the destruction of a stable and harmonious nature. Gaia "is not a figure of

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[89] Jeremy Davies (2016), *The Birth of the Anthropocene*, page 15.
[90] Davies, J. (2016), *The Birth of the Anthropocene*, page 29.

harmony. There is nothing maternal about her".[91] She is a "chthonic power […] a figure of violence, genesis, and trickery".[92] Latour's creative move lies in the manner in which he couples Gaia with the Anthropocene as a transformation of the Earth System. Gaia is the epitome of an anti-sovereign. Installing Gaia to power of the Earth System thereby brings about a dissolving of nature as a unitary and orderly whole: "the Earth system is anti-systematic: 'There is only one Gaia but Gaia is not One'".[93] Without a sovereign arbiter, the Anthropocene for Latour represents nothing short of a *return to war*.[94]

> "Such is the tipping point between unified, indifferent, impartial, global "nature" whose laws are determined in advance by the principle of causality, and Gaia, which is not unified, whose feedback loops have to be discovered one by one, and which can no longer be said to be *neutral toward our actions*, now that we are obliged to define the Anthropocene as the multiform reaction of the Earth to our enterprises."[95]

Despite the fact that Latour's environmental philosophy is informed by contemporary scientific understanding, his interpretation of the fundamental transformation of the Anthropocene is ultimately metaphysical. The claim to a return to war adheres to a larger narrative on the Anthropocene as an event of overcoming *modernity*. The absence of war is the absence of a distinction between friend and enemy, Latour writes, echoing Carl Schmitt, and thereby ultimately the absence of politics.[96] The Anthropocene destruction of nature's peaceful stability becomes intrinsic to the event of *(re)politicizing nature*, effectively overthrowing one of the basic tenets of modernist philosophy of nature.

> "What makes the Anthropocene an excellent marker, a "golden spike" clearly detectable beyond the frontier of stratigraphy, is that the name of this geohistorical period may become the most pertinent philosophical, religious, anthropological, and – as we shall soon see – political concept for the beginning to turn away for good from the notions of "Modern" and "modernity"".[97]

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[91] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 82.
[92] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 83.
[93] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 97. Latour is quoting Philip Conway, "Back Down to Earth: Reassembling Latour's Anthropocentric Geopolitics" (2016).
[94] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 236.
[95] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 238.
[96] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 240.
[97] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 116.

There is no doubt that Latour is at least partially guilty of appropriating the Anthropocene debate for the benefit of an anti-modernist agenda that he has been pushing for more than 30 years.[98] As such, it is also possible to discard his interpretation as irrelevant for our own analysis. However, I also find a more sympathetic reading far more intriguing, where we open up to the possibility that Latour has discovered a radical connection between, on the one hand, a two-century old criticism of Western philosophy of nature, and on the other hand, a contemporary environmentalist movement, heavily influenced by scientific research. Thus, the significant transformative event of the Anthropocene does no longer reflect some process of material change in nature. Rather, our current environmental situation, which is no doubt heavily informed by contemporaneous scientific discovery, has only accentuated a long-standing criticism of modernity and its metaphysical misconceptions of nature.

(**iv**) What is the fundamental meaning of nature's instability? Is it historic, scientific, or something that transcends both? The concepts of stability and instability are historically relevant because we can use them to determine the *state* of nature throughout a particular *period* of historical time, but also in our determination of the historical *transition* from a state of nature at a given point in time to another. But the meaning of stability itself seems to come before we employ the concept in our historical determination. That is, it is only by first establishing a scientific concept of what is meant by a stable and unstable state – for example through physics, geology, climatology, ecology, or sociology – that we may then utilize this concept in a historical representation of the world. So, when asking to define the meaning of nature's stability we must look to science and not history. Looking to science, we suggest that there are two radically different ways to understand the dichotomy of stability and instability. The first way understands both "stability" and "instability" as notions of scientific determination. That is, that both concepts are in service of our rigorous determination of natural lawfulness. Whereas the second way makes the dichotomy into a line of demarcation for science itself, turning the concept of nature's instability into an expression of the *limits of scientific determination*. This makes instability into a metaphysical concept.

Davies seems to argue for a thoroughly scientific meaning of both "stability" and "instability", expressing the *mechanisms and processes* of geological development. I think Hamilton, even though he might not concede to this himself, takes up a more ambiguous middle

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[98] The English translation of *We have never been Modern* was first published in 1993.

position in this question. An ambiguity expressed by the very title of his book, *Defiant Earth*. For even though Hamilton insists upon making a strong naturalistic interpretation on the state of the *Earth System*, expressing nature's defiance through the *forces* of the global climatic processes, this very same defiance also express our *lack of control*. We see this perspective for example in Hamilton's criticism of the *ecomodernists* and their delusional attempt at technological mastery.[99] And once we admit to the lack of control in confrontation with a defiant Earth, the pressing follow-up question then becomes whether nature can be uncontrollable and yet fully intelligible at the same time. Or whether in fact "controllability" and "intelligibility" are interdependent properties of nature. Bonnuel and Fressoz, as we have already mentioned above, makes this connection explicit, stating that the limits in our ability to manage and manipulate nature also express the limits of scientific understanding itself.[100]

Asking for the meaning of nature's instability brings us in contact with a topic that will eventually become a core concern for the entire dissertation. The general depiction of our new epoch as a transformative event of *destroying nature's stability* accentuates a line of metaphysical reasoning that represents one of the more profound yet also underdeveloped aspects of the Anthropocene literature. It is a narrative which suggests a radical transformation in our understanding of nature and the old dichotomy of *necessity and freedom*. For the time being, we will limit our analysis to merely indicate the kind of thinking alluded to by some of the Anthropocenologists, as a seed of thought for what is to come.

Central to Hamilton's interpretation of the Anthropocene is a highly unconventional use of the word "anthropocentric". Etymologically "anthropocentric" means to put *man in the center*, which environmental philosophy has traditionally identified as the valuation of nature because of its value *for humans*. Because modern day humans often valuate practices that does harm to nature itself, environmental philosophers generally consider it necessary to develop a manner of valuation of nature that is not anthropocentric. Hamilton's take on the term, on the other hand, begins as a scientific fact on the dominant position of humanity as a geological power for the Earth System. To be sufficiently anthropocentric, according to Hamilton, ironically ends up being the solution for environmentalism, as it entails both the coming to an awareness of our embedded environmental situation, and that we take *responsibility* for our

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[99] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 69. See Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015), *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*.
[100] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 23.

central position.[101] In light of his new notion of anthropocentrism, Hamilton makes the claim that the *embeddedness* in nature of the anthropocentric human subject brings about a radical breakdown of the traditional division between a human realm of freedom and a natural realm of necessity.[102]

Both Latour and Bonneuil & Fressoz make similar claims to Hamilton, refuting the idea of freedom as a line of demarcation for human and nature, making the event of acquiring freedom into an emancipation of humans from nature.[103] In the words of Bonneuil & Fressoz:

> "One of the major tasks of contemporary philosophy is undoubtedly to rethink freedom in a different way than this wrenching away from natural determinations, to explore what may be infinitely enriching and emancipatory in those attachments that link us with other beings on a finite Earth. What infinitely remains in a finite world?"[104]

However, neither Hamilton, Latour nor Bonneuil & Fressoz makes any substantial attempt to elaborate on this alleged transformation for nature and freedom. Let us therefore suggest a line of interpretation that connects the idea of freedom in nature with the Anthropocene narrative on the destruction of nature's stability. As a metaphysical interpretation of the instability of nature, as something that escapes scientific determination. That is, that the destruction of nature's stability not only marks the loss of a nature within the reach of our control and manipulation, but also somehow the manifestation of a nature that transcends our understanding. Could such an interpretation enable us to reconceptualize the old dichotomy of *necessity and freedom* as a foundational dynamic at the heart of nature itself? That is, that necessity represents the essence of nature according to scientific determination, whereas freedom becomes the manifestation of a part of nature that transcends all our attempts to determine and control. This opens the possibility for a metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene, which brings the meaning of *environmental crisis and destruction in direct contact with the fundamental questions of ontology*.

How does the emergence of nature's instability transform the human-nature relation, and in what sense does this transformation uncover a normative meaning? Starting with Hamilton, to which we have ascribed both the narrative of destroying *naturalness* as well as

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[101] Wasrud, M. (2017), "Antropocen – Om natur og den frie vilje", http://www.salongen.no/13960/
[102] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 51.
[103] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 108.
[104] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 41f.

nature's *stability*. This twofoldness is encapsulated by Hamilton's own notion of the *antinomy of the Anthropocene*. Through amplification of human power in the Earth System, we have tipped the scale of geological dominance, replacing a once *natural* order with "anthropocentrism" – that is, instating *humanity at the center* of the Earth System. But in doing so, nature has simultaneously been awakened from its slumber, manifesting its defiance against our attempts to manipulate and control. What Hamilton names a *defiant* Earth is echoed by Malm as the *autonomy* of nature; by Davies as the cataclysmic development of *deep time*; and by Latour and Bonneuil & Fressoz simply as *Gaia*. The Anthropocene has transformed the human-nature relation, in that the relatum of nature no longer lie dormant as a passive percipient of human activity but has now become an *active antagonist* – which in turn reveals a fundamental sense of *vulnerability* for the continuation of human existence on planet Earth. The normative force of the Anthropocene seems thereby to emerge from the turbulent intersection of human success in explaining and manipulating natural processes and the manifestation of a nature that transcends our attempts at determination and control. For Hamilton, our coming to awareness of this unruly middle position leads to an imperative of responsibility, not only to protect but also to *placate* nature.[105] For Latour, the war-like instability of the Anthropocene, where all environmental *agents* are at stake, brings about a general politicizing of nature.

Destroying Conceptions of Nature

The Anthropocene originally started as a suggested geological determination on a transition from the Holocene and into our current historical epoch. The first three narratives on destruction began with some kind of material change in nature, but not all were cut and dried in the alleged connections between the initial material change and the subsequent philosophical conclusions drawn from them. In other words, the distinction between a naturalistic and a metaphysical interpretation remain ambiguous. Now introducing a fourth narrative on the Anthropocene as an event of destruction, we immediately recognize that the idea of *destroying conceptions of nature* – that is, as the transformation of something like a *world-view* – pushes us even further away from a naturalistic line of interpretation.

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[105] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 55.

In what sense does the Anthropocene bring about a destruction of our conception of nature? We have already presented Latour's interpretation on the Anthropocene as installing Gaia as the anti-sovereign of the Earth System. To face Gaia is for Latour to bring about a destruction of the conception of nature as a unified *globe*. The conception of globe entails a *spherical understanding* of nature. A sphere is continuous, complete and transparent; it has "no history, no beginning, no end, no holes, no discontinuities of any sort."[106] The spherical understanding of the globe entails the encapsulation of nature as a unified totality – that is, as an object of total and complete knowledge.[107] With his conception of nature as globe, Latour makes a reference to Peter Sloterdijk and the idea of an *unresolved bifocalism* of Christian theology.[108] Cosmology in the Christian imagery is both *theocentric* and *geocentric* – that is, putting both God and nature at the center, which consequently also removes both to the periphery. Latour translates this bifurcation into the situation of modernity, as an incoherence intrinsic to scientific determination of nature. On the one hand, science depicts a detached universal nature viewed from a godlike position of the scientist. On the other hand, the scientists also find himself truly embedded in the practices and engagements of his research community:

> "This bifocal conception of science does not allow the "view from nowhere" to be reconciled with these very particular places: classrooms, offices, laboratory benches, computer centers, meeting rooms, expeditions and field stations, the sites where scientists have to place themselves when they actually have to *obtain* data or really *write* their articles."[109]

The conception of the globe represents the universal and godlike "view from nowhere", where nature becomes a unitary totality. In Latour's interpretation of the Anthropocene, where the anti-sovereign of Gaia is put in charge of the Earth System, neither "Anthropos" nor "nature" represents totalities. Both units are rather dissolved into a multifaceted but flat system of different peoples, territories, practices, interests, and feedback loops.[110]

Jedediah Purdy, in his book *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, represents yet another example of depicting the Anthropocene as a transformative event of destroying conceptions of nature. The Anthropocene is a result of three major *crises* throughout recent

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[106] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 136.
[107] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 127.
[108] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 125.
[109] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 127.
[110] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 122.

history, with corresponding revolutions for our way of thought, in *politics*, *economics*, and *ecology*. These three spheres constitutes the *home* for humans, as Purdy reminds us of their etymological origin in the Greek words for city and household (*polis* and *oikos*).[111] The idea of a crisis is here understood as the event where we recognize that something which initially appeared to be of a permanent nature is in fact at stake of collapse, revealing itself to be something "artificial, fragile and potentially self-immolating."[112] History has demonstrated that neither the principles of politics nor the mechanisms of economy are instituted by God or any other perpetual power. With the emergence of the modern notion of *environment* in the 1960s, nature itself, in its interaction with human beings, equally became an object of fragility and crisis. The concept of the Anthropocene, according to Purdy, corresponds to our modern-day situation, where politics, economy and ecology all stands in a perpetual crisis, which can be managed by human beings only to the extent that we take an active political responsibility for our future.

After Nature is first and foremost a book on the American history of nature, running us through a series of historical documents in search of the fundamental developments of the country's conceptions of nature. Purdy highlights four specific founding *imaginations* for the relationship between the American people and their surrounding nature: the *providential*, the *romantic*, the *utilitarian* and the *ecological* vision.[113] (**i**) The *providential vision* emerge through the creation and early development of the United States during the 1700 and 1800s. The idea of the *American Frontier* – the *Wild West* – lay at the heart of the US as a nation striving for the advancement of civilization. Untouched land was to be cultivated. Wilderness was simply unproductive wasteland.[114] Through the *Homestead Acts*, the American government instated measures that pushed for the appropriation and development of land to the west by private citizens. In stark contrast to the social class division in Europe, the American farmer became a symbol on the new nation's identity. The *free labor* of the individual and its transformation of land became the manifestation of the nation's ideals and virtues. Individualism was additionally enhanced by the material fact that any citizen could take off into open territory, should society catch up and infringe on his freedom. That the white man's expansion in fact entailed the

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[111] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 17.
[112] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 3.
[113] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 7f.
[114] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 25.

appropriation of land already inhabited was justified on the grounds of the thoroughly unproductive nature of the *savage*.[115]

(**ii**) Throughout the 1800 and 1900s, we see a development of a new awareness on the "deeper need" for a recreational use of nature, its source of aesthetic experience and moral influence.[116] Voices like Henry Thoreau and John Muir were important contributors for the establishment of the *romantic vision* of nature. Spectacular landscape and scenery manifested experience of beauty and sublimity, and demonstrated places of spiritual and religious sanctuary. Wilderness became the American equivalent to the cathedrals and ancient cities of Europe.[117] Thus, nature became an object of protection and preservation. Environmental organizations like the *Sierra Club* (founded by Muir) fought for the establishment and preservation of national parks like the Yosemite, Sequoia and Grand Canyon.

(**iii**) Throughout the 1900s, American soil was no longer to be conquered, but instead an object for our reshaping and management. In the *utilitarian picture* of nature as *reservoir of resources*, in the spirit of industry and capitalism, the ability to *conserve* became the new virtue. Efficient recourse management required comprehensive technical knowledge. As an alternative to the providential conception of *wasteland*, the supreme purpose of utilitarian conservation was to avoid *waste*.

(**iv**) As Purdy draws a line of comparison from the providential to the utilitarian picture of nature, so too does he see the romantic vision as the foundation for the development of the modern environmentalism in the 1960s and 1970s. The ecological awareness of the intricate interconnectedness of nature – how "everything is connected" – provided a secular variation on the original romantic idea of wilderness. The ecological crisis revealed a complexity in nature for which humanity had both the ability to engage in harmony as well as to destroy.[118]

Despite Purdy's rich account of the historical development in American conceptions of nature, the ultimate moral of his book is not historical but arguably metaphysical. For *After Nature* is not a story of the gradual emergence of environmentalism as the endpoint of American relationship to nature. Rather, the historical analysis serves instead to accentuate an awareness of the *contingency of our conceptions*. This seems to be the fundamental meaning of the

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[115] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 81
[116] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 140
[117] Purdy, J. (2015). *After Nature: A politics for the Anthropocene*, page 137
[118] My presentation of Purdy above is partly an iteration of an earlier text. See Wasrud, M. (2017), "Antropocen – Om natur og den frie vilje", http://www.salongen.no/13960/

Anthropocene: To stand in a *perpetual crisis* of economics, politics, and ecology, in the sense that their conceptions, frameworks and institutions, which grounds our contemporary situation, are all fundamentally *at stake* of destruction.

Does the Anthropocene narrative on the destruction of conceptions ultimately express a naturalistic or a metaphysical transformation? We see the material change, corresponding to a naturalistic interpretation, as the historical development of human practices and interactions in nature. In addition to the depictions by Purdy briefly presented above, we can also mention the many *histories of the Anthropocene* demonstrated in detail by Bonneuil & Fressoz. In the third part of *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, they set out to trace different lines of historical development for human activity and interaction in nature, in the last two hundred years that make up the Anthropocene. Here are some examples: The *Thermocence* depicts the history of successive additions (not replacements!) of new sources of primary energy.[119] The *Thantocene* (from *Thanatos*, the Greek god of death), "a 'brutalizing' of relations between society and environment" through the exceptional state of war.[120] The *Phagocene* (from the Greek "phagein" meaning to *eat* or *consume*), as the making of the modern consumerist society and its empowering of the "Great Acceleration" from 1945 and onwards, degrading environments and transforming human physiology.[121] And the *Capitalocene*, as capitalism becomes coextensive with Earth, creating "a 'second nature' made up of roads, plantations, railways, mines, pipelines, wells, power stations, future markets and container ships, financial positions and banks that structure flows of matter, energy, goods and capital on a world scale."[122]

These are the material developments of human interactions on Earth, be it technological, industrial, economic, or political, that molds our conceptions of nature. However, the *constitutive transformation* of the Anthropocene is not the process of molding conceptions, but, quite the opposite, the event of *transcending our conceptions*. This is the *conceptual crisis* of the Anthropocene – to gain an awareness of the possibility for environmental meaning to be destroyed. This makes for a metaphysical event, as it goes beyond the conceptions that bound our material surroundings. The transformation of human-nature relation then no longer means to destroy a relatum, or to disrupt the natural order of its power structure, but to disclose the

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[119] Bonneuil C. & Fressoz J. B (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 101.
[120] Bonneuil C. & Fressoz J. B (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 129.
[121] Bonneuil C. & Fressoz J. B (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 167.
[122] Bonneuil C. & Fressoz J. B (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 222.

contingency of the relationship as such, as humans now understand their environmental situation as founded upon conceptions that ultimately are at stake of destruction.

Destroying our Existential Foundation

In our final variation of the narrative on environmental destruction the Anthropocene represents an event that destroys nature as our *own existential foundation*. We suggest that this is the narrative that is most successful in revealing the meaning of the Anthropocene, not only because it goes to the heart of the transformative event of our new epoch, but also because it manages to encapsulate all the other narratives of environmental destruction that we have presented above. However, this also entails that we end on an interpretation which presents the meaning of environmental destruction as a *metaphysical transformation*. Our claim to the primacy of the meaning of the Anthropocene as destroying *our own* existential foundation may come as a surprise. For according to traditional environmental philosophy, such narrative may initially seem as an undesirable relapse into *anthropocentrism*, valuating nature only as a basis for human interests, development, and life. In fact, this objection speaks to a more general problem that haunts the entire Anthropocene idea. For in determining nature as being in the *time of man*, there is a fine line between a well-intentioned aspiration to offer a novel framework for philosophical analysis, overturning long-held misconceptions, and what might in fact end up as a mere superficial reduction of nature to the technological and political concerns of man. That is, there is no mistaking that the conceptional framework of the Anthropocene runs an inherent risk of reducing environmental philosophy to mere subjectivism. Arne Johan Vetlesen, for example, offers a criticism of the Anthropocene by pointing to what he perceives as a *paradoxical* position in Latour's interpretation:

> "On the one hand, he [Latour] shares with posthumanism a thoroughgoing critique of anthropocentrism in theory and practice and of the hubris that goes with viewing humans as superior, even unique, in everything to do with agency. On the other hand, he theorizes the agency that is now visible, and dramatically, operative in the "behavior" exhibited by Earth in purely human-centered terms, as if humans and their

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way of understanding what is happening in the Anthropocene are the only thing that matters".[123]

Portraying the Anthropocene as a concern for the "agencies" involved in human projects and interests, we risk a concept of nature which dissolves into questions of management and control, losing touch with the traditional narratives of humility and respect for the *wildness*, *otherness* or *intrinsic value* of nature. On a similar note, Simon Hailwood critically depicts the *new anthropogenic nature* of the Anthropocene:

> "In this picture the environmental crisis is one of *uncontrollable* impact, not excessive impact. And overcoming alienation in favour of oneness as a response to *this* crisis looks to be a purely anthropocentric matter of establishing a new kind of environmental harmony through mastery of nature and assimilating the resulting 'nature' to human artifact and technology."[124]

Hailwood's assessment echoes another well-known criticism in contemporary environmental philosophy, of the so-called *ecomodernists*, who have fully appropriated the Anthropocene idea for their own vision of a thoroughly manufactured nature.[125] Here, according to Michael Northcott:

> "Both ecomodernist and would-be geoengineers describe the Anthropocene as a new evolutionary moment – an anthropic epiphany – in which human beings are at last in the driving seat both of human and natural history. In this vein the Anthropocene fosters not humility but arrogant hubris."[126]

The concern that the incorporation of "Anthropos" into our determination of nature may result in an environmental philosophy that loses touch with nature in an all-encompassing attention to human affairs is not to be taken lightly, and is a topic that we will address more closely at a later stage.[127] Nonetheless, our task now is to provide a defense for the Anthropocene which centers on a concern for the existential situation of man. We will begin our presentation of this final variation on the narrative of environmental destruction by connecting the narratives that

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[123] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene – Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism*, page 213.
[124] Hailwood, S. (2015), *Alienation and Nature in Environmental Philosophy*, page 6.
[125] See Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015). *Ecomodernist Manifesto*.
[126] Northcott, M. (2015), "Eschatology in the Anthropocene", page 104.
[127] Most notably, in part two, chapter four, where we connect the danger of subjectivism to Heidegger's criticism of technology.

we have already established – that is, the destruction of *life*, *naturalness*, *stability,* and *conceptions* of nature – through the lens of human existence. This initial presentation will no doubt appear as a reduction of the Anthropocene idea to anthropocentrism. However, we will then proceed to show how the destruction of the things concerning man translates into a more radical revelation of the environmental origin of human existence, which transforms the Anthropocene into a fundamentally *ecocentric* orientation for environmental philosophy. That is, the ultimate transformation of the Anthropocene is to reveal that the innermost concern of human existence is an environmental foundation which transcends the human subject.

(**i**) Humans eat non-human life – that is, animals and plants. We extract biological natural resources – materials for buildings, textiles, medicine, etc. Hunting, farming, agriculture, forestry, and industry rely on the continued existence of a multitude of species and ecosystems. When we continue with practices that *exterminate life*, we indirectly also kill ourselves. (**ii**) Biological evolution, photosynthesis, pollination, water and nitrogen cycles, climatic systems, global cooling and warming. These are examples of mechanisms and processes upon which a violation of their *natural* state and development risk a deterioration or destruction of our own natural habitat. (**iii**) Human ability to prosper and develop rely on the *stability* of nature for our successful determination, prediction, management, and manipulation. When nature disrupts into instability and chaos, it becomes a hostile territory for human beings – as an enemy to survive rather than an ally for a shared flourishment. (**iv**) The breakdown of *conceptions* of nature entails the breakdown of our own existential possibilities. Our practices of fossil fuel extraction, for example, has fostered a great narrative about nature as a place of economic, material, and technological development, for the advancement of human society and individual freedom. One of the great challenges of our current global climate change crisis seems not to be the coming to awareness of our predicament, but instead the insurmountable task of conjuring up a viable alternative. Conceptions of nature articulate the necessary frameworks for the meaningful interactions in our surroundings.

What does it mean to say that the Anthropocene manifest the destruction of our own existential foundation? An existential foundation is the *ground of existence – the ground of being*. *Our* existential foundation is that which grounds our own *human existence*. That is, without this ground, human existence is no more. However, if we suggest that the Anthropocene *manifests* the destruction of our existential foundation, this cannot be the *actualization* of this destruction, but rather its fundamental *possibility*. This is a basic insight reflected in Heidegger's analysis of existential death – namely, that man cannot actually experience the passing of his own death. That is, as soon as death arrives, there is no longer any existential

awareness at all. But man can confront the advent of death as the ultimate condition of his existence.[128] So when we now look to establish the meaning of existential destruction – our existential death – potentiality takes precedence over actuality. Thus, when inquiring into the meaning of the Anthropocene as a transformative event, we are in fact inquiring into the meaning of the *possibility of existential destruction*.

So we ask anew, what is the meaning of the Anthropocene as the possibility of destroying our own existential foundation? If the foundation of our existence resides in the life, naturalness, stability, and conceptions of nature, then the destruction of our existential foundation becomes an event that *transcends* all these things. Environmental destruction is ultimately a possibility that goes beyond *any thing* natural or residing in nature. Now we begin to see the *metaphysical* significance of environmental destruction. Metaphysics is the inquiry into the necessary first principles that grounds reality. We recognize something as *necessary* only in the event of its absence. Metaphysics stands in a transcending (*meta*) relation to nature (*physis*).[129] It is only through this transcending act that we gain insight to the first principles of nature – that is, the necessary conditions that grounds existence. The things *of* nature – life, naturalness, stability, or conceptions – are seen as constituting our existential foundation only in light of their pending destruction. That is, because their destruction entails an event of transcending existence as such, we reveal them to be grounding conditions for existence.

The destructive event of the Anthropocene is metaphysical, in the sense of transcending nature as our own existential foundation. Through this transcending destruction, man sees the possibility of his own non-being. This is where we find the essential meaning of the Anthropocene as a transformative event of the human-nature relation. Man finds himself faced by an existential threat from the pending environmental destruction. There is no place of refuge or route of escape, nor any *transcendent self* in the wake of destruction. The event of environmental destruction thus brings about an *event of identification*. Man sees his *own self as being one with his natural surroundings*, simply from the disclosed awareness that without nature man himself turns into nothing. This brings about a shift for environmental awareness towards a fundamentally *ecocentric* understanding of nature. Any anthropocentric notion of a *nature for man* dissolves by the emergent acknowledgment that man himself is *of nature*. The

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[128] See Heidegger, M., *Being and Time*, § 48.
[129] "The name 'metaphysics' derives from the Greek μετά τὰ φυσικά. This peculiar title was later interpreted as characterizing the questioning that extends μετά or *trans* – 'over' – beings as such." Martin Heidegger (1998), "What is Metaphysics", in *Pathmarks*. Page 93.

human self is fundamentally oriented towards a nature that both *give and take* the conditions for his own existence.

We are inquiring into the meaning of the Anthropocene. It has a *naturalistic* basis, in the sense that our understanding of its event of environmental destruction originates as an object of scientific determination. But the meaning of environmental destruction itself is metaphysical, as it manifests the possibility of transcending all things of nature. The *transformative event* of the Anthropocene thereby reflects a transition into an ecocentric orientation for human beings, as man sees his own human self in identity with the existential foundation of his natural surroundings.

3. The Anthropocene as Overthrowing Nihilism

Continuing our philosophical analysis of the Anthropocene, we now turn to an interpretative framework that more explicitly addresses the new epoch as a metaphysical transformation of normative significance. We present the Anthropocene as an event that *overthrows nihilism*. As with the first narrative of environmental destruction, the point is not that all Anthropocenologists employ the concept of nihilism as the explicit basis for their analysis, but rather that this narrative can serve to encapsulate the myriad of claims and depictions that do in fact operate in the Anthropocene literature. So, what do we mean by nihilism? Let us begin with a rudimentary definition. "Nihil" means *nothing*, and we understand nihilism as the *absence of normative meaning*. In the context of environmental philosophy, it makes sense to distinguish between two different ways in which this absence of meaning become significant. The **first** perspective puts the absence of normative meaning in *relation to man*. Human life is obviously determined by normative meaning – the sphere of *ethic*s and *politics* being the most apparent examples for philosophical inquiry. The concept of nihilism becomes a way to address the absence of a *normative ground outside of human subjectivity*. For traditional Western metaphysics, such grounding of normative meaning is typically connected to the theological question on the existence of God, who serves as the ultimate foundation of human value and meaning. Without such ultimate foundation, the normative meaning of human existence becomes something like a *charade* or *mere appearance*, being sought by appeal to psychological or societal needs and desires, rather than necessitated by objective truth.

The **second** perspective for nihilism puts the absence of normative meaning in *relation to nature itself*. As such, it connects directly to the long-held quest of environmental philosophy to ascribe *intrinsic value* to nature, that is, independent of its instrumental value for human needs and interests. Nihilism may then be portrayed as a root cause for environmental destruction, as nature itself provides no normative restrictions on human exploitation of natural resources.

What is interesting about the Anthropocene narrative is that it seems to combine both perspectives on nihilism. Nature itself demonstrates a normative meaning, which simultaneously serves as ground for the innermost moral concern for human beings. The Anthropocene represents a transformative event that makes this normative meaning manifest. In the following subchapters, we will inquire into different depictions of the Anthropocene as an event that reinstates nature with normative meaning and significance, gradually developing our own interpretation of the Anthropocene as an event of overthrowing nihilism. In the **first subchapter**, we will address Andreas Malm's polemic depiction of the Anthropocene as a *break with Cartesianism*. In his critical review of contemporary environmental thinkers, and especially Bruno Latour, Malm presents the Anthropocene as an attempt to reject Cartesian *substance dualism*. According to Malm, Latour not only fails in his argument against substance dualism, but he also fails to address the more pressing issue for contemporary environmentalist narratives, which is an untenable adherence to *property monism*. We will utilize Malm's criticism of Latour as a starting point for our own interpretation. Contrary to Malm's position, we will argue that property dualism is the kind of metaphysical orientation that many of the Anthropocene thinkers tries to overcome. That is, that the incorporation of "Anthropos" into nature represents a transformation where normative properties, that have traditionally been restricted to a human sphere, are now projected into nature itself. In the **second subchapter**, we turn to Arne Johan Vetlesen. Vetlesen also depicts the Anthropocene as a break with Cartesianism, but he articulates this transformation with regards to two distinct definitions of *anthropocentrism*. In the first sense, Cartesianism qua anthropocentrism signifies the placing of man in an exclusive normative center. Whereas in the second sense, Cartesianism qua anthropocentrism becomes the exclusion of *mental* properties from all things non-human – contrasted by Vetlesen's own position of *panpsychism* and *animism*. We embrace Vetlesen's attempt to develop a metaphysics that overthrows the conception of an inanimate qua nihilistic nature, but simultaneously suggest that the transformation in our normative concern for nature does not entail a shift *away from humans*, but rather a reconceptualization which reveals the innermost *normative concern for man and nature as one and the same*. In the **third subchapter**,

we continue from the conclusions drawn in our preliminary encounters with Malm and Vetlesen, and then proceed to suggest that the dissolution of Cartesian property dualism and anthropocentrism is not primarily connected to our understanding of *individual existent entities*, but rather to the way all things of nature are organized into a *unified system of meaning*. And moreover, that by disclosing this normative meaning, we also reveal a fundamentally *ecocentric orientation* of human existence. In the final and **fourth subchapter**, we look to the concept of environmental *responsibility*, presenting three different facets of its meaning, which we suggest are all foundational to the normative meaning at the heart of our new epoch.

Overthrowing Cartesianism I: *Substance and Property Dualism*

Andreas Malm is not an Anthropocenologist. In fact, the few times he even mentions the word "Anthropocene" in his book, *The Progress of this Storm*, it is in the context of criticism. The book is mainly a polemic against environmental philosophy according to *postmodernism*, *social constructivism,* and *new materialism*, as Malm believes these to contradict his own position of *climate realism*.[130] The main thing that *do* make Malm relevant for our own inquiry into the Anthropocene is that the book's chief antagonist is Bruno Latour; and in particular, Latour's alleged rejection of Cartesianism. Malm therefore ends up making an indirect contribution to our own project, as it is not primarily Malm's own position that attracts our attention, but rather the insights gained from his polemic against Latour.

Malm does not adhere to the Anthropocene narrative of our contemporary environmental situation as *transforming* the relation of man-nature. In fact, he identifies such claim as a widespread misconception amongst environmental philosophers. Much of contemporary thought, with Latour at the very forefront, seems to think that the intricate cobweb of society and nature has dissolved the once Cartesian dualism into a greater unity. The Anthropocene according to Malm – that is, indirectly, through his assessment of Latour – becomes a claim to the overthrow of *substance dualism*. Malm's response to this claim is twofold. **First**, he accuses the Latourian solution of *hybridism* of succumbing to the same

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[130] The positions of postmodernism, social constructivism and new materialism are represented by such figures like, Noel Castree, Bruno Latour, Steven Vogel, Graham Harman, Karen Barad, and Donna Haraway.

dualism that it originally sets out to defeat. The hybrid argument states that "*because natural and social phenomena have become compounds, the two cannot be differentiated* by any other means than violence. Being mixed means being one."[131] But such line of argument only makes sense to the extent that we presuppose the "social" and the "natural" as being originally two separate entities – that is, in Malm's rendition, Latour's rejection of Cartesianism also presupposes Cartesianism. The only tenable response, according to Malm, is instead to assume *substance monism* as the initial position – which means that we recognize mind and body as originating from the same "undifferentiated oneness."[132] Malm's justification for substance monism follows a traditional line of argument for the indefensible position of a dualistic metaphysics that is unable to account for the *causal interaction* of mind and body.[133]

Having dismissed the Latourian hybrid overthrow of Cartesianism, Malm nonetheless sees some value to the environmentalist narrative of a harmful dualism of man and nature: "It is there whenever someone thinks or behaves as though society need not care about what happens in nature, however much the body of nature may bleed – as though it could exist without it."[134] According to Malm, such harmful exploitation of nature is precisely the result of our long-held misconception of the human-nature relation as substance dualism. This environmental ignorance and self-deception present itself in "everything from neoclassical economics to climate change denial and sheer indifference to issues of ecology. […] To realize that there is an ecological crisis with great potential to affect humans is to break with substance dualism."[135]

Second, having established substance monism as foundation, Malm turns to his second objection to Latour. Although mind and body, society and environment, all emerge from the same original matter – the one substance – man and nature are simultaneously distinguished by a *property dualism*. This becomes Malm's own position of *historical materialism* – that is, substance monism coupled with property dualism. The argument is fairly straightforward. It "begins with the recognition that the brain is the seat of all mental occurrences."[136] Although all mental occurrences emerge from the brain as the material monistic foundation, the mental properties "cannot themselves be reduced to sheer materiality or equated with physical

[131] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 47.
[132] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 51.
[133] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 52.
[134] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 52.
[135] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 53.
[136] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 55.

components."[137] This is where Malm claims Latourian philosophy of nature to go astray. The *new materialism* of ascribing *agency* to nature itself entails the category mistake of applying mental properties – such as intentionality – to a material realm of neural connections, chemical reactions, and physical mechanism.[138]

The Latourian claim to the Anthropocene as an event that *politicizes* nature becomes for Malm a fundamental misunderstanding of our environmental situation. The meaning of environmental crisis resides not *within* the sphere of politics, nor within nature as such, but at the intersection of the man-nature relation.

> "Environmental destruction, including climate change, does not happen at the boundary between droplet and cloud, or between petal and flower, or stone and slope, shop steward and federation, municipality and the United Nation. It happens *right at the interface between society and nature*."[139]

If the Anthropocene is the name for our contemporary environmental situation, then it does not abolish the distinction between the mental sphere of man and the material sphere of nature. Quite the contrary, does the "ecological crises render the distinction between the social and the natural more essential than ever."[140] Environmental awareness is characterized by a recognition of our own dependence and supervenience on a nature that is fundamentally *different from ourselves*.

What can we learn from Malm and his critique of Latour? Malm does not offer an explicit interpretation of the Anthropocene, but he does present a version of *Cartesianism*, which he believes to be a main adversary position for several proponents of contemporary environmental philosophy. That is, he presents Latourian philosophy as trying to overcome substance dualism. In doing so, we now suggest that Malm is in fact misinterpreting both Latour and the meaning of Cartesianism as a relevant polemic position for the Anthropocenologist. However, Malm thereby also helps us to get one step closer in our own effort to unravel the meaning of the Anthropocene as an event of transformation. Beginning with Malm's interpretation of Latour, the objection to hybridism as implicitly maintaining a separation of a human and natural substance simply seems unfounded. Latour does not claim that man and

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[137] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 55.
[138] E.g., Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 57 & 85.
[139] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 71.
[140] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 61.

nature are one because of the growing interconnectedness of our environmental situation, but rather that the interconnectedness of our particular environmental situation has made it impossible to continue a long-held metaphysical misconception of Cartesian separation. Latour begins his book on the Anthropocene by addressing the problem of the very phrase "relation to the world" as presupposing "two sorts of domains, that of nature and that of culture"[141], and later experiments with alternative expressions of nature; for example, as that "Out-of-Which-We-Are-All-Born".[142]

However, even if we grant that Malm is right in his depiction of Latour as being a substance dualist in disguise, it does not really make any difference. According to the dominant Anthropocene narratives, the transformative event shaping our contemporary epoch entails a radical incorporation of normative categories into nature that was previously reserved for humans. If Cartesian separation is to serve as a relevant polemic position for the Anthropocenologists, it is not as substance dualism, but rather by claiming that certain concepts, features, and experiences are exclusively human. That is, if the Anthropocenologists rejects Cartesianism, it is in the form of *property dualism*. The incorporation of normative categories is not brought about by imposing our own anthropogenic traits to an opposing nature. Rather, nature manifests itself as the root cause for the normative meaning of our environmental situation. When Malm maintains property dualism as a categorical distinction between social and natural properties – and where the social ultimately supervenes on the natural – he ends up as a textbook example of the kind of conceptual demarcation that the Anthropocenologists claim to dissolve.

Overthrowing Cartesianism II: *Anthropocentrism*

Malm provides us with a depiction of the Anthropocene as a metaphysical event that overthrows Cartesianism – that is, indirectly, through his criticism of Latour. We suggest that Malm's objection to the Anthropocene, for implicitly invoking substance dualism, entails a misinterpretation of Latour. Malm's criticism is nonetheless helpful for our own inquiry into

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[141] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 15.
[142] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 159.

the metaphysical meaning of the Anthropocene because it accentuates a significant conceptual shift in the way the Anthropocenologists perceive nature. Properties, concepts, and ideas that has traditionally been restricted to a human or societal sphere now appear to be relevant for our depiction of nature itself. What Malm articulates as a transition from *property dualism to monism*, despite rejecting this transition himself, seems to speak to a significant feature in the Anthropocene narrative. Continuing and elaborating on this line of metaphysical interpretation, we now turn to Arne Johan Vetlesen and his book of 2019, *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*.

Vetlesen also invokes Descartes as a polemic figure, addressing a long-standing metaphysical misconception of nature, which he also believes to be a root cause of our acts of environmental destruction. Vetlesen's depiction of the Anthropocene is twofold. On the one hand, it represents an already far-reaching history of abusing and destroying nature, where Cartesianism becomes the main cosmology of oppression. On the other hand, the Anthropocene also represents a tipping point – as an environmental situation that forces us to abandon Cartesianism "and search for alternatives".[143] Cartesianism, according to Vetlesen, is synonymous with *anthropocentrism*, and his redeeming alternative cosmology is *panpsychism*. In order to understand Vetlesen's narrative for the Anthropocene as a transition from anthropocentrism to panpsychism, we must first inquire into the meaning of these two rivaling positions.

Beginning with anthropocentrism, Vetlesen presents this word with (at least) two different meanings. The **first** adheres to a standard depiction of placing *man at a normative center*. For example, as postulating that human beings are "superior to all other beings"; as *practices* that "are either exclusively or primarily preoccupied with *human* agents and their perceived interests and needs"; or as the instrumental valuation of non-humans as "mere means for human ends".[144] Vetlesen goes a long way in suggesting that this kind of anthropocentrism is one of the root causes of our current environmental predicament.[145] This claim connects to one of the major premises for his project of panpsychism; that despite the countless *theoretical* attempts to overthrow Cartesianism, Descartes's destructive legacy is nonetheless *preserved in practice* – a fact that has now become more evident than ever, by our contemporary state of

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[143] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 9.
[144] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 2.
[145] Vetlesen is not alone in making this claim. Allen Thompson writes: "If one had to summarize the history of environmental ethics in a single question, a good candidate would be: Is anthropocentrism the ideological source of our environmental problems?" Thompson, A. (2017), "Anthropocentrism – Humanity as Peril and Promise", page 77.

environmental crisis.[146] Vetlesen's own solution to our environmental crisis is therefore one that ultimately transcends theoretical inquiry, as he ends up postulating *animism as panpsychism in practice*.[147] Speaking to our initial question regarding the philosophical meaning of the Anthropocene, asking whether its transformative event is either metaphysical or naturalistically grounded, it is remarkable how Vetlesen not only sees the Anthropocene as effecting a radical change in our metaphysical conceptions of nature, but even more radically, that he identifies a metaphysical *origin* of our environmental crisis. That is, our own assumption is that the philosophical analysis of our new epoch is ultimately *detached* from the scientific concept of the Anthropocene, in the sense that the conceptual and normative transformation is not dependent on some scientifically discovered change in the historical dynamics of human activity and natural processes. Vetlesen, on the other hand, seems instead to accentuate the interdependence of metaphysics and historical development. But contrary to the naturalistic interpretation, he instead presents harmful metaphysical misconceptions as a significant conditioning factor for the scientific and historical development.[148]

The **second** meaning of anthropocentrism ties more directly into Vetlesen's own project of panpsychism. What is panpsychism, according to Vetlesen? We begin our answer to this question with a critical reservation. The multitude of concepts and ideas identified as "psyche" throughout *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene* – be it mind, soul, consciousness, feeling, experience, intelligence, reason, spontaneity, agency, purpose or value, to name a few[149] – are not presented in a manner that justifies the seemingly inherent claim of panpsychism, namely that some single unified *mental essence* lies at the core of both man and all things natural.[150] Not to mention the ambiguity that prevails in deciding whether "psyche" applies to being in general or only to biological life.[151] It therefore becomes tempting to reject the idea of panpsychism altogether, as it is presented in *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*. However, it is also possible to carry out a more conciliatory interpretation of Vetlesen's book. An

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[146] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page vi.
[147] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 162.
[148] In his earlier but thematically related book, *The Denial of Nature*, Vetlesen also writes that "a specific culture's view of nature accompanies or directly legitimates what in the real world amounts to a series of practices *outright destructive to that nature* […]" Vetlesen, A. J. (2015), *The Denial of Nature*, page 199f.
[149] For example: Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 1, 3, 67 and 94.
[150] In Vetlesen's book, Thomas Nagel become the most prominent advocate of such form of panpsychism. See Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 21.
[151] Vetlesen himself mentions this problem. See Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 11.

interpretation that does not understand the project of panpsychism as an attempt to be a grand unifying theory of everything, but instead as an intellectual inquiry of tentative attempts to re-animate our conceptions of nature with properties, qualities and traits that has long been reserved for our determination of human beings. Anthropocentrism in the second sense of Vetlesen's use of the word then becomes a form of *metaphysical discrimination* that restrict these properties to humans. This variation of Anthropocentrism is also equated with the *mechanistic* cosmology of Cartesianism, reducing nature to spatially extended matter, determined by mechanical relations, and thereby "fundamentally devoid of mental qualities".[152]

We have thus identified two variations of anthropocentrism qua Cartesianism in Vetlesen's book. The first places man at the normative center and the second deprives nature of "mental" properties. We will refer to the two variations as anthropocentrism of *normative primacy* and anthropocentrism of *mechanistic cosmology*.[153] To be clear, Vetlesen himself does not distinguish between these two variations. In fact, he appears to present the two meanings as being interchangeable. Even though his failure to acknowledge this conceptual distinction is worthy of criticism, I believe Vetlesen's reasons for doing so is that the overthrowing of anthropocentrism as normative primacy is contingent on the overthrowing of anthropocentrism as mechanistic cosmology. That is, in order for us to valuate nature *for its own sake*, we must first be able to ascribe nature with *normatively relevant properties*. We can therefore say that the two variations of Anthropocentrism correspond to the *normative* and *descriptive* component of Vetlesen's solution to our environmental situation.

Why do we draw attention to the twofold meaning of anthropocentrism? We do so because I believe that Vetlesen is right in his interpretation of the Anthropocene as overthrowing mechanistic cosmology, but I think he is wrong in stating that the Anthropocene represents a shift away from a conception of normative primacy for human beings. How so?

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[152] See Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 12.

[153] Allen Thompson separates between three different meanings of anthropocentrism: *Ontological*, *ethical*, and *conceptual*. (1) *Ontological anthropocentrism*, which bears some similarity to what we named anthropocentrism as *mechanistic cosmology*, states that "[…] it is by some appeal to human existence that all the rest of nature is to receive its proper explanation.". (2) *Ethical anthropocentrism*, which is a variation of our own concept of anthropocentrism as *normative primacy*, states that "human beings are morally superior to everything else in the natural order." And finally, (3) *conceptual anthropocentrism*, is "the idea that human beings can only comprehend the world from a characteristically human perspective – from within a human conceptual framework." As Thompson himself points out, this latter variation of anthropocentrism bears some resemblance to Kant's moral theory. However, as will become apparent in our own Heideggerian appropriation of Kantian ethics in parts three and four, the idea that human autonomous reason is foundational to our conception of morality does not thereby mean that morality is *centered on man*. See Thompson, A. (2017), "Anthropocentrism – Humanity as Peril and Promise", page 78-79.

Let us begin by presenting three arguments for why anthropocentrism as normative primacy of human beings does not adequately speak to the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene. The first two arguments are largely anecdotal, building up to the third, which addresses an underlying philosophical problem of the notion of anthropocentrism.

(**i**) There is no shortage of human practices and conceptions that demonstrate valuation of nature – for the sake of nature itself. Starting with the traditional environmentalist examples of wildlife and wilderness, using my own country of Norway as a frame of reference. Norwegians have a long history of partaking in recreational practices in the great outdoors. We go hiking, skiing, mountain climbing, scuba diving, sailing, bird watching, fishing, and hunting. Through such activities, a great segment of the Norwegian population has also acquired a natural inclination towards protecting and preserving wildlife and pristine nature. The environmentalist debates in mainstream Norwegian politics almost never question the legitimacy of valuating wildlife and wilderness in the first place, but typically revolve around technical issues of priority and tradeoffs with respect to competing practices of industry and infrastructure. Norwegian national identity is closely connected to a romantic imagery of our forests, mountains, fjords, glaciers, and river falls. Norwegians also demonstrate a multitude of non-instrumental practices with domesticated animals, such as pets, horses for riding, and dogs or reindeer for sledding. To claim that all these practices, relations, conceptions and institutions mentioned adheres to an oppressive devaluation of nature itself seems (at best) to be gravely inaccurate.

(**ii**) Many human activities are also *anti-humanistic*. Vetlesen presents environmentalism through an oversimplified dichotomy where human practices are either *anthropocentric*, being beneficial for man but potentially harmful for nature, or *ecocentric*, acting from the perceived value and benefit of nature itself. Such narrative seems to miss the basic point that many of the activities and practices that are either neutral or harmful to nature – that is, practices that reflect a non-ecocentric normative concern – are also doing great harm to human beings. Vetlesen himself is also known in the Norwegian public debate for his criticism of *neoliberalism* – as the dominant ideology of our contemporary political reality, which he suggests is responsible for the harm done both to the environment and to societal institutions of the welfare state.[154] That is, reducing both man and nature to instrumental

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[154] See Vetlesen, A. J. (2015), *The Denial of Nature*; and Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), "Hva er det med den norske høyresiden og nyliberalismen?".

measures of economic efficiency and profit. However, an even more conspicuous example of non-ecocentric practices that are also doing harm to humans is *environmental destruction*. Greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, extinction of species and eradication of ecosystems hardly fits the dichotomy of anthropocentric versus ecocentric. As we have already alluded to above, the perhaps most important insight to the Anthropocene narrative seems precisely to be that the destruction of nature is simultaneously doing harm to ourselves. Hamilton's conclusion from this recognition is that our long-held practices have in fact not been *anthropocentric enough*. In doing so, he simultaneously reinterprets "anthropocentrism" as entailing that we take responsibility for the Earth System.[155] In contrast to Vetlesen's polemic notion of anthropocentrism, we thus suggest that the transformative event of the Anthropocene is not a shift away from man, but rather a reconceptualization which dissolves the distinction between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.

(**iii**) Is it possible to make a more principled objection to the dichotomy of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, which ultimately speaks to the distinction between man and nature itself? To the extent that there exists something like a Cartesian legacy, which makes us think about nature in a manner where human beings are placed at the normative center, then Vetlesen's solution seems to be that we should introduce nature as an *additional* center of normative concern. The question we now want to ask is whether a more adequate manner of response is to dissolve the dichotomy altogether. Heidegger's explicit polemic against Descartes in *Being and Time* brings about a rearticulation of the human subject as *Dasein* – that is, as a being whose existential concern (*Sorge*) is fundamentally *out there* in the world. The phenomenological basis of human beings – the opening of a world of normative concerns – is fundamentally the openness of nature itself.[156] Thus, for Heidegger, to be *authentically* anthropocentric is in fact to be ecocentric. Vetlesen's notion of anthropocentrism, on the other hand, seems to presuppose a human subject, or a collective society of human subjects, whose normative concerns are ultimately detached from the concerns of its natural surroundings. In fact, we could suggest that Vetlesen's notion of anthropocentrism as normative primacy presupposes something like a Cartesian subject. The philosophical idea of the Anthropocene,

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[155] Hamilton, C (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 42.
[156] At least in partial support of our claim, Trish Glazebrook writes: "Given that mainstream environmental philosophy stalled over the anthropocentric/ecocentric debate, Heidegger's real contribution to ecophenomenology may be not what he brings to specific issues, but that he makes possible new approaches." Glazebrook, T (2016), "Heidegger and Environmental Philosophy", page 435.

on the other hand, seems rather to be in line with the Heideggerian attempt of dissolving Cartesian dualism, rather than to replace man's position as a normative center with nature. Notably, this aspect of the Anthropocene is not completely lost on Vetlesen, but he seems unwilling to embrace it. Here is his comment on Latour:

> "There is something paradoxical about Latour's approach. On the one hand, he shares with posthumanism a thoroughgoing critique of anthropocentrism in theory and practice and of the hubris that goes with viewing humans as superior, even unique, in everything to do with agency. On the other hand, he theorizes the agency that is now visible, and dramatically, operative in the "behavior" exhibited by the Earth in purely human-centered terms, as if humans and their way of understanding what is happening in the Anthropocene are the only thing that matters".[157]

We can offer no decisive arguments against Vetlesen's claim that what Latour ultimately represents is a relapse to traditional anthropocentrism. And as already stated, we do also in fact concede to Vetlesen's criticism, by admitting that there is a problematic ambiguity regarding the status of human subjectivity at the heart of the Anthropocene idea. But in dismissing Latour and other Anthropocenologists, in their proposal of a radical reimagination of the relationship between human subjectivity and our normative concern for nature, we now suggest that Vetlesen is missing out of a greater philosophical potential. It is also possible to attribute Latour with a line of thinking that is far more radical than what is granted by Vetlesen. Latour does not make any distinction between the normative concern of the agency of man and the normative concern of the agency of nature, precisely because he believes the Anthropocene to make such a distinction obsolete.

Coming to a conclusion on Vetlesen and his critique of anthropocentrism, we suggest the following: Anthropocentrism, as giving normative primacy to man, does not adequately address the state of our environmental crisis, and is consequently neither something to be overthrown by the Anthropocene. In fact, the very opposite realization that the destruction of nature is the destruction of ourselves, so that a concern for the environment becomes simultaneously *our* concern, seems to be a fundamental feature of the Anthropocene narrative. But even though we suggest that Vetlesen is out of touch with the Anthropocenologists when he pushes for an overthrow of anthropocentrism as normative primacy, we also suggest that he is right when claiming that our environmental situation has made it impossible to uphold a

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[157] See e.g., Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 213.

Cartesian cosmology of mechanism – that is, a metaphysics which deprives nature of its *normative properties*, be it mind, experience, feeling, value, meaning or whatever. In fact, this seems to be a strength to Vetlesen's book in comparison with the other Anthropocenologists. As Hamilton, Latour, Purdy, Davies, Bonneuil & Fressoz, all seem largely contempt in merely claiming that nature has now become saturated with a moral and political meaning, Vetlesen helps us accentuate the radical metaphysical (or *cosmological*) implications of these claims, so that the decisive task for the Anthropocenologists now becomes to develop a new metaphysics for the Anthropocene.

Reinstating Nature as a System of Meaning

The critical review of both Malm and Vetlesen have led us to conclude that the dethronement of Cartesian metaphysics corresponds to the *integration of certain properties into nature which modern Western thought has traditionally ascribed to an exclusively human sphere of normativity*. And that in doing so, we have also opened our analysis up to a radical investigation into the relationship between man and nature itself. In continuation of this train of thought, we now seek to elaborate on the meaning of the normative properties of nature. We have already touched upon the idea of the Anthropocene as *moralizing* or *politicizing* nature, as for example through the incorporation into nature of such traits as *value*, *agency*, *autonomy*, *defiance*, *instability,* and *chaos*. Some of the Anthropocenologists, like Hamilton, Latour, and Bonneuil & Fressoz, also suggest a radical reinterpretation of *necessity and freedom*, and we hinted that this reinterpretation will prove central for our own final metaphysical interpretation that is to come. Malm identifies normative meaning as a specific property of monistic substances, whereas Vetlesen seems to approach the problem from a broader conception of panpsychism and animism. However, in our effort to broaden the analysis of nihilism and normative meaning, which thereby also exceeds the analyses of Malm and Vetlesen, we now ask whether the overthrowing of nihilism in the Anthropocene also represents a radical reconceptualization of normativity itself, going beyond the *value of individual things*, and looking instead to the normative significance of *nature as a whole*. That is, can we offer a more adequate depiction of the Anthropocene if we shift our emphasis from existent entities and their individual properties, looking instead at the organization of all things according to a unified *system of meaning*?

If nihilism is the absence of normative meaning, we now suggest a shift in emphasis from the properties or traits of a single thing or individual, to the *relational organization* of existent entities according to some *totality* in which they belong. But how can normativity reside in the organized state of things? If descriptivity refers to an account of *what is*, then normativity puts being itself into question. For example, when describing a chair as having four legs, we simultaneously take for granted the existence of both the chair and its legs – be it as the *actual* presence of the chair, standing on the kitchen floor, or as a *hypothetical* existence, conceived in our imagination. However, when asking whether I *should* sit on the chair, I question the very *being or non-being of my state of sitting*. If we now define *meaning* as the organization of things according to some totality, then meaning becomes normative to the extent that the continued preservation of this organizational whole is somehow *at stake*. That is, the normativity of meaning is a relational property that speaks to the innermost existential possibility of continuing and destroying its own state of organization.

This definition no doubt brings our analysis of nihilism and normativity into a more foreign territory of thought, but can it nonetheless serve to illuminate the meaning of the Anthropocene? We began part one with a brief account by Grinevald and Hamilton on the Anthropocene origin as a scientific concept. Among its central features was the approach to nature as a unitary *Earth system*, and the perceived totality of anthropogenic impacts on planetary ecosystems, processes, and mechanisms.[158] And the idea of nature as a system has also become a recurring theme for the philosophical debate. As Hamilton writes:

> "Instead of old ideas of nature, we inhabit the Earth System, that is the planet, taken as a whole, in a constant state of movement, driven by interconnected cycles and forces, from its core out to the atmosphere and beyond to the Moon, and powered by the flow of the energy of the Sun."[159]

Hamilton's account of this new conception of Earth as an interconnected system brings our thought back to an older distinction, between nature as an aggregate of *mechanistic* forces, actions and reactions, and nature as an *organic* whole. That is, the relationship of things in the Earth system bears a similarity to the interdependence of limbs and organs in an organic body. And as the organic parts depends on the integrity of the organism as a whole, so too does the

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[158] Hamilton, C. et al. (2015), "Thinking the Anthropocene", page 2 & 3.
[159] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 50.

limits of the Earth System represent the very limit to nature itself, and consequently the end of humanity. When Hamilton speaks of environmental responsibility, it is for the preservation of the Earth system, in the sense that the nature is grounded on the continued existence of this unified meaning. Hamilton also depicts the Earth system as a *defiant* Earth, in need of human appeasement. This act of anthropomorphization is brought even further by Latour and Bonneuil & Fressoz, by the introduction of *Gaia*. Echoing Hamilton's notion of the *antinomy of the Anthropocene* – the paradoxical situation where man is both the dominant geological power, and the victim of a defiant nature more empowered than ever – the notion of Gaia accentuates the Janus-face of nature as organizer. That is, as both the divine and chthonic originator of the Earth System, Gaia manifests our own dependence on a nature, whose meaning is not only grounded beyond ourselves, but simultaneously at stake of destruction.

The depiction of Gaia as originator of the Earth system is a conceptual transformation which also translates into a normative meaning of nature. This is perhaps most explicitly expressed by Latour. In response to the traditional dichotomy of man and nature, Latour makes a claim to a third *common core* "that distributes features between the first two."[160] He also refers to this common core with terms like "world" or "worlding" – "which opens to the multiplicity of *existents*, on the one hand, and to the *multiplicity* of ways they have of exiting, on the other."[161] As the originator of man, culture, history and nature – that is, as a multiplicity of ways to be in the world – Gaia, according to Latour, is inherently normative:

> "Now, we begin to spot this common core as soon as we take an interest in expressions such as "acting in keeping with one's nature," or in the classic line about living "according to one's *true* nature." It isn't hard, here, to detect the *normative dimension* of such expressions, since they purport to orient all existence according to a model of life that obliges us to choose between false and true ways of being in the world. In this case, the normative power that one would expect to find rather on the "culture" side turns out to be clearly imputed, on the contrary, to the "nature" side of the twofold concept."[162]

As a final example of the Anthropocene as a shift towards a form of environmental normativity that is centered on nature as a whole, as opposed to its individual parts, we look to the holistic perspective that is arguably gained when Vetlesen puts *experience* as the grounding component

[160] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 19.
[161] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 35.
[162] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 20.

of nature. His second chapter on panpsychism, centered on the *"inner physics" of Alfred North Whitehead*, is by far the most interesting part of Vetlesen's book on the cosmologies of the Anthropocene. The thing that Vetlesen now identifies as "psyche", is not consciousness but *experience*, which he claims to be the most primordial phenomena of the two.[163] Experience becomes Vetlesen's main contender for his theoretical dethronement of Cartesian cosmology of mechanism. Nature is no aggregate of "simple locations", that is, as the abstract reality of "simple self-identity […] bared of anything that involves its spatio-temporal relations with anything else besides itself."[164] Rather, through the unity of experience, space-time is transformed into "'a system of pulling together of assemblages into unities'".[165] The basic matter of this experience is not cognition nor thought, *but* feeling, and it is through Whitehead's *critique of pure feeling* that Vetlesen sees the potential of a non-anthropocentric sense of normativity.

Coming to a conclusion we ask once again – in what sense does the Anthropocene entail an overthrow of nihilism? We suggest that the normative meaning of nature does not reside in the properties of the individual things, but instead in the manner through which all individual things are organized according to a unified system. There is an undeniable holistic perspective set by the Anthropocene narrative. For starters, simply from the fact that "man" and "nature" are brought together into a greater unity. The environmental normativity of the Anthropocene demonstrates an imperative to uphold and preserve this unity. The overcoming of nihilism is therefore not the successful ascription of normative properties to a nature that is initially devoid of normative meaning. Rather, nihilism is conquered by coming to an awareness of the normative meaning that has already been there, lurking dormant in the background. It now comes to our awareness because the environmental situation of our new epoch has revealed the grounding meaning of man and nature to be *at stake*.

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[163] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 75.
[164] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 71.
[165]Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene*, page 73.

The Imperative of Responsibility

The normative meaning of the Anthropocene is inherently connected to a sense of responsibility. The concept itself carries several different facets, resulting in different ways to represent the normative significance of our new epoch. In this subchapter, we will present three different variations. (**i**) The perhaps most straightforward definition of responsibility also mirrors the initial scientifically grounded concept of the Anthropocene. To be responsible is *to be the cause*. We hold a person responsible for the *effects* of his actions, or of his failure to act. By incorporating "Anthropos" into our geological, climatological, ecological, or otherwise determination of nature, we identify man as the *predominant cause* of our contemporary environmental situation. One of the recurring questions in the philosophical literature on the Anthropocene is to ask *who* the "Anthropos" represents. In short, asking who is to blame. An adequate response, according to Bonneuil & Fressoz, "demand a differentiated view of humanity, not just for the sake of historical truth, or to assess the responsibility of the past, but also to pursue future policies that are more effective and more just".[166] Bonneuil & Fressoz's book represents one of the more comprehensive attempts to inquire into the *who* of the Anthropos, and the different practices, institutions and grammars that has caused our current environmental predicament. In doing so, they go a long way in suggesting that any attempt to attribute responsibility to humankind as a single homogenous entity, quickly breaks down once we take into account the great differences and inequalities that follow historical periods, regional and state borders, varieties of culture, ethnicity, level of industrial development, and economic class.

(**ii**) The word "responsibility" comes from the Latin *respondere*, which means to *answer*. If the first perspective on responsibility identifies the *cause* of our environmental situation, then the second addresses the manner of our *response*, given the recognition of our own causal liability. According to a standard environmentalist narrative, we would say that the choice of response must be *informed* by science and technology, and consequently *reviewed and resolved* through politics. That is, science presents us with a problem; technology informs us about the possibilities and limits in our ability to provide a solution; and politics evaluates

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[166] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 71.

the solutions available in the greater societal context of conflicting interests, opinions, and values.

A prevalent feature of traditional environmental philosophy is its proclivity to antagonize science and technology. This proclivity sometimes seems self-defeating, because modern environmentalism itself is at its core informed by science and technology. For example, the environmentalist struggle to *sustainable* economic and material growth, or even *degrowth*, usually presuppose comprehensive scientific and technical understanding of the environmental harms of our economic and material practices. In contrast to this anti-scientific and anti-technological feature of traditional environmentalism, the Anthropocene debate carries a breath of fresh air, as it largely evades criticism of science and technology, focusing instead on the philosophical implications of anthropogenic impact on nature that has been uncovered by science. However, a fraction in the environmentalist debate who do seem to reoccur as an antagonist in the Anthropocene literature are the infamous and unscrupulous advocates of geo-engineering – the *ecomodernists*.[167] This group of thinkers has become the standard go-to example on the imminent danger of *hubris*, when turning environmentalism into a response of technological ingenuity and management.[168] Regardless of whether the ecomodernists deserve this criticism, or if they have undeservingly been reduced to a cheap strawman, this objection also translates into a more general point regarding the nature of our responsibility. For the appropriate response in the Anthropocene is not simply willful resolve and courage, but also *humility* for a human state of inadequacy and vulnerability in the face of nature and environmental crisis.

We find a refreshingly novel take on the problem of environmental hubris by Steven Vogel. His recent and most thought-provoking book, *Thinking like a Mall*, connects contemporary environmental philosophy with his earlier work on the concept of nature according to *Critical Theory* and the Frankfurt School.[169] At the heart of Vogel's analysis lies a claim to social constructivism and the concept of *built environment*.[170] There has been no

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[167] See Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015), *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*. For examples of criticism, see Northcott, M (2015), "Eschatology in the Anthropocene", page 104; Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth – The Fate of Human son the Anthropocene*, page 23; and Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 81.

[168] E.g., by Clive Hamilton. See Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 23.

[169] Vogel, S. (2015). *Thinking like a Mall – Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*. Vogel, S. (1996). *Against Nature – The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*.

[170] Vogel, S. (2015). *Thinking like a Mall – Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*, page 43.

shortage of criticism of Vogel's claim to a socially constructed environment, rendering the very concept of nature obsolete.[171] For what social practice, we may ask, has built the ocean or the mountain? But Vogel's fundamental argument against the notion of an independent nature takes us directly into a core insight of the Anthropocene. The inescapable and uncontrollable *wildness* or *otherness*, which has traditionally served to identify "nature" as opposed to "man", is according to Vogel *equally* present in socially and technologically manufactured things – such as the City Center Mall in Columbus, Ohio.[172] If the foremost virtue of traditional environmentalism has been to *let* the wildness of wilderness *be* – as with McKibben, Katz and Elliot – Vogel now integrates this wildness into our own constructed artifacts. The result according to Vogel is a reciprocal relation of *responsibility and humility* – the two most important environmental virtues of our own time.[173] Even though our contemporary situation reveals that all things "natural" are fully submerged within our social practices, it is still an act of unredeeming hubris to assume that the wildness of our built environments has been tamed.

Although Hamilton is no social constructivist, he largely mirrors Vogel's coupling of responsibility and humility, as his notion on the *antinomy of the Anthropocene* accentuates our twofold environmental situation, where man is simultaneously a dominant geopower and subjected to the system of a defiant Earth. Equally so with Latour, who on the one side incorporates all things of nature into the domain of political discourse and decision-making, while simultaneously introducing the chthonic power of Gaia into the heart of the Earth system. If the specific environmental problems and technical solutions of the Anthropocene are laid out by natural science, it seems to be the role of philosophical interpretation to inquire into the fundamental *insights, attitudes and virtues* that determine our manner of response. To act out responsibly in the Anthropocene is not merely a matter of control and dominance, but equally so to internalize our fundamental *dependence* on environments that often violently overthrows our expectations. The Anthropocene does not annihilate unruly otherness. But instead of making otherness into a line of demarcation between nature and all things human, the Anthropocene seems instead to incorporate our awareness of otherness into the responsible acts of our own anthropogenically manufactured environmental situation.

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[171] E.g., Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 34-36.
[172] Vogel, S. (2015). *Thinking like a Mall – Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*, page 112-115.
[173] Although *Thinking Like a Mall* was published at a time of peak hype for the Anthropocene debate, Vogel does not explicitly address our new epoch. When nonetheless choosing to include Vogel among the Anthropocenologists, it is because his environmental philosophy touches on many of the same themes, including his concept of responsibility.

(**iii**) In presenting the meaning of responsibility as *providing an answer*, we have in fact paved way for an additional distinction. To answer is to *respond to a call*. As we have accentuated in the second point above, this response can mean that we *act out* in a manner that is fitting or required by a given situation. However, an even more fundamental way to look at responsibility, is regard the response to a situation as simply the *coming to awareness of the call given*. That is, to *recognize what is at stake*. This turns the concept of responsibility into a state of *pure contemplation*, which arguably precedes our ability to act.[174] In omitting this order of precedence, we lose touch with an important element of responsibility. For if we reduce the phenomenon of responsibility to the specific *actions* carried out in response to a given situation, then we end up unable to distinguish between responsibility as an important environmental *virtue*, and the mere automated reactions of a thoughtless actor.[175] To take responsibility for our environmental situation means above all else to *acknowledge a state of crisis*, and that the continued state, development or destruction of our environments are *contingent on* our anthropogenic practices. Latour writes:

> "we have to return to apocalyptic language, we have to become present again to the situation of terrestrial rootedness, and this no longer has anything to do, as you will have understood, with a return to (or respect for) "nature." To become sensitive – that is, to feel our responsibility, and thus to turn back on our own action – we have to position ourselves, through a set of totally artificial steps, *as though we were at the End of Time*"[176]

For Latour, environmental responsibility also becomes a sense of *eschatological awareness*, which preconditions our ability for action. Hamilton calls for a "pre-ethical sense of responsibility", which acknowledges our collective embeddedness in nature – that is, making way for the *feeling* of an "inescapable responsibility that comes with the unique and extraordinary place of humankind on planet Earth."[177] This way of understanding responsibility – that is, as the answering of a call, thoughtfully recognizing our environmental situation – speaks directly to the radical significance of the Anthropocene as overthrowing nihilism. For a

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[174] On a similar note, Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "Human existence displays an intrinsic capacity for ethical responsibility, construed as a primal, ekstatic openness-to-others-that-matters. Such responsiveness to others is the existential source of obligation, consciousness, and guilt, which generate the *claim* of ethics." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 196.

[175] Latour makes a similar accusation of Donna Haraway and her concept of *response-ability*. See Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 29.

[176] Latour, B. (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 213.

[177] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 149.

long time, traditional environmental philosophy has widely occupied itself with theoretical attempts to ascribe intrinsic value to a nature which is initially perceived to be without normative meaning. In the Anthropocene state of crisis, on the other hand, our acute sense of environmental responsibility is grounded by a normative meaning made manifest by nature itself. That is, the normative meaning of nature no longer becomes an intellectual *problem to solve*, but instead a *fact that confronts us*. As Hamilton writes on responsibility: "Such orientation arise not from obligations to other humans (as in all conventional ethics), which is to say, not from the realm of freedom as such; it arises out of an understanding of freedom emerging from nature as-a-whole."[178] The Anthropocene entails the overthrow of nihilism, not because philosophers have finally been successfully in developing an environmental ethics, but because we now stand *faced with an imperative of responsibility*, demanding our attention, which originates from the very foundation of our environmental situation.[179]

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[178] Hamilton, C. (2017), *Defiant Earth*, page 149.

[179] In choosing the phrase "imperative of responsibility", it is likely that the reader may think of Hans Jonas and his book, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (1984). And surely could this book have been of great relevance for this dissertational project. For not only is Jonas greatly influenced by Martin Heidegger, but one could also argue that this very book sets the stage for modern (German) environmentalism. However, the present use of the notion of an imperative of responsibility foreshadows an altogether different intellectual pathway, namely a Heideggerian environmental thought unfolded in a *Kantian system of metaphysics*. More specifically, it will be the aim of the coming parts (three and four) to utilize Kant's analysis of *moral responsibility* and the *categorical imperative* for our own environmental metaphysics.

4. The Historical Meaning of the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene originates as a suggested geological epoch. That is, as a historical classification of nature according to a geological timeline – partitioned by eons, eras, periods, epochs, and ages. The epoch of the Anthropocene, if it is implemented, is to replace the now 12,000-year-old running Holocene. The time of transition is suggested to be at some point during the 19th century. The Anthropocene Working Group, established in 2009 as part of the International Commission on Stratigraphy, has yet to make their conclusion on the implementation of the new epoch. As a scientific concept, the Anthropocene represents a historical determination of nature. In the present chapter, we question the *historical meaning* of the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept.

Bonneuil & Fressoz presents three main *stages* for the Anthropocene narrative. The first stage begins with the industrial revolution and ends with the Second World War. The second stage is the "Great Acceleration" after 1945. And the third stage corresponds to the "growing awareness of human impact on the global environment" around the year 2000.[180] There is a significant difference between the first two and the final stage. Whereas stage one and two represents *past material change* in nature due to human activity, the third stage corresponds to

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[180] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 50f.

a *conceptual and normative awakening in our contemporary environmental understanding*. Bonneuil & Fressoz thereby seem to invoke two significantly different ways of understanding the historical meaning of the Anthropocene. This twofold meaning, we will now argue, becomes relevant for our distinction between a naturalistic and metaphysical interpretation.

We have framed our inquiry into the Anthropocene literature by distinguishing between a naturalistic and metaphysical interpretation of our new epoch. That is, asking to what extent the conceptual and normative transformation presented in the philosophical concept is dependent on some scientific description of anthropogenic change in nature. We now turn to the explicit *temporal component* of this interpretative framework, asking about the historical meaning of the Anthropocene as an *epochal event*. The scientific concept of the Anthropocene clearly demonstrates a historical meaning, interlinking the lineages of geological and human development. But to what extent is this historical depiction mirrored by the philosophical analysis? A naturalistic interpretation would entail that the philosophical claims to a conceptual and normative transformation is *only valid at a point in time after a scientifically determined event of historical transition*. Whereas a metaphysical interpretation would imply that the philosophical claims are ultimately independent from the historical developments of human interaction with nature. But what then, would be the historical significance of the Anthropocene? Can we conceive of an altogether metaphysical meaning of history?

There is no doubt that also the philosophical analysis attributes an historical meaning to the Anthropocene as a transformative event. Beginning with Malm and Latour, both these thinkers claim that our current environmental situation has reinstated man and nature into a broader context of historical development. Paradoxically, as this coincidence of opinion is based on the two contradicting narratives of overcoming postmodernity and modernity. Malm begins his book by accusing *postmodernism* of having lost touch with our historical situatedness, referencing Fredric Jameson's diagnosis of postmodernism as the "predominance of space over time".[181] The *storm* of our current climate change crisis is for Malm the environmental situation where history and nature is "falling down on society"[182]:

> "We are only in the very early stages, but already our daily lives, our psychic experience, our cultural responses, even our politics show signs of being sucked back

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[181] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 1.
[182] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 15.

into past and future alike. Postmodernity seems to be visited by its antithesis: a condition of time and nature conquering ever more space."[183]

Malm calls this the *warming condition* of our contemporary situation of emerging environmental awareness. Latour on the other hand – which according to Malm is the chief postmodernist of contemporary environmental philosophy – presents more or less the same argument, but now as an event that overthrows *modernity*: "The Anthropocene, because it dissolves the very thought of the Globe viewed from afar, brings history back to the center of attention."[184] Another notable similarity between Malm and Latour is that neither of them seem to attribute this transformation in historical perception to some underlying cause of anthropogenic change in nature. That is, even though both regard their respective philosophies as scientifically grounded, the *a-historic* ideologies reflected in either "postmodernity" (Malm) or "modernity" (Latour) are instead presented as long-held metaphysical misconceptions, now made impossible to maintain by the current environmental crisis. The conceptual transformation does not reflect a new material reality. The scientific discovery of anthropogenic impact on nature has instead accentuated a historical meaning that has 'always' been true, irrespective of any recent historical developments.

We have already introduced Davies' account of the Anthropocene and the notion of *deep geological time* in the chapter on environmental destruction. In this depiction, Davies offers in fact two variations on the historical meaning of the Anthropocene. On the one hand, he presents the idea of replacing *gradualism* by *neocatastrophism* in our depiction of the geological development of planet earth.[185] History is thereby nothing more than the transpiring of *past events and transitions*, in a temporal lineage which ultimately extends far beyond the scope of human history. On the other hand, Davies also presents this scope of deep geological time as a new paradigm for understanding our contemporary environmental situation. We attributed something like the emergence of an *eschatological awareness* to Davies's theory, incorporating our historical knowledge of past crises and catastrophes as a conceptual outlook of the present.

Purdy's approach to the Anthropocene is developed by a meticulous reading of the development of different *imaginations* of nature throughout American history. His argument is

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[183] Malm, A. (2018), *The Progress of this Storm – Nature and Society in a Warming World*, page 11.
[184] Latour, B (2017), *Facing Gaia – Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, page 138.
[185] Davies, J. (2016), *The Birth of the Anthropocene*, page 29.

similar to Davis in that they both place historical awareness at the center of environmentalism, but the conclusions drawn from Purdy's analysis are metaphysically far more radical. Davies takes the objective validity of the geological determination of earth's historical development as an indisputable fact, serving as a premise for our contemporary environmental awareness of historically situatedness. An ontological primacy is thus given to past events and transitions, in the sense that our contemporary environmental situation gains historical meaning *only because* of the preconditioning fact of deep geological time. For Purdy, on the other hand, it is ultimately not the *content* of the imaginations themselves that serve as the ultimate ground for our historical awareness. He does not attribute primacy to any specific way of determining nature. That is, the *ecological* imagination is no truer than the *utilitarian*, but simply the cultural product of another time. The real historical insight gained by the Anthropocene is instead the *contingency* of our imaginations. That is, that our contemporary state of perpetual economic, political, and ecological crisis reveals a fundamental *vulnerability in our conceptions of nature*.

The historical component in the philosophical analyses of our new epoch given by all the Anthropocenologists referenced above holds a conceptual distinction. In the first sense, "history" refers to our knowledge of past developments and transitions, *looking back in time*. But in the second sense, it refers to some form of temporal awareness internalized in our understanding of contemporary affairs, *looking forward in time*. In some cases, this distinction becomes trivial, because the temporal awareness internalized in the second sense is simply the historical knowledge in the first sense. This seems to be true of Malm and Davis's account. But in other cases, the relationship between the first and the second sense of history becomes far more ambiguous. This seems true of at least Latour and Purdy. The question that now confronts us is whether we can give an account of the temporal awareness in the environmentalism of the Anthropocene which is ultimately detached from our knowledge of past events and transitions. That is, can we give an entirely metaphysical account of historical awareness? This is a question that is arguably insinuated, intentional or not, by several Anthropocenologists, but which is never fully addressed. In the effort to develop a matching metaphysical conception of history, we must now leave the Anthropocene literature behind.

Representational History and Awareness of Historical Situatedness

All the philosophers referenced above depict the Anthropocene as an event which somehow promotes or amplifies our historical awareness. But in doing so, they also reveal a fundamental ambiguity in the very notion of history. We shall now inquire into this ambiguity, introducing two different concepts of history. We will refer to these two concepts as *representational history* and *awareness of historical situatedness*.[186] The fundamental ambiguity lies not in the conceptual distinction itself, but in our understanding of the relationship between them. Why is this ambiguity relevant? The task of part one in this dissertation is to develop a metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene. In the current chapter, our task is to show that this metaphysical interpretation extends to the very meaning of history itself. It is in the interest to carry out this task that the ambiguous relationship between our two concepts of history become relevant. We will begin this subchapter with two separate introductions of (i) representational history and (ii) awareness of historical situatedness. We then proceed by inquiring into awareness of historical situatedness as either (iii) contingent on representational history, or as (iv) a condition for the possibility of representational history. In the next and final subchapter, we will use our newly developed concept of awareness of historical situatedness to present the metaphysical meaning of the Anthropocene as an epochal event.

(**i**) Representational history *represents* the temporal development of something – for example of man, nature, or the cosmos – according to a *story*. This story is determined as events and transitions according to *points* on a historical *timeline*, typically represented by the partitioning of a temporal axis. This representation is *abstract*, in the sense that it detaches our temporal understanding from the immediate experience of the present moment, providing instead a notion of history that juxtaposes past, present, and future in an infinite timeline of unprivileged successions of events. The paradigmatic example of representational history is given by the historical sciences. However, this does not mean that representational history is only an object of scientific inquiry. For example, if I choose to reflect back on my own life, organizing the events that has shaped my personal development, throughout the span of my

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[186] The concept of "historical situatedness" is based on Heidegger's concept of *historicity – Geschichtlichkeit –* which foreshadows my use of Heidegger's philosophy in the parts and chapters to come. So why do I insist on using my own neologism in this chapter? Because I want to present a general argument regarding the metaphysical meaning of history that does not rely on the philosophical connotations already associated with the concept of historicity.

childhood and early adulthood, I too invoke conceptions of representational history, albeit without the scientific rigor of an academic historian. The scientific concept of the Anthropocene also represents nature according to representational history – identifying the specific *point in time* which terminates the Holocene; and the specific *mechanisms, processes, and systems* that has gone into this transition.

(**ii**) In addressing our *awareness of historical situatedness* we begin with the meaning of the last two words of the concept. *Historical situatedness* refers to the supposed fact that any contemporary situation is contingent on *its place in history*. Obvious examples of such contingency would be the ways in which our present-day situation is determined by recent historical developments of science, technology, medicine, industry, infrastructure, and communication. The scientific concept of the Anthropocene adds to this perspective, accentuating how anthropogenic impact on nature has become a dominant factor in shaping our present-day environmental situation. A more elusive yet still fundamental aspect of our historical situatedness speaks to our *hermeneutical* situation. That is, articulating our historical situatedness as a set of commonly shared concepts, ideas, norms, values, and practices – factors that have gradually developed for decades, centuries, or even millennia, and which now shape the way we understand ourselves and the world we live in.

If the examples above serve to illustrate the meaning of the *partial* concept of historical situatedness, as the supposed fact that our contemporary situation is contingent on its place in history, then the *complete* concept no longer refers to the mere *fact* of this contingence, but instead to our *awareness of this* fact. That is, that human thought, which is usually and for the most part centered on the current affairs of every-day life, is for some reason brought to reflect on the *historical origin* of its present situation. The awareness of historical situatedness represents the simple yet *fundamental recognition that our very existence is historical in nature*. By making our awareness the center of attention for a concept of historical contingence, we reveal an ambiguity in the relationship between historical situatedness and representational history. How so? Despite the seemingly trivial nature of the examples given above, on the ways in which past events has affected our present situation, it is not clear that our coming to awareness of our historical situatedness is itself a product of our knowledge of representational history. On the contrary, it is also possible to think that our ability to inquire into past events and transitions reflects a form of historical meaning which precedes representational history.

(**iii**) In what sense does the present moment contain a historical meaning? That is, how do we come to acquire an awareness of our historical situatedness? In asking this question, we confront the ambiguous relationship between representational history and our awareness of

historical situatedness. The first and seemingly most obvious way to answer this question, is to say that we gain an awareness of our historical origin by *relating the immediate presence of our contemporary situation back to representational history*. That is, we come to see our contemporary situation as an *historical moment of the present*, because we relate the present moment to a perceived temporal succession of past, present, and future. By placing our contemporary situation within this greater context of representational history, we reveal the *contingency* of the present moment. By "contingency", we mean the non-necessity of our contemporary situation. That is, that the things we take for granted in the present moment did not exist before and could be long gone tomorrow. For example, when inquiring into the bygone days of our ancestors – their struggles and accomplishments – we are reminded of the *transitory status* of our own lives. When investigating into the kingdoms and empires of ancient times, we also come to acknowledge the *impermanence* of our current political, economic, and military superpowers.

A significant trait reflected in this first way to understand our awareness of historical situatedness is that we attribute *epistemic primacy* to representational history. That is, implying that we can assign historical meaning to our immediate presence *only because* we already possess knowledge of representational history. This way of determining our awareness of historical situatedness should resonate with the standard depiction of the Anthropocene. Our environmental situation becomes the *historical epoch of man*, because we relate the present-day moment to a theoretical representation of a shared temporal lineage of human and natural development, and the significant anthropogenic impacts on nature (geological, climatological, or ecological) that has occurred in some limited section of time leading up to the present moment. This accentuates the contingency of our environmental situation. *In relation to the past*, in that human activity has become the dominant causal factor of nature's historical development. *In relation to the future*, in that the onwards trajectory of man and nature is not set, and that we are therefore faced with an imperative of responsibility for our role in this continued historical development.

(**iv**) We have now hopefully succeeded in illustrating how we may come to an awareness of our historical situatedness, by relating our contemporary situation to some theoretical representation of past events and future predications – that is, to representational history. By orienting the present moment through the interpretive lens of past events and future possibilities, we gain a perspective on the continuing state of flux of the present, and thereby our place in history. We do not question the validity of this claim. However, we do ask whether representational history thereby constitutes the ultimate foundation for our awareness of

historical situatedness. That is, is the awareness of our historical situatedness always and necessarily contingent on our knowledge of representational history? Or is it in fact the other way around? That our ability to develop knowledge of representational history is ultimately contingent on a more radical form of historical awareness. And that this latter radical variation of historical awareness lies at the heart of the Anthropocene as a metaphysical event.

Let us begin with a simple and seemingly trivial admission. The Anthropocene Working Group has of current date yet to deliver their final verdict on the suggested new geological epoch. Stratigraphy is a historical science. This means that it inquires into the historical significance of its research objects. Colin Waters and the other members of the Anthropocene Working Group are currently conducting their historical research in order to decide whether the Anthropocene is to represent a new partitioning of earths geological timeline. In other words, they are currently in the process of *establishing* a scientific determination of representational history. Contrary to our claim above on the *epistemic primacy* of representation history, we now see that the development of representational history is somehow contingent on the contemporary research activities of stratigraphy as an historical science. That is, the question of whether human beings, due to an immense expansion in industrial activity during the 1800s, has become a dominant causal factor in the geological development of planet Earth, is contingent on the ongoing research of contemporary geologists. On their field excursion, data collection, lab work, workshops and conferences, writing and dissemination. Does this entail some operative historical awareness, as a condition for the possibility of historical research, which comes before the knowledge of representational history?

What is the fundamental meaning of history? In the first attempt to answer this question, we suggested that the awareness of our historical situatedness presupposes knowledge of representational history. And that by relating the present moment to an abstract temporal development of past, present, and future, we gain an insight into the fundamental contingency of our contemporary situation. We now suggest a reversal of this relationship – that our historical awareness of the present comes first. And that the primordial meaning of history is not its depictions of past and future transitions and events, but rather the *contingency of the present moment*. That is, a manifestation of contingency that does not relate to representational history, but simply to the *existential impermanence of the contemporary situation itself*.

This concept of contingency, which lies at the heart of the awareness of historical situatedness, contains both a *negative* and a positive *element*, which are dynamically interwoven. The negative element is simply a recognition of the *non-necessity* of our contemporary situation. That is, despite the factual state of our present condition, it does *not*

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need to be like this. Every contemporary situation contains an inherent possibility of non-being. However, the positive element of contingency speaks to all the things in our contemporary situation that are *given to us*. The sum of our scientific knowledge and technologies, which enable us to grow and breed food, to build homes and infrastructure, to harness and refine raw materials for industry, medicine and means of transportation and communication. The ideas and theories, norms and values, our communities, organizations, political systems and institutions, all which condition our ways of life, toil and labor, social practices, our religious, cultural, and recreational activities. These things make up the *material and intellectual basis* on which the entirety of our contemporary situation relies upon. In what sense is the negative and the positive element of contingency *dynamically interwoven*? It is by confrontation with the negative element of historical contingency that I am enabled to reflect on the positive element of my historical contingency. Only when facing the *potential loss* of something on which my way of life depends, do I come to realize my own state of *dependency*. That is, we come to recognize the things *given to us*, which sustains our contemporary situation, only because we see that the same things are at stake of being *taken away*.

In what sense is this primordial form of historical awareness a condition for the possibility of representational history? How does the contingency at the heart of our immediate presence enable us to develop theoretical representations of past and future? The contingency of our historical situatedness reveals the *non-necessity* of everything we know and hold to be true in our own contemporary situation. This, in turn, enables us to *imagine the possibility of a contemporary situation that is different from our own*. That is, in dismantling our own situation, we also gain the ability to develop representational history, as a process of *reassembling* an altogether different contemporary situation in our thought. It is in this process of re-assemblage, that the historian may approach the aggregate of things left behind from the past, meticulously fitting the pieces according to some general narrative of an imagined bygone time.[187]

[187] As a final remark, it should be noted that the conceptual distinction between representational history and awareness of historical situatedness is a philosophical *abstraction*, in the sense that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a concrete incident of human cognition where the two different forms of historical conceptions are entirely unrelated. On the contrary, is it more likely that the two forms of historical conceptions are usually and for the most part dynamically engaged in a single historical cognition. The purpose of this subchapter has been to show that it is possible to formulate an entirely metaphysical conception of history. In the coming subchapter, it will be the task to integrate this conception in our overall metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene.

The Epochal Event of the Anthropocene

In our search to uncover the historical meaning of the Anthropocene, we addressed an apparent ambiguity in the philosophical claim that our new epoch accentuates a sense of historical awareness. However, in our effort to untangle this ambiguity, we have also strayed away from the Anthropocene literature. Yet our overall ambition still remains the same, namely, to extract something like an essential meaning of our new epoch from the myriad of claims and analyses made by the Anthropocenologists. In what sense has our little detour into the primordial meaning of history helped to further this goal? Guiding our analysis is also the presupposition that the essential meaning of the Anthropocene is metaphysical. That is, that the conceptual and normative transformation depicted in the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept is ultimately independent from the initial scientific claim to a significant change in nature due to human activity. In presenting the Anthropocene as an event of coming to awareness of our historical situatedness – that is, as a recognition of the *fundamental contingence of our contemporary environmental situation* – we now hope to achieve two things. First, to show that the historical meaning of the Anthropocene corresponds to a metaphysical transformation. Second, to use this metaphysical notion of historical awareness as a framework to unite *all three interpretative narratives of the Anthropocene into a single epochal event*.

Let us begin with the notion of an historical *epoch*. The word itself traditionally contains two different meanings. In the first variation, which is also the most modern, an epoch represents a specific *time interval* according to representational history. The geological time interval of the Holocene, for example, spans a period of approximately 12,000 years from the past and into the present. However, a second and older variation corresponds instead to a specific *transformative moment in time* which serves to introduce a new historical period or development. We thus also speak of *epochal events*, such as the crossing of the Rubicon or the crucifixion of Christ. It is this latter meaning of epoch which we now attribute to the Anthropocene – as an event that *disrupts our old state of affairs*, and thereby paves the way for the *arrival of something new*. This brings the notion of "epoch" in closer connection with its Greek origin – ἐποχή – which connotes an *event of cessation*, and the second root of "Anthropocene" – καινός – which simply means *new*.

In its pure metaphysical meaning, the epochal event of disruption corresponds to a phenomenal manifestation of the *contingence of our contemporary situation*. That is, as a radical possibility of non-being that is contained in all the things that surrounds us. Confronted

with this ultimate negative possibility, we also come to an awareness of our own dependency of the things given to us. The metaphysical meaning of history thus corresponds to this dynamic relationship between *vulnerability and dependency* at the heart of our contemporary situation. However, in summarizing the historical meaning of the Anthropocene, we also come to see the similarity with the first major narrative. For the contingence at the heart of the Anthropocene as an event of historical disruption, is the very same event expressed as *environmental destruction*. Our new epoch presents us with a *crisis*. The environments which surround us now threatens with ecological collapse. But in the advent of environmental destruction, we simultaneously come to see that in destroying nature we also destroy our own existential foundation. The conceptual transformation of the Anthropocene becomes an event wherein man *identifies the environmentalist concern for nature as a concern for his own existence*. And finally, in connecting the metaphysical meaning of history and the advent of environmental destruction, we now stand to reintroduce the last major narrative of the Anthropocene as an event of *overcoming nihilism*. For in reflecting on the environment as our existential foundation, we stand faced with the grounding normative meaning of nature. That is, our sense of responsibility is not first and foremost reflected by our willful response, but rather through a contemplative recognition of our existential contingence on the continued preservation of nature as a system of meaning.

5. *The Environment and its Ethos – A Metaphysical Road Map*

We have now reached the conclusion of part one. Our inquiry into the Anthropocene literature has been guided by a presupposition that the philosophical conception of our new epoch reflects a significant transformation in our conceptual and normative understanding of nature and its relationship to man. And that the overall task of this dissertation is to develop a new metaphysics of man and nature that can accommodate this transformation. In chapter one, we began by introducing a distinction between a naturalistic and a metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept. The critical question articulated by this distinction is whether the conceptual and normative transformation depicted in the philosophical analysis is dependent on the scientific and historical descriptions of anthropogenic change in nature. In confronting the dominant narratives made by the Anthropocenologists, we made it clear that we expected to find that the transformative event in question is in fact metaphysical, corresponding to a radical *change of first principles* that grounds our perception of ourselves and the world we live in, in a way that is ultimately detached from any scientific description of nature's historical development. In chapter two, we confronted the general narrative of environmental destruction. We ended on an interpretation where the crisis of potential destruction enabled an identification of nature as the existential ground of man. In chapter three, we looked to the environmentalist concern of our new epoch as the overthrowing of nihilism. The imperative of responsibility, the foremost virtue of the Anthropocene, was not the resolute action of a willful subject, but rather a contemplative reflection on a grounding normative

meaning which both sustains and destroys all things existing. And finally, in the fourth chapter on the explicit historical meaning of the Anthropocene, we presented the contours of a metaphysical meaning of history as the coming to awareness of the fundamental contingence of our contemporary environmental situation. Through this interpretative framework, we suggested that the *revelation of contingence* at the hearth of the Anthropocene as an historical epoch, also speaks to the same transformative event as the two former narratives. That is, that *the contingence of our historical situation reflects the metaphysical meaning of environmental destruction as well as the normative meaning of nature*.

Looking back on our review of the Anthropocene literature, a first thing to notice is that our attempt to channel the claims and arguments made by the Anthropocenologists into an all-encompassing metaphysical narrative, clearly entails an act of appropriation. A second thing to notice, is that our metaphysical interpretation mostly comes in the form of claims and suggestions, and not as a fully developed theory of metaphysics, and that it therefore remains incomplete. That is, throughout our review of the different narratives of the new epoch, we have invoked conceptions of *man, nature, and normativity* that might be unfamiliar to many contemporary philosophers. And it is not until we are able to ground these conceptions in a proper metaphysical system that our interpretation of the Anthropocene stands to be vindicated.

The task of the remaining three parts of this dissertation is to develop a metaphysical system of man and nature, that can accommodate our interpretation of the Anthropocene as an epochal event of conceptual and normative transformation. Now at the end of part one, we will conclude our initial interpretation of the Anthropocene by articulating a *metaphysical road map*, indicating the task ahead of us. That is, as a set of concepts that forms the basic building blocks of our new system. This new metaphysics claims to be the theoretical foundation that the Anthropocene literature either implicitly or explicitly presupposes, but which the Anthropocenologists themselves have been unable to articulate.

Our metaphysics for the Anthropocene is *fundamental ontology*. This entails an inquiry into the meaning of being – that is, asking *what it means for something to be*. In the general introduction, we presented the major achievement of this metaphysics as the *unification of ethics and ontology*. That is, that the innermost inquiry of ethics and ontology ultimately goes back to the same fundamental thought. The basic method of this metaphysics is *phenomenology*. This means that we inquire into the fundamental meaning of ethics and ontology by describing and analyzing *that which shows itself to us in our phenomenal presence*. We have so far reviewed three dominant narratives of the Anthropocene: Environmental destruction of our existential foundation; the overcoming of nihilism by reinstating nature with a grounding

normative meaning; and the epochal event of the Anthropocene as the coming to awareness of the contingence at the heart of our historical situation. We now incorporate the elements of *destruction*, *normative meaning*, and *historical contingence*, into a single metaphysical framework, as the *revelation of the finitude of nature*. This metaphysical framework enables us to articulate the basic argument of the Anthropocene.

The argument goes as follows: The epochal event of the Anthropocene begins as the emergence of a **crisis**. The meaning of this crisis is the *revelation of the finitude of nature*. And the concept of the **environment** corresponds to this revelation. That is, the environment is the metaphysical concept of nature's finitude. In facing the finitude of nature, we come to see its grounding **normative meaning**. That nature, as the sum total of all existent entities, is *organized according to a unified system*. And that this state of organization is always already *at stake*. That is, the grounding meaning of nature is normative because the meaning itself contains a twofold possibility of continuation and annihilation. Underlying this twofold possibility lies the **ground of nature** as willing and freedom. **Willing** is the *origination and continued preservation* of the normative meaning of nature, and thereby the foundation of all existence. And **freedom** is the *abysmal destruction* of this meaning, which devours all existence into oblivion. If nature's finitude reflects a fundamental *limit* of existence itself, then freedom is the *delimiting ground* of nature. Man ultimately finds himself in the face of the normative meaning of nature and its grounding movements of willing and freedom. That is, as the **ethos** of his existential residence. And the moral essence of man, expressed by his environmental **responsibility**, is to *reflect on this residence*. This state of contemplation is the foremost virtue of our new epoch. **Figure 4** (below) provides a graphic presentation of our map of basic concepts.

From this short presentation of our metaphysical road map, we see that the two concepts of willing and freedom, which has traditionally been depicted as properties of the human mind, are now reconceptualized to represent an ontological ground of nature itself. And that human morality does not express a state of independence from nature, but that the moral essence of man corresponds to a recognition of the fundamental contingence of human existence on a normative meaning that ultimately transcends the human subject. The concept of environment as a *finite system of meaning* does not mean that nature is reduced to a *single* system. Rather, there are many environments, corresponding to the many ways in which nature shows itself. But all environments share the same grounding structure of its meaning.

Epoch of the Anthropocene

↓

Finitude of Nature

↓

Environment

(oikos)

↙   ↘

Contingence   Necessity

↕   ←   **Freedom** │ *Ground of Nature* │ **Willing** →   ↕

Destruction/   •   Unified System

Nihilation of   *Normativity*   of Meaning

meaning

↘   ↙

Ethos

↓

Essence of Man

↓

Responsibility

(Virtue of the Anthropocene)
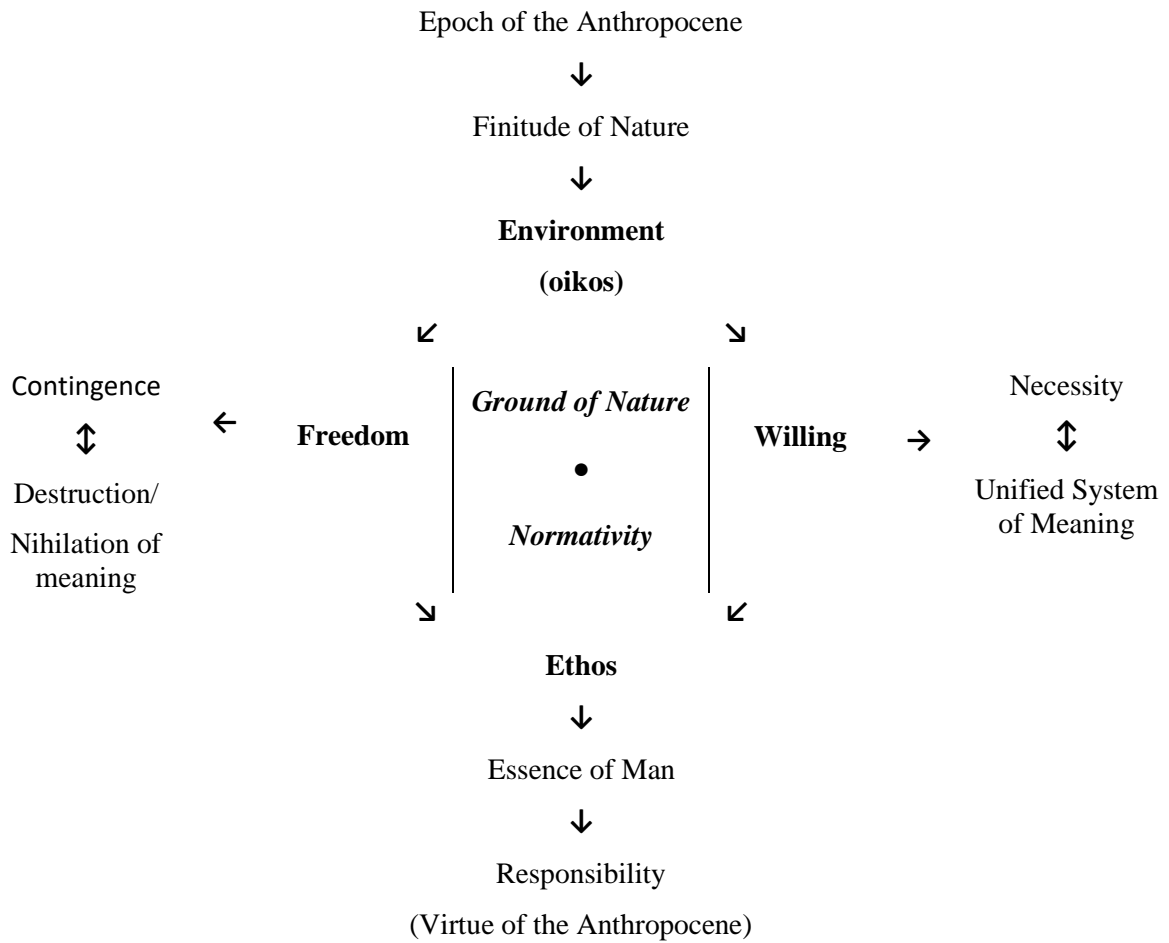
Figure 4: A map of the basic concepts for our metaphysics of the Anthropocene.

PART TWO: Introducing Heidegger and an Ecological Humanism

1. Ethos and Oikos

The Anthropocene thus requires the substitution of the 'ungrounded' humanities of industrial modernity by new environmental humanities that adventure beyond the great separation between environment and society.

Bonneuil & Fressoz[188]

We concluded part one with our own interpretation of the Anthropocene, as a transformation in our conceptual and normative understanding of nature and its relationship to man. But in making this interpretation, we also came to see the pressing need for a new metaphysical system that could accommodate this transformation. We presented a map of basic metaphysical concepts, as the schematic for a potential system of thought, indicating the task now ahead of us. The environment of the Anthropocene represents the revelation of the finite normative meaning of nature, grounded by the foundation and abyss of willing and freedom. The ultimate task of this dissertation is to develop a metaphysics of man and nature that incorporates these basic elements. In the context of this greater task, the current part two plays a preparatory role. In connecting our interpretation of the Anthropocene to Heidegger, we now seek to inquire deeper into the environmental thought of our project, as the groundwork on which our

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[188] Bonneuil, C. & Fressoz, J. B. (2016), *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, page 33.

subsequent metaphysical construction can build upon. That is, we now ask what is fundamentally at play in the environmental concern and sense of responsibility that has emerged in our new epoch.

The title of the second part of this dissertation presents an *ecological humanism* and indicates that the philosophy of Martin Heidegger will serve as the basis for such reorientation of environmental thought. The idea of an ecological humanism translates directly from our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene in part one. Our contemporary epoch does not depict nature as a product of man. Instead, it integrates the essence of man into the fabric of nature itself, in the sense of revealing nature as the existential and normative ground of the human being. If the "essence of man" represents the *humanity* of humanism, and "nature" the *environment* of ecology, then the Anthropocene represents a *unification of humanism and ecology*. However, the very notion of a humanism that is simultaneously ecological could strike the reader as counterintuitive, if not downright paradoxical. What is the meaning of humanism and ecology, and what does it entail when we claim that the center of their normative concern is the same?

Following Heidegger's analysis in *Letter on "Humanism"*, we may trace the Western idea of *humanity* back to the Greek notion of *paideia*, as the formative education of man; which was later adopted by the self-understanding of the Romans as the virtuous *homo humanus* – as opposed to the *homo barbarus*.[189] It was revived and formulated into its modern program of humanism through the creative and political emancipation of the Italian renaissance; and later developed as the *Bildung* of German Idealism; the Marxist liberation from capitalism, and later technological alienation. Today, the meaning of humanism seems most closely attached to liberalism, as the cultivation and valuation of humankind according to the freedom of human subjectivity. As a secular counterpart to the Christian emancipation from the material world, by virtue of a transcendent relation to God, the freedom of humanism too typically stands in a negative relation to nature, for example as the expressions of culture and art elevates humanity above the lawfulness and determination of natural phenomena.[190]

The term "ecology" is ambiguous. On the one hand, it represents a subdiscipline of biology, established in the early 1900s, which inquires into the *relationship between organisms*

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[189] Heidegger, M. *Letter on "Humanism"*, in *Pathmarks*, page 244 (GA 9: 320).
[190] On the relationship between humanism and religion, see e.g., chapter 7 in Hareide, D. (2011), *Hva er humanisme*.

and their environment.[191] In doing so, it also invokes knowledge and methods from a myriad of other scientific disciplines, like geology, chemistry, physics, and meteorology. On the other hand, the term is also used in a much broader context of environmentalism, which typically mirrors the common use of the word in environmental philosophy. In Norway, a product is labeled "ecological" if it somehow abides by sustainable or morally justifiable methods of production in agriculture, farming, or other areas of natural resource extraction.[192] *Deep ecologists*, like Arne Næss, were concerned with the *intrinsic worth* of natural entities, by virtue of their individual developments and interrelationships within a natural system.[193] The currently relevant *Ecomodernists* urge us to decouple "human development from environmental impacts" in order to prevent collapse in "non-human environments and wildlife."[194] On the whole, the environmentalist variation of "ecology" typically entail a concern for nature *itself*, as opposed to the mere instrumental valuation of nature in relation to human interests. This shift of normative concern is often expressed as a need for a *non-anthropocentric*, or *ecocentric*, orientation for environmental thought.

Even from these tentative and obviously superficial definitions of "humanism" and "ecology," it becomes clear to see the counterintuitive nature of our claim to an ecological humanism. Both orientations of thought, at least by our modern interpretations, seem to represent *man* and *nature* as somehow emancipated or independent from each other, and thereby equally valued by virtue of this independence.[195] In order for our notion of an ecological humanism to attain a meaning that makes proper sense, we are required to reinterpret the meaning of ecology and humanism alike. The two Greek words in the title of the present chapter – *ethos and oikos* – reflect our intention to inquire into the root meaning of humanism and ecology. The concept of *ethos* reflects the moral essence of man, connecting the humanity of humanism with the Anthropos of the Anthropocene. *Oikos*, on the other hand, is a synonym for "environment," being the etymological root of "ecology" and thereby the object of inquiry for ecological investigation: *oikos + logos*. What makes the translation of environment into

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[191] Although the original German term itself, "Oecologie", was introduced by the biologist Ernst Haechel in 1866. See Hestmark, G. (2018), *Hva er økologi*, page 8.

[192] The Norwegian term "ecological" is largely synonymous with the American label "organic."

[193] As the first of eight points in his attempt to define deep ecology, Arne Næss writes: "The well-being and flourishment of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth)." Næss, A. (2003), "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects", published in *Environmental Ethics – An Anthology*, edited by Andrew Light & Holmes Rolston, page 264.

[194] Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015), *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*, page 7 & 9.

[195] See Hareide, D. (2011), *Hva er humanisme*, page 130.

oikos conspicuous is the original meaning of the Greek word as *house* or *home*. The organism finds its existential residence within its environment – as its *niche*. Ecology is thereby not an inquiry into the individual entities of nature, but instead the *home* in which all entities of nature live and die. In part one we concluded our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene by identifying this home of life and death – of creation and destruction – as the finitude of nature, in the face of the ground and abyss of willing and freedom.

By directing our claim of an ecological humanism towards the question of ethos and oikos, we have simultaneously made way for our transition into the thought of Martin Heidegger. Few philosophers match the cliché more fittingly, that all great thinkers only really have one major thought. Heidegger is a thinker of being – *Denker des Seins* – inquiring into its meaning. Heidegger's approach to the human existence is therefore also fundamentally oriented towards the possible forgetfulness and revelation of the meaning of being. That is, for man to come into contact with his own essence is to find himself facing the existential conditions of being. By tracing our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene back to the questions of ethos and oikos, we now prepare the ground for a Heideggerian foundation for our new ecological humanism. As the moral essence of man, ethos becomes the dwelling of thought in the existential residence of the meaning of being – oikos. In other words: *if the essence of man, according to Heidegger, is to trace its fundamental existential situation back to the meaning of being, then the object of concern reflected in the Greek words of ethos and oikos are ultimately one and the same*.

A Heideggerian Groundwork for a Metaphysics of the Anthropocene

The goal of this second part of the dissertation is to elaborate on the basic environmental thought reflected in our interpretation of the Anthropocene, articulated as an ecological re-orientation for humanism, through the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, which will serve as the intellectual groundwork for the construction of a new metaphysics of man and nature in parts three and four. Because this groundwork for our metaphysical construction entails our first encounter with Heidegger, this part must also provide a general introduction into his thought, in a way that gradually prepares for an application of Heidegger for contemporary environmental philosophy. When addressing Heidegger's philosophy on an overall level of analysis, it is customary to distinguish between his so-called *early* and *later* period of thought, typically

placing the time of the turn – *die Kehre* – sometime during the early 1930s. It is the later Heidegger that will form the basis of our environmental thought – in particular, the *Letter on "Humanism"* from 1946, and his 1953-essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*. However, as our way into these two central works of a matured Heidegger, we will begin with a general introduction, based on the magnum opus of his earlier thought, *Being and Time* from 1927. This approach was in fact recommended by Heidegger himself, in the preface from 1962 to William J. Richardson's *Through Phenomenology to Thought*. Referring to his early and later period of thought as simply "I" and "II", Heidegger writes: "only by way of what **I** has thought does one gain access to what is to-be-thought by **II**. But the thought of **I** becomes possible only if it is contained in **II**."[196] What is expressed in this quote? Heidegger claims that his later thought contains a more profound articulation of the question of being, in a way that serves as a foundation for the preliminary analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*. But he also suggests that the preliminary analysis of his earlier philosophy may be utilized as a gateway into his later thought. Perhaps first and foremost because the aspiration of the younger Heidegger still resembles that of traditional philosophy, attempting to frame the question of being through a more systematic analysis of man and his practical life within a phenomenal world. Whereas the later Heidegger indulges himself in a poetic landscape of thought, mostly devoid of any rigorous representation of his concepts and ideas, turning his philosophy into a largely esoteric exercise.

On the way towards the ultimate goal of developing a new metaphysics, we have now presented the preliminary task of establishing our environmental thought of ecological humanism through the later thinking of Martin Heidegger, which will provide the groundwork for the metaphysical construction to come. But in presenting this intellectual pathway, have we not thereby also placed our project in a peculiar predicament? If the early Heidegger finds himself in an ambiguous position to traditional philosophy qua metaphysics, then the later Heidegger defines his own intellectual project in explicit opposition to metaphysics. How can we justify the use of an inherently anti-metaphysical thought as the groundwork for the development of our own metaphysics?

The development of Heidegger's own philosophy, with its increasing emphasis on a form of thinking that transcends metaphysics, becomes most conspicuous when we compare the lecture given in 1929, *What is metaphysics?*, and the introduction to the same text,

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[196] Heidegger, M. (2003/1963), *Preface*, in Richardson, W. J., *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page XXII. My **bold**.

Introduction to "What is metaphysics?", which does not appear until 1949. In the original lecture, Heidegger refers to his philosophical project of fundamental ontology as metaphysics, where the "meta-" is depicted as an internal act of transcendence, closely linked to the ecstatic event of Dasein that takes place in the second division of *Being and Time*.[197] Whereas in the introduction, he simply defines his own thinking in opposition to all traditional philosophy qua metaphysics.[198] It is certainly possible to interpret this turn as a resounding and permanent rejection of metaphysics, which would make our own project of building a new Heideggerian metaphysics directly at odds with the original intent of the later Heidegger. However, it is also possible to approach the later Heidegger as a radicalization of thought, in a way that prepares for a more profound basis for philosophy. In the *Introduction to "What is metaphysics?"*, Heidegger begins with a reference to Descartes. In a letter to Claude Picot, Descartes writes: "Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree: the roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences".[199] Heidegger then goes on to employ the same imagery for his own thought, and asks: "In what soil do the roots of the tree of philosophy take hold?".[200] Heidegger now orients his own thinking from the perspective of the *ground* of metaphysics. The grounding thought of our own metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene is the idea of an *ecological humanism*. And in the coming chapters of part two, our aim is to use Heidegger's philosophy to elucidate and elaborate on this idea. It will then be the role of the subsequent part three and four to use this environmental thought as the foundation in our development of a new metaphysics. So even though the mature Heidegger himself never did return to the metaphysical aspirations of his younger self, we suggest that our own project does not violate the basic tenet of Heidegger's philosophy, in that it tries to develop a metaphysical system which simultaneously is centered on its own transcendent ground.

In the coming three chapters of this second part of the dissertation, we will take inspiration from Heidegger's own assessment of the relationship between his early and later period of thought, in the preface to William J. Richardson. In **chapter two**, we begin with a general introduction into Heidegger's philosophy, based primarily on *Being and Time*. We present the question of being, and the relationship between being and man, and give a brief

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[197] See Heidegger, M. (1998), *What is Metaphysics*, page 93 (GA 9: 118).
[198] For a more extensive coverage of this development in Heidegger's thought that is revealed when we compare *What is metaphysics?* and the introduction, see Wasrud, M. (2011), *Veien til Væren – En eksistensiell vandring gjennom Heideggers værenstenkning*, page 92.
[199] Heidegger, M., *Introduction to "What is metaphysics?"*, page 277 (GA 9: 365)
[200] Heidegger, M., *Introduction to "What is metaphysics?"*, page 277 (GA 9: 365)

account of the development and turn of Heidegger's philosophy, focusing on the key concepts of the *meaning*, *truth,* and *event* of being – *Sinn, Wahrheit und Ereignis des Seins*. Once this general introduction is complete, we then proceed to **chapter three**, where we conduct our first proper encounter with the later Heidegger, going through the *Letter on "Humanism"*. Its task: to establish the foundational thought of our ecological humanism – *the ethos of the environment* – through Heidegger's call for the return of man to his existential foundation in the face of the presence of being. Then, in **chapter four**, we turn to *The Question Concerning Technology*, where we connect our Heideggerian environmental thought to the initial interpretation of the Anthropocene. We make the novel suggestion that the sense of environmental responsibility that has emerged as a dominant feature of our contemporary epoch, may in fact represent Heidegger's prophecy of a saving God in the history of Western philosophy, where man is awaken from the slumber of metaphysical forgetfulness, once again revealing the true meaning of being.

2. On the way to Being: *Being and Time*

The title of this chapter indicates that our inquiry into *Being and Time*, a work that signifies the high point of Heidegger's *earlier* period of thought, is but a means to a greater end – that is, as a preliminary step in our approach to the *later* Heidegger's thinking of being. The idea that *Being and Time* is only a preparation for a more profound thought to come is also reflected by the architectonic design of the work itself. Heidegger repeatedly stress that the role of the two published divisions is to prepare for the inquiry into meaning of being.[201] However, our current approach to *Being and Time* differs from Heidegger's original intent, in that the unpublished third division was to articulate the meaning of being based on the metaphysical framework of Dasein. Whereas we now employ the analysis of fundamental ontology as a steppingstone into the *later* Heidegger, whose thought is defined by a definitive transgression of metaphysics. Thus, it is with this transgression of thought in mind that we now turn to *Being and Time*.

The following subchapters presents three basic components of the *early* Heidegger's philosophy in *Being and Time* and ends on the nature of the *later* Heidegger's transition into a post-metaphysical thinking. In the **first** subchapter, we give a general outline of the *question of being* itself, utilizing a generic example of ecology as a first introduction into the enigma of the

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[201] See Heidegger, M (1962), *Being and Time*, page 25, 27, 38, 285, 362, 382 & 487 (SZ:5, 8, 17, 241, 314, 333, 436).

ontological difference. In the **second** subchapter, we present the *relation of man and being*, which sets up the metaphysical framework for Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology. In the **third** subchapter, we introduce the idea of the *truth of being*, which reflects Dasein's twofold existential possibility of *authenticity* and *inauthenticity*, in a manner that also hints at a grounding event that ultimately transcends human subjectivity. And in the **fourth** subchapter, we indicate the nature of Heidegger's transition into his *later* thought, as a shift in emphasis from *Eigentlichkeit* of Dasein to *Ereignis* of being. That is, from the essence of man as openness to being, to the grounding event of being itself.

The Question of Being

What does it mean for Heidegger to ask the *question of being*? To understand Heidegger's notion of being is to understand the *ontological difference* between being and existent entities – *Sein und Seiende*.[202] There is an intuitive yet trivial way to introduce this difference, which follows from the mere concept of ontology. However, the way Heidegger then continues to build on this intuition leads our thought into unfamiliar territory. It begins by a simple hermeneutical recognition. If ontology is the inquiry into that which *is* – that which exists – then ontology requires a preconditioning understanding of the *meaning of being*. In general terms, we can say that in order to look for some *type* of object X, we need a preconditioning understanding of what we *mean by X*. Heidegger refers to this inquiry into the meaning of being as *fundamental ontology*.[203] The intuitive yet trivial version of the ontological difference

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[202] The framing of Heidegger's question of being as a claim of ontological difference is absolute key to my interpretation of Heidegger, and thereby to this dissertation in its entirety. Andrew J. Mitchell presents Heidegger's *late* period of thought, from 1945-1976, as a thinking of the fourfold (*das Geviert*). According to Mitchell, this thought ultimately brings Heidegger to break with the claim of ontological difference, as becomes apparent in his "latest thinking (notes and sketches from the early 1970) [where Heidegger claims] that the fourfold would effect a break with the thinking of ontological difference that had so profoundly marked Heidegger's earlier work of fundamental ontology." If we take Michell's claim to mean that the idea of ontological difference is somehow flawed as an interpretive framework for later works like *Letter on "Humanism"* (1946) and *The Question Concerning Technology* (1953), then the interpretation of Heidegger given in this dissertation is fundamentally at odds with Mitchell. See Mitchell, A. J. (2015), *The Fourfold – Reading the Late Heidegger*, page 6 & 9.

[203] According to this preliminary definition, Heideggerian fundamental ontology would resemble the kind of asking that goes into the concept of *meta-ontology*, a term first coined by Peter Van Inwagen. Inwagen initially defines *ontology* by the basic question "What is there?", and consequently *meta-ontology* as the study that asks "What are we asking when we ask 'What is there?'?". Inwagen, P. V. (1998), "Meta-ontology", page 233.

express the mere analytical recognition that the question of the meaning of being cannot be answered by referring to existent entities themselves. Western philosophy qua metaphysics has developed several ways to articulate the logos of existent entities (*das Seiende*). Be it as *idea*, *substance*, *sense perception*, *qualitative* or *quantitative properties*, *underlying substrate*, *thing*, or *structure*. Such determinations contribute to our understanding of what is, without addressing the question of what we mean by being itself. For example, let us say we take on a modern stance of *scientific structural realism*, claiming that the mathematical structures of quantum physics and general relativity represents the best alternative for our contemporary understanding of what is, as opposed to the tangible objects of everyday understanding.[204] Such line of reasoning is still in need of a preconceived notion of the meaning of being – that is, as the general meaning of the group of things (i.e., existent entities) which structural realism claims is best explained by modern physics.[205] The intuitive yet trivial version of the ontological difference is simply the insistence that all ontology presuppose an understanding of what it means to be, and that any attempt to answer the question of the meaning of being by appealing to existent entities would only lead our inquiry in a circle. The very question "what *is* being?" has in a sense already failed in its task because the grammar of the "is" refers to being as an object, implying that being itself is an existent entity.

How then are we to understand the meaning of being? The radical answer of Heidegger's fundamental ontology is that the meaning of being – *der Sinn von Sein* – is not simply a preconceived notion in our understanding of existent entities, but also an ontological foundation of existence itself. That is, from the seemingly trivial acknowledgment about the need to question the meaning of being, Heidegger makes a leap of argument by insisting that this meaning itself represents an object of thought – *Sache des Denkens* – that is *radically different from and foundational to all existent entities*. To accentuate the relationship between being and existent entities does not simply entail that we address a meaning that all existent entities conceptually *possess*, but rather a grounding meaning from which all existent entities *originate*.[206]

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[204] E.g., Ladyman, J. & Ross, D. (2007), *Every Thing Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized*.

[205] As Catriona Hanley presents the problem: "for Heidegger being is the meaning or intelligibility of the unity of beingness". Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 102.

[206] Not unlike our own depiction, Jeff Malpas makes the following introductory definition of the question of being: "Heidegger's thinking is essentially oriented to the problem of understanding things as gathered into a certain sort of fundamental 'relatedness' by means of which they are also 'disclosed'. Thus Heidegger's inquiry into being is always centrally concerned with the articulation of an essential *unity* that belongs to being or, as we

This shift in our understanding of the ontological difference – from the initial claim that the meaning of being is a necessary *epistemic condition* of ontology, to the idea that the meaning of being itself represents an ontological foundation that *grounds all existence* – no doubt takes us into a foreign territory of thought. To make sense of this thought, and how it becomes relevant for our interpretation of the Anthropocene, is in a general sense the sole task of this dissertation. As a first introductory step to build an intuitive grasp of Heidegger's question of being and the ontological difference, we begin with two simple points. (i) The meaning of being forms a *meaningful whole* which conditions all existent entities as its *parts*. We will illustrate this point by a generic example of biological ecology. (ii) The meaning of being *presents itself to us in our phenomenal presence*. This makes Heidegger's fundamental ontology into *phenomenology*.

(**i**) In what sense does the meaning of being form a *whole* that conditions all existent entities as its *parts*? We begin with a generic example of *ecology*. Biological ecology investigates into the relation between the *organism and its environment*. The organism unfolds and develops through its environmental *niche*. The surrounding environmental landscape of possible interactions thus constitute the existential foundation for the organism. As an existential foundation, the environment itself makes out the *organized whole* of all biotic and abiotic components. Drawing an analogy to Heidegger's ontological difference, the meaning of being corresponds to this organized whole, which conditions its components without being reducible to them.

We stated above that the meaning of being is the ontological foundation from which all existent entities *originate*. We can also expand on the analogy between the meaning of being and ecology through the notion of the existential origination of *niche construction*.[207] The concept of niche construction corresponds to the phenomenon where an organism expands or modifies its niche through the alteration of its surrounding environment. We can think of the

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shall see shortly, to the 'truth' of being – it is just this unity that is itself at issue in the question of 'ground'. One of the underlying themes in Heidegger's work is the question of how such unity is to be articulated and understood, and the 'turning' that characterizes Heidegger's work as a whole, as well as being specific to the period after *Being and Time*, can be seen as a return to, and rethinking of, just this question of unity." Malpas, Jeff (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 171f.

[207] This way of articulating Heidegger's ontological difference through the notion of niche construction is the novel thought of Joseph Rouse. In his book of 2015, *Articulating the World*, Rouse employs the concept of niche construction as a basic interpretative framework for understanding the *foundational normative praxis* of natural science. My own understanding of Heidegger has greatly benefitted from reading Rouse, who has developed a philosophy of science that builds on several key aspects of Heideggerian thought. On niche construction, see e.g., Rouse, J. (2015), *Articulating the World – Conceptual Understanding and the Scientific Image*, page 20.

process of niche construction as an *event of origination*, where the formation of new relational behavior by the organism in its surroundings emerge from the *material basis* of the environment, but simultaneously where the new niche in question did in fact not exist prior to its construction.

However, as we utilize the example of the organism and its ecological niche to illustrate a structural relation between the *grounding whole and its emerging parts* that is analogous to Heidegger's ontological difference, we must also acknowledge the potential limits of this analogy. For Heidegger, the meaning of being is categorically irreducible to existent entities, as well as being foundational to all existence. Whereas in the case of biological ecology, one could make the case that natural science do in fact succeed in reducing the organism and its environment to a shared substrate of scientific explanation. That is, that both organism and environment emerge from more general biological mechanisms, and the adjacent workings of such fields like geology, chemistry, and physics.

(**ii**) The meaning of being is *present*, precisely in the sense that it *presents* itself to us. In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger begins with some preliminary thoughts on the meaning of *phenomenology*. The first root of the word, *phenomenon*, he brings back to the original Greek verb *faínesthai*, which means *to show itself*.[208] The second root, *logos*, he understands has speech – *légein* – in the sense of speaking out in a manner that *lets something be seen*.[209] The fundamental ontology in *Being and Time* is phenomenology, in the sense of articulating the existent entities of the world in a manner which lets the foundational meaning of their being be seen. The meaning of being is the organized totality which presents itself to us, and to which all existent things always already belong. This phenomenological approach to the meaning of being, as something that presents itself to us, will certainly not appear to be analogous with ecology as a biological science, as one traditionally imagines the scientific concept of environment as some kind of theoretical representation. The meaning of being, on the other hand, presents itself as an *existential experience*, as the surrounding landscape in which the organism or existent entity *finds itself*, and on which its existence is entirely dependent. Heidegger does not use the Greek word "oikos", but he repeatedly invokes the etymological commonality of the Germen *Anwesen*, *anwesend* and *Anwesenheit*, articulating

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[208] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 51 (SZ: 28)
[209] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 56 (SZ: 33)

the *estate* or *grounds* (*Anwesen*) of the meaning of being as simultaneously that which is *present* (*anwesend sein*) in our immediate *presence* (*Anwesenheit*).

The Relation of Man to Being

The inquiry into the *relation of man and being* is the explicit task of the published first and second division of *Being and Time*. In the introduction, when presenting the ontological difference and the question of the meaning of being as the task of fundamental ontology, Heidegger turns to a particular specimen of all existent entities, namely the human being. This particular entity stands out, because it belongs to the essence of man to ask the question of being. What does this mean? Once again, we may introduce the Heideggerian insight with a seemingly trivial observation. Namely, that man is the only existent entity who asks about being – that is, the only entity who practice ontology. Upon acknowledging this simple fact, we also come to recognize that the meaning of being must somehow be accessible to man. That is, that man is somehow *open* to the meaning of being. Man's *openness to being* thus becomes a condition for the possibility of fundamental ontology, as well as all other regional ontologies.[210] Based on this recognition, Heidegger makes the methodological maneuver of conceptualizing his fundamental ontology as an analysis of the essence of man. That is, it is through the investigation into the openness to being of man that we will acquire an access to the meaning of being itself. By introducing the German word *Dasein* as a neologism for the essence of man as openness to being, the inquiry of fundamental ontology becomes an analytic of Dasein – *Analytik des Daseins*.[211]

The first division of *Being and Time* centers on the *existentiality – die Existenzialität –* of Dasein. These are the ontological structures that conditions man's openness to being.[212] At this point, Heidegger's fundamental ontology resembles a Kantian model of transcendental

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[210] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 31 & 34 (SZ:11 & 13)

[211] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 34 (SZ:13). In Richardson's words: "Heidegger prefers to designate the questioner of Being by a term which suggests this unique privilege that distinguishes it from all other beings, sc. its comprehension of Being as such: the 'There-being.'" Richardson, William J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought* (Fourth Edition), page 34.

[212] Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 113.

philosophy.[213] As opposed to the Kantian *categories*, which conditions the objects of experience, the *existentials – die Existenzialen –* conditions the openness of Dasein itself – that is, the manner and modes which determines Dasein's experiential access to a world of existent entities. Taken as a unified whole, the existential structures combine into the overarching organization of Dasein's openness as *care – Sorge*.[214] Man finds himself engaged within the openness of being, *caring for* all manner of things and persons in its surroundings. The organization of the openness to being as care makes for a fundamentally *practical* orientation towards the world, where the manner in which we *use* the existent entities in our surroundings takes precedence over our ability to determine them as objects of theoretical representation. The fact that our understanding of the existent entities in the world always begin through practical comportments has direct significance for our understanding of the meaning of being. An ontology that fully detach itself from the practical understanding of tangible objects is an ontology without a foundation. It is through our practical openness to the being of existent entities that we acquire an understanding of the meaning of being itself, and thus find the necessary condition for the possibility of any ontological conceptualization.

In the second division of *Being and Time,* we find a radical disruption in Heidegger's approach to the openness of being. This disruption makes it unequivocal that any epistemological or standard transcendentalist interpretation of his fundamental ontology is in fact impossible to maintain. Heidegger reveals an inherent possibility within the openness of being to eradicate the human self, shifting the primacy for fundamental ontology from the existentially structured self to the openness of being as such.[215] More specifically, Heidegger accentuates the human experience of *death* as the existential possibility of destroying the self of worldly comportments. Upon experiencing such existential possibility of destruction, Dasein comes to realize its own existential contingence on the meaning of being.

This is the point where Heidegger introduces the ontological significance of *time*. The grounding thesis of *Being and Time* is that the meaning of being is time. Dasein's openness to being thus ultimately becomes temporal. The second division inquires into the temporality of Dasein – *der Zeitlichkeit des Daseins* – which expresses the manner in which Dasein's

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[213] I deliberately write "Kantian" as opposed to "Kant's", as I question whether the philosophy of Kant himself actually matched up with the traditional epistemological depiction of transcendental philosophy. More on this will follow in our later chapters on Kant.

[214] "Care signifies the primordial ontological structural totality of Dasein, that is, the unity of the various structural elements of Dasein". Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 136.

[215] See Schmidt, D. J. (2016), "Being and Time", page 194.

existentiality is founded on the meaning of being as time. We cannot go into detail on this temporal foundation, but the pressing issue for our current introduction to Heidegger is to accentuate the *ecstatic* relation of Dasein to the meaning of being. The ecstatic structures of temporality – *die Ekstasen der Zeitlichkeit* – corresponds to the three basic modes of time: past, present, and future.[216] The temporal meaning of Dasein's openness as *past* indicates where the human self comes from – that is, from where it originates. And as *future*, it indicates where the human self is going – that is, its projected possibilities. To be a human being, according to the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*, is to find it*self* in the momentary projection – *dem augenblicklichen Entwurf* – from a given past and onto its future.[217] But the past, present, and future are not thereby properties of the human self. In contrast to the traditional Kantian depiction of time as an internal form of human intuition, the temporal foundation ultimately *transcends* the human self. The very notion of ecstasy – *Ekstase* – entails an emphasis on the temporal foundation as an event of being *taken out of one's place*, or to be *outside oneself* (cf. the Greek *ekstasis* and *ekstatikon*[218]). This ecstatic transcendence becomes manifest when Dasein is confronted with its most own (*eigenste*) and non-relational possibility of death. Death is the future possibility of man's existential impossibility – that is, the possibility of the non-existence of the human self.[219] Upon realizing the future projection of itself onto its own destruction, Dasein consequently attains an understanding of itself as the ecstatic projection of the meaning of being as time. That is, the human self of Dasein is at any moment merely an entity that *emerges out* from the original temporal meaning of being.

What about the third division? Even though it was never published, it is crucial that we interpret the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* from the architectonic framework of its intended three divisions. In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes the distinction between being, as "*what is asked about*", the meaning of being, as "*what is to be found out by the asking*", and Dasein, as the particular existent entity which is *to be interrogated* in order to find this meaning.[220] Heidegger consistently refers to the analytic of Dasein in the first and second division as being both *incomplete* and *provisional*, and he also repeatedly stress how the

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[216] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 377 (SZ:329)
[217] "Dasein always already is in the mode of projecting itself beyond its 'now' and into possibility – which means that the 'now' itself is possibility." Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 123.
[218] Richardson, W. J. (1963/2003), *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, Fourth edition, page 88.
[219] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 294 (SZ:250)
[220] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 25f (SZ:6f)

analytic is itself conditioned by a more primordial understanding of being, which is not attained by the published version of *Being and Time*:

> "It merely brings out the Being of this entity [Dasein], without interpreting its meaning. It is rather a preparatory procedure by which the horizon for the most primordial way of interpreting Being may be laid bare. Once we have arrived at that horizon, this preparatory analytic of Dasein will have to be repeated on a higher and authentically ontological basis."[221]

And,

> "But if the variations of Being are to be interpreted for everything of which we say, "It is", we need an idea of Being in general, and this idea needs to have been adequately illuminated in advance. So long as this idea is one at which we have not yet arrived, then the temporal analysis of Dasein, even if we *repeat* it, will remain incomplete and fraught with obscurities […] The existential-temporal analysis of Dasein demands, for its part, that it be repeated anew within a framework in which the concept of Being is discussed in principle."[222]

This is the proper interpretative framework of our understanding of *Being and Time*. The analytic of Dasein, in the first and second division, is only a way – *nur ein Weg* – to the meaning of being itself, which was to be the main subject of the third division.[223] The first division begins by the notion of man's openness to being, elaborating on how this openness is initially structured. The second division reveals an inherent possibility within the openness to being to transcend the human self. Through this act of transcendence, man suddenly gains a fundamental ontological perspective from which he reveals his own existence to be the ecstatic projection from the meaning of being as time.[224]

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[221] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 38 (SZ:17)
[222] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 382 (SZ: 333). See also: 25, 27, 285 & 362 (SZ:5, 8, 241 & 314).
[223] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 487 (SZ:436). Although concurring with our interpretation, Richardson's remarkably differ from us in seemingly identifying the term "fundamental ontology" itself with the preliminary analysis of Dasein: "Fundamental ontology, itself only a preliminary analysis to expose the horizon necessary for the analysis of the sense of Being itself, will prepare to interrogate the Being that is comprehended by first interrogating the comprehending itself. The prelude to the question of Being is the question of There-being." Richardson, William J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page 40.
[224] As David J. Schmidt reminds us: "the book that we have does not carry out its own project. We never fully arrive at the question of *Being* (*and Time*), but remain largely concerned with the question of the analytic of Dasein that culminates in the presentation of Dasein and temporality." Schmidt, D. J. (2016), "Being and Time", page 193.

The Truth of Being

The *truth of being* is one of the most important notions of the *later* Heidegger and will thus prove vital in the coming chapters on *Letter on "Humanism"* and *The Question Concerning Technology*. However, in this preliminary introduction of Heideggerian thought, we will mainly orient the question of truth from within the framework of *Being and Time*.[225] How are we to understand the notion of the *truth* of being? The openness to being defines the essence of man as Dasein. This openness can be truthful, *revealing* the true meaning of being. And it can be untruthful, *concealing* the true meaning of being. At first glance, the idea that man's openness to being is either truthful or untruthful should not strike the reader as controversial. To the extent that the meaning of being is an object of possible inquiry for human understanding – which in turn becomes a necessary condition for the possibility of ontology – it seems perfectly reasonable to assume that man also has the possibility to be mistaken in his understanding. However, as is usually the case with Heidegger, what is at first seemingly simple quickly ends up being radical and obscure. For as we emphasized in our short presentation of the relation between being and the essence of man above, the openness to being of Dasein is not something that man himself creates. It is rather the meaning of being as such that grounds this openness, and from which Dasein finds himself as an ecstatic projection. That is, it is because there is something like an openness of being that man originally finds himself as an existent entity. Through this radical recognition on the relation of being and the essence of man, we come to realize that the truth and untruth of the openness of Dasein is a property of the meaning of being itself. This means that the truth of being is an ontological concept, rather than epistemological. Dasein's openness can be true or untrue, not because man's understanding of being *corresponds* with the meaning of being itself. Rather, because the meaning of being reveals and conceals itself in its projected openness. The notion of the *meaning of being* and the *truth of being* thereby

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[225] Some Heidegger scholars may object to our reading and claim that the concept of truth undergoes a significant transformation in step with Heidegger's overall turn of thought (*die Kehre*). See e.g., Dahlstrom, D. O. (2016), "Truth", page 364-365. However, in our conciliatory reading of the early and later Heidegger, we suggest that there is a clear continuity in Heidegger's approach to truth. That is, even though truth in *Being and Time* is conceptualized from within the analytic of Dasein, it does not therefore contradict the later Heidegger's conceptualization of truth of being as something that ultimately transcends the human subject.

become synonymous, in the sense that it belongs to the meaning of being an ability to reveal itself truthfully, and to conceal itself untruthfully.[226]

Heidegger develops his notion of the truth of being in connection with the original Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, with an emphasis on the etymological meaning of *unconcealment – Unverborgenheit*. Although the relevant paragraphs in *Being and Time* (§§ 7B & 44) makes it clear that truth as *aletheia* has a significant role to play in the question for the meaning of being, Heidegger does not offer anything more than a rudimentary introduction throughout the two published divisions. With the *turn* of the 1930s, however, the term quickly develops into one of the most important notions of Heideggerian thought, perhaps only matched by the equally obscure neologism of *Ereignis*.[227] We nonetheless begin our inquiry into the truth of being by way of its presentation in *Being and Time*. It is first briefly mentioned in § 7B, in the introduction, in connection with an elaboration of the meaning of phenomenology. The *logos* of phenomenology is presented as having the structure of *being-true – Wahrsein –* because it brings the existent entity in question (i.e. Dasein) *out of its hiddenness and lets it be seen as unhidden –* "das Seiende, *wovon* die Rede ist, im λεγειν aus seiner Verborgenheit herausnehmen und es als Unverborgenes (ἀλέτης) sehen lassen, *entdecken*."[228] In the context of the analytic of Dasein, logos is speech – *die Rede –* in the sense of being Dasein's self-articulation of his own openness to being. In identifying the speech of logos as being-true, Heidegger accentuates the equally present possibility of distortion and concealment, that is, of being-untrue – *Falshsein*. This leads him to make the following radical but crucial conclusion: "But because 'truth' has this meaning, and because the λόγος is a definite mode of letting something be seen, the λόγος is just *not* the kind of thing that can be considered as the primary 'locus' [*Ort*] of truth."[229] What this sentence alludes to, is the coming revelation that Dasein's possibility of being-true and as well as being-untrue is ultimately contingent on something more primordial

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[226] However, that is not to say that the shift in emphasis from 'meaning' to 'truth' does not entails a shift in philosophical attention, generally corresponding to the turn from the *early* to the *later* Heidegger. See Malpas, J. (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 148.

[227] In our own depiction of Heidegger's notion of truth in *Being and Time* and his later works of the 1930s and beyond, we choose to accentuate the meaning of the word from a perspective of continuity rather than change. This is not to say, as many do, that the analysis of truth in *Being and Time* remains 'restricted' to the analysis of Dasein, and does not therefore reflect the full force of the anti-subjectivist thinking that marks Heidegger's later thinking. Jeff Malpas, for example, writes the following: "From 1936 on, however, Heidegger starts more directly to articulate the happening of truth as itself that which is primary here, and so as determinative of human being, rather than as 'founded' in the human – it is this which is a crucial element in the thinking of the 'Event' (*Ereignis*) that appears in 1936-1938." Malpas, J. (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 201.

[228] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 56 (SZ:33)

[229] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 57 (SZ:33)

than the articulated self of Dasein. That is, the truthfulness and untruthfulness of Dasein originates from the truth of being itself.

The truth of being is unconcealment. This is a strictly *formal* concept, in the sense that it does not offer any description of the matters of fact of anything existing, but only that all existent entities, by virtue of their existence, are unconcealed. And that this state of being unconcealed is brought about through an event of unconcealment.[230] The distinction between *being unconcealed* and the *event of unconcealment* is simply another way of articulating the ontological difference between existent entities and the meaning of being. The formal nature of this distinction makes Heidegger's notion of truth difficult to comprehend. Let us use a couple of examples to improve our intuition. First, (i) by the literal example of *illumination*, as a naive illustration of how the phenomenal appearance of individual things are dependent on the illuminating event of unconcealment. And second (ii), by turning to Heidegger's argument for the dependency of *epistemological truth* as correspondence on *ontological truth* as unconcealment.

(**i**) When a dark area suddenly becomes illuminated – say, by the first light penetrating a black forest, or a pitch-dark room transformed by the touch of a light switch – its surrounding landscape and nearby things are brought into the light – into unconcealment. A way to differentiate between the landscape and things illuminated, on the one hand, and the event of illumination itself, is by acknowledging the fact that the initial darkened state of concealment cannot be attributed as a property of the landscape or the things. For prior to their illumination, they were simply not present at all. Heidegger sometimes articulates the truth of being by the German word *Lichtung*, playing on the ambiguity of its literal meaning as a clearing of light, in addition to the establish meaning as a clearing of an *open region* in the woods. Of course, this naïve example of illumination is analogous to Heidegger's notion of truth, only to the point of recognizing that the event of illumination of the forest clearing, or the room, is a necessary condition for us *seeing it*, and not for its general *existence*.

(**ii**) In § 44 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger address the traditional conception of truth as correspondence between the *ideal* content of an assertion and the *real* thing itself.[231] This makes

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[230] "Truth as unconcealment is prior to 'what' is disclosed by naming the *process* of disclosure itself." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 38.
[231] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 259 (SZ:216)

truth into a *relation*. We may refer to this relational conception as *epistemological truth*.[232] Heidegger does not reject epistemological truth, but instead ask about the nature of its relation. That is, in what manner does this relation demonstrate itself as being true?[233] In order to judge whether an assertion in fact corresponds to the thing, we need a preconditioning access to the thing itself. This preconditioning access is the unconcealment of the thing – its *ontological truth* – as it is revealed to us in our phenomenal presence. Heidegger uses the simple example of a person that stands with his back against the wall and evaluates the assertion that "the picture on the wall is hanging askew."[234] The truthfulness of this assertion is demonstrated when the person turns around and sees the picture hanging askew. The ontological truth of unconcealment does not refer to the specific property as hanging askew, but to the simple fact that the picture is unconcealed in our phenomenal presence, and that this unconcealment provides us with a necessary foundation for the epistemological truth of any statement. The example of a picture hanging on a wall might seem trivial, but it is important to notice that the dependency of epistemological truth on the unconcealment of ontological truth applies with the same necessity for more complex phenomena. For example, the representational content of a modern theory of physics is *scientific*, only to the extent that it corresponds to the *experimental practices* of test objects and physicists (at the very least, by means of thought experiment).

So far, we have presented Heidegger's notion of the truth of being as an elaboration of the meaning of being. That is, that the meaning of being demonstrates a possibility of *revealing itself* truthfully and *concealing itself* untruthfully. We have tried to elucidate the ontological difference as a distinction between the *unconcealed state of existent entities* and the *grounding event of unconcealment* itself. However, the analysis so far has offered little on the meaning on the untruth of being as concealment. That is, by giving a preliminary presentation of unconcealment as an event of illumination, one might think that untruth is nothing more than the absence of the light of being. But this is not the case. Rather, Heidegger's notion of untruth is instead a fundamental form of *distortion*. In order to understand the distinction between truth and untruth we will now return to the initial framing of the question of truth in *Being and Time*, as a relation between the meaning of being and the essence of man.

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[232] Heidegger does not use this term himself. On other occasions, he refers to the relational truth of the assertion as correctness – *Richtigkeit*. See Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Origin of the Work of Art,* page 28 (GA 5: 38).
[233] As Catriona Hanley puts it: "This begs the question of what the correspondence or agreement means and presupposes, and what kind of relation obtains between a statement about something and the things about which the statement speaks." Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 135.
[234] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 260 (SZ:217)

The analytic of Dasein inquires into the essence of man as openness to being. The openness of being is not the epistemological product of human cognition but the ontological foundation from which man finds himself as an ecstatic projection. Since the meaning of being demonstrates a possibility of revealing itself truthfully and concealing itself untruthfully, the ecstatic projection of man must equally be grounded by this twofold existential situation of truth and untruth. In fact, the exposition of man's existential relation to truth and untruth corresponds to the architectonic structure of the published divisions of *Being and Time*, as the *authenticity and inauthenticity of Dasein*. The first division inquires into the everydayness of inauthentic Dasein, where the meaning of being is opened untruthfully. Whereas the second division inquires into the ecstatic projection of authentic Dasein, where the meaning of being is opened truthfully.[235]

The English word "authentic" is a poor translation of the original German word "eigentlich", for it captures only one of two essential meanings. Both words reflect a state of being *true* – or the projection of the *true reality or nature of someone or something*. However, Heidegger also puts emphasis on the root of the German word – *eigen* – which makes the projection of the true reality of Dasein an event of coming to one's most *own* self.[236] That is, to attain a state of authenticity – *Eigentlichkeit* – is to come to *one's own true self*. This emphasis tells us something critical about the methodological nature of the analytic of Dasein. The understanding of one's *own-ness* is fundamentally a first-order experience. This means that the reader of *Being and Time* will only be able to follow the argumentative development of the text to the extent that he himself becomes the object of inquiry. This self-referential structure of the analytic of Dasein is equally expressed by the reciprocal reference of the German genitive – *Analytik des Daseins* – where the analysis *of* Dasein is simultaneously carried out *by* Dasein himself.

So what does it mean to come to one's own self, to become authentic? The major achievement of *Being and Time* is its efforts to articulate the human being in a manner that radically shifts our thinking away from its rootedness in a traditional metaphysical subject.[237] The unity of thought expressed by the "I am" of the subject is for Heidegger inextricably linked

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[235] Lawrence J. Hatab specifies: "The analysis of Dasein's authentic self is found in sections 54 to 60 in *Being and Time*." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 25.
[236] Contra the traditional translation of Macquarrie & Robinson (or the more recent translation by Joan Stambaugh) of "eigentlich" into "authentic", John Haugeland suggests instead the term "owned" and "ownedness". Haugeland, J (2013), *Dasein Disclosed – John Haugeland's Heidegger*, see page 90 & 152.
[237] See Schmidt, D. J. (2016), "Being and Time", page 192.

to Dasein's self-understanding as *a being in the world*. At this point, Heidegger is simply providing a phenomenological extension to the Kantian argument that the synthetic unity of the subject (i.e., the *transcendental apperception*) is constituted through its relation to the object of appearance.[238] But a thinking that orients itself on the basis of a subject of worldly comportments is still only inauthentic. That is, if the self-inquisitorial analytic of Dasein concludes with the I of the subject as it interacts with its surrounding things and fellow humans, it will fail in its effort to think the true nature of itself as a human being.[239] It is only in the second division of *Being and Time*, when Dasein confronts its own projected possibility of death, that we arrive at an authentic self-understanding. The true *coming-to-one's-own-self* of authenticity is to come to an awareness of one's own existence as grounded on the truth of being as unconcealment.[240]

To be clear, Heidegger only briefly mentions the concept of ontological truth in his elaboration of the authenticity of Dasein in the second division.[241] However, in the final part of the first division he offers a more extensive discussion on the truth of being and its relation to the essence of man as Dasein. The §44 is titled *Dasein, Openness, and Truth*.[242] Here he rearticulates the openness to being of Dasein as the truth of unconcealment. He then goes on to frame the inauthenticity of everydayness as being in untruth, thereby making way for the authenticity of truth in the second division to come:

"The upshot of our existential-ontological Interpretation of the phenomenon of truth is (1) that truth, in the most primordial sense, is Dasein's openness, to which the

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[238] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.

[239] Technically, the *selfhood* of inauthenticity has the ontological structure of what Heidegger calls *Das Man*.

[240] In the words of Bret W. Davis: "For Heidegger *Entschlossenheit* is intimately related to the notion of *Erschlossenheit* (disclosedness). This notion of dis-closing in turn is related to Heidegger's conception of truth as *a-letheia*, 'unconcealment' or 'unhiddenness' (*Entborgenheit, Unverborgenheit*)." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 40.

[241] A couple examples: "What are we to say about the 'certainty of death'? […] To be certain of an entity means to *hold* it for true as something true. […] *But certainty is grounded in the truth, or belongs to it equiprimordially*" (BT 300 [SZ 256]). "In the resoluteness [*Entschlossenheit*] we have now arrived at that truth of Dasein which is most primordial because it is *authentic*" (BT 343 [SZ 297]).

[242] Contra Macquarrie & Robinson and Joan Stambaugh translation of "Erschlossenheit" into "disclosedness", we choose the simpler English alternative of "openness", simply because we wish to make our presentation of Heidegger as intelligible as possible. The task of § 44 is to bring the openness of Dasein (*Erschlossenheit des Daseins*) in connection with the unconcealment of truth (*Entdecktheit*). However, as the English translation "disclosedness" brings to our attention, the German etymology of "er-schlossen" corresponds to the negation (*er-*) of what is initially closed (*schließen/schlossen*).

unconcealment of entities within-the-world belongs; and (2) that Dasein is equiprimordially both in truth and in untruth."[243]

All things of this world – all existent entities – are ultimately contingent on the grounding event of truth as unconcealment. The human being of everyday life comes to *itself* through its identification with the existent entities of its surroundings. That is, *I am the things I do in the world*. The state of inauthenticity reflects the phenomenon where Dasein's self-identification with the existent entities of its surroundings blinds its understanding of the grounding event of unconcealment. That is, the inauthentic self of Dasein resides in untruth because it omits the truth of its own existence.[244] This truth is not some technical or abstract nature that hides from us. It is rather the simplicity of our immediate presence. That we come into our own – to our most authentic self – as the ecstatic projection of unconcealment. Neither authenticity nor inauthenticity are achievements *of* man. They are rather possibilities presented and enabled *for* man – grounded by the truth of being: "We presuppose truth because 'we', being in the kind of Being which Dasein possesses, *are* 'in the truth'."[245]

The Transition into a Post-Metaphysical Thinking

We have now made a first step in our preliminary introduction into the philosophy of Heidegger, by presenting three basic components operating in the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. First, the *meaning of being* (*das Sein*), as the phenomenal presence of an organized totality that grounds all existent entities (*das Seiende*), without thereby being reducible to an existent entity itself. Second, the *essence of man* (*Dasein*), as an ecstatic projection in the openness of the meaning of being. And third, the *truth of being*, as the formal structure of the meaning of being

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[243] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 265 (SZ:223). I have made two changes to the translated quote of Macquarrie & Robinson, in order preserve consistency to our use of Heidegger's language, exchanging "disclosedness" with "openness", and "uncoveredness" with "unconcealment".

[244] On the inauthenticity of Dasein, Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "For the most part, Dasein's existence is 'fallen' […], which does not connote a negative or deficient condition but simply Dasein's fascination with, and absorption in, its world of concerns and social relations, its familiar world of common practices and expectations shared with other Daseins. In its fallen condition of everyday concerns, however, Heidegger claims that Dasein is not 'itself'." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 25.

[245] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 270 (SZ: 227)

as unconcealment, which makes man either inauthentically oblivious or authentically aware of the grounds of its own ecstatic existence.

All these components are fraught with ambiguity, as they initially appear to say something familiar, perhaps even trivial, yet eventually take our thought into an altogether foreign territory. In regard to the first component, the idea that being shows itself to us in our phenomenal presence may at first seem to align with a generic claim of phenomenology, that our understanding of the world is ultimately rooted in phenomenal experience, akin to Kantian philosophy. However, the phenomenal presence of being is not an object of appearance, but rather a totality that brings all existent entities into appearance. Regarding the second component, the initial sense of the idea that man is essentially an openness to being says nothing more than that human beings are at heart conditioned by an existential awareness. That man, unlike other animals, is aware of the fact of his own existence. But in this existential awareness, man is ultimately confronted with an event that transcends his own self. Regarding the third component, the idea that being manifests itself truthfully and untruthfully, if taken to reflect a property of our understanding, is as old as philosophy itself. However, truth and untruth is no matter of limitation in human cognition, but rather an expression of the meaning of being itself. And it does not tell us anything substantive about the nature of the existent entities, but simply the formal structure of their being as brought into our presence by an event of unconcealment.

All these ambiguities reflect the radicality of Heidegger's question of being – that is, the enigma of the ontological difference. The basic framework of the two published divisions of *Being and Time* is the analytic of Dasein as a questioning of the essence of man. Especially in the first division, this line of questioning can easily be mistaken for traditional transcendental philosophy, inquiring into the conditions for the possibility of understanding that originates in a transcendental subject. But the ultimate goal of *Being and Time* is not to uncover the essence of man, or any other existent entity for that matter. Rather, what "*is to be found out by the asking*" of the analytic of Dasein is the true meaning of being itself.[246] And in this manner of asking beyond the matters of existent entities, insisting on the ontological difference at the heart of the question of being, *Being and Time* finds itself in a deeply unsettled position with regards to traditional philosophy. The outlines of Heidegger's heterodox thinking are already present in the second division. But the third division remains unpublished, and so the final exposition

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[246] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 26 (SZ:6)

of the meaning of being as time remains unavailable to us. Heidegger's thinking from the early 1930s and onwards *turns away* from the conceptualizations of fundamental ontology and the analytic of Dasein, attempting instead to articulate the grounding event of being in a manner that radically shifts thinking away from the systematic investigations of traditional philosophy.

What would have been the contribution of the third division? Looking back with the hindsight of almost twenty years of intellectual development, a matured Heidegger in *Letter on "Humanism"* presents the transition of the third division as a venture beyond the limits of traditional philosophy qua metaphysics. This *transcending of metaphysics* was to become a hallmark of Heidegger's *later* period of thought:

> "The essential provenance of metaphysics, and not just its limits, became questionable in *Being and Time*. […] Metaphysics does indeed represent existent entities [*Seiende*] in their being, and so it also thinks the being of existent entities. But it does not think being as such, does not think the difference between being and existent entities. […] Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of the human being belongs to the truth of being."[247]

The quote states that metaphysics is the inquiry into the being of existent entities – *das Sein des Seienden*. And that in this preoccupation with existent entities, traditional metaphysics has lost touch with the meaning of being itself. In *Being and Time*, the original ambition was to articulate this transcending event beyond existent entities from within a system of metaphysics. To employ the analysis of the existential and ecstatic nature of Dasein as a platform to articulate the truth of being. In short, to *transcend metaphysics from within metaphysics*.[248] Whereas the turn of the later Heidegger entails a transcending of metaphysics altogether, inquiring into the truth of being itself, in a way that elevates thinking beyond all matters of existent entities.

One instructive way to approach the turn away from the metaphysics of the *early* Heidegger and into his *later* post-metaphysical thinking, which also entails a retrospective interpretation of the transition of thought in the unpublished third division of *Being and Time*, is by emphasis on the shift from *Eigentlichkeit* to *Ereignis*. Heidegger writes in a footnote to the first edition of the *Letter on "Humanism"*: "For '*Ereignis*' has been the guiding word of my

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[247] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, in *Pathmarks*, page 246 (GA 9:322). I have changed the English translation (by Frank A. Capuzzi) of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".
[248] This understanding of metaphysics as containing an internal event of transcendence is articulated explicitly in *What is Metaphysics*. For example: "Metaphysics is inquiry beyond or over beings that aims to recover them as such and as a whole for our grasp." Heidegger, M. (1998), *What is Metaphysics*, in *Pathmarks*, page 93 (GA 9: 118).

thinking since 1936."[249] The standard meaning of the German word is *event*. Not merely as the regular transpiring of everyday occurrences, but as a special occasion where something happens which makes the occurrence conspicuous *as an event*. Elaborating on the nature of this event, Heidegger accentuates the German etymology. First, the word connotes the older form of "Eräugnis" and "eräugnen" which literally means to *come into a line of sight – to come into the eye (Auge)*. This makes *Ereignis* and *Lichtung* into synonyms, as the process of coming into the line of sight can only take place through the grounding event of illumination. Second, the word also connotes "eignen", which means *suitable*, as something *naturally belonging*, and "eigen" which means *one's own*. Ereignis then becomes both the *place* that is *naturally suited for man*, and the *event* in which man *comes to his own self*.

Frank A. Capuzzi translates "Ereignis" in *Letter on "Humanism"* as the *event of appropriation*. We understand the verb "appropriate" as a process of *taking possession of something*. Possession of what? The root of "appropriate" refers to *property*, which in turn stems from the Latin *proprius*, which means *one's own*. We may interpret the Heideggerian term as *the coming to one's own – ad proprius – by the process of taking up residence*. However, in our elaboration of *Ereignis* as an event of appropriation, it is imperative to emphasize that man is not the active agent of this appropriation. Rather, man is instead *that which is being appropriated by the event of Ereignis*. That is, to be a human self is to be conditioned by a primordial event which appropriates its existential residence. So what, then, is "doing" the appropriating? It is simply being itself.

We now begin to see that *Ereignis* articulates an event that is analogous with the ecstatic movement of *Eigentlichkeit* in the second division of *Being and Time*. But it does so in a manner that flips the perspective from the essence of man as being *opened to* the truth of being, to the idea of being itself as somehow *grounding this openness*. In short, whereas authenticity reflects being from the perspective of the essence of man, the event of appropriation reflects man from the perspective of the truth of being. This is the same transition of thought that Heidegger reads, retrospectively, into the third division of *Being and Time*:

> "The adequate execution and completion of this other thinking that abandons subjectivity is surely made more difficult by the fact that in the publication of *Being and Time* the third division of the first part, 'Time and Being,' was held back […].

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[249] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, in *Pathmarks*, page 241n (GA 9: 316n). The English translation by Frank A. Capuzzi includes both the German word "Ereignis" and the English paraphrasing "event of appropriation".

Here everything is reversed. The division in question was held back because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning [*Kehre*] and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics."[250]

As we now turn to the later Heidegger in *Letter on "Humanism"* and *The Question Concerning Technology*, we also turn away from the metaphysical project of Dasein and fundamental ontology. But in our conciliatory reading, we do not perceive this turn as a discontinuation in Heidegger's development of thought. Rather, we approach the thinking of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis* as a *radicalization* of the philosophical project that was outlined but never fully articulated in *Being and Time*. And in this submersion into the radical territory of the later Heidegger, we temporarily abandon all aspirations of a systematic philosophy. We do so to establish our *environmental thought*, only to reemerge in parts three and four, where we will attempt to use this thought as a foundation for our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene.

[250] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 250 (GA 9:328).

3. Heidegger's Humanism as a Thinking of Being

Despite its relatively short length (the English translation is 38 pages), the *Letter on "Humanism"* of 1946 is a work of great importance in the Heideggerian corpus. It reflects a thinker that has matured from the infamous and enigmatic turn of the 1930s.[251] The letter not only manages to encapsulate the central thought of the so-called *later* Heidegger, but it is also one of the few places where Heidegger explicitly addresses *die Kehre*.[252] The overarching theme of *Letter on "Humanism"* is the notion of *humanity*, as an inquiry into the human essence. In approaching this topic Heidegger is not without reluctance, for the tradition of humanism also comes in tow with the kind of metaphysical conception of man that his own thinking tries to overcome. The letter thereby offers an attempt to offer a more primordial notion of humanity as an event of *coming to awareness of the truth of being*.

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[251] William J. Richardson called it a "culminating moment in his [Heidegger's] development", and without any doubt, "the most important of his writings since EM [*Einführung in die Metaphysik*], not so much for what it offers that is new but for a crystallization of the entire development we have seen him undergo." Richardson, W. J. (1963/2003), *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page 530.

[252] According to Andrew J. Mitchell, this makes *Letter on "Humanism"* a "central document in what has been called Heidegger's 'self-interpretation'." Mitchell, A. J. (2016), "The 'Letter on Humanism': Ek-sistence, Being, and Language", page 237. Heidegger himself writes: "The first time in my published writings that I spoke of the 'reversal' [die Kehre] was in the 'Letter on Humanism'." Heidegger, M. (2003/1963), *Preface*, in Richardson, William J., *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page XVI.

The *Letter on "Humanism"* becomes relevant for our own project on two main accounts. First, we will use this work to introduce the basic thought of the *later* Heidegger. This thought is expressed by the idea of the truth of being as unconcealment – *Unverborgenheit* – as the disclosure and concealment of a meaning that grounds all existence. And as the event of appropriation – *Ereignis* – where man comes to himself in the truthful presence of being. Second, in presenting the later Heidegger, we also stand to offer the basic elements of our *environmental thought* for the Anthropocene. We introduced this thought as an ecological reorientation for humanism. In its Heideggerian conception, the roots of *ethos* and *oikos* are molded into a primordial unity, where the essence of man is to abide in the nearness of being.

The esoteric nature of his language makes Heidegger's philosophy controversial. This feature is only worsened as we now descend from the relatively structured analysis of *Being and Time* and go into the poetic landscape of the *Letter on "Humanism"*. However, we will still mainly abide by the form of style of Heidegger's own concepts and arguments. The process of integrating our Heideggerian thought into a more conventional form of philosophy – that is, in the form of a metaphysics of man and nature – will be the task of the parts and chapters to come.

How do we approach Heidegger's *Letter on "Humanism"*? The letter itself is addressed to Jean Beaufret, providing answers to the following three questions: *How can we restore meaning to the word "humanism"? What is the relation of ontology to a possible ethics? How can we preserve the element of adventure that all research contains without simply turning philosophy into an adventuress?*[253] We will use these questions to structure our own interpretation of the letter. In the **first** subchapter, we present a Heideggerian humanism as the *return of man to his original home in the truth of being* – representing the root meaning of *oikos*. In the **second** subchapter, we present the coming to awareness of the truth of being as a *radical practice of letting things be* – representing the root meaning of *ethos*. And in the **third** subchapter, we present the adventurous element of thinking, as the emancipation of thought that emerge when confronting the abysmal ground of nothingness that lay at the heart of the truth of being.

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[253] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 241/262, 268 & 275 (GA 9: 315/344, 353 & 362).

First Question: *Returning Man to his Original Home of Being*

"How can we restore meaning to the word "humanism"?"[254] The question suggests that humanism is somehow lost. The "–ism" centers our thought on *humanity*, that is, on the *essence of man – das Wesen des Menschen*. It represents the concern for man, that he be "human [*menschlich*] and not inhumane, 'inhuman,' that is, outside his essence."[255] When asking about the *essence* of something, it seems at first inescapable to think this word confined through the traditional dichotomy of *essentia* and *existentia*. That is, distinguishing between the *possible what-ness* of something, and its *actualized reality*. According to traditional Western metaphysics, we determine the what-ness of man as *animal rationale*. Heidegger responds:

> "This essential definition of the human being is not false. But it is conditioned by metaphysics. […] Metaphysics does not ask about the truth of being itself. Nor does it therefore ask in what way the essence of the human being belongs to the truth of being."[256]

What does it mean to ask about the essence of man as belonging to being? How can we think about the human essence as something differentiated from *what* it is and *that* it is? Heidegger's concern for the essence of man is existential in the most radical sense, as it puts the very meaning of its being into question. The metaphysical inquiry into the *what* and *that* of existent entities, on the other hand, merely takes this meaning for granted. When we ask what it means for man to be, we orient the question of humanity from within the question of being as such.

This way of distinguishing and accentuating the question of being is of utmost importance, and thus deserving of repetition. Heidegger's question on the essence of man does not ask *what* I am, nor does it address the fact *that* I am. It asks what it *means* for me to be. The "what" and "that" presuppose this meaning as the ultimate foundation for their inquiry. The ecstatic experience of death in *Being and Time* revealed the *that-ness* of my existence as being at stake. But the fundamental revelation of the second division was not therefore the *existentia*

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[254] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 241 (GA 9: 315). My *italic*.
[255] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 244 (GA 9: 319). Frank A. Capuzzi translates the German "Mensch" and "seines" to "human beings" and "their". I believe this change in representation from singular to plural is problematic, and have therefore altered the translation to "man" and "his".
[256] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 246 (GA 9: 322).

of Dasein. Rather, it was through the transcending of my *existentia* – that is, through the possibility of my death – that the meaning of my being was brought into light.

The original German word for "essence" is "Wesen". Heidegger exploits the etymological connection between *Wesen*, *anwesend* and *Anwesenheit*.[257] We can do the same with *essence*, *present* and *presence*, all stemming from the Latin *esse – being*. The essence of man is to be present – *anwesend sein*. This is by and large a Kantian argument. Through the critical turn of his transcendental philosophy, Kant sought to ground all existent entities, and thereby the human subject, as objects of *appearance*. However, in order for man to be present, he requires a grounding presence – *Anwesenheit*. The ultimate meaning of this presence in *Critique of Pure Reason* is space and time. Heidegger was to continue this argument in the third division of *Being and Time*, identifying the meaning of being as time.[258] Both time and space continues to frame the *later* Heidegger's articulation of the truth of being, for example as *historical event* (*Geschehen*, *Ereignis*) and as *region* (*Gegend*, *das Offene*); although Heidegger never (re)attempts at a systematic articulation of being according to its temporal structures (*Temporalität des Seins*).

The essence of man is to stand in the presence of being. Heidegger articulates this presence equally simple as *that which is near*, *nearness – die Nähe*. Humanism then becomes an endeavor that "thinks the humanity of the human being from nearness to being."[259] This tells us something important about the nature of Heidegger's thinking in *Letter on "Humanism"* in comparison with traditional metaphysics. A thinking of being does not invoke abstract arguments or technical concepts; it does not "overcome metaphysics by climbing still higher, surmounting it, transcending it somehow or other; thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest."[260] The difficulty of Heidegger's thinking lies precisely in its simplicity. Because the truth of being represents what is most immediate about our surrounding presence, it is also most easily overshadowed by our proclivity towards

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[257] Two examples from the *Letter on "Humanism"*: (1) "[…] die Weise, wie der Mensch in seinem eigenen Wesen zum Sein *anwest*, ist das ekstatische Innestehen in der Wahrheit des Seins." (2) "Ob es und wie es erscheint, ob und wie der Gott und die Götter, die Geschichte und die Nature in die Lichtung des Seins hereinkommen, *an- und abwesen*, entscheidet nicht der Mensch." Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 251 & 252 (GA 9: 330). My *italic*.
[258] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 40 & 64 (SZ:19 & 39)
[259] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 261 (GA 9: 343).
[260] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 268 (GA 9: 352).

technical analysis of the things residing *within* this presence: "Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from the human being"[261]

This latter argument, that the most immediate and obvious of things also tend to be the most easily overlooked, is an insight that to some extent applies for all philosophical inquiry. Traditional questions of philosophy accentuate and critically address things of thought that humans otherwise take for granted. A significant part of the process of learning to think philosophically is to make the presuppositions of our everyday life conspicuous. Be it for example the basis of our normative judgments, or our conceptions of objectivity. After making such presuppositions conspicuous, however, philosophy quickly turns into rigorous analysis of concepts and their logical relations, losing touch with the initial event that jolted thought into its current state of awareness. This initial event itself does not consist in determination and argument, but rather a temporarily state of bewilderedness and wonder. For example, the basis of my normative judgment turns into a conspicuous object of inquiry, only once my initial normative understanding is disrupted and thereby put into question. Heidegger's thinking of being operates within this very landscape of bewilderment and wonder, prior to any established language of technical inquiry: "But if human being is to find his way once again into the nearness of being he must first learn to exist in the nameless."[262]

The most important concept in Heidegger's articulation of the essence of man in *Letter on "Humanism"* is *ek-sistence – Ek-sitenz.*[263] This concept combines two words, *existence* and *ecstatic*. Together they attempt to express the meaning of the being of man – humanity. In what sense is the essence of human existence *ecstatic*? We can begin to make sense of this idea by emphasizing Heidegger's longstanding claim on the ontological primacy of *possibility*.[264] Standard metaphysics conceptualize "possibility" in contrast to "actuality", which in turn connects to the distinction of *essentia* and *existentia*.[265] When Heidegger articulates man's openness to being in *Being and Time*, he does so with the neologism of *Da-sein*. Conventionally, the German word means *existence*, but literally, it says *there-being*. The "there" represents the existential possibilities of man, grounded by the truth of being:

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[261] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 252 (GA 9: 331).
[262] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 243 (GA 9: 319).
[263] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 247 (GA 9: 324).
[264] Hanley, C. (2000), *Being and God in Aristotle and Heidegger*, page 104. Kisiel, T. (1993), *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, page 439.
[265] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 242 (GA 9: 316).

"the human being occurs essentially in such a way that he is the "there" [das "Da"], that is, the clearing of being. The "being" of the Da, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of being."[266]

Man understands himself as his existential possibilities.[267] This line of thought indicates that the traditional distinction of *essentia* and *existentia* merely address two aspects of abstraction from a more original phenomenon. For the fact of its existence – the *that-being* of an entity – is originally manifest in its projected possibilities – the *what-being* of the entity. This original phenomenon is *ecstatic* in the sense of being a *projected future possibility* that transcends the spatio-temporal immanence of *here* and *now*. When Heidegger articulates the essence of man as *ecstatic inherence – ekstatischen Innestehens –* he continues the idea of Dasein from *Being and Time* as *thrown possibility – geworfene Möglichkeit*.[268] That is, when we say that man is thrown into his existential possibilities there is no initial subject present, which subsequently projects itself onto its possibilities. Rather, man *is* himself this very ecstatic projection. Man is therefore not the *ground* of his own existence. His ek-sistence is rather *given* to him. Once again, Heidegger relates his thinking back to *Being and Time*:

> "In *Being and Time* we purposively and cautiously say, "there is/it gives" ["es gibt"] being. [The] "it" that here "gives" is being itself. The "gives" names the essence of being that is giving, granting its truth. The self-giving into the open, along with the open region itself, is being itself."[269]

Heidegger utilizes the ambiguity of the conventional and literal meaning of the German phrase, "Es gibt", indicating that man *exists* through the *giving* of being. This puts emphasis on the ontological difference between man as an existent entity and the event of being that grounds this existence: "the projection is essentially a thrown projection. What throws in such projection is not the human being but being itself, which sends the human being into ek-sistence of Dasein that is his essence."[270]

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[266] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 248 (GA 9: 325).

[267] Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "For Heidegger, existence is to be understood in terms of the Greek *ek-stasis*, as standing out; that is to say, not the 'inside' of a discrete consciousness, not even an outside as the 'other side' of consciousness, but a standing *in* the out, an immersion *in* the 'there' of being that characterizes Dasein's prereflective involvement in the world." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 11.

[268] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 183 (SZ: 144).

[269] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 254-255 (GA 9: 334). Heidegger original quote contains the French "il y a l'Être" as well as the German "Es gibt Sein". Since we also include the English translation "there is/it gives being", I have left out the French quote for improved readability.

[270] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 257 (GA 9: 337).

How can we restore meaning to the word "humanism"? The question suggests that humanism is somehow lost.[271] The loss corresponds to a *forgetfulness* of our own essence. To restore humanism is to regain our humanity, in the sense of bringing thought back in connection with the truth of being. Heidegger refer to this restoration as a return to *home* – a *homecoming*.[272] The word "home" is thought here, "not patriotically or nationalistically, but in terms of the history of being."[273] To be at home is to find oneself residing in the "nearness to being".[274] This tells us something fundamental about the "relation" of man to being. The essence of man is *ek-sistence*, that is, to stand in the truth of being, as its ecstatic projection. Man can either find himself at *home*, facing his essence. Or, he can be *homeless*, losing himself in the forgetfulness of metaphysics.[275]

What do we mean by the loss of oneself in forgetfulness? The standard English idiom – *"to lose oneself in…"* – refers to the phenomenon where a person is *engaged in an activity* to the extent that he loses track of all things that are external to the continued execution and achievement of this engagement. But how does this all-consuming immersion reflect a loss of *self*? No doubt is the active agent still present. The idiom expresses an absence of a *critical self-awareness*. For example, if I lose myself in a line of work, I may neglect to recognize the ramifications of my actions, how I affect the human beings in my life, or to what extent I am able to care for my own basic needs or well-being. The self-awareness lost is thus not a solipsistic concern for an isolated subject, but rather a critical evaluation of my current situatedness in a state of engagement. Heidegger's notion of forgetfulness reflects a similar structure of self-awareness, but with a radical twist: *To recognize my situatedness is ultimately to transcend my self – reflecting on the grounds of my existence*. Invoking yet another English idiom, we may say that the coming to one's most own essential self presupposes that one is not *full of oneself*.

The essence of man is ek-sistence – that is, the ecstatic projection of the truth of being. Man *loses himself*, in the ontological sense of the phrase, when he forgets the grounding of his

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[271] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 262 (GA 9: 344).

[272] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 257 (GA 9: 337). The word "homecoming" is a direct reference to the poem by Hölderlin, "Heimkunft/An die Verwandten", which Heidegger addresses in a 1943-essay by the same name. See GA 4:9.

[273] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 257 (GA 9: 338).

[274] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 258 (GA 9: 338).

[275] On *home*, the *homecoming*, but also the *uncanniness* (*Unheimlichkeit*) of this homecoming, see: Malpas, Jeff (2006), *Heidegger's topology – Being, Place, World*, page 149.

existence in the truth of being. This twofold existential possibility of the human essence – either to lose oneself in forgetfulness or to bring thinking back into the presence of being – is not the achievement of man or human subjectivity. The existential situation of man is given to him, as the *historical sending of being*: "Human beings do not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of being, come to presence and depart. The advent of beings lies in the *destiny of being*" – *Geschick des Seins*.[276] The Western history of metaphysics represents that manner in which the sending of being has brought man into a state of homelessness: "Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of existent entities by being. Homelessness is the symptom of oblivion of being. Because of it the truth of being remains unthought."[277] Heidegger's concept of *thinking*, on the other hand, represents the manner in which the sending of being disrupts the careful immersion of metaphysics, throwing man out of his forgetfulness, letting him back to his home: "Thinking, in contrast, lets itself be claimed by being so that it can say the truth of being."[278]

Second Question: *A Radical Practice of Letting Things Be*

We have descended into the esoteric depths of the *later* Heidegger. Confronting the first question of the *Letter on "Humanism"*, what have we learned so far? All things belong to the meaning of being. This claim is initially trivial, stating simply that our understanding of a thing qua existent entity presupposes an understanding of what it *means to be*. But Heidegger claims this meaning to be *phenomenally given* – that is, to be a phenomenon that is not only *differentiated* from the existent entities themselves, but which equally *grounds* their existence. Heidegger refers to this phenomenal meaning as the *truth of being*. The essence of man – humanity – is a self-reflective awareness where I relate my own existence to the truth of being. That is, I become aware of my own *ecstatic* existence – as *ek-sistence* – revealing my contingence on a grounding event that ultimately transcends me. This is an *existential*

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[276] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 252 (GA 9: 330f). The Heideggerian word "Geschick" combines the base meaning of *fate* with the related "Geschichte", meaning *history*, and "schicken", which means to *send*, thereby emphasizing that history is *a fate-full sending of a given contemporary situation*.
[277] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 258 (GA 9: 339). I have changed Frank A. Capuzzi's translation of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".
[278] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 239 (GA 9: 313).

experience in the most radical sense of the word, as I face the very meaning of my being. Heidegger refers to this existential event as a return to one's *home*.

Connecting our inquiry into the *later* Heidegger with the introduction to an *ecological humanism* in the beginning of this chapter, we have now identified "oikos" as the *home of the truth of being*. The second question of the *Letter on "Humanism"* further accentuates the essence of man as "ethos" – that is, as the meaning of the essence of man as *abiding in the home of being*:

> "But if humanitas must be viewed as so essential to the thinking of being, must not "ontology" therefore be supplemented by "ethics"? Is not that effort entirely essential which you express in the sentence, "What I have been trying to do for a long time now is to determine precisely the relation of ontology to a possible ethics"?"[279]

The quote above includes the original question from Beaufret as well as Heidegger's interpretation of its meaning. Humanity and humanism are concepts we initially associate with ethics. But as Heidegger has now brought these concepts in direct connection with the truth of being, we have ended up with an unsettled relation between ontology and ethics. Ontology and ethics are traditionally considered as the principal disciplines of *theoretical and practical philosophy*. Ontology is theoretical in the sense that it thinks the being of existent entities as theoretical representation, that is, according to conceptual thinking – *begriffliche Denkens*.[280] Ethics, on the other hand, is practical because it provides us with "directives that can be readily applied to our active lives."[281] Heidegger quickly rejects both forms of ontology and ethics, stating his own thinking of being to represent a more *primordial and rigorous* form of intellectual endeavor:

> "The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass [*ereignet sich*] before this distinction. Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection of being and nothing else. Belonging to being, because thrown by being into the preservation of its truth and claimed for such preservation, it thinks being. Such thinking has no result. It has no effect."[282]

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[279] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 268 (GA 9: 353). My *italic*. The original quote recites the question in French.
[280] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 271 (GA 9: 357).
[281] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 358).
[282] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 358).

Even though Heidegger rejects "ontology" and "ethics" as a way of framing his own thinking, he does not thereby discard the second question made by Beaufret: "Nevertheless, your question, thought in a more original way, retains a meaning and an essential importance."[283] The thinking of being offers instead a *common ground* which enable us to think ontology and ethics in their primordial meaning:

> "Before we attempt to determine more precisely the relationship between "ontology" and "ethics" we must ask what "ontology" and "ethics" themselves are. It becomes necessary to ponder whether what can be designated by both terms still remains near and proper to what is assigned to thinking, which as such has to think above all the truth of being."[284]

We can connect this attempt at a radical framing of "ontology" and "ethics" to our initial introduction into the metaphysical transformation of the Anthropocene. In part one we claimed the epochal event of our contemporary situation to be one of *reinstating nature with a normative meaning*. This transformative event seems to violate a fundamental dogma of modern metaphysics, namely the categorical distinction between that which *is* and that which *ought to be*, which traditionally corresponds to the disciplines of ontology and ethics, as either the inquiry into the being of things themselves, or the normative judgment we humans make about these things. The classification of philosophy itself according to "ontology" and "ethics" seems to enforce this very division of thought. In order to think the Anthropocene as an event of reinstating nature with normative meaning, we must first acquire a new *ground for thought* that is able to transcend this division.

As Heidegger introduces the second question towards the end of the *Letter on "Humanism"*, he is quick to reject the traditional distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy as a framework for his thinking of being. This may seem strange at first, as the letter begins by addressing the question of the *essence of action – Wesen des Handelns*.[285] However, what this apparent inconsistency in fact reveal is an intent to establish a new and far more *radical concept of practice*, which transcends the standard understanding of the word according to disciplines like ethics and political theory. Action, says Heidegger, is usually viewed as *causing an effect*, and consequently *valued* according to its *utility*.[286] A *thinking of being*, on

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[283] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 271 (GA 9: 358).
[284] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 269 (GA 9: 353f).
[285] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 239 (GA 9: 313)
[286] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 239 (GA 9: 313)

the other hand, represents a practice of letting man back into his essence – that is, into the nearness of the truth of being – a practice that brings man out of his initial state of forgetfulness. But is not this disruption from forgetfulness simply another form of action, which effects a result – that is, as an achievement for our understanding? Far from it. For the disruption of forgetfulness resides rather in a particular state of *letting things be*. Opposite from the willful assertion of subjectivity that determines any human action in the world, man comes to realize his essence only when he is *withdrawn from action*, letting himself instead be claimed by the truth of being.[287]

The emphasis on the practice of thinking as an event of letting things be demonstrates a significant change of mood – *Stimmung* – going from *Eigentlichkeit* to *Ereignis*. When Dasein achieves authenticity, the *early* Heidegger articulates man as being in a state of *resoluteness – Entschlossenheit*. Whereas for the *later* Heidegger, when thinking is *appropriated* by the event of being, the dominant mood is instead articulated by the German word of *Gelassenheit* – as a *composure of releasement*.[288] Compared to a traditional concept of ethics, the resoluteness of authenticity certainly appears as the more obvious candidate for a Heideggerian notion of morally acting person. But the mature Heidegger of the *Letter on "Humanism"* now suggests that the traditional understanding of morality, as the acting out of some principle or law, is in fact preconditioned by a more original state of ethical reflection that transcends all forms of action. So what is this original state of ethics?

The articulation of the thinking of being as a radical practice of letting things be leads Heidegger to reimagine the very concept of ethics. The original Greek word "ethos" is usually translated as meaning *character, custom or habit*.[289] However, Heidegger's emphasis is on the

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[287] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 239 & 272 (GA 9: 313 & 358)

[288] Hubert L. Dreyfus writes: "Heidegger only occasionally considers how an individual in our nihilistic age should live while awaiting a nonnihilistic culture. When he does, what he propose is not *Entschlossenheit*, with its misleading suggestions of willfulness and triumphant joy, or even *Ent-schlossenheit*, with its implication that openness to meaninglessness is an end in itself, but rather *Gelassenheit*, a serene openness to a possible change in our understanding of being." Dreyfus, Hubert L. (1991). *Being-in-the-world – A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, page 339. Bret W. Davies points to the inherent ambiguity of *Entschlossenheit*, echoed by the transition from the early to the later Heidegger: "How then are we to understand this ambiguity of *Entschlossenheit*, that it on the one hand leans toward a supreme will to mastery, a mastery over even Dasein's own death, and on the other hand that it is a resolve to repeat the interruption of every project of Dasein that tends to forget its own finitude." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 49.

[289] In *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger depicts ἦθος in a similar way, complementary to the practical comportments of Dasein: "First of all, we will consider ἦθος, the 'comportment' of the speaker: in what manner the speaker offers himself to his hearers in discourse […]". Heidegger, M. (2009), *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, page 111 (GA 18:165).

additional but often neglected meaning of ethos as *an accustomed place, a residence*. The meaning and etymology of the German translation as *Aufenthalt* brings an additional layer to Heidegger's analysis. For "Aufenthalt" is a *temporarily* residence, a *sojourn*, as a movement brought to a state of *halt* (*Aufent-halt*). Appropriating Heidegger's concept for our own interpretation according to the English language, we chose the word "abode". An *abode* is a place to dwell, a place to live. An abode is also a nominalization of the past tense of the verb *to abide*. As an abiding place, the abode is a *temporary stay*, a place to *wait*, and a place to *endure*. It is temporary in the sense of being a particular *event – Ereignis –* that takes us out of the familiar and usual dealings with our surroundings. It is a place of waiting as opposed to willing, in the sense of an event that is *given* to those who waits, as opposed to *taken* by those who wills. And it is a place of enduring, in the sense of *undergoing* and perhaps even *suffering* a transformation.

Heidegger reimagines *ethos* as the human abode in the presence of the truth of being.[290] *Ethics* then becomes a thinking that "ponders the abode of the human being".[291] Through this re-imagination, Heidegger rejects the traditional notion of practical philosophy as providing *directives for our action* that are *valuated for the utility of its effect*. To assess something according to its *value – Wert –* is to subject it as an object of human appreciation.[292] That is, reducing its existence to the willful actions of human subjectivity. The abiding ethos of the human essence transcends the subjectivity of value, entering instead a primordial state of *letting things be*. By rejecting an ethical orientation towards "value", Heidegger effectively makes a criticism of much of 20th century environmentalist philosophy:

> "The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. When one proclaims "God" the altogether "highest value," this is a degradation of God's essence. Here as elsewhere thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against being. To think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of existent entities. It means rather to bring the clearing of the

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[290] As François Raffoul puts it, "when Heidegger takes issue with ethics as a metaphysical discipline, it is with the intent of uncovering a more originary sense of ethics as 'authentic dwelling' and 'standing-in' the truth of being." Raffoul, F. (2016), "Ethics", page 291. Graham Mayeda adds: "Because of this characterization of ethics, Heidegger sees fundamental ontology *as* ethics". Mayeda, G. (2006), *Time, Space and Ethics in the Philosophies of Watsuji Tetsurō, Kuki Shūzō, and Martin Heidegger*, page 20.
[291] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 271 (GA 9: 356)
[292] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 265 (GA 9: 349)

truth of being before thinking, as against subjectivizing existent entities into mere objects."[293]

What then, remains of an ethical meaning when the things in our phenomenal presence are *dispossessed* of their value? In a state of letting go, that *release* all things for our thinking, they now appear instead with a sense of *dignity – Würde*.[294] Dignity is the ethical meaning of all things, standing in the truth of being. To be removed from the nearness of being is to lose touch with this ethical meaning. That is, to be consumed by a forgetfulness that removes us from our abiding home. Heidegger connects this deprival of ethical meaning to Marx and the idea of *alienation – Entfremdung*: "What Marx recognized in an essential and significant sense, though derived from Hegel, as the alienation of the human being has its roots in the homelessness of human beings."[295] This alienation of homelessness goes to the heart of our claim in part one, when we presented the Anthropocene as an epochal event of overcoming *nihilism*. To come back home to our abode in the truth of being is to reinstate nature itself with a normative meaning.

Heidegger's distinction between dignity – *Würde* – and the value of things – *Wert* – is still far from transparent. What is this *dignified ethical meaning* that man confronts in the face of the truth of being? This very question brings us to the final question of the *Letter on "Humanism"*. What Heidegger addresses as the *adventurous element of thinking* at the very end of his letter –appearing at first to be nothing more than a mere appendix to the main content – takes us to the final and grounding element of a true thinking of being. Elaborating on the radical practice of thinking as an *affirmation of nothingness* will complete our presentation of Heidegger's thinking of being as a unification of *ethos* and *oikos*.

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[293] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 265 (GA 9: 349). I have changed Frank A. Capuzzi's translation of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".
[294] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 265 (GA 9: 349)
[295] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 258 (GA 9: 339). I have changed Frank A. Capuzzi's translation of "Entfremdung" from "estrangement" to "alienation".

Third Question: *The Free Thought in The Face of Nothingness*

What does it mean for Heidegger to say that *ethos* and *oikos* are the same? The idea of an "essence of man" corresponds to an acquired state of *self-awareness* – that is, an event through which man comes to reflects on the meaning of his own existence. The Heideggerian notion of "thinking" thus represents the antithesis to man's *forgetfulness* of his essence. We have inquired into the event of man's realization of a thoughtful self-awareness, first, by manner of a brief introduction into the metaphysics of Dasein in *Being and Time*, and consequently, as the post-metaphysical endeavor in the *Letter on "Humanism"*. At the heart of both works lies an existential experience that violently overthrows the traditional foundation of the human *subject* – the "I am" of thought. The most authentic and radical sense of self-awareness centers on a *grounding event* that ultimately transcends man, and from which he finds *himself* as its ecstatic projection. Heidegger articulates this grounding event as the *truth of being*. To say that *ethos* and *oikos* are the same becomes a Heideggerian statement, in the sense that the truth of being is the *home* that ultimately grounds man's existence, and from which he is able to understand himself, as well as everything in his surroundings. Man is able to return to the home of his essence by manner of a radical practice of letting things be. That is, the homecoming is not the achievement of an active subject, but rather a revelation given to man, as he abides in a receptive mode of thinking. Heidegger identifies this abiding residence in the nearness of the truth of being as a primordial meaning of ethics.

However, even after our inquiry into the two first questions of the *Letter on "Humanism"*, it still remains to be asked: What is this *phenomenal presence* which Heidegger names the truth of being? In what way does it represent a grounding event that *transcends man*, only for him to regain his own essence? And what is the primordial *ethical meaning* of man's abode in the presence of being, from which things regain their dignity? These questions take us back to the very notion of truth itself – to *unconcealment*. The word has the structure of a *negation*, as *un*-concealment. As such, it reflects a dynamic relationship between two grounding movements – *revelation* and *concealment*.[296] In order to understand this dynamic relationship, we must begin with the meaning of concealment. This *primacy of concealment* applies both

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[296] And to understand this dynamic, is the ultimate task for Heidegger: "In the simplest of terms: Heidegger's whole effort is to interrogate the positive-negative process of ἀ-λήθεια, insofar as it gives rise to metaphysics." Richardson, W. J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought*, page 9.

structurally and hermeneutically. *Structurally*: It only makes sense to speak of something as being disclosed if we already know the meaning of hiddenness. *Hermeneutically*: If we already find ourselves residing in an illuminated place, the illumination itself only becomes apparent if we by some process become aware of the possibility of a return to darkness.

With the third question of the *Letter on "Humanism"*, it is our intention to accentuate the truth of being itself, by manner of inquiring into the meaning of concealment. In the passage leading up to the final question, Heidegger presents a short and enigmatic discussion on *nothingness*. The subsequent question itself centers on the meaning of *adventure*. Inquiring into these things of thought – nothingness and adventure – we will present the ultimate and grounding piece for Heidegger's thinking of being as a unification of ethos and oikos.

> "Through its simple essence, the thinking of being makes itself unrecognizable to us. But if we become acquainted with the unusual character of the simple, then another plight immediately befalls us. The suspicion arises that such thinking of being falls prey to arbitrariness; for it cannot cling to existent entities. Whence does thinking take its measure? What law governs its deed? Here the third question of your letter must be entertained: How can we preserve the element of adventure that all research contains without simply turning philosophy into an adventuress?"[297]

With less than two pages left of the letter, one might be tempted to read this question primarily as providing a fitting exit. Heidegger makes a short reference to *Poetics* and the claim by Aristotle that "poeticizing is truer than the exploration of existent entities."[298] Then he introduces the notion of a "first law of thinking" as the *fittedness of man to say the truth of being*, as he is appropriated by the *fateful sending of being*; playing on the etymological connection between the German *Schicklichkeit*, *Schicksal*, and *schicken*.[299] Finally, he ends on insisting that a *thinking of the future* – what is needed to meet the *present world crisis* – "is no longer philosophy, because it thinks more originally than metaphysics – a name identical to philosophy."[300]

The third question sets the notion of *adventure* as a framework for the truthfulness of poetry, the idea of a first law of thinking, and the transformation from metaphysics to thinking.

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[297] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 275 (GA 9: 362). My *italic*. I have changed the English translation (by Frank A. Capuzzi) of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".
[298] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 275 (GA 9: 363). I have changed the English translation (by Frank A. Capuzzi) of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".
[299] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 276 (GA 9: 363).
[300] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 276 (GA 9: 364).

We can utilize this framework for the benefit of our inquiry into the meaning of the truth of being as unconcealment. What is an adventure? It is a special form of undertaking. It is a venture into the *danger of the unknown*. And through this undertaking, the adventurer stands to *gain something new*. This is the poetic creation – *poiesis* – at the heart of true art as well as innovations of science and technology. But we do not define the meaning of adventure by determining *what* it stands to win, but rather by the dynamic relation itself, between the danger and the prize – between *destruction and creation*. This, then, becomes the first law of all novel intellectual endeavor: to reside at the precipice of destruction, only to regain oneself as an act of creation. The transition from metaphysics to thinking entail that we gain admittance to this primordial poetic landscape. That is, thinking not of existent entities and their properties, but merely on this dynamic event that grounds their existence. What grants this adventurous admittance is the *advent* of destruction.[301]

Our interpretation of adventure as a venture into the landscape of destructive danger should resonate with the everyday meaning of the word. But our insinuation that the danger of adventure reflects the concealment in the truth of being might at first hand seem to lack textual basis. For there is no mention of concealment nor destruction in the two pages discussing the question of adventure. However, in the pages leading up to the introduction of the third question, Heidegger directs our thought to the topic of *the not*, *nothingness – das Nicht, Nichsts*.[302] This is no accident, for the advent of nothingness is precisely the ground that initiates man into adventure. That is, the confrontation with nothingness corresponds to the first law of thinking, as the event that appropriates man into the true nearness of being. So we rephrase our question on concealment: what is the meaning of nothingness?

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[301] As already stated, Heidegger does not give us a whole lot to go on to interpret his third question, and our own interpretation is admittedly suffering from an insufficient textual basis. However, to any critic that might object to the exegetical correctness of our reading, we will nonetheless insist that our appropriation of Heidegger's use of the word "adventure" is in keeping with Heidegger's general thought. E.g., Richardson clearly interprets Heidegger's question and answer differently, emphasizing the *advent of being* in the adventure – that is, without any notion of danger: "The ad-venture of thought is saved from mere venturesomeness (*aventuriére*), if there is a total fidelity to Being as this is imparted to thought." Richardson, William J. (2003). *Through Phenomenology to Thought* (Fourth Edition), page 550.

[302] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 359). Technically, Heidegger does not invoke the word "das Nichts" – *nothingness* – in the *Letter on "Humanism"*. Rather, he speaks of "das Nicht" – *the not*. However, the English word "nothingness" more clearly express something like an ontological foundation, as opposed to a mere statement or linguistic component. This translation is also in keeping with Heidegger's earlier use of the German word "das Nichts", which I take to be synonymous for "das Nicht". See for example Heidegger, M. (1998), *What is Metaphysics*, in *Pathmarks*, page 84 (GA 9: 105).

We understand nothingness initially through the negation – that is, the act of *saying no – das Nein*. As a formal logical structure, we may define the negation simply as the *contradiction* of a statement (¬P). But if the contradiction is to correspond with a world of existent entities, it cannot simply reflect the mere *absence* of something. We invoke the negation because it represents a *positive* alternative. That is, the negation reflects the *possibility of non-being*, and this possibility has to present itself to us, somehow, in our phenomenal presence. This phenomenal presence is *nothingness*. The negation, therefore, does not reflect the original meaning of nothingness. On the contrary, the negation itself presupposes nothingness:[303] "Every 'no' is simply the affirmation of *the not*."[304]

The concealment at the core of the truth of being presents itself as a movement of *nihilation – Nichtens*.[305] To understand the nihilating movement of concealment is the most important, yet also the most difficult step in our efforts to understand Heidegger.[306] The difficulty is due to his radical framing of concealment through the ontological differentiation between being and existent entities. Concealment represents an *act of transcendence*. Traditionally, transcendence is attributed generally to the idea of the *thing in itself*, and specifically to the idea of *God*. But Western metaphysics thereby represents transcendence as a *property of existent entities*. Heidegger's claim, on the other hand, is that concealment represents a *transcendent movement that grounds existence itself*. The task of elaborating on this transcendent movement will remain one of the chief endeavors throughout the rest of this dissertation, connecting it to our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene, and articulating this connection through a Kantian system of freedom and causality. As we currently reside in the esoteric depths of Heidegger's *Letter on "Humanism"*, we will begin our effort to build an intuition on this subject matter by introducing our own example of *wilderness*. We now ask: can we depict a thinking on the nihilating concealment of being as an *adventure into the wild of the environment?*

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[303] Or, according to Gregory Schufreider: "Instead, that is, of thinking of nothing as a noun that refers to a universal state of nonbeing, he verbalizes the term, suggesting that we would have to think nothing in its operation as the source of negation, not the other way around." Schufreider, G. (2016), "The Nothing", page 313.

[304] Heidegger, M., *Letter on "Humanism"*, in *Pathmarks*, page 272 (GA 9: 359). I have changed the translation by Frank A. Capuzzi of "das Nicht" from "the 'not'" to "*the not*".

[305] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 359).

[306] As Gregory Schufreider writes, the "nothing spans virtually the entirety of Heidegger's career", and it "goes without saying that nothing is an elusive topic." Schufreider, G. (2016), "The Nothing", page 311.

What is wilderness? It is a place in nature that is *wild*. Wilderness is a central concept for environmentalism, and thus for environmental philosophy. Consequently, there are several alternative definitions of the wild.[307] As a first step to navigate the many variations of the concept, we can make a general distinction between depictions of wilderness as a place in nature that is either *intelligible* or *intelligible*. That is, asking to what extent the wild represents an element of nature that we can understand, utilize, or even manipulate. Or, if it represents something that *escapes our comprehension altogether*. In our previous dealings with the Anthropocenologists, we saw examples of both positions. In the works of McKibben, Katz, Elliot and Lie, wilderness *qua naturalness* represents a nature that is independent of human interference. But this definition does not imply that wilderness is beyond our understanding. Quite the contrary is it be the task for scientific disciplines like ecology, geology, or climatology to determine the natural composition and mechanism of the wild. For example, in determining and acting to preserve a place of old-growth-forest, as opposed to a territory of lumber production. However, if we instead look to thinkers like Hamilton, Vogel, and Latour, then the wild seems to reflect some remaining residue of nature, after all our attempts to determine, manipulate and control has been exhausted – representing something that ultimately demands our *humility* and *respect*. As the *defiance*, *otherness,* or *chthonic agency* of our environments. Wilderness in this latter sense thereby reflect a fundamentally *unintelligible* element of nature.

We do not claim that there is a right and a wrong definition of wilderness. The term holds the potential for different conceptualizations, suitable for different types of analysis. And different conceptualizations might also be compatible. But our emphasis now is on the wild as a place in nature which ultimately transcends our ability of understanding. The pressing question then becomes: How does the unintelligibility of the wild become *available* to us? That is, in what manner does that which transcend our understanding demonstrate its presence? We will now depict wilderness as a form of *personal experience*. People who engage in different types of activity in pristine and often extreme parts of nature also often demonstrate a sense of environmental concern. What happens when we go out into nature and face the wild? Why do we go hiking in the woods, climb mountains or sail the oceans? Why do we continue to push

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[307] J. Baird Callicott describes the traditional or "received" wilderness idea as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain." Callicott, J. B. (2003), "A Critique of and an Alternative to the Wilderness Idea", page 437. Philip Cafaro writes: "At its core, 'wildness' means biological nature's freedom from domination by human beings. Men and women can be free; birds and beasts, swamps and forests, can be wild." Cafaro, Philip (2017), "Valuing Wild Nature", page 126.

the boundaries of our ventures, going ever higher, longer, limiting our aids while extending our goals?

The human adventure into wilderness expresses a transformation into a particular *state of being*. At the heart of this state resides the possibility of being *bewildered*. To be bewildered means to lose bearing on the surrounding environment. That is, to lose one's sense of orientation. This possibility is not present in the usual dealings of everyday life. When I tend to my ordinary obligations, and recreational activities, the things around me appear inconspicuously familiar. But when I go trekking in the mountains, or venture into the deep woods, I am confronted with an acute sense of unfamiliarity.

The sense of bewilderment in the wilderness does not fully consume me. For if I lose my bearing altogether, I become *lost*, and will ultimately die. The experience of wilderness resides rather in the continued efforts to *preserve control in the face of the wild*. This is the true meaning of the old cliché of *coming into contact* or *getting in touch* with nature. The "contact" is always already there – cultural activities and metropolitan areas too reside within nature. But the wildness tends to be suppressed into an unnoticeable slumber. The adventure of the wilderness merely brings forth this inherent wildness, as the ultimate possibility of my surroundings.

This depiction certainly challenges a widespread intuition which tend to identify wilderness with specific types of territory – like national parks and wildlife reserves. For as we define the wild as place of possible bewilderment, we go a long way in suggesting that wilderness is a *relative concept*. The same great mountain plateau may demonstrate its wildness to the solitary hiker, but not necessarily to a pack of reindeer herders riding on their snow scooters. For the 40-foot sailboat, crossing the Atlantic is a once in a lifetime adventure. For the 900-foot oil tanker, it is a routine transportation. In the end, wilderness is the state of ultimate possibility for *all* environments. The extent to which an environment demonstrates its wildness is dependent on the *type of activities* engaged, and the *level of experience* possessed by the adventurer. An experienced trekker might regard a certain area of pristine nature as his extended backyard. While for the novice, its conquest might demonstrate an insurmountable task. For this very same reason, the adventurer of wilderness will continue to push the boundaries of his own ventures, only in order to attain the same level of wildness.

What is the experience of wilderness? The advent of bewilderment demonstrates the *limits* to the venture in my surrounding environment. How *far* can I go? How *high* or *steep* can I climb? What are my limits of enduring *warmth* and *cold*? What can I *eat*, and how little do I need? In demonstrating these limits, the adventure simultaneously accentuates my

environmental *dependencies*. That is, what is needed in order for me to preserve a sense of control. Neither the limits nor the dependencies are products of my own doing. Instead, they demonstrate the natural foundation of my adventure.

The example of wilderness offers an illustration of the meaning of the destructive movement of concealment. What really happens when I stand faced with the wildness of nature? My bewilderment does not arise as a property of the stone, the tree, the waterfall, or the reindeer. It is the overall grip on my surroundings that breaks down. That is, destroying the manner in which all things appear as an *organized totality*, purposive for my venture. As I face the wild, I stand to lose control. Through this loss, I not only fail to grasp the specific things around me, but ultimately, I stand to lose myself – that is, to perish in the wild. The transcendent act of concealment represents a *nihilation* of my environmental orientation. But as the wildness of nature transcends my orientation towards existent entities in an *immanent* environment, nature does not thereby provide a basis for an extrapolation of thought into a reality of *transcendent* entities or properties. The wildness of concealment represents the loss of my environmental orientation, and thereby also a loss of myself – *and beyond that, simply nothingness!*

With the example of wilderness, as our attempt to elaborate on Heidegger's inquiry into the adventure of thought, we have now hopefully gained a sense of intuition on the meaning of concealment as something altogether different than the properties of existent entities. That is, an intuition on the *ontological difference* between existent entities and the phenomenal presence of nothingness. This phenomenal presence demonstrates a threat of nihilating the *organized whole* that originally grounds all existence. It is important to note that the case of wilderness is not intended as a mere analogy or metaphor, but quite literally as a concrete exemplification of the nihilating movement of concealment. This literal interpretation, however, rests entirely on the ability of the reader to identify our depiction of the wild with his own personal experience. The challenge to come, however, is to expand on this intuition, and to recognize that the advent of concealment as not simply the sentiments of subjective perception. But far more radically, as a grounding movement for the truth of being itself.

Can we now bring our intuition on the nihilating movement of concealment back to the *Letter on "Humanism"* and our attempt to reveal the essence of man as belonging to the truth of being? That is, can we utilize our interpretation of nothingness as the ultimate basis for our two previous questions on the home of man and a primordial ethical practice? We begin with the radical practice of letting things be. In what sense is the practice *radical*? The word itself originates from the Latin "radix", which means *root*. We understand this root as representing a *ground*. A radical practice thereby becomes a return to one's root – a return to the ground. But

the ultimate meaning of ground, according to Heidegger, is not a solid bedrock. Rather, it is an *abyss – Abgrund*. What is the meaning of abyss? The abyss is the *nihilation of meaning itself*. Things are meaningful when they appear as inter-relationally connected according to some *organized whole*. Practice, in the ordinary sense of action, is to act out according to such meaning. The radical practice of thinking, on the other hand, abruptly violates the willfulness of an active human subject. The abyss appropriates man through the nihilation of his foundational meaning, thereby *releasing* thinking from all engagements and concerns.

What is the ethical meaning of nothingness? In what way does the radical practice of letting things be entail a return to the primordial meaning of *ethos* as the abiding place for the essence of man? In the passage leading up to the discussion on nothingness, Heidegger begins by drawing the conclusion that a thinking of being is neither theoretical nor practical, because it "has *no result*. It has *no effect*".[308] By transition of a quote from Hölderlin and the notion of the *house of being*, Heidegger then directs our thought to the question of the *essence of evil*. The notion of a house represents the *jointure* of being – *die Fuge des Seins* – as the *assembling* place where thinking resides and builds upon.[309] He then articulates this very same house of jointure as the "realm of the upsurgence of *healing*".[310] The word "healing", as with the original German "Heilen", connotes the movement of *making whole*. The question of the essence of evil is brought to the fore as the countermovement of such healing:

> "With healing, evil appears all the more in the clearing of being. The essence of evil does not consist in the mere baseness of human action, but rather in the malice of rage. Both of these, however, healing and the raging, can essentially occur in being only insofar as being itself is in strife. In it is concealed the essential provenance of nihilation [*Nichtens*]. What nihilates [*nichtet*] comes to the clearing as the negative. This can be addressed in the "no"."[311]

The question of the essence of evil takes us to the ultimate foundation of *normativity*, and thus to the primordial meaning of ethos as the abiding place of man. What is normativity? It represents our attempt to encapsulate the grounding phenomenon for all questions of practical philosophy. We traditionally make a distinction between "descriptivity" as an account of *that which is*, and "normativity" as an account of *that which ought to be*. The "ought" reflects a

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[308] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 358). My *italic*.
[309] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 358).
[310] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 359). My *italic*.
[311] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 359).

fundamental *strife* in the very meaning of the "is".[312] That is, it reveals that which is to be *at stake*. Normativity itself reflects the phenomenal presence of the simultaneous possibility of being and non-being.[313] Traditionally, we identify this possibility of non-being by the concept of *freedom*. But we seldom ask thoroughly what it means to be free. For it cannot simply be the ability of some agent or thing to act out an effect. Rather, all manner of moral and political action must itself be grounded on freedom, as that which grants its normative meaning. Freedom itself is the abyss of nothingness, which instates being with a grounding strife between preservation and nihilation of meaning. To acquire a state of freedom for man entails that he comes to *realize this strife*, as residing at the ground of his own existence.[314] Heidegger's thinking of being is simply this realization – *the free thought in the face of nothingness*: "Historically, only one saying belongs to the matter of thinking, the one that is in each case appropriated to its matter. Its material relevance is essentially higher than the validity of the sciences, *because it is freer. For it lets being – be*."[315]

How does nothingness return man to the original home of his essence? The threat of nihilation – the advent of the wild – reveals the existential ground of man as an abyss. Through this revelation, man is released from the willful commitments and concerns of his everyday life, entering instead a primordial state of abiding composure, letting all things reside in their original phenomenal presence. To reside in this phenomenal presence is to be at home. The event of homecoming – *Ereignis* – has a fundamentally ontological as well as ethical

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[312] Lawrence J. Hatab makes a similar statement about *finitude and the ought*, regarding a possible Heideggerian ethics: "Likewise, the very nature of ethics involves the difference between actualities and possibilities, in terms of a differential relation between oughts and extant conditions, a relation made possible by the negativity of Dasein's transcendence. Both the 'ought' and the 'ought not' pertain to negation, in recommending something different from what can be, is, or has been the case." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 59.

[313] In a novel connection between Heidegger and the Japanese thinker Kuki Shūzō, Graham Mayeda makes a similar connection between ethics and contingency: "The necessary is that whose reason for existing is present within itself. In contrast, contingency, as the negation of necessity, is that whose reason for being is not included in itself. It thus contains within it the possibility of its own non-existence. The contingent is that which could not exist. […] For Kuki, the ethical will eventually be located in this overflowing, this excess, i.e., in that which cannot be contained within being." Mayeda, G. (2006), *Time, Space and Ethics in the Philosophies of Watsuji Tetsurō, Kuki Shūzō, and Martin Heidegger*, page 180-181.

[314] It is important to notice a certain ambiguity in a possible Heideggerian conceptualization of freedom. For in one respect, freedom can represent the *ground of nothingness* that instigates man's thinking on the truth of being. This is the way we have chosen to define freedom in this dissertation. On the other hand, Heidegger also presents freedom as the *thinking of the truth of being itself*. As Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "Ontological freedom is a disclosive letting-be that makes possible any and all orientations in the world." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 178.

[315] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 272 (GA 9: 358). My *italic*. Bret W. Davis adds: "Man does not 'possess freedom as a faculty, he ex-sists in participation in it.'" Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 300.

significance. As ontological, the home represents the true meaning of being itself. That is, as the strife between the revelation of meaning that grounds all existence, and the abyss of concealment which threatens to destroy it all. As an ethical event, this very same strife represents the groundwork for all manner of valuation and normative meaning:

> "Only so far as the human being, ek-sisting into the truth of being, belongs to being can there come from being itself the assignment [*Zuweisung*] of those directives that must become law and rule for human beings. In Greek, to assign [*zuweisen*] is νέμειν. Νόμος is not only law but more originally the assignment contained in the dispensation of being. Only the assignment is capable of enjoining [*verfügen*] humans into being. Only such enjoining [*Fügung*] is capable of supporting and obligating. Otherwise all law remains merely something fabricated by human reason. More essential than instituting rules is that human beings find the ways to their abode in the truth of being. This abode [*Aufenthalt*] first yields the experience of something we can hold on to [*Haltbaren*]. The truth of being offers a hold [*Halt*] for all conduct."[316]

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[316] Heidegger, M. (1998), *Letter on "Humanism"*, page 274 (GA 9: 361).

4. Two Heideggerian Interpretations of the Anthropocene

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
Das Rettende auch.

But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.

<div align="right">J. C. F. Hölderlin[317]</div>

We presented part two as an introduction to an *ecological humanism*. The emphasis on *ethos* and *oikos* reflected an attempt to carry out such radical reorientation for humanism, by looking into the environmental origin of human existence. This reorientation has brought us to the esoteric thinking of Martin Heidegger; first via *Being and Time*, and subsequently to the *Letter on "Humanism"*. We will now attempt to bring Heidegger's fundamental thought back to our initial interpretation of the Anthropocene. The basic claim of our new ecological humanism is that ethos and oikos are the same. However, this claim reflects a certain ambiguity. If we say that the essence of man is ultimately identical to the ground of nature, we may interpret this identity in the following two ways. First, as an acknowledgment of man's ultimate belonging to nature. Second, as the incorporation of nature into the domain of all things human. An

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[317] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 28 (GA 7:29).

analogous ambiguity plays out for the Anthropocene idea. On the one hand, the new epoch calls for our environmental concern and sense of responsibility for nature. On the other hand, there is a pressing risk at the heart of the Anthropocene narratives of subverting the integrity and independence of nature, reducing environmentalism to matters of mere anthropogenic and anthropocentric concerns. This latter interpretation remains the most severe criticism of the Anthropocene idea. If traditional environmental philosophy centers on nature as something fundamentally *other* than man – canonically articulated through the ideas of *natural independence* and *intrinsic value* – then the Anthropocene may end up advocating a form of anthropomorphization where the otherness of nature is lost.

The Anthropocene stand faced with the accusation that, by incorporating "Anthropos" into our determination of nature, it represents an illegitimate reduction of nature to concerns that are exclusively centered on man. The immediate answer to this accusation seems to be exhausted by three different lines of response: First, to acknowledge the validity of the criticism and thereby to discard the Anthropocene idea altogether; second, to embrace the criticism, and thereby to embrace anthropocentrism as the new modus operandi for environmental philosophy; third, to reject the criticism, insisting that accusation of anthropocentrism fails to comprehend the Anthropocene idea. We will now briefly go through these three lines of response, before turning to Heidegger, suggesting a fourth way of responding, which instead embraces the ambiguous relationship between man and nature, as an essential component for our understanding of the new epoch.

(**i**) The first response is simply to discard the idea entirely, claiming that the Anthropocene is a degenerate form of environmentalism that has lost touch with the original profundity of traditional philosophy of nature. The Anthropocene becomes a symptom of how far either philosophy or society has ventured astray, as opposed to a narrative that can help to illuminate what is at stake in our contemporary environmental situation. We find such sentiments by philosophers like Vetlesen, Hailwood, and to some extent Malm.

(**ii**) The second response does not aim to refute the criticism but chooses instead to embrace its claims. The vulgar go-to example of the contemporary literature are the *Ecomodernists*, making the case for the Anthropocene as the ultimate demonstration by humans of their "social, economic, and technological powers".[318] Other and arguably more intriguing

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[318] Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015). *Ecomodernist Manifesto*, page 6.

examples are Hamilton and Vogel. Hamilton insists on a *new Anthropocentrism* as the only viable form of recognition and responsibility for nature itself. Whereas Vogel discards the notion of nature altogether, arguing instead for responsibility and humility towards our commonly shared *built environments*.

(**iii**) The third form of response is to prove the criticism wrong. Suggesting that the incorporation of "Anthropos" into the very notion of nature reflects a more truthful conceptualization of our environmental problems, without thereby failing to recognize the integrity of nature. Philosophers like Latour and Bonneuil & Fressoz perceive the Anthropocene precisely as an intellectual framework that transcends conventional dichotomies and conceptions that has long confined and corrupted our ways of thinking. The otherness and independence of nature – which Latour presents as the chthonic agency of *Gaia* – emerge precisely through our radical sense of environmental belonging, and not through some abstract dichotomy of man versus nature.[319]

If we now introduce Heidegger to the discussion, with the presumption that his thinking can prove relevant for our inquiry into the Anthropocene, it becomes obvious that a Heideggerian interpretation of our new epoch cannot conclude with a reduction of nature to a sphere of human subjectivity. Quite the contrary does the identity of thought expressed through *Ereignis* – the event of appropriation – articulate a radical sense of human belonging to an original ground of nature that ultimately transcend all things human. It may thus seem most fitting to put Heidegger in the third category of response, alongside with Latour and Bonneuil & Fressoz. That is, that a Heideggerian incorporation of "Anthropos" into nature entails the claim that *man belongs to nature*, and not the other way around. However, if we thereby simply conclude that a Heideggerian basis for our environmental thought would refute any accusations of an anthropogenic and anthropocentric philosophy, then we may in fact stand to overlook an essential component to our epochal diagnosis. Instead of framing the question of the Anthropocene as a *binary for or against* an anthropocentric and anthropogenic line of

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[319] A noteworthy objection to this way of categorizing the philosophical positions in the Anthropocene debate, according to three different ways of responding to the accusation of anthropocentrism, is that it relies on a superficial reading of the Anthropocenologists. If we take into account a more nuanced representations of their respective arguments and theories, we must also likely admit that many of the Anthropocenologists make claims that does not hold exclusively to one category or the other. Hamilton and Vogel, for example, both represent an environmental philosophy that is explicitly anthropogenic and anthropocentric. But they also combine this perspective with a traditional environmentalist concern for the *otherness* and *independence* of nature, thereby muddling our initial distinction between the second and third category of response.

interpretation, we now ask: Could the ambiguity of the Anthropocene express a far more profound strife at the very heart of our contemporary environmental situation?

Going back to the very outset of our inquiry, we are reminded that the Anthropocene debate begins as a scientific acknowledgment of the anthropogenic impact on nature. From an environmentalist perspective, which in turn grounds the philosophical appropriation of the Anthropocene idea, this anthropogenic impact reflects a certain environmental predicament – a crisis – urging for some kind of response. This is more or less the understanding of Vetlesen, who sees the intellectual project of *panpsychism* and *animism* as the proper way of responding:

> "If the Anthropocene is the historical product of anthropocentrism, it is also what forces us to abandon it and search for alternatives – alternatives whose first assignment is to be less destructive to the natural world that humanity depends upon: to help us, finally, to *appreciate that world for what it is in itself*, and to do so for other reasons than those linked to our obvious stake in securing the survival of humanity […]"[320]

Vetlesen presents the Anthropocene as something of a backdrop for the more serious intellectual work that is to come. For the more devoted Anthropocenologists, on the other hand – like Latour, Hamilton, Davies, Bonneuil & Fressoz, and arguably Vogel – there is a presumption that the very acknowledgment of anthropocentrism and anthropogenic impacts on nature is the key to understanding our environmental situation, as well as being the foundation for any attempts to muster a solution. That is, it is precisely *through* the recognition of the extent of human impact on nature that we acquire a more radical manner of thinking the relationship of man and nature. Moreover, all these Anthropocene thinkers do in fact preserve some variation on the *otherness* of nature, but unlike Vetlesen, this otherness is depicted as inherently connected to the environmental situation of human beings. Taking these different interpretations into account, could we in fact see a fourth way of response to the ambiguity of the Anthropocene, which sees the incorporation of "Anthropos" into nature as *both a fall from grace, as well as a sign of salvation*?

(**iv**) We suggest a fourth response to the criticism of the Anthropocene idea as illegitimately reducing the otherness of nature to the anthropogenic and anthropocentric concerns of human beings. The violation of nature's own integrity – its *independence* and *otherness* – is not simply a possible pitfall for the Anthropocene narratives, for which all

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[320] Vetlesen, A. J. (2019), *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene – Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism*, page 9.

Anthropocenologists must cautiously avoid. On the contrary, the factuality and acknowledgment of this violation constitutes an inherent component to the emergence of a more truthful environmental thinking. The Anthropocene idea remains fundamentally ambiguous, because it contains both the downfall and redemption of our environmental situation.

This fourth response takes us back to Heidegger, and his 1953-essay, *The Question Concerning Technology*. Central to this essay is Heidegger's interpretation of the two lines by Hölderlin: *"But where danger is, grows / The saving power also"*. The essay asks about the essence of technology – *das Wesen der Technik*. This essence contains the ground of man's *forgetfulness of being*, and thereby the loss of his own *humanity*. This is the supreme danger – *die höchste Gefahr* – of technology.[321] But as Hölderlin suggests, the essence of technology equally contains the *saving power* for man to regain his humanity, as a return to the home of the truth of being. We will now try to connect Heidegger's thinking to the Anthropocene, by utilizing the double essence of technology – as danger and saving power – disclosing the ambiguity of the Anthropocene incorporation of "Anthropos" into nature. We will present *two Heideggerian interpretations of the Anthropocene*. The first depicts our contemporary epoch as the culmination of technology and the reduction of nature to the subjectivity of human will. The second presents the current state of environmental crisis as an eschatological event that transcends the forgetfulness of technical thinking. These two interpretations are not presented as mutually exclusive. In fact, we suggest that they are both true. And as such they help to disclose the dynamics of the transformative event of our new epoch.

Having already presented the fundamentals of Heidegger's thinking of being through an inquiry into his *Letter on "Humanism"*, we will not approach his essay on technology with the primary intent of understanding the text as it stands alone. Rather, we will go through this text with an intent to integrate our own metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene into our reading, thus appropriating Heidegger's analysis of technology for our own. The extent of this appropriation will become most apparent when we introduce an additional layer to Heidegger's notion of the saving power – *das Rettende* – of the technical epoch. That is, we will suggest that our own contemporary state of *environmental crisis* offers a saving power that Heidegger himself did not foresee, but which nonetheless serves to strengthen the Heideggerian interpretation of the Anthropocene.

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[321] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 26 (GA 7: 27).

The Anthropocene as a Culmination of Technology and the Subjectivity of Human Will

The Question Concerning Technology asks about the *essence* of technology. Similar to the *Letter on "Humanism"*, Heidegger begins with the conventional meaning of the word "essence" – *Wesen* – as referring to the *what-ness* of something. To ask about the *what-ness* of technology is not the same as enumerating technical things, explaining their functions or decomposing their design: "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological."[322] The standard definition presents technology as a *means to an end* and *a human activity*.[323] Heidegger calls this the "*instrumental* and *anthropological* definition".[324] This definition is in one respect no doubt correct, and even seem to encapsulate both archaic expressions of craftsmanship, as well as modern techniques and devices of science and engineering. But Heidegger suggests that the anthropological and instrumental definition falls short in our effort to reveal the *true* nature of technology. He invites us to reflect on the meaning of the instrumental itself.[325] This appeal to the "true essence" of technology, as opposed to the mere "correct definition", will at first strike the reader as a mere play on words. But the distinction offers a rhetoric transition to Heidegger's real question – the question of technology in relation to the truth of being – to unconcealment. We then recall from our inquiry into *Letter on "Humanism"*, that when we think something by its relation to the truth of being, then the notion of "essence" itself transcends the conventional dichotomy of *essentia* and *existentia*. That is, Heidegger's insistence on a more original truth for the essence of technology entails that we free the question concerning technology from determinations of the *what-ness* and *that-ness* of things: "Only the true brings us into a free relationship with that which concerns us from out of its essence."[326]

The continued inquiry into the meaning of the instrumental takes us to the questions of *causality*: "Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality

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[322] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 4 (GA 7: 7).
[323] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 4 (GA 7: 7).
[324] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 5 (GA 7: 8). My *italic*.
[325] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 6 (GA 7: 9).
[326] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 6 (GA 7: 9).

reigns, there reigns causality."[327] But Heidegger insists on the now bygone Aristotelian conception of a fourfold causality – the *material*, *formal*, *final*, and *effective* cause. With the example of a sacrificial silver chalice, he takes us through them all. The silver is the matter – *hyle* – out of which the chalice is made. The form – *eidos* – is the particular appearance (*Aussehen*) into which the silver is molded. The Greek root of the final cause is *telos*. Heidegger opposes the standard translation into "aim" or "purpose". The telos of the chalice is instead that "which gives bounds, that which completes".[328] Finally the effective cause, the silversmith, which gathers the three aforementioned causes. More truthful and original than the Latin "efficiens" is instead the Greek "legein" and "logos": "*Legein* is rooted in *apophainesthai*, to bring forward into appearance."[329]

How do we understand causation as the gathering of four causes? Our understanding of causality is today largely shaped by the notion of *causa efficiens*. That is, as the effecting of an event, A → B. This understanding is obviously not the same as the Aristotelian fourfold. At best, the effecting of an event becomes a mere component within a more comprehensive Aristotelian idea. If we are to take the Aristotelian notion of four causes serious, then we need to rethink our understanding of causation altogether. Heidegger interprets the original Greek word for cause, *aition*, as responsibility – *Verschulden*.[330] The four causes are all co-responsible "for the silver chalice's lying ready before us as a sacrificial vessel."[331] Causality in this sense of responsibility is not simply the effectuation of a movement, or the transitioning of a state, but more radically, the *ground that brings something forth into our presence – Her-vor-bringen*. Heidegger invokes a quote from the *Symposium*, where Plato identifies this movement of bringing-forth into the presence – that is, from non-being and into being – as the most comprehensive expression of *poiesis*.[332]

From this line of inquiry into the essence of technology – asking about causality as responsibility, and the bringing-forth of *poiesis* – we suddenly find ourselves all the way back into the presence of the truth of being as unconcealment. The essence of technology has emerged as the poetic creation of nature itself: "*Physis* also, the arising of something from out

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[327] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 6 (GA 7: 9).
[328] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 8 (GA 7: 10).
[329] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 8 (GA 7: 11).
[330] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 7 (GA 7: 10).
[331] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 9 (GA 7: 12).
[332] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 10 (GA 7: 12). See Plato's *Symposium*, paragraph 205b.

of itself, is a bringing-forth. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense."[333] The essence of technology is not a means for human activity but *a way of revealing nature itself*. The four Aristotelian causes articulate the manner of such revealing. The causes do not effect the sacrificial silver chalice, in the conventional sense of the word; instead, they are grounding components in the unconcealment of its phenomenal presence. Let us elaborate on this interpretation by accentuating the two components of *telos* and *logos*. *Telos* is "that which in advance confines the chalice within the realm of consecration and bestowal. Through this the chalice is circumscribed as sacrificial vessel."[334] This confining and completing – *das Umgrenzende und Vollendende* – of telos is the *organized whole of the sacrificial practice*. This practice is not a "reason for" the chalice, but a ground from which the chalice itself can emerge as a meaningful object. Logos, on the other hand, is the *language* of the silversmith. The concepts and ideas internalized through his craftsmanship. This language does not *produce* the chalice. Instead, it gathers – *versammelt* – the material (*hyle*) and the form (*eidos*) into an object for the sacrificial practice (*telos*).

This causal determination of technology and the technologist – the craft and the craftsman – takes us back to the Greek root of *techne*. Heidegger brings to the fore the two complementary meanings of the word. On the one hand, *techne* is identified with the "activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts."[335] Thus coupling *techne* to the bringing-forth of *poiesis*. On the other hand, *techne* is equally connected to *episteme*. That is, as a manner of knowing something "in the widest sense. [*Techne* and *episteme*] mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it."[336]

Through Heidegger, we have now gained an insight into the essence of technology as a way of revealing nature. That is, we now understand technology as a *manner of unconcealing for the truth of being as unconcealment*: "Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence [*West*] in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens."[337] This framing of our inquiry by the truth of being itself is at first established through a general notion of technology, with a strong affinity to Greek thought. But then Heidegger turns to the question of *modern technology*, as the particular way of revealing

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[333] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 10 (GA 7: 12).
[334] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 8 (GA 7: 10).
[335] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 13 (GA 7: 14).
[336] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 13 (GA 7: 14).
[337] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 13 (GA 7: 14).

of our own time. This becomes the sole object of inquiry for the remaining two thirds of the essay. At the heart of this inquiry are the notions of *Bestand* and *das Ge-stell* – that is, the idea of expediting nature as *standing-reserve*, through our epochal *order of resource demand*. We will go through the two in turn.

Modern technology reveals nature as *Bestand*. This German word initially means an aggregate or group of something – typically as a population of organisms. Etymologically, it connects to the verb "bestehen", which means to *persist*, to *endure*; and the root "stehen" which means *to stand*. The aggregate of things as *Bestand* are not only the stocks and populations of plants and animals, but of all things in general. Nature according to technology persists as a *reserve of readily available resources*. All things have their *standing*, according to their *allocated position* in a framework of reserves. Taking all of these components into consideration, we employ the traditional English translation of "Bestand" as *standing-reserve*.[338]

We understand the meaning of standing-reserve as expressing a particular form of *human-nature relation*. It expresses an *expediting promotion – Fördern –* of nature as something to be *ordered and processed*. That is, the expediting promotion "unlocks and exposes" nature as something to be ordered. But in this unlocking and exposing, the "expediting is always itself directed from the beginning towards furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense."[339] This makes the things of nature as *Bestand* into something significantly different from the traditional notion of *Gegenstand*.[340] The German word for "object" – *Gegenstand* – literally means *to stand against*. To some extent, we can invoke a similar meaning for the English word, as the verb "to object" means to *go against*, *to counter*.[341] What Heidegger alludes to in his differentiation between *Bestand* and *Gegenstand*, is that the thing of nature as standing-reserve tend to *lose itself* as a self-contained entity of integrity. The standing-reserve becomes incapable of any resistance, dissolving instead into an endless process of manipulation and management.[342]

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338 Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 17 (GA 7: 17)
339 Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 15 (GA 7: 16)
340 Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 17 (GA 7: 17)
341 Although the Latin root, "objectum", "objicere", means to *throw something in front of oneself*.
342 Similarly, Andrew J. Mitchell writes: "Heidegger's thinking of the thing departs from the modern philosophical conception of the object as a discrete and self-standing presence […] the thing is no object (*Gegenstand*), but extends beyond itself into the world." Mitchell, A. J. (2015), *The Fourfold – Reading the Late Heidegger*, page 24.

In the expediting promotion of all things as standing-reserve, nature itself is guised under the idea of human control and dominance. Heidegger asks, "Who accomplishes the challenging setting-upon [*herausfordernde Stellen*] through which what we call the real is revealed as standing-reserve? Obviously, man."[343] By the ordering and processing of natural goods, man comes to understand nature through the exertion of his own will: "In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exist only insofar as it is his constructs. […] It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself."[344] Modern technology becomes the triumph of the *subjectivity of the human will* – that is, reducing nature to a human *will to mastery*.[345]

Heidegger's essay contains a number of examples on the revelation of nature as standing-reserve, which are important for the reader to gain something of an intuitive grasp on the essence of technology. However, instead of indulging in Heidegger's own examples, we now choose to orient the analysis with illustrations from our own time. Does the Anthropocene in fact demonstrate an even greater case for the reduction of nature to an objectless reserve, readily available at the will of human subjectivity? The paradigmatic example for Heidegger, as well as for our own time, is the standing-reserve of stored *energy*. The anthropogenic state of nature for the Anthropocene largely revolves around the extraction and consumption of energy stored in wood, coal, oil, gas, and bio-waste – emitting ever-greater amounts of CO_2 into the atmosphere, and thus changing climate and ecosystems. But the *order and ordering* of energy does not merely extend to the consumption by industry, transportation, communication, personal utility, and leisure, as are examples from Heidegger's own time. Even environmentalism – our very concern for nature itself – has today transformed into a global accountancy of greenhouse gases, tracing atmospheric levels of CO_2 in the *parts per million*, negotiating pollution taxes and trading emission quotas. The so-called *green* solutions to our environmental predicament rely heavily on our future ability to invent, develop, and utilize the power of wind, sun, wave, and waterfalls, and arguably also the atomic nuclear binding. CO_2 emissions are to be captured and stored in great *carbon sinks*, or utilized in all manner of industrial production. Forests, marshes, and tundras are conserved for their function as CO_2 and methane reserves. Grander projects of geoengineering are also on the table, investigating

[343] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 18 (GA 7: 18)
[344] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 27 (GA 7: 28)
[345] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 5 (GA 7: 8)

into the costs and benefits for large-scale methods of tampering with the warming condition of the Earth system itself.

Our modern orientation towards nature – even our sense of environmental concern – appear to be fixated on human impact, management, and control. That is, what we often refer to as an anthropogenic and anthropocentric human-nature relation. However, in drawing this picture of the technical state of our contemporary relation to nature it is simultaneously important to acknowledge the *absence of any viable alternative*. Heidegger's depiction of our environmental situation as a reduction of nature to standing-reserve is first and foremost a *diagnosis of our factual state*, and not the passing of a moral judgment. Moreover, it is a diagnosis of a factual state that does not offer any ways to escape.

If the Anthropocene manifests an environmental awareness and concern for our anthropogenic impact, then the traditional virtue of environmentalism to cease our impact on nature altogether seems ill-equipped to face this challenge. The principles of McKibben, Katz, and Elliot echo today in the contemporary suggestions for anthropogenic *degrowth* and ecological *rewilding*.[346] But when faced with actual environmental ramifications by human societies, situated in a political world of material interests, necessities and conflicts, a philosophical principle of *natural independence* hardly seems fit to offer any serious contribution to the problems facing our consumption of energy, or the impacts of agriculture and food production. Invoking yet again the scapegoat position of the *ecomodernists*, their *hubris* resides not in the call for anthropogenic responsibility, but rather in the idea of environmentalism as "decoupling human development from environmental impacts."[347] The anthropogenic reality of the Anthropocene is upon us, and there seem to be no viable alternative to a continued development of our environmental understanding, and thereby an increase in the level of efficiency and precision for our anthropogenic environmental impact.

The true Anthropocene response is not one of refraining from anthropogenic impact. What, then, about the remaining wilderness areas, where we arguably still admit nature its

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[346] E.g., George Monbiot defines rewilding as "to permit ecological processes to resume", but thereby also as an "enhanced opportunity for people to engage with and delight in the natural world." Monbiot, G. (2013), *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*, page 10 & 11. Caroline Fraser states that "Conservationist biologists have developed a number of methods for restoring the balance between ourselves and nature, for saving biodiversity. The most exiting and promising of these methods is rewilding. Proposing conservation and ecological restoration on a scale previously unimagined, rewilding has become a principal method for designing, connecting, and restoring protected areas – the ultimate weapon in the fight against fragmentation." Fraser, C. (2009), *Rewilding the World: Dispatches from the Conservation Revolution*, page 8f.
[347] Asafu-Adjaye, J. et al. (2015), *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*, page 7.

independence? Even these remnant domains of nature are today protected and conserved through careful human management. As old-growth forests, wildlife reserves, and as national parks, we procure nature as reserves of biodiversity, endangered species, and scenic landscapes. The personal wilderness experience turns into a commodity, to be ordered, enjoyed, and subsequently dismissed in search for the next adventure. The wilderness enthusiast thrives in his fetishism of equipment's and technical aids. The experiences attained are immediately overshadowed by the production, archiving and distribution of photographic documentation, in order to reap recognition for one's accomplishments.

But did we not address the personal wilderness experience as an exemplification of a homecoming to the poetic landscape of being in our inquiry into Heidegger's *Letter on "Humanism"*? That is, precisely as a way to transcend the forgetfulness of the active will of human subjectivity? Yes indeed, and we stand by this claim. In the end, we do suggest that the abiding residence at the verge of bewilderment is a central component to the appeal of wilderness as a recreational venue. But these remaining enclaves of natural independence and wildness cannot serve as a viable alternative to the technological state of our modern societies. As Purdy points out through his extensive depiction of American history of nature, there was a time when the *Wild West* still represented a way out from Western civilization. But today, the wild is reduced to a mere diversion. Regardless of the extent of its profane effects, the wilderness remains an experience to be requested and faced, but subsequently abandoned for the inevitable return to the inconspicuous familiarity of our technological everyday life. The adventurous life of the deep forest, the high mountain, or the vast ocean, has no bearing on the global environmental concerns facing humanity today.

Environmentalism in the Anthropocene centers on a recognition of our anthropogenic impact on nature and the *absence of any other choice than to continue to exert our impact*.[348] In this respect, the labels of "anthropogenic" and "anthropocentric" do not reflect normative judgments, but rather factual descriptions of our current environmental situation. Heidegger writes: "The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip

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[348] As Michel Haar states: "Certainly, we cannot escape from the world as governed by Technology. Nor can we renounce the use of technological objects on which our life depends. We are obliged to say 'yes' to them. And yet, Heidegger assures us, we can and must also say 'no' to them, by not regulating our thought in accordance with the logic implicit in them. […] We would thus be free not to be blindly subject to the epoch, free to see to it that its errancy does not corrupt us or reach us…in what? In our intimate essence?" Haar, Michel (1993). *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, page 138f.

from human control."[349] This statement is no call for us to escape the unhappy dynamics of our contemporary anthropogenic state. It is rather Heidegger's judgment on the destiny – *Geschick* – of our own time, to which the subjectivity of the human will is itself all but a sending – *Schicken*: "But the unconcealment itself, within which ordering [*Bestellen*] unfolds, is never a human handiwork, any more than is the realm through which man is already passing every time he as a subject relates to an object."[350]

But if our expediting promotion of nature as standing-reserve remains an inescapable fact of our contemporary environmental situation, then what is the purported *danger* of technology that initiated our analysis? If we understand technology as a human-nature relation – that is, as the ordering, manipulation, and processing of nature as standing-reserve – we must also avoid misinterpreting Heidegger as somehow advocating for the end of technology. When Heidegger guides our inquiry back to the Greek origin of *aition*, *poiesis,* and *techne*, it is with an intent to demonstrate the essence of technology as something fundamental to human existence. Through our environmental orientation, humans develop and gradually learn to master a multitude of ways to understand and manage our surroundings. This is the human way of life. From the perspective of traditional environmentalism – with a concern for anthropogenic impacts like pollution, species extinction and ecological decay – Heidegger's conclusion may first appear counterintuitive. But the ultimate danger of technology does not reside in the harmful consequences of our tools, machines, and organization of industry:

> "What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence. […] The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence."[351]

The danger of technology lies in the *forgetfulness of its essence as unconcealment*.[352] That is, through the ordering of nature as standing-reserve, we forget that our relation to nature as an expediting promotion is itself a manner of unconcealing for the truth of being as unconcealment. This danger is intrinsic to all human enterprise – also the *techne* of Greek antiquity. However,

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[349] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 5 (GA 7: 8)
[350] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 18 (GA 7: 19)
[351] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 28 (GA 7: 29).
[352] In Bret W. Davis words: "And yet we should bear in mind that the central point of Heidegger's critique is not aimed at technological devises themselves, but at the way of revealing/concealing which they embody." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 183f.

through modern technology the threat has been amplified, making forgetfulness into the all-encompassing and inescapable trait of our time. We now come to reveal a great irony for traditional environmental philosophy. The accusations of our contemporary situation as being *anthropogenic* and *anthropocentric* are themselves expressions of this forgetfulness. That is, the depiction of nature as something *created by man*, and that our ordering of nature as standing-reserve express a *centeredness on humanity*, are both predicated on an untruthful reduction of our environmental situation to the subjectivity of the human will. For the true origin of our environmental situation is not the human subject. Heidegger writes:

> "Who accomplishes the challenging setting-upon through which what we call the real is revealed as standing-reserve? Obviously, man. To what extent is man capable of such a revealing? Man can indeed conceive, fashion, and carry through this or that in one way or another. But man does not have control over concealment itself, in which at any time the real shows itself or withdraws. […] Only to the extent that man for his part is already challenged to exploit the energies of nature can this ordering revealing happen." [353]

Man is himself challenged – *herausgefordert* – to order nature as standing-reserve by the *technological order of unconcealment*.[354] Here enters the second grounding concept in Heidegger's essay. In the epoch of modern technology, the unconcealment of nature takes the form of *das Ge-stell*. This peculiar neologism is particularly difficult to translate into English. The conventional German word translates into *frame*, *rack* or *shelf*. The root "stellen" means *to place* or *to position*. This also connotes the older "Stall", as the *place where something stands*. The prefix "Ge-" forms the perfect participle of "stellen", thus indicating that something *has been placed, has been positioned*. The prefix also reflects the *collective unity* of something framed or positioned, as with the unity of mountains – *Gebirge* – or our thoughts and feelings – *Gemüt*.[355] William Lovitt translates "das Ge-stell" as *Enframing*, referring to the framework through which nature is ordered as standing-reserve. Daniel O. Dahlstrom opts instead for *positionality*, as the framing of nature according to its position as standing-reserve.[356] No single English translation seem capable to encapsulate the full extent of its original meaning. We

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[353] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 18 (GA 7: 18).
[354] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 18 (GA 7: 18).
[355] Inwood, M., *A Heidegger Dictionary*, page 210.
[356] Dahlstrom, D. O. (2013), *The Heidegger Dictionary*, page 171.

choose a more liberal alternative, emphasizing meaning rather than etymology: The essence of technology is the *order of resource demand*.

The order of resource demand is the *manner of revealing* for the epochal unconcealment of   modern technology. The *demand* for nature as standing-reserve is not itself a product of the human will, but rather a *grounding order* that challenges man into his state of ordering: "That challenging gathers man into ordering. This gathering concentrates man upon ordering the real as standing-reserve."[357] The expediting promotion of nature as standing-reserve is therefore not anthropogenic, but in fact a demand that is itself *necessitated* by our environmental situation.

We can use the example of the global climate change crisis to shed some light on the environmental necessity of *das Ge-stell*. Global warming challenges us to take environmental responsibility. In the environmentalist debate, such responsibility is often depicted as a response of the *subject*. That is, our failure to meet the challenge of the climate crisis is portrayed as a *problem of character* or a *weakness of will*; be it on the level of individuals, groups, corporations, states, or the international community. But the climate change crisis demands far more radical transformations than a mere change of mind. Emissions of greenhouse gases are usually tied to a myriad of social institutions and practices that are all environmentally grounded, making it an overwhelming task even to imagine a viable alternative to a continued state of global warming. We need to change our ways of being, not our mind. And because our ways of being are environmentally grounded, so too does the change require a radical disclosure of new forms of environmental practices. The initial state of crisis and the subsequent challenge of responsibility are therefore both necessitated by our environmental situation. And it is only by acknowledgement and careful analysis of our state of environmental belonging that a response of the human will can emerge.

Our environmental situation is not anthropogenic. This realization does not entail that we deny the all-encompassing impact on nature by human activity – the fact of anthropogenic impact is precisely the original scientific claim of the Anthropocene. Rather, it means that human impact on nature is brought about by *grounding environmental practices*, from which man finds himself as a product, and not the creator.[358] And just as Heidegger's notion of the

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[357] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 19 (GA 7: 20)

[358] Or, as Bret W. Davis puts it: "Thus, for Heidegger, it is not that our willful nature has led us to treat the world technologically, but rather that we became the self-assertive masters of objects through the being-historical (*seinsgeschichtliche*) unfolding of the essence of technology. In other words, the unbounded will of man is in

order of resource demand – *das Ge-stell* – dissolves the claim that our environmental situation is anthropogenic, it also overthrows the environmentalist criticism of anthropocentrism. For what does it mean to be *centered on man*? A rigorous examination of the meaning of anthropocentrism takes us to the question of "Anthropos" itself – that is, the *essence of man*. This remains a driving question throughout all of Heidegger's thought and was explicitly formulated as the question of humanity in *Letter on "Humanism"*. The essence of man – *ethos* – is not the subjectivity of an ordering and expediting will, but a radical experience of environmental belonging, which is revealed only when man is enabled to transcend the identity of his willful self. The expediting promotion of all things as standing-reserve prevents such transcending event of thought, as it sets up a milieu through which man can indulge, and thereby *lose himself*, in his subjectivity.[359] This is the fundamental and only meaning to Heidegger's critical notion of *Bestand*. The untruthfulness in our ordering of nature as standing-reserve has nothing to do with the correctness in our determination of natural phenomena. The tactile and tacit comprehension acquired by the 18th century farmer does not correspond any more authentically to Mother Nature than the abstract and mathematical knowledge possessed by the nuclear physicist – these are simply different ways of unconcealment for nature. The notion of *Bestand* does not entail any judgment on the *what-ness* and *that-ness* of existent entities. Rather, the judgment on standing-reserve reflects a forgetfulness of being. That is, the expediting promotion of nature instigates a human-nature relation where the grounding event of unconcealment is held back in oblivion. This brings out an additional meaning to the notion of *epoch*. The Greek ἐποχή means to *hold back*.[360] Thus, Heidegger understands the epoch of technology as the manner in which the truth of unconcealment is held back in forgetfulness, by the ordering of nature as standing-reserve.[361]

> "Since destining [*Geschick*] at any given time starts man on the way of revealing, man, thus under way, is continually approaching the brink of the possibility of pursuing and

fact bound up with a process that 'emerges from the hidden essence of technology'." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 174.

[359] And as Andrew J. Mitchell points out, what prevents thought from transcending this expediting promotion, is that the concealment of nature remains hidden: "The availability of the standing reserve drives the entirety of the item into the open, to be solely what it is, without concealment. But it is just this concealment that interrupts the self-presence of the being and keeps it from finally identifying itself as merely what it is." Mitchell, A. J. (2015), *The Fourfold – Reading the Late Heidegger*, page 41.

[360] See Heidegger, M. (1972), "Time and Being", page 9 (GA 14: 13).

[361] Michel Haar on ἐποχή: "Man is claimed by being 'in each case,' in each of the metaphysical 'epochs' in which being addresses itself and withholds itself in an *épochè*." Haar, Michel (1993). *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, page 145.

pushing toward nothing but what is revealed in ordering, and of deriving all his standards on this basis. Through this the other possibility is blocked, that man might be admitted more and sooner and ever more primally to the essence of that which is unconcealed and to its unconcealment, in order that he might experience as his essence his needed belonging to revealing."[362]

The ever-present *danger* of technology resides in the possibility of forgetfulness for the truth of being. That is, disguising the grounding event of unconcealment by the correct determinations of existent entities. This danger is as old as humanity itself, making its presence in the *techne* of the Greek craftsman, in the *Handwerk* of the Schwarzwald forester, as well as in the *science* of the geoengineer. But in our own epoch of modern technology, the possibility of forgetfulness has been exalted to the *supreme* danger – *die höchste Gefahr*.[363] Heidegger list three components. First, by the order of resource demand, all things dissolve into an expediting promotion, to the extent that even man himself is now determined and valuated as standing-reserve – thereby losing his humanity. Second, through this expediting of nature, man is appropriated by the delusion that he has become lord of the earth – *Herrn der Erde*.[364] Third, in this deluded lordship, man encounters in nature only himself.[365] That is, all things of nature are reduced to the subjectivity of the exertion of his will.

The Anthropocene as an Eschatological Event

What is the danger of the Anthropocene? In our fixation on anthropogenic impact on nature, today most prevalent in the management of greenhouse gas emissions, our exertion of human willfulness ends up overshadowing a far more radical recognition of our environmental belonging. The coupling of "Anthropos" and "nature" into *Anthropocene* reflects a seamless dissolution of all things natural into the domain of man. But is there yet another way to think this union? That is, can the Anthropocene also represent an event that incorporates man into a primordial ground of nature? Is there a saving power emerging in our current epoch? We turn

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[362] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 26 (GA 7: 26)
[363] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 26 (GA 7: 27)
[364] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 27 (GA 7: 28)
[365] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 27 (GA 7: 28)

to the final quarter of Heidegger's essay on technology, where he confronts the words of Hölderlin:

> "Therefore we must consider now, in advance, in what respect the saving power does most profoundly take root and hence thrive even in that wherein the extreme danger lies, in the holding sway of the order of resource demand [*Ge-stell*]. In order to consider this, it is necessary, as a last step upon our way, to look with yet clearer eyes into the danger."[366]

In order to understand the essence of technology as both danger and saving power, we need to bring into play the grounding concepts of Heidegger's thought that was presented in our inquiry into the *Letter on "Humanism"*. Unconcealment – the truth of being – is the phenomenal presence of a meaningful whole, through which all things can appear as existing entities. This meaningful whole comes about as a grounding fateful sending – *Geschick* – where man finds his own destiny. That is, man can exert his own willful subjectivity, only because unconcealment reveals an order of lawfulness in his surroundings. The grounding fateful sending of unconcealment has two fundamental modes – truth and untruth. That is, unconcealment is the truth of being, and this truth has the possibility of revealing itself, *as unconcealment*. But usually and for the most part, unconcealment itself remains in hiding, outshined by the familiar dealings and determinations of existent entities in our everyday world. This double nature for the truth of being corresponds to the modes of *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* in the analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*. And for the later Heidegger, as the distinction between the truthful event of *thinking* and the forgetfulness of *metaphysics*. The entirety of Heidegger's massive academic production, after the *turn* of the 1930s, can be interpreted as constant efforts to rearticulate *Ereignis* – as the event through which man is *appropriated* by the unconcealment of being, returning him back to the true place of his essence. This homecoming of *Ereignis* has a paradoxical nature. For it is only when man is confronted with an event that transcends his own self, letting go of his active subjectivity, that man is simultaneously enabled to regain his true essence. It is only through the *abysmal ground* of unconcealment that man finds his *ethos* – that is, the abiding place of humanity in the face of nothingness.

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[366] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 29 (GA 7: 30). I have altered William Lovitt's translation of *das Ge-stell* from "Enframing" to "order of resource demand".

The order of resource demand – *das Ge-stell* – is the fateful sending of unconcealment in our own technological epoch. This sending constitutes a supreme danger, because the expediting promotion of all things as standing-reserve fortifies a human-nature relation that eliminates all possibility for unconcealment itself to reveal its truth. Heidegger simultaneously points to an inherent ambiguity for our technological epoch:

> "The essence of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth. On the one hand, the order of resource demand challenges forth into the frenziedness of ordering that blocks every view into the coming-to-pass of revealing and so radically endangers the relation to the essence of truth. On the other hand, the order of resource demand comes to pass for its part in the granting that lets man endure – as yet unexperienced, but perhaps more experienced in the future – that he may be the one who is needed and used for the safekeeping of the coming to presence of truth. Thus the arising of the saving power appear."[367]

How can we understand this ambiguity? In what sense does the saving power also reside within the danger of the essence of technology? We can present the ambiguity of technology in two steps. The **first** step to understand the saving power speaks to the very structure of the truth of being itself. Unconcealment contains both truth and untruth. When we dwell on the essence of technology, as the revealing of nature as standing-reserve, we eventually become free from our initial state of willful engagement, gaining instead an admittance into the true presence of unconcealment: "Above all through our catching sight of what comes to presence in technology, instead of merely staring at the technological. So long as we represent technology as an instrument, we remain held fast to master it."[368] The essence of technology contains the saving power, in the sense that when we come to understand its true nature, we simultaneously reveal how our own subjectivity belongs to the fateful sending of unconcealment. In short: by transcending the *untruth* of our expediting promotion of nature as standing-reserve, the *true essence* of technology as unconcealment is revealed for our abiding thought.

If the first step on our way to understand the saving power simply refers to the modes of truth and untruth for the essence of technology as unconcealment, then the **second** step elaborates further into the *transition of thought* from untruth and into truth. That is, the dynamic state of technology that makes this transition possible. Heidegger's argument seems to be that

[367] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 33 (GA 7: 34). I have altered William Lovitt's translation of *das Ge-stell* from "Enframing" to "order of resource demand".
[368] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 32 (GA 7: 33).

the state of supreme danger itself renders the epoch of technology *vulnerable to its own internal breakdown*:

> "It is precisely in the order of resource demand, which threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing, and so thrusts man into the danger of the surrender of his free essence – it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to light, provided that we, for our part, begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology."[369]

The quote identifies the "free essence" of man with the "innermost indestructible belongingness of man" to unconcealment. Not unlike the free thought of humanity in *Letter on "Humanism"*. The supreme danger of technology *alienates* man from this essential belongingness. The technological mode of permanent alienation becomes unsustainable, precisely because it separates man from that which is most essentially human. Eventually, the fateful sending of technology will meet its downfall, as man continues to yearn for the truth of his existence. Not as the conquering act of an emancipated subject. But as the emergence of a thought that answers the call of its environmental origin.

Now combining the two steps in our elaboration of the saving power of technology, we come to a first, temporarily conclusion. In the time of modern technology – in the epoch of the Anthropocene – the ordering and processing of all things as standing-reserve has reduced nature to the exertion of human willfulness. Nature stands absent of the *dignity* of its *otherness* – what traditional environmental philosophy has identified by the notions of independence and intrinsic value. This degradation of nature from its original meaning only reflects a fundamental possibility that resides in being itself – that is, the possibility of concealing its own truth as unconcealment. But this untrue state of forgetfulness of being is fundamentally unsustainable, because it separates man from his own humanity. The technological epoch of the Anthropocene is pushed to the brink of its own breakdown, for it deprives humankind of its own existential truth. In this way, the technological state of the Anthropocene remains ambiguous, because the powers that keeps us back into the darkness of forgetfulness, simultaneously holds the potential of bringing the true grounding event of being back into the light of our environmental awareness.

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[369] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 32 (GA 7: 33). I have altered William Lovitt's translation of *das Ge-stell* from "Enframing" to "order of resource demand".

> "The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought."[370]

Through these final words, Heidegger ends his essay on a glimmer of hope. The essence of technology – that is, unconcealment as the order of resource demand – not only contains the possibility of salvation – the revelation of truth – but also an inherent dynamic that will push to transform man out of the unsustainable state of his forgetfulness. But Heidegger's conclusion also remains conspicuously unresolved. How will the transition of thought by the saving power of technology transpire? When can we expect a new environmental awareness to emerge? Heidegger's answers are unclear: "How can this happen? Here and now and in little things, that we may foster the saving power in its increase. This includes holding always before our eyes the extreme danger."[371] In the end, the revelation of truth remains equally an event of fateful sending – *Geschick* – for the historical destiny of being – *der Seinsgeschichte*. Man himself cannot incite the saving power. He can only wait upon its arrival:

> "Human activity can never directly counter this danger. Human achievement alone can never banish it. But human reflection can ponder the fact that all saving power must be of a higher essence than what is endangered, though at the same time kindred to it."[372]

Heidegger does not offer a solution to the danger of technology. He is first and foremost making a diagnosis on the conditions for human thought in our contemporary environmental situation, and the mechanisms that may transform man back into a more truthful existential awareness. How the saving power of technology will eventually emerge is not a question for philosophy to answer. Man can but prepare himself for the advent of such an event, by entering into a state of thoughtful reflection.

The recognition that man's existential facticity is at the mercy of the historical sending of being is fundamental to Heidegger's analysis. Nowhere is this claim about the human condition more unequivocally stated than in the famous interview with *Der Spiegel*. Although first published after Heidegger's death in 1976, the interview itself was conducted in 1966. Mainly concerned with Heidegger's political affiliation with German National Socialism, but

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[370] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 35 (GA 7: 36)
[371] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 33 (GA 7: 34)
[372] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 33 (GA 7: 35)

the interview eventually turns to the question of modern technology. Heidegger is asked about the role of the individual and philosophy in response to the danger of technology, and provides the following answer:

> "philosophy will be unable to effect any immediate change in the current state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all purely human reflection and endeavor. Only a god can save us. The only possibility available to us is that by thinking and poetizing we prepare a readiness for the appearance of a god, or for the absence of a god in [our] decline, insofar as in view of the absent god we are in a state of decline."[373]

In the remaining few pages of this chapter, we will attempt to appropriate Heidegger's notion of the *saving power of a god* for our own interpretation of the Anthropocene. Can our contemporary state of *environmental crisis* represent such divine event of salvation? That is, as an *eschatological event* that reveals the saving power of a god, returning man back into a more original state of environmental belongingness. As we carry out this final piece to our introductory coupling of Heidegger and the Anthropocene, we will also try to reconnect our analysis with the basic metaphysical concepts from part one.

What is the meaning of our current environmental crisis? The answer is obviously multifaceted. The original catalyst is global warming.[374] Beginning as a comprehensive series of scientific discoveries, through an aggregate of disciplines that together form the umbrella term of *climate science*. These scientific discoveries translate into an environmentalist concern, which throughout recent decades has developed into an international political phenomenon. To understand this phenomenon, it is crucial to recognize that environmental politics does not merely mirror the technical determinations of climate science. This recognition corresponds to our initial distinction between the Anthropocene as a *scientific* and a *philosophical* concept – between the technical determinations of anthropogenic impact on nature, and the conceptual and normative transformations that follow in light of this determination. Scientific determination of nature informs us that the continuation of a civilization largely based on fossil fuel and greenhouse gas emissions will eventually lead to a catastrophic deterioration for the

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[373] Heidegger, Martin (1981/2010), "Only a God Can Save Us": The *Spiegel* Interview, page 57.
[374] If *global warming* is the catalyst of our contemporary environmental crisis, we simultaneously see the emergence of a more general environmentalist concern, extending beyond the management of greenhouse gas emissions. Issues like ecosystem collapse and the extinction of species; change in the nitrogen cycles and acidification of the oceans; land degradation, desertification, and the loss of agricultural soil; water shortages; waste management, and the pollution of non-biodegradable materials.

state of humankind. The fundamental recognition of environmental politics is precisely the *impossibility of its own continuation*. The meaning of the environmental crisis becomes metaphysical because the normative commitment centers on an event that *transcends its own environmental orientation*.

How to understand this transcending metaphysical event? Our environmental orientation – the practices through which we engage with our natural surroundings – are ultimately grounded on the phenomenal presence of an environmental *meaning*. Environmental meaning is the manner in which all things are organized according to some unified system. The metaphysical event of the environmental crisis is the *nihilation* of such meaning. We underestimate this event if we try to reduce it to some ordeal of subjective perception. The nihilation of meaning is a fundamental ontological event. How so? Because environmental meaning is the *ground through which all things can appear as existent entities*. That is, meaning is not simply the organization of pre-existing entities. It is rather the condition for the possibility of being as such.

The nihilation of meaning is an integral possibility to all forms of environmental orientations. The breaking up from a relationship, the falling out from religious faith, a change of career, the bankruptcy of a business, the replacement of an industry by new technology, a paradigm shift within a scientific discipline, the ecological collapse of an ecosystem due to human interference, or the cataclysmic transformation of a landscape by some natural disaster. All of these are potential examples for the destruction of environmental meaning that make up the existential basis for its environmentally indigenous people and things. But not all these examples qualify as eschatological event. Their destruction of environmental practices usually and for the most part entail only a *partly* nihilation of our total *life world*. The loss of a friend or a spouse does not entail the loss of one's entire social network. A break with the church does not entail a loss of all values, beliefs, and sense of existential meaning. A career ended may quickly be replaced by other occupations, pursuits, or recreational activities. The ecological collapse of one particular ecosystem may not affect the sustainability or prosperity of its surrounding areas.

Our current environmental crisis stands out from other examples of losing meaning, because of the *all-encompassing extent of its environmental nihilation*. Greenhouse gas emissions connects somehow or another to most segments of modern civilization. To agriculture, industry, technological and material development, means of transportation, communication and social interaction, to cultural and recreational activities, the pursuit of happiness and individual freedom, to our economic and financial systems, to geopolitics and

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international relations. The call for environmental responsibility does not simply urge us to manage some limited and well-defined domain of human practice. It is rather the technological project itself that now appears to be at stake. Because the human-nature relation of management and control has been brought to an extreme, there is also no viable alternative to its continuation. Because there is *no escape* – because the ground of our civilizational project appears to dissolve from under our feet – the current environmental crisis is exalted to a state of eschatological event.

It is important to emphasize that the fundamental meaning of "eschatology" is not the empirical death and destruction of man and the world. Even if the absolute worst predictions of climate science become a manifested reality within the next centuries, both "humankind" and "nature" will no doubt prevail in some form or another. But the existential foundation of our *contemporary environmental situation* will in some likelihood not prevail. That is, the ways in which we organize our current lives stand to change, and it is this *existential impossibility of our contemporary environmental orientations* that manifests in our eschatological awareness.

Looking back on the achievements of part one, can we now make use of our depiction of the metaphysical event of the Anthropocene? That is, as a transformation of the human-nature relation by a radical recognition of our environmental belongingness, and thereby as an epochal event that overthrows nihilism? In order to inquire into the Anthropocene as an event that *reinstitutes meaning in nature*, we must understand the significance of the original loss, and the hermeneutical mechanism of its eventual recovery. Ultimately, this entails an investigation into the *meaning of meaning itself*. Nihilism, in our Heideggerian interpretation of the word, is not an insight into the factual absence of meaning. That is, as some discovery of the objective indifference or randomness of the cosmos. Rather, nihilism expresses the *forgetfulness* of something that lurks inconspicuously in our most immediate presence. To overcome nihilism is therefore not a task of novel discovery or invention, but instead a matter of recollecting something already possessed.

Meaning emerge from out of its habitual state of forgetfulness once its internal possibility of self-destruction becomes apparent. This destruction – the nihilation of meaning – is the original expression of *freedom*. Heidegger writes, in the few pages leading up to the segment on the danger of technology, that the "essence of freedom is *originally* not connected

with the will or even with the causality of human willing."[375] Freedom is rather the abysmal ground of unconcealment, which threatens to dissolve the meaning of our phenomenal presence into nothingness: "But that which frees – the mystery – is concealed and always concealing itself."[376] The metaphysical meaning of the environmental crisis is the *disclosure of freedom.* Because we are confronted with the possibility of losing environmental meaning, we simultaneously come to an environmental awareness of our existential dependence on its continuation. Not in the superficial sense of appreciating the environment as provider of goods and services that we need. But far more radical, I come to recognize that the very existence of my own human self – my subjectivity – is *identical* to the environmental possibilities of my natural surroundings.

The transformation of the human-nature relation comes about through the disclosure of environmental meaning. This meaning exhibits a fundamental twofoldness. That is, environmental meaning contains both the *foundation and abyss* of nature. The abyss of nature is freedom, as the possibility of nihilation, forcing man to recognize his radical environmental belongingness, through the identity of the environmental crisis and his own existential destruction. The foundation of nature we name *willing*. Willing is the grounding movement towards the continuation and preservation of environmental meaning, as the organization of all things according to some unified system. In our contemporary technological epoch, willing translates into an order of resource demand – *das Ge-stell*. The will to a continuation and preservation of environmental meaning is the existential ground of nature through which human subjectivity is made possible. That is, the willfulness of human subjectivity can unfold, only as an expression of this fundamental ontological willing.

We have provided a metaphysical depiction of the environmental crisis of the Anthropocene, as a transformative event through which man comes to recognize his environmental belongingness, by reinstituting nature with a radical sense of environmental meaning. This environmental meaning is in a state of constant dynamic struggle between its own destruction and continuation, expressed as the ground of nature as freedom and willing. This metaphysical depiction of our epochal state of environmental crisis enables a more fundamental notion of *human responsibility as environmental awareness*. The *response* of responsibility is not the acting out of a willful subject, but the thoughtful state of recognition

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[375] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 25 (GA 7: 26).
[376] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 25 (GA 7: 26).

by man, of his own existential contingence on the grounding struggle between freedom and willing. Responsibility is the return of man to his original environmental home – *oikos*. It is simultaneously a recognition of the human essence – *ethos* – as the abiding residence of man in the presence of environmental meaning.[377] Through this identity of *ethos* and *oikos*, we reveal the original ground of human morality, as the awareness of the dynamic conflict between environmental freedom and willing.

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[377] Or as François Raffoul puts it: "Ethics is no longer tied to the subject, but to the event of being; it is not the active manipulation of entities, but the enactment of being itself" and further "responsibility names the human being's relationship to being, that is, the cobelonging of being and the human being." Raffoul, F. (2016), "Ethics", page 293 & 294.

PART THREE: A Metaphysics of Freedom

1. Ecological Humanism as a Metaphysical System

In part one, we presented a metaphysical interpretation of our new epoch. The second part introduced the so-called *later* Heidegger and connected his thinking to the Anthropocene narrative. Both parts one and two has served an introductory function – that is, they have established a particular horizon of thought for our project of environmental philosophy. In part two, we articulated this horizon as an ecological humanism. In parts three and four, it is our intention to develop this ecological humanism into a metaphysical system. What does this development entail? In order to sufficiently answer this question, we will now begin by recapitulating our achievements and shortcomings thus far.

We began part one with an analysis of the Anthropocene as a transformative event. The notion of a "transformation" simply follows from the idea of an epochal change. Originally, this change reflects a proposed transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, according to the scientific determination of nature by stratigraphy and Earth System science. However, despite its scientific origin, we quickly suggested that the recent philosophical appropriation of the Anthropocene idea centers on a metaphysical meaning for our contemporary epoch – that is, forming a conception of the Anthropocene transformation that ultimately transcends its original scientific determination. What is this metaphysical meaning? The word itself, "Anthropocene", indicates an *incorporation of man into our understanding of "nature*. This incorporation is generally perceived by environmental philosophers to entail a shift in our normative understanding of nature. The transformative event of the Anthropocene thus contains

two essential components: First, a transfiguration of the man-nature relation. Second, a reorientation in our normative understanding of nature. This transformation is metaphysical. In a negative sense, because it is *independent of the empirical-material epochal change that is originally associated with the Anthropocene as a scientific concept.* In a positive sense, because the concepts and ideas transformed constitute *first principles* for our understanding of man and nature.

With this preliminary notion of transformative event, we inquired into the Anthropocene literature, framing our analysis according to three general narratives: *The destruction of nature, the overcoming of nihilism, and historical meaning of epochal event.* By making this trifurcation, we did not claim that there are three separate forms of transformations. Rather, we presented these narratives as different perspectives on one single event, as a way to encapsulate the myriad of claims made by the Anthropocenologists. First, the destruction of nature corresponds to an environmental crisis where man's *existential foundation is threatened by annihilation*, manifesting a radical awareness of the *identity of the human self and its natural surroundings*. Second, this environmental awareness brings forth an overthrow of nihilism, revealing nature as a *unified system of normative meaning*. Third, the transformative event attains a direct historical significance, as the state of crisis manifests the fundamental *historical contingence* of our environmental situation. The metaphysical meaning of *epochal event* thereby becomes, not a theoretical partitioning of history according to distinct segments of representational time, but instead the manifestation of a primordial historical awareness that has become a predominant trait of our own time.

Can we narrow these narratives down to one original metaphysical event, articulating its formal structure? In the final chapter of part one we laid out a set of basic concepts for our interpretation of the Anthropocene, as a foundational framework for our continued development of a metaphysics of man and nature. The transformative event begins by a state of crisis. The crisis delimitates the finitude of nature as **environment**. That is, the metaphysical meaning of "environment" is this *manifestation of the finitude of nature*. Through this delimitation of finitude, we reveal the *normative meaning* of nature.[378] The essence of normativity is the simultaneous possibility of being and non-being. Through our Anthropocene interpretation,

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[378] In his own inquiry into a possible Heideggerian ethics, Lawrence J. Hatab makes a similar connection between finitude and normativity: "At the heart of ethical existence is the finitude of meaning." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 195.

"being" translates into a *unified system of meaning*, whereas "non-being" refers to the *nihilation of this meaning*. This metaphysical conception of normative meaning brings us to the heart of our dissertation – to the notion of a ***ground of nature***. Nature, in its primordial normative meaning of environment, contains the simultaneous possibility of its own preservation and destruction as a system of meaning. These possibilities are conditioned by two *grounding movements*. ***Willing*** is the foundational creation of meaning, through which all things of nature can realize their existence. ***Freedom*** is the abysmal ground that nihilates all meaning. The essence of man – his ***ethos*** – is to stand confronted with these two grounding movements. This confrontation is the primordial meaning of environmental ***responsibility***. The transformative event of the Anthropocene thus attains a twofold meaning – it is a coming into an original environmental awareness of the grounding struggle between willing and freedom, yet simultaneously it is a coming into contact with one's own primordial essence. In short: *the return to the ground of nature is also the return of man to his own essence*.

We began part two by encapsulating our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene under the notion of an ecological humanism. The general idea is to transform the inquiry about the essence of man into an ecologically oriented thinking. More specifically, if the idea of a commonly shared humanity reflects an *ethical essence* of human existence, then the claim of our ecological humanism is that this essence is fundamentally rooted in nature itself. However, in the modern landscape of thought, our claim to such transformation of humanism should intuitively spark significant dissent. For whereas humanism is often defined through human emancipation from nature, the ecological demand by traditional environmental philosophy is that we detach our perspective and valuation of nature from anthropogenic and anthropocentric concerns. If we define "ethos" and "oikos" as the respective objects of inquiry for humanism and environmentalism, then the radical claim of our ecological humanism is that ethos and oikos are in fact the same.

The introduction of Martin Heidegger was made as a direct response to the challenge of conceptualizing a radical unity of ethos and oikos. We chose his *Letter on "Humanism"* as the main work for our introduction to his thinking. The letter is written in response to three questions. *How can we restore meaning to the word "humanism"? What is the relation of ontology to a possible ethics? And, how can we preserve the element of adventure that all research contains without simply turning philosophy into an adventuress?* We utilized these questions as a way to thematically structure our interpretation of Heidegger. The first question retraces the idea of humanity back to an understanding of being. The *later* Heidegger articulates the understanding of being above all else through the notions of *Unverborgenheit* and *Ereignis*.

The true meaning of being is *unconcealment* – the foundational disclosure of existence into our phenomenal presence. Heidegger connects this foundational disclosure to human existence. In its primordial form, unconcealment represents an *event of appropriation* – that is, the event through which man is brought into being. Human existence is fundamentally ecstatic, as it stands out from the phenomenal presence of unconcealment. Humanism then becomes an intellectual project that tries to bring our thinking back to its original ecstatic existence in the face of unconcealment. Humanism is an event of homecoming, tracing our existence back to the truth of being itself.

The second question confronts the traditional division between theoretical and practical philosophy – between ontology and ethics. If ontology inquires into the being of existent entities as *theoretical representation*, and ethics provides *directives for human action*, then the homecoming of the understanding of being represents a mode of thinking that is more primordial than both ontology and ethics. Heidegger utilizes a less familiar translation of the Greek "ethos" as meaning *abode* or *abiding place*. This original place for human existence is signified by a *radical practice of letting things be* – that is, as a temporarily releasement from the everyday forgetfulness of willful engagements. The homecoming to the presence of the truth of being – *the home of oikos* – is thereby connected to this radical and reflective practice of the human essence – *the contemplative ethos*.

The third question addresses the adventurous element of thinking. Humanism as a thinking of being is adventurous. The adventure represents a venture into the danger of the unknown. This confrontation of danger is the manifestation of the abysmal ground of being. Heidegger articulates this abysmal ground in the *Letter on "Humanism"* as *nothingness, the not*. But we also accentuated the connection made between nothingness and freedom. The abysmal ground of nothingness is *that which frees human thought*, making possible the reflective thinking of humanism – the homecoming of the human essence.

In the final chapter of part two, we attempted to bring the thinking of Heidegger in direct connection with our initial metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene. We sought to articulate the transformative event of our contemporary epoch through the Heideggerian language of *unconcealment* and the *event of appropriation*. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger approaches the problem of the possibility of a homecoming to our humanity from the perspective of the *history of being*. The Western history of being corresponds to the development of the different manners of unconcealing for the truth of being as unconcealment. More specifically, it corresponds to the development of the way in which the truth of being *conceals itself* throughout its different ways of unconcealment. The history of

Western philosophy is a history of the forgetfulness of the truth of being. Heidegger thereby understand the notion of "epoch" from the original Greek meaning of *holding back*, as the different historical ways in which the truth of being is held back in forgetfulness. In our own historical time, the truth of being is held back by a *technological* manner of unconcealment. The essence of technology resides in the reduction of nature into a willful ordering and management of readily available resources. This technical exposure of nature constitutes a supreme danger. Through the instrumentality of human willfulness, technology not only conceals the truth of being, but it also detaches man from his own essence. This makes our technological epoch *existentially unsustainable*. Yet, because of this internal vulnerability, the technological danger simultaneously represents the possibility of a saving power. In our appropriation of Heidegger's essay on technology, we presented the current environmental crisis as an historical sending that holds the potential to emancipate man from his technical determination. Such emancipation does not entail that we stop harvesting natural resources; that we refrain from machines and industry; nor that we stop investing in the technical solutions of human ingenuity. Rather, it is an emancipation that enables human thought to reflect on the ground of its own existence. The Anthropocene represents an eschatological event: In face of environmental crisis man is brought back to the original home of his essence – that is, in the advent of destruction, man also finds his salvation. This transformative event of thought has become the predominant trait of our own time.

When we now look back and evaluate our achievements thus far, we ask the following: What were the challenges to our metaphysical interpretation of the Anthropocene in the first part, and to what extent did the Heideggerian conceptualization in the second part accommodate these challenges? At the heart of the first part is our new concept of a ground of nature. This concept contains the existential foundation of man, and it has an inherently normative meaning. In the second part, we equated the concept of a ground nature with Heidegger's notion of a truth of being. The ground of nature is the event of unconcealment that brings all existence into our phenomenal presence. Man finds himself as the ecstatic projection of this unconcealment. Have we thereby accomplished our expressed attempt to develop a new metaphysics? No. In what sense is there a need for a new metaphysics? In our interpretation of the Anthropocene, we have presented a new and radical understanding of man and nature – that is, an understanding that violates the predominant intuitions of contemporary philosophy. In order to validate our Anthropocene interpretation, we need to develop a *new set of first principles*, *systematically articulating the phenomena of man, nature, and their normative meaning*. Heidegger does not offer such metaphysical system. In the first and second division of *Being and Time*, Heidegger

attempts to frame the question of being through a metaphysics of man – as an *analytic of Dasein*. But Heidegger never finished the final third division, where the meaning of being itself was to be exposed. Instead, he abandons the project of a metaphysics of man in favor of his enigmatic turn towards a post-metaphysical thinking of the truth of being. The so-called *later* Heidegger is no longer philosophy qua metaphysics. It is above all else an inquiry into a *primordial mode of thinking*.

Wherein, specifically, lies the distinction between our own intended metaphysics for the Anthropocene, and the primordial thinking of the *Letter on "Humanism"* and *The Question Concerning Technology*? In the end, the *later* Heidegger is motivated by one single question: the meaning of being. Throughout his extensive production after the *turn* of the early 1930s, this meaning is articulated in several ways, but above all else as the truth of being as unconcealment. By making the radical distinction between existent entities as *unconcealed*, and the event of *unconcealment itself* – that is, the ontological difference – the Heideggerian thought becomes radically different from any other ontological inquiry, and thereby traditional metaphysics. The quest is no longer to investigate into the properties, structures, or demarcations of existent things, but rather to think the grounding meaning which encapsulates all of existence. As expressed with the word itself – unconcealment – this meaning articulates a dynamic relationship between *concealment and disclosure*. And nothing else. The task now ahead of us must be to build on this primordial mode of thinking the truth of being as unconcealment, in order to develop a metaphysical system of first principles that is able to accommodate our claims to the transformative event of the Anthropocene. That is, an articulation of the first principles of the metaphysical objects of man and nature, as they are grounded on the meaning of being itself.

Ecological Humanism as a Metaphysics of Freedom

Is there an even simpler way to frame our metaphysical system? That is, can we provide a *general interpretive framework* for our Anthropocene interpretation, and its Heideggerian conceptualization as an ecological humanism, from which all the basic concepts of our new metaphysical system can naturally emerge? The Anthropocene represents a transformative event through which the essence of man is brought back to its original ground of nature. We are inquiring into a *common ground* of man and nature. What is *commonly expressed* through

this ground? On the one hand, the essence of man – his humanity and morality. On the other hand, the essence of nature – that which fundamentally and necessarily constitutes all things of nature. We choose to frame this common ground in our ecological humanism as a *metaphysics of freedom*. Why freedom? The presumption at play in this choice is simple: *Freedom is foundational to human morality. If we want to trace the essence of human morality back to a primordial ground of nature, then surely freedom must be essential to this ground.* What is freedom? Traditionally, we depict freedom as the ground of human morality. Consequentially, it is a necessary basis for any theory of ethics or politics. Pushing ethics and politics towards such basis, we can express both as domains under the umbrella term of *normative thinking*. What is normativity? We understand this notion intuitively in contrast to descriptivity. The descriptive represents our understanding of *that which is*. Whereas the normative reflects our understanding of *that which ought to be* – that is, expressing an imperative. Freedom is the essence of normativity. At this level of abstraction, freedom simply represents the simultaneous possibility of being and non-being. Without this basis, all forms of normativity disintegrate back into the realm of the descriptive. The fundamental claim to our ecological humanism is that freedom, as the essence of normativity, is the common ground of nature and man.

Freedom is the ground of nature, as the essence of normativity, and thereby the ground of the essence of man. We aim to develop a metaphysics of freedom. What is metaphysics? We understand the word "meta" as indicating that which is *above or beyond* nature. More specifically, as the *first principles* that grounds nature *a priori*. Whereas "nature" – *physis* – is simply the totality of that which is – the totality of existent entities. Taken together, then, metaphysics is an inquiry into the *first principles of being*. In our Heideggerian conceptualization of metaphysics, the idea of first principles of being takes on a peculiar shift in emphasis. **First**, the most fundamental of ontological inquires is not to ask about *which* specific things that do in fact exist, nor to determine the *what-ness* of these existent entities, but instead to ask about the meaning of being as such. Metaphysics is the inquiry into the *first principles of the meaning of being*. This transforms metaphysics into *fundamental ontology*. And it is only through the lens of fundamental ontology that we can truly approach the secondary ontological questions regarding the "which" and the "what" of existent entities. **Second**, the meaning of being is *ontologically different* from existent entities themselves. Translated into our current metaphysics of freedom, this means that freedom cannot itself be an existent entity. **Third**, the human subject is not the foundation of being. Rather, the subject is itself an existential possibility *of* being. This claim is reflected by the ecocentric orientation of our Heideggerian humanism. **Fourth**, the first principles of the meaning of being express a

practical nature, rather than theoretical representation. Thus, freedom is fundamentally something that we *act out*. **Fifth**, we have equated the Heideggerian notion of the truth of being with our own concept of a ground of nature, and more specifically with the essence of normativity. This equation entails the following radical conclusion: *normativity is ontologically different yet simultaneously foundational to nature*. That is, as ground of nature, normativity becomes the basis of descriptivity. From the perspective of environmental philosophy, this conclusion completely flips the traditional (Humean) problem of ascribing value (normativity) to an already pre-existing nature. In our Heideggerian metaphysics of nature, the "ought" becomes a prerequisite for the "is".

A Heideggerian Appropriation of Kant's Philosophy of Freedom

The task now ahead of us is the attempt to bring our enigmatic and obscure Heideggerian conceptualization of the Anthropocene into the light of an intelligible and rigorous system of metaphysics. However, this ambition holds something of an apparent paradox. The very premise of the *later* Heidegger's intellectual project is an insistence to abandon the methods and conceptual frameworks of traditional Western philosophy – to abandon metaphysics – indulging instead in the poetic landscape of an alleged primordial mode of thinking. We claim the Heideggerian thought as an essential foundation for a more truthful philosophy of man and nature. Yet we also utilize this foundation as a catalyst for a return to metaphysics. If the *later* Heidegger's notion of "thinking" reflects the antithesis to the forgetfulness of being within metaphysics, then we are now in fact suggesting a return to traditional philosophy that incorporates a Heideggerian understanding of being as its foundation. In other words, we suggest the synthesis of a *thinking metaphysics*. Ultimately, this means that we are going beyond the scope of Heidegger's own philosophy.

Can we find a starting point for our own thoughtful metaphysics within Heidegger's own writings? The metaphysics of Dasein in *Being and Time* may seem as the obvious first choice. But the two published divisions only contain an account of the inauthenticity and authenticity of Dasein, as conditioned by its understanding of being. We are inquiring into the truth of being itself, as the ground of nature and a supposed expression of the essence of normativity. The resoluteness of authenticity – *die Entschlossenheit der Eigentlichkeit* – in the second division of *Being and Time* can at best help to indicate a primordial manner of ethical

comportment, but it does not get to the preconditioning ground of ethics. What we need is a substitute for the missing third division of *Being and Time* that can help us articulate the *normative meaning of being itself.*

Given our initial decision to develop a Heideggerian metaphysics of freedom, it seems reasonable to start this development by looking into what Heidegger has written specifically on the topic of freedom. Most notably, we find three lecture series: GA 31, 42 and 49. The two latter centers on the treatise on human freedom by the later Schelling. The first lecture series addresses central concepts of Plato and Aristotle, but above all else, it deals with the philosophy of freedom by Kant. We choose Kant over Schelling. We choose *The Essence of Human Freedom*. Why? At the very outset of our task to develop a metaphysics of freedom for the Anthropocene, we can give two reasons to choose Heidegger's lecture series on Kant. The **first** reason has to do with the nature of Kant's system of philosophy. Kant is, in a sense, both a *Greek* and a *modern* thinker. He is modern because he compartmentalizes traditional metaphysical problems according to distinct disciplines like "ontology", "ethics", "politics" and "theory of right". Yet, he is also Greek, because his overall intellectual project seeks to connect these disciplines together in a unified system.[379] Precisely because of this internal ambiguity, Kant becomes an ideal candidate for our own project of unifying ontology and ethics. The **second** reason has to do with a particular *pathway* of Kantian thought that is suggested several times throughout *The Essence of Human Freedom*, but which Heidegger ultimately fails to deliver. This pathway reflects a reversal of Kant's philosophy of freedom. Instead of the original determination of freedom as a property of natural causation, Heidegger suggests that we understand freedom as the ultimate ground of ontology. The fact that Heidegger never completes this Kantian pathway is made clear in the four-page conclusion of the lecture, where the reversal is once again presented, but only to leave the reader in a state of suspense. This lack of closure makes the lecture fundamentally outward-looking. This scope beyond itself has a twofold dynamic. In one sense, it is an incitement to see a radical potential of thought within

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[379] Paul Guyer similarly speaks of an ambiguity in the systematic aspirations of Kant's philosophy, which he ties directly to *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its role of joining the law of nature from the first critique and the law of freedom from the second critique: "But although Kant did not think that the scientific laws of nature and the moral laws of freedom could ever be *derived* from a single principle, neither did he think that they could be left to define merely parallel but unconnected realms of human thought. On the contrary, after establishing the fundamental laws of nature in his first *Critique* and the fundamental principle of morality in the second, Kant wrote a third *Critique* precisely in order to show how the laws of nature and the laws of freedom could be *joined* in a single and coherent view of the place of human beings as moral agents in the natural world." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 1f.

the Kantian framework. In another sense, it is a foresight into the turn of the *later* Heidegger. As a lecture series from the summer semester of 1930, *The Essence of Human Freedom* reflects a philosophical project that is still largely rooted in the metaphysics of Dasein from *Being and Time*.[380] But the questions asked that remain unanswered indicates yet a more radical mode of thinking. And it does so through the metaphysical framework of Kant.

GA 31: *The Essence of Human Freedom*

The full title of GA 31 is *The Essence of Human Freedom – An Introduction to Philosophy*. The inclusion of the subtitle is important. The overarching theme of the lecture is the relation between the question of human freedom and the nature of philosophy. Its general argument goes like this: It is through freedom that man is confronted with the finitude of his own existence. The disclosure of finitude reflects a primordial understanding of being. Philosophy is fundamentally an inquiry into being. Freedom is the ground of being. Freedom thereby becomes the condition for the possibility of philosophy. An inquiry into the essence of human freedom is ultimately an inquiry into the relation between being and freedom, and thereby the defining inquiry of philosophy.

The role of this current subchapter is to give a summary of the overall structure of the lecture. In the subsequent and final subchapter, we will then offer a plan for how we intend to use Heidegger's reading of Kant for our own metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. The lecture consists of five chapters across two main parts, together with an introduction and a conclusion. As is often the case with Heidegger, the analyses and arguments of *The Essence of Human Freedom* does not unfold by manner of strict and necessary inference.

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[380] Sacha Golob writes: "However, the vast majority of Ga31 remains firmly within the framework set up by *SZ*". Golob, S. (2014), *Heidegger on Concepts, Freedom and Normativity*, page 193. Bret W. Davis considers the work to stand in a third, middle position between Heidegger's early and later period of thought. Davis emphasizes this as the period where Heidegger disastrously succumbs to a philosophy of *willing* (disastrous, because Davis connects this brief intellectual tendency to Heidegger's connections with national socialism). Whereas the later Heidegger, according to Davis, becomes instead a thinker of *non-willing* (a description that share many commonalities with our own concept of *ontological freedom*): "Heidegger's turn to non-willing, or more precisely stated, his turn to the task of thinking the problem of the will and the possibility of non-willing, takes place only after wandering down the dead-end path of a disastrous embrace of the will." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 60.

Rather, one topic of discussion is often superseded by another, seemingly by a method of mere association. It is only in hindsight that we are able to see the development of the text in accordance with a unified and coherent horizon of thought. To extract this unified thought cannot therefore be the task of the present summary but will ultimately be reflected by our own appropriation of the lecture throughout the chapters to come.

The lecture begins by a set of preliminary considerations on the nature of freedom and its status as a philosophical question. Freedom has historically been defined as independence from either nature or God, and thus somehow connects to the scope of the *totality of beings* (i.e., nature) or to the *ground of beings* (i.e., God). This puts the question of human freedom in a seemingly unsettled middle position, as both addressing a particular human property, and the most general philosophical concern for everything that is.[381] The first chapter of part one immediately follows up on this strange ambiguity for the question of the essence of freedom as both particular and general, by claiming that philosophy is simultaneously a task of *going after the whole* and of *going to the roots*.[382] Heidegger himself admits that this alleged connection between "the whole" and "the roots" is not at all clear at this point. However, the implicit assumption is that freedom somehow constitutes an ultimate ground of being, and that this ground is fundamental to a possible understanding of being as a whole. If independence from nature and God constitutes a *negative* definition of freedom, then the investigation continues by appealing to a possible *positive* definition. Heidegger quickly turns to Kant. Locating the original definition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we find that freedom is expressed through the concept of causality. This makes Kant's philosophy of freedom both novel and profound, as it allegedly represents the first time in the history of philosophy where freedom is articulated explicitly in "a radical connection with the fundamental problems of metaphysics."[383] However, this brief reference to Kant serves only as a point of transition for the introduction to the main theme of part one. Heidegger makes the following argumentative line of inquiry: Causality is fundamentally an expression of *movement*. Movement is a basic trait of *existent entities* (*Seiende*). An inquiry into the nature of existence entities takes us to the *meaning being itself*

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[381] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 5 (GA 31: 6).
[382] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 14 (GA 31: 19).
[383] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 15 (GA 31: 21).

(*Sein*).[384] So begins the main bulk of part one, which is the inquiry into the essence of human freedom through the question of the meaning of being.

Chapter two of part one takes the question of being back to Greek thought – to Plato and Aristotle. With an emphasis on the original meaning of οὐσία as *property* or *estate*, Heidegger appropriates the Greek word via the German "Anwesen" and "Anwesenheit", understanding being as a *constant presence – ständige Anwesenheit*.[385] According to Heidegger, the Greek connection between "estate" and "being" reflect a fundamental property of all existent entities; that they are presented to us as *constantly attainable*. This ultimately entails a phenomenological understanding of being – *that which is, is that which presents itself to us*. Heidegger takes us through an extensive discussion on constant presence according to movement and change (μεταβολή). He connects the well-known principles of δυνάμις and ἐνέργεια to the fundamental movements of being as *presence* and *absence* – ἀπουσία and παρουσία. The chapter ends on an interpretation of *Metaphysics* Θ10 by Aristotle, where Heidegger suggest that ἀλήθεια – containing both the presence of ἀπουσία and absence of παρουσία – in fact offers the most primordial understanding of being according to Greek thought.

Having established the meaning of being through the Greek word of οὐσία, chapter three investigates further into the nature of constant presence according to *time and freedom*. Constancy implies that something endures. Endurance expresses a basic mode of time. Being thus presents itself through time. Heidegger then refers to Aristotle, Augustin, and Kant, who all claim that time is somehow inherently connected to man: "Soul, spirit, the *human* subject, are the loci of time."[386] The argument is initially straightforward. In the same way as the human understanding of being is the only manner of access for the problem of being itself (i.e., for ontology), so too is the human experience of time the necessary basis for our inquiry into time itself. However, this does not mean, as one might be led to believe from Kant, that time is "something that only occurs in man"[387], or something for which man himself is the basis. Time is at bottom the *individualization* (*Vereinzelung*) of the human being. That is, the coming into being of the identity of his self. This means that time is instead the ground of the essence of

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[384] Heidegger makes this transition in §§ 4 and 5. However, the explicit distinction between "existent entities" and "being" ("Seiende" and "Sein") is only introduced fully in chapter 2.
[385] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 37 (GA 31: 52).
[386] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 85 (GA 31: 121).
[387] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 88 (GA 31: 126).

man. This temporal grounding of individualization becomes a main topic in part two, as Heidegger investigates into Kantian framing of time as the transcendental basis of causality.

What then about freedom? Heidegger ends chapter three and thereby part one of the lecture by returning to the definition of philosophy as *going after the whole* as *going to the roots*. By this stage, the question of freedom has been left behind in favor of being and time. The reintroduction of freedom therefore primarily serves as an introduction to a topic that is to come. If the constant presence of time goes to the *whole* of everything that is, and thereby reflect the ultimate scope of philosophy, then Heidegger now suggests freedom as the *roots* of philosophy, and thereby "something prior even to being and time".[388] But this also means that freedom is no longer a property of man. Rather, man has now instead become "a possibility of freedom."[389]

Part one of *The Essence of Human Freedom* is titled *Positive Definition of Philosophy from the Content of the Problem of Freedom – The Problem of Human Freedom and the Fundamental Question of Philosophy*. Perhaps a more precise and explanatory title could be *The Problem of Human Freedom as a Question of the Meaning of Being*. Part two of the lecture is titled *Causality and Freedom – Transcendental and Practical Freedom in Kant*. The subtitle corresponds the division between chapter one and two, where Heidegger inquires into Kant's two different ways to freedom. That is, freedom as a *transcendental idea* and freedom as the factuality of *practical reason*. The first way, presented in the first chapter, is almost exclusively concerned with the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The transcendental idea of freedom originates from the transcendental concept of causality. Heidegger devotes substantial effort to interpret the concept of causality in the *analogies of experience*, and the transcendental idea itself as presented in the *third antinomy*.

The second chapter expands the Kantian scope on freedom, connecting the analysis of *Critique of Pure Reason* to *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. Even though Kant explicitly maintains the connection between freedom and causality, there is simultaneously a significant development in the way of conceptualization, as he shifts towards a fundamentally practical expression of freedom – that is, as the ethical actions of man. Heidegger offers his interpretations of the meaning of freedom as practical fact, the human will and practical reason, and the moral law as a categorical imperative. Through the Kantian framework in part two, the

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[388] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 94 (GA 31: 134).
[389] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 94 (GA 31: 135).

lecture provides a more elaborate analysis of the relationship between being as constant presence, and its ultimate basis of time and freedom. The meaning of being as time connects to causal lawfulness of nature, whereas freedom represents the ultimate instance of being as transcending this lawfulness.

In the end, Heidegger is not content with the Kantian framework. The final conclusion ends by suggesting a reversal of thought that has only been mentioned throughout the lecture. Can we, in contrast to the ontological setup in *Critique of Pure Reason*, approach freedom as the ground of causality, and thereby ultimately as the ground of being itself? The initial framing of freedom as *root* and condition for the possibility of philosophy now comes full circle. But the suggested transition of thought ends on a mere four-page conclusion. Heidegger does not continue the explicit framing of ontology as a philosophy of freedom. And more importantly, Heidegger's thinking throughout the 1930s quickly develops away from any attempt at a metaphysical system akin to traditional Kantian philosophy.

A Kantian Framework for a Heideggerian Thought

As we now are about go deeper into *The Essence of Human Freedom*, it is not with the primary intent to understand this lecture on its own right. In the end, we look to this text as a basis for a Heideggerian project that Heidegger himself never sought out to complete. The lecture suggests a metaphysics of freedom, as a reversal of the Kantian framework in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Part four of this dissertation will be dedicated to flesh out such a metaphysics. It will do so, based on a novel interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where we claim that Kant himself offers the kind of reversal of thought that Heidegger only suggests. The role of our current part three is to establish a *metaphysical pathway* on which part four may venture. That is, to articulate Heidegger's notion of the true meaning of being through the Kantian framework of phenomenal presence – *Erscheinung*. Since this is a Kantian pathway, we will limit our interpretation of Heidegger's lecture to the segments that deals specifically with Kant. This means that we will largely ignore the explicit treatment of Plato and Aristotle, shifting the emphasis of our analysis from οὐσία to *Erscheinung*.

Our interpretation of Heidegger's lecture will be organized according to three basic themes: Freedom in relation to *the meaning of being*; freedom in relation to *causality (and time)*; and freedom in relation to *ethical praxis*. These themes do not make up three separate elements

but reflect a gradual development towards one fundamental horizon of thought. The first theme is the object of inquiry in **chapter two**. Freedom connects to the meaning of being, as the ultimate ground of all existent entities. If being is a phenomenal presence, then freedom is the *absence* that marks the finitude of man and nature. We will interpret the *critical turn* of Kant's *transcendental idealism* as a delimitation of the finitude of being as phenomenal appearance – *Erscheinung*. This entails a conceptualization of Kant's enigmatic notion of the "thing in itself" as the delimiting ground of *ontological freedom*. The second theme is the object of inquiry in **chapter three**. The phenomenal presence of being is *lawfully structured*. We encapsulate this lawfulness of man and nature through the concept of causality. Freedom thereby becomes the abysmal ground that transcends causality. The third and final theme is the object of inquiry in **chapter four**. The phenomenal presence of causality and freedom is fundamentally *practical* – that is, something that we *act out*. The understanding of being therefore takes the form of a *practical event*. The Kantian concept of *practical reason* is ultimately a mode of experience that reflects on this event. The Kantian notion of "ethics" thereby refers to the essence of man as a primordial understanding of being.

The one single and overarching thought of the *later* Heidegger is the conceptualization of the true meaning of being as *unconcealment*, and the *event of appropriation* where man is brought back to his essence in the face of this truth. It is now our task to articulate this true meaning of being through a Kantian system of freedom and causality. The *will* is according to Kant the *determining ground* for the acting out of causal relations. The *free will* of pure practical reason is an instance of thoughtful reflection, where man is able to juxtapose the possible action of a causal relation with the possibility of freedom to transcend causal determination altogether. Heidegger suggests that we approach Kant's concept of "will" and "freedom", not as concepts on the faculty of the human subject, but instead as the ultimate ground of nature – that is, as the *ground* and *abyss* of the truth of being as unconcealment.

2. The Phenomenal Presence of Being: Appearance, Finitude and Freedom

What is metaphysics? Heidegger begins *The Essence of Human Freedom* by framing philosophy as simultaneously *going-after-the-whole* and *going-to-the-roots*. What does it mean to go after the whole? Any science is restricted to a particular *domain* of nature – as a field of inquiry and delimitation of its research practice.[390] Philosophy is in this regard a unique intellectual endeavor because it has no dedicated domain of its own. What then is the object of inquiry for philosophy? Approaching philosophy in its most basic form, it represents an inquiry into the entirety of all domains – that is, an inquiry into the *whole* of existent entities.[391] This definition elevates philosophy to the level of metaphysics. Heidegger turns to Kant and *Critique of Pure Reason* as the basis for the traditional notion of metaphysics. It is the *knowledge of supersensible beings*: "Traditional metaphysics, to which Kant remains oriented in his *Critique*, defines these supersensible beings under the three headings 'soul', 'world', 'God'."[392] The

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[390] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 3 (GA 31: 4).

[391] There is another Heideggerian answer that should be mentioned. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger distinguishes between "fundamental ontology", which corresponds to his analytic of Dasein, and "regional ontology", which builds on the meaning of being from fundamental ontology. Heidegger does not elaborate on the meaning of "regional ontology" in *Being and Time*, but if we compare with the statements of *The Essence of Human Freedom,* a "region" does not correspond to a unique *philosophical domain*. Rather, all regional ontologies are parasitic on different scientific domains, or domains of everyday life, investigating into their *founding concepts* (*Grundbegriffe*). See Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time*, page 30 & 34 (SZ 10 & 13).

[392] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141 (GA 31: 204).

metaphysical idea of a soul expresses the essence of the human subject, "its simplicity, indestructability and immortality."[393] World is the totality of nature – that is, the totality of existent entities – as it presents itself to us. And God is the "ground and author of all beings."[394]

The "meta" in the traditional definition of metaphysics thus refer to *transcendent qua supersensible existent entities*. However, Kant abandons the *speculative* metaphysics of his predecessors – like Leibniz, Wolf, and Baumgarten.[395] We have no basis for inferring from the existence of supersensible ideas to the existence of corresponding transcendent objects. But Kant does not thereby discard the notion of metaphysics altogether. Instead, he reinterprets its meaning according to his *critical* philosophy.[396] The "meta" does not address supersensible objects, but instead a *transcending of thought* beyond the scope of the sensible, in order to regain an ontological understanding of sensible objects as a whole. The primary concern for Kant's critical metaphysics is thereby not existent entities as such, that is, what Kant refer to as *objects of appearance*. Rather, it is the *relation and limits drawn between transcendence and being as a whole*, as the *conditions for the possibility of all existent entities*. This makes Kant's metaphysics into *fundamental ontology*. This label no doubt entails a Heideggerian appropriation of Kant. However, we claim that Heidegger's ontological lens helps us to elevate the radical insight of Kant's critical turn for metaphysics. And through this elevation, we also reveal Heidegger's thinking as ultimately indebted to Kant.

Appearance – *Erscheinung* – is the ultimate *foundation* of Kant's fundamental ontology. This foundation is equivalent to Heidegger's notion of the true meaning of being – unconcealment. As such, we get two variations on the definition of fundamental ontology. For Kant, it is the inquiry into the *conditions for the possibility of existent entities qua objects of appearance*. For Heidegger, it is the inquiry into the *meaning of being*. The Heideggerian definition brings with it the explication of an ontological difference. That is, the radical claim that we cannot understand the meaning of being in terms of existent entities, but that it must represent something altogether different. Kant certainly does not make any such claim regarding appearance. However, it will nonetheless be one of the primary tasks of our Heideggerian appropriation to demonstrate that Kant's critical philosophy is haunted by a radical ambiguity in the ontological meaning of appearance, and that Heidegger's claim of

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[393] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141 (GA 31: 204).
[394] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141 (GA 31: 204).
[395] See Wood, A. W. (2005), *Kant*, page 8 ("Life and Works").
[396] See KdrV A841/B869

ontological difference may in fact offer a resolution for this ambiguity. It is an ambiguity that becomes most apparent in the development of Kant's *transcendental ideas*. More specifically, we will use the development of Kant's transcendental ideas on freedom and causality throughout all three *Critiques* as the basis for a formulation of our own metaphysical concept of a *ground of nature*.

The task of the present chapter is to establish the notion of being as such, as the basis for our metaphysics of man and nature. In the **first subchapter**, we will use Kant's concept of appearance to determine the meaning of being as *phenomenal presence* – a phenomenal presence which also contains an inherent *absence*. In the **second subchapter**, we will inquire into the *finitude* of being as established through Kant's problematic idea of the *thing-in-itself*. Here we will introduce Heidegger's radical articulation of the thing-in-itself as an *ontological ground of freedom*. In the **third subchapter**, we will introduce Kant's transcendental ideas as a basis for a metaphysical articulation of Heidegger's ontological difference. Freedom is a transcendental idea. Kant's notion of transcendental ideas undergoes a significant development throughout his critical work, but their ontological meaning nonetheless maintains a problematic ambiguity. Indicating what is to come in our appropriation of Kant's critical philosophy in the next two chapters of part three, as well as the entirety of part four, we suggest that the ontological ambiguity that haunts the transcendental ideas can be utilized to articulate Heidegger's foundational differentiation between existent entities and the meaning of being.

Being as Phenomenal Presence

What is the object of inquiry for the question of the meaning of being? It is not *that* which exists. Neither is it the common *properties* or *structures* through which we can characterize existent entities. Rather, these latter questions do in fact presuppose an understanding of the meaning of being. In our everyday life, we simply take this primordial understanding of being for granted.

> "It is not first by speaking and talking about beings, by explicit 'is' sayings, that we operate in an understanding of 'is', but we already do this in all silent *comportment* to beings. Again, not only, and not initially, in contemplative enjoyment of beings, or in

theoretical reflection upon them, but in all 'practical' judging and employment of beings."[397]

In this everyday comportment, judgment as well as theoretical analysis, our understanding of being is initially and for the most part divided. We relate to existent entities by manner of their *being-present – Vorhandensein* – for example when stating that the house in front of me *actually* exists, as opposed to the mere idea of a house, or to the potential of building a house someday. When we say that the house is tall, or made of bricks, we refer to its *so-being – Sosein*. If we classify the house as a building, or the bricks as building material, we refer to their *what-being – Wassein*. Moreover, when claiming the *fact* that the house was raised in 1988, or that it is situated in the municipality of Oslo, we invoke an understanding of *being-true – Wahrsein*.[398]

These are all examples on the *initial dividedness* for the subject matter of being. Yet they all also presuppose a *primordial and undifferentiated* understanding of being.[399] When stating that something does in fact exist (present-being), or if we inquire into its characterizations (so-being and what-being), we already take for granted what it *means* for something to be an existent entity. But how can we even begin to conceive the meaning of being itself? In search for an answer, Heidegger begins by turning to the Greeks. However, our own motivation for reading *The Essence of Human Freedom* is not to gain an understanding of Plato and Aristotle. Rather, we are inquiring into a novel reading of Kant. Heidegger sees in Kant a return to Greek thought, and thus we can appropriate the interpretation of Plato and Aristotle for our Kantian fundamental ontology: "We find in Kant a radical redefinition of the essence of ontology […] And yet this redefinition is on the whole a renewal of the Greek approach to the question of being."[400]

Heidegger turns to οὐσία as the Greek word for being, or the *beingness of existent entities – Seiendheit des Seienden*.[401] This word contains a peculiar connection between being and property or estate – house and home. Heidegger translates this connection with the German words of *Anwesendheit* and *Anwesen* – presence and estate.[402] The validity of this interpretation is not primarily rooted in its strength as a claim of Greek philology. Heidegger rejects all claims

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[397] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 29 (GA 31: 41).
[398] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 30 (GA 31: 42).
[399] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 30 (GA 31: 42).
[400] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141 (GA 31: 203).
[401] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 33 (GA 31: 47).
[402] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 37 (GA 31: 52).

to *historically correct* representations; in the end, all "*philosophical interpretation is destruction.*"[403] The validity must instead rest on the fruitfulness of the pathway that is opened up by this interpretation. So what is opened up by framing being as estate?

Property, possession, or home – *Anwesen* – reflect a state of having existent entities at one's disposal. Things are at one's disposal because they *present themselves as constantly attainable – ständig verfügbar*.[404] What is reflected by the attainability of a thing? An immediate *purposiveness and serviceability – Dienlichkeit*.[405] The German words of "dienen" and "dienlich" brings our thought to Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* of existent entities as *Zeug*. In lack of a better word, "Zeug" is usually translated into English as *tool* or *equipment*. But Heidegger's exemplarily use of "Werkzeug" does not reduce the purposiveness of all things to the usefulness of hammers and bicycles. What is primordially at service can also be a pattern of praxis, the structure of behavior, a reaction, or a function. Ted Sadler translates "Dienlichkeit" in *The Essence of Human Freedom* as *purposiveness*. Its root notion of *purpose* does not merely express the instrumental utility for man's leisure or handicraft. A thing can surely be purposive for the technological applications of man. But a stone, a plant or an animal can also be purposive for the sustainability and flourishment of an ecosystem. And equally can an atom be purposive for the chemical formation of a molecule. What Heidegger's analysis of οὐσία demonstrates, is that the purposiveness and serviceability of all things reveal the meaning of their being as a *constant presence*. That is, as familiarly and reliably presenting themselves at our disposal. This purposiveness of constant presence "does not attach to such things in an external way but determines what and how they are."[406]

Things present themselves in a constant presence of purposiveness. This constancy indicates in turn that things *exists in movement – Bewegung*.[407] What is the primordial nature of movement? Again, Heidegger turns to the Greeks: "The fundamental nature of movement is μεταβολή, change."[408] The nature of change connects to *presence and absence* as two basic expressions of οὐσία: *An-wesenheit* and *Ab-wesenheit* – παρουσία and ἀπουσία.[409] A change of color is the *disappearance* of one color and the *appearance* of another:

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[403] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 119 (GA 31: 168).
[404] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 36 (GA 31: 52).
[405] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 40 (GA 31: 56).
[406] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 40 (GA 31: 56).
[407] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 40 (GA 31: 57).
[408] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 41 (GA 31: 59).
[409] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 42 (GA 31: 60).

"[The] interpretation and description of μεταβολή is oriented to absence and presence – indeed […] this was, in a certain sense, already the case with Plato, who speaks of change from nothing to being and *vice versa* – to clearly see and understand this is of the greatest importance."[410]

The analysis of the Greek conception of movement and change provides us with an enigmatically ambiguous notion of being. Οὐσία has become a *constant phenomenal presence*, which itself contains both a *presence and an absence*. Heidegger subsequently spends some time to elaborate on this ambiguity by appealing to the two notions of ἐνέργεια and δύναμις (often translated as actuality and potentiality).[411] For an existent thing, ἐνέργεια is the presenting of itself as something *actually* present. Whereas δύναμις is the *potential* of a possible manifestation. For Plato, however, the potential of δύναμις equally presents itself as the idea of a thing – ἰδέα, εἶδος.[412] Therefore, both the absence of δύναμις and the presence of ἐνέργεια becomes determinant for the being of a thing.

Heidegger is now in a position to rearticulate the divided understanding of being according to presence and absence. The characteristics of *so-being* appear as presence, and change through the dynamics of presence and absence. The classification of *what-being* is absently contained within the potential of a thing, but is nonetheless present through its idea. And the *being-present* of a thing is the actuality of its presence. But what about the remaining category of *being-true*? Does the notion of the truth of a thing contain a forgotten and yet more primordial and undivided meaning of being itself? In the final part of the lecture's chapter on the Greek understanding of being as constant presence, Heidegger turns to *Metaphysics* by Aristotle and the meaning of truth – ἀλήθεια. He begins by fending off the traditional interpretation of book Θ, part 10 (by Albert Schwegler, Werner Jaeger, and David Ross), which states that truth is a problem of logic and epistemology, and does not therefore properly belong to book Θ. Heidegger rejects this interpretation as a distortion of, not only Aristotle but also Greek thinking in general: "Θ10 is not a foreign appendix, but rather *the keystone of Book Θ*, which itself is the center of the entire *Metaphysics*."[413] According to Heidegger, Aristotle represents an orientation of philosophy qua metaphysics as fundamentally a question regarding

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[410] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 43 (GA 31: 61).
[411] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 47 (GA 31: 67).
[412] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 50 (GA 31: 72).
[413] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 74 (GA 31: 107).

truth: "Aristotle's straightforward claim is that being-true constitutes the most proper being of beings, i.e. that being-true as such announces the most proper essence of being."[414]

We have already introduced the meaning of truth as *unconcealment* in part two, but it is worth repeating some of the highlights. (**1**) The notion of truth – ἀλήθεια – represents an effort to think the unity of the meaning of being as constant presence, as containing both a presence and an absence. (**2**) Truth is not a *representation* of something which itself is different from the unconcealed. Rather, being *is* itself this unmediated presence – and nothing else. (**3**) There is a vital distinction to be made – that is, an ontological difference – between the *unconcealed existent entities* (ὄν ἀληθές) and *unconcealment itself* (ἀλήθεια).[415] The perhaps most instructive yet not all exhaustive way to think about this distinction, is by acknowledging that concealment (absence) cannot be contained in the concept of a thing. Concealment is rather that which transcends the scope of things. (**4**) We can describe unconcealment on the whole, by analogy of an *event of illumination*.[416] What is illuminated is not originally our knowledge of existent entities, but existence as such. (**5**) And finally, *untruth* is not hiddenness. For hiddenness is itself an integral part of truth. Neither is it the incorrect representation of existent entities. Untruth is the *distortion – Verstelltheit –* of constant present itself, so that its meaning as unconcealment is forgotten in the constricting focus on the presence of existent entities.[417]

The purpose of our examination thus far has not been to provide a satisfactory presentation of Heidegger's interpretation of Plato and Aristotle. We have obviously just scratched the surface regarding notions like οὐσία, μεταβολή, ἐνέργεια and δυνάμις. Our detour through Greek thinking has instead served to establish a preliminary setup for our question of the meaning of being. That is, we have established the *meaning of being as a constant phenomenal presence*. Yet this phenomenal presence simultaneously contains an absence. This original dynamic relationship between presence and absence is articulated through the Greek word for truth – unconcealment.[418] Heidegger's interpretation of Kant in *The Essence of Human*

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[414] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 61 (GA 31: 87).
[415] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 63 (GA 31: 91).
[416] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 81 (GA 31: 114).
[417] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 63 (GA 31: 91).
[418] Andrew J. Mitchell adds: "unconcealment is not simply a matter of revealing something otherwise concealed, it is no longer thought in such rough and ready oppositions. Unconcealment is now capable of letting appear the concealment that is essential to all revelation." Mitchell, A. J. (2015), *The Fourfold – Reading the Late Heidegger*, page 16.

Freedom suggests that the critical notion of *appearance – Erscheinung –* continues this Greek orientation for ontology.

What is the meaning of appearance? Even at the level of everyday understanding and speech, this word contains a peculiar ambiguity. Appearance means that something *shows itself*, but it also means that something *hides*. For example: *The woman appeared at the venue dressed in dark green. She appeared joyful, but in truth, she kept within her a great sorrow.* In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger inquires into this ambiguity, suggesting that there are in fact four possible interpretations of the word "Erscheinung".[419] **First**, there is simply the possibility of something to *show itself*, unconditionally, as an unmediated phenomenon. **Second**, an appearance can mean to *not show itself*, but instead to indicate its own absence. **Third**, an appearance can entail the *partial* showing of itself by something, thus simultaneously indicating a remaining absence of something *yet to be shown*. **Fourth**, an appearance can be the showing of itself by something, while simultaneously indicating the not-showing of something which is itself *inherently absent*. This fourth interpretation is a variation of the third, as it not only states that something is not shown, but also that the property of not-showing is in fact the essential meaning of that which is absent. These distinctions might seem overly subtle, but we can in fact map them onto a fundamental difference between an *epistemological* and an *ontological* interpretation of Kant's notion of "Erscheinung".

Both the second and the third variation on the meaning of appearance can serve as the basis for an epistemological interpretation of Kant. The second variation indicates that Kant's critical restriction of human understanding to appearance entails that we *never get to know the world as it really is in itself*. Whereas the third variation states that humans do in fact acquire an understanding of how the world really is, but yet *only partially and incompletely*.[420] Both variations suggest an epistemological interpretation of Kant's critical demarcation of appearance, because the *thing in itself* here represents a limitation in human understanding, as opposed to a distinction of reality itself. However, Heidegger's claim is that Kant's notion of appearance belongs in the fourth category, which entails an ontological reading. What appears in the constant phenomenal presence of *Erscheinung* is *completely and unconditionally the*

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[419] Heidegger, M (1962) *Being and Time*, page 53 (SZ: 30). I have altered the order of presentation. The original order in *Being and Time* is three, one, two, four.

[420] Although not necessarily the same, there is a similarity between Heidegger's second and third variation of "Erscheinung" and what Henry E. Allison refers to as the "two-object view" and the "two-aspect view" of Kant's notion of the *thing in itself*. See Allison, H. E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 3.

world as it exists in itself. What is absent in the showing of appearance is *not an underlying reality* but something altogether different:

> "When *Kant* goes on to say that we do not know the thing-in-itself, i.e. that we do not have an absolute intuition of this but only see an appearance, he does not mean that we grasp a pseudo-actuality or something that is only half actual. If that which is present (the beings themselves) is conceived as appearance, this means nothing else but that the actuality of the actual consists in its character as appearance. To appear is to come into view, i.e. to the presence of a look, into the fully determining determinedness of the self-showing beings themselves."[421]

Why do we favor the ontological interpretation of Kant against the epistemological? We approach Kant's philosophy from the perspective of the Heideggerian question of the meaning of being.[422] The ontological interpretation suggests that Kant's notion of appearance is key to an understanding of this meaning. The epistemological interpretation states that we do not possess knowledge about things as they exist in themselves, or that this knowledge is incomplete. Notice, however, that both of these variations do in fact presuppose an understanding of the meaning of being. That is, they presuppose what it would *mean* for a thing to exist in-itself. Our concern is not to account for what is known and unknown about the world. What our Heideggerian interpretation of Kant tries to establish is a far more radical and fundamental concern for philosophy: namely the meaning of being as such. However, when tracing this meaning back to appearance, this still leaves us with the question: What is the nature of the not-showing of that which is inherently absent in Kant's notion of appearance? That is, what is the meaning of the thing-in-it-self, as the basis for the delimitation of the finitude of appearance? When Heidegger traces the meaning of being back to the phenomenal presence of appearance, this also means that the thing-in-itself cannot simply be a limitation in our understanding but must represent something that transcends existence itself. To take Kant's critical demarcation seriously is to understand that the notion of the thing-in-itself is a demand to bring thinking to the very limits of being.

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[421] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 50 (GA 31: 71).
[422] It is worth noting that Kant himself refers to his critical philosophy as ontology. E.g., in *Lectures on Metaphysics* (*Metaphysik L₂*: 1790-1791?, AK. 28: 531-594): "The first and most important question in ontology is: *how are a priori cognitions possible?*". And further: "Transcendental philosophy is ontology – doctrine of essence, not doctrine of things (discipline, a science which posits limits for our human knowledge – doctrine, [one] which extends it)." Kant, I. (1997), *Lectures on Metaphysics*, page 28:542 & 28:679.

The Finitude of Being

Kant's notion of the *thing-in-itself* is the key to understand the meaning of *appearance*. As a foundational component to his transcendental idealism, it is also one of the most enigmatic and problematic of Kantian notions. And the enigma is not alleviated by the fact that Kant himself is inconsistent in his use of its variant terms, and the definitions he gives them.[423] To provide a satisfactory interpretation of the thing-in-itself requires a violent appropriation. Our interpretation goes through Heidegger and *The Essence of Human Freedom*. If philosophy is the *going after the whole* as *going to the roots*, then the relation of "whole" and "roots" is for Kant situated in the dynamic of appearance and thing-in-itself. So we ask, in what sense is meaning of appearance grounded on the roots of the thing in itself? The grounding is *conceptual*, *ontological,* and *hermeneutical*. **Conceptually**, appearance contains both an element of showing itself and of *not* showing itself. The notion of the thing in itself refers to *what is absent in appearance*. **Ontologically**, the thing-in-itself is the *ultimate ground* for the object of appearance – as that from which all things come into being. **Hermeneutically**, it is only through the manifestation of the hidden ground of the thing-in-itself that we are able to come to an awareness of the meaning of being *as appearance*. That is, Kant's critical philosophy of *Erscheinung* begins as a confrontation with that which is absent in appearance.

A first step towards an understanding of the thing-in-itself is to define its relation to appearance as a division of ontology, rather than of epistemology: "The requisite question concerning man [in *Critique of Pure Reason*] can be neither psychological nor epistemological, nor can it be a phenomenology of consciousness and experience, nor anthropology."[424] A straightforward variant of the epistemological interpretation of the division between appearance and thing-in-itself goes as follows: Human understanding – *Erkenntnis* – is a condition for the possibility of the object of appearance. We do not have access to objects qua existent entities

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[423] In the words of Allen W. Wood: "Kant himself formulates transcendental idealism [i.e., the doctrine that states that we can have cognition of appearance but not of things in themselves] in a variety of ways, and it is not at all clear how, or whether, his statements of it can all be reconciled, or taken as statements of a single, self-consistent doctrine." Wood, A. W. (2005), *Kant*, page 63.

[424] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 142 (GA 31: 205). As we will see below, Heidegger's rejection of "anthropology" as a label for *Critique of Pure Reason* directly contradicts Kant's own depiction in *Jäsche Logic*. However, as a conciliatory reading, we suggest that Heidegger rejects anthropology qua subjectivist reductionism, whereas Kant's claim to anthropology can be interpreted to conform with Heidegger's general claim that man's understanding of being is a precondition for ontology. See Kant, I (1992), *The Jäsche logic*, page 538 (*Logic* 9: 25).

outside of appearance. Therefore, *we only know the world as it appears through our understanding and remain ignorant about the world as it exists in itself.*[425] This argument may first seem uncontroversial. However, upon closer reflection we see that it is in fact inconsistent with the fundamental claims of Kant's transcendental idealism. We have already defined "nature" as everything that is – as the totality of existent entities. In line with Kant, this concept of nature is synonymous with the total aggregate of objects of appearance: "Now that which, according to its essence, gets encountered in experience as present (in the contexture of its being-present) is what Kant calls *nature*."[426] Experience is based on sensory intuition – ἐμπειρία.[427] We can attain a *pure* (i.e. non-empirical) understanding of the transcendental forms and concepts that determine the sensory object of appearance, but we have no *intelligible* intuition of existent entities outside of experience. This empirical basis for the Kantian experience of nature does not entail a demarcation for the extent of our *knowledge about things in nature*, but rather our understanding of *nature as such*, as the totality of existent entities. There is nothing that prevents us from hypothesizing or speculating regarding potential things or properties in a nature unknown to us. But ask the simple question: what would it *mean* for these properties or things to be *real*? Kant's answer is that the only basis for our understanding of the meaning of being resides in appearance. The epistemological interpretation claims that we only know the world as it appears through our understanding and remain ignorant about the world as it exists in itself. This claim presupposes the notion of "world" or "nature" as something that is *mediated by our understanding* in order to produce appearance, and therefore also as something which *exists before and outside of understanding*. But this is precisely what Kant denies.[428] There is no epistemic ambiguity of the world; there are no *two objects* or a

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[425] It may be instructive to point out that our Heideggerian rejection of the "epistemological" interpretation is first and foremost a rejection of what Kantian scholars often refer to as the "two-world view." Henry E. Allison presents a variation of this interpretation as follows: "According to many of its critics, transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory that affirms the uncognizability of the 'real' (things in themselves) and relegates cognition to the purely subjective realm of representations (appearances)." Allison, H. E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 4.

[426] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 142 (GA 31: 189).

[427] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 168 (GA 31: 247).

[428] Henry E. Allison seems to formulate the same contradiction, or in his words "paradox": "The basic assumption is simply that the mind can acquire these materials [for our representations] only as a result of being 'affected' by things in themselves. Thus, such things must be assumed to exist, even though the theory denies that we have the right to say anything about them, including the claims that they exist and affect us." Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 5.

double aspect of nature.[429] The claim of the epistemological interpretation implodes on itself. The concept of nature simply has no meaning outside our understanding of appearance.

Why has the epistemological interpretation of Kant such a strong foothold in the standard depiction of the history of philosophy?[430] The misinterpretation expresses a failure to recognize the radical nature of Kant's critical transformation of metaphysics. For metaphysics to be critical means for it to "determine [*umgrenzen*] its inner possibility, thus marking it off against what does not properly belongs to it, drawing boundaries and limits – κρίνειν."[431] This determination and delimitation of the inner possibility is inherently connected to the philosophical investigation of man: "Kant sees the grounding of metaphysics precisely as a return to human nature."[432] Kant famously summarizes the interests of human reason, and thereby the fields of philosophy, by the following three questions: *What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?* In *Jäsche Logic*, he expands with a fourth question – *What is man?* – to incorporate all the former:

> "*Metaphysics* answers the first question, *morals* the second, *religion* the third, and *anthropology* the fourth. Fundamentally, however, we could reckon all of this as anthropology, because the first three questions relate to the last one."[433]

What does it mean for philosophy to be fundamentally oriented towards anthropology – towards man? A basic premise for Heidegger's fundamental ontology is that "we have access to the problem of being only through the understanding of being."[434] This premise makes Heidegger into a Kantian thinker. Human experience is the condition for the possibility of our access to the object of appearance, but this does not entail that the object of appearance is a product of human experience. Rather, human experience, and thereby the human existence, is a product of appearance. We possess knowledge – *episteme* – about the world because we have access to

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[429] Wood presents what he considers to be the two viable options of interpretation. The *causality interpretation* states that "the relationship between things in themselves and appearances is a causal relation: appearances are subjective states in us, that are *caused* by things in themselves outside us." The *identity interpretation* states that "every appearance is *identical* to a thing in itself, and the distinction is not between two different entities but between two ways of thinking about or referring to the same entity." Wood, Allen W. (2005), *Kant*, page 64 & 65.
[430] Henry E Allison attributes the contemporary dominance of the epistemological interpretation to the legacy P.F. Strawson's reading of Kant. See Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 5.
[431] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141f (GA 31: 204).
[432] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 142 (GA 31: 205).
[433] Kant, I (1992), *The Jäsche logic*, page 538 (*Logic* 9: 25). See also KdrV A805/B833.
[434] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 88 (GA 31: 125).

the world itself as appearance. The means of access is human experience, and without a critical investigation into the conditions and limits of experience, we risk a degradation of human understanding into a speculative knowledge that can never find a corresponding existent entity.[435]

Following our Heideggerian rejection of the epistemological interpretation of the thing-in-itself, we can now introduce an ontological interpretation of the thing-in-itself through a *negative* and a *positive* definition. The negative definition only tells us what is *not present* in the showing of appearance. Thus, it only helps to articulate the thing-in-itself as the conceptual basis for the meaning of appearance. The positive definition, on the other hand, articulates the manner in which the thing-in-itself *manifests* its own absence as the ontological *ground* of appearance, and consequently the hermeneutical starting-point for Kant's philosophy.

The **negative** definition of the thing-in-itself is the *finitude* of the meaning of being as appearance. The nature of this finitude will be the subject of extensive analysis throughout the rest of the dissertation, so we will now merely settle for some preliminary characterizations. Beginning once more with the understanding of everyday speech, the notion of appearance signifies a *restriction* for the appearing object – that is, that *not all is shown* in the presence of what is appearing. This restriction translates into the determination of the object of appearance as *not infinite*. We can articulate this finitude in a number of ways. Spatially, the object of appearance is *not everywhere but somewhere*, with a *confined spatial extent*. Temporally, it does not *persist infinitely throughout all time*, but resides *then*, *now,* or *sometime in the future*. The object does not possess an infinite aggregate of properties or possibilities but demonstrates a finite set of characteristics. Et cetera. To be an existent entity is to demonstrate such finitude in its determination. The speculative object of infinite space, time, and properties does not merely transgress the extent of human understanding but violates our understanding of what it means to be.

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[435] Even though Henry E. Allison defines Kant's transcendental conditions explicitly as *epistemological* and *not ontological*, and thereby seems to reject our own Heideggerian claim, it is relevant to note that Allison also defines "ontological conditions" as follows: "By the latter [i.e., ontological conditions] is meant a condition of the possibility of the existence of things, which conditions these things quite independently of their relation to the human (or any other) mind." However, *if* we can interpret Allison's condition "*independently of their relation to the human*" as simply saying "*independent from appearance*", then there is no necessary contradiction between Allison's epistemological interpretation and Heidegger's ontological interpretation. That is, to the extent that Allison simply identifies "ontology" with *pre-critical metaphysics*, his position seems to be in line with our own claim that Heidegger is at bottom a critical thinker. See Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 11.

The negative definition of the thing-in-itself simply determines the meaning of appearance as *not being infinite*. But the "not" of the thing-in-itself is not thereby reducible to a simple negation of predicates: The dress is *not* green; the woman is *not* there. Rather, the primordial meaning of the "not" is something that manifests itself substantially in appearance.[436] The **positive** definition of the thing-in-itself articulates an =*X*; as the appearance of something purely intelligible, transcending all sensuous empirical experience of existent entities:

> "What it [appearance] is in itself, for absolute knowledge, remains unknown to us. However, already in this not-knowing we intend and think something we do not know: not the appearance, but the unknown X, the transcendental object which must underlie the appearances. Of this X, then, we say that 'it' appears, albeit not as it is in itself. While the object X is utterly empty, it is still in its emptiness, not sensible but intelligible. It is negatively intelligible and unknown in any further aspect. The X is the intelligible object. It is what is intelligible about the object. But the X is not itself a separate object of knowledge"[437]

The ontological meaning of this =X is the "real stumbling block for philosophy", and the hermeneutical catalyst for the philosophical reflection of the meaning of being *as* appearance.[438] The thing in itself is the *delimiting ground for the finitude of existence*. Heidegger's radical claim in *The Essence of Human Freedom* is that this ground is freedom: "Ultimately, this is the primary and ultimate context, the only primordial and genuine context, of the problem of freedom."[439] In part two of the lecture series, he inquires into Kant's two ways of freedom, as the *cosmological idea* of freedom in the third antinomy of *Critique of Pure Reason*, and as the factuality of freedom in the moral judgment of *practical reason*, as described in *Groundwork*

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[436] Lawrence J. Hatab writes on Heidegger's notion of finitude: "Finitude does not refer simply to spatial, temporal, definitional, or cognitive limits; it includes an indigenous negativity in being, where an absence or otherness is always part of a thing's being, so that being cannot be associated with full or constant presence." Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 2f.

[437] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 169f (GA 31: 250f).

[438] The observant reader will notice that the phrase *"stumbling block for philosophy"* is a quote from Kant's depiction of the problem of freedom in the third antinomy of the transcendental dialectic. The fact that we now identify the stumbling block of freedom as a problem of appearance and the thing-in-itself reflects our Heideggerian interpretation. KdrV A449/B476.

[439] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 115 (GA 31: 161). Michel Haar adds: "Although it grounds every ground or reason (*Grund*), it itself is *Abgrund*, an abyss. 'Freedom is the abyss of *Dasein*.' [...] All freedom is made possible in the first by being. Unlike existentialism, the Heideggerian thesis proclaims that man is not the possibility of freedom, but the freedom of being is what makes man possible. What is this freedom that we do not have, but what permeates us or that we come to meet? In what sense can it still be called *human*? In a 1930 course [GA 31] we find this apparent reversal formulated for the first time and with great vigor." Haar, Michel (1993). *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, page 122 & 123.

and *Critique of Practical Reason*. In the end, the cosmological idea of freedom only provides a negative definition of the thing in itself, as a *limiting concept* for the delimitation of the finitude of appearance.[440] It is only through the ethical praxis of man that we gain access to the positive manifestation of freedom as the ontological ground of appearance. In the next two chapters we will elaborate on the ontological meaning of the *thing in itself* according to these two Kantian ways to freedom. For the time being, we will restrict our analysis to what Heidegger says about freedom prior to his direct analysis of Kant.

Heidegger begins the lecture by giving some preliminary considerations on the meaning of freedom. Initially, we define freedom negatively as *independence from...*[441] The "from what" of independence is traditionally understood in two different ways. Freedom is the independence either from *world* or from *God*. We recognize both "world" and "God" as two fundamental ideas of metaphysics (together with "soul"). World, or nature, is the totality of existent entities. The independence from world reflects that human action is "not bound by the lawfulness of natural processes and their necessity." [442] God, on the other hand, is the ground of existence – the ground of being. And the independence from God is a condition for the possibility that man's *relationship to God* is itself an expression of his own autonomy: "Only then can *he* seek and acknowledge God, hold God and take upon *himself* the demands of God."[443]

Through this initial definition of *independence from world and God*, we see that freedom is no longer a mere property of the human subject, or the human soul, but rather a *negative relationship to the totality and ground of all existent entities*. Freedom marks the essence of human existence, thus putting into question the most primordial of all anthropological concerns – our humanity. But it also puts into question the most primordial of all philosophical concerns – the question of being as such: "If we wish to grasp the essence of this relationship, of this independence, we must inquire into the essence of man, and also into the essence of world and God."[444]

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[440] As Henry E. Allison states, the positive meaning of noumenon in Kant's critical metaphysics is as limiting concepts for our understanding: "even though in the *Critique* Kant rejected the view that we can know noumena, we have seen that he did not reject the concept of a noumenon. Rather, he sought to reinterpret it in such a way that it could be incorporated into his transcendental account. This is accomplished by giving it the function of a limiting or boundary concept (*Grenzbegriff*)." Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 58.
[441] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 4 (GA 31: 6).
[442] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 4 (GA 31: 6).
[443] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 5 (GA 31: 7).
[444] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 9 (GA 31: 13).

We see now an outline of the connection between the question of freedom and the thing-in-itself as an ontological problem. The idea of freedom offers the same negative yet grounding relationship to being as the delimiting ground of the thing-in-itself.[445] When we now continue on this Heideggerian pathway of articulating freedom as the ontological basis for Kant's transcendental idealism, it becomes important to free our thinking from the stasis of traditional preconceived notions, enabling instead a mode of reflection where we can approach the problem of freedom anew. The independence from world and God makes freedom into an ontological ground that is more primordial than the being of any existent entity: "*Freedom is not some particular thing* among and alongside other things, but is *superordinate and governing in relation to the whole*."[446] As such, the problem of freedom forces us to challenge even the very basic concept of ontology itself. In the next and final subchapter, we will introduce the connection between Heidegger's ontological difference and the ontologically ambiguous position of Kant's transcendental ideas. Our claim is that Kant's critical rearticulation of metaphysical ideas entails a radical expansion for our understanding of the object of inquiry for ontology; an expansion which Kant himself was never able to fully articulate, but which Heidegger determines as the ontological difference between existent entities and the meaning of being itself.

Ontological Difference and Transcendental Ideas

The driving task for this third part of the dissertation is to establish a metaphysical framework for the meaning of being. We have now introduced this meaning as a constant phenomenal presence, yet also indicated that this presence contains a phenomenal absence. This dynamic of presence and absence is expressed by the grounding framework of Kant's transcendental idealism – as *appearance* and the *thing-in-itself*. The most radical and difficult task for a

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[445] Michel Harr adds: "Freedom is not an entity of the world, nor a faculty of man, but '*by its essence more original than man*' [GA 31: 134]. It is the possibility of entities as a whole becoming manifest. It is the possibility of any metaphysical truth. Freedom is thus the way to being integrated into the essence of truth." Haar, M. (1993). *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, page 123. In Lawrence J. Hatab's iteration of a *Heideggerian ethics*, he states that "Ontological freedom […] is prior to something like a will or self-causation". Hatab, L. J. (2000), *Ethics and Finitude*, page 178.
[446] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 94 (GA 31: 134).

Kantian framework of fundamental ontology is to ask about the meaning of the thing-in-itself. The difficulty resides in the fact that the absence of the thing-in-itself is not itself an existent entity. So what 'is' it? The answer to this question will necessarily push the conceptual basis of ontology itself. Heidegger's answer in *The Essence of Human Freedom* is that the ultimate ground of being is freedom. We gave an initial definition of freedom as a radical independence from the world and God – that is, as something that transcends the *totality and ground of existence itself*. Yet the difficulty still remains as we try to articulate the ontological meaning of this independence. For independence in the ordinary use of the word is typically a property of some existent entity. However, the Kantian claim is that the independence of the thing-in-itself is something that essentially transcends all forms of existence. But the thing-in-itself is still not nothing, in the sense of a mere negation of predicates. So the question remains: what 'is' it?

This strange predicament for our analysis indicates once again a return to Heidegger's *ontological difference*. That is, the insistence that the meaning of being is the ground of all things, without itself being an existent entity. The task now ahead of us is to bring the problem of the ontological difference in contact with Kant's *transcendental ideas*. Kant's transcendental ideas reflect a certain *ontological ambiguity* throughout the entirety of his critical work. In the critical turn for metaphysics, existence is restricted to the object of appearance, thus denying any correspondence between the transcendental ideas and intelligible (i.e., non-empirical) existent entities.[447] However, the ideas are not therefore merely figments of human imagination. They express things of thought that are *necessary and foundational to both morality and nature*. We suggest that our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant brings about a particularly fruitful realization of both these thinkers. On the one hand, Heidegger holds the fundamental thought of ontological difference. Whereas Kant, on the other hand, provides a metaphysical system for this thought to unfold. The transcendental ideas express the meaning of being as constant phenomenal presence. Our focus will be on the dynamic relationship between the idea of *causality*[448] as the lawfulness of nature, and the idea of *freedom* as the transcending of this

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[447] Allen W. Wood formulates this critical turn as making metaphysics "epistemological": "Kant understood the term 'meta-physics' (etymologically, 'beyond nature') in epistemological terms. That is, for the purpose of metaphysics, 'nature' is what is known through experience, and so 'meta-physics' is a science demarcated not by the set of objects whit which it deals but by the *a priori epistemic status* of its principles." Wood, Allen W. (2005), *Kant*, page 24.

[448] Why do we refer to causality as a transcendental *idea*, rather than a transcendental concept (i.e., category)? Even though the topic of natural lawfulness is primarily approached by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a

lawfulness. It should be noted that Heidegger himself does not make an explicit connection between the ontological difference and the transcendental ideas of freedom and causality. However, we nonetheless suggest that this is the claim that is ultimately implied by Heidegger in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. That is, when Heidegger suggests that we reverse Kant's philosophy of freedom, so that we think the problem of causality from a transcendent ground of freedom, he paves the way for a metaphysics of man and nature that thinks beyond existence itself.[449]

What is the meaning of Kant's transcendental ideas? Let us begin by looking at Heidegger's interpretation of *Critique of Pure Reason*, with an emphasis on the cosmological idea of freedom. The transcendental ideas emerge as a problem of the appearance of nature and the relation between the conditioned and the *absolute totality of the unconditioned*:

> "In its demand for absolute totality, reason insist on going back from one condition to another until it arrives at *the unconditioned*. Thus the principle of reason is 'that *if the conditioned is given, the entire sum of conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned* (through which alone the conditioned has been possible) *is also given'*."[450]

The transcendental *concepts* of understanding – *Verstand* – reflect the representation of the general nature of appearance.[451] As a condition for the possibility of existence, there is a direct correspondence between the concept and the appearing object. The transcendental *ideas* of reason – *Vernunft* – reflect the extrapolation of thought, thinking the concepts of understanding in their *unconditioned unity and completeness*. As such, the ideas of pure reason transcend the scope of any corresponding object of appearance:

> "The ideas 'contain a certain completeness to which no possible empirical knowledge ever attains. In them reason aims only at a *systematic unity*, to which it seeks to approximate the unity that is empirically possible, without ever completely reaching it.'"[452]

transcendental concept of understanding, it will be one of the main tasks of part four in our dissertation to investigate into the meaning of causality as a transcendental idea in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

[449] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 205 (GA 31: 299).

[450] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 146 (GA 31: 212). See also KdrV A409/B436.

[451] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 143 (GA 31: 207).

[452] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 143 (GA 31: 207). See also KdrV A567f/B595f. My *italic*.

The ideas of traditional metaphysics – as *metaphysica specialis* – are the unconditioned totalities of soul, world, and God; defined in respect to the representation of the human subject, the manifold of objects in appearance, and in respect to the representation of the condition of all objects of thought whatsoever.[453] Rather remarkably, Kant finds the question of freedom to be seated in the metaphysical idea of the world, rather than the soul or God:

> "Instead, freedom belongs where we least expect it: it is a *cosmological* idea. The problem of freedom *arises in the context of the problem of world*, understanding 'world' in Kant's sense as the 'totality of appearances' (nature and cosmos), thus the totality of present beings as accessible to finite human knowledge."[454]

The question of freedom expresses the ontological problem of the unconditioned totality for the objects of appearance. This unconditioned totality is the ground for all appearance – the ground of nature – yet still not itself an existent entity. As ontological ground, the transcendental idea of freedom articulates the meaning of the thing-in-itself from the perspective of natural lawfulness: "Freedom is nothing other than *absolute natural causality*, or as Kant himself fittingly says, it is a concept of nature that transcends all possible experience."[455]

In the end, the cosmological idea of freedom in *Critique of Pure Reason* is only a *limiting concept* for the demarcation of the finitude of appearance. The purpose of Kant's inquiry into the third antinomy is not to demonstrate the positive reality of freedom, but rather to dissolve the internal contradiction of reason (*anti-nomos*) in thinking freedom as simultaneously present together with the lawful determination of nature. However, Kant's inquiry into the *ontological nature* of the transcendental ideas takes on a significant development throughout his critical work. Our emphasis throughout the rest of this dissertation will be on two essential contributions to this development. We find the first in the moral philosophy of *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the second in the theory of aesthetics and natural technique offered by *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In what sense does these works contribute to the development of Kant's understanding of the transcendental ideas? The first critique establishes a critical transformation for our understanding of metaphysical ideas, from noumenal existent entities to *regulative principles* for the object of appearance. In the second critique, there is shift in emphasis for these regulative principles,

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[453] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 143f (GA 31: 208).
[454] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 144 (GA 31: 209).
[455] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 148 (GA 31: 214f).

from theoretical representation to the acting out of practical reason. The 'real object' of the transcendental ideas is not a corresponding existent entity, but instead a *grounding praxis* for human morality. In the third critique, Kant adds yet another layer with the introduction of r*eflective judgment* and the *transcendental principle of purposiveness*. This principle articulates a radical ground for the lawfulness of nature – as a transcendent natural technique. In its primordial form, it is a lawfulness that only speaks to the subjective lawfulness of our aesthetic sensibility. That is, as the aesthetics objects of *beauty* and *sublimity*.

The primary contribution of Kant's transcendental ideas in the first critique is *negative*, representing theoretical concepts for the delimitation of the finitude of appearance. Whereas in the second and third critique the contribution of the transcendental ideas is *positive*, representing practical ground of human morality and an aesthetic foundation for a transcendent lawfulness in nature. Our appropriation of Kant's metaphysics is an attempt to *utilize this practical and aesthetic nature of the transcendental ideas to articulate and systematize Heidegger's fundamental thought of ontological difference*. In the next two chapters, we will follow Heidegger's interpretation of the transcendental idea of freedom. In chapter three, as the cosmological idea of freedom as the *absolute origination of the causal determination of nature*. And in chapter four, as the practical factuality of freedom in the moral judgment of pure practical reason.

3. *Freedom and the Lawfulness of Being*

In the previous chapter we established the meaning of being as the constant presence of phenomenal appearance. Following Heidegger's analysis of Greek thought and its connections to Kant, we articulated this phenomenal appearance as simultaneously containing a presence and an absence. The absence is the ground out of which being comes to presence as appearance. In Kant's transcendental philosophy, this dynamic relationship between a phenomenal presence and absence is reflected in the critical distinction between the object of appearance and the thing-in-itself. Through Heidegger's radical appropriation of Kant, we presented an interpretation of the negative ground of the thing-in-itself through a concept of ontological freedom. Having now arrived at chapter three, we see that the title indicates a connection between the problem of freedom and the *lawfulness of being*. The word "lawful" express our attempt to epitomize the essential meaning of causality. Kant originally presents the idea of human freedom through the transcendental concept of causality, that is, articulating freedom as a metaphysical problem of nature. In the efforts to further develop our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene as a *metaphysics of freedom*, we now extend our analysis to Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's philosophy of *freedom in relation to causality*. If freedom is the grounding absence that lurks in the back of the constant phenomenal appearance of being, then causality now represents the *form* of the phenomenal presence. That is, if freedom is that which hides itself in the meaning of being, then being shows itself as the lawful presence of appearance.

What is fundamentally *asked about* in the metaphysical question of causality? We cannot simply rely on our commonsense intuitions for the meaning of causality. Causality is a matter of a *relation* between cause and effect. Traditionally, with a questionable trait of causal *necessity*. But what is this relation from cause intended to describe? One approach is to start with Newton. If the *initial conditions* of a closed mechanical system are given, so too is the *development* of this system given, by necessity and in perpetuity. However, the discoveries of quantum mechanics throughout the twentieth century have put forth serious questions about the classic notion of a mechanically determined universe. Physical phenomena like superposition, entanglement, the uncertainty principle, and the measurement problem seem to radically violate the old billiard ball paradigm of causal determination. Does this entail that modern physics invalidates the fundamental necessity of causality as such?

Kant famously responds to Hume's rejection of causal necessity.[456] He also situates his own metaphysics of nature in an explicit relation to Newtonian mechanics.[457] But there is nonetheless a conspicuous lack of agreement amongst Kantians in their interpretations of the meaning of transcendental causation in *Critique of Pure Reason*.[458] It is not at all clear that Kant's original concept of cause and effect is directly translatable to mathematical relations in empirical theories of physics. Could it instead address a far more general yet fundamental trait in nature, relating to the *temporal succession* of all appearing objects, not at all exclusive to scientific understanding and determination? Complicating the matter further, Kant's dealings with lawfulness in nature continues to evolve throughout his works, and so too is it possible to claim that the notion of causality itself is continuingly broadened. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is best known for securing a transcendental basis for the simple "mechanical" relations of temporal succession between appearances, that is, as the *category* of causality in the

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[456] Watkins, E. (2005), *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, page 4.

[457] Most notably in his book of 1786, *Metaphysical Foundations for Natural Science*. Michael Friedman emphasizes the role of Kant's philosophy as a response to the metaphysical problems of Newtonian physics: "Much of Kant's philosophical development can be understood, I think, as a continuous attempt – an attempt faced with a succession of more and more fundamental problems – to construct just such an apparently paradoxical reconciliation of Newtonian and Leibnizean-Wolffian ideas, and to construct thereby a genuine metaphysical foundation for Newtonian natural philosophy." Friedman, M. (1992), *Kant and the Exact Sciences*, page 4.

[458] Béatrice Longuenesse writes: "Incredible as it may seem, scholars continue to disagree about what exactly Kant was trying to prove in his Second Analogy of Experience – in that section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he was supposed to provide his response to Hume's skeptical doubt concerning the concept of cause." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, page 143. Similarly, Eric Watkins writes that "after more than two centuries of sustained exegetical and philosophical attempts, no consensus has emerged about *what* Kant's argument in the Second Analogy is and *how* it is supposed to refute Hume's position." Watkins, E. (2005), *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, page 4.

transcendental analytic. But already in a later section of the first critique, in the *Appendix* to the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant expands his analysis to entail a greater *causal meaning* – that is, an *overall organization of appearing objects according to a unified system*. In *Metaphysical Foundations for Natural Science*, Kant continues from the transcendental analytic in the first critique, providing a more elaborate analysis of natural mechanics as well as dynamics. And in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, by introduction of a new form of *reflecting* judgment, complementing the already established subsummation of *determining* judgment, Kant presents the idea of a subjective lawfulness of aesthetic phenomena, as well as an objective lawfulness of natural teleology. Not to mention the enigmatic and infamous *Opus postumum*, the incomplete work of Kant's autumn years, which introduced the notion of a contracting and expanding ether – *Wärmestoff* – central to Kant's final attempt to inquire into a transcendental basis for natural science.

In addition to the transcendental analysis of causal determination for the objects of appearance, Kant also continues to provide an even more radical connection between the lawfulness of immanent appearance to an altogether different transcendent ground. In *Critique of Pure Reason,* this ground is expressed as the cosmological idea of freedom, as the unconditioned totality for the concept of causality. The ground of this cosmological idea is merely *negative*, as a limiting concept for the finitude of the causal determination of nature. But in *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, the same idea of freedom attains a *positive factuality* as an 'object' of practical reason, thus connecting the individuality (*Persönlichkeit*) and humanity of a moral person to the causal determination of nature. This radical and highly problematic connection between the immanent lawfulness of nature and a transcendent ground is brought even further in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant enigmatically invokes the notion of a *supersensible ground of a natural technique* in the reflecting judgement of natural purposiveness.

This gradual shift for the meaning of causality, from a simple relation between objects, to an overall organization of nature, and ultimately to an enigmatic transcendent ground, takes us back to Heidegger's novel reading of Aristotle in *The Question Concerning Technology*. Starting once again with the initial intuition on causality as the necessary relation between a cause and effect, we may rightly debate the commensurability between the Greek and the modern notion of an *efficient cause*. However, by also adding a material, formal, and final cause, Aristotle seemingly puts the question of causality somewhere far away from our initial suggested definition through Newtonian mechanics. We may of course simply discard Aristotle as representing a naïve and antiquated expression of natural philosophy. But we may also view

his four causes as expressing a more general concern for metaphysics. Heidegger interprets the Greek understanding of cause as responsibility – *Verschulden*. Not primarily as the effectuation of a movement or the transitioning of a state, but more radically as the *ground* that brings something forth into our presence. This event of bringing forth is none other than the *poetic creation of nature itself*: "*Physis* also, the arising of something from out of itself, is a bringing-forth. *Physis* is indeed *poiesis* in the highest sense."[459] Heidegger thereby frames the question of causality in the context of a ground of nature, and consequently as the disclosing event of ontological truth – unconcealment.

The question of causality connects to the metaphysical problems of *relation, necessity, movement, alternation, time, and scientific determination*, but also to the notion of a *ground of nature and human morality*. Is there a way to articulate causality that encapsulates all these things? In the previous chapter we established the meaning of being as a constant presence of phenomenal appearance, which in turn contains both a presence and an absence. We now define the question of causality as the inquiry into the *lawfulness of that which is present in the phenomenal presence of being*. However, the ontological meaning of "cause" at play in this definition carries a radical ambiguity, speaking both to an *immanent relation* and a *transcendent ground* of lawfulness. **First**, the lawfulness of causality is the *necessity of the relational connection (in time) of what presents itself in phenomenal presence*. In Kantian terms, it is the necessary temporal connection for the objects of appearance. Causality is not a relation that is imposed on a set of preexisting objects. Rather, causality speaks to the condition for the possibility of existence as such – *to appear in lawful relations is to come into existence*.

Second, that which presents itself in the phenomenal presence of being simultaneously relates to a phenomenal absence. The causal meaning for the lawful relations of existent entities ultimately relates to a transcendent ground. Thus we connect the problem of causality with the simultaneous *presence and absence* in the meaning of being. In our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant, we articulated this presence and absence as the dynamic relation of appearance and thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself is not itself an existent entity, but an unknown =X of appearance. In our previous chapter, we established an interpretation of the thing-in-itself as ontological freedom – that is, as independence from the lawfulness of nature. We see now that ontological freedom becomes the ultimate ground for the lawful relations of causality. The

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[459] Heidegger, M. (1977), "The Question Concerning Technology", page 10 (GA 7: 12).

problem of freedom as ground for causality accentuates the problem of ontological difference. That is, the problem of articulating an ontological foundation that is not itself an existent entity. We have suggested that the Kantian framework of transcendental ideas holds the potential to articulate this ontological difference according to a metaphysical system. Throughout *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger continuously hints at a reversal for the Kantian determination of freedom through causality. We choose to pursue this suggested reversal and attempt to articulate causality as a problem of freedom. That is, we wish to articulate the lawful relations for the meaning of being through the lens of the transcendental idea of freedom.

We ask once again: What is the meaning of the question of causality? What is fundamentally *asked about* in the metaphysical question of causality? The world is not mere chaos. It is deeply imbedded with a sense of order. This order reflects an objective and communicable reality, as the necessary basis for scientific investigation and determination, as well as all forms of everyday human interactions and engagements. The causal determination of all immanent reality – that which presents itself in the phenomenal presence of being – reflects a *necessary relational connection* between existent entities. In this chapter, we aim to bring the question of causality in connection with ontological freedom. If freedom is the absence that hides itself in the phenomenal appearance of being, then causality represents that which shows itself. That is, we present the absent ground of freedom in relation to the lawfulness of phenomenal presence. We take Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's cosmological idea of freedom in *Critique of Pure reason* as the basis for this inquiry. Through this idea, Heidegger interprets Kant as giving a negative definition of freedom in relation to the causal determination of nature. In order to understand the cosmological idea of freedom, we must first look into the transcendental concept of causality itself, as presented in the *first and second analogy of experience*.

The chapter consist of five subchapters. In the **first, second, and third subchapter**, we closely follow Heidegger's own interpretation of Kant's first and second analogy of experience in the transcendental analytic, presenting the transcendental concept of mechanical causality. In the **fourth subchapter**, we offer a little detour, responding to the widely held (mis)conception that Kant's analysis of causality is somehow refuted by modern physics. Using simple examples from quantum mechanics and thermodynamics, we illustrate how Kantian causality is in fact a precondition for our conception of the *collapse of the wave function* and the alleged *'arrow of time'* of the second law of thermodynamics. And finally, in the **fifth subchapter**, we return to Heidegger's interpretations of Kant and the cosmological idea of

freedom in the third antinomy of the transcendental dialectic, as the absolute origination of the causal determination of nature.

As we go through Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, it is important to note that the conceptions of causality and freedom that is established in *The Essence of Human Freedom* are ultimately insufficient for our own metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. The major contribution of part three is to establish a Kantian *pathway* for our Heideggerian environmental thought. It is not until the final part four of the dissertation that we eventually *venture out into this pathway*. This means that part four also needs to confront the questions of causality and freedom once more, through our own reading of Kant.

The Analogies of Experience

We find Kant's transcendental concept (i.e., *category*) of causality in the second analogy of experience, in the transcendental analytic of *Critique of Pure Reason*. However, as Heidegger states in his presentation of Kantian causality in *The Letter on Human Freedom*, the first analogy provides the foundation for the second, and is therefore unavoidable for our analysis of the meaning of cause and effect.[460] Contrary to Kantian scholars who aspire to uncover the *'true original'* argument, Heidegger rejects the idea that there is a 'correct' representation of Kant; as previously mentioned, any meaningful way of interpretation is destruction.[461] Heidegger's destruction of Kant lies primarily in his accentuation of time as the ultimate basis for the unity and lawfulness of human experience. Following the analysis of *Being and Time*, time represents the grounding meaning of being, delimited only by the nihilation of ontological freedom.[462] Time in the Heideggerian interpretation of the schematization of causality is

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[460] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 116 (GA 31: 163). Henry E. Allison adds that it "has been increasingly recognized that the [three] Analogies can only be properly understood if taken together." Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 229. Eric Watkins accentuates the special connection between the second and third analogy, as critical for an understanding of Kant's concept of causality. Watkins, E. (2005), *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, page 185. However, in this dissertation, we will limit our analysis to Heidegger's interpretation, which deals only on the first and second analogy.
[461] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 119 (GA 31: 168)
[462] What Heidegger articulates as the ontological ground of freedom in *The Essence of Human Freedom* corresponds to the notion of "nothingness" (*das Nichts*) in *Being and Time*.

therefore ultimately not a product of the transcendental subject, but rather an ontological ground that is both *different from* and *foundational to* man and all other existent entities.[463]

Experience – *Erfahrung* – is the way through which existent entities become accessible to human understanding.[464] In other words, if the meaning of being is the phenomenal appearance of presence and absence, then experience is the *openness of human understanding* for this phenomenal appearance. The mere sensibility of what presents itself in appearance is simply an unrelated aggregate of perceptions. The unity and connection of experience must be given in the combination of perception and thought – the synthesis of sensibility and understanding.[465] The basis for this unitary combination, according to Heidegger's interpretation, is time. As such, we read Kant's initial formulation of the general principle for the analogies of experience: "All appearances are, as regards their existence, subject *a priori* to rules determining their relation to one another in time."[466]

There are three fundamental modes of time: *duration, succession,* and *simultaneity – Beharrlichkeit, Folge, und Zugleichsein.*[467] These in turn corresponds to the three analogies of experience. The first analogy is oriented to duration and expresses the principle of *permanence of a substance* that underlies all temporal determination. The second is oriented to succession and expresses the temporal determination of all *alteration according to the connection of cause and effect*. And the third analogy is oriented to simultaneity and expresses the *thoroughgoing and reciprocal* temporal determination of a substance according to a *community* of appearances.

It is important to emphasize that even though Kant makes a distinction between the unlawful aggregate of mere sensibility on the one side, and the unitary connection of experience on the other, the analogies of experience do not describe a process of human cognition, where unlawful sense perception is initially given in appearance, and consequently schematized through time in experience. Rather, Kant's argument is that the unitary connection of experience cannot itself be extracted empirically, but must instead be the condition for the

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[463] As Frank Schalow writes: "[according to Heidegger] schematism is the Kantian way of discussing being and time". Schalow, F. (2016), "Heidegger and Kant: Three Guiding Questions", page 108. This connection between Kant's schematism and temporality is a central concern for Heidegger's earlier work: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.
[464] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 110 (GA 31: 153)
[465] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 111f (GA 31: 155f)
[466] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 107 (GA 31: 149). See also KdrV A177f.
[467] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 108 (GA 31: 150). See also KdrV A177/ B219.

possibility of all empirical perception. The temporal lawfulness of experience is the foundation for our perception of nature as such:

> "As the most general laws of nature, they set forth what nature is as such. They are laws which natural science can never discover, precisely because they must always be presupposed and pre-understood in all scientific questioning concerning *specific* natural laws."[468]

Being a *general* metaphysical law of nature, as the condition for the possibility of *specific* empirical-scientific laws, our walk-through of the first two analogies of experience will also demonstrate how little that is in fact secured through Kant's transcendental concept of causality. The metaphysical problem of causality does not have a stake in the debate of scientific determination of nature according to classical versus modern physics. But the metaphysical analysis does uncover a form of lawfulness that must be foundational to any scientific investigation.

The First Analogy: *Permanence and Temporal Succession*

There are two variations on the first analogy of experience. The A-edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* states that *"All appearance contain the permanent (substance) as the object itself, and the transitory as its mere determination, that is, as a way in which the object exists."*[469] Whereas the B-edition reads *"In all changes of appearances substance is permanent; its quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished."*[470] We approach the first analogy as the initial basis for mechanical causality in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Mechanical causality expresses the determination of nature according to its *temporal succession* – that is, as cause and effect. Temporal succession means that "one time follows-on from another time", in the phenomenal presence of appearance.[471] We understand the transcendental principle of the first analogy

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[468] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 116 (GA 31: 162f)

[469] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 116 (GA 31: 163). My *italic*. See also KdrV A182.

[470] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 109 (GA 31: 152). My *italic*. See also KdrV B224.

[471] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 108 (GA 31: 150).

through Kant's distinction between *change and alteration – Wechsel und Veränderung*. Change qua *Wechsel*, is the *complete replacement* of one appearance by another: "A sequence of different states one after another, one ending and another beginning, is *change*."[472] If change, thus defined, is all there is to the flow of time, then there can be no understanding of succession nor simultaneity. Temporal development is reduced to a myriad of *singular, unrelated and unordered* instant moments.

Alteration qua *Veränderung*, on the other hand, is "a way of existing which follows upon another way of existing of the same object."[473] The experience of temporal development presupposes something *permanent*, as the basis through which the sequence of moments can relate as temporal succession. That is, an underlying *permanent substance* of which we can determine temporal succession as the *alteration of its accidents*.[474] Generally speaking, an analogy is the correspondence between two relations. For the first analogy, it is the correspondence between the relations of "predicate to subject and accident to substance."[475]

In all appearance, there must be something permanent, through which we grasp its alteration as temporal succession. The permanence of the substance is therefore a necessary foundation for the two other modes of time – succession and simultaneity. All three analogies of experience are the schematization of the categories under the general ontological heading of relation. But as Kant states, the category of permanence (substance) is a relation, "not so much because it contains a relation, but because it is a condition of all relations".[476]

The principle of the first analogy may seem stronger in the B-edition, as it adds the following to the definition of permanence: "its quantum in nature is neither increased nor diminished." This definition could lead to an interpretation of Kant's permanent substance as providing a transcendental argument for the conservation of physical matter.[477] Or perhaps through a modern translation, as the conservation of energy. But this is not the way of our Heideggerian interpretation. The ultimate foundation for the unity and relational connection of

[472] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 122 (GA 31: 172).
[473] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 122 (GA 31: 172). See also KdrV A187/ B230.
[474] In Henry E. Allison's words: "[Kant] argues that all 'change' (*Wechsel*) among appearances must be conceived and experienced as an alteration (*Veränderung*) of a substance that persists". Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 237.
[475] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 121 (GA 31: 171).
[476] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 121 (GA 31: 171). See also KdrV A187/ B230.
[477] According to Henry E. Allison, the possibility of this interpretation has also led to significant criticism of Kant: "The basic charge is that it involves an illicit move from transcendental to empirical considerations, in particular, that Kant is attempting to 'deduce' the principles of the conservation of mass as it is understood within Newtonian mechanics.". Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 244.

experience are not existent entities, but the meaning of being as time.[478] That is, the permanence of the substance is not itself time, but the *unity created through time*: "'Time itself does not alter, but only something which is in time.' So temporal succession does not mean a sequence of times belonging to times itself, but the succession of that which is in time."[479]

In order to elaborate on this enigmatic but crucial point of our interpretation, we can bring in the analysis of the *later* Heidegger on the meaning of a *thing*. In the work *Das Ding*, he accentuates the old Germanic (and Norse) etymological meaning of "thing" as *assembly* or *gathering – Versammlung*.[480] Translated into the Kantian category of substance, the unity and permanence of what underlies in the alteration of temporal succession is ultimately an assembly created through the meaning of being as time. The phenomenal manifestation of a *persevering identity* is not a property of the thing but a condition for the possibility of its existence. Throughout this dissertation, we have repeatedly articulated the meaning of being as a *grounding event*. We now see this grounding event as the temporal assembling of the unity of a substance. This unity can never be the object of inquiry for any empirical investigation but is instead a precondition for any empirical orientation. The unity of the appearing object is given through the grounding presence of appearance itself.

The Second Analogy: *Temporal Succession as an Event*

The second analogy of experience defines the transcendental concept of *mechanical causality*. The specification of the concept as "mechanical" becomes important later on, when we introduce a more broadened expression of causal meaning through our interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Mechanical causality expresses a general lawfulness of nature, as the *necessary order for the temporal succession of appearances*. In the A-edition, the principle states that "Everything that happens, that is, begins to be, presupposes something upon

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[478] Here, in David Webb's rendition of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant: "Kant determines all change in the phenomenal realm as alteration (*Veränderung*), underpinned by a substratum that persist throughout change. This substratum is ultimately time itself as 'the primal form of all permanence' and the horizon against which the relations of succession and simultaneity are determined". Webb, D. (2009), *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, page 57.

[479] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 108 (GA 31: 150). See also KdrV A41/ B58.

[480] Heidegger, M. (1971), *The Thing*, page 172.

which it follows according to a rule." In the B-edition it reads *"All alternations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect."*[481]

The second analogy builds directly on the first, as it presupposes that all change (succession) of appearances is alteration of a permanent substance.[482] But the order of sequence for the temporal succession of the first analogy is altogether arbitrary. As we presented the meaning of the first analogy by distinction of change and alteration, we can now demonstrate the meaning of the second analogy by distinction of *alteration* and *event – Veränderung* und *Begebenheit*.[483] The alteration qua *Veränderung* of the first analogy is *arbitrary and reversible*. That is, it simply reflects the accidental change of a persistent substance. In an event qua *Begebenheit*, on the other hand, we "experience something as actually occurring, something which follows on from something else."[484] The occurrence of an event means that something begins to be. But this coming into being is not an absolute origination from nothingness – *Ursprung aus dem Nichts*.[485] Rather, what comes into being is always the following on from something else. This relation is temporal, as something comes *before*, and something is *succeeding*. This temporal relation is the famous and fundamental causal *necessity* of Kant's transcendental concept of mechanical causality – the *necessary order of sequence of cause and effect in an event*:

> *"Time is an irreversible succession, i.e. it has a definite direction*." […] Thus what Kant says with his principle of causality amounts to this: every appearance having the character of a temporal event, i.e. which begins to be at a particular time, presupposes something that runs ahead of it in time and determines it as that which follows on."[486]

Why is transcendental causality an ontological principle for all objective reality, and not simply an epistemic principle for our subjective apprehension? Heidegger demonstrates the distinction of subjective and objective temporal succession with Kant's own examples of the change of appearance for a house and a ship. With the house, "my perception can proceed from the roof to the basement or vice versa, likewise from left to right or vice versa." With the ship, it is the

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[481] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 123 (GA 31: 174). See also KdrV A189 & B232.
[482] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 124 (GA 31: 175). See also KdrV B233.
[483] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 124 (GA 31: 176).
[484] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 128 (GA 31: 182).
[485] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 125 (GA 31: 176).
[486] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 130 & 131 (GA 31: 187). See also KdrV A198/ B243.

perception of the vessel "sailing past me down the river."[487] Both cases reflect a subjective succession of apprehensions, yet only in the case of the ship does the succession also reflect an objective alteration as event. Why? Only with the ship is there an alteration in the object itself – the "being-present of the house, in the unity of its properties, does not involve a succession. It does not have the character of an event."[488] I can reverse the order of my apprehension of the different parts of the house, but I cannot reverse the order for the ship sailing down the river.[489] This lawfulness for the temporal order is not given by the ship itself, but through the unity of experience grounded through time. Transcendental causality is not a matter of applying a law to what is already given in the succession of appearances, but a condition for the possibility of experiencing any alteration in nature as events.

It is also worth mentioning that the definition of causality through temporal succession does not rule out cases where cause and effect appear simultaneously. In fact, Kant states that "'the great majority' of natural causes are simultaneous with their effects".[490] As with the heated state of a room due to fire still burning in the stove, the alteration of the temperature must be determined through the temporal succession of an event, where fire in the stove comes first, and from which the heat in the room follows.

To the extent that the Newtonian paradigm of mechanical physics continues to shape our contemporary intuition on the meaning of causal necessity, Kant's transcendental concept of the second analogy may no doubt appear underwhelming. Transcendental causality says nothing about the empirical concern for which *types of action* that may or may not effect another *type of reaction*.[491] Instead, it inquires into the organization of the alteration of appearing objects

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[487] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 129 (GA 31: 183). See also KdrV A190/ B235.
[488] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 129 (GA 31: 183).
[489] To better our understanding of this argument, it can be instructive to remember the argument of the first analogy, which is foundational to the second. The first analogy states that all change of appearance is the *accidental alteration of a permanent substance*. Only in the case of the ship is there an alteration in the object itself. Béatrice Longuenesse seems to point to the same argument when she states that: "(a) we have to relate it [subjective succession] to an object; (b) by relating it to an object, we have to recognize a change of states of the object; (c) recognizing a change of states means presupposing that it follows from a preceding state according to a rule." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, page 162.
[490] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 135 (GA 31: 194). See also KdrV A202f/ B248.
[491] Borrowing the terminology from Lewis White Beck, Henry E. Allison makes the distinction between an interpretation of causality as "every-event-some-cause" and "same-cause-same-effect". Allison is at this point in line with Heidegger's interpretation, in stating that Kant's category of causality does not make a claim to the connection between different *types* of causes and effect, but only a general organization of alternations as events of *a* cause and *an* effect: "In both editions the goal is to establish the every-event-some-cause principle." Allison, H. E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 246-247. Béatrice Longuenesse also adds an additional dimension, separating between interpretations of the second analogy as (a) the "succession of events or states of affairs as we perceive them in the objects of our ordinary experience" (e.g., Henry E. Allison), and (b) the

in experience according to the temporal unity of events. All alterations of appearances are events, and it is only on the basis of this transcendental necessity of experience that we can inquire scientifically into the empirical lawfulness of nature. The general lawful determination of transcendental causality is equally valid in the cases where the specific lawfulness of empirical science is yet undetermined: "Even when we encounter events within which we are unable to orient ourselves, i.e. events whose connection is indeterminate, we must still understand what we encounter in terms of causality."[492]

Transcendental Causality and Modern Physics

As a metaphysics of nature qua ontology, we have now established a preliminary yet important building block for our determination of the *lawful appearance in the meaning of being*, through Heidegger's reading of Kant's category of mechanical causality. This determination speaks to the general meaning of being, as *fundamental ontology*, and is thereby foundational to all other forms of *regional* ontologies. For example, this means that our metaphysics is foundational to philosophy of science. And the connection to philosophy of science is arguably more pressing than many other forms of regional ontologies, precisely because Kant's metaphysics of causality is today often depicted as being invalidated by modern physics, and in particular quantum mechanics. In *A Kant Dictionary*, Howard Caygill writes:

> "Although interpretations and critiques of Kant's understanding of causality continue, his working within the framework of Galilean science has now made his work on causality largely of historical interest. Even in orthodox Kantian terms the discovery of the Uncertainty Principle which suspends causal laws at a quantum level refutes the claim that the category of causality and its principle are indispensable preconditions of experience."[493]

"succession of states of affairs as determined in the context of a scientific image of the world" (e.g., Michael Friedman). Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, page 144.

[492] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 131 (GA 31: 187).

[493] Caygill, H. (1995), *A Kant Dictionary*, page 108. Béatrice Longuenesse similarly writes: "[Kant] is charged with a misguided absolutization of a Newtonian model of natural science made obsolete by revolutions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century physics." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, page 185. And Michael Friedman, which analyses Kant's philosophy of science through the lens of *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, states that "our current philosophical predicament evolves directly from the

This dissertation is not intended as a direct contribution to philosophy of science. To tackle the question of Kantian metaphysics and modern physics is a task that deserves a dissertation of its own and cannot in any way be addressed adequately in this subchapter. However, as we now nonetheless chose to confront this task, it is with the following two intensions. First, by orienting the analysis of the second analogy to modern physics, we simply offer an example that helps to illustrate the foundational character of Kantian metaphysics. Kant employs the example of a ship sailing down a river, and now we add the example of quantum mechanics and thermodynamics. Moreover, Heidegger actually references quantum mechanics in his treatment of causality in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, and so this subchapter can be seen as a continuation of this reference.[494] Second, by exemplifying the foundational character of Kantian metaphysics in relation to modern physics, we also address the widely held misconception that the transcendental argument for causality is invalidated by the developments in physics throughout the twentieth century; and in particular, by quantum physics. Our forthcoming analysis does not presume to offer a definitive refutation of this misconception, but merely to indicate that our own metaphysical project presupposes that Kant's philosophy remains relevant in the era of modern physics. And inversely, that any criticism of Kantian causality on the basis of modern physics would equally affect the validity of this dissertational project.

We offer two examples: First, and most important, the *collapse of the wave function* in quantum mechanics; and second, the purported *'arrow of time'* in the second law of thermodynamics. The first example (1) speaks directly to the claim that Kant's traditional conception of causality has been invalidated by modern physics. Whereas we aim to show that Kant offers a more general concept of lawfulness in nature, that must be presupposed by classical and modern physics alike. The second example (2) pushes the limits for a meaningful concept of a "modern" physics, as the theory of thermodynamics was developed in the nineteenth century, before the revolutions of quantum physics and theory of relativity. The second law of thermodynamics does not pose a direct challenge to Kantian philosophy, but we include this example because of its purported representation of the *directionality of time*, which is typically presented as a constituent of the modern paradigm of a physically determined

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breakdown of the Kantian philosophy in light of twentieth-century scientific developments (via the developments of logical positivism and its aftermath)". Friedman, M. (1992), *Kant and the Exact Sciences*, page xii.

[494] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 106 (GA 31: 147).

universe. Our intention is neither to confirm nor to challenge this view, but to illustrate how Kant's concept of mechanical causality also contains a directionality of time, and that this is a transcendental condition for the possibility of the 'arrow of time' in thermodynamics.

(**1**) In order to analyze causality according to quantum mechanics, it is instructive to begin with an example of classical physics. We begin with the simplest example imaginable of Newtonian mechanics.[495] We will use some mathematical notation, but this is not essential to understand the general argument. Imagine an object of inertial mass, m, in a closed one-dimensional system (along the x-axis), with initial position x_0, and initial velocity equal zero. There is only one force, *F*, acting on the object. Then, we can find the position of the object as an expression of time: $x(t) = x_0 + \iint F \ dtdt$. Hence, by knowledge of the initial conditions and the force acting of the object we can determine its position at any given point in time. For example, throughout the timespan from t_1 to t_2 the object will necessarily develop from position $x(t_1)$ to $x(t_2)$.

How does it fair with quantum mechanics? We understand the development of an object (e.g., an electron) through the notion of a *quantum state*, traditionally denoted by the Greek letter Ψ, also known as the *wave function*. In contrast to the classical example of x(t) which tells us the *one specific location* for x at time t, the quantum state Ψ(t, x) reflects a *superposition of an infinite number of possible positions*. The literal "wave" of the wave function corresponds to a statistical distribution for determining the probability of the object's position.[496] That is, we can at best predict the position of the object that is most likely. Once we actually perform the measurement, the wave function will *collapse* into a definite numerical value, and we can determine its exact position. When Heidegger states that the movement of "atomic physics" is "determinable only at a mid-point",[497] he is referring to the statistical *average value* for a quantum state, for example when calculating the expected position as $\langle x \rangle = \langle \Psi \ x \ \Psi \rangle = \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} x \ |\Psi|^2 dx$.

We have thus gone through two different expressions of physical mechanics for calculating the spatial position of an object. What is the relevant difference for our metaphysical

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[495] Newton does not exhaust the notion of "classical mechanics". Throughout the nineteenth century, physics saw new variations, like *Lagrangian* and *Hamiltonian* mechanics. However, we will restrict our analysis to the simplest example of Newtonian mechanics.

[496] Technically speaking, the wave function expresses the *probability density*. We arrive at the probability distribution by integrating the square of the absolute value of the wave function, such that $\int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} |\Psi|^2 dx = 1$.

[497] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 106 (GA 31: 147).

question of causality? In classical mechanics, there is a *one-to-one correspondence* between one specific initial position, and another specific succeeding position – that is, $x(t_1)$ to $x(t_2)$. In quantum mechanics, the initial state is a superposition of infinitely many spatial positions. We can calculate the statistical probability of the expected position, but the outcome for an actual measurement is contingent on statistical chance. The *statistical nature of the superposition* is one of the main reasons for the widespread opinion that quantum physics invalidates traditional causality. However, we must be precise about the specific meaning of the concept of causality that we are employing. Kant's concept in the second analogy of experience does not entail a relation between two *empirically specific types* of appearances. Kant's argument is regarding the determination of temporal successions as events. When some physical phenomenon comes into being, it is always as the alteration of something persistent, relating the present state to something that came before. *The collapse of the wave function is also an event* – relating the initial superposition as *prior*, and the numerical value of the measurement as *subsequent*. That is, without Kant's transcendental concept of causality, there cannot be an event of the collapse of the wave function.

(**2**) The second law of thermodynamics is said to determine the *arrow of time* – that is, the directionality of time. The law states that the *entropy of a closed system will increase*. What is entropy? It is defined as $S = k_B \log \Omega$. The k_B is simply the numerical value of *Boltzmann's constant*, so the relevant magnitude for our philosophical analysis is the *complexity of the system*, Ω. As a simplified version of the second law of thermodynamics, we can say that the *complexity of a closed system will increase*. Complexity reflects the relative *state of order* of things – typically as the organization of molecules, atoms, and elementary particles. We can utilize **figure 5** (see below) for a simple illustration of the development of complexity qua entropy for a closed system. The figure shows the closed system of eight white balls and eight black balls. In the box to the left, the balls are perfectly organized according to colored columns. In the box to the right, the balls are randomly distributed. The entropy in the left box is lower because it has a higher state of order. The notion of "order" is directly translatable to the statistical probability for the distribution of the balls. When the second law of thermodynamics states that the entropy of a system will increase, it corresponds to the claim that the system will develop towards a distribution that is statistically more likely.

	Low Entropy		High Entropy

Low Entropy

(high degree of order)

High Entropy

(low degree of order)
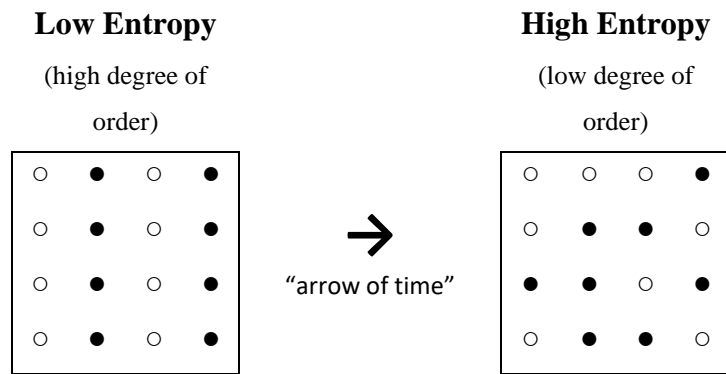
Figure 5: Statistical development according to the second law of thermodynamics.

The *arrow of time* reflects the increase of entropy, as the development towards a statistically more probable state of distribution. But similarly to the example of the collapse of the wave function, the measurement of the development for the complexity qua entropy of a system will necessary presuppose the unity of appearances in experience as an event. More specifically, if the directionality of the temporal succession is not presupposed, there is no longer any basis for judging one state of entropy as coming before and the other as following after. Thus, the arrow of time in the second law of thermodynamics must already presuppose a definite and irreversible order of temporal succession in nature.

In practical physics, the directionality and succession of time is grounded and operationalized by the use of *clocks*. But a clock is only a manufactured instrument for the measurement *of* time, typically through some basic mechanism of oscillation. The directionality of time must be presupposed in the construction of the clock. So where does it originate? According to the Kantian argument, there is no ultimate framework of time analogous to the external reality of a clock. That is, "absolute time is not an object of perception [,] time itself cannot be".[498] Instead, the directionality of time is grounded through the temporal unity of appearing objects in experience.

What can we take away from this brief review of Kantian causality in relation to modern physics? If we start with the assumption that the analogies of experience are intended as a transcendental basis for Newtonian mechanics, then it becomes remarkable how little Kant's

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[498] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 112 (GA 31: 156). See also KdrV A215/ B262 & B219.

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category of causality can offer in determining the lawfulness of nature. Yet, it provides a fundamental ground for metaphysics of nature. The unity and directionality for the temporal succession of an event is not a mere *heuristic* principle for the scientific investigation of nature. It does not simply address an *epistemological* limitation for the extent of human knowledge about the world. Rather, the principle of causality is ontological, because it speaks to the meaning of being that grounds all investigation into nature. If science divides nature according to different regions of empirical investigation, then the highest genus for the scientific object of inquiry is simply *that which is* – existent entities. What does it mean for an entity to exist? The partial answer provided by Kant in the second analogy of experience is that an existent entity *comes into being through the temporal unity of events*.

The Cosmological Idea of Freedom

In the third antinomy, in the transcendental dialectic of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant addresses freedom as an *ontological* problem. Having secured the basic lawfulness of mechanical causality in the second analogy of experience, Kant turns to the question of a radically different form of causality. We do not simply look to the third antinomy as an effort to *save* moral freedom in the face of natural causality, that is, as to avoid a contradiction between Kant's ontology and ethics, as two separate fields of philosophy. Through Heidegger's interpretation in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, we rather aim to accentuate *freedom as a metaphysical problem for the lawfulness of being*. The third antinomy presents freedom as a universal ontological concept, initially irrespective of any theory of ethics. Only later on, in *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, does Kant elaborate on ontological freedom as the ground for human responsibility and morality. Ultimately, our interest lies in this radical connection between freedom as a problem for metaphysics of nature and as a problem regarding the grounding of human morality. This connection will serve to establish a foundational framework for our own metaphysics of man and nature, as a *unification of ontology and ethics*.[499]

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[499] The potential for a radical connection, or transition [*Übergang*], between theoretical and practical philosophy in the third antinomy is confirmed by Allison: "Since Kant here introduces transcendental freedom in a theoretical context as a cosmological idea, that is, as the idea of an undetermined cause or ground of the world as a whole, and then later moves to a discussion of its role in the conception of the practical freedom of the human

"To understand and engage with the Kantian problem of freedom, it is of crucial importance to see two things. First, that Kant is led to the problem of freedom from two utterly different contextures of problems [*Problemzusammenhängen*]. Secondly, that owing to the universal ground from which Kant defines the problematic of philosophy as such, these two ways to freedom are equally necessary for him. These two problems belong together within the totality of metaphysical problems."[500]

In the next and final chapter of part three, we will inquire into Kant's second way to freedom, as the moral responsibility of practical reason, and consequently the connection between freedom in Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy. For the current chapter, it is our sole aim to establish an ontological concept of freedom in relation to Kant's metaphysics of natural causality.

The most significant achievement of the dialectic in *Critique of Pure Reason* is the *critical transformation of metaphysics*. That is, as the delimitation of the meaning of the traditional metaphysical objects, according to Kant's transcendental idealism:

"To inquire into the essence of metaphysics means to determine [*umgrenzen*] its inner possibility, thus marking it off against what does not properly belong to it, drawing boundaries and limits – κρίνειν. Criticism in the Kantian sense means determining the essence of metaphysics, i.e. determining the capacity of pure reason for a total knowledge of beings."[501]

For Heidegger, the critical turn of transcendental idealism represents a revealing of the *finitude* for the meaning of being as phenomenal presence – the finitude of appearance. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, this revelation of finitude comes to the fore as a *breakdown of reason*, as it illegitimately attempts to transgress the limits of its own metaphysical understanding.[502] Kant understands the traditional objects of metaphysics as a proclivity by pure reason to think its own transcendental concepts in their unconditioned totality. That is, "reason looks to the unity and completeness of what is representable" in appearance.[503] Kant refers to these concepts on the unconditioned as *transcendental ideas*. The conditioned object of appearance stands in a necessary *logical* relation to the transcendental ideas on the unconditioned. However, the

will, his procedure may be described as involving a transition (brought about by a transcendental idea) from a concept of nature to a practical concept." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 197.

[500] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 140 (GA 31: 202).

[501] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 141f (GA 31: 204).

[502] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 146 (GA 31: 211f).

[503] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 143 (GA 31: 207).

problem for the critical metaphysics of the dialectic is the *ontological status* of these ideas. The objects of traditional metaphysics emerge as an inference from the *givenness* of the conditioned immanent object of appearance to the *givenness* of the unconditioned transcendent object in-itself. Kant rejects this line of inference as an illegitimate transgression of the finite bounds of human understanding. There are no corresponding objects for the transcendental ideas of pure reason. Instead, the ideas serve as *regulative principles* for immanent reality: "In Kantian terminology: the principle does not anticipate or predetermine what the object is as such, but merely postulates what must occur in the regression."[504]

There are three primary objects for traditional metaphysics qua *metaphysica specialis*. These are *soul*, *world* and *God*. As Heidegger points out, freedom emerge in the Kantian architectonic where we least expect it, as a *cosmological idea of the world*.[505] The object of appearance is conditioned by the concept of causality, as the relational connection of temporal successions as events. The cosmological idea of freedom attempts to think the *absolute unity and completeness* of this sequential occurrence of appearances: "Freedom is nothing other than *absolute natural causality*, or as Kant himself fittingly says, it is a concept of nature that transcends all possible experience."[506] In the regression towards absolute causality, pure reason is faced with a contradiction. The idea on the unity and completeness of nature as temporal successions contains two opposing doctrines – a *thesis* and an *antithesis*. Heidegger remains agnostic as to whether this antagonism for absolute causality is in fact unavoidable for reason: "What interests us is solely the position of the problem of freedom within metaphysics, and how *the first way to freedom can be brought into unity with the second way.*"[507] We reveal the fundamental metaphysical meaning of freedom, not in the antagonism as such, but through the subsequent dissolution of the third antinomy. However, we must first begin with Heidegger's interpretation of the thesis and the antithesis. Beginning with the definitions:

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[504] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 163 (GA 31: 240).
[505] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 144 (GA 31: 209). Karl Ameriks goes a long way in suggesting that Kant has in fact misplaced his analysis of freedom: "For example, it has been noted already that the Antinomies, which Kant himself designated as containing the key thought of his new Critical system, simply fails to make a clear statement on transcendental freedom in general. If one turns to the Paralogisms, the part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that one would expect to lay down a doctrine about human freedom in particular, an even less clear picture emerges. This need not have been so, for if Kant had simply kept to the structure of his discussion of the soul in the lectures [*Vorlesungen über Metaphysik*], he would have made freedom the topic of his fourth Paralogism." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 69.
[506] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 148 (GA 31: 214f).
[507] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 155 (GA 31: 226).

THESIS: "Causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only causality from which the appearances in the world can one and all be derived. To explain these appearances it is necessary to assume that there is also another causality, that of freedom."

ANTITHESIS: "There is no freedom; everything in the world takes place solely in accordance with laws of nature."[508]

Kant's proof for both doctrines are *indirect*, assuming first the opposite of its own claim. For the **thesis**, the initial assumption becomes that natural causality is all there is, so that "everything that occurs presupposes a prior state from which it inevitably follows according to a law."[509] As reason extrapolates this order of temporal succession towards a complete unity, it finds that every beginning is only relative, that there is "*no first beginning* in the series of causes."[510] But this conclusion is precisely the opposite of what the law of causality demands. The second analogy of experience states that all alteration of appearances must be unequivocally determined according to an antecedent cause. An indefinite sequence of temporal successions results in an incomplete causal determination. For the completeness of the idea by pure reason, it becomes necessary to assume another form of causality "whose causation is such that the cause is no longer determined by anything prior."[511] The thesis is the claim to cosmological freedom as the *absolute origination* for the causal determination of events. That is, the *absolute spontaneity* for what comes into the lawful being of appearances.

Once something is effected into being by the spontaneous self-origination of freedom, it is governed by natural causality. Causality from freedom is not an absolute beginning *in relation to time* – that is, it "does not exclude the possibility that something occurred prior to it, without, however, *necessitating* it."[512] Freedom is rather an idea on the *origination of temporal existence* as such. We now see that cosmological freedom becomes the condition for the possibility of the moral responsibility of a will-governed person, but it is not itself an idea on moral action.

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[508] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 149 (GA 31: 216). See also KdrV A444ff/ B472ff.
[509] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 149 (GA 31: 217).
[510] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 149 (GA 31: 217).
[511] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 150 (GA 31: 217).
[512] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 151 (GA 31: 220).

For the **antithesis**, the initial assumption is that freedom qua unconditioned and absolute causality do in fact exist. This means that the temporal determination of nature as the following-on of occurring events has an *absolute beginning*.[513] But the assumption of an absolute beginning is precisely what the law of causality denies: "If freedom were to enter into the causality of the world-process, this would not amount to a different causality, but to complete lawlessness, and nature as such would cease to be."[514] In Heidegger's interpretation, the essential premise for the antithesis becomes the representation of freedom as an *existent entity – Seiende*. Nature qua the totality of existent entities is conditioned by the temporal unity of experience. Freedom is the violation of this temporal unity, and thus cannot itself be present as something existing, but is instead reduced to an "empty thought-entity".[515] So the proof of the antithesis becomes ultimately not a rejection of freedom as such, but instead a demonstration of the impossibility of the representation of freedom as an existent entity. Consequently, the dissolution of the third antinomy relies on the possibility of a metaphysical framework that can articulate freedom as something *ontologically different* from any object of appearance.

Having presented the contradictory proofs of the thesis and antithesis, Heidegger continues his interpretation of Kant's subsequent *dissolution* of the third antinomy. The conflict of the transcendental idea of absolute causality reflects a distinction between an understanding of nature as either *finite* or *infinite*. According to the thesis, the absolute beginning of freedom becomes a delimitation of natural causality: "We can thus take the Thesis as saying that the ordered series of causes, considered in its totality, is finite."[516] Whereas the antithesis "would say that the series of the regressive synthesis of conditions is infinite"[517] – if there is only natural causality, then the temporal successions in the idea on the unconditioned totality of causality would extend forever.

However, Heidegger concludes that nature is neither finite nor infinite: "The presuppositions of both Thesis and Antithesis is false."[518] This conclusion might initially seem strange. For was not the finitude of being the fundamental insight of Kant's critical turn for metaphysics? The key to Heidegger's interpretation resides in his understanding of the distinction between appearance and the thing-in-itself. Both the *thesis and antithesis entail a*

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[513] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 152 (GA 31: 221f).
[514] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 152 (GA 31: 222).
[515] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 152 (GA 31: 222). See also KdrV A447/ B475.
[516] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 159 (GA 31: 233).
[517] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 159 (GA 31: 233f).
[518] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 159 (GA 31: 233f).

transgression of possible sensible experience and thus presuppose nature as a thing-in-itself.[519] The thesis presupposes the givenness of freedom as a transcendent existent entity that originates the series of natural causality, and the antithesis presuppose the givenness of the unconditioned totality of natural causal determination. But nature qua the totality of existent entities cannot be a thing-in-itself – it extends only to the immanent object of appearance.

Once again, we find ourselves faced with the necessity of an ontological difference. The phenomenal givenness of the *conditioned* object of appearance stands in a necessary logical relation to the idea on the *unconditioned*. The speculative reason of traditional metaphysics makes an inference from the idea of the unconditioned to the thing-in-itself as an existent entity. According to Kant, this inference is invalid. The critical turn for Kantian metaphysics demands of us to think on the unconditioned as something radically different from the reality of appearing objects. The transcendental idea on absolute causality transcends the scope of sensuous experience, thus accentuating the distinction between appearance and thing-in-itself. What is the thing-in-itself? It is the *absence* in the phenomenal presence of being, an unknown X of appearance: "the transcendental object which must underlie the appearances. […] It is negatively intelligible and unknown in any further aspect. […] But the X is not itself a separate object of knowledge."[520]

The critical turn for Kantian metaphysics, and consequently the dissolution of the third antinomy ends on this conclusion: The transcendental idea of freedom accentuates the distinction between appearance and the thing-in-itself. Cosmological freedom is not an object of sensuous experience and thus cannot be an existent entity. This is as far as Kant can take us through the framework provided in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The transcendental ideas remain as mere *negative concepts*, serving as regulative principles for immanent appearance. The dissolution of the third antinomy does not prove the actuality of ontological freedom. It merely states the "possibility of the unity of natural causality and the causality of freedom. What does 'possibility' mean here? It means thinkability [*Denkbarkeit*]."[521] How can we think the metaphysical unity of natural causality and freedom?

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[519] As Eric Watson writes, the thesis and antithesis are based on the assumption of *Transcendental Realism*, namely the "view that identifies appearance and things in themselves, that is, it maintains that what appears to us in space and time is also what really exists independently of us and that what exists independently of us also appears to us in (or is at least subject to the conditions of) space and time." Watkins, E. (2005), *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, page 305.

[520] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 170 (GA 31: 250f).

[521] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 174 (GA 31: 258).

> "The essential double character of every appearance, such that not only is it connected with other appearances but is also the appearance of something which appears (X), involves the fundamental possibility of a relation to both the empirical and the non-empirical."[522]

There is a double meaning for the causal determination of nature. Causality reflects the temporal unity of experience that connects all alternation in appearances as the following-on from an antecedent state. But causality is simultaneously the relation of the temporal unity to an extra-temporal ground. That is, taken together, the notion of appearance and thing-in-itself express the *absolute origination of the temporal unity of nature from a ground of freedom that itself transcends time*. This is the primordial delimitation of the finitude of being as appearance. Finitude is not the beginning nor the end of occurring events within the temporal succession of nature. It is rather the transcending of time as such, and consequently the nihilation of existence itself.

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[522] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 170 (GA 31: 251f).

4. The Practical Reality of Freedom

We have taken Kant's notion of appearance – *Erscheinung* – as the foundational expression for the meaning of being. This appearance contains both a phenomenal presence and absence, as expressed through Kant's distinction between the appearing object and the thing-in-itself. Through Heidegger, we have conceptualized the thing-in-itself as the ontological ground of freedom. Freedom represents the ultimate delimiting ground for the finitude of being. However, in making such a claim, we are faced with a radical problem. The delimiting ground of freedom cannot itself be an existent entity – an object of appearance – for what is delimited is precisely existence itself. The articulation of the thing-in-itself as freedom thus accentuates the need for an *ontological difference*. We have suggested that the ambiguity that haunts Kant's critical theory of transcendental ideas may hold the key to articulate this ontological difference. In chapter three, we went through Heidegger's interpretation of the cosmological idea on the absolute origination of the causal determination of nature, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, representing Kant's *first way to freedom*. In the third antinomy, Kant dissolves the apparent contradiction of reason in thinking the unity of natural causality and the absolute causality of freedom. But this first way through theoretical philosophy does not prove the reality of freedom, but simply paves the way for the possibility of freedom in our thought – that is, its mere thinkability. In the final chapter of *The Essence of Human Freedom*, Heidegger inquires into Kant's *second way to freedom*, as the factuality of practical reason. What is merely possible in *Critique of Pure Reason* now becomes actual in the ethical praxis of man.

When now turning to Heidegger's inquiry into Kantian ethics, in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, it is important to have a clear understanding of the specific interpretive framework that we seek to establish. It is certainly possible to interpret the relationship between Kant's *theoretical* and *practical* philosophy of freedom, as first setting up a metaphysical system of nature in which freedom is made possible, and then subsequently turning to an ethical theory on human morality, taken as an altogether different domain of intellectual investigation. However, this is not the interpretive route suggested in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. As the absolute origination of the lawfulness of the phenomenal presence of being, Heidegger presents the cosmological idea of freedom in the third antinomy as the ultimate ground of nature. When now turning to the positive manifestation of freedom in the moral actions of practical reason, it is with the intent to articulate the same transcendent ground of nature. In Heidegger's reading, the shift in Kant's depiction of freedom, from a cosmological idea to the practical factuality of the moral law entails a *radicalization for our understanding of the meaning of being itself*. As we have suggested, but which is arguably only hinted at by Heidegger's analysis, this radicalization is connected to a more general development in Kant's depiction of the transcendental ideas.

Once again, we stress the doubly outward-looking nature of our approach to *The Essence of Human Freedom*. That is, by appropriating this lecture, we ultimately look beyond what is originally stated by both Kant and Heidegger. The **first** step of transgression is carried out by Heidegger himself. His reading of *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Groundwork* entails a violent appropriation of Kant's philosophy of freedom. As such, it is through Heidegger's version of Kant that we now seek to establish a metaphysics of freedom as fundamental ontology. The **second** step of transgression is reflected by our own appropriation of Heidegger. We approach *The Essence of Human Freedom*, not simply to extract what is actually presented in Heidegger's interpretation of Kant, but ultimately as a *steppingstone* for our own forthcoming interpretation of Kantian metaphysics – an interpretation that Heidegger only alludes to throughout his lecture series. In the final four-page conclusion, Heidegger writes the following:

> "The *actuality* [*Wirklichkeit*] of practical freedom is indeed the problem of the second way. Yet the actuality of this actual freedom does not become a problem such that the essence of this specific being, i.e. of the being announced in the will-governed action of

the human person, is genuinely interrogated. The actuality of freedom is not interrogated in a properly metaphysical sense, not *as a problem of being*."[523]

This "being" (*Sein*) that is *announced in the will-governed action* is not the human subject nor its property, but the ground of nature from which man finds his primordial residence. The complete exposition of the ground itself will be the achievement of the next and final part four of this dissertation. That is, just like our presentation of the problem of causality in chapter three, so too will our rendition of Heidegger's interpretation of Kantian morality only provide a preliminary step towards our own metaphysical system. The ultimate meaning of causality and human morality will be made clear in part four, where we present the final metaphysical components of *man*, *nature*, and the *ground of nature as willing and freedom*.

In the **first subchapter**, we follow Heidegger's introduction of Kant's *second way to freedom*, as a factuality of the pure practical reason of a moral person – that is, as *free will*. In the **second subchapter**, we present Heidegger's radical interpretation of Kant's moral law. Heidegger suggests that the lawfulness of free will is not an altogether separate domain of human moral action; but instead, that pure practical reason represents the *formal foundation of the causal determination of nature*. And in the **third subchapter**, we outline an interpretation of Kant's two ways to freedom which completes the argument Heidegger alludes to, but which also remains incomplete in *The Essence of Human Freedom*. That is, we present the practical reality of freedom in human ethical praxis as a revelation of fundamental ontology.

The Ethical Praxis of the Human Essence

In the theoretical philosophy of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant articulates the cosmological idea of freedom, as unconditioned causality for the absolute origination of the lawfulness of nature. We approach Kant's turn to practical philosophy as a direct continuation from the metaphysical framework of the cosmological idea: "Kant himself emphasizes in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* that 'speculative philosophy' (i.e. the treatment of the problem of the

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[523] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 206 (GA 31: 301).

Antinomies) 'clears the way for practical philosophy'."[524] Kant looks to the essence of the human being – the *ethical praxis of practical reason* – for the *positive manifestation of freedom*. Heidegger refers to this manifestation as either the factuality, actuality, or reality of freedom – *Tatsächlichkeit, Wirklichkeit oder Realität*.[525] The claim to the *factuality of freedom* in ethical praxis conflicts with the initial Kantian understanding of facts and experience. A "fact" is a universal thought corresponding to an object in experience. And "experience" is defined exclusively as the receptivity for the object of appearance – that is, as the apprehension from empirical sensibility. Freedom is not empirical; it is not derived through sensibility. The transcendental idea of freedom expresses the unconditioned totality for the concept of causality. Thus, freedom cannot be an object for experience: "For it belongs to the essence of an idea to go beyond all experience, i.e. not to be intuitively presentable in experience."[526] However, Kant nonetheless maintains that freedom is a fact.[527] How can this be? The factuality of freedom must be *non-empirical*. Heidegger thereby draws the conclusion that the non-empirical factuality of freedom must correspond to a *new and extended concept of experience*. That is, so that "experience" now contains both the susceptibility of the appearing object of nature, as well as the transcendent object of freedom. To be clear, we do not find such use of the German word "Erfahrung" in Kant's own writings. But Heidegger nonetheless suggest that such notion of experience is necessarily brought to the fore by the Kantian inquiry.[528]

The key to understand the positive reality of freedom – as Kant's second way to freedom – is to inquire into the practical nature of the human essence. What is the human essence? In the traditional definition, the human being reads as *homo animal rationale*: "man as the animal endowed with reason."[529] Kant continues this definition, but the rationality of humankind – *Menschheit* – does not exhaust the meaning of the human essence. The ultimate essence lies in the personality – *Persönlichkeit* – of the singular individual. A *person* is not merely rational, but through his rationality, he is "capable of *self-responsibility*" – *Selbstverantwortlichkeit*.[530]

[524] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 184 (GA 31: 264f). See also GMS 4:456. I have changed Ted Sadler's translation of "Grundlegung" from "foundations" to "groundwork".
[525] That is, "factuality", "actuality", and "reality" are in this context understood as synonyms. Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 184 (GA 31: 265).
[526] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 187 (GA 31: 269).
[527] Heidegger's main source for this claim is *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 91, 5:468. Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 185 (GA 31: 267).
[528] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 189 (GA 31: 273). This extended meaning of "experience" (*Erfahrung*) will be utilized in our own interpretation of Kant throughout part four.
[529] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 182 (GA 31: 262).
[530] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 182 (GA 31: 262).

Self-responsibility expresses a relationship of a person *to himself*. To stand in a self-relationship means to go beyond oneself. That is, to *see oneself* presupposes the ability to transcend the identity of one's own self, so that the self can become conspicuous as a thing of thought from a distance. What is brought back into the distance in the going beyond oneself of responsibility is the *empirically determined self*: "Thus Kant defines 'personality' as 'that which elevates man above himself as part of the word of sense'."[531]

The breaking out from the empirical self in the ethical praxis of a person is the positive manifestation of freedom through pure willing; or simply put, the *act of free will*: "*The factuality corresponding to the idea of freedom is that of praxis. We experience the reality of freedom in practical will-governed action.*"[532] What is an act of a free will? When speaking of an action – *Handlung* – we typically refer to the *abilities and comportments of practical man*. However, Heidegger points out that Kant's concept of action generally connects to causal determination; that is, as the *effecting of natural causality*.[533] In the second analogy, Kant states that action "signifies the relation of the subject of causality to its effect."[534] So, when Kant turns to the ethical action of a person, it is within the explicit framework of the causal lawfulness of nature:

> "If action has the general meaning of effecting (bringing about), and pertains primarily to natural occurrences, then the concept of free moral action, or as Kant likes to say, of 'voluntary' [*willkürlichen*] action, is ontologically oriented, precisely *as* action, to being in the sense of being-present."[535]

In the ethical praxis of a person, the *will* comes into view as the *determining ground* for the causal effecting of action. That is, praxis "is the particular kind of action made possible by a *will*, i.e. such that the relation of the subject of the causation, the determining instance, to the effect, occurs through will."[536] What is the Kantian notion of the will? The will is "a power to act according to concepts."[537] A concept is the representation of an object of appearance in our understanding. The conceptual representation of nature is fundamentally lawful. That is, according to the second analogy of experience, all temporal succession for the object of appearance is organized according to the temporal unity of events. As such, the will becomes

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[531] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 183 (GA 31: 263).
[532] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 188 (GA 31: 271).
[533] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 137 (GA 31: 197).
[534] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 137 (GA 31: 198). See also KdrV A205/ B250.
[535] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 137 (GA 31: 197).
[536] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 189 (GA 31: 274).
[537] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 189 (GA 31: 274).

the ability to act out in accordance with the *empirical lawfulness of nature*: "What determines the will are the experienceable existent entities that are to be brought forth."[538] Because Kant defines reason – *Vernunft* – in a narrow sense, as the "capacity to act *in accordance with the representation of laws*, that is, in accordance with principles" [539], the acting out in accordance with the conceptual representation of natural lawfulness expresses the ability of reason to be practical. In other words, the power of the will becomes synonymous with *practical reason*.

The will expresses the ability of reason to be practical, but when the will acts out according to the natural lawfulness, it is not free, but rather causally determined. However, the radical claim of Kant's practical philosophy is that the will also possesses another form of lawfulness that is entirely independent from empirical experience – that is, a *law of pure practical reason*. The enigma of Kantian ethics lies in the nature of freedom as the acting out in accordance with this a priori lawfulness of pure willing. The pressing issue for Heidegger in *The Essence of Human Freedom* becomes the question of the relationship between the willful act from natural lawfulness and the willful act from pure practical reason. One could easily choose to interpret the moral law as an altogether separate foundation for willful action. That is, making a clear distinction between the will from immanent natural lawfulness and the will from transcendent moral lawfulness. But in Heidegger's interpretation, the a priori lawfulness of pure practical reason becomes instead the necessary foundation for all willful acts of empirical lawfulness. That is, natural and a priori lawfulness becomes *two ontologically different aspects for the same willful origination of the causal determination of being*.

The Lawfulness of the Will: The Moral Law

What is the moral law? According to Heidegger, it is not a separate basis for *ethical* action, as opposed to the *natural* actions of a causally determined will. Rather, the moral law is simply the *formal structure of the will itself*, in the willing of natural lawfulness: "It thus emerges that the *basic law of the pure will, of pure practical reason*, is nothing else than the *form of law-*

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[538] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 190 (GA 31: 276). I have changed the translation of "Seiende" from "beings" to "existent entities".

[539] GMS 4:412. Heidegger does not refer to this quote explicitly, but arguably implicitly. See Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 190 (GA 31: 275).

giving [*Gesetzgebung*]."[540] This means that the essence of a moral person, in Heidegger's interpretation, is not primarily expressed as an act of *overruling* natural causality from a transcendent basis; rather, it becomes an act that *confirms* the will as the a priori ground for the lawfulness of nature. How can we make sense of this interpretation?

Action is the effecting of natural lawfulness. The will is the determining ground – *Bestimmungsgrund* – for this effecting. This means that the acting out of natural lawfulness is grounded on the practical instance of willing. The *material* content of the will – that is, that which is willed in willing – is always the empirical lawfulness of nature. The pure *form* of the will, on the other hand, is simply willing itself. In what sense does the pure form of willing itself express an a priori law? What is a law? A law is a *necessary and universal connection* of a manifold. The *material law* of will is the empirical-causal connection of the manifold of appearance. The *formal law* of will is simply the necessary and universal connection of willing itself. That is, the law of pure will is the necessity of willing as the ground for all causal action: "The law of pure will does not pertain to this or that representable effect but is the law for the existence of the will, i.e. the will is the willing itself."[541]

Willing has the form of an *imperative*. That is, expressing an *ought – ein sollst*. For the material content of willing, the ought is always empirically contingent; meaning that the imperative to will *something* is dependent on the specific conditions of a given empirical situation. A *hypothetical* statement has the logical form of "if-then".[542] Kant therefore refers to the ought of the material content of willing as the *hypothetical imperative* of the will. But the ought of pure willing itself is always and unconditionally the form of the will. The ought of pure will therefore become a *categorical imperative*. That is, the necessity of pure willing itself is absolute.

When a person willfully subject himself to an empirical law, that is, as valid for his own particular subjective will, the law is a *subjective principle* of willing. Kant calls this subjective principle a "maxim". However, the formal imperative of the will itself remains the *objective* ground for all willing: "The binding character of the pure will is not dependent on contingent factors but is universally valid."[543] And so we arrive at the formulation of the categorical imperative as a *principle of universality*: "*act only in accordance with that maxim through*

[540] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 192 (GA 31: 279).
[541] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 192 (GA 31: 278).
[542] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 193 (GA 31: 280f).
[543] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 195 (GA 31: 284).

which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law." [544] In Heidegger's interpretation, the principle of universality expresses an imperative for the subjective will of a maxim to conform with the universal form of pure willing itself: "if we act in such a way that the determining ground of our willing, i.e. our maxims, can always at the same time determine *every will as such*, then we act according to the objective fundamental law of our will."[545]

As with the principle of universality, Heidegger equally provides a short presentation of the *principle of humanity*: "*So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.*"[546] An *end – Zweck –* is that which is "represented in advance as the determining ground for the actualization of an object."[547] The *end of humanity* is the determining ground of willing itself, as that which "can never be a means, but only an end"[548], in the willful action of a person. Thus, the categorical imperative states that:

> "[Before] anything else, in all your actions, always act in your essence. The essence of person is this self-responsibility: to bind oneself to oneself, but not egotistically, i.e. not in relation to the accidental 'I'. To be in the mode of self-responsibility, to answer only to the essence of one's self. To give this priority in everything, to will the ought of pure willing."[549]

Let us try to elaborate. To be an empirical self – that is, a human subject – is to stand in a relation to a lawfully determined object of appearance. The will is the determining ground for this lawfulness. This means that the empirical self is ultimately an expression of the determining ground of the will. Moral responsibility is the self-relation acquired by a person when his own empirical self is revealed to be contingent on the a priori ground of willing: "It is a matter of showing that man actually knows himself to be under the obligation of a pure willing."[550] To act out from the a priori ground of pure will is to transcend the empirical determination of the self, only to regain one's own essence as willing: "*to actually will is to will nothing else but the ought of one's existence.*"[551] This event of transcending oneself is the positive manifestation of

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[544] GMS 4:421. My *italic*.
[545] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 196 (GA 31: 286).
[546] GMS 4:429.
[547] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 200 (GA 31: 293).
[548] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 200 (GA 31: 293).
[549] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 201 (GA 31: 293).
[550] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 195 (GA 31: 284).
[551] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 198 (GA 31: 289).

freedom. That is, freedom is the "interrogative ground [*tragender Grund*]" for the revelation of our humanity as pure willing.[552]

Heidegger claims that the moral law of pure practical reason is not a separate domain of praxis that is detached from the actions of an empirically determined self. Rather, he suggests that the moral law represents the *pure form of will itself, that is foundational to all causally determined willing*. But Heidegger's effort to implement this radical claim in his technical reading of the specific formulations of the moral law is ultimately insufficient. In fact, Heidegger ultimately discards the formulations of Kant's categorical imperative as *historically contingent* and therefore unable to speak to the essence of human morality:

> "The categorical imperative of pure practical reason belongs to the Age of Enlightenment, to the time of the Prussia of Fredrick the Great. Expressed in contemporary terms: the categorical imperative is a specific sociologically determined philosophico-ethico ideology, i.e. by no means is it the most general law of action for all rational beings as maintained by Kant."[553]

In conclusion, it becomes clear that the strength of Heidegger's interpretation is not his inquiry into the technicalities of the categorical imperative – its formulations and applications. Instead, the significant contribution of *The Essence of Human Freedom* is the attempt to accentuate the Kantian *connection between human morality and metaphysics of causality*. The will of morality is not the faculty of a human being *standing outside* a causally determined nature. The will is always the willing of natural lawfulness. The moral law is the a priori lawfulness of pure formal willing, as the categorical and universal ground for all causal action. That is, Heidegger suggests that the fundamental insight of Kantian ethics is that *pure willing is the ultimate basis for the lawful determination of nature*.

The Free Thought from the Absolute Origination of Being

In what way is the practical reality of freedom in human ethical praxis an answer to the question of the meaning of being? That is, how can we understand Kant's moral theory as fundamental

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[552] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 128 (GA 31: 182).
[553] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 197 (GA 31: 287).

ontology? The primordial connection between the meaning of being as a constant phenomenal presence (οὐσία – *Erscheinung*) and Kantian philosophy of freedom remains the purported yet ultimately undeveloped vision of *The Essence of Human Freedom*. Heidegger does not attempt to complete the connection between the cosmological idea of freedom and the ethical praxis of the human essence. Towards the end of his chapter on Kant's second way to freedom, Heidegger states that: "Only now are we adequately prepared for the task contained in the main thesis: to present the objective reality, i.e. practical reality, the specific factuality of freedom, solely through the factuality of the law of pure practical reason."[554] And in the final four-page conclusion, Heidegger returns once more to his suggested reversal for Kantian metaphysics, and asks if it is possible to invert the Kantian articulation of freedom through causality, so that causality, and ultimately metaphysics itself, becomes a *problem of freedom*:

> "If we consider that the being of beings is proximally comprehended as constant presence – and this involves producedness [*Hergestelltheit*], producing, finishing in the broad sense of actualizing [*Verwirklichen*] – it is clear that precisely *causality*, in the traditional sense of the being of beings, in common understanding as in traditional metaphysics, is the *fundamental category of being as being-present*. If *causality is a problem of freedom* and not vice versa then the *problem of being in general* is in itself a *problem of freedom*."[555]

Heidegger never goes through with this reversal. But we now intend to do. We will utilize the suggested radicalization of the meaning of Kantian freedom as a framework for our own metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. As a pathway to articulate and systematize the incorporation of the moral essence of *Anthropos* into the ground of nature, and thereby to unify ethics and ontology. This means that we now continue from the state of suspense in which Heidegger leaves us. The lecture series originates from the summer semester in Freiburg of 1930. Heidegger is at this point of his intellectual development still only at the beginning of a decade-long maturation towards the *later* thinking of *Ereignis* and *Unverborgenheit*. As we now continue down the road of a violent appropriation of Kant, we do so based on the fundamental insights gained in part two, through our reading of the *Letter on "Humanism"* and *The Question Concerning Technology*.

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[554] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 202 (GA 31: 295).
[555] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 205f (GA 31: 300).

The true meaning of being is unconcealment, as the event of origination for existence itself in our phenomenal presence. In Kantian terms, it is the coming into existence for the object of appearance. The phenomenal presence of being is fundamentally lawful: "[Causality] is the *fundamental category of being as being-present*."[556] The most rudimentary form of this lawfulness is described in the second analogy of experience as the mechanical causality of nature. The cosmological idea of freedom in the third antinomy reflects the unconditioned totality for the very same concept of causality, expressing the *absolute origination for the lawfulness of being*. Heidegger's reading of the theoretical philosophy of freedom in *Critique of Pure Reason* indicates a possible articulation of the *truth of being according to a metaphysical system of causality*. That is, what Kant's cosmological idea of freedom ultimately express, is that the event of unconcealment lies at the very foundation of the causal meaning of nature.

However, the metaphysical framework of Kant's theoretical philosophy does not offer a way to articulate the positive manifestation of freedom – its factuality. The cosmological idea of freedom remains a mere thing of thought, as a negative determination of finite human understanding. However, in *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason,* it becomes clear that the ability to articulate the positive reality of freedom entails a radical development of its metaphysical meaning as a transcendental idea. The idea on the unconditioned, which transcends the scope of empirical sensibility, manifests its factuality through the causal action of ethical praxis – *the transcendental idea of freedom reveals its practical reality*.

And so, we ask again. How can the practical reality of freedom in human ethical praxis be the answer to the question of the meaning of being? That is, how can we connect Kant's theoretical and practical way to freedom, in a way that transforms his moral philosophy into fundamental ontology? When Heidegger chooses the cosmological idea of freedom as a framework to articulate the problem of being, he is arguably only extending an already existing Kantian connection between the problem of freedom and ontology. That is, for Kant, the cosmological idea of freedom represents *one of many* articulations of the transcendental limits of appearance. But in Heidegger's interpretation, the idea of freedom is now exalted into the position as the *main expression of the thing-in-itself*, as the *grounding abyss that delimits the finitude of being*. Heidegger's interpretation is at this point no doubt highly unorthodox, but it

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[556] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 205 (GA 31: 300).

does not fundamentally violate the metaphysical framework of Kant's transcendental philosophy. However, the main problem facing Heidegger's purported reversal of Kant's philosophy of freedom stems from the fact that Heidegger also attempts to extend this ontological connection to the practical reality of freedom in human ethical praxis. Instead of viewing the analysis of the third antinomy as a preparatory work that removes any theoretical obstacles for the subsequent development of practical philosophy, Heidegger now suggests that we understand the practical reality of freedom as the factual manifestation of the phenomenal absence of the thing-in-itself, which translates the moral judgment into a revelation of being itself. Why is this a problem? Kant's moral theory is inherently connected to his analysis of the will – as a *critique of pure practical reason*. And the will is presented as a faculty of the human mind. The practical reality of freedom would therefore seem to speak to a revelation of the inner nature of the human subject, but not to being itself. If we are to take the Kantian pathway in *The Essence of Human Freedom* serious, then so too must the faculty of the will undergo an ontological transformation. That is, instead of being the determining ground for the limited domain of human causal action, we must approach the *praxis of willing as the determining ground for causal determination as such. That is, making willing and freedom into a twofold ground of nature*.

The task of the upcoming part four of this dissertation is to develop a metaphysics of man, nature, and the normative ground of willing and freedom. However, as a final contribution of the current part three, let us now provide an outline of the basic framework of our new metaphysics. The true meaning of being is the *event of unconcealment*. In this event, the lawful appearance of nature is brought into our phenomenal presence. This movement of bringing nature into the light of lawful appearance is *willing*. That is, the *unconcealing* of unconcealment has the form of willing. *Freedom*, on the other hand, is the abysmal countermovement to willing, as a will to nothingness, which nihilates the lawfulness of existence into oblivion. The *concealing* of unconcealment has the form of freedom. Together, willing and freedom constitute the twofold ground of nature:

> "The actuality of the pure will does not mark out a domain of objects which at first stand indifferently over against us, only subsequently to be willed or not-willed. Rather,

willing or not-willing [*Nichtwollen*] is what first allows this actuality *to occur* and in its own way *to be*."[557]

What about *free will* and the moral law of pure practical reason? What is a law? A law is the necessary and universal connection of a manifold. In the case of the moral law, the manifold is simply the twofold ground of nature. That is, the *moral law is the unity of thought that holds the ground of willing and freedom together*. This means that human morality – the moral essence of man – is not primarily found in the acting out of a judgment, but rather in a preconditioning state of *reflective contemplation*. How is this state of contemplation brought about? What is the original genesis of morality? The empirical self of a person always already finds himself engaged in causally determined action. If the person suddenly finds himself facing the abysmal ground of freedom, for example as the emergence of a crisis, then he is elevated into a state of pure *thinking*. That is, transcending his empirical self by letting the concerns of his causal engagements be. But in transcending himself, the moral person is simultaneously able to contemplate on the grounds of his existence. That is, on the absolute origination of the lawful presence of nature. It is an event of absolute origination because the disclosure of willing stands in an inherent connection to the abysmal nihilation of freedom, as a dynamic struggle in the meaning of being itself.

This basic thought conveys the *Kantian pathway*, on which we plan to venture in the final part four, with the intent to develop our Heideggerian environmental thought into a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. What must be accomplished in this development? **First**, we must rethink the idea of *man*, his moral essence, and sense of responsibility, as an answer to the call of the meaning of being. **Second**, we must rethink the idea of *nature*, as the systematic unity of finite causal meaning – that is, as the finitude of the environment. And **third**, we must present the ground of nature as willing and freedom, as the foundation and abyss of man and nature.

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[557] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 202 (GA 31: 295).

PART FOUR: The Normative Ground of Nature

1. A Metaphysics of Man and Nature for the Anthropocene

Over the last couple of decades, environmentalism has emerged from the periphery of political discourse – as interest groups, activist movements, niche parties, and philosophical critique and analysis – and turned into a prevalent global (or, at least Western) phenomenon. Originating from and still mainly centered around a growing awareness of anthropogenic climate change, this initial regard for the potential harms of our carbon footprint has arguably also enforced a more general environmentalist concern. Be it for the collapse of ecosystems, for unsustainable exploitation and management of natural resources, for the disruption of chemical balance in natural systems like the nitrogen cycle and acidification of our oceans, emission of non-biodegradable waste, extinction of species, et cetera. The Anthropocene originates as a geological concept of stratigraphic classification and analysis by Earth system science. With respect to the recent appropriation of this neologism by the humanities and social sciences, there are no doubt different ways to interpret its meaning. In this dissertation, we have presented the Anthropocene as an attempt to express the acute environmental concern that has become a dominant feature of our own time. Environmentalism reflects a dynamic between the emergence of an environmental *crisis*, and the subsequent sense of *responsibility*. A crisis reveals that something is *at stake*, and responsibility is the thoughtful *recognition* of this critical situation, in a way that may or may not lead to an *imperative to act*. The environmentalism at play in the Anthropocene is special in a twofold sense. First, because its underlying sense of crisis and responsibility reflects a radical form of environmental vulnerability that incorporates

and effects all other concerns of nature. That is, in other instances of environmental concern, for example in the case of unsustainable anthropogenic impacts on a particular ecosystem, the worst-case scenario of ecological collapse would still mainly affect *that* particular ecosystem, leaving other environments intact, giving the inhabitant humans the possibility to abandon the now barren wasteland in favor of other and still fertile grounds. But the rise in global average temperature due to an anthropogenic greenhouse effect impacts all of earths environments, in a way that deprive humans of any means to escape.

Second, because of this all-encompassing vulnerability, the climate change crisis also speaks to the existential situation of man. That is, because there is no escape for humans, the sense of environmental responsibility emerging in the Anthropocene is simultaneously a concern for the innermost vulnerability of human existence itself. The eschatological frame of reference alluded to in this depiction of man's existential vulnerability does not imply that the worst-case scenario of an eight-degree temperature rise would be the end of all humans – or even the end of most humans for that matter. Rather, it means that the *ways of human life* that has become intrinsic to our modern civilization, and which are entirely reliant upon massive consumption of carbon-based energy, is unsustainable and thereby in need of transformation.

Now combining these two aspects, we see that the Anthropocene represents the emergence of an environmental *normativity* that originates from the very relationship between man and nature itself. Or to be more precise, a normativity reflected in the coming to awareness of *man's own environmental origin*. In addressing the philosophical significance of this special form of normativity, which is the task of the Anthropocenologists, we can now present two radically different ways of interpretation. The first and perhaps seemingly obvious choice would be to regard the normativity at play in the Anthropocene as an extraneous stratum of subjective meaning on top of an original substrate of objective reality. That is, that man and nature exist first and foremost as two separate ontological entities, best described by natural science, and that the normative unification of man and nature only emerge through an additional and historically contingent layer of ethical, political, and social meaning – which would make the normativity of the Anthropocene entirely anthropogenic and ultimately anthropocentric.

However, in this dissertation we have presented a radically different line of interpretation. Through the coupling of environmental philosophy and Martin Heidegger, we have suggested that the normativity at play in the Anthropocene in fact speaks to the fundamental meaning of being itself. And that both man and nature are somehow grounded by this meaning. That is, if nature is the sum total of existent entities, then existence itself emerge on a ground of normativity. And the essence of human existence, is to stand confronted with

this primordial ground. This is no doubt a far more enigmatic and controversial line of interpretation. It elevates the Anthropocene from a specific political program of environmental concern to a general metaphysical event, which brings us into contact with a more truthful understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. That is, the philosophical significance of the Anthropocene is ultimately not reflected by the way it addresses the climatological, ecological, political, or otherwise specific concerns of contemporary environmentalism. But rather by the manner in which the environmental concern and sense of responsibility that has become a prevalent phenomenon of our time serves to disclose a more profound but long forgotten insight into the environmental origin of our own existence. It is this metaphysical aspect reflected in the environmental orientation of our contemporary epoch that this dissertation tries to unravel.

What is the meaning of the Anthropocene as a metaphysical event? It is a revelation of the grounding normative meaning of nature, and man's existential origin in the face of this meaning. In **part one**, we concluded our review of the Anthropocene literature, by introducing the idea of the *ethos of the environment* and a corresponding map of basic concepts, anticipating our forthcoming development of a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. The metaphysical meaning of environment is the manifestation of the *finitude of nature*. That is, an environment represents the organization of all things in a *system of meaning*, whose continued preservation or ultimate destruction is contingent on the *ground of nature as willing and freedom*. And ethos is the *abiding place of man* in the face of this finitude.

In **part two**, we articulated the fundamental environmental thought reflected in our interpretation of the Anthropocene as an *ecological re-orientation for humanism*. We then sought out to articulate this thought through the philosophy of the later Heidegger. For Heidegger, humanism represents the return of man to his existential and ecstatic origin in the *nearness of being*. Following Heidegger's depiction of the history of Western metaphysics as a history of human forgetfulness of being, we made the novel suggestion that the epochal sending of our contemporary environmental awareness represents a saving power that offers a way out from this forgetfulness.

In **part three**, we began the task of developing our Heideggerian environmental thought into a system of metaphysics. In Heidegger's violent interpretation of Kant, we found a way to articulate the phenomenal presence of being, and thereby the normative meaning of the environment, through a metaphysical framework of *freedom and causality*. That is, Heidegger suggests that we interpret the factuality of freedom manifested in the practical reason of human morality as the ultimate ground and origination of the causal determination of nature. This

means that the meaning of being is now articulated as a primordial struggle between the willful preservation and destructive disruption of the lawful presence of all existent entities. However, because Heidegger himself never completed his suggested transformation of Kant's philosophy of freedom into fundamental ontology, we were ultimately left with a metaphysical roadmap into a yet unknown territory of thought.

Now, having arrived at the **fourth part** of the dissertation, it is time to present our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene, as a Heideggerian thought in a Kantian system. As the main title indicates, the main achievement of this final part will be to establish the concept of the *normative ground of nature*. We will do so in *three steps*, corresponding to chapters two, three, and four. In short, these steps reflect the basic metaphysical building blocks of *man, nature, and the normative ground of willing and freedom*. **Chapter two** centers on the metaphysical object of *man*. The general argument is that the moral essence of man does not reflect an act of introspection into the innermost reality of an independent subject. Rather, the human moral essence corresponds to a realization that the intellectual identity of the human self is fundamentally grounded on the unity of its surrounding environments and their lawful environmental practices. This realization is brought about by an event of nihilation which disintegrates the human self, thereby confronting man with the contingence of his own existence on a ground of nature which ultimately transcends the human subject. This depiction of the human moral essence is originally based on Heidegger's philosophy.[558] However, the role of chapter two is to develop this Heideggerian idea within a Kantian framework of metaphysics. We will do so based on Kant's first major work on ethics, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. In an act of violent appropriation, we approach Kant's analysis of human morality with the preconceived Heideggerian notion that the foundational elements of willing and freedom are in fact not the properties of the human subject, but rather a ground of nature. Despite this transformation, it will be our task to demonstrate that the *formal structure of human morality* depicted in Kant's analysis remains the same. That is, that the notion of duty and good will, the categorical imperative, and the idea of moral autonomy and pure practical reason, are all preserved, despite the Heideggerian reversal where human morality and imperative of responsibility are ultimately centered on a transcendent ground of nature itself.

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[558] As François Raffoul puts it: "In his thinking of ethics and responsibility, Heidegger thus breaks with a subject-based thinking, breaks from the tradition of autonomous subject, and with an anthropological way of thinking." Raffoul, F. (2016), "Ethics", page 295.

The object of inquiry in **chapter three** is the metaphysical object of *nature*. In its most rudimentary form, we defined nature as the *totality of existent entities*. As such, the concept of nature simply translates into the highest of ontological genera. In chapter three, we expand upon this concept, making the case that a given aggregate of existent entities exhibits an intrinsic form of lawfulness that are always already organized according to a *unified system*. This claim to nature's inherent state of lawful organization is reflected in our metaphysical concept of the *causal meaning* of an environment. In terms of our original Heideggerian thought, this concept reflects an articulation of the fundamental *meaning of being as a causal meaning*. However, in order to unpack this concept for our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene, we now look to Kant. Even though the term "causal meaning" is our own, the philosophical problem reflected in this concept is largely mirrored by Kant's own analysis. In the *appendix* to the transcendental dialectic of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant confronts the problem of the unsatisfactory insufficiency of a concept of nature based solely on the transcendental table of categories. The real empirical nature into which man is born, wherein he conducts his everyday life, and from which he departs upon his death, reflects a fundamental state of lawful organization. But the conceptual framework of Kant's analysis in the first critique merely allows him to hint at a possible *transcendental basis* for such unified system of nature. It is not until his third and final critical work, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, that Kant claims to have found such a transcendental basis – namely, in the *reflecting power of judgment* and its principle of *formal and logical purposiveness*.

The aim of chapter three is to appropriate Kant's analysis of the problem of nature as a system of causal determination for our own concept of causal meaning. Central to this appropriation is an emphasis on the development of Kant's *transcendental ideas*. In the appendix of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the idea of nature as a unified system is restricted to a *regulative principle* for a mere hypothetical use of theoretical reason, without any means to secure a proper transcendental foundation. That is, the idea of causal meaning remains a mere figment of pure reason, without any validity outside the human subject. However, by introducing reflecting judgment and its principle of purposiveness, Kant now transforms the meaning of the transcendental idea into a *radical form of praxis* where man becomes attuned to a foundational lawfulness revealed by nature itself. It is at this point that Kant introduces the notion of a transcendent *natural technique*, grounding its lawful appearance.

The **fourth chapter** centers on the metaphysical object of the *ground of nature as willing and freedom*. That is, if the two previous chapters presented the metaphysical objects of man and nature in a way that merely alluded to a possible *common ground of human morality*

and causal meaning, then the task now becomes to confront this ground itself. We do so by engaging with Kant's analysis in the *Critique of Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. The aesthetic objects of *beauty* and *sublimity* are contained within a purely subjective judgment and do not therefore provide any cognition about the world, but only a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. However, Kant nonetheless suggests that the state of *harmonious free play* that is instilled in the subject is foundational to all cognition. And he makes a claim to a connection between aesthetic judgment and human morality. It is this radical yet underdeveloped connection between aesthetic judgment, cognition, and morality which we now aim to exploit. The ground of nature as willing is the foundation of beauty, which puts into play of a state in the subject that enables us to act out the causal meaning of nature. And the ground of nature as freedom is the sublime abyss which disrupts the very same praxis, nihilating the causal meaning of nature and thereby disintegrating the unity of the human self. The essence of human morality is simply to reflect on this twofold ground, as its own existential foundation.

2. The Formal Structure of Ethos

> The speculative use of reason *with respect to nature* leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of the *world:* the practical use of reason *with regard to freedom* leads also to an absolute necessity, but only *of laws of actions* of a rational being as such. [We] do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative, but we nevertheless comprehend its *incomprehensibility*; and this is all that can fairly be required of a philosophy that strives in its principles to the very boundary of human reason.[559]

The ethos of the environment is the *primordial residence of man in the face of the finitude of nature*. This is the grounding thought and the object of inquiry for our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene. We have chosen to divide the metaphysical inquiry in the final part of our dissertation according to three basic components: the *essence of man as ethos*, the *finite causal meaning of nature as environment*, and the *normative ground of nature as willing and freedom*. When we now begin with the concept of ethos, it is only with the intent to flesh out its *formal structure*. In what sense is the exposition *merely formal*? Ethos represents a metaphysical concept of man that is fundamentally determined by his *grounding relationship to nature*. This means that a fully developed metaphysical meaning of human essence is contingent on the subsequent development of the notion of environment and the ground of

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[559] GMS 4:463.

nature in chapters three and four. That is, we will now define the *existential residence of ethos* at a stage of our metaphysical exposition where the substantive meaning of the *causal state of nature* and its *existential ground of willing and freedom* has yet to be revealed.

As the primordial residence of man, ethos is the basis for our intended *unification of ontology and ethics*. This means that our metaphysical notion of ethos must contain two components. First, it must be able to articulate the *moral essence of man*, including the notions of moral *responsibility* and the *duty* of moral law. Second, ethos must also contain an *existential experience of fundamental ontology*. That is, as the revelation of the phenomenal presence of the meaning of being. We find the basis for this identification of ethics and fundamental ontology in Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. That is, as a continuation of the interpretative pathway that was laid out by Heidegger in *The Essence of Human Freedom*.[560]

A metaphysics of morals, according to Kant, is the inquiry into "the idea and the principles of a possible *pure* will."[561] The will is pure when it is determined *a priori* – that is, "completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical and that belongs to anthropology", while simultaneously serving as the foundation for all empirically determined volition. As the title of the book indicates, *Grundlegung* is the laying of the foundation for a metaphysics of morality that Kant intended "to publish some day" and is "nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*".[562] This groundwork takes the form of an investigation into the nature of pure willing itself – that is, as a *critique of pure practical reason*. This pure form of practical reason is the ability of the will to be free.

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[560] A significant debate amongst modern Kant scholars, which allegedly began with John Rawls, is the question of whether Kant's moral theory should be understood as *constructivism* or *realism*. Echoing Christine M. Korsgaard, Robert Stern states that Kant is **realist** if "the activity of practical reason in telling us how to act is to be measured against a prior order of values, whereas the **constructivist** view counts as anti-realist because the order of dependence is reversed." See Stern, R. (2012), *Understanding Moral Obligation*, page 8 & 9 (my **bold**). Following Heidegger approach to Kant's moral theory as fundamental ontology, we will not partake in this debate. Heidegger rejects the notion that Kant's ethics deals with the question of 'moral values', a sentiment that that will be shared in our coming interpretation: "The philosophy of value in particular represents a total distortion of the genuinely Kantian problem." Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 189 (GA 31: 273). More importantly, our Heideggerian interpretation will accentuate the phenomena of free will as a revelation of the meaning of being, thereby dissolving any distinction between "reality" and the "constructions" of a human subject.

[561] GMS 4: 390

[562] GMS 4: 391 & 4: 392. Allison adds: "it is now generally recognized that GMS is properly classified as a work of meta-ethics, having as its sole aim the two-part task of searching for and establishing the supreme principle of morality (GMS 4:392$_{3-4}$); whereas it is the long delayed *Metaphysics of Morals* (1796-97), for which GMS was originally intended to lay the foundation, that is Kant's major work in normative ethics." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 3f.

Our own metaphysical exposition of the formal structure of ethos thereby becomes an inquiry into the *nature of free will*.

However, in our reading of *Groundwork* we aim to present the critique of pure practical reason qua free will, not only as the founding of ethics, but equally as a work of fundamental ontology. No doubt does this entail a violent appropriation of Kant's first major work on practical philosophy. Following Heidegger's interpretation in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, we will accentuate the radical connection in Kant's ethics to metaphysics of natural causality. Freedom, according to Kant, is a transcendental idea on the absolute origination for the causal determination of nature. This means that Kant himself provides an ontological conceptualization of freedom; we simply push the Kantian analysis a few steps further. The Kantian concept of will, however, offers a greater challenge. We must offer an interpretation of Kant that reorients the phenomenon of willing, so that it signifies the *determining ground for the causal determination of nature in general*, and not just the limited domain of causal actions by rational beings. This means that we aim to *ontologize the will*, in a way that clearly exceeds the scope of Kant's original analysis. This is also the reason why the present interpretation of *Groundwork* can only provide the formal structure of ethos as free will. For it is not until chapter four that we finally provide a full exposition of the ontological ground of nature as willing and freedom. Despite our heretic approach to Kant's moral philosophy, it is our claim that the analysis of practical reason in *Groundwork* still holds true. That is, the *formal structure* of Kant's argument remains intact, despite the radical shift in our conception of the will. And it is because of this malleability that we can utilize Kant's original analysis for our own Heideggerian metaphysics.

Groundwork has a remarkable structure, organizing its argument along two significantly different pathways. Section 1 and 2 follows an *analytical* pathway, which begins with the concept of a good will, and traces its necessary conditions, expressed as the *duty of a categorical imperative* and the idea of *moral autonomy*. The aim of section 3 is to connect this analytical concept of a good will to the transcendental idea of freedom. That is, the idea of a free will becomes the positive expression of freedom through which man is able to think the *synthetic unity* of a good will and the causal determination of his volition. Section 3 represents the ultimate groundwork for ethics, and thereby also the foundation for the analysis and applications of the categorical imperative in section 1 and 2. As Kant states:

> "I have adopted in this work the method that is, I believe, most suitable if one wants to proceed analytically from common cognition [*Erkenntnis*] to the determination of its

supreme principle, and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to the common cognition in which we find it used."[563]

With our own goal to develop a metaphysical concept of ethos as the unification of ethics and ontology, we will approach and appropriate Kant's *Groundwork* in the following way: In the **first, second, and third subchapter**, we will go through the separate pathways of the analytical and the synthetic argument, corresponding to the three sections of the book. The point here is not to assess the validity of the arguments given, but simply to flesh out the general Kantian framework of free will. The **fourth subchapter** introduces the *apparent contradiction* that is contained in the very concept of a free will, and Kant's *metaphysically ambiguous* solution to this contradiction in *Groundwork*. The emphasis on this metaphysical tension in Kant's moral theory will serve as a catalyst for our own *critical appropriation* of the synthetic pathway of section 3 as fundamental ontology. In the **fifth subchapter**, we extend the critical interpretation by transforming the foundational element of willing into an ontological ground of nature, as opposed to a capacity of the human mind. A key condition to succeed in this transformation is the ability to show how the unique position of a Kantian *moral person* is maintained – that is, as opposed to a mere *thing of nature* – despite our violent efforts to ontologize the will. We end up accommodating this condition by appealing to Kant's bifurcation of the will as *Wille* and *Willkür*. In the final **sixth subchapter**, we reconnect our ontological interpretation of free will to the original analysis of the categorical imperative and its applications of everyday morality. We accentuate the negative ground of freedom, as a *negation from nothingness*, and demonstrate how this negative ground can translate into imperatives for human causal action.

The Analytical Argument in Kant's Groundwork: *section 1*

The analytical argument in *Groundwork* begins with the concept of a *good will as duty*, from which it derives the notion of a *categorical imperative*, its formulations, and the idea of *moral autonomy*. Despite Kant's explicit use of the word "analysis", it seems uncontroversial to claim that the argument from duty to autonomy does not conform to a strict line of analytical

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[563] GMS 4:392.

deduction. That is, Kant's moral law is not contained within the mere concept of duty. So how can we understand the analytical pathway? The title of section 1 expresses a *transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition*.[564] We understand this transition as the philosopher's attempt to expose and articulate our everyday intuitions on the nature of moral judgment.[565] The title of section 2 expresses a *transition from popular moral philosophy to metaphysics of morals*.[566] We understand this second transition as the formalizing of our intuitions according to a pure metaphysics of morals.[567] When we interpret the first two sections in this way, it means that the validity of the analytical argument will ultimately not rest on its demonstration of logical coherence, but rather on the degree to which the reader *recognizes* Kant's analysis of duty as a formal articulation of his own moral intuitions. That is, that Kant appeals to the Platonic method of *recollection* – ἀνάμνησις. However, this process of recollection will remain incomplete until the analysis from duty is synthetically connected to the transcendental idea of freedom in section 3.

The analysis begins with the following question: what do we consider as morally good? The only thing that is unconditionally good, that is, "considered good without limitation", is a good will.[568] Kant does not thereby reject the moral worth of things besides a good will, be it the intension or purpose of an action, or happiness as its effect. However, a good will remains not only the highest good, but also the "condition of every other".[569] Kant then proceeds with an auxiliary argument from natural teleology. From the *wisdom of nature*, we can assume as a principle for an organized being "that there will be found in it no instrument for some end other than what is also most appropriate to that end and best adopted to it."[570] The will is the ability of reason to be practical. There exists no object in the world for which the cultivated will can hope to achieve this object at any satisfactory level of competence. For example, if the will

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[564] GMS 4: 393.

[565] Allison seems to agree: "In GMS 1, Kant starts from the premise that the true principle of morality must already be latent in the ordinary human understanding and that the task of the moral philosopher is to clarify this principle and give it a precise formulaic expression." Allison, H. E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 7.

[566] GMS 4: 406.

[567] Allison adds: "In GMS 2, by contrast, Kant proceeds to the formulation of the supreme principle of morality as the categorical imperative by means of an analysis of 'the universal concept of a rational being as such' (GMS 4: 412₃₋₄). And if the procedure if GMS 1 occupies some common ground with popular moral philosophy, with the assumption that morality must fall within the purview of the ordinary human understanding, that of GMS 2 marks a decisive break with the former." Allison, H. E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 7.

[568] GMS 4: 393.

[569] GMS 4: 396.

[570] GMS 4: 396.

were to be fixated on the object to achieve enjoyment of life, it would result in "a certain degree of *misology*, that is, hatred of reason".[571] Kant therefore concludes that the true vocation (*Bestimmung*) of practical reason "must be to produce a will that is good, not perhaps *as a means* to other purposes, but *good in itself*."[572]

From the notion of a will that is unconditionally good in itself, Kant completes the first section of *Groundwork* by presenting three basic propositions – *Sätze*. (**i**) The first proposition states that the notion of a good will is contained within the concept of duty, and that an action is morally good when acting *from duty itself – aus Pflicht –* and not simply in *conformity* with its demand – *Pflichtmäßig*.[573] Kant claims that this is a definition of a good will "under certain subjective limitations and hindrances", but he does not elaborate on the meaning of this reservation until later.[574] Instead, he appeals to our everyday intuition on moral judgment through four examples: the duty not to commit suicide; the merchant's duty to be honest; the duty to help others; and the duty to further one's own happiness. If the conformity of an action with duty is merely accidental, because the real motivation resides in external and empirically contingent inclinations, then the action does not express true moral worth.

(**ii**) The second proposition states that "an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the purpose* to be attained by it but in the maxim in accordance with which it is decided upon," thus expressing an action that "does not depend upon the realization of the object of the action but merely upon the *principle of volition* in accordance with which the action is done without regard for any object of the faculty of desire."[575] This proposition rests on Kant's distinction between a *material* and a *formal* principle of the will. The material principle of the will is the empirical basis of volition; that is, the incentives – *Triebfeder* – of a human subject determined by natural causality. Kant later refers to this material basis as a *maxim*, or the subjective principle of volition.[576] The formal principle of the will, on the other hand, is an *a priori* basis

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[571] GMS 4: 395.
[572] GMS 4: 396.
[573] GMS 4: 397. Strictly speaking, Kant does not actually present this as the *first proposition*. However, because he presents the next propositions as the "second" and "third", we infer that Kant's articulation of a good will as duty is in fact the first proposition. As Henry E. Allison states: "the standard view is that this unformulated proposition states that an action has moral worth if and only if it is performed from duty alone." Allison, H. E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 122.
[574] GMS 4: 397.
[575] GMS 4: 399f.
[576] Allison gives the following preliminary definition of maxims: "It is clear from both definitions [GMS 4: $400_{34\text{-}37}$ & $420_{36} - 21_{30}$] that maxims are subjective principles of practical reason. As *subjective*, they are principles or practical laws, which are those on which an agent *ought* to act and would act if perfectly rational. Moreover, as *principles*, maxims are general rules or policies, which specify action-types under certain

of willful action, thus expressing a strictly "formal principle of volition" – *das formelle Prinzip des Wollens* – such that when an action is done from duty, "every material principle has been withdrawn from it." Kant later refers to this as the *moral law*, or the objective principle of volition. When we consider these two principles together, the will is placed "at a crossroads" – *ein Scheideweg*.[577] It can act on the material basis of empirical determination. But a will that is good in itself, and not merely as a means to a purpose, is a will that acts from the formal ground of its own a priori principle of volition.

(**iii**) The third proposition, which Kant claims to be a "consequence of the two proceeding," states that "*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for law*."[578] The notion of respect – *Achtung* – does not itself reflect a moral judgment but is instead the feeling accompanying such judgment. Unlike all other feelings, respect is not produced from sense experience and the empirically determined self, but is instead "self-wrought [*selbstgewirktes*] by means of a rational concept" – that is, it is "regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law."[579] The third proposition thus states that the moral good is objectively "nothing other than the *representation of the law* in itself, *which can of course occur only in a rational being*, insofar as it and not the hoped-for effects is the determining ground of the will", and that the feeling of respect signifies my subjective "consciousness of the superordination [*Unterordnung*] of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences on my sense."[580]

Taking all three propositions together, Kant asks what remains for the content of a good will, now that we "have deprived the will of every impulse that could arise from it from obeying some law". The answer: "nothing is left but the conformity of actions as such with universal law, which alone is to serve the will as its principle". On this basis alone, Kant presents his first formulation of the moral law: "*I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*."[581]

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conditions, rather than particular actions or intentions. Kant subsequently underscores this point by noting that all principles have the form of universality." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 95f.

[577] GMS 4: 400 & 4: 400n.
[578] GMS 4: 400.
[579] GMS 4: 401n.
[580] GMS 4:4001 & 4: 401n.
[581] GMS 4: 402.

The Analytical Argument in Kant's Groundwork: *section 2*

The second section marks a transition from everyday intuitions on moral judgment to a proper metaphysics of morals. Even though the analysis of the first section begins from presumptions about the "common use of our practical reason", Kant emphasizes that this does not entail that the concept of a good will qua duty originates from empirical experience.[582] However, he does admit to a *practical* difficulty of making a clear distinction between actions performed *from duty* itself, and actions that are simply carried out in *conformity* with duty. Decisions of real-life actions are always muddled by the inclinations of self-love. And surely, this lack of practical clarity regarding the determining ground of volition may lead some to conclude that the very idea of morality is in fact a "mere phantom of a human imagination".[583] Kant's response is that unless "we want to deny the concept of morality any truth and any relation to some possible object", we must assume the existence of a moral law that transcends all empirical determinations of the human subject; a law that is *universally* valid, with *absolute necessity* for *all rational beings*.[584] Kant's answer thereby reflects a hypothetical nature for the argument in section 2 – that is, the validity of the analysis to come only holds because we already assume the reality of the unconditional moral good. It is not until the synthetic path of the third section that Kant inquires into the question of the real possibility of the moral law – that is, its practical reality.[585]

A metaphysics of morals must look to the nature of *pure practical reason* – that is, volition independent of empirical experience – as the basis for a "universal concept of a rational being as such".[586] Morality reflects a will that is good in itself. So, what is the nature of a good will? Kant defines the will through the notion of natural lawfulness – that is, through causality:

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[582] GMS 4: 406.
[583] GMS 4: 407.
[584] GMS 4: 408.
[585] Kant only alludes to the question of the possibility of the moral law in section 2. E.g., 4: 419-420 & 4: 425. Allison seems to confirm our claim on the 'hypothetical' nature of section 1 and 2, and the ultimate grounding in section 3: "As already noted, [*Groundwork*] consists of two parts: one devoted to searching for and the other to establishing the supreme principle of morality. […] Although we shall see that Kant's execution of the second part of his project, which is the subject matter of GMS 3, is highly problematic, it is relatively clear that he regarded it as grounding a synthetic *a priori* proposition, which takes the form of a practical analogue pf a transcendental deduction." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 7.
[586] GMS 4: 412.

"Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity [*Vermögen*] to act *in accordance with the representation* [*Vorstellung*] of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a *will*. Since *reason* is required for the derivation of actions from laws [*Ableitung der Handlungen von Gesetzen*], the will is nothing other than practical reason."[587]

The will is the practical ability of reason to act in accordance with the representation of laws. Hence, the determining ground – *Bestimmungsgrund* – of the will is *always a given law*. However, the meaning and origination of the law given is fundamentally twofold. That is, the determining ground is given either by the empirically determined self – that is, from natural causality – expressing a lawfulness of *subjective* inclination. Or it is given from pure reason itself, expressing an *objective* law. This is the same distinction as the one between the *material* and *formal* principle of volition in section 1. The consequence of this twofoldness for the determining ground of volition is an internal conflict within will itself: "the will is not *in itself* completely in conformity with reason". The law of pure practical reason is "objectively necessary [but] subjectively contingent".[588] For the subjectively determined will, the objective law of pure practical reason manifests as *necessitation – Nötigung*. But the will is not necessarily obedient – *folgsam* – to its own objective law. The law therefore takes the form of an *imperative* – expressing a command, or an *ought – ein Sollen* – of pure reason.[589]

The concept of an imperative follows from the distinction between a will determined from the maxim of the empirical self and a will determined from its own objective law. A good will is therefore a will that acts dutifully from its own imperative. When defining the will in this way, Kant arrives at yet another crucial distinction: All "imperatives command either *hypothetically* or *categorically*."[590] A will that acts from a hypothetical imperative is a will that is *good as a means* for "something else that one wills (or that it is at least possible for one to will)."[591] The law is *hypothetical* because the end of willing is contingent on subjective inclinations that are either possible or actual – that is, *problematic* or *assertoric*. A will that acts from a categorical imperative, on the other hand, is *good in itself*, because it is "objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end" – that is, *apodictic*.[592]

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[587] GMS 4: 412.
[588] GMS 4: 412 & 413.
[589] GMS 4: 413.
[590] GMS 4: 414.
[591] GMS 4: 414.
[592] GMS 4: 414.

Kant presents two types of examples of a hypothetically good will; that is, good for some purpose external to volition itself. First, all sciences include "some practical part" that consist of solving technical problems.[593] In response to these technical problems, the scientist develops rules of skills – *Regeln der Geschicklichkeit* – for their successful solutions.[594] The will of the scientist facing technical problems is therefore good when it wills the means that are necessary for their solution. According to Kant, these rules of skills are entirely analytic: "Whoever wills the end also wills (insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the indispensably necessary means to it that are within his power."[595] The purpose of such volition is however entirely contingent on the empirical nature of a given scientific practice.

Second, the purpose of *happiness* is not contingent on a given practice, but can be "presupposed as actual in the case of all rational beings".[596] But even though the purpose itself is assertoric, the elements that belongs to the concept of happiness, and thereby our understanding of the means necessary for its achievement, "are without exception empirical" and therefore subject to great uncertainty.[597] A rational being can therefore at best strive to develop certain pragmatic counsels of prudence – *Ratschläge der Klugheit* – for which a good will can act accordingly in the mere hope to achieve happiness.[598]

If the hypothetical imperative is the law of a will that is good for some external purpose, given by empirical experience, then the categorical imperative is the determining ground for a will that is good in itself. But what remains for the law when it is stripped of all empirically contingent content? Kant gives the following answer:

> For, since the imperative contains, beyond the law, only the necessity that the maxim be in conformity with this law, while the law contains no condition to which it would be limited, nothing is left with which the maxim of action is to conform but the universality of a law as such; and this conformity alone is what the imperative properly represents as necessary."[599]

The law of pure practical reason must be *universal*, applying to all rational beings. Because the will of the empirical self is always determined by subjective inclinations from natural causality,

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[593] GMS 4: 415.
[594] GMS 4: 416.
[595] GMS 4: 417.
[596] GMS 4: 415.
[597] GMS 4: 418.
[598] GMS 4: 416.
[599] GMS 4: 420f.

the law of pure reason takes the form of a categorical imperative that commands the subjective principle of the empirical self – that is, its maxim – to conform with the objective principle of the moral law. Since all that remains for the concept of the moral law is the *formal content of universality*, then the command of the categorical imperative is simply that any empirically given maxim must conform with the universality of the moral law. And thus Kant arrives at the *formulation of universal law* (**FUL**[600]): "*act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*."[601]

Kant then immediately proceeds to another expression of the categorical imperative, which is a variation of the formulation of universality: the *formulation of universal law of nature* (**FNL**). The concept of nature, in the most general and formal sense of the word, express the *necessity and universality* of causal law. From analogy of causal law, Kant exalts the concept of nature to include the moral law of pure practical reason. The categorical imperative thereby reads: "*act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a* **universal law of nature**."[602]

The formulations of universality and law of nature are two variations on the formal meaning of the moral law. That is, the mere form of volition, when stripped of all empirical-material content, is its universality. Having now provided an explicit articulation of the categorical imperative, Kant proceeds by demonstrating its application through four examples. The moral law demands of any maxim to conform with its universality. This demand translates into a duty not to commit suicide; a duty not to make false promises; a duty to cultivate one's talents, and a duty to help others.[603] These duties follow because a rational being either cannot *think* the universalization of its maxim without contradiction – *nicht denken können* – or, because he cannot *will* "that a maxim of our action become a universal law" – *nicht wollen können*.[604] Kant then points out that when a person acts immorally – that is, transgressing duty

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[600] I use the same acronyms for the different formulations of the categorical imperative as that of Allen W. Wood: FUL = *Formulae of Universal Law*; FLN = *Formulae of the Law of Nature*, FH = *Formulae of Humanity as End in Itself*; FA = *Formulae of Autonomy*; and FRE = *Formulae of the Realm of Ends*. See Wood, A. W. (2008), *Kantian Ethics*, page 66.

[601] GMS 4: 421. It is worth noting that the formulation of universal law extends beyond the necessary conclusion that follows from the premise that Kant himself presents. If the premise of the formulation is that all maxims must *conform with the universality* of the moral law, it does not follow that the *maxim itself* ought to be thought or willed as universal. That is, it would be enough to demand of the maxim, as a *particular* instance of willing, not to contradict the universality of the moral law.

[602] GMS 4: 421.

[603] GMS 4: 421-423.

[604] GMS 4: 423f. Allison elaborates further on the connection to *perfect* and *imperfect* duties: "After concluding his enumeration, Kant further remarks that maxims of actions that violate perfect or strict duties are such that

– he does not actually will the universality of his wrongful maxim, but rather makes an *exception* for himself.[605] Arguably, this claim indicates that the moral law is not only a principle that a rational being can choose to employ but is also free to reject, but is rather an *intrinsic and inescapable aspect of all volition*.

Having established the formulations on universality, and now moving on to the next, Kant begins by restating the necessity for a proper metaphysics of morals to think the moral law without appealing to any empirical content – that is, analyzing the concept of morality from pure reason itself. The unconditional necessity of moral duty must not be tainted by an empirically contingent human nature – *menschliche Natur* – but must relate to the universal nature of all rational beings.[606] The analysis therefore continues as an inquiry into the meaning of pure rational nature. The universal rational nature of all human beings resides in the faculty of the will. A metaphysics of morals must therefore inquire into the "concept of the will of a rational being as such."[607] What is will? Kant rearticulates his definition: "The will is thought as a capacity to determine itself to acting in conformity with the *representation of certain laws*. And such a capacity can be found only in rational beings."[608] Kant then goes on to introduce the fundamental notion of the second formulation of the categorical imperative: An end – *Zweck* – is that which "serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination" – *objekiven Grunde seiner Selbsbestimmung*.[609] It is contrasted with the concept of a means – *das Mittel* – which is the "ground of the possibility of an action" that leads to an end as its effect.[610] Alternatively put, the end is the purpose of an action, and thereby the ultimate object of volition. Whereas the means reflect the specific content of an action that leads to the realization of a purpose. Kant then introduces the distinction between *subjective* and *objective ends*. Subjective ends of the will originate from the *incentives – Triebfeder* – of an empirically determined subject. Objective ends, on the other hand, express the *motive – Bewegungsgrund* – of a universal and a priori ground of all rational nature. The division of subjective and objective

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they cannot even be *thought* without contradiction as a universal law of nature, while in the case of imperfect (here termed 'wide or meritorious') duties, it is merely impossible to will them without contradiction as a universal law of nature (GMS 4: 424$_{8-14}$). These are generally referred to in the literature as the 'contradiction in conception' and the 'contradiction in will' tests". Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 182f.
[605] GMS 4: 424.
[606] GMS 4: 425.
[607] GMS 4: 426.
[608] GMS 4: 427.
[609] GMS 4: 427.
[610] GMS 4: 427.

ends express yet another iteration of previously established distinction between the *material* and *formal* principle of volition.

Now, because the subjective ends originate from an empirically determined subject, they only possess a worth *relative* to the incentives of the human faculty of desire – *Begehrungsvermögen*.[611] The objective ends, on the other hand, because it originates from pure rational nature itself, has an absolute worth – *absoluten Wert*.[612] In making this claim, it is critical that we acknowledge that Kant's analysis at this point gives us no basis to infuse the concept of objective ends with anything that resembles a substantive meaning. We do not know what objective ends are, nor whether they even are possible. Whereas the concept of subjective ends is fairly straightforward and easy to relate with examples from everyday life, the concept of objective ends remains a mystery. All we know is that the concept of objective ends originates from the ground of universal rational nature, and therefore expresses an absolute worth.[613] From this mere hypothetical and formal concept, Kant proceeds by making the following claim:

> "Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being *exists* as an end in itself, *not merely as a means* to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded *at the same time as an end*."[614]

This claim is a *postulate*. The proper meaning and real possibility of rational beings as ends in themselves does not become an object of inquiry until the final third section.[615] However, through this postulate, Kant now arrives at his concept of a *person*, which possesses absolute worth in itself, as opposed to a mere *thing*, which only possesses relative worth as a means for something else.[616] And this leads Kant to his second main articulation of the categorical

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[611] GMS 4: 427.

[612] GMS 4: 428.

[613] In Allison's words: "While leaving open the questions of whether there is something that is an end in itself and whose existence has an absolute worth and whether there is a categorical imperative, Kant here affirms that they reciprocally imply each other." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 205.

[614] GMS 4: 428.

[615] Allison states that Kant's claim to humanity as an end in itself is grounded on the capacity of rational nature to be moral, but then quickly adds: "The next logical step would be to demonstrate that human and, more generally, rational agents, actually have this capacity, which, on Kant's analysis, turns out to be autonomy. But since Kant has not yet introduced the concept of autonomy and since, even if he had, demonstrating that rational agents possess it does not fall within the scope of a metaphysics of morals, Kant cannot proceed in this way." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 218f.

[616] GMS 4: 428.

imperative, the *formulation of humanity as end in itself* (**FH**): *So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.*[617] This formulation of the categorical imperative expresses the "supreme limiting condition of the freedom of action of every human being".[618] And once again, Kant goes on to demonstrate the application of his new formulation, using the same four examples from the application of the formulation of universality.

Summing up the fruits of his analysis of duty, and the moral law as a categorical imperative, Kant claims there to emerge a third principle from the combination of the two former. The first formulation presents universality as the form of the moral law and the second formulation presents the end of rational nature as its determining ground. The third *formulation of autonomy* (**FA**) expresses the "idea *of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law.*"[619] Kant presents several variations of the same formulation, some also in the form of an imperative: "act only *so that the will could regard itself as at the same time giving universal law through its maxim.*"[620] Kant can thereby extract his novel claim to *moral autonomy*. The reason why "all previous efforts" to discover the principle of morality "had to fail", was due to an adherence to *heteronomy*, placing the origin of moral duty outside oneself:[621]

> "It was seen that the human being is bound to laws by his duty, but it never occurred to them that he is subject *only to laws given by himself but still universal* and that he is bound only to act in conformity with his own will, which, however, in accordance with nature's end is a will giving universal law."[622]

As we utilize the English translation by Mary J. Gregor, it is worth noting that the phrase "a will giving universal law" does not fully translate the meaning of "eines allgemein gesetzgebenden Willens".[623] Whereas the English translation refers to the *universality of the law given*, the German original opens up to an interpretation where the true universality resides in the very *act itself of giving law*. This emphasis on the universality of the act of giving law

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[617] GMS 4: 429.
[618] GMS 4: 430f.
[619] GMS 4: 431.
[620] GMS 4: 434.
[621] GMS 4: 432-433.
[622] GMS 4: 432.
[623] GMS 4: 431.

itself – *allgemeine Gesetzgebung* – as opposed to the universality of the law given, will be an important feature in our own interpretation of *Groundwork* in the subchapters to come.

From the principle of a will giving universal law – or rather, a universal lawgiving will – Kant expands on his formulation of autonomy by introducing the idea of the *kingdom of ends* – *das Reich der Zwecke*.[624] A *kingdom* is a "systematic union of various rational beings through common laws."[625] However, the kingdom of ends is unique, in that each rational being as a member of the kingdom, is on the one hand subject to its laws and the command of its duty, while at the same time also a sovereign – *Oberhaupt*; not "subject to the will of any other", but himself a legislator.[626] As such, the idea becomes an *ideal* for all human volition, as man thinks himself as an autonomous being in a community with all other rational beings. This leads Kant to his final expression of the categorical imperative, which is a variation on the formulation of autonomy, the *formulation of the realm of ends*. (**FRE**): "act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends, remains in its full force because it commands categorically."[627]

Now having established the full principle of autonomy (FA + FRE), Kant returns to the question of moral worth. As we pointed out above, the claim to the absolute worth – *Wert* – of a person, in the analysis of the formulation of humanity, was a mere postulate with no further elaboration of its meaning. Kant now introduces the concept of dignity – *Würde* – of a rational being.[628] When stating that something possesses value in everyday speech, we typically think the attribution of a quality as the *property of a thing*. And surely is such interpretation possible when only looking at Kant's initial postulate on persons as ends in themselves. However, now Kant connects the dignity of a person to the act of giving universal laws – that is to autonomy: "*Autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature."[629] Moreover, the feeling of r*espect*, which Kant introduced in the first section, is the estimation – *Schätzung* – of this dignity.[630] Taken together, we see a small but significant shift in the meaning of moral worth. Respect for human dignity is not a determination of a fact, but rather a reflective state of appreciation. That is, the highest moral good is not the value of a

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[624] GMS 4: 433.
[625] GMS 4: 433.
[626] GMS 4: 433.
[627] GMS 4: 438f.
[628] GMS 4: 434.
[629] GMS 4: 436.
[630] GMS 4: 436.

human subject in the world, but the respect for the dignity that manifests in my awareness of autonomy as the determining ground of my own person, and the personhood of all other rational beings:[631]

> "Our own will insofar as it would act only under the condition of a possible giving of universal law through its maxims – this will possible for us in idea – is the proper object of respect; and the dignity of humanity consists just in this capacity to give universal law, though with the condition of also being itself subject to this very lawgiving."[632]

Kant formulates several variations of the categorical imperative throughout *Groundwork*, with a varying degree of difference in meaning. It is customary in Kantian scholarship to organize these variations according to five main expressions, and we have so far gone through Kant's analysis in section 2 accordingly: the *formulation of universal law* (FUL), the *formulation of the law of nature* (FLN), *formulation of humanity as end in itself* (FH), the *formulation of autonomy* (FA), and the *formulation of the realm of ends* (FRE).[633] However, Kant himself refers only to three different formulations: first, a general principle of universality that combines FUL and FLN; second, the principle of humanity (FH); and third, a general principle of autonomy that combines FA and FRE.

This trifurcation becomes most explicit towards the end of section 2, as Kant elaborates on the relation between the formulations that has now been established. (**i**) The formulation of universality represents the *form* of the categorical imperative – the *formula* of pure will – commanding the maxims to conform with universality of the moral law. (**ii**) The formulation of humanity represents the *matter* of the categorical imperative, taking rational nature as an end in itself to be the supreme "limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends."[634] Kant's use of the word "matter" at this point must not be confused with his previous referral to the empirically determined content of volition. The end of rational nature is the *a priori matter* of pure willing. (**iii**) And finally, the principle of autonomy and kingdom of ends provides a

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[631] Or, in Allison's words: "In other words, it is not that being human or having a rational nature has an independent value, which is the source of an obligation to treat beings with these qualities with respect; it is rather that the categorical imperative bestows this value upon them by enjoining us to treat such beings with respect, which turns out to mean not using them merely as means to one's own ends." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 206f.
[632] GMS 4: 440.
[633] Wood, A. W. (2008), *Kantian Ethics*, page 66.
[634] GMS 4: 436.

complete determination – *eine vollständige Bestimmung* – of the categorical imperative, commanding that "all maxims from one's own lawgiving are to harmonize with a possible kingdom of ends as with a kingdom of nature."[635] Evaluating all three formulations according to the table of categories, they represent the *unity* of form, *plurality* of matter, and the "*allness or totality of the system of these*" – *Einheit, Vielheit und Allheit*.[636] **Figure 6** (below) illustrates a complete overview of the different formulations.[637]

Principle of universality   - Formulations: **FUL + FLN**
                                 - The *form* of the categorical imperative.
                                 - Category: *Unity*

Principle of humanity   - Formulation: **FH**
                                 - The *matter* of the categorical imperative.
                                 - Category: *Plurality*

Principle of autonomy   - Formulations: **FA + FRE**
                                 - A *complete determination* of the categorical imperative.
                                 - Category: *Allness/totality*

Figure 6: Overview of the different variations of the categorical imperative.

What is the relationship between these three formulations? First of all, Kant makes it clear that these are merely different formulations "of the very same law, and any one of them of itself unites the other two in it."[638] For practical purpose, Kant gives the advice to always proceed from the formulation of universality, because it provides the *strictest method*.[639] However, for

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[635] GMS 4: 436.
[636] GMS 4: 436.
[637] This figure agrees with Allen W. Wood. See Wood, A. W. (2008), *Kantian Ethics*, page 66. An example of a dissenting view is offered by Paul Guyer, who argues that Kant does not provide textual basis for the unification of FA and FRE, but that these formulations must instead be view as two separate principles, making the total number of principles four and not three. Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 148.
[638] GMS 4: 436.
[639] By interpreting Kant in this way, we take the principle articulated in GMS 4:436 to be the same as FUL: "one does better in moral appraisal always to proceed according to the strict method and put at its basis the universal formula of the categorical imperative: *Act according to that maxim which can at the same time make itself into a universal law*." Allison, in contrast, opens up to the possibility that this is in fact a different principle, which he names the 'universal formula' (UF), although he also acknowledges that "it has been widely assumed that the

the philosophical investigation, the formulation of autonomy is not only the most *complete* determination of the categorical imperative, but also the articulation that leads us to the ultimate *groundwork* of the metaphysics of morals: "*Morality* is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to a possible giving of universal law through its maxims."[640] Kant thereby completes the analytical pathway of the first two sections by establishing *autonomy of the will as the supreme principle of morality*, and is now ready to tackle the real grounding of human morality in section 3:[641]

> "An absolutely good will, whose principle must be a categorical imperative, will therefore, indeterminate with respect to all objects, contain merely the *form of volition* as such and indeed as autonomy; that is, the fitness of the maxims of every good will to make themselves into universal law is itself the sole law that the will of every rational being imposes upon itself, without having to put underneath it some incentive or interest as a basis."[642]

The Synthetic Argument in Kant's Groundwork: *section 3*

The analytical pathway of the first and second section begins with the concept of a good will as the basis for the unconditional moral good and ends with the principle of moral autonomy. It is important to acknowledge that the concept of autonomy at this stage of Kant's analysis is detached from the idea of *free will*. In the introduction, Kant presents the moral law as a *law of freedom*, and he also makes a few references to freedom and free will throughout the first two sections.[643] A reader of *Groundwork* will therefore naturally approach the analysis with an expectation that freedom is somehow foundational to Kant's concept of duty and the moral law as a categorical imperative. But the explicit connection is not made until the third section. When Kant concludes the analytical pathway by claiming that autonomy is the supreme principle of

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universal formula, or UF, is logically equivalent to FUL." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 251.

[640] GMS 4: 439.

[641] GMS 4: 440. Or, as Allison writes, it is "in GMS 2 that Kant introduces the principle of autonomy, which, as the culmination of the regressive argument of GMS 2, might be said to set the agenda for GMS 3." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 149.

[642] GMS 4: 444.

[643] E.g., GMS 4: 387, 416f & 409.

morality, he has only established a mere *formal concept of a will that gives itself universal law*. In our own novel appropriation of Kant's philosophy of freedom in the subchapters to come, it is precisely the meaning and possibility of the connection between autonomy and the transcendental idea of freedom that becomes the pivotal question for *Groundwork* as a critique of pure practical reason.

When Kant presents autonomy of the will as the supreme principle of morality at the end of section 2, he simultaneously claims that the articulation of this principle as a categorical imperative entails a *synthetic* proposition – *synthetischer Satz*.[644] This claim is undoubtedly strange, given that Kant also insists that the deduction from duty to autonomy has been analytical.[645] It is not until the inquiry of section 3 that we gain a proper understanding of the synthetic nature of the moral law. However, Kant's claim still stands: The connection between the principle of autonomy and the duty of the categorical imperative does not follow "by mere analysis of concepts" in a metaphysics of morals.[646] Kant thereby marks the transition towards the third and final section of *Groundwork* with the leading question: *How is* "*such a synthetic practical proposition possible a priori*"?[647]

Kant begins the third section by claiming that the "concept of freedom is the key to the explanation of the autonomy of the will".[648] He offers yet another variation on the definition of the will through causality: "*Will* is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational".[649] Through the causal basis of the will, Kant can then introduce the distinction between *freedom* and causal *necessity*:

> "[…] and *freedom* would be that property of such causality that it can be efficient [*wirkend*] independently of alien causes *determining* it, just as *natural necessity* is the property of the causality of all nonrational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes."[650]

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[644] GMS 4: 440.
[645] Hence, one could argue that this is yet another example confirming that the analytical pathway of section 1 and 2 is in fact not a matter of strict analytical deduction, but instead an attempt to articulate and formalize a concept of morality based on our everyday intuitions on moral judgment.
[646] GMS 4: 440.
[647] GMS 4: 444.
[648] GMS 4: 446.
[649] GMS 4: 446.
[650] GMS 4: 446.

We see a bifurcation in the causal nature of the will. By virtue of its rational nature, the will possesses the ability to act – *wirken* – independently from the necessity of causal laws of nature. And by virtue of its nonrational nature, the will is itself determined by causal necessity. However, Kant acknowledges that this definition only provides us with a *negative* concept of freedom and is "therefore unfruitful for insight into its essence".[651] But what definition can serve to articulate a *positive* concept of freedom?[652] In response to this question, Kant makes a radical claim: A concept of a will in a state of mere lawlessness "would be an absurdity" – *ein Unding* – so the positive concept of freedom must instead express a "causality in accordance with immutable laws".[653] That is, a free will is a will under laws that are independent of causal necessity. Given this radical claim, Kant then concludes that freedom of the will can be nothing else than "autonomy, that is, the will's property of being a law to itself".[654] The positive concept of free will is therefore the same as the categorical imperative and autonomy as the supreme principle of morality. Kant claims that the moral law follows analytically from the mere concept of a free will. However, the connection between the moral law and the maxim of volition remains synthetic. Only through the idea of freedom can we synthetically unite the formal and material principle of volition. The groundwork of the metaphysics of morals thus requires a proof – a *deduction* – of the transcendental idea of freedom through a critique of pure practical reason.[655] However, at this introductory stage of the third section, we must also admit that Kant's claim to the synthetic nature of his grounding proposition on morality, just like his conclusion in the second section, continues to be shrouded in mystery. The true meaning of the synthetic nature of morality has yet to be revealed.

Having presented the idea of freedom as the necessary third cognition – *die dritte Erkenntnis* – for the synthetic unity of moral duty and the maxim of one's volition, Kant suggests that some preparatory work is required before we can inquire directly into the ground of freedom.[656] Kant begins with a claim on the *practical necessity* to presuppose freedom:

> "I say now: every being that cannot act otherwise than *under the idea of freedom* is just because of that really free in a practical respect, that is, all laws [of morality] that

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[651] GMS 4: 446.
[652] Rephrased by Allison: "Since freedom is defined as a kind of causality, what is necessary is a positive characterization of it, which would explain what it means to be determined by a 'non-alien cause.'" Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 285.
[653] GMS 4: 446.
[654] GMS 4: 447.
[655] GMS 4: 447.
[656] GMS 4: 447.

are inseparably bound up with freedom hold for him just as if his will had been validly pronounced free also in itself and in theoretical philosophy."[657]

Freedom is the basis for moral autonomy and must therefore be a universal property of all rational beings. This presupposition reflects a necessity in our understanding of the concept of the will. That is, now paraphrasing Kant's argument slightly, the only way through which we can perceive the will as the determining ground of our action, is to assume that the will is independent from causal necessity. Without the practical presupposition of freedom, any substantive meaning for the concept of the will is dissolved: "as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must be regarded of itself as free, that is, the will of such a being cannot be a will of his own except under the idea of freedom".[658] This practical necessity manifest itself in the *ought* of the categorical imperative. That is, through its empirical nature the human subject is determined by natural causality and the command of the moral law represents a subordination of the empirical self. But the ought of the moral law is fundamentally a *willing – ein Wollen –* "that holds for every rational being under the condition that reason in him is practical without hinderance".[659] The idea of freedom becomes the condition for the possibility of this willing.[660]

   With the practical argument for freedom by virtue of the *facticity* of moral judgment, Kant must now admit to what rightly appears like a circular argument: "We take ourselves as free in the order of efficient causes in order to think ourselves under moral laws in the order of ends; [and we] think ourselves as subject to these laws because we have ascribed to ourselves freedom of will".[661] The categorical imperative of the moral law follows from the idea of freedom, and the idea of freedom must be presupposed in the practical judgment of the categorical imperative:[662]

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[657] GMS 4: 448.
[658] GMS 4: 448.
[659] GMS 4: 449.
[660] Allison puts it as follows: "Rather, freedom, like the other transcendental ideas, expresses a conceptual necessity." And, as "Kant might have put it, we can deliberate only under the idea of freedom, not because this is the way our mind works or because doing so is the best way to deliberate successfully, but because it is only under this presupposition that deliberation and therefore the exercise of rational agency is conceivable." Allison, H. E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 306 & 306f.
[661] GMS 4: 450. With the formulation "facticity of moral judgment" I invoke Kant's determination of the moral law as a *fact of reason* in *Critique of Practical Reason*. E.g.: "Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason." KdpV 5:31
[662] Or as Karl Ameriks puts it: "If the necessity that we act under the idea of freedom is just one placed on us insofar as we feel bound by morality, then we do not have the categorical foundation for freedom needed here if morality is to be strictly deduced." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 61.

> "[The] hidden circle was contained in our inference from freedom to autonomy and from the latter to the moral law – namely that we perhaps took as a ground the idea of freedom only for the sake of the moral law, so that we could afterwards infer the latter in turn from freedom, and that we were thus unable to furnish any ground at all for the mora law".[663]

Does the moral law follow from the objective reality of freedom, or must we presuppose freedom from the practical facticity of the categorical imperative? In a *circular argument* the conclusion is presupposed in the premise. Kant's answer to this circularity, however, is not to retrace the argument back to a single foundation. Instead, he embraces the circle as demonstrating a synthetic connection between two radically different aspects of human nature. Kant asks whether it is possible to inquire into the problem of freedom by thinking ourselves from a different standpoint – *ein anderer Standpunkt*. That when we think ourselves as free "we think ourselves as causes efficient a priori [as opposed to] when we represent ourselves in terms of our actions as effects that we see before our eyes."[664]

All representation of nature according to actions that are determined by causal necessity reflect objects of appearances – *Erscheinung* – and never things in themselves.[665] In making this distinction, Kant argues, we simultaneously think and assume that there must be something behind appearances; something which is itself not an appearing object but a thing in itself. Although we can never hope to comprehend such a thing, we can instead gain an insight into the way in which the thing in itself may affect us – *wie sie uns affizieren*. This leads Kant to make a general distinction between a world of sense – *Sinnewelt* – and a world of understanding – *Verstandswelt*.[666]

The human subject, as the self that carries out actions of everyday life, always stands in a necessary relation to the appearing object, and is thus itself a product of empirical experience. As opposed to such *empirical self* of the world of sense, Kant now assumes the reality of an *intellectual self* of the world of understanding. We come to know our transcendent self through our actions. That is, through our pure self-activity – *als reine Selbsttätigkeit*. Kant has thereby finally arrived at the true *groundwork* for the metaphysics of morals as a *critique of pure practical reason*. From the alternative standpoint of the thing in itself, we see the transcendent

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[663] GMS 4: 453.
[664] GMS 4: 450.
[665] GMS 4: 451.
[666] GMS 4: 451.

self as pure will. Not as an object of theoretical understanding, but as a practical reality to be acted out, under the transcendental idea of the absolute spontaneity of freedom.

From the two standpoints of human nature – as appearance and a thing in itself – Kant can now readdress the apparent circular argument of free will and the duty of moral law. When we think ourselves as free, we "transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and cognize autonomy of the will along with its consequence, morality". But when we think ourselves under the command of the categorical imperative, we "regard ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at the same time to the world of understanding."[667] And so we can finally conclude that the moral law expresses a synthetic proposition a priori, because through the *ought* of its command, I think myself both as a transcendent self of the world of understanding, and as an empirical self of the world of sense, unified together under the idea of freedom.[668]

How is this a deduction of free will? That is, as a grounding of autonomy as the supreme principle of human morality through a critique of pure practical reason? As a thing in itself, freedom is "only an *idea* of reason".[669] It is beyond all empirical experience and comprehension – *Begreiflichkeit*.[670] Through the idea of the thing in itself, we think the ground of all appearances, the ground of nature. According to all theoretical metaphysics, this ground remains forever a mere negative concept, as a "boundary of human reason".[671] However, in our volition – that is, in the ability of reason to be practical – we see the positive manifestation of the ground of nature as freedom. This positive manifestation comes in the form of the *ought* of a categorical imperative. Through this ought, man reveals his most authentic self – *das eigentliches Selbst* – as a willing that thinks the unity of his empirical nature of causal necessity and his intellectual nature as the absolute spontaneity of freedom.[672] We do not comprehend the nature and possibility of pure practical reason. But in its incomprehensibility –

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[667] GMS 4: 453.

[668] Does this in fact entail a solution to the initially introduced circle? Allison seems to think not. Instead, he suggests that the initial circle is "something of a red herring, which Kant apparently used as a rhetorical devise for the introduction of the two standpoints": "[…] one might wonder what bearing it [the two standpoints] has on 'the suspicion … that there was a hidden circle contained in our inference from freedom to autonomy and from this to the moral law.' The answer, which Kant does not make explicit, is that any such worry stems ultimately from a more fundamental worry concerning the impossibility of ascribing freedom to *any* human action because of its incompatibility with the presumption that the same action is explicable in accordance with laws of nature." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 317.

[669] GMS 4: 455.

[670] GMS 4: 459.

[671] GMS 4: 463.

[672] GMS 4: 458.

Unbegreiflichkeit – we act out the practical reality of freedom: "The practical use of common human reason confirms the correctness of this deduction."[673]

The Apparent Contradiction of Free Will: *A Critical Interpretation*

We have now gone through the analytic and synthetic argument of *Groundwork*, with an intent to be as faithful to the original text as possible. That is, even though our review no doubt entails a certain element of interpretation on our part – through our selection, emphasis, and exclusion of different segments in Kant's text, and through our paraphrasing and elaboration of the arguments given – we nonetheless suggest that our rendition is within the bounds of Kantian orthodoxy. However, we now enter the part of the chapter where we aim to appropriate Kant's *Groundwork* for our own Heideggerian metaphysics. The central achievement of this appropriation will be to transform Kant's ethics into fundamental ontology. The ultimate groundwork of Kant's ethics is represented by the synthetic argument of the third section. At this foundational level of analysis, the notion of morality reflects the unification of man's empirical and transcendent (i.e., *intellectual*) nature. It is precisely this twofold nature of human existence, and the meaning of its synthetic unity in our thought, that will be the center of attention for our Heideggerian appropriation.

How do we begin to approach *Groundwork* for our ontological transformation of Kantian ethics? We need a key element in Kant's analysis that can function as a catalyst for our Heideggerian appropriation. We suggest that the very notion of a free will contains an *apparent*

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[673] GMS 4: 463 & 454. By asking how we should understand Kant's deduction in the third section, we have in fact opened a Pandora's box in Kant scholarship. For not only do Kantians disagree about the meaning of the deduction itself, but the problem is further complicated by the fact Kant seems to alter is argument of justification in *Critique of Practical Reason*. As Karl Ameriks writes: "In the first work [*Groundwork*] Kant seems to desire and develop a theoretical argument for freedom in a sense which is absolute and from which the objective validity of the moral law is to be deduced. In the second work [*KdpV*], however, Kant appears directly to reverse himself and to replace this project of a strict deduction with the idea that the moral law (i.e., its validity, not its entire exact formulation and implications) is simply given as an "a priori fact of reason" (from which alone freedom can then be inferred)." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 53. My own interpretation of Kant's deduction will be presented in the following three subchapters. Although this interpretation arguably follows a 'reconciliationist' approach to *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, my placement in the Kantian debate is nonetheless ultimately irrelevant, because my Heideggerian appropriation does not aspire to reconstruct Kant's argument in way that remains faithful to the original text.

contradiction which any serious philosopher of freedom must address. And that Kant's purported solution to this contradiction holds the potential for an interpretation which transforms his ethics into fundamental ontology. Kant begins by defining a *negative concept of freedom* as causal independence, and then proceeds to ask how freedom can also be a *determining ground for willful action*. The apparent contradiction of free will resides in the fact that freedom itself is entirely *negative*, and therefore unable to provide a basis for *positive* action. To dissolve this contradiction, we need an additional positive concept of freedom. Kant's own answer is that the *positive concept of freedom is the moral law*. But the connection between freedom and moral law remains far from obvious. The question leading our inquiry in this subchapter is as follows: *How can the moral law express a positive concept of freedom?* By providing an answer to this question, we offer an interpretation of the moral law that is centered on an existential experience that *transcends the human subject*, which thereby leads our thought to the very meaning of being itself.

The subchapter consists of the following three steps. As a first step (i), we will utilize a generic *liberalist* conception of freedom to illustrate Kant's claim that negative freedom is insufficient as a determining ground of free will. We will then extend Kant's claim by arguing that the problem of negative freedom as a determining ground, points to an inherent contradiction contained in the very concept of a free will. The second step (ii) present a first contender to solve this contradiction, as a *speculative interpretation* of a transcendent subject as moral legislator. Although we make it clear from the start that we reject this answer, the speculative interpretation nonetheless offers a way to elaborate on the problem of free will. As a third and final step (iii), we present the second contender to solve the contradiction of free will. A *critical interpretation* presents the moral law as the synthetic unity of willing and freedom in our thought. This interpretation depicts willing and freedom as an existential ground that ultimately transcends the human subject, and thereby paves the way for a transformation of Kantian ethics into fundamental ontology.

(**i**) At the very outset of the third section of *Groundwork*, Kant defines *negative* freedom, as a property of the causality of the will, to be "efficient independent of alien causes *determining it*".[674] That is, as causal independence of the will. He then immediately proceeds to claim that this negative definition is "unfruitful for insight into" the essence of free will, and that a *positive*

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[674] GMS 4: 446.

concept of freedom can be nothing else than a "causality in accordance with immutable laws, but of a special kind; for otherwise a free will would be an absurdity."[675] Why does Kant make this claim?[676] Without any further justification, the definition of positive freedom as a causality from a special kind of law becomes a vital premise for the remaining inquiry of section 3. In the much later work of *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant offers a similar claim:

> "But freedom of choice [*Die Freiheit der Willkür*] cannot be defined – as some have tried to define it – as the ability to make a choice [*Wahl*] for or against the law (*libertas indifferentiae*), even though choice as a *phenomenon* provides frequent examples of this in experience. For we know freedom (as it first becomes manifest to us through the moral law) only as a *negative* property in us, namely that of not being *necessitated* to act through any sensible determining grounds. […] Only freedom in relation to the internal lawgiving of reason is really an ability; the possibility of deviating from it is an inability."[677]

To make sense of Kant's claim that free will must be an expression of law, we will introduce a hypothetical opposing stance, which we name the *liberalist conception of freedom*. This stance utilizes a generic variation of freedom of choice according to liberalism as political philosophy.[678] In a rule of law the citizens are free to the extent that the state does not limit or prohibit their range of choice. Freedom is simply *independence from state intervention*. In the context of political theory – that is, addressing the relationship between the state and its citizens – the liberalist conception of freedom is perfectly coherent and applicable for political analysis. However, once we apply the same conception in the context of personal freedom – that is, addressing the internal self-relation of the human subject – we quickly run into a deep philosophical problem.

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[675] GMS 4: 446.

[676] Paul Guyer formulates a similar question: "Why should the freedom of the determination of the will by one's own inclination or sensory drives be possible only if the will is instead determined by reason in accordance with immutable laws; that is, why should freedom, negatively described, be possible only by the achievement of autonomy?" Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 118.

[677] MdS 6: 226 & 227.

[678] E.g., John Stuart Mill's conception of freedom in *On Liberty*.
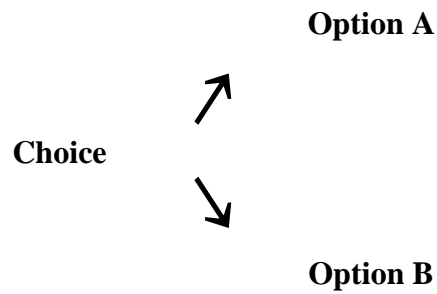
Option A

Choice

Option B

Figure 7: The 'liberalist' conception of freedom.

Figure **7** (above) provides an illustration of the liberalist conception of personal freedom. It depicts the simple situation of a choice between two options. According to this depiction, free will is the ability of a person to make a choice between option A and option B independent of external intervention. That is, the person is not necessitated to choose one or the other. This illustration represents a paraphrasing of what Kant defines as the *negative* concept of freedom. So why does Kant claim that negative freedom is insufficient in determining free will? The insufficiency becomes clear once we ask the following question: how can *independence* from external necessitation translate into a *determining ground* for action? Negative freedom, in itself, simply cannot assist in the choice between two options. For example, if I am faced with the option of selecting either ice cream or crisps, negative freedom only informs me that I am not compelled in either direction. But the independence of freedom cannot help me make an actual choice.[679] As Kant writes in *Metaphysics of Morals*: "[freedom] as it first becomes manifest to us [is only] a *negative* property in us, namely that of not being *necessitated* to act through any sensible determining grounds."[680] The determining ground for the choice between two options will always be an *interest*, and therefore a choice determined by our empirical nature.

What the liberalist conception in fact reveals, is a *paradoxical nature in the concept of free will*. That is, the very notion of a will expressing its freedom contains an apparent contradiction. The will is inherently *positive*, expressing itself through the acting out of a

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[679] Allison adds: "Here Kant is in agreement with the Leibnizians in their insistence that free actions must have a sufficient reason, which accounts for their law-governedness; though he differs from them in denying that this reason must be traced to an antecedent state of the agent." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 287.
[680] MdS 6: 226.

choice. Freedom is inherently *negative*, expressing an independence that transcends all actions. Without any further qualifications, it therefore makes little sense to say that the pure negativity of freedom can somehow provide a determining ground for the positive act of willing. How can a person act out something that transcends all action? Although Kant does not present the problem as a contradiction or paradox in the concept of free will, it is nonetheless the same type of argument that leads him to conclude that the positive concept of a free will can only be "autonomy, that is, the will's property of being a law to itself".[681] But to what extent does Kant's conclusion really offer a solution to the paradoxical nature of free will? What is the relation between freedom of will and autonomy? That is, how can *negative* freedom as independence from causal necessity transform into a *positive* concept of free will as autonomy? Kant's purported solution seems only to rephrase the question, now asking instead: *How* can *the moral law express a positive concept of freedom?* [682]

In the following, we will present two different answers to this question. The first answer provides a *speculative interpretation* of free will. It is 'speculative' because it invokes the idea of a transcendent subject as moral legislator. This answer is not intended as a proper contender for our understanding *Groundwork*, but is rather a straw man argument, which will serve to flesh out the philosophical problem of free will. This, in turn, will serve as a catalyst for our second answer, which offers a *critical interpretation* of free will. This answer tries to make good on Kant's claim that the moral law "flows from" the negativity of freedom, while simultaneously keeping within the finite limits of his critical philosophy.[683] The significant contribution of this second answer is that it presents free will as an existential experience which transcends the human subject, and thereby paves the way for a conception of human morality as a revelation of fundamental ontology.

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[681] GMS 4: 447. Allison elaborates: "Rather, since the notion of causality is inseparable from that of law and freedom is, by definition, a kind of causality, a free will must be determined (in the sense of governed) by law, though not by the kind of law according to which natural occurrences are determined (laws of nature)." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 286f.

[682] As Allison formulates the problem, although it seems reasonable to present freedom as a *necessary condition* for autonomy, it is far from obvious that freedom is a *sufficient condition*: "Since Kant had concluded the regressive portion of his argument by claiming that autonomy is the supreme principle of morality, it is only to be expected that GMS 3 would be concerned with justifying the ascription of autonomy to the will of rational agents. And it is hardly surprising that Kant would claim that the concept of freedom provides the key to this endeavor, since it is already clear from the account of autonomy in GMS 2 that freedom is a necessary condition of its possibility. What is surprising, however, is Kant's claim that freedom is not merely a necessary, but also a sufficient condition of autonomy and therefore of morality as viewed by common human reason and as analyzed in GMS 2" Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 283.

[683] GMS 4: 446.

(ii) The *speculative* interpretation of free will represents our first contender for a possible solution to the apparent contradiction that is contained in the concept of a will that acts out from the negative ground of freedom as causal independence. In essence, this interpretation understands *negative freedom as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the possibility of autonomy and must therefore make the transition from causal independence to moral law by means of a transcendent subject, which thereby poses a direct challenge to Kant's otherwise critical prohibition against any speculative inference to an existent entity beyond the realm of appearance*. What do we mean by this? Let us work our way through the components in this statement.

First, how is negative freedom a *necessary* condition for autonomy? Man is an empirical being and therefore determined by the causal laws of nature. In order to act from a moral law given by his own pure will, he must be able to exercise an independence from the causal laws of empirical nature – that is, he must be free.[684] Why is negative free will not a *sufficient* condition? The independence of negative freedom only provides a state of lawlessness. The positive act of giving laws onto oneself requires the *addition of a transcendent moral legislator*.[685] In our speculative interpretation of *Groundwork*, this transcendent legislator is represented by Kant's concept of an authentic self – *eigentliches Selbst* – which inhabits a world of pure understanding:[686]

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[684] As Karl Ameriks adds, Kant sometimes presents the condition of negative qua transcendental freedom as addressing the very foundation of Kant's transcendental idealism, namely the distinction between appearance and the thing in itself: "Kant states that if transcendental idealism is accepted, then transcendental freedom is not only a possibility but also a necessity: there must be some ground for appearances which is itself unconditional (e.g., A 537/B 565). He also obviously believes that independent arguments for the premise of transcendental idealism are available. He even suggests that otherwise nature itself would have to be rejected (A 543/B 571); that is, without his idealism the only objection to our freedom, namely the universal laws of nature and our apparent complete subjection to them, could not be justified […]. Thus the very item that raises the threat to the assertion of transcendental freedom ultimately points to the existence of things in themselves and so to the presence of transcendental freedom." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 58.

[685] Paul Guyer seems to raise the same question, when asking about the relationship between transcendental freedom and autonomy. According to Guyer, Kant's claim in *Groundwork* is that transcendental freedom is both a *necessary and a sufficient condition for autonomy*. Guyer then suggests that Kant's argument undergoes a significant shift in the years after *Groundwork*. In *Critique of Practical Reason*, this shift is still presented ambiguously. However, by the time of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, it becomes unequivocal that Kant no longer regards transcendental freedom as a *sufficient* condition for autonomy. Rather, he now views transcendental freedom as *only* the ability of the noumenal self to either *affirm or reject* the moral law. Whereas a complete concept of autonomy, "is not identical with a noumenal 'act' of freedom. Autonomy is a condition, dependent upon an *a priori* principle but realizable in the empirical world, which we can freely choose to realize and maintain, or to subvert or destroy." See Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 122-126.

[686] GMS 4: 458.

"The human being, who this way regards himself as an intelligence, thereby puts himself in a different order of things and in a relation to determining grounds of an altogether different kind when he thinks of himself as an intelligence endowed with a will, and consequently with causality, than when he perceives himself as a phenomenon in the world of sense (as he also really is) and subjects his causality to external determination in accordance with laws of nature."[687]

We can interpret the authentic self as the existence of a *transcendent human subject* – that is, as a *thing in itself*. This subject is not only independent from the causal laws of nature, but it also has capacity to give itself moral law.[688] Even though *theoretical* reason categorically forbids us to make such inference, the *practical fact* of our moral judgment confirms the existence of such transcendent subject. The speculative interpretation entails a *practical postulate* but offers no answers as to *how* the moral law of autonomy comes to be:[689] "But reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to *explain how* pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same task as to explain *how freedom is possible*."[690] In other words, the moral law of positive freedom is a fact of practical reason, contingent on the idea of a transcendent subject as moral legislator, but we have no knowledge about this subject nor about the genesis of its moral law. **Figure 8** (below) offers a simple illustration of the speculative interpretation, where the *negative freedom* of causal independence and the *positive freedom* of the moral law are depicted as two separate properties of a transcendent subject, which together constitute a sufficient condition for the possibility of moral autonomy.

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[687] GMS 4: 457.

[688] Karl Ameriks writes: "given that we belong to an intelligible as well as sensible (natural) order, we should feel bound to serve the former. This argument rests on the claim that in general the intelligible world is the ground of the sensible one, and thus its rules should be preferred, and so in particular the rules of one's 'proper self' (as a member of the intelligible world legislating autonomous rules of conduct) should be given dominance over the rules of one's mere natural apparent self." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 65. Henery E. Allison points to, but equally rejects, a somewhat similar interpretation of a foundational noumenal authentic self that underlies the phenomenal self, which he calls the "metaphysical interpretation": "If taken to refer to a real or noumenal self (the self as it is in itself), then, in spite of the difficulties to which it leads, fidelity to the text requires us to interpret Kant's deduction of the categorical imperative as resting primarily on the ontological primacy of this to the phenomenal self." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 351f.

[689] Kant refers to the moral law as a "practical postulate" in *Critique of Practical Reason*. See KdpV 5: 46.

[690] GMS 4: 458f.

**Transcendent
Subject**

↙   ↘

**Negative
Freedom of
Independence**   **Positive
Freedom of
Moral Law**

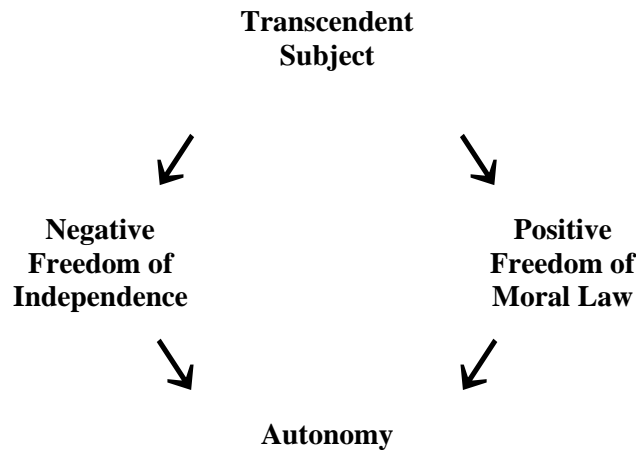↘   ↙

Autonomy

Figure 8: A speculative interpretation of free will.

The speculative interpretation solves the apparent contradiction of free will – or perhaps more correctly, it evades the problem – by postulating the moral law through the existence of a transcendent subject. The interpretation is 'speculative' precisely because it appeals to an existent entity that transcends empirical reality. Regardless of whether the speculative interpretation offers a tenable reading of *Groundwork*, it is clearly an unsatisfactory interpretation, because it invokes a metaphysical claim that violates the general demarcation of Kant's critical philosophy, without gaining any further insights into the origin of the moral law.[691] With the speculative interpretation as a backdrop, it is now time to introduce our own solution to the problem of free will.

(**iii**) **The *critical* interpretation** represents our second contender for a possible solution to the apparent contradiction of free will, in a way that prepares the way for a conceptualization of the human moral essence as a contemplative abiding ethos in the face of the meaning of being. In essence, it understands the *pure negativity of freedom as causal independence as the sole basis for autonomy, by translating the moral law into a synthetic unity of willing and*

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[691] Karl Ameriks seems to give support to our claim: "Even if we granted that the argument shows that all things known by us have a sensible and an intelligible (noumenal) side, this by itself does not show our transcendental freedom, let alone our autonomy or subjection to morality. It needs to be shown that the intelligible side constitutes a realm of laws and that they relate to our will and should be given precedence by us." Ameriks, K. (1981), "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality", page 65. Henry E. Allison also confirms the metaphysical tension that exists in the synthetic argument of *Groundwork*: "Nevertheless, the fact remains that this characterization of the world of understanding as only a standpoint stands together in the text with the overtly metaphysical language that has already been noted. And to this commentator at least, this suggests that there is a certain tension in GMS 3 between metaphysical and normative strands of argumentation." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 354.

freedom as two opposing ontological ideas that ultimately transcends the existence of the human subject. This is no doubt an interpretation that goes beyond the explicit textual basis of *Groundwork*. However, it is nonetheless an interpretation which insists on taking Kant's analysis of morality seriously, in a way that allows thought to take us wherever is necessary to unveil the enigma of free will.

The *critical turn* of Kantian metaphysics corresponds to a demarcation of the finitude of nature as appearance – *Erscheinung*. Freedom is a transcendental idea. In Kant's theoretical philosophy, the mere *thinkability* of this idea was secured through the dissolving of the third antinomy by distinction between causal lawfulness of appearance and causal independence of the thing in itself. The *factuality* of the idea, on the other hand, was categorically prohibited as an object of theoretical representation, but nonetheless postulated through our practical moral judgment. In Kant's practical philosophy the transcendental idea of *freedom thus becomes a positive manifestation of the thing in itself*.[692] By naming our interpretation 'critical' we accentuate the fundamental claim that freedom, as a thing in itself, can never be an existent entity. But what is freedom, if not itself a being? The factuality of freedom must be a positive expression of the *pure negativity of the thing-in-itself that transcends all existence*:

> "It signifies only a "something" [*ein Etwas*] that is left over when I have excluded from the determining grounds of my will everything belonging to the world of sense, merely in order to limit the principle of motives from the field of sensibility by circumscribing this field and showing that it does not include everything within itself but that there is still more beyond it; but of this something more I have no further cognizance."[693]

Following our previous analysis in part three, we define freedom as the negative abyss of nothingness. It manifests its phenomenal presence as an instance that *nihilates causal determination* of nature. The critical interpretation of free will must be able to develop the moral law *from the pure negativity of freedom*.[694] How is this possible? We begin to see an answer by

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[692] Allison partially confirms our claim: "the concept of a world of understanding [which is based on the introduction of the idea of freedom] receives positive content by means of the moral law." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 345.

[693] GMS 4: 462.

[694] Allison certainly do not share our own 'critical interpretation', but he does seem to share (at least to some extent) our understand of the kind of challenge that Kant's critical philosophy of freedom in fact represents: "But as we have already seen and as Kant reminds us, in spite of being merely negative with respect to the world of sense, the thought of a world of understanding is not vacuous from a practical point of view. In fact, it yields not only the negative conception of freedom (not being causally determined by anything in the world of sense), but

turning our attention to the meaning of law itself – that is, we ask: *What is a law?* We repeat the definition from our previous analysis: A law is the *necessary and universal connection of a manifold*. What is the manifold in the case of the moral law? It is nothing more than the *twofold of willing and freedom*. Willing is the determining ground for all empirically determined action. Freedom is independence from causal determination. The moral law is the synthetic unity of the two in our thought. The authentic self of a person is not a transcendent legislator but is itself the *product* of the synthetic unity of the law. That is, man – *der Mensch* – is always an empirically determined subject. But as a moral *person*, man also stand faced with the abysmal ground of freedom that transcends his own subject. The authentic selfhood thus resides in the relationship between the empirical self and its transcendence. This internal self-relationship is the *ethos of human existence*. **Figure 9** (below) presents this primordial residence of man. Willing and freedom are now no longer depicted as properties contained within a transcendent subject, but rather the *ground and abyss of its empirical existence*.

Freedom
(Abyss of Self-destruction)

Willing
(Ground of Empirical Self)

↘   ↙

The Synthetic Unity of Moral Law
(Authentic self – ethos)
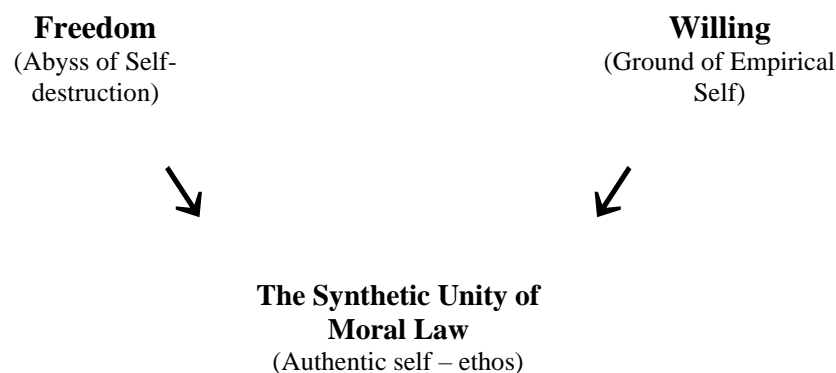
Figure 9: The critical interpretation of free will.

Towards an Ontological Will: *Wille and Willkür*

In our approach to the inner workings of *Groundwork* – the synthetic argument of section 3 – with the intent to appropriate the Kantian model of the human moral essence for our own

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also the positive conception of it as a causality of reason, which is identified with the will." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 354f.

Heideggerian metaphysics, we looked to an apparent contradiction contained in the very concept of a free will. We suggested that Kant's enigmatic claim that the moral law is the positive concept of freedom holds the potential for an interpretation that transforms Kantian ethics into fundamental ontology. In our critical interpretation of *Groundwork*, we presented willing and freedom as ground and abyss of human existence, and the moral law of free will as the synthetic unity of this twofold ground in our thought. However, despite our depiction of morality as an event that transcends the limits of empirical subjectivity, we have yet to show that our analysis has any relevance beyond a domain of human volition. The claim that the ethos of a moral person is a revelation of fundamental ontology is still dependent on our ability to demonstrate that the principle of free will is not only a realization of an authentic self, but simultaneously and primordially a revelation of the ground of nature. A preliminary demonstration of freedom as ontological ground was given in part three, where we followed Heidegger's interpretation of *Critique of Pure Reason* and the cosmological idea on the absolute origination of causal nature. But this explicit ontological framework was seemingly lost when we turned to the factuality of freedom in the moral law of pure practical reason. The full development of an ontological concept of willing and freedom as ground of nature will not be achieved until the final chapter four. The task now is to present an interpretation of *Groundwork*, where the moral law is transformed into a revelation of the twofold ground of nature, while simultaneously preserving Kant's depiction of the formal structure of human morality. That is, we do not yet approach the grounding phenomena of willing and freedom itself, but rather the moral essence of man, as a fundamental attunement to this ground. There is no hiding that our attempt to *ontologize the will* constitutes one the most controversial elements in our appropriation of Kantian ethics. Not only does *Groundwork* offer no textual basis for such interpretation, but Kant is also explicit in stating that the possession of pure practical reason is that which separates man from all other things of nature. So how can we implement our ontological transformation while simultaneously preserving the formal structure of Kantian ethics? A key to answer this question lies in an important *ambiguity* in Kant's concept of the will, expressed by the German distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*.

What is will? Kant defines the will as a capacity – *Vermögen* – of rational beings. The point of Kant's distinction between *persons* and *things* is precisely to emphasize the unique ability of *rational nature* to be determined by the laws of its own free will, as opposed to *empirical nature* which is always determined by causal law. However, in making this distinction, we also reveal an *ambiguity* in the concept of will itself. For on the one hand, the will is a *capacity for causal action*. And as this *positive* possibility for the acting out the causal

lawfulness of nature, it represents an opposing force to the *negative* possibility of freedom as causal independence. On the other hand, the will is also a *capacity for moral law,* as pure practical reason, which in our critical interpretation became the ability to unify willing and freedom synthetically in our thought. Thus, there seems to be *two wills* operating our analysis – the willing of causal action and the will of the moral law. Kant only refers to one single concept of will in *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, and so one might object to the bifurcation as a flaw in our interpretation. However, in *Metaphysics of Morals*, we find textual basis for a twofoldness of the will. Kant now introduces the distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*:[695]

> "The faculty of desire [*Begehrungsvermögen*] in accordance with concepts, insofar as the ground determining [*Bestimmungsgrund*] it to action lies within itself and not in its object, is called a faculty to *do or to refrain from doing as one pleases*. Insofar as it is joined with one's consciousness of the ability to bring about its object by one's action it is called *choice* [*Willkür*]; if it is not joined with this consciousness its act is called a *wish* [*Wunsch*]. The faculty of desire whose inner determining ground, hence even what please it, lies within the subject's reason is called the *will* [*Wille*]. The will is therefore the faculty of desire considered not so much in relation to action (as choice is [*wie die Willkür*]) but rather in relation to the ground determining choice to action. The will itself, strictly speaking, has no determining ground; insofar as it can determine choice, it is instead practical reason itself."[696]

Both concepts of will are defined as a general capacity of a human being as having a *proclivity towards action – Begehrungsvermögen*. In a mere state of *unreflective* proclivity, this capacity is characterized as wish – *Wunsch*. But once the capacity is coupled with a self-awareness of the power of its actions to bring about objects, it is called willing – *Willkür*. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, we will refer to Kant's concept of *Willkür* by the name of *willing*. Willing corresponds to what *Groundwork* defines as the *material principle* of the will. It consists of two main components. First, an end or a purpose – *ein Zweck* – as the determining ground for causal determination. Second, an *incentive* to act from this purpose. If we isolate willing from *Wille*, it becomes a *heteronomous* human praxis, as the capacity to act from the determining ground of causal law of nature. *Wille*, on the other hand, Kant defines as the proclivity towards action

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[695] But has this conceptual distinction presented in *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) any bearing on the much earlier work of *Groundwork* (1785)? Allison seems to think so: "rather than being a radical innovation of the late Kant, the *Wille-Willkür* distinction makes explicit what is already implicit in GMS." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 299.
[696] MdS 6:213.

who's determining ground lies within practical reason itself. That is, *Wille* is the *autonomous determining ground* of willing (*Willkür*). It corresponds to what *Groundwork* defines as the *formal principle* of the will. We shall refer to Kant's concept of *Wille* by the name of *will*.

The will qua *Wille* is not itself the acting out of causal action, but rather the formal determining ground of willing itself – that is, pure practical reason.[697] In what sense can pure practical reason be an autonomous determining ground for willing? When willing as the proclivity towards causally determined action is coupled with the awareness of freedom, willing acquires an entirely different determining ground for action. What is freedom? The quote from *Metaphysics of Morals* above presents freedom of willing (as *Willkür*) as the ability to "*do or to refrain from doing as one pleases*" – *ein Vermögen nach belieben zu thun oder zu lassen*.[698] This means that freedom itself is the simple but radical possibility to refrain from action – as the *possibility of negation*. That is, freedom now becomes a kind of counter-willing – a *non-willing* – which nihilates any proclivity towards action. Holding these two together in our thought – the proclivity towards causal action and its negation – willing now manifests a determining ground of its own. This is the pure formal structure of willing: *the imperative to act*. This imperative is *hypothetical*, when acting from the ends given by empirical experience. And it is *categorical*, when acting from the pure end of willing itself.[699]

Freedom
(Nihilation)

Willkür
(Willing)

Wille
(Determining ground of pure
practical willing)
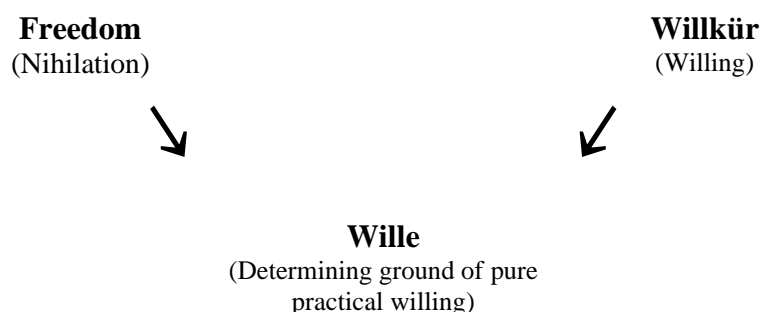
Figure 10: Wille and Willkür.

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[697] So far, Allisson seems to agree: "In general, it seems fair to say that for Kant *Wille* and *Willkür* refer to two distinct aspects of a single faculty of volition, which differ with respect to function. The function of the former is legislative; while that of the latter is executive (executing or obeying the laws stemming from the former)." Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 298.

[698] MdS 6:213.

[699] In the next subchapter, *Nothingness, Negation and the Categorical Imperative*, we offer a more detailed elaboration of these two forms of the moral imperative.

Figure 10 (above) employs the exact same model that was used earlier in our *critical interpretation* of free will (illustrated by figure 9), but now rearticulates the relationship between willing and the moral law as the bifurcation of *Willkür* and *Wille*. Willing is the proclivity towards causal action, and the will is the synthetic unity of freedom and willing of pure practical reason. What is our reason for making this technical detour, only to end up with the same conclusion as the former subchapter? What have we accomplished by bringing Kant's intricate distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür* to the table? In light of this distinction, we now stand prepared to develop an ontological concept of willing as ground of nature, while simultaneously preserving what is uniquely human in Kant's grounding of a moral person. The primordial personhood – the authentic self – of a human being resides not in the acting out of causal action, but in the synthetic connection of willing and freedom.[700] This synthetic unity constitutes the law of pure practical reason and is the autonomous ground of all willful action. It is therefore the will of pure practical reason that defines the Kantian distinction between *persons* and *things*, and not the willful proclivity towards causal action. The moral essence of the human being – its *ethos* – is a *state of thoughtful reflection on the twofold ground of its own existence*.[701] The radical claim of our Heideggerian appropriation of Kantian ethics is that the existential twofold ground of willing and freedom is not itself a ground of the human subject. Rather, willing and freedom are the grounding elements of our surrounding environments, *through which the emergence and disintegration of subjectivity is made possible*. In the context of *Groundwork*, this claim will ultimately remain an empty assumption. However, once we turn to the analysis of reflective judgment in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we will be able to offer a substantive content to our idea of an ontological ground of willing and freedom according to Kant's own transcendental philosophy.

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[700] The primarily contemplative nature of Heideggerian freedom (qua free will) is confirmed by Michel Harr: "Man accedes to freedom only if he agrees to let himself be bound to the secret clarity of being." And moreover: "*Gelassenheit* is undoubtedly the greatest amount of 'freedom' that Heidegger recognizes in man." Haar, Michel (1993). *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, page 129 & 138.

[701] Although reflecting a quite different approach to Heidegger and the problem of the will, Bret W. Davis similarly presents a Heideggerian interpretation of free will along the lines of a *contemplative letting-be* (cf. *Gelassenheit*) of willing and non-willing: "The freedom of ek-sitence – which exceeds the present determinations of beings and stands out into the clearing event of their determination – is always complemented and countered by an in-sistence which holds fast to beings, turning its back on the opening which allows them to presence in the first place." And further: "Freedom as 'letting beings be' is not a permanent state into which one enters, but can occur only 'from time to time' by way of a 'glimpse into the mystery out of errancy,' that is, by stepping back from one's dealings with beings to expose oneself to the question of being." Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 283.

Let us reiterate and sum up our achievements thus far. The purpose of this chapter is *not* to develop a metaphysics on the ontological ground of willing and freedom – this is the task of the final chapter four. The purpose of our current appropriation of *Groundwork* is to demonstrate that the essence of the Kantian moral person – *the formal structure of ethos* – can be maintained, even if we *assume* that the foundational elements of willing and freedom represents a ground of nature, as opposed to a capacity contained within the human subject. Through our latest contribution to this argument, introducing the distinction of *Wille* and *Willkür*, we emphasized how our Heideggerian appropriation maintains what is uniquely human in Kant's moral theory – namely, the will qua *Wille*, as the moral law of pure practical reason – while simultaneously enabling us to ontologize willing qua *Willkür*, as the proclivity to act out the causal determination of nature. To the extent that this disentanglement has been successful, it means that the coming chapters now stand free to focus on the elements of willing and freedom, as the ground and abyss of the causal determination of nature.

Willing is not a capacity of the human subject, but a ground of causal nature which brings the human subject into existence. As a final contribution to our introduction of ontological will, we will now present a preliminary reflection on the relationship between a willful subject and the causal state of nature, in anticipation of our forthcoming exposition of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the genesis of lawful subjectivity as the *harmonious free play* of aesthetic purposiveness. Kant states that the *material (subjective)* element of volition is determined by natural causality – that is, as "a posteriori incentives"[702]. But what precisely is the relation between a willful empirical subject and the causal determination of nature? Simply put: what is the relationship between the *human subject* and *nature as object*? Can we think the subject as radically grounded in nature itself, and thereby the empirical incentives of its volition as ultimately an expression of a ground of nature? Does Kant himself offer a metaphysical basis that can dissolve the boundary between a willful subject and the general causal determination of nature? In answering this question, we look once more to *The Essence of Human Freedom*, and Heidegger's radical effort to connect Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy. In his analysis of Kantian ethics and the ground of man as willing, Heidegger makes a short and tentative reference to *Critique of Pure Reason* and the notion of *transcendental apperception*. Heidegger suggests that the unity of thought, expressed as the "I am" of transcendental

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[702] GMS 4: 400.

apperception, not only reflects a radical form of causality, but that this causality contains an *ought* (*ein Gesolltes*), expressing a kind of necessity and "connection with grounds which is found nowhere else in the world of nature."[703] This leads Heidegger to suggest a possible connection between the two Kantian notions of apperception and pure practical reason:

> "'Pure apperception' means 'action and inner determinations which [man] cannot regard as impressions of the senses'. Pure apperception as action involves causality, a determining letting-follow such that what gets determined is not just received and accepted but originates from itself. Pure apperception then means giving oneself to oneself, and indeed 'simply' in existence [*im Dasein*], not in what I am in myself [*nicht in dem, was ich an sich bin*]. I cannot know myself in *what* I am, but I can know *that* I am, i.e. I can know my existence absolutely in its 'that'. This is because I always already form, in all thinking and determining, the 'I'-being as the 'I think'. I am absolutely given to myself only in the act of this determining, and never prior to this as something present which determines."[704]

Let us try to unpack this connection. The transcendental apperception is the most basic expression of the Kantian subject in *Critique of Pure Reason*. Our cognition – *Erkenntnis* – of nature consist of two fundamental conditions. The manifold of appearing objects of our intuition – *Anschauung* – and its correspondence to concepts of understanding. The ultimate transcendental ground for the synthetic unity of concepts and the manifold of our intuitions is the transcendental apperception:

> "Now no cognitions can occur in us, no connection and unity among them, without that unity of consciousness that precedes all data of the intuitions, and in relation to which all representation of objects is alone possible. This pure, original, unchanging consciousness I will now name **transcendental apperception**."[705]

The transcendental apperception is simply the unity of the *I think* that "must be able to accompany all my representations".[706] This is not a subject isolated nor independent from nature. Quite the opposite, it corresponds to the synthetic unity of the manifold of appearing objects. That is, the unity of the subject is fundamentally the unity of nature itself: "Thus the original and necessary consciousness of the identity of oneself is at the same time a

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[703] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 173 (GA 31: 257). See also KdrV A547/B575.
[704] Heidegger, M. (2002), *The Essene of Human Freedom*, page 173 (GA 31: 256). See also KdrV A546/B574 & B157.
[705] KdrV A106 -107.
[706] KdrV B131.

consciousness of an equally necessary unity of the synthesis of all appearances in accordance with concepts".[707] So, if we think the human subject through Kant's notion of the transcendental apperception, then the causal determination of the empirical subject and the object of appearance becomes *one and the same*.[708]

What then becomes of willing? Kant also refers to the analytic unity of transcendental apperception as an act of spontaneity – *ein Actus der Spontaneität*.[709] What Heidegger seems to suggest in *The Essence of Human Freedom* is that the *spontaneous act of transcendental apperception corresponds to his ontological interpretation of free will*. In our own critical interpretation of the apparent contradiction of free will, we depicted the empirical self of a human being as the product of the willful proclivity towards causal action. So, the identical unity of the empirical self is fundamentally an *act of willing*. But in what sense is this willful act spontaneous? When coupled with freedom through pure practical reason, the willful proclivity to act becomes an imperative from the ground of nothingness. That is, free will is the absolute spontaneity of willing from the abyss of freedom. The primordial meaning of the human subject – that is, as an authentic self – thereby becomes the revelation of the ontological ground of nature as willing and freedom.

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[707] KdrV A108. Or as Henry E. Allison puts it: "[…] we saw that a subject cannot think (apperceive) its own identity with respect to distinct representations without in the same act bringing them into a synthetic unity. To think this thought (that of the identity of the *I think*) is to unify the distinct representations in a single consciousness, which is why Kant claims that this thought 'contains' a synthesis." Allison, Henry E. (2004), *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* page 169.

[708] Here is Wood, in support of our claim: "In relation to what we have called 'minimal experience' [i.e., experience as something *manifold* through time, a *succession* of distinguishable contents that are present to a *subject* of that experience – and present to *numerically the same* subject throughout the time in which they appear*], objects have often been thought of only as something 'outside' that experience that might somehow 'enter' it by being the *cause* of its contents. Kant himself thinks in these terms when he treats sensible intuition as the effect of an object on us. But in the Transcendental Deduction, his approach is different, and even revolutionary. For he wants to show us that owing to the necessary synthesis that makes even minimal experience possible, there must also occur in our experience something that plays the role of an object of the representations of minimal experience. In other words, his claim is that *minimal experience alone is not possible at all*. It is not possible because in order for even minimal experience to be possible, the merely subjective representations of minimal experience must stand in relation to objects that count as going beyond those merely subjective representations and laying claim to a kind of validity for any consciousness capable of experiencing at all." Wood, Allen W. (2005), *Kant*, page 51 (*& 48).

[709] KdrV B132. The principle of apperception is 'analytic' because "it says nothing more than that all **my** representations in any given intuition must stand under the condition under which alone I cab ascribe them to the identical self as **my** representations, and thus can grasp them together, as synthetically combined in an apperception, through the general expression **I think**." (KdrV B138)

Nothingness, Negation and the Categorical Imperative

The primary task of developing an interpretation of Kantian ethics as a revelation of the meaning of being is now complete. That is, we have presented a critical interpretation of the moral law as the synthetic unity of the twofold ground of nature. Willing, as the grounding proclivity towards causal determination of nature through willful action. And freedom, as the abysmal ground of nothingness that nihilates all causal determination. The interpretation developed thus far only presents the *formal structure of ethos*. It is 'formal' because the analysis is still contingent on the forthcoming exposition of the ground of willing and freedom itself. However, our Heideggerian appropriation of Kantian ethics is still missing a final piece. For in demonstrating that the primordial meaning of free will is ontological, we have also removed our analysis from the everyday intuitions of human morality, as a command for action. Our new metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene is supposed to *unify ontology and ethics*. This means that the ontological meaning of the moral law as a synthetic unity of willing and freedom must also represent the determining ground for everyday moral judgment, as presented in the two first sections of *Groundwork* as the categorical imperative. Our inquiry into Kant's ethics so far has been guided by the question: *How can the moral law express a positive concept of freedom?* Now that we have provided an answer, the subsequent question becomes: *How can the synthetic unity of willing and freedom translate into a categorical imperative?* In short, our answer to this question is that the *abysmal ground of freedom confronts human beings with a fundamental possibility of saying no – a possibility of negation – and that our shared recognition of this possibility as an inherent trait of human existence translates into a moral imperative for all action.* **Figure 11** (below) illustrates our analysis of the moral imperative of human willful responsibility as a direct continuation from the primordial meaning of the moral law as a revelation of the meaning of being.
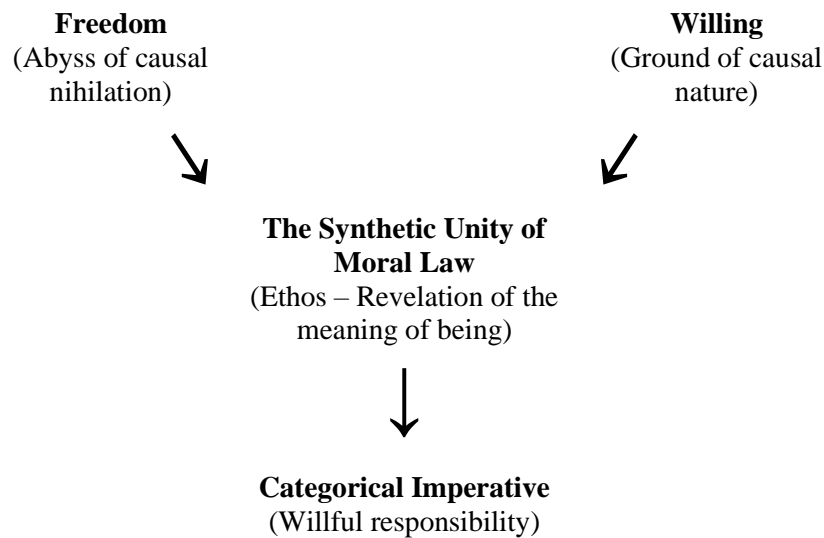
Freedom
(Abyss of causal
nihilation)

Willing
(Ground of causal
nature)

↘ ↙

**The Synthetic Unity of
Moral Law**
(Ethos – Revelation of the
meaning of being)

↓

Categorical Imperative
(Willful responsibility)

Figure 11: Translating the moral law into a categorical imperative.

How can the negativity of freedom transform into a determining ground for willful action? Freedom is the ground that nihilates causal nature. As this movement of nihilation, freedom is itself an *abyss of nothingness*. For human willful action, this nothingness manifests as the possibility of negation – *the possibility of saying no*. That is, for whatever activity man finds himself doing – in the full range between trivial tasks of everyday leisure and the commitments of lifelong pursuits – the nothingness of freedom represents the option of saying no to its continuation.[710] However, in presenting this negative possibility, it is also important to stress Kant's rightful claim about the *unfruitful* nature of negative freedom. The negation originating from the nothingness of freedom represents an *option* for our choice, but it does not itself offer a *determining ground* for choice. An actual choice of negation must be grounded on some basis other than nothingness itself, typically by some reason or interest. For example, imagine yourself in a game of sports. The preservation of the game is contingent on the continuation of your willful commitment to the rules of the sport you are playing. While playing the game,

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[710] Allison makes a similar argument on negative freedom as a possibility of negation: "Kant does not define a free will in terms of a capacity to do otherwise. Rather, he understands it **negatively** as independence from determination by alien causes and positively as autonomy, that is, as a capacity to obey laws stemming from one's own practical reason. In the case of finite rational agents, who have a sensuous as well as rational nature, the latter involves a **capacity to resist** the pull of incentives arising from their sensuous nature, which, owing to their imperfections, is not always exercised. But it is in the capacity to obey the dictates of pure practical reason, not our frequent and all too human failure to exercise this capacity, that Kant locates the essence of freedom." My **bold**. Allison, Henry E. (2011), *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, page 299.

someone might confront you with the option to quit. You respond, however, by asking what reasons you might have for discontinuing the game. The possibility of negation itself cannot be the reason to say no. You could be exhausted from physical exertion and in need of rest. You might be presented with some other activity that appears to be more appealing. But nothingness itself cannot help you decide.

Negation is a possibility that is fundamental to the existential orientation of all human beings. Not as a possibility that resides within the human subject, but rather as a possibility grounded in our surrounding environments, which stands in a negative relation to all willful exertion of human subjectivity. We act upon this possibility constantly, but most of the time without being mindful that we do so, and of the ground through which this possibility is made available to us.[711] But when we do become mindful of the possibility of negation, we simultaneously reveal an entirely different and a priori determining ground for volition. From the synthetic unity of pure practical reason, that holds the twofold ground of nature in our thought, willing now emerge with the form of an *imperative*. What is an imperative? Kant states that all "imperatives are expressed by an *ought* [*Sollen*] and indicate by this the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that by its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it."[712] The proclivity towards causal action of willing manifests itself *as an imperative*, only when it is coupled with the awareness of freedom – that is, through the synthetic unity of pure practical reason. It is only through the accentuation of its possible negation that an incentive is revealed as an imperative. An incentive of willing without this negative possibility is merely an *indicative* of what is about to happen.[713]

What is the formal structure of the imperative of pure willing? It comes in two forms – as a hypothetical and a categorical imperative. We can illuminate the meaning of these two forms of willing by appealing to Kant's notion of an end – *Zweck*. As a prelude to the articulation of the principle of humanity, Kant defines an end as the determining ground of willing. He then makes the distinction between *subjective ends*, which rests on empirical incentives, and *objective ends*, which "depends on motives, which holds for every rational

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[711] Referencing Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Fredrik Nilsen points to the distinction between a *lawless exertion of freedom*, corresponding to the *ethical state of nature*, and *freedom regulated by law*, corresponding to the *ethico-civil state*. Nilsen, F. (2018). *Fra Prohairesis til Wille og Willkür*, page 255n. See also *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6: 96.
[712] GMS 4: 413.
[713] I use the term "indicative", as counter-concept to "imperative", inspired by Fredrik Nilsen. See Nilsen, F. (2018). *Fra Prohairesis til Wille og Willkür*, page 300.

being."[714] The hypothetical imperative is contingent on the existence of a subjective end given through empirical experience. Given such subjective end, it states that *the willful act is the condition for the possibility of the realization of that end*. That is, it combines the willful proclivity towards causal action with an awareness of the fundamental existential possibility of negation. In essence, it is a *call to responsibility*. This responsibility reflects that the realization of the subjective end relies upon the continuation of my willful action – a willful action that is always at stake of nihilation through the negative possibility of freedom. If I do not take responsibility and act upon the *means* necessary for the realization of the end, then I do not abide by the formal structure of willing itself, and therefore cannot say that *I will* that end.

The categorical imperative does not rely upon anything empirical but is the willful act from the objective end of formal willing itself. What is this objective end? When Kant defines the objective end of the categorical imperative he is still confined within the analytical pathway of *Groundwork* and have thus yet to establish the moral law as the positive concept of free will. That is, at this stage of the analysis Kant simply refers to the objective end of willing as the "ground of its self-determination […] given by reason alone, [which] must hold equally for all rational beings."[715] However, when reading this definition *retrospectively* from the synthetic argument of the third section, it becomes clear that the objective end of pure formal willing is nothing else than free will.[716] How can free will itself be the determine ground for willing? Free will of pure practical reason is the synthetic unity of willing and freedom and is the essential meaning of human nature as moral personhood. That is, the *ethos* of man as the primordial residence in the face of the meaning of being. This means that all humans qua rational beings are faced with the simultaneous possibility of willful proclivity towards causal action and the nihilation of causal determination by freedom. In other words, despite the empirical nature of human subjectivity, all persons have the option to transcend their own empirical nature through the negative possibility of freedom. The categorical imperative is simply the command to respect this fundamental existential possibility of human nature. It states: *Do not act as if you or any other persons are without the possibility of negation*. The point is not to respect whatever

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[714] GMS 4: 427-428.
[715] GMS 4: 427.
[716] Paul Guyer seems to support of this claim (at least to the extent of equating humanity with free will qua "the capacity to choose ends") and adds that "Kant's equation of humanity with the capacity freely to choose one's own end, implicit in the *Groundwork*, is made explicit in other works." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 154.

reasons I might have for negating a causal action, which is contingent on my empirical state of being, but simply the fact that I as a person *possess* this fundamental negative possibility.

We see now that Kantian morality, through our critical interpretation, is fundamentally an *argument from authenticity*. That is, the moral force of the categorical imperative is basically an incitement to *be true to your own nature and the nature of all other persons*. In this way we also come to see why the categorical imperative is only the deduction from a more original expression of the moral law as a reflective state of thought. Let us now run through the three major formulations of the categorical imperative, illustrating this basic relation between the fundamental existential revelation of the moral law, and the subsequent command to act from this revelation. We start with the formulation that according to Kant is the most complete: The principle of autonomy and kingdom of ends: "act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends, remains in its full force because it commands categorically."[717] The kingdom of ends expresses a radical community between all human beings as universally lawgiving nature. The universal law given is the synthetic unity of willing and freedom. This means that the community of all rational nature in which a moral person finds himself, is the shared experience of their common existential ground. This in turn translate into a twofold meaning of moral responsibility. First, it is a state of reflection as an *answer to the call – respondeō –* from the ground of nature. Second, it is the acting out of a resolute will that hold itself accountable in the face of this grounding revelation.

The principle of humanity and universality are really just different variations on the principle of autonomy and kingdom of ends, focusing respectively on the *matter* of the categorical imperative, which reflects the objective ground of self-determination as free will, and on the *form* of the categorical imperative, which reflects its universality. The principle of humanity states: "*So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*."[718] The humanity in my person is the objective ground of my self-determination – that is, free will. To use myself and any other as an end in itself entails at first that I recognize the existential situation of all persons as having the possibility to transcend the willful expressions of one's subjectivity. Second, this recognition translates into the command that I should act in a way that conforms

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[717] GMS 4: 438f.
[718] GMS 4: 429.

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with the existential situation of myself (or any other) as having the freedom to negate whatever causal situation I find myself in.

The principle of universality states: "*act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law*."[719] This formulation addresses the relationship between a maxim, as the subjective principle of empirically determined willing, and the objective principle of the moral law. Once again, we read the principle as beginning from a state of thoughtful reflection, recognizing the universality of the moral law. The willing of a maxim must conform to this universality. As we already alluded to in our initial presentation of Kant's analytic argument for the moral law, the essential claim is not that the maxim itself should in fact be universalized, but rather that we hold the synthetic unity of freedom and willing as the universal ground for all causally determined volition.[720] For practical judgment, conformity with the moral law requires of the maxim not to violate the possibility of negation that holds universally for all rational nature. That is, if my action is not consistent with the recognition of every human being as having the possibility to negate causal action, it is in violation with the moral law.

The second variation on the principle of universality is interesting for our own interpretation of the moral law as a revelation of fundamental ontology, because it offers an additional *analogy* between law of nature and law of pure will:

> "Since the validity of the will as a universal law for possible actions has an analogy
> with the universal connection of the existence of things in accordance with universal
> laws, which is the formal aspect of nature in general, the categorical imperative can

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[719] GMS 4: 421.

[720] This goes back to our analysis of section 2, where we pointed to an ambiguity in Kant's statement: "allgemein gesetzgebenden Willens" (GMS 4: 431). This can be understood as expressing the *universality of the law given*. But it can also be understood as expressing the *universality of the act of lawgiving itself*. It is in the latter form that we interpret Kant's moral imperative, which means that the principle of universality does not require that the maxim itself be transformed into a universal law, but rather that the maxim must *conform* with the universality of the act of lawgiving – that is, with the synthetic unity of free will. This conclusion is certainly disputable. If we only consult the literal articulation of the principle of universality, then surely the former interpretation would seem more fitting (that is, that the maxim itself should be universalized). However, the final argument that leads Kant to deduce the principle of universality seems to support our interpretation that the maxim must *conform* to universality of the moral law, and not itself be universalized: "But when I think of a *categorical* imperative I know at once what it contains. For, since the imperative contains, beyond the law, only the necessity **that the maxim be in conformity with this law**, while the law contains no condition to which it would be limited, nothing is left with which the maxim of action is to conform but the universality of a law as such, and this conformity alone is what the imperative properly represents as necessary." GMS 4: 420f (my **bold**).

also be expressed thus: *act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have as their object themselves as universal laws of nature.*"[721]

How can we understand this analogy? What does it mean to think of the synthetic unity of freedom and willing as a universal law of nature itself? Can we push the connection between free will and nature a little further than what Kant himself likely envisaged? Having made our ontological interpretation of willing as the ground of all causal determination of nature, and freedom as the abyss that nihilates this determination, the *synthetic unity of free will becomes a revelation of the universal ground of nature*. The analogy thereby represents an acknowledgement that *all causal laws of nature are ultimately based on the twofold ground of willing and freedom*. That is, the moral law becomes the existential experience of free will as the ultimate ground of all lawfully determined nature.

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[721] GMS 4: 437.

3. *The Causal Meaning of Nature*

The task of part four is to articulate the three basic concepts of our new metaphysics: The essence of man as *ethos*; the finite causal meaning of nature as *environment*; and the *normative ground of willing and freedom*. The first concept of *ethos* was established in chapter two, as the primordial residence of man in the face of the ground of nature as willing and freedom, through a violent appropriation of Kant's grounding of human morality in *Groundwork*. However, this concept is so far *merely formal* because its substantive meaning rests on its relationship to the other two concepts. **First**, the essence of man as ethos corresponds to a metaphysical concept of environment, expressed by its causal determination. This requires us to go beyond the concept of causality so far encountered in *Groundwork* and the second analogy of *Critique of Pure Reason*. In what way? Following Heidegger's interpretation of the second analogy of experience in *Critique of Pure Reason*, we established a concept of *mechanical causality* as the fundamental yet rudimentary temporal order (schematization) of change in appearance according to events (*Begebenheit*), where one state of appearance comes before, and another state succeeds it. That is, the necessary temporal order of cause and effect. This rudimentary form of lawfulness leaves us with a concept of nature that consists of nothing more than an *aggregate* of different and unrelated causal relations. In order to achieve our own concept of environment, as the finite *causal meaning* of nature, we need to expand the analysis of causality to entail a more comprehensive conception of nature as a *unified system of lawfulness*.

Second, as for the relationship between ethos and the ground of nature, we need to develop a full ontological conception of willing and freedom as ground and abyss of causal meaning. It is only through this ground that we reveal the causal meaning of nature as *finite*, and thereby as a *normative* meaning, which will enable us to ground the essence of human morality as the *ethos of the environment*. In Kant's original analysis, the will is a faculty of the human mind – *Vermögen des Gemüts*[722] – and freedom a property of this faculty. This human faculty contains both a *formal* and a *material* principle of willful action. The formal principle is the moral law of free will and the material principle is the incentives of an empirically determined subject. In our reading of Kant's moral philosophy as fundamental ontology, we claimed that this twofold determining ground of human volition is ontological. That freedom and willing, as the basis for morality and the empirically determined subject, are not themselves faculties of the human mind but reflect a transcendent ground of nature. The ontological meaning of freedom has been partially established as the independence and absolute origination of causal determination. But the task remains to develop a complete ontological concept of both willing and freedom, as the ground and abyss of a causally determined nature.

To develop a metaphysical conception of the normative ground of nature as willing and freedom will be the achievement of our next and final chapter. So why do we now choose to juxtapose the two remaining tasks of this dissertation? This is because both tasks will be centered on the same philosophical work – *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. We will find the main components for our concept of causal meaning in the *two introductions*, as an analysis of the *principle of logical purposiveness* in nature. However, this principle invokes an idea that underlies the entirety of Kant's third critique, namely the notion of a transcendent *technique of nature*. And as we then move on to the problem of a ground of nature in chapter four, it will be our claim that the *subjective principle of aesthetic purposiveness* in *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* represents the most primordial expression of this natural technique. In other words, it means that our progression from chapter three to four – as an inquiry into the causal meaning of nature, and subsequently the normative ground of willing and freedom – corresponds to a radicalization of Kant's own analysis throughout *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. As we go through the analysis of causal meaning and the condition of its possibility in the principle of formal and logical purposiveness, it is therefore important that the reader

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[722] KdU 5:198.

simultaneously pay heed to the transcendent ground of nature that is implied but not yet fully address by this analysis, and which will become the sole focus of our attention in chapter four.

Our concept of the causal meaning of the environment represents nothing less than the fundamental lawful structure of reality. That is, as a metaphysics of the lawfulness of nature. However, this does not thereby mean that our concept of causal meaning is intended to *exhaust* the metaphysical concept of causation. We approach the problem of lawfulness in nature from the perspective of fundamental ontology. This means that our concept of causality is limited for the purpose of revealing the meaning of being. More precisely, we have confined our analysis to selected sections of *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. A more detailed analysis of causality itself, based on the comprehensive literature by both Heidegger and Kant, could easily have filled an entire dissertation.[723]

In the **first subchapter**, we begin by looking into the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic* in *Critique of Pure Reason*. In light of his recent analysis of natural lawfulness in the second analogy of experience, Kant now accentuates the insufficiency of a nature that is determined solely as mechanical causality, and then proceeds by presenting the *logical idea* of nature as a unified system of empirical laws. This idea constitutes the first major component of our own concept of *causal meaning*. But Kant's logical idea only informs us of a hypothetical (regulative) use of pure reason for a possible attainment of causal meaning. That is, it does not speak to the transcendental basis for its necessity. Kant is therefore in need of an additional and matching *transcendental principle*. In the **second subchapter**, we turn to *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in search for a transcendental basis for nature as a unified system, which constitutes the second major component of our idea of causal meaning. Following the analysis of the *first and unpublished introduction*, we present the concept of *technical* propositions of theoretical philosophy, and Kant's subsequent introduction of a radical *technique* of lawful nature, which goes beyond the initial classification of philosophy as either theoretical or

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[723] Can we give some examples of possible pathways that could extend our Heideggerian and Kantian analysis of causality? **With respect to Heidegger**, we could inquire into *Being and Time*, and its conceptualization of things as *tools* (*Zeug*) that are *ready-to-hand* (*Zuhanden*), and the grounding of Heidegger's analysis of things in the world through the *temporality* of the openness of being (*Zeitlichkeit*). We could inquire into *What is a Thing* (*Die Frage Nach Dem Ding*) and the notion of *mathematical* thinking and representation. Or we could utilize Heidegger's notion of the thing as a fourfold (*das Geviert*) in *The Thing* (*Das Ding*). **With respect to Kant**, we would most likely address the comprehensive discussion of natural lawfulness in *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. We could inquire further into the third critique, and the principle of *objective purposiveness* in the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*. Or we could confront the final and unfinished work of *Opus postumum*, where Kant inquires into the enigmatic concept of an ether – *Wärmestoff* – of contracting and expanding forces, which was supposed to enable a transition from transcendental philosophy to physics.

practical. We define the *reflecting power of judgment*, its *principle of purposiveness*, and the corresponding *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*. When the power of judgment reflects on the formal nature of the manifold of empirical experience as purposive for the idea of nature as a unified system of lawfulness, its judgment is accompanied by a feeling of pleasure. In the **third subchapter**, we continue to follow Kant's analysis of reflecting judgment in the first introduction, focusing now on the distinction between the principle of *logical*, *aesthetic*, and *teleological* purposiveness. For the task of the present chapter to establish a concept of causal meaning, the center of our attention remains the reflecting judgment of logical purposiveness. However, despite Kant's own inconclusive analysis of the relationship between the three principles of purposiveness, we also look for possible ways in which the analysis of aesthetics and teleology can help to support our concept of causal meaning. In the **fourth subchapter**, we trace Kant's subtle hints at a possible connection between aesthetic reflection and the organization of nature as causal meaning, forming a preliminary introduction to chapter four. We present an interpretation where *aesthetic judgment becomes the subjective yet foundational element of logical purposiveness*. More specifically, beauty becomes the subjective comportment of willing, as a condition for the possibility of all conceptually determined volition, and the causal state of nature in general. In the **fifth subchapter**, we briefly go through some of the interpretive pathways that are available to us by incorporating Kant's analysis of natural teleology. We conclude by pointing to the teleological element of Heidegger's basic thought on the meaning of being, and thereby the necessity of developing a teleologically grounded concept of causal meaning. In the **sixth subchapter**, we gather all the pieces that we have acquired throughout the chapter, to articulate the final concept of causal meaning. We retrace our earlier chapter on Heidegger's analysis of Aristotle and the four causes, and present an argument for why the logical idea of nature as a unified system must be understood as a final cause of nature, making the causal meaning of the environment into a teleological system. And finally, the **seventh subchapter** offers a brief and simple example of the causal meaning of the *office environment*.

The Insufficiency of a Mere Mechanical Concept of Nature

The *transcendental dialectic* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is predominantly occupied with a critique of the limits and illegitimate transgressions of pure theoretical reason. If transcendental

understanding – *Verstand* – provides the categories for the constitution of objective truth of nature – that is, as the correspondence of the categories with the object of appearance – then transcendental reason – *Vernunft* – is the ability of human cognition to think these categories as unconditioned totalities – that is, as *transcendental ideas*.[724] These ideas have no corresponding objects. All attempts to infer from an idea to the existence of an object would go "out beyond the field of possible experience [and are therefore] deceptive and groundless".[725] Nonetheless, there is a natural propensity of human reason to overstep its boundaries and to think the existence of an "object lying outside the field of possible empirical cognition".[726] We understand the word "dialectic" as meaning *to connect something*, which in the case of the transcendental dialectic is the connection of the ideas of pure reason, which originates from the constitution of the *thing of appearance*, with the notion of a *thing in itself*.[727] Almost the entirety of Kant's transcendental dialectic is occupied with the task of fleshing out these transcendental illusions – *transzendentale Shein*.[728] In our reading of *The Essence of Human Freedom*, we encountered Heidegger's interpretation of the third antinomy on the theoretical inference from causal determination to the unconditioned idea of the absolute origination of a first cause qua freedom. However, in the *appendix* to the transcendental dialectic, Kant turns our attention to a possible *positive use* of the transcendental ideas. From an auxiliary argument of natural teleology, Kant suggests that since the power of pure reason is given to us, there must be a purposive and correct use of its transcendental ideas. As opposed to the *transcendent* use of the ideas in the dialectic inference to the existence of a thing in itself, Kant now suggests a proper *immanent* use.[729] However, since the ideas of reason no doubt continues to extend beyond the limits of possible empirical experience, Kant, somewhat enigmatically, suggests that a legitimate immanent use would also entail an illusion; although an illusion that does not deceive us, but which is:

> "indispensably necessary if besides the objects before our eyes we want to see those that lie far in the background, i.e., when, in our case, the understanding wants to go

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[724] KdrV A642/B670.
[725] KdrV A642/B670.
[726] KdrV A644/B672.
[727] "The analysis of the metaphysician separated pure *a priori* knowledge into two very heterogenous elements, namely those of the things as appearances and the things in themselves. The dialectic once again combines them, in unison with the necessary rational idea of the unconditioned, and finds that the unison will never come about except through that distinction, which is therefore the true one." KdrV Bxxi.
[728] KdrV A295/B352.
[729] KdrV A643/B671.

beyond every given experience (beyond this part of the whole of possible experience), and hence wants to take the measure of its greatest possible and uttermost extension."[730]

If the faculty of understanding relates to the object of appearance in intuition – *Anschauung* – then reason relates to the concepts of understanding, not the objects of appearance themselves.[731] An *a priori concept of nature* of pure transcendental understanding – that is, when the power of judgment subsumes the objects of appearance *exclusively* according to transcendental concepts – is given as a *unified whole*. However, an *empirical concept of nature* – that is, when nature is determined according to empirically contingent concepts – is initially given as an *aggregate* of different and unrelated laws.[732] In the task of unifying the infinite manifold of empirical experience, transcendental understanding simply cannot help us.

Looking back at our earlier encounter with Heidegger's interpretation of the second analogy of experience, we recall how little that was in fact secured by the transcendental concept of causal lawfulness. If we define "mechanics" by the second analogy alone, it simply states that all change in the object of appearance is organized by a *necessary order of succession* as cause and effect. It does not state a relation between specific *types of causes* and corresponding *types of effects*. When Kant introduces the possibility of a legitimate immanent use of the transcendental ideas, it is with the intent to transform the infinite aggregate of empirical lawfulness into a unified whole. In fact, we may interpret the challenge of the appendix of the transcendental dialectic as a variation on the *problem of induction*: Given the undetermined state of a mere mechanical concept of nature, the task now becomes to develop a (potentially) infinite manifold of simple mechanical relations into a unified system.[733] It is only through the organization of natural phenomena according to *genera* and *species* that we can secure the necessity of causal relations between different types of objects.[734]

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[730] KdrV A644f/B672f.

[731] As we will see in the following subchapters (and chapter four), the *reflecting* power of judgment is able to bypass understanding, relating the transcendental idea to the mere *form* of the object of appearance in intuition, through its own regulative principle – the principle of formal purposiveness in nature.

[732] KdrV A646/B674.

[733] Placing KdU in direct continuation with the *Appendix* of KdrV, Paul Guyer confirms the tenability of this reading: "A number of scholars have looked to Kant's treatment of systematicity in the third *Critique* as his answer to Hume's problem about the rationality of induction, which does not seem to be addressed in Kant's treatment of causation in the second 'Analogy of Experience' in the first *Critique*." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 56.

[734] We see now that our interpretation of the problem that the *Appendix* is supposed to solve is contingent on our earlier Heideggerian interpretation of the second analogy. Béatrice Longuenesse provides a review of the two dominant positions of Kant scholars who interprets the second analogy. Our Heideggerian interpretation

The unified system of nature, as the thoroughgoing unity and interconnection of all empirical concepts, is a logical idea of pure theoretical reason. This idea cannot be *constitutive* for the object of appearance, for this would entail a dialectic inference beyond the legitimate scope of empirical experience. As opposed to an *apodictic* use of reason, where the a priori "universal is in itself certain and given", reason must now engage in a *hypothetical* use, where the empirical "universal is assumed only problematically".[735] The necessary and non-deceptive illusion of pure reason resides in its *regulative* use, thinking the systematic unity of nature *as a mere idea* – that is, only as a "projected unity, which one must regard not as given in itself, but only as a problem".[736]

Kant gives a brief example of the idea of a fundamental power – *Grundkraft*. If we understand "power" as the motor effectuating a causal event, then at "first glance the various appearances of one and the same substance show such diversity that one must assume almost as many powers as there are effects".[737] But the regulative principle of reason leads us to assume that behind this apparent variety there is a possible "hidden identity" to be discovered.[738] Reason postulates hypothetically the reality of a fundamental power, although such absolute unity for the manifold of experience can ultimately never be found in experience. The regulative idea represents a *heuristic* principle, as a "rule of possible experience", which, however, "goes much too far for experience or observation ever to catch up with it; without determining anything, it only points the way towards systematic unity."[739]

In further elaboration of the logical idea of the systematic unity of nature, Kant identifies three principles. The principle of *homogeneity* and the principle of *specification*, which by themselves represents two conflicting interests of reason, and finally the principle of *continuity*, which unites the former two. (**1**) The ***principle of homogeneity*** assumes the "sameness of kind in the manifold under higher genera".[740] In all our encounters of the variety of empirical

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corresponds to the first position of Gerd Buchdahl and Henry Allison, who sees the second analogy as a *weak causal principle*, that merely states the necessary temporal order of a "particular sequence of events" in ordinary perceptual experience. Whereas Michael Friedman argues for a *strong causal principle*, which takes the analogy to state that all events "fall under universal and strictly necessary causal laws", reflected through objective scientific determination. If Friedman is correct, or some other interpretation that conflicts with Heidegger, Buchdahl and Allison (e.g., Longuenesse's own interpretation), then our current interpretation of the *Appendix* will necessarily also fall short. See Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant and the Human Standpoint*, page 144.

[735] KdrV A646/B674
[736] KdrV A647/B675
[737] KdrV A648/B676
[738] KdrV A649/B677
[739] KdrV A663/B692 & A668/B696
[740] KdrV A657/B685

experience, we must always think the possibility of a genus – *Gattung* – that can determine different lawful expressions according to a unifying concept. This process of unifying that which is different continues towards the projected idea, that can never be found, of a single highest genus. Kant also refers to a scholastic rule – *Schulregel* – which may remind us of the modern notion of *Occam's razor*: "*entia praeter necessitatem non esse multiplicanda*" – entities are not to be multiplied without necessity.[741]

> "But that such unanimity is to be encountered even in nature is something the philosophers presuppose in the familiar scholastic rule that one should not multiply beginnings (principles) without necessity […] It is thereby said that the nature of things themselves offer material for the unity of reason, and the apparently infinite variety should not restrain us from conjecturing behind it a unity of fundamental properties".[742]

(**2**) The ***principle of specification*** assumes a "variety of what is same in kind under lower species".[743] In opposite direction from the organization of nature according to genera, which inquires into a possible identity of a given manifold, the principle of specification begins with a general concept and looks for the manifold contained within it. That is, classification of species is the determination of difference within that which is the same. As a logical idea, the process of specification is *never-ending*, meaning that there will always be a set of species within a genus, and then another set of subspecies within each of the former species. Consequently, no set of species can ever be regarded as the lowest: "hence it [species] cannot be related to an individual, consequently, it must at every time contain other concepts, i.e., subspecies, under itself."[744] Equivalent to the scholastic rule of homogeneity, Kant then formulates a separate rule of specification: "*entium varietates non temere esse minuendas*" – the varieties of entities are not to be diminished rashly.[745]

(**3**) The third and final ***principle of continuity*** completes the systematic unity, assuming "the affinity of all concepts, which offers a continuous transition from every species to every other through a graduated increase of varieties."[746] If the principle of homogeneity points our understanding of nature towards new genera of ever-increasing universality, and the principle

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[741] I use the translation of Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, see KdrV A652n/B680n.
[742] KdrV A652/B680.
[743] KdrV A657/B685
[744] KdrV A657/B685.
[745] I use the translation by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, see KdrV A656n/B684n.
[746] KdrV A657f/B685f.

of specification fills each universal with the "greatest possible variety", then the principle of continuity assumes a thoroughgoing determination – *durchgängig Bestimmung* – of nature as a whole, with a continuous transition between all concepts, unified under a single highest genus.[747]

Having unified the three principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity, Kant now extends the analysis of the logical idea of pure reason with the help of a metaphor. Imagine a *logical horizon – ein logischer Horizont*. That is, let us regard every empirical concept "as a point, which, as the standpoint of an observer, has its horizon, i.e., a multiplicity of things that can be represented and surveyed, as it were, from it."[748] Now, the logical horizon contains an infinite number of points, which each by themselves contain their own narrower field of vision, through an infinite division of subspecies. The totality of this horizon is thoroughly determined, containing no vacuum, no transition by leaps, but make up a seamless transition between all points in "every smaller degree of distinction", as an interconnected whole, united by a single highest standpoint.[749] In extension from the two former "scholastic rules", Kant now writes: "*non datur vacuum formarum*" and "*datur continuum formarum*" – there is no vacuum of forms, and there is a continuum of forms.[750]

The systematic unity of nature is a *logical idea* of pure reason. This idea constitutes the first major component for our own concept of *causal meaning*. That is, we understand nature to be *meaningful* if it adheres to a systematic unity. Kant himself does not use this term, but because it refers to the same basic problem, we will continue to address Kant's analysis in the appendix as the idea of causal meaning. But if the logical idea of nature as a systematic unity is only a component, what more remains for the complete idea of causal meaning? The idea also needs a transcendental basis. Throughout the appendix, Kant repeatedly stresses that the logical idea of systematic unity must be accompanied by a *transcendental principle*. The logical idea simply reflects an *interest* of reason for a rational unity of nature. But such interests have no weight unless we also assert that a unity of nature may in fact be found:[751]

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[747] KdrV A658/B686 - A659/B687.
[748] KdrV A658/B686.
[749] KdrV A659/B687.
[750] KdrV A659/B687. I use the translation by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, see KdrV A659n/B687n.
[751] As Paul Guyer writes: "The systematizability of nature must be presupposed if we are rationally to adopt the regulative ideal of systematicity; it is not a product of adopting the regulative ideal. Thus, the regulative ideal can be characterized in purely logical terms as a structural feature of our knowledge, but satisfaction of the ideal commits us to a claim about the objects of experience themselves." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 21.

"For by what warrant can reason in its logical use claim to treat the manifoldness of the powers which nature gives to our cognition as merely a concealed unity, and to derive them as far as it is able from some fundamental power, when reason is free to admit that it is just as possible that all powers are different in kind, and that its derivation of them from a systematic unity is not in conformity with nature?"[752]

Corresponding to the logical principle, a transcendental principle would express the a priori necessity of assuming nature itself to conform with the interest of reason for a systematic unity:

"But whether the constitution of objects or the nature of the understanding that cognizes them as such are in themselves determined to systematic unity [*an sich zur systematischen Einheit bestimmt sei*], and whether one could in a certain measure postulate this *a priori* without taking into account such an interest of reason, and therefore say that all possible cognitions of the understanding (including the empirical ones) have the unity of reason, and stand under common principles from which they could be derived despite their variety: that would be a transcendental principle of reason, which would make systematic unity not merely something subjectively and logically necessary, as method, but objectively necessary."[753]

Such transcendental principle is a necessary condition for the possibility of empirical truth – *empirische Wahrheit* – that is, for there to be something like an intelligible understanding of lawful empirical nature.[754] However, Kant's own inquiry into the exact meaning and significance of this transcendental principle remains short and unsatisfactory in the appendix of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Rather than continuing to linger on the few traces of a transcendental argumentation that may be found in the first critique, we now instead turn to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant presents a *new transcendental basis for causal meaning*, through the power of reflecting judgment.

A Transcendental Basis for Causal Meaning

How to approach Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*? There are different interpretive pathways available to us; with respect to its individual parts; with respect to the third critique

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[752] KdrV A651f/B679f.
[753] KdrV A648/B676.
[754] KdrV A651/B679.

as a whole; and its role in the context of Kant's overall project of transcendental philosophy. We could approach the critique of the aesthetic power of judgment as a theory of art and natural beauty. Or the critique of the teleological power of judgment as an expansion of causality for biology and the scientific investigations into natural organisms. We could view the critique of the power of judgment, and its connection to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, as the final component of Kant's transcendental philosophy as a system of higher cognitive faculties, and as a system of the faculties of the human mind in general. And we could address the transcendental principle of the reflecting power of judgment as the unifying mediator between theoretical and practical philosophy; and thus secure a transcendental basis for the possibility of man to achieve both virtue and happiness within the finite confines of his empirical existence.

The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is all these things and more.[755] However, for the present chapter we choose to approach the third critique as the transcendental basis for the organization of empirical nature according to a unified system, in continuation with Kant's analysis in the appendix of *Critique of Pure Reason* and the regulative principle of nature as a logical system.[756] That is, we look for a transcendental basis for the causal meaning of nature. We find such basis in the *two general introductions* of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. More specifically, the idea of causal meaning is a main concern for the *first* and originally *unpublished* introduction. It is also a concern for the *second* and *standard* introduction, but this text provides a stronger emphasis on the mediating role of reflecting judgment, for the unification of theoretical and practical philosophy, as well as the completion of transcendental philosophy as a systematic whole. We therefore choose to follow the general argument of the *first introduction*, with the occasional supplements from the second.

The first introduction begins by presenting philosophy as a "system of rational cognition through concepts", which is itself grounded by a critique of pure reason, and divided into

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[755] Wood comments: "[Kant's] fundamental and clearly avowed purpose was to bridge what he perceived to be a yawning gulf between the treatments of theoretical and practical reason in his philosophy, and thereby to unify his philosophical system. But exactly what his solution to this problem was supposed to be, or even what the problem itself is supposed to be, are matters of deep dispute among Kant scholars down to the present day." Wood, Allen W. (2005), *Kant*, page 151.

[756] Paul Gauer writes: "In the *Critique of Judgement*, however, published only three years after the revised second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the regulative ideal of systematicity is reassigned to the newly introduced faculty of reflective judgment." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 11. Henry E. Allison also confirms the connection: "Admittedly, in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic Kant does deal with the problem of moving from particulars to universals, and in the process appeals to the line of argument that he later develops in the Introduction to the third *Critique*; but this is all presented in terms of an account of the proper regulative use of the ideas of reason, which makes no reference to judgment and a distinct reflective function." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 15f.

theoretical and *practical* philosophy – that is, as a critique of theoretical and practical reason.[757] Kant then immediately turns our attention to the meaning of practical propositions – *praktische Sätze*.[758] In our everyday life, we invoke the term "practical", and thereby also the term "practical philosophy", regarding all manner of rules, norms and etiquettes of social, technical and scientific actions. But if we abide by the Kantian framework of philosophy, this use of language is strictly speaking in error. Theoretical philosophy is the philosophy of nature, and thereby the inquiry into both *a priori and empirical laws of nature*. Practical philosophy, on the other hand, is the philosophy of morals, and has as its sole object of inquiry the *a priori law of freedom*. Practical propositions whose content is not grounded on the law of freedom is therefore an expression of theoretical philosophy. To avoid an erroneous conjunction of the two, Kant introduces a distinction between *practical* propositions, as the praxis of practical philosophy, and *technical* propositions – *technische Sätze* – as the praxis of theoretical philosophy.[759]

As we look back on our reading of *Groundwork*, we remember Kant's definition of a hypothetically good will, whose actions abide by rules of skills – *Regeln der Geschicklichkeit* – for the solutions of technical-scientific problems; and the pragmatic counsels of prudence – *Ratschläge der Klugheit* – for the achievement of happiness.[760] Kant now redefines these rules of skills and prudence as *technical imperatives*.[761] The distinction between practical and technical imperatives also takes us back to Kant's distinction between the *formal* and *material* principle of the will. If the formal principle is the a priori and objective moral law of free will, then the material principle is the subjective incentives – *Triebfeder* – of a human volition determined by natural causation. Kant also refers to this subjective principle of an empirically determined will as a *maxim*. Going back to *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we now see an analogous distinction for the twofold determining ground of the will:

> "In a word: all practical propositions that derive that which nature can contain from the faculty of choice as a cause [*von der Willkür als Ursache ableiten*] collectively belong to theoretical philosophy, as cognition of nature; only those propositions which give the law to freedom are specifically distinguished from the former in virtue of

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[757] KdU 20:195.
[758] KdU 20:196.
[759] KdU 20:200. In the second introduction, Kant employs instead the distinction between *morally practical* and *technically practical – moralisch-praktisch und technisch-praktisch*. See KdU 5:172.
[760] GMS 4: 416.
[761] KdU 20:200n.

their content. One can say of the former that they constitute the practical part of a philosophy of nature, but the latter alone ground a special practical philosophy."[762]

Technical propositions are the maxims of human volition for the acting out of causal determination of nature. As such they belong to art – *Kunst* – that is, the "art of bringing about that which one wishes should exist".[763] We may thus give a general definition of "technique" as the *willful effectuation of something into existence*, and "art" as the *product brought into existence by such technique*. By this preliminary way of defining technique – *Technik* – the technical propositions simply stand in service of theoretical philosophy. That is, they are maxims for the willful acting out of objective nature determined by causal laws of understanding: "Practical propositions, therefore, the content of which concerns merely the possibility of a represented object (through voluntary action), are only applications of a complete theoretical cognition and cannot constitute a special part of a science."[764] Or as Kant writes in the second introduction: "All technically practical rules […] so far as their principles rest on concepts, must be counted only as corollaries of theoretical philosophy."[765]

However, having presented this preliminary definition of technical propositions, Kant then proceeds by suggesting an *extended meaning* of technique and art: "However, we shall in the future also use the expression "technique" where objects of nature are sometimes merely judged *as if* [*als ob*] their possibility were grounded in art".[766] This would be a meaning of technical propositions that is no longer subjugated to concepts of objective understanding of nature. But instead, a *new and radical form of praxis*, belonging neither to theoretical nor practical philosophy, but reflecting a mere subjective relation between nature, in analogy with art, and our cognitive faculties. This extended meaning of technique is the focal point of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Before we begin to unravel this new form of praxis, it is important that we accentuate the *radical interpretive framework* that Kant now presents. Technique expresses the basis for willful action. As a praxis of theoretical philosophy, this willful action is merely contingent on the objective understanding of natural lawfulness. However, as Kant reorients the basis for technique by shifting from a determining to a reflecting power of judgment, the *willful action*

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[762] KdU 20:197.
[763] KdU 20:200.
[764] KdU 20:198.
[765] KdU 5:172.
[766] KdU 20:200.

from the idea of nature as art becomes a transcendental basis for objective nature itself. That is, willing is no longer the derivative of objective causal law, but instead a subjective condition for the possibility of natural lawfulness in general. The full extent of this shift will be the focal point of chapter four, as we make Kant's analysis of beauty and the sublime the basis for our own concept of a ground of nature as willing and freedom. For the time being, as we approach the reflecting power of judgment as a problem of causal meaning of nature, we should simultaneously keep in mind that what is reflected by the power of judgment is ultimately a new and radical ground of willful action.

From the seemingly unfounded assumption of a radical form of technique beyond the distinction of theoretical and practical philosophy, Kant proceeds by argument from the system of philosophy itself. For the complete system of the higher faculties of cognition – *Erkenntnisvermögen* – Kant argues for the need of a *critique of the power of judgment*, complementing the former two critiques of theoretical and practical reason. And for the complete system of all the faculties of the mind – *Vermögen des menschlichen Gemüts* – Kant suggest an *a priori connection between the power of judgment and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure*. As a general architectonic of Kant's transcendental philosophy, this means that the *first critique* connects the a priori principles of pure understanding and the faculty of cognition; the *second critique* connects the a priori law of freedom and the faculty of desire; and the *third critique* connects the power of judgment and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. **Figure 12** (below) shows Kant's own table, in the second introduction, which gives an "overview of all the higher faculties in accordance with their systematic unity."[767] Does Kant's argument from the system of philosophy hold any merit? Or does his appeal to architectonics only serve as a means of rhetoric transition? We will remain agnostic to this question, and simply accept Kant's introduction of his third critical work as a critique of the power of judgment and its connection to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.

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[767] KdU 5:198.

All the faculties of the mind	Faculty of cognition	*A priori* principles	Application to
Faculty of cognition	Understanding	Lawfulness	Nature
Feeling of pleasure and displeasure	Power of judgment	Purposiveness	Art
Faculty of desire	Reason	Final end	Freedom

Figure 12: Kant's table on the higher faculties.

We can define a *critique* as the investigation into the *possibilities and boundaries* of the transcendental principles of the higher faculty of cognition – that is, of pure reason.[768] What is the transcendental principle of the power of judgment, and thereby its possibilities and boundaries? In the second introduction, Kant makes a distinction between the *field*, *territory*, and *domain* of a concept. A field – *Feld* – is the scope of objects that is determined by that concept, "regardless of whether a cognition of the [object] is possible or not". A territory – *Boden* – is the "part of this field within which cognition is possible for us". And a domain – *Gebiet* – is the "part of the territory in which these [concepts] are legislative".[769] Now, the transcendental laws of understanding, grounded by the critique of theoretical reason, has their legislative domain in the immanent (sensible) nature of appearance. The transcendental law of freedom, grounded by the critique of practical reason, has its legislative domain in the transcendent (supersensible) realm of the thing in itself.[770] As for the a priori legislation of transcendental principles, the laws of understanding and law of freedom *exhausts* the number of domains in Kant's system of philosophy. That is, there can be *no third domain* for the transcendental principle of the power of judgment. And so we ask, what territory remains open for the power of judgment to govern?

What is the power of judgment – *die Urteilskraft*? It is "the faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general".[771] The general concepts are given by understanding for the power of judgment to determine nature. This means that a transcendental principle of the power of judgment cannot itself be a concept for the determination of objects, but rather a principle reflecting the conformity – *Übereinstimmung* – of nature to our ability to judge it according to concepts. In other words, it would "have to be the concept of a purposiveness of nature in behalf

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[768] KdU 5:167
[769] KdU 5:174.
[770] KdU 5:175-176 & KdU 20:201-202.
[771] KdU 20:201.

of our faculty for cognizing it, insofar as for this it is required that we be able to judge the particular as contained under the general and subsume it under the concept of nature."[772]

What kind of conformity between nature and our ability to judge is expressed in the transcendental principle of the power of judgment? The transcendental concepts of pure understanding are the conditions for the possibility of nature whatsoever. But these transcendental conditions do not by themselves provide a sufficient basis for the power of judgment to produce an organized and intelligible understanding of natural lawfulness. That is, the judgment on empirical nature through transcendental laws alone gives us nothing but a *raw and chaotic aggregate of different and unrelated lawful relations*:[773]

> "For although experience constitutes a system in accordance with transcendental laws, which contain the condition of the possibility of experience in general, there is still possible such an infinite multiplicity of empirical laws and such a great heterogeneity of forms of nature, which would belong to particular experience, that the concept of a system in accordance with these (empirical) laws must be entirely alien to the understanding, and neither the possibility, let alone the necessity, of such a whole can be conceived" [774]

The transcendental principle of the power of judgment must therefore be the conformity of nature to the logical idea of a systematic unity. That is, a purposiveness – *Zweckmäßigkeit* – of nature for a thoroughgoing lawful interconnection of all empirical concepts, in a "hieratical order of species and genera".[775] Although Kant himself does not invoke such terminological distinction, we could say that although the categories of pure understanding provides a sufficient basis for a *transcendental concept of nature*, we require the technique of the power of judgment to secure an adequate *empirical concept of nature* – that is, as the organization of appearing objects of experience according to a unified system.[776]

When the power of judgment invokes its own principle of purposiveness it enters a state of reflection – *Reflexion*. As opposed to the subsummation of a determining power of judgment

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[772] KdU 20:202f.
[773] KdU 20:209.
[774] KdU 20:203
[775] KdU 20:213. Or, as Hannah Ginsborg puts it: "without the background assumption that nature is divided into classes to which our putative concepts can purport to correspond, the idea of an empirical concept's agreeing, or for that matter, failing to agree with nature, would be devoid of content." Ginsborg, Hannah (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 138.
[776] Somewhat similar, Allison refers the mere transcendental state of lawfulness as "transcendental chaos" or "disorder at the transcendental level". Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 35.

– *bestimmende Urteilskraft*. To reflect or to consider – *Überlegen* – Kant understands as "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."[777] As Kant introduces the transcendental principle of purposiveness through the problem of empirical nature as a logical system, the power of judgment reflects on a manifold of empirical representations in relation to the regulative idea of nature as a thoroughgoing connection of a unified system. The power of judgment is reflecting as opposed to determining because the *general concept for the subsummation of appearing objects is not given*. That is, reflecting judgment can search for an ever-increasing degree of "classification of the manifold", and "specification of the manifold under a given concept", but the logical system is ultimately *only an idea*, whose unconditional totality can never be found as a corresponding reality in empirical experience. The reflection on purposiveness in nature thus represents a *heuristic principle for the investigation of a possible systematic unity of a given manifold*.[778]

Kant elaborates further on the meaning of judgmental reflection through the neologism of *heautonomy*. The reflecting power of judgment does not have its own domain of objective legislation, and is therefore not autonomous, as is the case for pure understanding and pure practical reason. But the reflecting judgment nonetheless expresses a *subjective validity* in the purposiveness of nature for our faculties of cognition. This purposiveness is merely *formal*. As such, the specific content of a given systematic unity of nature is always empirically *contingent*. But the assumption that nature through its mere form is susceptible to our classification and specification reflects a transcendental *necessity*. In other words: the reflecting power of judgment is *heautonomous* in the sense that it reflects on the manifold of empirical experience as if – *als ob* – nature itself was given as art:

> "Now since such a classification is not a common experiential cognition, but an artistic one, nature, to the extent that it is thought of as specifying itself in accordance with such a principle, is also regarded as art, and the power of judgment thus necessarily carries with it *a priori* a principle of the technique of nature, which is distinct from the nomothetic of nature in accordance with transcendental laws of understanding in that the latter can make its principle valid as a law but the former only as a necessary presupposition."[779]

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[777] KdU 20:211.
[778] KdU 20:214-215 & 20:205.
[779] KdU 20:215

When we think of the conventional meaning of a judgment, as a determining judgment, we usually think of the cognitive act of making a propositional statement about the world. The validity of such judgment is then evaluated by virtue of its objective truth – that is, the correspondence between the proposition and the appearing object of nature.[780] However, for Kant's novel conception of a power of judgment that reflects on the *formal purposiveness of nature* there can be no such objective validity. That is, the transcendental principle of reflective judgment does not provide any *material* content for our determination of natural lawfulness, but merely assumes the *form* of nature as being susceptible to the organization of empirical lawfulness according to a unified system. Formal purposiveness is not an objective determination but a *subjective state of mind*, as the power of judgment reflects on the conformity of nature to our cognitive abilities. But what then, becomes the determining ground for the *subjective validity* of such reflective judgment? It is at this point that Kant introduces the *a priori* connection between the power of judgment and the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*.

All faculties of the human mind, according to Kant, can be traced back to the faculty of cognition – *Erkenntnisvermögen*; the feeling of pleasure and displeasure – *Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*; and the faculty of desire – *Begehrungsvermögen*.[781] The feeling of pleasure and displeasure is usually thought of as the sentiment or emotion accompanying the attainment of an end.[782] When we define it as such, feeling becomes a faculty of the mind that is entirely contingent on empirical experience. But Kant now suggests an *a priori* connection to reflective judgment, such that a critique of the power of judgment also entails a *critique of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure*.[783] The transcendental validity for reflecting judgment is not the objective correspondence of whatever empirically contingent lawfulness we might reflect upon, but the subjective state of purposiveness in the power of judgment itself, which invokes a feeling of pleasure:

> "In fact, although in the concurrence of perceptions with laws in accordance with
> universal concepts of nature (the categories) we do not encounter the least effect on
> the feeling of pleasure in us nor can encounter it, because here the understanding
> proceeds unintentionally, in accordance with its nature, by contrast the discovered
> unifiability of two or more empirically heterogenous laws of nature under a principle

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[780] E.g., KdrV A642/ B670. Allison states that every determining (or "cognitive") "judgment makes a claim about its purported object and therefore has a truth *value* (is true or false)". Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 20.
[781] KdU 20:205f
[782] KdU 5:187.
[783] KdU 20:207.

that comprehends them both is the ground of a very noticeable pleasure, often indeed of admiration, even of one which does not cease though one is already sufficiently familiar with its object."[784]

When we make a reflecting judgment on the formal purposiveness of nature for the regulative idea of logical system of empirical lawfulness, we experience a sense of pleasure, or even admiration – *Bewunderung*.[785] Because this feeling originates in relation to the mere internal and subjective state of reflecting judgment itself, based on its own transcendental principle, as opposed to the external and empirically contingent state of a lawful object, the judgment express a transcendental necessity and is therefore universally valid for all human beings.[786]

Reflections on Logical, Aesthetic and Teleological Purposiveness

We have now introduced the reflecting power of judgment and its transcendental principle of purposiveness through the problem of nature as a logical system. That is, presenting reflecting judgment as the transcendental basis for the organizing of the manifold of empirical lawfulness into a continuous, hierarchical unity of genera and species. This interpretive pathway reflects the initial route taken by Kant himself in the first introduction, and it is at least partially retraced in the second introduction. Although Kant's terminology is not entirely consistent, we may refer to the transcendental principle for the development of a logical system of empirical lawfulness as the principle of *logical purposiveness*.[787] However, this is not the only variation of the principle of reflecting judgment. Both introductions also present the principles of *aesthetic* and *teleological* purposiveness, which later forms the basis of the two main parts of the third critique, as the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* and the *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*.[788]

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784 KdU 5:187.
785 KdU 5:187.
786 KdU 5:187.
787 See e.g., KdU 20:216 & 20:217.
788 As alternative formulations, which will be used later on, we can also use the terms "*logical and formal*" for logical purposiveness, "*subjective and formal*" for aesthetic purposiveness, and "*objective*" for teleological purposiveness. This denomination may serve to accentuates a possible connection between logical and aesthetic purposiveness, which will be a main concern in chapter four. Paul Guyer makes additional subdivisions of the principle of aesthetic and teleological purposiveness, ending up with five different principles: "In the

We approach the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with the intent to develop our own concept of the causal meaning of environments. This means that the principle of logical purposiveness will remain at the center of our attention in this chapter. However, we also look for ways in which aesthetic and teleological purposiveness can serve to *support* our concept of causal meaning. Is there a relationship between the different principles? Kant's general introduction to the power of reflecting judgment is initially made through the problem of nature as a logical system. It may therefore come as a surprise that Kant does not appear to continue his inquiry into the principle of logical purposiveness in the main text. That is, Kant do provide several suggestive yet inconclusive hints, both in the introductions and in the main text, but an explicit investigation into the connection between the three principles remains absent.[789] In the present subchapter, we will begin with a general outline of the principles of logical, aesthetic, and teleological purposiveness, emphasizing their differences. In the following subchapters, we will explore the ways in which we can exploit their possible connections for our own interpretation. This in turn will lead us to form our own concept of causal meaning, as the conclusion of this chapter. It will also pave the way for our next and final chapter, where we use Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment as the basis for our own concept of the ground of nature as willing and freedom.

As a general definition, we can say that the power of judgment always relates to an *object* that is judged. For determining judgment, this object is the *correspondence* between a concept and the object of appearance. For reflecting judgment, it is either the *relationship* between objects of appearances, or the *relationship* between appearance and one's faculty of cognition in general.[790] One way to distinguish between the three principles of purposiveness, is by pointing to the relationship between reflection and determination for the object that is judged. On the one hand, the object of logical purposiveness is judged according to both the

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introduction and in the two main parts of this work, Kant describes at least five distinct forms of reflecting judgment: the use of reflecting judgment to search for a *system* of scientific concepts and laws, described in both versions of the introduction to the work; *aesthetic* judgment, which takes two forms, namely the judgment of *beauty* and the judgment on the *sublime*; and *teleological* judgment, which also has at least two forms, namely, judgment on the purpose rather than merely mechanical organization of *particular organisms* in nature, and the judgment that *nature as a whole* constitutes a single system with a determinable end." Guyer, Paul (2003), "Kant's Principles of Reflecting Judgment", page 2.

[789] As Paul Guyer writes: "But Kant's treatment of systematicity [*logical purposiveness*] is both brief and obscure, and it is far from clear how it bears on issues of continuing interest such as the problem of induction and the structure of scientific theories as well as how it is connected to Kant's own theory of aesthetic judgment." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 57.

[790] See KdU 20:211.

reflecting and the determining power of judgment. That is, even though we will never accomplish an objective understanding of nature as a *complete* unified system of lawfulness, it nonetheless remains a heuristic goal of logical purposiveness to advance towards the subsummation of ever greater unity, manifold, and continuity in our understanding of nature. In other words, the logical purposiveness of reflecting judgment stands in service of a possible subsummation of determining judgment. On the other hand, the objects of aesthetic and teleological purposiveness are *judged as objects of pure reflection*.[791] That is, the object of beauty and sublimity, as well as natural ends and the idea of nature on the whole as a unified system, will never become objects for the subsummation of determining judgment. Let us now use this distinction to address each principle in turn.

(**i**) We begin with the principle of **logical purposiveness** (also known as *logical and formal* purposiveness). The regulative idea of a logical system, introduced in *Critique of Pure Reason*, expresses a systematic unity of mechanical lawfulness. The task of reflecting judgment and the principle of logical purposiveness, introduced in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, is to investigate into the manifold of empirical lawfulness, in search for *sameness in kind* under an ever-increasing universality of genera, as well as a potentially infinite *specification of the variety* kept within each genus. As we stated above, to reflect means "to compare and to hold together given representations […] in relation to a concept thereby made possible."[792] Once the reflecting judgment through the comparison of a given manifold has unified the empirical lawfulness under a general concept, then the faculty of understanding has gained a new genus for the subsummation of nature through the determining judgment. That is, the *achievement* of the logical-reflecting judgment is the fixation of natural lawfulness into an *organized state of determination*. However, the regulative idea of the logical system remains unconditional, expressing a complete and thoroughgoing determination – *durchgängig Bestimmung* – of the manifold of natural lawfulness, and can therefore never be achieved within the confines of empirical experience.[793] This means that the object of inquiry for logical purposiveness – that

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[791] Allison writes: "not every reflective judgment involves a corresponding determination. For it turns out that there is such a thing as 'merely reflective judgment' […] aesthetic judgment of reflection […] and teleological judgment." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 44.

[792] KdU 20:211

[793] On the never-ending development towards an understanding of nature as a unified system, Paul Guyer writes: "Knowledge of empirical law is not simply a matter of filling in the schema provided by the categories with the details offered by empirical intuition, but of projecting the idea of systematicity upon such data and attempting thereby to move from known to new laws – an open-ended process which can never lead to completely determinate results, but without which we have neither a method for coping with the boundless multiplicity of

is, the systematic unity of empirical nature – involves a *perpetual dynamic relationship* between the investigation of sameness and variety in lawfulness, guided by the heuristic principle of nature's conformity with the regulative idea of a complete logical system, and the determination of the manifold of lawfulness by an incomplete but very real understanding of empirical nature as a unified system. In other words: *In relation to nature as a logical system of empirical lawfulness, the power of judgment is simultaneously and dynamically logically reflecting and logically determining.*[794]

This dynamic between the initial investigative reflection and the subsequent determination of empirical lawfulness as a unified system is echoed in the connection between the power of judgment and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The feeling of pleasure is connected a priori to the subjective state of reflection when the power of judgment *discovers* that nature is in fact purposive for our idea of a logical system. But once this organization of empirical nature is fixed, and the acute sense of purposiveness is gradually lost to the determinate understanding of everyday familiarity, so too does the feeling of pleasure and admiration dwindle:[795]

> "To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed. – It thus requires study to make us attentive to the purposiveness of nature for our understanding in our judging of it, where possible bringing heterogenous laws of nature under higher though always still

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empirical observation nor any basis for even a qualified satisfaction of the demand for necessity in empirical laws." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 55.

[794] In support of our claim, Allison writes: "reflection and determination are best seen as complementary poles of a unified activity of judgment (the subsummation of particulars under universals), rather than as two only tangentially related activities pertaining to two distinct faculties. Accordingly, every ordinary empirical judgment involves moments of both reflection and determination". Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 44.

[795] Paul Guyer initially claims that there are no connection between logical purposiveness and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure according to the *first* introduction: "Yet at least in the First Introduction, he also suggests that it is only *aesthetic* judgment, particularly the judgment of beauty, that reveals a special connection between the faculty of judgment and the faculty for feeling pleasure and displeasure […], and he says nothing about any connection between the discovery of systematicity among our empirical concepts of nature and the felling of pleasure and displeasure." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 59. However, he does ultimately concede, at least partially, that such a connection is made in the *second* introduction. See Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 70-71.

empirical ones, so that if we succeed in this accord of such laws for our faculty of cognition, which we regard as merely contingent, pleasure will be felt."[796]

The object of judgment for logical purposiveness involves a dynamic relationship between a reflecting and a determining power of judgment. This definition separates logical purposiveness from aesthetic and teleological purposiveness, which are judgments of *pure reflection*. That is, the objects of aesthetic and teleological reflection can never be fixed into an objective entity of determining judgment. But even though the judgments of aesthetics and teleology share this property of being purely reflective, they are simultaneously two very different forms of purposiveness. So how can we distinguish between the two? Once again, we look to Kant's definition of reflection: "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."[797] This definition entails two different possibilities. In the first case the judgment of reflection compares and hold together *given representations with one's faculty of cognition in general*. This is a purely *subjective judgment* – that is, providing no cognitive judgment for our understanding – and corresponds to the aesthetic reflections on beauty and the sublime. In the second case, reflective judgment holds and compares together *given representations with other specific representations*. This is a judgment on *objective purposiveness* – expanding our cognition of natural lawfulness beyond the scope of a mere mechanical system – and corresponds to the teleological judgment on the inner purposiveness of *natural ends*, the relative purposiveness of *means*, and the purposiveness of the *totality of nature* as a teleological system.[798]

(**ii**) We continue with the principle of **aesthetic purposiveness** (also known as *subjective and formal* purposiveness). What does it mean for the power of judgment to reflect on the subjective purposiveness of a given empirical representation for one's faculty of cognition in general? Looking back on our interpretation of *Groundwork* in chapter two, we remember Heidegger's novel connection between the spontaneous act of the transcendental apperception and Kant's analysis of the determining ground of free will. Kant now revisits the self-active faculty of cognition – *selbsttätigen Erkenntnisvermögen* – similar to the analysis in

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[796] KdU 5:187
[797] KdU 20:211
[798] KdU 20:211

the transcendental deduction in *Critique of Pure Reason*.[799] To every empirical concept there belongs three actions: The (1) apprehension – *Auffassung* – "of the manifold of intuition;" the (2) comprehension – *Zusammenfassung* – "i.e., the synthetic unity of the consciousness of this manifold in the concept of an object"; and the (3) presentation – *Darstellung* – "of the object corresponding to this concept in intuition."[800] The first step corresponds to the synthesis of sense perception from intuition into an object of appearance in the power of imagination – *Einbildungskraft*. The second step corresponds to the synthetic unity of cognition through the faculty of understanding. And the third step corresponds to the synthesis in the subsummation of the object of appearance under the concepts of understanding through the *determining* power of judgment. Or simply put: the sense perception of appearance is given as an object of possible cognition in the faculty of imagination, and the unity of consciousness in understanding provides the basis for the appearing object to be subsumed under concepts by the determining power of judgment, thus creating objective cognition.

However, the use of *reflecting* judgment is initiated in the conspicuous predicament where *no general concept is given*. This means that the power of judgment, in the third step of self-active cognition, holds and compare the empirical manifold in imagination, not with a specific concept of understanding, but with the *general ability of understanding for cognition*. The principle that guides this reflection is *formal and subjective*. That is, reflecting the conformity of the mere form of the appearing object, preceding any subsummation, thereby judging a strictly subjective agreement, as a *harmonious free play*, between imagination and understanding.[801] The aesthetic judgment "contributes nothing at all to the cognition of the object."[802] It is a judgment on the *internal state of mind*, which, through the connection of the transcendental principle of purposiveness, "arouses the feeling of pleasure and displeasure."[803]

> "If pleasure is connected with the mere apprehension (*apprehensio*) of the form of an
> object of intuition without a relation of this to a concept for a determinate cognition,
> then the representation is thereby related not to the object, but solely to the subject,
> and the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that

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[799] KdU 20:220
[800] KdU 20:220
[801] KdU 20:224
[802] KdU 20:222
[803] KdU 20:222. Allison adds: "the feeling of pleasure is not simply the effect of such a harmony (though it is that); it is also the very means through which one becomes aware of this harmony, albeit in a way that does not amount to cognition." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 54.

are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play, and thus merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object."[804]

The principle of aesthetic purposiveness is arguably the most enigmatic component in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It is also the part of reflecting judgment that Kant holds to be the most fundamental.[805] The presentation given above is an excerpt of Kant's analysis in the first introduction and is obviously lacking. However, because the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* is the main concern in the next and final chapter, we will refrain from further elaboration into the meaning of aesthetic purposiveness at this point of our investigations.

(**iii**) Finally, we turn to the principle of **teleological purposiveness** (also known as *objective* purposiveness). If aesthetic judgment is the reflection on the subjective relation between a given empirical (pre-conceptual) representation and the faculty of cognition in general, then teleological judgment is the reflection on the *objective relation between different empirical representations*. This is a cognitive judgment – *Erkenntnisurteil* – expanding our understanding of natural lawfulness beyond the systematic unity of *mechanical* lawfulness. But its central concept of a natural end – *Naturzweck* – is still only a regulative idea that goes beyond the limits of a possible determinate object of empirical experience. That is, the *systematic teleological unity* of natural lawfulness will forever remain an object of pure reflection:

> "In contrast [to aesthetic judgment], if empirical concepts and even empirical laws are already given in accordance with the mechanism of nature and the power of judgment compares such a concept of the understanding with reason and its principle of the possibility of a system, then, if this form is found in the object, the purposiveness is judged objectively and the thing is called a natural end, whereas previously things were judged as indeterminately purposive natural forms."[806]

Kant initially defines natural ends with respect to the organization of specific entities as *organisms*, or the organized beings of *organic technique*.[807] But in the main text – in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* – it becomes clear that the same teleological structure can also be extrapolated to nature as a whole.[808] So we begin by asking: What is the general meaning

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[804] KdU 5:189f
[805] See KdU 5:193 & 20:244.
[806] KdU 20:221
[807] KdU 20:234
[808] KdU 5:379. Paul Guyer seems to argue that this 'extrapolation' to nature as a teleological *whole* is precisely a consequence of our initial judgment on individual organisms: "That is, we must not just represent the parts and the whole of organisms as reciprocally related, but must also be able to conceive of some purpose for their very

of a natural end? Kant defines the concept of an end, or a purpose – *Zweck* – as following: "Now since the concept of an object insofar as it at the same time contains the ground of the reality of this object is called an end". The concept of purposiveness – *Zweckmaßigkeit* – is in turn defined as the "correspondence [*Übereinstimmung*] of a thing with that constitution of things that is possible only in accordance with ends".[809] At first glance, this definition no doubt appears enigmatic. Developing an interpretation step by step, we begin by acknowledging that the end is given as an *empirical concept of a thing*. Unlike a mere mechanical representation of nature, this concept functions as the *final cause of that thing – Endursache*.[810] A judgment is *teleological* if it identifies a concept, as the final cause of an object, to be the *ground of the possibility for the existence of that object*. But what, specifically, does it mean for an empirical concept as final cause to be the ground of the reality of a thing? The grounding relation between a final cause and an empirical object as natural end is fundamentally a *relationship between the whole and its parts*. In the earlier case of reflecting judgment on logical purposiveness, the system of empirical nature was *mechanical*, which means that the manifold of parts is first given in experience, only to be subsequently investigated for their possible organization according to a unified system. However, for a teleological judgment, the *lawful organization of the whole must be given as the condition for the possibility of the lawfulness of its parts*. Kant expands further on this relationship in part two of the main text: First, the parts of a natural end are "possible only through their relation to the whole."[811] Second, the parts are structured in a reciprocal relationship to each other and the whole, so that *each part is both cause and effect to the organization of the whole*. The complete idea of a natural end thus reads: The ground of the possibility of a teleological object is the thoroughgoing interconnection between all its parts in a reciprocal causal relation to each other and to the object as a whole. But this teleological form of systematization remains a mere idea, forever transcending the limits of a determinate cognition of empirical experience, and thus strictly an object of reflecting judgment. The principle for the reflection of teleological judgment is *objective purposiveness*, inquiring into natural lawfulness *as if* the manifold of parts in empirical experience were given in conformity with their teleological interconnection and unity of a whole.

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existence. Moreover, once we have conceived of an intelligent and purposive author of organic nature, it is inevitable for us to conceive of such a being as the author of all of nature, and as having a purpose in the creation of nature as a whole". Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 95.
[809] KdU 5:180.
[810] KdU 20:234.
[811] KdU 5:373.

Aesthetic Reflection as the Ultimate Foundation of Causal Meaning

How does the reflections on aesthetics and teleology connect to the initial principle of logical purposiveness? And how can we ultimately utilize these connections for our own concept of the causal meaning of environments? We begin with the relationship between logical and aesthetic purposiveness. As an initial caveat, we must acknowledge that it is entirely possible to regard these principles as altogether separate, sharing only a common basis in the faculty of reflecting judgment.[812] One could then approach the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* as Kant's contribution to the philosophy of natural beauty, theory of art, and reflections on the genius of the artist, irrespective of any ambitions relating to cognition and philosophy of science.[813] No doubt has this manner of interpretation gained a substantial legacy in the history of Western philosophy.[814] But if this is truly Kant's intended purpose for his theory of taste, then it as also strikingly out of touch with the themes and questions raised in the two introductions. In addition to Kant's general presentation of aesthetic judgment in the introductions, he also gives us several more or less subtle hints at its connection to the reflections on logical and teleological purposiveness. This connection becomes most explicit towards the end of both introductions, when all three principles of purposiveness have been established. Kant now seems to suggest that *aesthetic judgment takes precedence over the other two*. And even more so, that *aesthetic reflection is somehow foundational to the entire third critique*. The second introduction reads:

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[812] As Henry E. Allison writes, comparing the principle of natural purposiveness in the introductions and the critique of aesthetic power of judgment: "At first glance at least, the account of reflective judgment and its *a priori* principle, the purposiveness of nature […] does not seem to have much, if anything, to do with taste and aesthetics judgment." Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 43.

[813] As Ingvild Torsen states: "The subjectivist turn of modern aesthetics makes taste central for the inquiry into art and it entails […] that the object of aesthetic comportment is considered only with respect to the way it is experienced by the subject. Kant's third *Critique* is the most thorough and systematic example of such an inquiry […]". Torsen, I. (2016), "Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics", page 20.

[814] E.g., according to Hannah Ginsborg: "Kant's view that aesthetic judgment is based on the principle of the systematicity of nature has been rejected as a distortion of his theory of taste. And more generally, the difficulties surrounding the connection have cast doubt on whether Kant's theory of taste stands in any more than a superficial relation to the rest of the *Critique of Judgment*." Ginsborg, H. (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 135.

"In a critique of the power of judgment the part that contains the aesthetic power of judgment is essential, since this alone contains a principle that the power of judgment lays at the basis of its reflection on nature entirely *a priori*, namely that of a formal purposiveness of nature in accordance with its particular (empirical) laws for our faculty of cognition, without which the understanding could not find itself in it; whereas no *a priori* ground at all can be given why there must be objective ends of nature".[815]

And similarly in the first introduction:

"It is therefore properly only in taste, and especially with regard to objects in nature, in which alone the power of judgment reveals itself as a faculty that has its own special principle and thereby makes a well-founded claim to a place in the general critique of the higher faculties of cognition, which one would perhaps not have entrusted to it. However, once the capacity of the power of judgment to institute *a priori* principles for itself is granted, then it is also necessary to determine the scope of this capacity, and for this completeness in critique it is required that its aesthetic faculty be recognized as contained in one faculty together with the teleological and as resting on the same principle, for the teleological judgment about things in nature also belongs, just as much as the aesthetic, to the reflecting (not the determining) power of judgment."[816]

Both sections sited above seems to suggest that aesthetic judgment is somehow foundational to all other reflections on natural purposiveness. Having already alluded to the multitude of functions and possible achievements for the reflecting power of judgment, it becomes clear that there are several possible ways to interpret the foundational role of *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. Does the reflections of beauty and sublimity provide a mediating basis for theoretical and practical philosophy, thereby granting a possible bridge between the sensible and the supersensible?[817] Is the analysis of natural teleology ultimately accessible only by way of a critique of aesthetic judgment?[818] The aim of the present chapter is to develop a concept of causal meaning, which means that the principle of logical purposiveness is our main concern. We therefore ask: *How can aesthetic reflection be foundational to the development of empirical nature as a logical system?* Kant writes:

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[815] KdU 5:193
[816] KdU 20:244
[817] Allison and Guyer presents variations on this argument, particularly with respect to the mediating role of the beautiful. See Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, and Guyer, Paul (1993), *Kant and the experience of freedom*.
[818] See e.g., KdU 20:229 & 5:193f.

"Every determining judgment is logical because its predicate is a given objective concept. A merely reflective judgment about a given individual object, however, can be aesthetic if (before its comparison with others is seen), the power of judgment, which has no concept ready for the given intuition, holds the imagination (merely in the apprehension of the object) together with the understanding (in the presentation of a concept in general) and perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes *the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general* (namely the agreement of those two faculties with each other)."[819]

We propose an interpretation of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where aesthetic judgment functions as the *subjective yet foundational element to our investigation into empirical nature as a unified system*.[820] That is, the internal conformity of imagination and understanding, reflected through the principle of a mere formal purposiveness, does not itself yield objective cognition. But this conformity is nonetheless a condition for the possibility of empirical cognition whatsoever:

"What is merely subjective in the representation of an object, i.e., what constitutes its relation to the subject, not to the object, is its aesthetic property; but that in it which serves for the determination of the object (for cognition) or can be so used is its logical validity. In the cognition of an object of the senses both relations are present together."[821]

This connection between aesthetic and logical purposiveness will be the starting point for our next and final chapter four. Approaching aesthetic power of judgment as the foundational state of mind that underlies all understanding of natural lawfulness. And the objects of aesthetic reflection themselves – beauty and sublimity – will form the basis for our own concept of the ground of the causal meaning of nature. As a preliminary step to understand this foundational role of aesthetics we must retrace our original framing of the reflecting power of judgment. Kant begins the first introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* by suggesting an extended meaning of *technique*, as a radical basis for willful action that goes beyond theoretical

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[819] KdU 20:223f. My *italic*.
[820] Hanna Ginsborg supports such line of interpretation: "There is room for disagreement about Kant's own primary purpose in writing the third *Critique*. […] Even while recognizing the importance to Kant's aesthetics and teleology for their own sake, we can attempt to interpret the *Critique of Judgment* as contributing to the understanding of judgment not just in the special sense of discerning aesthetic value or suitability for a purpose, but in the sense relevant to the fundamental question of how cognition is possible." Ginsborg, H. (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 3.
[821] KdU 5:188f

and practical philosophy. All willful action entails a conceptual representation of an object as an end – *Zweck*. This is what *Groundwork* presents as the ground of the self-determination of the will – *Grund der Selbsbestimmung*.[822] This ground is fundamentally twofold. The will can act from the ends grounded by the laws of nature. Or it can act from the end of the moral law grounded by freedom. However, Kant's major discovery in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is a far more radical *preconceptual subjective ground for willful action – as a technique of pure aesthetic reflection*. That is, it is a reflection on the formal and subjective purposiveness – *Zweckmäßigkeit* – of nature for our faculties of cognition, as a precondition for the conceptual representation of ends. Throughout this chapter we have been occupied with the power of reflecting judgment as providing a transcendental basis for empirical nature as a logical system of lawfulness. As such, serving a subjective ground for the representation of theoretical philosophy. But in the next chapter, when including the analysis of both beauty and sublimity, we will demonstrate how reflecting judgment can equally deepen our understanding of the determining ground for practical philosophy, articulating freedom as the abysmal ground that violates natural purposefulness.

Theoretical and practical philosophy present the laws of nature and freedom. A law is the necessary and universal connection of a manifold. The technique of reflecting judgment reveals a normative basis for lawful necessity. The ought – *Sollen* – of the technical imperative is the *acting out of necessity*. This practical necessity is foundational to all forms of reflective judgment. But aesthetic judgment reflects the *subjective comportment of the ought*, prior to any objective representation. As such, it is the ultimate normative foundation for natural lawfulness: Aesthetic judgments "lay claim to necessity and say [...] that *everyone ought to so judge*, which is as much as to say that they have an *a priori* principle for themselves."[823]

To be clear, Kant himself does not claim that the mechanical causality of the second analogy is grounded by the normativity of aesthetic reflection. On the contrary, he explicitly distinguishes the two: "Now this ought [of purposiveness] contains a necessity which is clearly distinguished from physical-mechanical necessity, in accordance with which a thing is possible in accordance with mere laws of efficient causes".[824] Aesthetic judgment is rather the ground for the *organizing* of mechanical causality according to a unified system. But as will become

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[822] GMS 4: 427.
[823] KdU 20:239. My *italic*.
[824] KdU 20:240.

clear in the two remaining subchapters, the organized state of causal meaning is not a mere appendage to an already preexisting nature of fragmented mechanical causality. Rather, in our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant, the *causal meaning that is grounded by the aesthetic power of judgment represents the condition for the possibility of causal nature in general*.

A Possible Teleological Extension for Causal Meaning

Is there a connection between the reflections of logical and teleological judgment? As we mainly consult the analysis given in the two general introductions of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant's answer is seemingly unequivocal. The logical system of empirical lawfulness is not teleological. Any investigation into natural ends is only advisable when all means of mechanical systematization has already been exhausted:

> "We can and should be concerned to investigate nature, so far as lies within our capacity, in experience, in its causal connection in accordance with merely mechanical laws: for in these lie the true physical grounds of explanation, the interconnection of which constitutes scientific cognition of nature through reason."[825]

If we approach the analysis of teleological judgment from the perspective of scientific investigation, then Kant's many examples on organisms certainly lends itself to the conclusion that natural ends are necessary for the expansion from physics to biology, and perhaps also to other domains of natural science. But teleology is thereby also reduced to a *mere supplement* of causal understanding. However, the paragraphs dedicated to natural ends qua organisms in the main text make up a remarkably small part of *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*. This suggests that the expansion for scientific investigation of natural lawfulness is in fact not the primary motivation for Kant's introduction of teleological purposiveness. As is emphasized more strongly in the second introduction, the power of reflecting judgment is introduced as a mediator between theoretical and practical philosophy. A teleological ground of nature is necessary in order to secure the possibility of man to achieve *moral virtue*, and a connection between virtue and the attainment of *happiness*, both within the confines of his

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[825] KdU 20:235.

earthly existence.[826] Kant introduces the idea of man as the final end of nature – *Endzweck der Natur* – as the ultimate basis for the totality of nature as a teleological system.[827]

There are several remarkable similarities between our own Heideggerian project of unifying ontology and ethics, and Kant's argument for teleological reflection as mediator between theoretical and practical philosophy, and thereby the completion of transcendental idealism as a system of philosophy. These similarities could easily have served as the basis for an additional chapter, or even an additional part five. But the overall task of this dissertation – to articulate Heidegger's meaning of being through a Kantian framework of freedom and causality – ultimately takes us to a significantly different intellectual landscape than the one presented in *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*. Our present inquiry into teleology is therefore solely directed towards the concept of causal meaning. Heidegger's basic thought on the meaning of being is fundamentally teleological, in the Kantian sense that the *meaning of being as a whole constitutes a condition for the possibility of existent entities as its parts* – albeit with the additional Heideggerian caveat that the whole and its parts are *ontologically different*. A Heideggerian appropriation of Kant's principle of logical purposiveness thus require us to develop a teleological concept of causal meaning. In the next and final subchapter, we will therefore present an interpretation of the regulative idea of a logical system as a *final cause* of all empirical nature. This means that we will adopt the basic structure from Kant's argument for the whole of nature as a teleological system, but not for the same reasons that Kant himself employs these structures in *Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment*.

The Causal Meaning of Environments

We now have all the pieces necessary to present our own concept of the causal meaning of environments. Before we put the pieces in their place, let us begin by recapitulating the role and significance of this concept. There are in fact two concepts in operation: Environment *and*

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[826] In *Critique of Practical Reason*, the attainment of virtue qua "the *complete conformity* of dispositions [of the will] with the moral law" is secured by the practical postulate of the *immortality of the soul*, and the correspondence of virtue and happiness, by the practical postulate of the *existence of God*. See KdpV 5:122 & 5:124.
[827] KdU 5:378.

causal meaning. The latter is only one of two fundamental aspects of the former. In what sense? In its Heideggerian conception, the concept of environment represents the manifestation of the finitude of nature and thereby the meaning of being. The aim of this dissertation is to develop this concept into a proper metaphysical system through the Kantian framework of freedom and causality. The concept of causal meaning represents the *immanent lawful structure of that which shows itself in the appearance of nature*. The finitude of environment, on the other hand, is the *demarcation of nature through that which hides itself in the appearance of nature – that is, through the transcendence of freedom*. It is only after we establish the concept of a ground of nature in chapter four that we will truly be able to articulate the finitude of environment. This finitude reveals the causal meaning of environment to be *at stake*, and thereby as a fundamentally normative meaning. For the present purpose, we shall confine the analysis of our concept of environment to its immanent causal meaning.

The concept of causal meaning represents our attempt to articulate the *lawful structure of the meaning of being*, as one of the key elements to our inquiry of fundamental ontology. However, to raise the question of the meaning of being within the framework of Kantian metaphysics reflects a violent Heideggerian appropriation. Kant's original analysis operates on several different levels of ontological abstraction. For example, with a gradual increase in complexity, from the simple object of appearance in intuition; to the subsummation of this object under transcendental and empirical concepts of understanding; to the organization of the manifold of empirical lawfulness according to the regulative idea of a unified system. Nowhere does Kant himself seriously raise the question of being as such, as a radical and all-encompassing framework for philosophical investigation like we find with Heidegger.[828] As we nonetheless insist on applying the same Heideggerian frame of thought for Kantian metaphysics, we now ask: Where in this multilayered ontological analysis do we find the primordial causal meaning of being? We begin with the phenomenological premise shared by both Heidegger and Kant: *All understanding of nature originates through phenomenal experience*. Kant's transcendental analysis is made possible only as an act of abstraction from this phenomenal origin. If we simply ask what it means for a thing of nature *to be*, then a

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[828] In fact, in his treatment of the ontological proof for God's existence, Kant seems to express reluctance towards the notion of being as an object of separate investigation: "**Being** is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing or of certain determinations in themselves." KdrV A598/B626.

philosophical answer that is consistent with the *critical turn* of Kant's transcendental idealism have no other choice but to confront the appearance of empirical experience.

Kant presents the reflecting judgment of logical purposiveness as the search for a possible systematic unity of a given manifold of empirical lawfulness. That is, in Kant's analysis, the manifold of the particular is given precedence over the organization of this manifold into a unified whole. This ontological primacy of the particular over the universal mirrors the definition of reflecting judgment as the comparison and evaluation of a given manifold in the case where no general concept for subsummation is given. However, in our interpretation of Kant's depiction of scientific development towards the regulative idea of nature as a logical system, we emphasized how an ongoing empirical investigation entails a *perpetual dynamic between an open investigation of heuristic reflection and the fixation of natural lawfulness into a determinate system*. In other words, a never-ending reciprocal relation between a logically reflecting and a logically determining power of judgment.

What if we interpret the initial state of an entirely unorganized manifold of unrelated empirical lawfulness as an *abstraction* for transcendental analysis? And instead view the ongoing dynamic relationship between the particular and the whole as the *original appearance of nature in empirical experience*. This would be a position akin to Heidegger's argument from hermeneutical facticity – *Faktisität*.[829] Namely, that our understanding of a particular existent entity is *always already situated within an ongoing understanding of phenomenal experience as a whole*. We never encounter a thing of nature in complete isolation from others. To stand in an interconnected whole is the condition for the possibility of both the intelligibility and the unintelligibility of a thing. That is, we understand a thing *as a thing* because it is related to other things within a meaningful whole. And our lack of understanding of a thing is only possible as a manifestation of the incomplete relational determination of that thing. Kant's initial definition of *nature* as a raw aggregate of an infinite manifold of empirical lawfulness is an abstraction. And so, we introduce the concept of *environment* as the concrete manifestation of appearing objects, organized according to a unified system.

Empirical experience is always already situated within a dynamic relationship between the parts and the whole, and so our understanding of *what it means for a thing of nature to be* must equally be traced back to this holistic experiential origin. In forcing Kant's analysis of

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[829] See Heidegger, SZ §41.

logical-reflecting judgment towards this conclusion, we accentuate the teleological nature of our underlying Heideggerian project. One of the most explicit analyses of teleology is given in *The Question Concerning Technology*. In part two, we presented Heidegger's brief but nonetheless significant analysis of Aristotle and the fourfold of causality. We can now retrace this analysis from within the metaphysical framework of Kant's critique of the power of judgment. More specifically, we now aim to articulate Heidegger's teleological foundation through the reflecting judgment of logical purposiveness.[830]

Heidegger's analysis begins as a question of the essence of technology. He rejects the *instrumental* and *anthropological* definitions – that is, as a *means to an end* and as a *human activity*.[831] He then introduces Aristotle as the basis for a more radical investigation. The four causes are all co-responsible for *bringing a thing of nature forth into the phenomenal presence of appearance*. Heidegger uses the example of the sacrificial silver chalice. The first two of causes are matter and form: The silver is the matter – *hyle* – out of which the chalice is made. The form – *eidos* – is the appearance (*Aussehen*) into which the silver is molded. However, we paid particular attention to two latter – the final and the effective cause. Heidegger rejects the translation of *telos* by the modern "aim" or "purpose". The telos of the chalice is instead that "which gives bounds, that which completes".[832] This confining and completing – *das Umgrenzende und Vollendende* – of telos is the *organized whole of the sacrificial practice*. And finally, the concept of effective cause, which Heidegger traces back to the Greek *logos* and *legein*. Logos reflects the *language* of the silversmith – the concepts and ideas internalized

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[830] As with our own Heideggerian transformation of Kant's philosophy into a teleological metaphysics, Frederick Beiser points to a similar tension between Kant and the romantic *'Naturphilosophers'* that came in the 19th century – thinkers like Schelling, Hegel, Schlegel, and Novalis: "The problem is that *Naturphilosophie* grew out of a deep *aporeia* in the Kantian system – namely, its failure to explain the interaction between the intellectual and sensible, the noumenal and phenomenal. Indeed, the romantics' most interesting and plausible argument for their organic concept of nature exploits a very common Kantian strategy: It attempts to provide something like a transcendental deduction of the idea of an organism. In other words, it attempts to show that the constitutive status of the idea of an organism is the necessary condition of the possibility of experience." Beiser, F. (2006), "Kant and *Naturphilosophie*", page 7f. Even though Beiser adheres to the traditional view that the natural teleology of the *Naturphilosophers* is in violation of Kant's original philosophy, he also points to an inherent ambiguity, or "mystery", in the Kantian position: "Kant himself was deeply ambivalent about his regulative doctrines. Nowhere are his vacillations more apparent than in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*. Here Kant explicitly rejects the mere hypothetical and heuristic status of the principles of the systematicity of nature, and he expressly affirms that we must assume there *is* some systematic order in nature, so that the concept of the unity of nature is 'inherent in the objects' (*den Objekten selbst anhängend*) (B 678)." And furthermore: "Unlike the romantics, he [Kant] was content to leave the connection between understanding and sensibility, the intellectual and empirical, a mystery." Beiser, F. (2006), "Kant and *Naturphilosophie*", page 9 & 23.
[831] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 4 (GA 7: 7).
[832] Heidegger, M. (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology*, page 8 (GA 7: 10).

through his craftsmanship. This language does not *produce* the chalice. Instead, it gathers – *versammelt* – the material (*hyle*) and the form (*eidos*) into an object for the sacrificial practice (*telos*).

Heidegger's rejection of the instrumental and the anthropological definition of technology is mirrored by his introduction of a more radical meaning of the final and effective cause. Let us now use this analysis to elaborate on the teleological foundation of our own concept of causal meaning of environments. We start with Heidegger's rejection of the instrumental definition. The point is not to deny that we constantly act out the means necessary for the attainment of a purpose given – that is, that we act out according to technical imperatives. Rather, through his questioning of the essence of technology, Heidegger suggests that there is a primordial sense of teleology that underlies our use of instrumental rationality. *The phenomenal reality of an end, and the means available for its instrumental attainment, presuppose that a praxis that connects the two are already given.* That is, a condition for the possibility that we can engage with the world according to means and ends, is that our surroundings are already organized as a unified system. We can choose to pursue a career because career paths are already laid open to us. Or we can commit ourselves to solve a scientific problem, because a problem is already made available through the historical development of specific disciplinary scientific practices. Heidegger's radical interpretation of *telos* reflects the *original assembling of nature into the organized unity of an environment*. That is, only through the organization of the infinite manifold of nature into the systematic unity of an environment can there be something like instrumental rationality.

In our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant's analysis of reflecting judgment, the logical idea of nature as a unified system of lawfulness becomes the *final cause* of a teleological system. But what is teleology? The grounding *telos* is not the instrumental attainment of an end by effectuating its necessary means. That is, nature is not teleological because it strives to achieve a *product*; or because it is created for the realization of some *final state* of being. Nature is teleological because all its constituent parts – its objects, subjects, activities, means and ends – are all made available as existent entities of phenomenal appearance through the praxis that gathers their environment into a unified whole. *The grounding telos is the unifying event of the environmental practice.*

What about Heidegger's rejection of the anthropological definition of technology? Is not the reflection of the power of judgment precisely an *activity of man*? Heidegger identifies the effective cause as the *logos* of the craftsman. But the language of his artistic trade is not a projection of his subjectivity. Instead, it is a language that reflects the purposiveness of nature

itself, as the ground of his willful praxis. This is an *ecocentric turn* for our understanding of human subjectivity, originally conceived through Heidegger's notion of man as *Da-sein*, and later grounded by the *event of appropriation – Ereignis*. With the introduction of Kant, we have now found a basis for a proper metaphysical articulation of the environment as the birthplace of human subjectivity. Through the reflecting judgment of logical purposiveness, man acts out *as if* nature itself was given as art. That is, *the praxis of reflecting judgment is the comportment of man towards a nature that contains the ground of its own systematic unity*.

An environment is the phenomenal appearance of the causal meaning of nature. What is causal meaning? It is the organization of the manifold of empirical lawfulness into a hierarchical order of genera and species. And within this order, the technical connection of means to ends. The object of science is to inquire into this causal meaning, and to develop its interconnections into a determinate system of rigorously defined concepts. That is, as objects for the determining power of judgment. But this scientific investigation is a never-ending process. The determinate system of nature will forever remain incomplete. Ultimately, the unity and thoroughgoing connection of a complete system remains a regulative idea to be acted out.

Example: *The Office Environment*

Let us now end this chapter by illustrating the basic structure of causal meaning with the help of a simple example: *The office environment*. As I sit and write my dissertation I am surrounded by a desk, a computer, books, and other office equipment. The object I sit on is a "chair". This term denotes a general conceptual representation of all objects that are suitable for sitting. The reliability of my particular chair corresponds to a generally perceived lawfulness of chairs as means for the purpose of sitting. As an office chair, I automatically connect its usage to a desk. The desk and chair represent a core unit of an office. I have several pens for taking notes. They all possess the capacity to write but are simultaneously distinguished with respect to the color of their ink, and the level of ease with which my hand is subject to when writing. The pens connect to different types of paper at my disposal. All these things and others belong to the activities I perform at my desk, which in turn connects to the commitments of my employment. My own office is just one of many cells, which together constitute a larger office complex. I interact with the people around me as my "colleagues". This general representation of my fellow human beings corresponds to specific forms of social and cooperative interactions,

typically expressed by collegial norms and etiquettes. I may ask an associate to review a report, or to join me for lunch, but not to clean my apartment.

If we assess the office from the perspective of theoretical determination, then there are only so many components in the unity and interconnections of this environment that is readily articulable, and which may in fact be articulated at all. But the office does not therefore appear as an aggregate of things that are only partially connected. Usually and for the most part, there are no *conspicuous gaps* between different practices, norms and operations, whose connections are initially unknown and inarticulable to the people inhabiting the office environment. Rather, all things appear *as if* they connect to each other, in a seamless and inconspicuous whole. This completion of the incompleteness of theoretical determination, which makes the office environment into a thoroughgoing interconnected whole, is realized through the office practices. That is, the reality of the systematic unity of the office environment is ultimately practical. However, this does not mean that the office is a mere product of its practitioners. That is, the environment is not the social construct of human subjectivity. Rather, it is the environment itself which enables the technical and social practices through which human subjectivity can materialize. At its core, the environment projects a formal purposiveness which incentivizes its residents to act out as if the surrounding landscape were given in conformity with the regulative idea of its causal meaning.

The office is but one of many environments in my life. My home is an environment, situated in a greater milieu of the town I inhabit. I partake in environments of social, cultural, and athletic activities. I also go hiking into the woods and climb the surrounding mountains. All these environments reflect a general potential of nature to manifest an indefinite number of environmental systems. That is, the environmental manifestation of nature is fundamentally plural. Some environments greatly overlap, to the extent that our ability to separate them are concealed by the seamless familiarity of their commensurabilities. Others are conspicuously separated, to the extent that an inhabitant of one environment will suffer an acute sense of alienation when confronted with the incommensurable environmental practices of another. **Figure 13** (below) shows a simple model of the multitude of environments, with varying degrees of overlapping environmental practices.
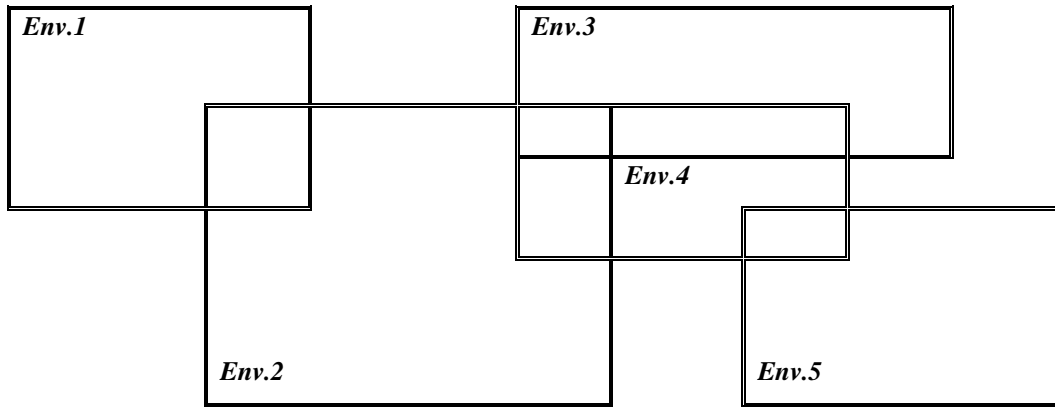
Figure 13: A multitude of partially overlapping environments.

4. The Aesthetic Ground of Willing and Freedom

Our quest to develop a metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene has now reached the final chapter. The task at hand is to offer a systematic articulation of the *normative ground of nature*. This is the third and foundational concept in the conceptual triad of part four – including the essence of man as *ethos*, the finite causal meaning of nature as *environment*, and the ground of nature as *willing and freedom*. We find the basis for our concept of a ground of nature in Kant's analysis of aesthetic reflection on beauty and sublimity, in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. However, let us first begin by recapitulating our achievements in the two previous chapters, in a way that accentuates the aesthetic ground of nature as the missing piece which completes our new metaphysics.

In chapter two, we presented an interpretation of Kant's *Groundwork* as fundamental ontology. We approached the apparent contradiction of free will, not as the acting out of a speculative transcendent subject, but instead as the holding together of willing and freedom in our thought. Man finds himself – his moral essence – in the existential struggle between the willful emergence of a causally determined subject, and the loss of self in the transcending nihilation of causal determination by the abyss of freedom. In chapter three, we established the regulative idea of the causal meaning of environments, as the organizing of natural lawfulness into a unified teleological system of genera and species. We inquired into the reflecting power of judgment and its principle of *logical purposiveness*, in the *two introductions* to Kant's third critique, as the transcendental basis for causal meaning. We also pointed to a possible

interpretation of the principle of *aesthetic purposiveness*, in *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, where the reflecting judgment of beauty and sublimity becomes the subjective yet foundational element for this transcendental basis.

Looking back on the initial interpretation of the Anthropocene in part one, we remember that we connected the metaphysical meaning of our new epoch to a twofold metaphysical transformation. First, as the *identification of nature as the existential foundation of man*. Second, as the revelation of a *grounding normative meaning of nature*. As we now retrace the steps so far taken in part four, we see how the ontological interpretation of *Groundwork* in chapter two corresponds to the first transformative event of the Anthropocene; that is, as the identification of nature as the existential ground of man. Whereas the interpretation of *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in chapter three, inquiring into reflecting judgment and the radical praxis of causal meaning, corresponds to the second transformative event, as the revelation of the grounding normative meaning of nature. However, the full meaning of these transformations is still contingent on an underlying understanding of the ground of nature itself. That is, it is through the ground of nature that human subjectivity can emerge and forego; and from which the subjective basis of causal meaning is put into action, and thereby receives its normative significance. The task now at hand is to develop a metaphysical concept of the *common normative ground of the human subject and the causal meaning of nature*. In other words, a ground that can establish the two transformations of the Anthropocene as one single event.

The ground of nature is the foundation and abyss of the human *subject* and reflects the *subjective* basis for the causal meaning of nature. There is a conspicuous conceptual similarity at play when speaking about the *ground of the subject* as well as a *subjective basis* of nature. This similarity is not a coincidence. In fact, it is now time to demonstrate how the *emergence of a subject* and the *radical praxis of subjective purposiveness* is the same event. That is, revealing the achievements of chapter two and three as an expression of the same *spontaneous act of creation and destruction*. This does not entail a relapse into a metaphysics of subjectivity. Rather, it reflects a profound insight that is shared by Heidegger and Kant in their phenomenological approach to fundamental ontology. Namely, that it is only through a radical questioning of the human subject that we stand to engage with the ontological ground that ultimately transcends human subjectivity.

Now approaching the first major part of the third critique, the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, we do so with the intent to interpret the two central objects of aesthetic reflection – *beauty and sublimity* – as the twofold ground of willing and freedom, forming the ultimate basis for a metaphysics that unifies ontology and ethics. At first glance, this

interpretation will likely appear to be directly at odds with the actual contents of the analytic of beauty and the sublime. Kant emphatically stress the distinction between the objects of pure aesthetic reflection (beauty and sublimity), the objects of cognition (objective nature), and the object of pure willful action (freedom). In fact, one could say that the separation of beauty and sublimity as something altogether different from the objects of theoretical and practical philosophy is essential to Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment. However, despite this categorical distinction, Kant also makes several claims to the connections between aesthetic judgment, cognition, and morality. In this chapter, we aim to exploit these connections for our own Heideggerian appropriation of Kantian metaphysics, no doubt pushing the analysis beyond Kant's original intentions.[833]

We are inquiring into beauty and sublimity as an expression of the ground of nature as willing and freedom. Because freedom is determined by its negative relation to the will, we will start our analysis with the primordial expression of willing as beauty, and then approach the sublimity of freedom as its opposing ground. We begin with a simple question: What is willing? In Kant's own definition, willing is the ability to act in accordance with the representation of laws, either as the causal laws of empirical nature, or as the pure law of practical reason itself. This means that Kant's own concept of freedom and willing is defined as a praxis from the determining ground of concepts – that is, as the conceptually determined means and ends of an action. Beauty and sublimity, on the other hand, are not determined by concepts, but reflect purely aesthetic judgments on a *conceptually indeterminate subjective lawfulness*. It is precisely for this reason that Kant draws a categorical distinction between willful action and aesthetic reflection. But does Kant's definition exhaust the meaning of willing and freedom? And does the definition of willing and freedom as conceptual determination speak to their innermost essence?

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[833] The claim to a connection between judgement of taste and morality is certainly not new, but the specific way in which we intend to go about this connection, which identifies morality as an experience of fundamental ontology, is not common. Here is Allison's general claim on the connection between beauty and morality: "It should not be inferred from this, however, that the connection with morality is merely a side issue, peripheral to the main business of the *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. On the contrary, we shall see that this connection lies at the very heart of Kant's project". Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 195. On a similar note, Guyer writes: "The pleasurable yet disinterested sense of freedom from cognitive or practical constraint – that is, the sense of the unity of aesthetic experience without its superordination to any scientific or moral concepts and purposes – which is at the heart of Kant's explanation of our pleasure in beauty is precisely that which allows aesthetic experience to take on deeper moral significance as an experience of freedom." Guyer, P. (1993), *Kant and the experience of freedom*, page 3.

In our reading of *Groundwork*, we established a fundamental distinction for the determining ground of willing. The *material principle* of the will corresponds to the acting out from an immanent and causally determined nature. Whereas the *formal principle* corresponds to the acting out of a will that internalizes the transcendent, causally independent ground of freedom – that is, as the acting out of a *free will*. We will now introduce yet another distinction that applies to the nature of willing as well as freedom, which we certainly do not find presented explicitly by Kant himself, but which we will argue is equally foundational for an adequate understanding of willful action. We now introduce the distinction between the *objective and the subjective element of willing and freedom*.[834]

Every instance of willful action represents a choice between the *affirmation and the negation of a conceptually determined end*. This conceptual representation corresponds to the objective element of willing and freedom. That is, the objective element for the determining ground of willing is the affirmation of an end. And the objective element of freedom represents the negation of the same end. In other words, each instance of willful action reflects a choice between the being and non-being of a conceptually determined object. But this conceptual representation does not exhaust the nature of willing and freedom. The mere projection of the possibility to affirm or to negate an end does not itself reflect a sufficient determining ground for the will. That is, if the objective element defines willing and freedom as the affirmation and negation of an end, we still need to articulate the subjective element expressed in the underlying *comportment of affirmation and negation* itself. The subjective element of willful choice must express some kind of *normative force*; as that which *incentivizes* the actual acting out of the necessary means to an end, or as the *disruption* of willful action through the negation of its end. This normative force cannot itself be based on the conceptual understanding of objective nature. Instead, it must reflect a *preconceptual subjective lawfulness* that enables conceptual determination in the first place. That is, the subjective lawfulness reflected in the comportment of affirmation and negation.[835] In our appropriation of Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment,

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[834] In *Groundwork*, Kant also use the terms "subjective" and "objective" in his description of *ends* as the determining ground of the will, but only as synonyms for the distinction between the *material* and the *formal* principle of the will. It is therefore important to note that our own distinction between the subjective and the objective elements of willing and freedom is entirely unrelated to Kant's own use of the same terms. See *Groundwork*, 4:427

[835] Bret W. Davis speaks similarly of a *fundamental attunement*: "I suggest that we can understand the notion of will by way of what Heidegger calls a 'fundamental attunement' (*Grundstimmung*)." And further: "A fundamental attunement would be 'fundamental' in the sense that it first opens (one) up (to) a world, prior to the

we will present the subjective element of willing as the emergence of the subject in a state of *harmonious free play*, grounded on the formal purposiveness of natural beauty. And the subjective element of freedom as the *dissolution of the self*, in the face of the un-purposiveness of the abysmal ground of the sublime.

The *Critique of the Power of Aesthetic Judgment* is not a 'theory of art', in the sense of adding a new territory of human experience for the pleasures and excitement of the connoisseur, in a way that is unrelated to the domains of theoretical and practical philosophy. In fact, we claim that the *pure* objects of beauty and sublimity are not the ultimate concern for Kant's aesthetics. For the pure objects of aesthetic reflection are only *exemplars* whose primary purpose is to reveal a subjective yet foundational element of all judgment. That is, beauty and sublimity represent the *special cases* of an aesthetic phenomena that is usually and for the most part reflected as the subjective ground of theoretical and practical philosophy.

Taken individually, the objects of beauty and sublimity exemplifies the subjective ground for the *continuation and disruption of the willful praxis of causal meaning*. That is, as the ground and abyss of natural technique. However, if we hold these two grounding movements together in our thought, they reflect the *primordial struggle that is intrinsic to the meaning of being itself*. To reflect on this struggle is to reveal man's primordial residence in the face of the finite causal meaning of environments – his *oikos*. This finitude reveals the causal meaning as a fundamentally *normative meaning* because it is conditioned by the simultaneous possibility of its continuation and nihilation. To reflect on this finitude is the moral essence of man – his *ethos*. **F**i**gure 14** (below) illustrates the relationship between the subjective and objective element of freedom and willing, and their unification as the primordial revelation of the finitude of environment.

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determination of 'who' is opened up to 'what.'" Davis, Bret W. (2007). *Heidegger and the Will – On the Way to Gelassenheit*, page 6 & 8.

Ground of nature

↙   ↘

Sublime abyss of   Willful ground of
freedom   beauty

↓   ↓

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┌─────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────┐
│  Subjective element │                    │  Subjective element │
│  Dissolution of self│   Preconceptual    │ Harmonious free play│
│           ↓         │       praxis       │          ↓          │
│  Objective element  │                    │  Objective element  │
│  Conceptual         │    Conceptual      │  Conceptual         │
│  Negation           │   representation   │  determination      │
└─────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────┘
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↓   ↓

Disruption of causal   Willful causal action
action

↘   ↙

- Oikos -
Finite causal meaning of
environment

↓

- Ethos -
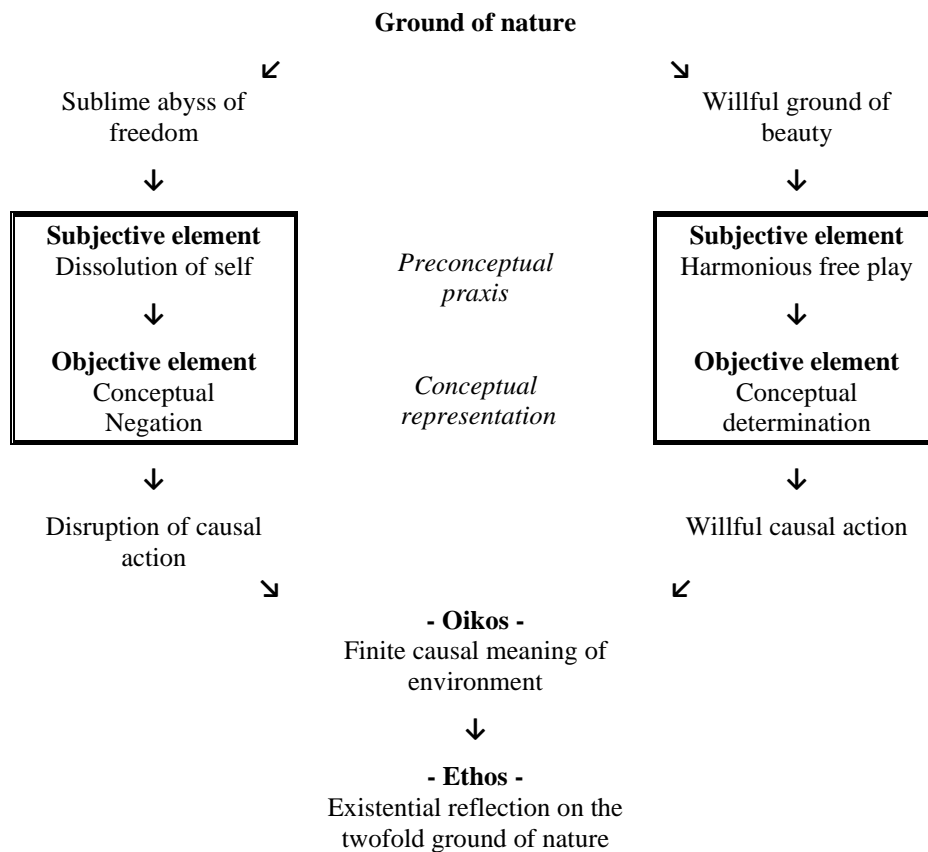Existential reflection on the
twofold ground of nature

Figure 14: Subjective and objective element of freedom and willing.

Following Kant's standard setup, the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment* consists of an *analytic*, a *deduction*, and a *dialectic*. In our Heideggerian appropriation, we will mainly confine our interpretation to the analytic of beauty and of sublimity. In the **first subchapter**, we go through all *four moments in the analytic of beauty*, with the intent to be as faithful to the original text as possible. And equally, in the **second subchapter**, we present the *analytic of the mathematically and dynamically sublime*, without exceeding the limits of Kantian orthodoxy. In the **third subchapter**, we present our plan for a Heideggerian appropriation of Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment as fundamental ontology. We accentuate two interpretive pathways that is made available to us by Kant's original analysis. First, the idea of reflecting judgment of beauty as a *subjective condition for the possibility of objective cognition*. Second, the connection between aesthetic judgment – in particular, the object of sublimity – and *human morality*. Appropriating these interpretative pathways, we present the aesthetic objects of beauty and sublimity as ground and abyss for the causal meaning of nature, and thereby simultaneously as the primordial revelation of human morality. In the **fourth subchapter**, we offer a seven-part argument for aesthetic judgment as the subjective ground of causal meaning.

Utilizing Heidegger's *ontological difference* as an interpretive lens for the transcendental ideas at play in aesthetic judgment, we present the subjective and formal purposiveness of harmonious free play as a *radical praxis that acts out the finite normative causal meaning of an environment*. In the **fifth subchapter**, we offer three examples to illustrate the main argument given in the fourth subchapter above. Rigorous *game*, improvised *play*, and spontaneous *dance*, represents three different degrees of conceptual determination in aesthetic judgment. That is, in a game the rules are mostly determinate; in play the rules are in a state of flux; and in dance, the lawful behavior of the dancer is entirely indeterminate. What unites all three examples is the subjective state of harmonious free play. In the **sixth subchapter**, we turn to the idea of the human *subject as the spontaneous act of willful praxis*. Having demonstrated aesthetic judgment of beauty and sublimity as the subjective foundation for causal meaning – by technical argument and through examples – we now present human subjectivity as the intellectual unity of the environmental praxis. We end by utilizing a painting by Caspar David Friedrich, *The Monk by the Sea*, as a way to illustrate the disintegration of the empirical self in the face of the sublime, and the subsequent recognition by the monk of his existential origin. In the **seventh subchapter**, we repeat the same basic argument as in the three previous subchapters, but now with an emphasis on the ground of willing and freedom itself. That is, we present a short but technical definition of beauty and sublimity as the *subjective foundation for the instrumental volition of means and ends*. In the **eighth subchapter**, we conclude our presentation of the ground of nature with the concept of *environmental responsibility*. Utilizing the transformative event of the Anthropocene as example, we present the metaphysical meaning of responsibility as the unity of willing and freedom in human thought.

The Analytic of Beauty

As we look back on our previous reading of the two introductions of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we recall that the basic argument for the aesthetic judgment has already been presented. Beauty is the object of a *reflecting judgment on the formal and subjective purposiveness of nature*, *which connects to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure*. And the sublime, in turn, is the ultimate violation of this purposiveness. Now approaching the analytic of beauty in the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, our task is simply to elaborate on the same judgmental structure already encountered. The analytic is structured according to four

moments, as the exposition of the judgment of taste concerning its *quality, quantity, relation, and modality*. Throughout these moments, Kant gradually presents the structural elements of aesthetic judgment. It is only when we place all these elements together at the end, as a unified experience of aesthetic reflection, that we stand to grasp the full meaning of beauty. A central point in Kant's critique of taste throughout all four moments is to distinguish the subjective judgment on beauty from logical (objective) judgments of cognition, as well as the desirable objects of the agreeable and the good. This in turn reflects the general separation of aesthetic judgment from both theoretical and practical philosophy. However, after we have established the main components of both the analytic of beauty and the analytic of the sublime, it will ultimately be our goal to show how aesthetic judgment reflects a *common ground for ontology and ethics*.

FIRST MOMENT: *QUALITY*

"Definition of the beautiful derived from the first moment.

Taste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest. The object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful."[836]

The reflecting judgment on beauty, which Kant also refers to as the judgment of taste – *das Geschmacksurteil* – is *aesthetic*. The concept of aesthetics is first contrasted to *logical* judgment, that is, to the objective judgment of cognition – *Erkenntnisurteil*.[837] The representation in a logical judgment stands in a relation to an object. That is, as the correspondence between a concept of understanding and the object of appearance. However, for an aesthetic judgment of taste, the representation does not relate to an object, but solely to the internal state of the subject. Hence, the aesthetic judgment is strictly *subjective*.

What does it mean for the judgment of taste to be subjective? Kant's analysis at this point is tentative and suggestive: We relate the representation of the beautiful "by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure."[838] This statement indicates a two-part component to the subjectivity of aesthetic

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[836] KdU 5:211. My *italic*.
[837] KdU 5:203.
[838] KdU 5:203.

judgment. The first component is a suggested *combination of imagination and understanding*. As Kant expands his analysis throughout the next three moments, this combination will unfold as the essential core of formal purposiveness. The second component, which reflects the basic *quality* of the judgment of taste, and is the main concern of the first moment, is the connection of the representation to the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*. That is, beauty is an object of satisfaction – *Wohlgefallen*.[839] Kant then proceeds to determine judgment of taste negatively, by contrast of the two other main objects of pleasure: the *agreeable* and the *good*.[840]

The good, the agreeable and the beautiful are all objects of a certain satisfaction, but they are distinguished with respect to their definition in relation to *concepts* and *interest*. Kant defines an interest as the "satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object".[841] That is, when I take interest in something, I connect a feeling of pleasure with its representation, which excites an inclination in me to realize this object. For example, if I am hungry and take an interest in a tasty dish, this entails that I connect a feeling of satisfaction with the representation of the dish, which in turn provides me with an inclination to eat the dish. This means that an object of interest connects to the faculty of desire as the possible attainment for willful action: "But to will something and to have satisfaction in its existence, i.e., to take an interest in it, are identical."[842]

(**i**) ***The good*** is that which pleases in combination with both a *concept and an interest*. Kant's exposition is at this point by and large a repetition of the analysis of a *good will* in *Groundwork*. The will acts out according to a concept of an end. The will is *mediately good* – that is, *useful* – when acting according to an end given outside itself. And it is *immediately good*, when acting from the end of willing itself – that is, from the principle of pure practical reason.[843] When the will attains an end – that is, when it is good – it is accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction. When the end attained is pure practical reason itself, this feeling of satisfaction

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[839] KdU 5:204.
[840] Allison supports our claim: "As such, his procedure has been aptly characterized as a *via negativa*." Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 90.
[841] KdU 5:204.
[842] KdU 5:209. Allison adds: "the main idea is that simply having a desire or inclination (even a strong one) is not yet to have an interest. The latter requires, in addition, some kind of rational endorsement of the desire, a 'contingent determination of the will.' In other words, as rational agents, we don't simply have interests; rather we *take* an interest in something through a rational endorsement. Correlatively, a desire or inclination only becomes an interest, that is, a reason to act or, equivalently, and incentive [*Triebfeder*], insofar as it is rationally endorsed." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 87.
[843] KdU 5:207.

is called respect – *Achtung*.[844] And so, we can summarize the connection of the satisfaction of the good with a concept and an interest: A *concept of an end* is the determining ground of willful action; and a *good will* is combined with an interest – that is, an inclination towards the satisfaction that is accompanied by the attainment of this end.

(**ii**) *The agreeable – das Angenehme –* is an object of *interest, but without a concept*. It is an object of pure sensation. Strictly speaking, all logical judgments of cognition are based on sensation, synthesizing the matter of sense impression – *Empfindung –* with the concepts of understanding. But in the representation of the agreeable there is no judgment regarding the object, but merely a relation to the subject and its feeling – *Gefühl –* that is, as an object of pure sensuous satisfaction.[845] The agreeable can be the quenching of one's thirst or the satisfying of hunger; it is joyful laughter, sexual pleasure, the euphoria of drug-induced intoxication, or simply taking a swim in the lake on a hot summer's day.

There is no argument in support of the agreeable. No amount of reasoning can convince me to confirm or deny what is immediately felt in sensation. But I may grow accustomed to like things that were initially foreign to me, and my private feelings may conform with the feeling of others, for example by virtue of our commonly shared cultural and social practices. As an object of pure sensuous satisfaction, the agreeable is desirable. That is, as an object of interest, the agreeable excites my desire for its existence. With the good, satisfaction is not itself the determining ground for willful action, but rather the feeling accompanying the attainment of an end. However, the agreeable can be the determining ground for willful action, as an end outside of the will itself.

(**iii**) *The beautiful* is an object of satisfaction, but *without a concept and without an interest*. The good, the agreeable and the beautiful "designate three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure".[846] The agreeable and the good connects to the faculty of desire. The agreeable is a desirable object of pleasure for the possible attainment of the will. And the good is the satisfaction that is accompanied by the attainment of an end by the will. However, for the satisfaction of the beautiful, aesthetic judgment remains indifferent to the existence of the object – that is, its willful attainment. The judgment of taste

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[844] KdU 5:210.
[845] KdU 5:206.
[846] KdU 5:209.

has no interest and remains contemplative in its mere reflection of the object.[847] The distinction between beauty and the good is the most apparent, because beauty is not related to a concept of an end. Whereas the distinction between beauty and the agreeable is more subtle because they both express a singular judgment on the immediate pleasure in the sensation of their objects.[848] The pressing question therefore becomes: What does it mean for beauty to be an object of pleasure, yet without interest? This question takes us to the next moment, on the *quantity* of aesthetic judgment.

SECOND MOMENT: *QUANTITY*

"The definition of the beautiful drawn from the second moment: That is beautiful which pleases universally without a concept."[849]

The first moment presents beauty as an object characterized by the *subjective quality of pleasure without interest*. However, the substantive contribution was primarily negative, defining beauty by contrast to the agreeable and the good. The second moment continues the analysis by presenting the *quantity* in the judgment of beauty as the *universality of its pleasure*. Kant begins by claiming that the quantity of universal validity can in fact be "deduced from the previous explanation of it as an object of satisfaction without any interest."[850] However, the full extent of this implication is not made transparent until the analytic of beauty is completed with the last two moments; and strictly speaking, not until the completion of the transcendental deduction and dialectic as well. But contrary to the predominantly negative contribution of the first moment, Kant now offers the first major contribution to a positive determination of beauty: *the state of the subject in a harmonious free play*.

For the satisfaction of the agreeable object, the judgment is based on the ground of *private feeling* and is therefore not universal – that is, in the judgment on the agreeable,

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[847] Béatrice Longuenesse elaborates: "To say that aesthetic pleasure is disinterested is not to say that the object does not need to exist for the pleasure to be elicited. Rather, it is to say that the object's existence is not what causes our pleasure; nor does our faculty of desire strive to cause the existence of the object." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, page 268.
[848] KdU 5:208.
[849] KdU 5:219. My *italic*.
[850] KdU 5:211.

everyone has his own taste. For example, a man is "perfectly happy if, when he says that sparkling wine from the Canaries is agreeable, someone else should improve his expression and remind him that he should say 'It is agreeable to me'".[851] But when it comes to our intuition on the beautiful, Kant seems to argue, we think differently. It would be ridiculous (*lächerlich*) for someone who prides himself on his taste to claim that something "is beautiful for me."[852] For in judging something to be beautiful, we simultaneously demand (*fordert*) that the satisfaction aroused by the object, must equally hold for everyone else.[853] The argument in support of this intuition is that because beauty is a judgment *devoid of private interest*, it must reflect a ground in our ability to judge whatsoever, which, albeit merely subjective, makes the satisfaction aroused by the object of beauty common to all humans.[854]

As with beauty, the satisfaction in the representation of the good is also universal, but this universality is grounded on a concept. For the good reflects a will acting on the basis on the principles of its own volition – that is, formulated as the hypothetical and the categorical imperative. I expect all human beings to feel pleasure by the conditional good of a will that is useful in the attainment of an empirically given end, and I expect all rational beings to feel respect for the unconditional good of a will acting from the a priori moral law. Kant's argument for the universality of the satisfaction of the good is thus grounded on a necessary logical relation in the volition of concepts as ends. But how can the judgment on beauty equally hold universal validity? With regards to *logical* analysis of quantity, "all judgments of taste are singular judgments", and so any claim to universality for the judgment of beauty is absurd.[855] Kant therefore needs to secure a *radical subjective ground of aesthetic universality* for the satisfaction in the judgment of beauty.

Does the feeling of pleasure come *before or after* the judging of the object in the judgment of taste? Kant now presents this question as "the key to the critique of taste".[856] For the agreeable, the pleasure in our sensation of the object comes first, and so we judge the object

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[851] KdU 5:212.
[852] KdU 5:212.
[853] KdU 5:213.
[854] Is this a valid argument? Béatrice Longuenesse do not think so: "This is a bad argument: after all, even while being disinterested in the sense Kant gives to the term, the satisfaction drawn from the apprehension of the object might depend on mental characteristics peculiar to some, not all subjects […] the disinterested character of the pleasure (the fact that it is elicited by the mental activity of the subject rather than by the existence of this or that object) does not by itself seem to be a sufficient argument for maintaining that it is universally communicable." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, page 273.
[855] KdU 5:215.
[856] KdU 5:216.

to be pleasurable based on our private feeling. But for the satisfaction of beauty, the judgment of the object comes first, and so the universality of the pleasure felt must be grounded on some universal capacity of the subjective judgment. Kant's first account of this ground is cryptic. He states that for every objective and universally valid judgment there must also correspond a subjective and universally valid judgment. That is, "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."[857] What does this mean? Two pages later, Kant elaborates: the subjective basis is the "universal capacity for the communication [*Mittheilungsfähigkeit*] of the state of mind in the given representation".[858] That is, the subjective ground is the universal ability of the subject to communicate (*mitteilen*) a given representation. Or simply put: It is the *state of mind* that underlies all cognition.[859]

How can we characterize this subjective yet foundational state of mind? Again, we resort to the distinction between the form of judging that *determines* an object, and the judging that simply enters a contemplative state of *reflection*. All representation requires the *power of imagination*, "for the composition of the manifold of intuition", and the *faculty of understanding*, "for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations."[860] For the determining judgment of cognition, the manifold of imagination is *subsumed* under the concepts of understanding. But in the aesthetic judgment, the powers of representation enters a state of *harmonious free play*. This state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding is the subjective universal communicability of all representation and is a "requisite for a cognition in general".[861] Alternatively put, as our own translation of Kant's statement: If objective cognition is the lawful correspondence between the concept and the

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[857] KdU 5:215. My **bold**.

[858] KdU 5:217.

[859] In Hannah Ginsborg's words: "reflective judgment in general is the capacity to take one's mental state in perceiving a particular object, to be universally valid with respect to that object. As such, this capacity can be employed in two different ways. In the first place, it can be employed for the purpose of cognition, in which case it serves to bring particular objects under empirical concepts. But in addition, it admits of a second kind of exercise which doe not give rise to cognition. This is the purely formal employment of reflective judgment, through which objects are experienced as beautiful." Ginsborg, Hannah (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 146.

[860] KdU 5:217.

[861] KdU 5:218. Or as Henry E. Allison puts it: "in the mere reflection involved in a judgment of taste, the imagination does not exhibit the schema in a determinative cognitive judgment. Instead, it exhibits a pattern or order (form), which suggests an indeterminate number of possible schematizations (or conceptualizations), none of which is fully adequate, thereby occasioning further reflection or engagement with the object." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 51.

object of appearance, then the harmonious free play of aesthetic judgment is the *conceptually indeterminate yet lawful correspondence between the subject and its environment*.

Kant has then provided a solution to the problem that he claims to be key in the critique of taste. The feeling of pleasure by the object of beauty *follows from* the reflecting judgment where the subject enters a state of harmonious free play. But the feeling of pleasure is also *the only thing that follows*. No logical judgment regarding the object itself is achieved: "but beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject."[862] I may judge the singular *rose* in front of me as beautiful, because of the feeling of satisfaction it instills in me, but I can say nothing about roses in general on the basis of pure aesthetic judgment.[863] However, even though the judgment of taste only relates to the internal state of mind in the subject, Kant equally holds this subjective state to be foundational to all cognition. The judgment of taste reflects a radical form of praxis – *Tätigkeit* – which serves to animate – *beleben* – an agreement amongst the faculties of cognition. Although objectively indeterminate, this agreement constitutes "the business of the understanding in general", which brings the faculties of cognition into a "well-proportioned disposition that we require for all cognition and hence also regard as valid for everyone (for every human being) who is determined to judge by means of understanding and sense in combination."[864]

THIRD MOMENT: *RELATION*

"Definition of the beautiful inferred from this third moment.
Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end."[865]

The first moment presents beauty as an object of *satisfaction without any interest*. The absence of interest reveals a mere contemplative state of the subject, without any inclination to attain the object of its aesthetic reflection – that is, a subject devoid of any desire for the existence of the object. In the second moment, Kant presents the disinterested satisfaction of the beautiful,

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[862] KdU 5:218.
[863] KdU 5:215. Strictly speaking, even by referring to the aesthetic object by the name "rose" I appeal to a determining judgment, that is, a judgment which subsumes the particular under a general concept.
[864] KdU 5:219.
[865] KdU 5:236. My *italic*.

even though the determining ground for judgment of taste is without any concept, as *universal for all human beings*. What is logically singular in the judgment of taste nonetheless reflect an aesthetic universality. As the ground of this universality, Kant introduces the idea of a radical state of subjectivity, where the powers of representation engage in a harmonious free play. The substantive contribution of the third moment is to *define this state of play through the transcendental principle of formal purposiveness*. This achievement will prove particularly relevant for the forthcoming task to appropriate the critique of aesthetic judgment for our own Heideggerian concept of a ground of nature, because it *relates the satisfaction of beauty to the ground of a transcendent will*.

The task now is to present the judgment of taste concerning its *relation of ends*, by defining beauty through the principle of formal and subjective purposiveness. On our way to the principle itself, we follow Kant's gradual introduction of the central elements required for this definition.[866] Starting with a definition that we have encountered many a time before, the concept of an *end* or purpose – *Zweck* – and its relation to a *will*.[867] Kant starts off with a rather condensed definition: An end is "the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former (the real ground of its possibility)".[868] What does this mean? How can a concept be the ground of the possibility of an object? An end represents a particular form of *causal relation*, as the conceptual representation of an object as a possible effect, which in turn serves as the determining ground for the cause of that effect.[869] This cause can only be a will, which Kant initially defines as the "faculty of desire, insofar as it is determinable only through concepts, i.e., to act in accordance with the representation of an end".[870] In other words, an end is the projected reality of an object, which serves as the determining ground for a will. The concept of an end is the ground of the possibility of an object because the reality of that object is contingent on a will that acts out according to its end.

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[866] Although we do not follow Kant's own order of introduction.
[867] Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews translates "*Zeck*" into "end", and "*Zweckmäßigkeit*" as "purposiveness". In following this translation, it is important not to forget that the original German words share the same root, which in turn reflects a deep connection between the two concepts. Why not simply use "purpose" instead? First, for continuity with our earlier interpretation of *Groundwork*. Second, because "end" arguably reflects the intended meaning of "*Zweck*" better than "purpose". That is, whereas "purpose" may be said to have stronger connotations of *relative instrumental rationality*, the term "end" more strongly denotes a determining ground of *absolute worth, finality, and finitude*. Kant, I. (2000), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.
[868] KdU 5:220.
[869] KdU 5:220.
[870] KdU 5:220.

The next concept is purposiveness – *Zweckmäßigkeit*. In our everyday language, if we add the suffix "-ness" to a root word, this usually serve to express a *general state, quality, or condition* of what is initially characterized by that word. For example, *joyfulness* reflects a general state of being joyful, and *naturalness* may indicate a general condition of being natural. In the case of the expansion from *Zweck* to *Zweckmäßigkeit*, there is initially no apparent reason to regard the addition of "-mäßigkeit" differently.[871] Immediately after his definition of an end, Kant continues by stating that purposiveness (*forma finalis*) is "the causality of a concept with regard to its object".[872] If the concept of an *end* (*Zweck*) expresses a causal relation, where the conceptual representation of an object as an effect serve as the condition for the possibility of that thing – that is, in the sense that a thing comes into being by virtue of a will that acts out from the determining ground of the representation of that thing – then the concept of *purposiveness* (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) would simply express the general condition of this causal relation. Simply put: Once we have defined the causal relation of ends, the concept of purposiveness merely expresses the general nature of this causality.

However, this apparent meaning of purposiveness seems to collapse once we take into account that the aesthetic object at play in the judgment of taste is *without a concept*. More specifically, because the basic components of purposiveness – an *end* and its relation to a *will* – are both inherently defined through concepts, the privation of concepts removes our sole basis for understanding the general condition of purposiveness. So how can we understand its meaning? Although Kant arguably does not state this task explicitly, it becomes implicitly clear that our ability to save the concept of purposiveness, as a principle for aesthetic judgment, rests on the task of redefining its structural components without a conceptual basis. That is, Kant's notion of *purposiveness seems to allude to a subjective yet foundational element in the formal structure of the willing of ends*.

Kant's response to this task is no doubt enigmatic. It accentuates a profound problem for Kant's critical philosophy; namely, the ontological status and significance of his transcendental ideas. Ultimately, we will not be able to give a satisfactory answer to this problem before we present our own interpretation of the transcendental ideas through the lens

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[871] The suffix "-mäßig" originates from *Maß*, which translates into measure, and so we can interpret *Zweckmäßig* as a general characterization of something based on the measure of its relation to ends (*Zweck*). And the addition of "-keit" (as with "-heit") merely entails a nominalization of the root word (*Zweckmäßig*), similar to the English addition of "-hood" (e.g., *falsehood*, *adulthood*).

[872] KdU 5:220.

of Heidegger's *ontological difference*. However, now still confined to Kant's own explicit analysis, we see him state the following:

> "An object or a state of mind or even an action, however, even if its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of an end, is called purposive merely because its possibility can only be explained and conceived by us insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule. Purposiveness can thus exist without an end, insofar as we do not place the causes of this form in a will, but can still make the explanation of its possibility conceivable to ourselves only by deriving it from a will."[873]

How to make sense of a purposiveness without ends – *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* – conceived through the idea of a willful ground of nature? It is at this point that we return to the state of harmonious free play from the second moment. In this state of play, no object of appearance is subsumed under a concept. Instead, the manifold of sensation in imagination demonstrates a radical sense of agreement – *Zusammenstimmung* – with the unity of concepts in the understanding.[874] Kant now articulates this agreement as the mere *formal subjective purposiveness* of a representation. The achievement of this purposiveness is to animate – *beleben* – the subject and its powers of representation, as the subjective yet foundational condition for the possibility of objective cognition. In the state of *pure* aesthetic reflection, no cognition of the object is given; it is a judgment on what is *formal yet still indeterminate* in the representation of a thing.[875]

   If the judgment of taste does not produce any cognition of the object, but merely a state of mind in the subject, what then remains its principal achievement? The sole positive 'object' in the representation of the judgment of taste is its sense of satisfaction. And so, we arrive at the final component in the definition of formal purposiveness – the feeling of pleasure and displeasure – *Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*. In contrast to the two former moments, Kant now extends his definition of this feeling: "The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, **for maintaining** it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure".[876] That is, Kant now claims that the feeling of pleasure, not

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[873] KdU 5:220.
[874] KdU 5:227.
[875] KdU 5:227.
[876] KdU 5:220. And as its opposite: "displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representation to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them)."

only follows from the state of harmonious free play, but in fact that the satisfaction felt acquires a *causality of its own*, as a motor that inclines us to dwell on the aesthetic object, and thus sustains our state of contemplative reflection: "We **linger** [*weilen*] over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself".[877] The reflecting judgment on the formal purposiveness is the subjective yet foundational condition for the possibility of all cognition, and the feeling of pleasure it excites is the driving force that sustains the subject in this condition.[878]

Now coming to an end of this third moment, we ask once again: If the judgment of taste reflects on a formal purposiveness without an end – that is, depriving purposiveness of a conceptually determined basis of *ends* and their relation to a *will* – what then remains as the subjective element in the *willing of ends*? What is willed in the willing of formal purposiveness is not an object, but rather the subject. That is, the mere form of the subject and its powers of representation in a state of free play. This state of subjectivity is the foundation for all cognition. But the end of its volition remains indeterminate, and thus provides no objective cognition by itself. However, because the subject itself is the object of volition in the will of formal purposiveness, we can no longer think of this will as a capacity *of* the subject. Rather, the will in the judgment of taste becomes a *ground of nature that animates the subject in the first place*. That is, the reflecting judgment on the formal purposiveness manifests the idea of a *technique of nature*, where the *subject itself is animated through the acting out according to an indeterminate transcendent end, given by nature itself*.

FOURTH MOMENT: *MODALITY*

"The definition of the beautiful drawn from the fourth moment. That is beautiful which is cognized without a concept as the object of a necessary satisfaction."[879]

The beautiful is an object of universal disinterested satisfaction – that is, a feeling of pleasure without any desire to attain or to realize its object of reflection. It is no cognitive judgment on

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[877] KdU 5:222.
[878] Or, in the words of Allison: "the feeling serves as the vehicle through which we perceive the aptness or subjective purposiveness (or lack thereof) of a given representation for the proper exercise of our cognitive faculties." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 71.
[879] KdU 5:240. My *italic*.

the object; rather, it is a reflection on the subject itself in a contemplative state of harmonious free play. Beauty is the purposiveness of a transcendent willful ground of nature that animates the *subject* and its powers of representation into a state of *formal* agreement, and which maintains the subject in this state through the excitement of its satisfaction, as the subjective foundation of all cognition. Now arriving at the fourth moment, the final step in Kant's exposition of the beautiful is to present the hitherto merely presupposed idea of a common sense of aesthetic reflection – *sensus communis* – as the condition for the possibility of aesthetic universality, in what is otherwise a logically singular judgment.

The satisfaction in the representation of the agreeable is based on a private feeling, and so I can merely ascertain that it is pleasurable *for me*. With the beautiful, on the other hand, we judge the representation to have a "necessary relation to satisfaction."[880] However, the nature of this necessity is somewhat peculiar. In the ordinary sense of the word, we would think of the necessity of a satisfaction in a representation as an *apodictic* theoretical judgment, "where it can be cognized *a priori* that everyone **will feel** this satisfaction in the object called beautiful by me".[881] As Kant has demonstrated in his practical philosophy, apodictic necessity of satisfaction can also be the consequence of a will acting from its own objective principle of pure practical reason – that is, as the feeling of respect for the moral law. However, in contrast to the apodictic judgments of theoretical and practical philosophy, the universal necessity of the satisfaction in the judgment on beauty does not reflect a basis of determinate concepts.[882] Kant calls the necessity of aesthetic universality exemplary – *exemplarisch*. Any particular judgment on the beautiful is taken as an example of an object whose form reflect a "universal rule that one cannot produce."[883] That is, when confronted with the pleasure of beauty, I *demand* (*fordern*) the assent of everyone else, even though I do not have a determinate understanding of the universal basis that underlies this necessity, and thereby no means to convince others by argument.[884]

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[880] KdU 5:236.
[881] KdU 5:236f.
[882] As Allison puts it: "The major difference between judgments of taste and moral judgments is that, in the case of the former, the rule grounding the judgment cannot be stated." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 147.
[883] KdU 5:237.
[884] KdU 5:239.

The judgment on beauty reflects a should – *Sollen* – demanding universal assent.[885] This makes the necessity of aesthetic judgment *normative*. But because we are unable to cognize and communicate its underlying universal basis, this normative necessity reflects a *conditional* should. What is this condition for the universal necessity of beauty? The idea has been lurking in the back of Kant's analysis throughout all three previous moments, but only now does he explicate the principle of a common sense – *Gemeinsinn*.[886] Usually, the notion of a common sense corresponds to our collectively shared intuitions regarding logical judgments on certain phenomenon. However, in Kant's present meaning of the word it does not indicate a *sensus communis logicus* but rather a *sensus communis aestheticus*.[887] It is a common ground for the judgment of taste. The common sense is a strictly subjective principle – that is, reflected in the state of harmonious free play of the cognitive powers of the subject. Without this assumption, that all human beings share the same foundational sensibility for the conceptually indeterminate yet formal purposiveness of aesthetic phenomena, the demand for universal assent in the judgment of taste is no longer possible.

What is our reason for assuming the reality of such common sense? Kant's answer to this question happens to be the most explicit argument for aesthetic judgment as the subjective foundation for objective cognition throughout the entirety of the *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. The argument is largely a continuation of the exposition of free play as the basis for aesthetic universality in the second moment.[888] The ability to *communicate* one's representation to others is a condition for the possibility of an objectively shared understanding of reality. From this simple recognition, Kant infers that not only the objective content of a cognitive representation but also the *subjective disposition* of the cognitive powers in general – *die Stimmung der Erkenntniskräfte zu einer Erkenntnis überhaupt* – must be collectively shared.[889] This subjective disposition is the mental state – *Gemütszustand* – where the cognitive powers of representation are animated into a conceptually indeterminate yet harmonious agreement. The achievement of this state is nothing more than the feeling of pleasure, which serves to strengthen and maintain the subjective disposition of its powers. But because the judgment of taste only excites our feeling of pleasure, and provides no objective judgment of

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[885] KdU 5:237.
[886] KdU 5:238.
[887] KdU 5:295.
[888] See KdU 5:217.
[889] KdU 5:238.

cognition, we have no way of factually knowing that a universal ground of aesthetic sensibility does in fact exist. Instead, Kant's argument for the universality of the judgment of taste is an appeal to save cognition from *skepticism* – that is, a normative argument for the foundation of objective reality: The common sense must be "assumed with good reason […] as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical."[890] For there to be an understanding of the objective lawfulness of nature, we need a common sensibility for a foundational *subjective lawfulness* – a free "lawfulness without a law" – of aesthetic phenomena.[891]

In the aesthetic judgment on the beautiful I demand universal assent to the disinterested pleasure that I feel in my reflection on the object. This demand is subjective, in that it presupposes an "indeterminate norm of a common sense" unknown to us as an object of cognition.[892] The *common sense is a mere idea to be acted out in the state of free play*. And when acting out this idea, I gain access to a *universally shared community of aesthetic sensibility*, as the subjective yet foundational condition for the possibility of experience in general.[893]

The Analytic of the Sublime

Das Erhabene is conventionally translated as "the sublime" or "sublimity".[894] Although being of different origin, the etymology of both the German word and the Latin root of its English

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[890] KdU 5:239.
[891] KdU 5:241.
[892] KdU 5:239.
[893] This claim, that aesthetic judgment is the subjective condition for the possibility of objective cognition, will serve as a foundational premise in the further development of our own interpretation of Kant's theory of taste in the subchapters to come. However, Kant's claim is not without controversy. Henry E. Allison, for example, seems to reject the claim altogether, and concludes that: "Admittedly, it would be nice if this argument, or some variant thereof, were successful; for it would provide a transcendental grounding for taste by linking it directly to the conditions of cognition," [but, there] "is simply no way in which a feeling resulting from the noncognitive condition of free play could serve as a condition of cognition." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 152&153.
[894] Kant himself references Edmund Burke, and the German translation of his famous work on beauty and the sublime: *Philosophische Untersuchungen über den Ursprung unserer Begriffe vom Schönen und Erhabenen*. See KdU 5:277.

counterpart indicates an object that *elevates and exalts*.[895] In Kant's definition, the elevation of sublimity is an act that *transcends nature as an object of appearance*, which in turn *exalts the aesthetic judgment to a state of moral reflection*. In our own forthcoming appropriation, we will exploit this connection that Kant makes between sublimity and morality, as we take the sublime to reflect the primordial revelation of the abysmal ground of freedom. However, in the present subchapter, we will try to be as faithful as possible to the original argument of the text. The sublime is an object of aesthetic reflection, and, as Kant tells us in the two preliminary paragraphs of his analytic of the sublime, it shares the same structural moments as the judgment of beauty. That is, the judgment on the sublime reflects a universal satisfaction in its quantity; without interest in its quality; expressing a subjective purposiveness in its relation; which, "as far as its modality is concerned", is necessary.[896] Because of this structural similarity, our present exposition of sublimity will hopefully stand to gain from what we have already established on the nature of judgment of taste. That is, we understand the analytic of the sublime, not as the exposition of an entirely new type of object, but rather as a variation of the same form of aesthetic judgment that we encountered in the analytic of beauty. More specifically, if beauty is the willful ground of nature that animates the subject into a conceptually indeterminate state of lawfulness – that is, a state of harmonious free play – then the sublime is an *opposing power through which the animated subject suffers a total disintegration*.

Kant begins the analytic of the sublime with two preliminary paragraphs, §§ 23-24, enumerating some of the differences between beauty and the sublime. **First**, the judgment on beauty reflects the *form of the object*, and as such it represents nature as a phenomenon of limitation – *Begrenzung*.[897] The sublime, on the other hand, manifests a *formless object*, which represents limitlessness – *Unbegrenztheit*. As a judgment on the form by limit, the satisfaction in the reflection on beauty connects primarily to the *quality* of the aesthetic object. But since the sublime reflects a judgment on a limitlessness that transcends any form, the satisfaction connects primarily to its *quantity*.

Second, if the object of beauty brings with it a "feeling of the promotion of life", then the movement of sublimity is in fact twofold, in that it first brings a "feeling of a momentary

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[895] The root of "Erhaben" is "heben" which means *lift* or *raise*. And "sublime" originates from the Latin "sublimare", which means *to lift up high*.

[896] KdU 5:247.

[897] KdU 5:244.

inhibition of the vital powers", but is then immediately followed by an "all the more powerful outpouring of them".[898] The satisfaction connected to the sublime thus reflects an excitement of wonderment or respect – *Bewunderung oder Achtung* – which Kant designates as *negative pleasure*.[899]

Third, although the beautiful does not itself represent an object of cognition, it nonetheless incites a radical state of activity from which the subject may *reflect on a lawfulness in nature that expands beyond mere mechanism.* Contemplating *nature as art*, beauty reveals a lawfulness in the appearing object that is only possible through the idea of a willful ground of nature acting from a concept unknown to us. As such, the mere reflection of aesthetic judgment on this technique of nature may serve as the subjective foundation for our scientific inquiries into the causal determinations of nature – that is, it "invites profound investigations into the possibility of such a form."[900] The sublime, on the other hand, is the manifestation of nature "in its chaos or in its wildest and most unruly disorder and devastation", allowing for "a glimpse of magnitude and might".[901] Instead of providing a subjective foundation for natural lawfulness, the sublime eliminates our ability to determine and comprehend nature altogether. In fact, the sublime incites us to abandon the sensuous stimulus of the appearing object, as it elevates judgment to reflect on the transcendent ideas of reason. This leads Kant to conclude that whereas beauty is sought in a ground of nature *outside ourselves*, the sublime, on the other hand, transcends nature altogether and is ultimately found *in ourselves* – that is, in pure reason.[902]

Although the two preliminary paragraphs cover the basic components of Kant's general exposition of the sublime, the arguments he provides, which we have now partially reproduced above, still appears somewhat fragmented. Can we summarize the arguments in a manner that epitomizes not only the structure of the judgment of sublimity itself, but also its relation to beauty? As with the beautiful, a key to understand the reflecting judgment on the sublime lies in the transcendental principle of formal purposiveness. Natural beauty "carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment". [903] Whereas the sublime "appear in its form to be **contrapurposive**

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[898] KdU 5:244-245.
[899] KdU 5:245.
[900] KdU 5:246.
[901] KdU 5:246.
[902] KdU 5:246.
[903] KdU 5:245.

[*zweckwidrig*] **for our power of judgment**, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination".[904] In relation to formal purposiveness, sublimity is the diametrical opposite of beauty, constituting a counter-movement to the animation of free play, and thereby a collapse of the idea of nature as art. However, in the disruption of the animated state of subjective purposiveness, Kant sees the revelation of a higher form of purposiveness – *eine höhere Zweckmäßigkeit*.[905] That is, a purposiveness that is "entirely independent of nature", relating instead the limitlessness of sublimity to the inner ground of freedom, which in turn serves to empower man in a state of morality.[906]

As we now venture into the two main parts of the analytic of the sublime, we intend to present the *mathematically* and *dynamically* sublime, not as an exposition of two separate forms of sublimity, but instead as two different ways to articulate the same fundamental movement of a twofold purposiveness – that is, a dynamic of *contra*-purposiveness and a *higher* purposiveness.[907] In the mathematically sublime, the contra-purposiveness corresponds to a breakdown in our estimation of spatial magnitudes in immanent sensuous nature. And in the case of the dynamically sublime, it corresponds to the breakdown of empirically determined volition. But this counter-movement to the formal purposiveness in our determination of immanent nature, expressed in both versions of sublimity, simultaneously serve to elevate the aesthetic judgment to reflect on a higher purposiveness between the breakdown of immanent nature and the transcendent ground of free will.

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[904] KdU 5:245. My **bold**.

[905] KdU 5:246.

[906] As Allison writes: "What we now learn is that the sublime (much like the ugly) presents itself as *counterpurposive* for the same reflective activity of judgment in virtue of its form (or, better, lack thereof), yet (unlike the ugly) the object is liked, that is, its effect on the mind is felt as purposive. Thus, if the paradox underlying Kant's account of the beautiful is that of a purposiveness without purpose, underlying the sublime is the seemingly even more paradoxical conception of a *counterpurposive purposiveness*." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 309f

[907] In presenting the mathematically and dynamically sublime as *two possible ways* to articulate the same fundamental phenomenon, as opposed to two separate categories which together seeks to exhaust the meaning of the concept, we also enable an interpretation of the sublime that allows for a multitude of different expressions, that is not covered by Kant himself.

(A) THE MATHEMATICALLY SUBLIME

"We call sublime that which is absolutely great."[908]

Kant begins the exposition of the mathematically sublime by making a distinction between being *great* and being a *magnitude*.[909] The German couple of *groß* and *Größe* reflects a linguistic connection that is less apparent in the English translation. We can say regarding a thing that it represents a spatial magnitude – *eine Größe* (quantum). But this statement in turn begs the question of *how great* (qua large) this magnitude is – *wie groß ist diese Größe?* That is, in the representation of a concrete object – as a "multitude of homogenous elements together [that] constitute a unity"[910] – we recognize this object as having a certain spatial extension irrespective of anything else. For example, the chair or the bike has a size – a magnitude, simply by virtue of itself as a concrete object in space. But an estimation of how great the chair or the bike is, requires a *comparison* with something else – that is, with another "magnitude, as its measure."[911] The spatial magnitude of the chair is smaller than the table, but greater than the book. From these simple observations, Kant then proceeds to make a rather exceptional claim. The sublime is not only great, but absolutely great – *schlechtin groß* – which means that it is *great beyond all comparison*.[912] This is strange, for Kant thereby seems to take a form of spatial estimation – *Größenschätzung* – which we initially understand to be *inherently comparative*, but then suggests that the same form of estimation to be *without comparison in the unique case of the mathematically sublime*. That is, when Kant defines the sublime as that "in comparison with which everything else is small", the intuitive interpretation would arguably be to say that we estimate the absolute greatness of the sublime by comparison to (all) other things. But this is precisely what Kant denies. Instead, the reflecting judgment on the mathematically sublime as absolutely great is made possible through an *aesthetic estimation based on a purely subjective measure*. That is, Kant suggests that the sublime is in fact not an object of nature. Rather, the estimation of the absolute greatness of the sublime is "grounded in a subjective purposiveness of the representation in relation to the power of judgment."[913] More specifically,

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[908] KdU 5:248. My *italic*.
[909] KdU 5:248.
[910] KdU 5:248.
[911] KdU 5:248.
[912] KdU 5:248.
[913] KdU 5:248.

through the manifestation of the "inadequacy of our faculty for estimating the magnitude of the things of the sensible world".[914]

In order to understand this subjective basis for the reflecting judgment on the mathematically sublime as absolutely great, Kant inquires further into the nature of spatial estimation. Another distinction is brought into the analytic: between mathematical (logical) and aesthetic estimation of a magnitude – *mathematische und ästhetische Größenschätzung*.[915] Mathematical estimation is arguably the form of judgment that most closely connects to our everyday intuition of spatial evaluation. It is the logical determination of the size of an object in a representation of theoretical cognition. That is, as the determination of a magnitude *through a number*, or through some conceptual representation of a number (like algebra). Taking myself as an example, I am 1.84 meters in height. This gives us an exact determination of a given magnitude (my body), but it is still only a comparative estimation. That is, all I can say is that my height is smaller than the tree standing 5 meters tall, but greater than the dining table of 0.7 meters. A complete determinate estimation of a magnitude thus requires a basic measure – *Grundmaße* – which is itself not comparative.[916] However, mathematical estimation cannot provide such a basic measure. And so, Kant introduces the notion of aesthetic estimation.

Aesthetic estimation is the representation of a magnitude that we grasp immediately in intuition – that is, the magnitude "measured by eye".[917] This could be the intuition of any object in nature, but for common reference in the interest of objective estimation, let us use the example of the aesthetic estimation of a *measuring rod* of metric dimensions. As I intuit the meterstick in front of me, I gain a definite sense of the spatial magnitude for the numerical value of one meter – that is, an estimation which itself does not depend on comparison. Even though this aesthetic estimation does not itself constitute a conceptual or numerical determination, it provides a necessary reference point for all objective determination of mathematical (logical) estimation: "in the end all estimation of the magnitude of objects of nature is aesthetic (i.e., subjectively and not objectively determined)."[918] For example, by virtue of my aesthetic estimation of the meterstick, I now gain a fundamental measure as definite reference for the numeric magnitude of the tree and the table as 5 and 0.7 meters.

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[914] KdU 5:250.
[915] KdU 5:251.
[916] KdU 5:251.
[917] KdU 5:251.
[918] KdU 5:251.

So far so good, but now returning to the question of the mathematically sublime, which is great beyond all comparison, yet also that which by comparison everything else is small. The sublime reflects a magnitude of *infinite greatness*. A mathematical estimation of infinity is only comparative, corresponding to the indefinite possibility of adding a number relative to another, and can therefore provide no basis for a judgment on an absolute greatest magnitude. That is, the infinity of mathematical estimation is only comparatively *greater* than some arbitrary numerical magnitude, but never itself *the greatest* of magnitudes. If there is something like the mathematically sublime at all, it must therefore be an object of aesthetic estimation – that is, as an absolute magnitude that "the mind can grasp […] in one intuition."[919] Kant then goes on to reintroduce a technical distinction which we remember from the judgment of taste: the distinction between apprehension and comprehension – *Auffassung und Zusammenfassung* – which in turn corresponds to the power of imagination and the faculty of understanding.[920] A magnitude is first *apprehended* in the imagination intuitively as a basic measure of aesthetic estimation, and then in turn *comprehended* by means of a number in mathematical estimation. This relationship between apprehension and comprehension in a mathematical estimation of a magnitude is analogous to our earlier presented structure of determining judgment, where the manifold of appearance in imagination is subsumed under the unity of concepts in the understanding. However, in the case of the estimation of the absolute magnitude of the sublime, this relationship between apprehension and comprehension breaks down. That is, the absolute magnitude is no problem for apprehension, since the manifold of intuition in our imagination "can go on to infinity".[921] But once the magnitude in apprehension reaches a certain threshold, a maximum, the ability to comprehend the magnitude through a number breaks down. Kant defines this maximum as a state where the intuited manifold in imagination is *filled up* to the extent that any addition of new sense perception is proportionally matched by the subtraction of previously apprehended sensation:

> "For when apprehension has gone so far that the partial representations of the intuition
> of the senses that were apprehended first already begin to fade in the imagination as
> the latter proceeds on to the apprehension of further ones, then it loses on one side as

[919] KdU 5:251.
[920] KdU 5:251. See also 20:220.
[921] KdU 5:251f.

much as it gains on the other, and there is in the comprehension a greatest point beyond which it cannot go."[922]

This latter definition of a maximum in the apprehension of a magnitude is quite technical, without necessarily providing an equally greater elucidation of the mathematically sublime. A simpler yet perhaps all the more adequate variation of the definition would be to say that the judgment on sublimity reflects the "inadequacy of the imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude for the estimation by means of reason".[923] The aesthetic phenomenon in the imagination *violently opposes* any attempt to comprehend the magnitude as a determinate object of mathematical estimation. This definition in turn accentuates how the sublime represents a structure in reflecting judgment that is diametrically opposed to the judgment on beauty. Whereas the aesthetic judgment on beauty reflects on a subjective *ground* for cognition of nature in general, the judgment on the sublime reflects a corresponding *abyss* that disrupts any cognition. That is, if beauty incites a state of harmonious free play for the powers of cognition, then the mathematically sublime manifests a subjective non-purposiveness – *subjective Unzweckmäßigkeit* – where our ability to estimate the spatial magnitude of nature breaks down.[924] It is for this reason that Kant claims that the sublime, as opposed to the beautiful, does not really reflect a quality of nature, for the real object of its judgment is the movement of disruption within the subject itself: "For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves".[925] That is, although both judgments are subjective, the judgment of taste invokes the idea of a willful ground of nature, whereas the judgment of sublime reflects an idea of transcendence at the heart of the subject itself.

We began this subchapter by introducing the *twofold purposiveness* of the sublime. So far, in the exposition of the mathematically sublime, the argument has centered on the breakdown of spatial estimation in the reflection on the non-purposiveness of the aesthetic phenomenon of the absolutely great. However, Kant then turns to the second and higher form of purposiveness between the aesthetic estimation in the imagination and pure reason. If the

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[922] KdU 5:252.
[923] KdU 5:257. Even though Kant here uses the word "reason" (*Vernunft*), we interpret this to mean the particular part of reason that deals with numerical determination – that is, the faculty of understanding (*Verstand*): "The imagination, by itself, without anything hindering it, advances to infinity in the composition that is requisite for the representation of magnitude; the **understanding**, however, guides this by numerical concepts, for which the former must provide the schema." KdU 5:253. My **bold**.
[924] KdU 5:252.
[925] KdU 5:246.

sublime represents a magnitude that transcends the domain of immanent appearance for the objective determination of natural lawfulness, then judgment is now instead elevated to a state of reflection on a subjective correspondence between the aesthetic magnitude of the sublime and the totality of the transcendental ideas:

> But **even to be able to think** the given infinite without contradiction requires a faculty in the human mind that is itself supersensible. For it is only by means of this and its idea of a noumenon, which itself admits of no intuition though it is presupposed as the substratum of the intuition of the world as mere appearance, that the infinite of the sensible world is **completely** comprehended in the pure intellectual estimation of magnitude under a concept".[926]

The higher form of purposiveness in the reflecting judgment on the sublime is the correspondence between, on the one hand, the breakdown of sensible estimation of a spatial magnitude in the imagination, and on the other hand, the totality that is represented in the transcendental ideas of pure reason. Kant then proceeds by revealing an additional connection that becomes essential to the elevated state of reflecting judgment on the sublime. The disposition of the mind – *Gemütsstimmung* – which is produced in the purposiveness of imagination and reason, reminds us of the feeling that is influenced by a will acting from ideas of pure practical reason.[927] That is, the aesthetic estimation of the infinite magnitude of *the sublime reminds us of our own state of morality*. Kant refers to this connection as a *subreption* – that is as a "substitution [*Verwechselung*] of a respect for the object instead of for the idea of humanity in our subject".[928]

What is respect – *Achtung*? Kant now provides a new definition that complements the one given in *Groundwork*. Respect is the "feeling of the inadequacy of our capacity for the attainment of an idea **that is law for us**".[929] What is interesting about this definition is that it accentuates the analogy between the reflecting judgment on the sublime and morality – namely, the *twofold movement of a disintegration and the subsequent state of elevation*. In the breakdown of the spatial estimation of the absolutely great, the sublime invokes a feeling of displeasure. This first movement corresponds to the *nihilation of the empirical subject in the face of the abysmal ground of freedom*: "What is excessive for the imagination (to which it is

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[926] KdU 5:254f.
[927] KdU 5:256.
[928] KdU 5:257.
[929] KdU 5:257.

driven in the apprehension of the intuition) is as it were an **abyss** [*Abgrund*], in which it **fears to lose itself**".[930] However, a higher purposiveness is then revealed between the very same judgment of inadequacy and the transcendent totality that is expressed by the ideas of pure reason. Through this purposiveness, the sublime excites a feeling of pleasure. This second movement corresponds to the elevated state of moral reflection, which demonstrates the superiority of a moral self in the face of its empirically determined subject: The sublime makes "intuitable the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty over the greatest faculty of sensibility."[931]

(B) THE DYNAMICALLY SUBLIME

"Nature considered in aesthetic judgment as a power that has no dominion over us is dynamically sublime."[932]

The section on the dynamically sublime is considerably shorter than on the mathematically sublime, resulting in a greater need for an interpretation that fills out the 'missing pieces' in Kant's argument. Although Kant does not present the dynamically sublime in an explicit relation to the principle of reflecting judgment, it seems uncontroversial to say that it invokes the same structure of a double purposiveness. However, a noteworthy distinction is that whereas the connection between the mathematically sublime and morality is made by leap of association (*subreption*), the very same connection is now presented as a direct relation. That is, if the purposiveness of the mathematically sublime is defined in relation to the estimation of spatial magnitude, and thus only indirectly to practical reason by association of the totality of the transcendental ideas in general, then the judgment on the dynamically sublime reflects on a purposiveness in nature that explicitly relates to human volition. Specifically, as the non-purposiveness in relation to *empirically* determined willing, and as the higher purposiveness in relation to the transcendent determination of *free will*.

The exposition begins with a series of definitions. Power – *Macht* – is a "capacity that is superior to great obstacles." And dominion – *Gewalt* – is the same power, "if it is also superior

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[930] KdU 5:258. My **bold**.
[931] KdU 5:257.
[932] KdU 5:260. My *italic*.

to the resistance of something that itself possesses power." The dynamically sublime is then in turn defined as the manifestation of nature as "a power that has no dominion over us".[933] This definition might initially seem trivial, as one could simply interpret it to say that the sublime possesses a power that is superior to some things, but not superior in relation to humans. But the judgment is far more complex. For in one respect, the dynamically sublime is superior precisely to human beings, leaving any attempt to resist its power completely futile – *vergeblich*.[934] Yet at the same time, it ultimately does not exert any control over us. This ambiguous relationship is further mirrored by a second set of definitions. An evil – *ein Übel* – is "that which we strive to resist". And if we find our own capacity to be no match for this evil, it becomes an object of fear – *Gegenstand der Furcht*. However, Kant then defines the dynamically sublime as an *object of fear*, which we at the same time *are not afraid of* – *furchtbar ohne furcht*.[935] Certainly, this latter extension to the definition makes the ambiguity of the dynamically sublime seem downright paradoxical. How can I perceive something as an object of fear, if it does not excite a state of fear in me? How can fear be anything but a disposition or comportment of the subject in relation to an object? The paradox is dissolved by appealing to the double nature of man's self-relation. Initially, the dynamically sublime represents an object of fear for the *empirical self*, but instead of manifesting this mode of comportment in the subject, it serves to elevate the reflecting judgment to the state of pure practical reason:

> "[The] irresistibility of its power certainly makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical powerlessness, but at the same time it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of it and a superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be threatened and endangered by nature outside us, whereby the humanity in our person remains undemeaned even though the human being must submit to that domination."[936]

If fear is the disposition of a subject that strives to resist an object that is superior to itself, then fear nonetheless *presupposes the preservation of that subject*. That is, to be in the state of fear entails that the object feared somehow concerns me. If there is no longer a subject, then the disposition of fear itself dissolves. Because the judgment on the dynamically sublime elevates

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[933] KdU 5:260.
[934] KdU 5:260.
[935] KdU 5:260.
[936] KdU 5:261f.

to a state of pure moral reflection, and thereby transcends all concerns of an empirically determined subject, the object of fear no longer excites the disposition of fear in me.

Extending the elaboration of this ambiguous state of fear without being afraid, in a manner that no doubt extends beyond Kant's own original analysis, but which gives a clue to the forthcoming appropriation of aesthetic judgment as basis for our own fundamental ontology, it is interesting to point out a (possible) structural similarity between the judgment on the dynamically sublime and Heidegger's distinction between *fear and angst* in *Being and Time*. The object of fear, according to Heidegger, is a possibility that concerns man as a thing in the world, and through this state of concern it thereby serves to enforce his subjectivity: "*That which* fear fears *about* is that very entity which is afraid – Dasein."[937] The experience of angst, on the other hand, does not reflect an object for which the subject is concerned, but the nihilating event of nothingness – *das Nichten des Nichts* – which entails a dissolution of the subject: "The 'nothing' [*Das Nichts*] with which angst brings us face to face, unveils the nullity [*Nichtigkeit*] by which Dasein, in its very *basis* [*Grunde*], is defined".[938] The structural similarity between Heidegger's angst and Kant's sublime fear without being afraid is that both reflect a *disposition that transcends the subject*.[939] With Heidegger, this event of transcendence leaves man in a state of authenticity – *Eigentlichkeit*. Whereas for Kant, it elevates judgment to a state of moral reflection. That is, transcending the volition of an empirically determined subject – which in the face of the power of the dynamically sublime is rendered powerless – only to regain a higher sense of autonomy through the determining ground of free will. Confronted with the frightening power of sublime nature, man "recognizes in himself a sublimity of disposition suitable to

[937] SZ 141.

[938] SZ 308. I have changed the translation of "Angst" by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson from "anxiety" to "angst". See also *What is Metaphysics*, GA 9:115. Gregory Schufreider describes the *angst of nothingness* in *Being and Time* as follows: "*Dasein* may be said to face the void that is left insofar as beings have slipped away in(to) a profound meaninglessness: present themselves with a pervasive sense of utter insignificance, in what amounts to a dysfunctional indifference, given the dis-integration, dis-orientation, and dis-sociation that *Dasein* experiences in anxiety." Schufreider, G. (2016), "The Nothing", page 313.

[939] In making this connection, it is worth mentioning that Kant himself also operates with a distinction between fear and angst, which he does not invoke in the analytic of the sublime. Roe Fremstedal writes: "Kant states that fear and anxiety are *qualitatively different*: 'Fear concerning an object that threatens an undetermined ill [*Übel*] is *anxiety* [Bangigkeit]. Anxiety can fasten on to someone without his knowing a particular object for it: an uneasiness arising from merely subjective causes (from a diseased state).' (A 7:255, cf. 187). Rather than saying that anxiety is a form of fear, Kant is saying at A 7:256 that it is a form of 'aversion [*Abscheues*] to danger,' namely *undetermined* danger." See Fremstedal, R (2014), *Kierkegaard and Kant on Radical Evil and the Highest God: Virtue, Happiness, and the Kingdom of God*, Palgrave Macmillan, page 249-50.

God's will, and is thereby raised above the fear of such effects of nature, which he does not regard as outbursts of God's wrath."[940]

Aesthetic Reflection as a Revelation of Fundamental Ontology

We have now gone through the main arguments of the analytic of beauty and the sublime, while trying to remain faithful to the original text. But in doing so, we have also presented an interpretation that to some extent remains an empty shell of a formalistic argument. We have hardly succeeded in conveying what Kant is in fact trying to achieve in the critique of the aesthetic power of judgment – that is, revealing what is fundamentally at stake in his transcendental analysis. On the immediate surface, beauty and sublimity are simply objects of pleasure and displeasure, with the unique caveat that the satisfaction felt, even though the judgments are subjective, is simultaneously demanded to hold universally for all other humans, thereby distinguishing the objects of pure aesthetic reflection from the private character in the sensation of the agreeable. But why does Kant dedicate the greater part of his third and final critique to these particular forms of judgments? Could the critique of aesthetic judgment be nothing more than Kant's attempt to reveal a transcendental basis for a possible theory of art? Kant also gives us several indications on the primacy of aesthetic judgment, and in particular the judgment of taste, for the task of establishing the transcendental principle of reflecting judgment – that is, of formal purposiveness.[941] Can we thereby conclude that the aesthetics is nothing more than the necessary yet preliminary setup for the more substantial contribution of objective purposiveness in the critique of the teleological power of judgment? In the two introductions, Kant presents the overall achievement of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as the discovery of reflecting judgment and its principle as a mediator between theoretical and practical philosophy, which in turn provides a unifying conclusion to his overall project of critical philosophy. Even though the judgments on beauty and the sublime accentuates a unique connection between aesthetic phenomena and the transcendental ideas, in a manner that certainly leaves the reader open to a continued reflection on a possible unity of ontology and

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[940] KdU 5:263f.
[941] See e.g., KdU 20:244 & 5:193.

ethics, it is also evident that the most explicit argument for the mediation between theoretical and practical reason is presented in the critique of the teleological power of judgment, reflecting on a possible basis for the *development of virtue* and the connection between *morality and happiness*.[942] This leaves the question regarding the achievements of aesthetic judgment in a state of ambiguity.

For the remaining part of this chapter, we aim to exploit the connections and interpretive pathways that is already present in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in order to present our own interpretation of what is fundamentally at stake in the revelation of aesthetic phenomena. However, in doing so, we will ultimately go beyond what is arguably Kant's own originally intended vision. That is, we aim to offer an interpretation that, on the one hand, is made possible from within the text itself, but which, on the other hand, entails the drawing of conclusions that are clearly not articulated by Kant himself, thereby making our interpretation an act of violent appropriation.[943]

There are two overall interpretive pathways of particular interest. The first is the claim to aesthetic judgment on *formal purposiveness as the subjective condition for the possibility of objective cognition*.[944] The second is the connection between aesthetic phenomenon and morality – that is, between *beauty and sublimity and the transcendental idea of freedom*.[945] We aim to expand upon these pathways in a manner that not only further develop their arguments

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[942] For an extensive discussion on the topic, see "Reflective Judgment and the Transition from Nature to Freedom", Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 195-218.

[943] Heidegger's own dealings with *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is surprisingly brief, and seemingly insubstantial in the wider context of his relationship of Kant. However, in his short essay, *Kant's Doctrine of the Beautiful*, Heidegger does allude to a possible radical meaning of Kant's aesthetics: "The misinterpretation of 'interest' leads to the erroneous opinion that with the exclusion of interest every essential relation to the object is suppressed. The opposite is the case. Precisely by means to the 'devoid of interest' the essential relation to the object itself comes into play." And further: "Kant's interpretation of aesthetic behavior as 'pleasure of reflection' propels us toward a basic state of human being in which man for the first time arrives at the well-grounded fullness of his essence. It is the state that Schiller conceives of as the condition of the possibility of man's existence as historical, as grounding history." Heidegger, M. (1979), *Nietzsche – Volumes One and Two*, page 110 & 113 (GA 6.1: 110 & 113). Ingvild Torsen adds "Heidegger uses Kant and the third *Critique's* notion of disinterestedness, in particular, as a source of insight. Disinterest anticipates what Heidegger calls 'letting be', his own notion of the subjectivity characteristic of the happening of art." Torsen, I. (2016), "Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics", page 16.

[944] Or as Hannah Gingsborg puts it: "At the core of Kant's aesthetic theory is the idea that the experience of the beautiful satisfies the 'conditions of cognition in general' without itself amounting to cognition: an idea which lead him to assert that 'the principle of taste is the subjective principle of judgment in general' (CJ, §35, 5:286)." Ginsborg, Hannah (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 5.

[945] Wood confirms the generally perceived connection between aesthetic phenomena and morality: "As with most of Enlightenment aesthetics, Kant holds that there is a close connection between morality and aesthetic feelings for the beautiful and sublime. He sees these feelings as connecting and mediating between moral reason and our sensitive nature. Beauty and sublimity give us an authentic feeling of morality, and even (in Paul Guyer's felicitous phrase) an *experience of freedom*." Wood, Allen W. (2005), *Kant*, page 152.

individually, but more importantly, and thereby equally more controversially, in a manner that combines these two elements into one single experience.

As for the first interpretive pathway, there is no question that Kant at several times makes the claim that judgment of taste represents a subjective basis for objective cognition, but he also gives us little in terms of attempts to elaborate on this relationship in the analytic of beauty. However, when looking back at the two introductions, we see a subtle but arguably far more substantial connection being made between aesthetic judgment and the principle of *logical* purposiveness – that is, the purposiveness reflected in relation to the idea of nature as a *logical system* of causal determination.[946] In chapter three, we utilized the principle of logical purposiveness as the basis for our own concept of the *causal meaning* of nature, by giving Kant's transcendental idea of a logical system a teleological twist. It is now time to demonstrate that *aesthetic judgment is the subjective yet foundational condition for the possibility of the causal meaning of nature*.

As for the second interpretive pathway, Kant makes several connections between aesthetic judgment and morality. In a set of *general remarks* that concludes the analytic of beauty and the sublime, he makes the following statement regarding the idea of free will:

> "But the **determinability of the subject** by means of this idea, and indeed of a subject that can sense in itself **obstacles** in sensibility but at the same time superiority over them through overcoming them as a **modification of its condition**, i.e., the moral feeling, is nevertheless related to the aesthetic power of judgment and its **formal conditions** to the extent that it can serve to make the lawfulness of action out of duty representable at the same time as aesthetic, i.e., as sublime, or also as beautiful, without sacrificing any of its purity".[947]

The quote shows that Kant goes a long way in identifying both beauty and sublimity as *pure aesthetic representations of the idea of morality*. However, it is only with morality and the sublime that Kant makes a serious attempt to elaborate on this connection. And here it remains ambiguous whether the sublime phenomenon in nature merely reminds us (by *subreption*) of

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[946] Allison partly confirms our claim: "This obscurity is largely a feature of the Introductions, where the linkage of judgment of taste with the conditions of cognition appears to take the form of a simple identification of the transcendental principle of purposiveness with the *a priori* principle supposedly underlying judgments of taste. To be sure, statements suggesting a connection between natural beauty and the logical and formal purposiveness of nature are not lacking in the main body of the text. But they tend not to be found within the discussion of taste itself, and they do not claim that the principle of purposiveness is itself the principle of taste." Allison, Henry E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 59.
[947] KdU 5:267.

our own transcendent but nonetheless altogether different human nature, or whether the unlimitedness manifesting in the power of nature is in fact the same infinity that lays at the ground of the moral autonomous subject. In chapter two, we presented the idea of freedom as an ontological ground of nature that ultimately transcends the human subject. It is now time to demonstrate the sublime as this abysmal ground.

Kant presents aesthetic judgment as a subjective basis for objective cognition, which simultaneously connects to the idea of human morality. By extending these two interpretive pathways, we present the *object of beauty as the ground of causal meaning, and the sublime as the primordial expression of freedom.* However, our most significant contribution resides in the unification of these two interpretive pathways. We now regard beauty and the sublime, not as two altogether separate objects, but instead as *two dynamically opposing movements within a single aesthetic experience.* This unification is not articulated in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* but reflects our own Heideggerian appropriation of Kant. It is an argument that continues from our previous interpretation of the formal structure of ethos in Kant's grounding of morality. Free will is the synthetic unity of willing and freedom, as the ground and abyss of the causal determination of nature. Having ventured from the simple mechanical relations of causality in *Groundwork*, to the organizing of natural lawfulness according to a unified system of logical purposiveness, the aesthetic objects of beauty and sublimity now represents an *aesthetic basis that is either purposive or un-purposive for the generation of causal meaning.* This in turn means that the moral essence of man, as the synthetic unity of the twofold ground of causal determination, may now be represented as an esthetic experience that holds beauty and sublimity together in our thought. *If morality is fundamentally a radical form of self-relationship, which reveals our own empirical subject as being contingent on a ground of causal determination that ultimately lies outside ourselves, and if aesthetic judgment entails a reflection on a formal purposiveness that grounds the causal meaning of nature, then the revelation of the ground of causal meaning of nature and the moral essence of man becomes the same.*

Ground and Abyss of Causal Meaning

How can aesthetic judgment on beauty and sublimity reflect a ground and abyss for the causal meaning of nature? In this subchapter, we will attempt to answer this question. We present the

following seven-part argument: **First**, we begin by recapitulating the idea of causal meaning itself, which was conceived in chapter three, as a teleological twist on Kant's regulative idea of nature as a logical system in *Critique of Pure Reason*. **Second**, we turn to *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and retrace the general argument for reflecting judgment and its principle of purposiveness as a transcendental basis for causal meaning. This transcendental connection, between reflecting judgment and the logical idea of nature a unified system, was most explicitly expressed in the two introductions, through the principle of *logical and formal* purposiveness. **Third**, we present a preliminary argument for why the aesthetic judgment on a purely *subjective and formal* purposiveness represents the ultimate transcendental basis for *logical and formal* purposiveness. The logical idea of nature as a unified system represents the organization of empirical concepts. Because all empirical concepts of lawful nature are contingent, they cannot itself hold the transcendental basis for their unity. Instead, the transcendental basis for causal meaning must be reflected by a preconceptual lawfulness. This preconceptual lawfulness is the object of inquiry in the critique of aesthetic judgment and the principle of *subjective and formal* purposiveness. **Fourth**, in setting up for our final argument for aesthetic judgment as the transcendental basis for causal meaning, we accentuate the *ontological ambiguity* that haunts the transcendental ideas at play in the reflections on beauty and sublimity. More specifically, we point to a triad of ideas: as the *negative abyss of sublimity*, the *positive ground of beauty*, and the *intellectual unity of the moral self* that holds this twofold ground together. According to the fundamental demarcation of Kant's critical philosophy, neither of these ideas can represent existent entities. So, what 'are' they? We suggest that the ontological ambiguity of the transcendental ideas holds the key to understand Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment. **Fifth**, continuing directly from the problem posed in the fourth step, we now present a solution to this ambiguity. Utilizing the Heideggerian lens of *ontological difference*, we offer an interpretation that ascribes a radical sense of *practical reality* to the transcendent ground of aesthetic reflection. Beauty and sublimity represent the *willful origination and abrupt nihilation of a meaningful praxis that grounds all existence*. **Sixth**, we finally present the argument for beauty and sublimity as the subjective foundation of causal meaning. What remains incomplete in nature as a system of determinate objective cognition, is completed by a radical praxis of reflecting judgment, that acts out *as if* empirical lawfulness were bound by a thoroughgoing unified system. And **seventh**, we extend the argument of the former step, by accentuating the aesthetic judgment of beauty and sublimity as a revelation of the finitude of nature, and thereby as the manifestation of the *environment as the finite normative causal meaning of nature*.

1. EMPIRICAL NATURE MANIFEST AS CAUSAL MEANING

A fully developed concept of nature must contain a principle that organizes the aggregate of simple mechanical relations according to a unified system.

The idea of causal meaning is a continuation of Kant's argument for the necessity of expanding the notion of causal determination beyond the mere concept of simple mechanical relations, to achieve a more adequate depiction of the empirical lawfulness of nature. The argument for the regulative idea of a logical system begins as a variation of the problem of *induction*. The category of mechanical causality simply demonstrates the necessary order of succession for the temporal events of any change in a substance (i.e., a thing), and so the second analogy of experience in *Critique of Pure Reason* merely provides a representation of nature as an infinite manifold of simple and unrelated connections. That is, a mere mechanical nature remains a chaotic aggregate unfit for anything remotely resembling a scientific understanding of natural lawfulness. A proper understanding would require an ability to determine causal events as a necessary connection between specific *types of causes* and corresponding *types of effects*, which entails that the infinite manifold of mechanical relations must be organized into a system of genera and species. Simply put, we judge a specific thing to possess certain causal properties by virtue of being *subsumed under* and *differentiated from* classes and subclasses of causally determined things in general.

The idea of nature as a logical system takes this principle of organizing natural lawfulness and extends it to its *unconditioned totality*. It depicts nature as a complete and thoroughgoing interconnected whole. First, reflecting sameness of kind in the manifold of appearance under empirical concepts (i.e., genera), in a hierarchical order of ever-increasing universality, united by a postulated yet indeterminable concept of a highest genus. Second, asserting an infinite variety of classification within each genus, as the differentiation by species and subspecies, in an indefinite process where no classification can represent the absolute elementary set of subspecies. Third, if the first two characterizations represent the movement *upwards towards identity* and *downwards towards differentiation*, then the idea of a logical system is completed by displaying a continuous transition and all-pervasive interconnection across its organization of genera and species – that is, reflecting a *thoroughgoing systematic unity*.

The teleological twist in the appropriation of Kant's idea of a logical system consists in the determination of the *unified whole as a condition for the possibility of its constituent parts*.

Although this foundational relation goes counter to the explicit analysis of the idea of a logical system in the first critique, and the principle of logical purposiveness in the third critique, we nonetheless suggest that our interpretation does not therefore violate Kant's basic argument. Rather, it entails a *change of perspective*. Kant's depiction represents an *abstract* analysis of the structural relationship between the immanent object of nature, and the transcendent idea of a systematic whole. The immanent object takes ontological precedence over the transcendent idea, in the sense that only the object is given as an existent entity of appearance, whereas the idea ultimately invokes the hypothetical notion of a supersensible substratum that remains unknown to us. That is, in Kant's perspective, the task is to develop a system of nature as *determinate objective cognition*. Because this task can never be fully accomplished, the particular remains forever on an indefinite path towards the organized whole. In our Heideggerian interpretation, on the other hand, we approach the same relationship from the perspective of the *facticity of phenomenal experience*. Humans will never encounter nature as a mere aggregate of things. We are always already situated within a dynamic relationship between concrete existent entities, and the transcendental idea that holds these entities together in the unity of understanding. For the question of the meaning of being – that is, asking what it *means* for something *to be* – the Heideggerian answer is that the idea of a logical system is foundational to the existence of appearing objects. Although the whole of nature as a complete thoroughgoing system remains a *mere idea*, it is nonetheless also an idea which we cannot think the things of nature without. Causal meaning is the primordial origin of existence, and the residence in which man lives and dies.

2. REFLECTING JUDGMENT HOLDS THE TRANSCENDENTAL BASIS FOR CAUSAL MEANING

The principle of logical and formal purposiveness unites and compares the partial and incomplete lawfulness of determinate cognition under the indeterminate yet complete idea of nature as a logical system.

The causal meaning of nature, as a teleological twist on Kant's idea of a logical system, reflects an unconditioned totality which clearly transcends the finite limits of nature as phenomenal appearance. That is, we will never be able to identify this idea in a corresponding object of nature. Kant therefore presents the idea as a *regulative principle*, as opposed to *constitutive*, reflecting an application of the transcendental ideas of pure reason that does not violate the

demarcation of critical philosophy. Although the complete idea of a logical system will never be realized as an object of determinate cognition, it nonetheless guides our investigation and engagement in the face of natural phenomena, as a heuristic principle, in order to uncover its lawfulness. However, one thing is to articulate a principle for the *inquiry* into nature in search for a unified system, but another thing entirely is whether we in fact *succeed* in finding such a system. In presenting the regulative principle of an organized nature in the *Appendix* to the transcendental dialectic of the first critique, Kant simultaneously emphasizes the need for a *transcendental* principle that can secure the interest of pure reason. In this dissertation, we have turned to *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the search of such transcendental basis. The *reflecting* power of judgment does not subsume the manifold of sensation under a given concept – as is the case for the *determining* power of judgment. Instead, it operates on a principle of its own, reflecting on an indeterminate yet formal purposiveness of nature.

To reflect is the act of holding together and comparing the manifold of empirical experience under a concept that is yet unknown to us. The manifold will then reveal itself as being either purposive or un-purposive for the proclivities of our powers of cognition. The transcendental basis that is reflected by the principle of formal purposiveness is therefore ultimately not a power of cognition within the subject, but instead the revelation of a formal yet still indeterminate potential for cognition that resides in nature itself. When the power of judgment enters a state of reflection, it means that the subject is engaged by the susceptibility of a ground of nature that ultimately transcends itself. That is, the subject is harmonically attuned to the manifold of empirical experience which manifests as purposive for the organization of nature into a unified system.

We find the most explicit presentation of the reflecting power of judgment as a transcendental basis for causal meaning in the two introductions of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, as an analysis of the principle of *logical and formal* purposiveness.[948] This principle contains an internal dynamic. In the investigation of natural lawfulness, the power of judgment is simultaneously and dynamically *logically reflecting* and *logically determining*. The goal of a power of judgment reflecting on the logical and formal purposiveness of nature is no doubt to

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[948] In our analysis so far, we have mainly referred to this principle simply as "logical purposiveness". As we now extend the name, addressing instead the principle of *logical and formal* purposiveness, it is with the intent to accentuate its relation to the aesthetic judgment of *subjective and formal* purposiveness. That is, both principles express a formal purposiveness, but whereas the first principle relates this *form* of reflecting judgment to a possible logical (qua objective) determination, the latter principle remains a purely subjective judgment.

achieve determinate objective knowledge of natural lawfulness. That is, reflecting judgment is, to some extent, a means to the end of determinate cognition. However, in relation to the regulative idea of a logical system, the determinate cognition will always remain incomplete. And so our understanding of natural lawfulness will forever remain in an *intermediate state between the incomplete but determinate knowledge of particular causal laws, and the complete but indeterminate idea of a unified system of laws*.

We may in fact depict this dynamic relationship between logically reflecting and logically determining judgment as a variation of the *hermeneutical circle*. Any inquiry into natural lawfulness is always already situated within a preconceived understanding of a complete yet partially indeterminate conception of the whole. It is the whole that gives the inquiry a direction – that is, an investigative framework of readily available questions and a field of possible answers. Once the investigation of logically reflecting judgment has succeeded in fixating a new part of the system into determinate objective cognition, so too will the conception of the whole be altered. This reconceptualization of the whole through the change of its parts will sometimes only amount to a tilting of minute details, but other times it may result in profound paradigmatic transformations.

3. AESTHETIC JUDGMENT IS THE TRANSCENDENTAL BASIS OF LOGICAL AND FORMAL PURPOSIVENESS

The principle of logical and formal purposiveness reflects on a systematic unity of concepts that are empirical, and therefore contingent. The transcendental basis for the organization of nature according to a logical system must therefore be found in the subjective judgment on aesthetic phenomena.

The reflecting judgment on *logical and formal* purposiveness contains an inherent dynamic relationship to *logical qua objective* determination. That is, a reciprocal relationship between the reflecting judgment on an indeterminate yet complete idea of nature as a thoroughgoing causal system, and the determinate judgment on objective yet incomplete causal laws. When Kant first presents reflecting judgment in the two introductions, it is with the intent to secure a transcendental basis for causal meaning. But this transcendental basis cannot be found in our conceptual determination of nature. How so? By comparison, we may first look to *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant inquires into mechanical causality through the analysis of the

categories and their schematism through the inner sense of time. The transcendental basis is at this point found in the pure concepts of the faculty of understanding and its synthetic a priori judgments. However, when looking at the transcendental analysis in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the concepts at play in the reflecting judgment on causal meaning are all *empirical*, and therefore contingent. This means that the transcendental basis for causal meaning, as opposed to mechanical causality, must be expressed in a structure of reflecting judgment that is not itself based on determinate concepts. It is from this premise that we now draw the conclusion that Kant himself does not explicate – at least not unambiguously – but which becomes critical to our own interpretation of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. We claim that *the transcendental basis reflected in the judgment on logical and formal purposiveness is in fact aesthetic judgment*. That is, it is the *subjective and formal* purposiveness at play in the reflecting judgment on beauty and the sublime that holds the ultimate transcendental basis for causal meaning.

We claim that the aesthetic judgment on a *subjective and formal* purposiveness is the ultimate transcendental basis for *logical and formal* purposiveness. This claim significantly alters our approach to *Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. For now, the objects of beauty and sublimity – *in and by themselves* – are no longer the ultimate concern for Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment. The reflecting judgment on a subjective and formal purposiveness is *generally and for the most part* put into play as the transcendental basis for determining objective cognition. Our experience of the objects of beauty and sublimity represents the *rare and special case* when reflecting judgment has detached itself entirely from determinate concepts – that is, as *pure* aesthetic judgment. In the interest of transcendental philosophy, the beautiful and the sublime only serve as *exemplars*, in order to isolate and explicate the subjective foundation for objective cognition. That is, the objects of beauty and sublimity are no doubt real, as phenomena in a purely aesthetic sensibility. But the philosophical *relevance* of beauty and sublimity is due to the subjective and formal purposiveness that these purely aesthetic phenomena *exemplify* – a purposiveness that is otherwise and for the most part integrated in an empirical understanding of logically reflecting and logically determining judgment.

4. THE TRANSCENDENTAL IDEAS HOLDS AN ONTOLOGICAL AMBIGUITY

The unresolved ontological status of the transcendent ground reflected in aesthetic judgment poses a radical problem for the integrity of Kant's project of critical philosophy.

We claim that the pure aesthetic reflection on *subjective and formal* purposiveness represents the ultimate transcendental basis for the reflecting judgment of *logical and formal* purposiveness. However, having now established this claim, the general question of this subchapter still remains unanswered: *How can aesthetic judgment be the subjective foundation of causal meaning?* Before we can provide a definitive answer, we must take a final detour. As with the role and meaning of Kant's transcendental ideas in general, there is an *ontological ambiguity* that haunts the ideas at play in the judgment on beauty and the sublime. The task of untangling this ambiguity, which entails that we subject Kant's critical philosophy to our own Heideggerian interpretation, will prove instrumental for our ability to understand the foundational role of aesthetic judgment.

To understand the ontological ambiguity of aesthetic judgment, we begin with a simple question: *What are the 'objects' of beauty and sublimity?* The seemingly innocent use of scare quotes for the word "object" indicates a radical and inescapable problem for the analytic of aesthetic phenomena. For in one respect, the beautiful and the sublime are both defined in opposition to objective cognition, and therefore cannot be *objects* in the proper (Kantian) sense of the word. Instead, the analysis centers on the *state of mind in the subject*. Specifically, as the subjective judgment on the formal purposiveness and un-purposiveness between sensation and the powers of cognition, and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure that is aroused by this judgment. At the same time, no tenable interpretation could simply discard beauty and sublimity – *in themselves* – as being nothing at all. That is, they are both aesthetic phenomena *of nature*, and somehow foundational to the state of mind that they incite in the subject.[949] But if they are not objects of cognition, what do they in fact represent?

The question regarding the ontological status of beauty and sublimity must be brought in connection with the relationship between aesthetic phenomena and the transcendental ideas

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[949]In her review of Heidegger's reading of Kant's aesthetics, Ingvild Torsen makes a similar point regarding the subject as the *receiver*, and not the origin, of the aesthetic judgment that happens in relation to a beautiful object: "To sum up, there is an essential relation between subject and object, which is dependent on disinterest, but which can be positively described; the aesthetic stance that allows one to experience beauty is one of 'letting be' on Heidegger's reading of Kant and beauty is the 'shining' of the disclosure of the object, which is something

on the supersensible. There are three main ideas at play in aesthetic judgment (although these in turn may be further differentiated). **First**, is the idea of a *technique of nature* in the judgment of beauty. Technique in general, is the instance where something is brought into existence through an act of volition. In the opposite case of objective purposiveness, a determinate concept of an end becomes the ground of the existence of a thing, when the thing is the achievement of a will that acts out from the determining ground of that end. However, in the case of formal purposiveness, no determinate concept is given. Instead, the reflecting judgment invokes the idea of an indeterminable concept of the supersensible. The idea of a technique of nature at play in aesthetic judgment thereby reflects a *transcendent willful ground of nature*, whose volition secures the purposiveness of the subject in a state of harmonious free play.[950] **Second**, is the idea of the *infinite* reflected in the sublime. The unlimited and unconditioned of the absolute greatness and power of aesthetic phenomena violates the finitude of nature as appearance. However, in this transgression of the finitude of appearance we are reminded of the unconditioned totality of the transcendental ideas of pure reason, and thereby of the idea of the thing-in-itself as a supersensible substratum of appearance. And **third**, is the idea of a transcendent *moral self*, that somehow connects to both beauty and the sublime. In the case of the sublime, it is the experience of the infinite in the absolute greatness and superior power of nature that in turn serves to empower our own autonomous determination from freedom. In the case of the beautiful, it is an experience that "cultivates a certain **liberality** [*Liberalität*] in the manner of thinking", so that "freedom is represented more as in play than as subject to a lawful business".[951]

If we take these three ideas together, we can generalize the meaning of aesthetic judgment as an experience that accentuates the crucial yet highly problematic distinction of Kant's critical philosophy: the notion of the *thing-in-itself* as the transcendent ground of nature as immanent *appearance*. However, the ideas also seem to represent three different aspects of

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that *happens* when the artwork is approached in the open manner of letting be. On this reading, the subject is not the standard for beauty, but its disinterested way of relating to what is necessary for beauty 'to shine', which happens when the object comes to show itself as what it is." Torsen, I. (2016), "Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics", page 21.

[950] In partial support of our interpretation, Allison writes that "to view an object as a purpose is to consider it as the product of an intelligent causality, that is, of a rational will aiming at a determinate end. Correlatively, to view it as purposive (but without attributing to it a definite purpose) is to consider it as if it were the product of such causality, even though we cannot know it to be such. But to think of it in this way is to attribute its 'form,' that is, its purposive or designlike appearance, to a supersensible ground or substrate." Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 250.

[951] KdU 5:268.

this distinction. In what way? (**1**) The idea at play in the reflection on the sublime represents the thing-in-itself *negatively*, as the limit of appearance.[952] It is an aesthetic experience of the thing-in-itself as a *negative revelation of appearance* – that is, that appearance does *not* contain the infinite:

> "[…] although it certainly finds nothing beyond the sensible to which it can attach itself, nevertheless feels itself to be unbounded precisely because of this elimination of the limits of sensibility, and that separation is thus a presentation of the infinite, which for that very reason can never be anything other than a merely negative presentation, which nevertheless expands the soul."[953]

In this negative act of privation, the sublime also serves to accentuate our surrounding nature *as mere appearance*: "And precisely by this are we reminded that we have to do only with a nature as appearance, and that this itself must be regarded as the mere presentation of a nature in itself (which reason has in the idea)."[954] In short: it is through the manifestation of the pure negativity of the sublime that we become aware of the distinction between appearance and the thing in itself in the first place.

(**2**) Beauty, on the other hand, represents the thing-in-itself *positively*, as the basis for nature as art. This positive revelation of a transcendent ground of nature is alluded to throughout the entire analytic of aesthetic judgment but becomes most definitive in the transcendental dialectic for the judgment of taste. Here Kant concludes that our ability to think the judgment of taste without an internal contradiction, rests on a distinction between reflection on beauty as, on the one hand, a merely subjective and thereby logically singular judgment of appearance (i.e., without a concept), and on the other hand, the universal validity of the judgment by virtue of an indeterminable concept of the supersensible that remain unknown to us:

> "But now all contradiction vanishes if I say that the judgment of taste is based on a concept (of a general ground for the subjective purposiveness of nature for the power of judgment), from which, however, nothing can be cognized and proved with regard to the object, because it is in itself indeterminable and unfit for cognition; yet at the same time by means of this very concept it acquires validity for everyone (in each case, to be sure, as a singular judgment immediately accompanying the intuition),

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[952] KdU 5:264.
[953] KdU 5:274.
[954] KdU 5:268.

because its determining ground may lie in the concept of that which can be regarded as the supersensible substratum of humanity."[955]

(**3**) The sublime reflects a negative representation of the thing-in-itself as an *abyss of nature*. Whereas the beautiful reflects a positive representation of the thing-in-itself as the *ground of nature as art*. The third and final idea of a moral self reflects yet another variation of the thing-in-itself, but now as a transcendent basis of its own, that holds the ability to connect the former two. Confronted by the infinite of the sublimed, the moral self exerts its independence from the lawful determination of nature as appearance. Confronted by the technique of the beautiful, it is aroused to a state of harmonious free play – engaged, but not yet determined by the lawfulness of nature. When taken together – in a manner that no doubt pushes the boundaries of Kant's original argument – the *transcendental idea of a moral self reflects the intellectual unity of the ground and abyss of nature*.

Figure 15 (below) illustrates the threefoldness of the idea of the thing-in-itself reflected in aesthetic judgment, as the ground and abyss of beauty and sublimity, and their unity in the thought of a moral self. As long as we hold true to Kant's demarcation of critical philosophy, neither of these ideas can represent existent entities. So, what do they represent? Having established the problem of the ontological ambiguity in the transcendental ideas of Kant's analytic of aesthetic judgment, we can now proceed with our own Heideggerian solution.
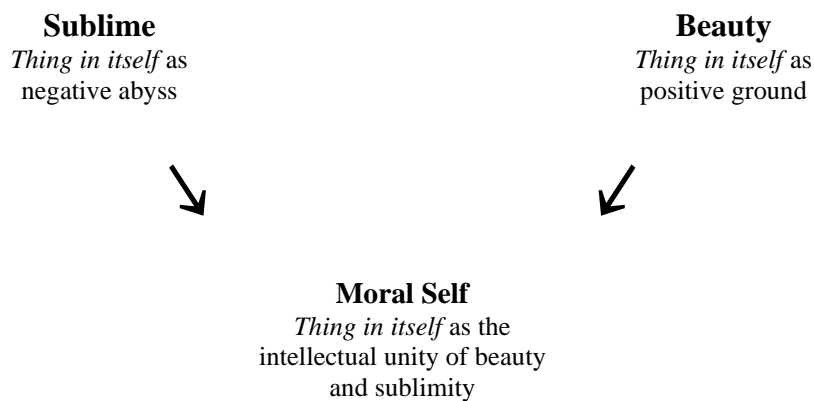
Sublime
Thing in itself as
negative abyss

Beauty
Thing in itself as
positive ground

↘   ↙

Moral Self
Thing in itself as the
intellectual unity of beauty
and sublimity

Figure 15: The threefold of the *thing in itself*.

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[955] KdU 5:340.

5. THE REALITY OF THE ONTOLOGICAL IDEAS IS PRACTICAL

The transcendent ground reflected by the ideas at play in aesthetic judgment represents a pure practical reality that is ontologically different from the existence of appearing objects.

We are inquiring into the ontological ambiguity of the transcendental ideas at play in aesthetic judgment. We choose to take this detour because the disentangling of the ambiguity will prove essential for the underlying task of revealing beauty and sublimity as the ground and abyss of causal meaning. The reflecting judgment on subjective and formal purposiveness invokes certain transcendental ideas that directs our thinking towards a supersensible ground. What is this ground? In the Kantian framework of fundamental ontology, appearance is the condition for the possibility of the objective reality of nature. That is, through the demarcation of critical philosophy, *our understanding of existent entities is limited to what is present and absent in phenomenal experience*. However, the interpretation of Kant's metaphysical insinuations that nonetheless appear to be most straightforward, would be to say that the transcendental ideas points to a supersensible reality of existent entities. That is, as an extrapolation from the immanent reality of appearance to an analogous transcendent reality of the thing-in-itself. In the case of beauty, this extrapolation would amount to the assertion of the existence of a transcendent will – that is, something like a *voluntaristic god*. In the case of the sublime, it would amount to the assertion of parallel world that contains the infinite. And in the case of the moral self, it would amount to a primordial depiction of man as a transcendent subject that is both independent from and foundational to his empirical self.

But is this alternative reality of the thing itself *real*? If we accept the interpretation of the transcendental ideas given above, then we are left we two options. First, we may choose to interpret Kant as in fact postulating a parallel world corresponding to the transcendental ideas. Such postulation would be successful in securing the universal validity of aesthetic judgment. But it comes at a steep price – for it would violate the foundational demarcation of Kant's critical philosophy.[956] Second, another possibility is to degrade the idea of a transcendent

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[956] This seems like the kind of interpretation that leads Béatrice Longuenesse to reject Kant's idea of a supersensible ground: "To have to suppose a consciousness of the supersensible ground common to the object

ground to a mere *heuristic* principle. That is, as a principle that guides our actions, by virtue of a *hypothetical* world that ultimately resides in our thought as a figment of imagination. This interpretation would not violate Kant's critical demarcation for philosophy. But it would also fail to secure the universal validity of beauty and the sublime – reducing the principle of reflecting judgment to a mere epistemological principle without proper ontological bearing.[957] None of these solutions seem tenable. Kant either contradicts the foundational premise of his entire philosophical system, or he simply fails in securing a transcendental basis for reflecting judgment. Thus, we end up with our claim to a radical and inescapable ontological ambiguity.

Is there another way to resolve the ambiguity of the transcendental ideas? Is there an interpretation that can allow for a ground of aesthetic phenomena, that transcends the scope of human subjectivity, while simultaneously abiding by the demarcation of critical philosophy? The quintessence of Heidegger's philosophy resides in his continuingly recurring attempts to articulate the *ontological difference* between existent entities – *das Seiende* – and the meaning of being – *der Sinn von Sein*. This difference begins with a simple distinction. Any ontological inquiry into *that which is* presupposes a conception of the meaning of being itself. The inquiry into this meaning – which is the task of *fundamental ontology* – cannot itself resort to an analysis of existent entities. Ontology presupposes fundamental ontology, and therefore cannot serve explain it. Strictly speaking, the very question "What *is* the meaning of being?" is absurd, because the "is" in the question frames the meaning of being as a thing that exists. The success of fundamental ontology is instead contingent on our ability to elevate thinking beyond the mere inquiry into things and their properties. However, in his efforts to abide by this simple distinction, Heidegger then goes on to make the highly controversial yet pivotal claim that the meaning of being itself represents a *ground that is both independent from yet also foundational to all existent entities*. Can we apply Heidegger's ontological difference to Kant's analysis? Can we think the distinction between the object of appearance and the transcendental idea as a relationship that is analogous to the distinction between existent entities and the meaning of being? The offspring of this intellectual marriage is twofold. Using Heidegger's radical insight,

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and to ourselves, as the ground of the subjective universality and necessity of the aesthetic judgment, is more than most of us can swallow." Longuenesse, B. (2005), *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, page 290.

[957] In addressing logical purposiveness (systematicity of nature) Paul Guyer admits that Kant seems to think that the principle of reflecting judgment is more than a mere heuristic principle: "These remarks suggest that Kant intends the principle of systematicity to be understood as more than merely heuristic, more than something that guides the conduct of our own inquiry without really asserting anything about its objects." Guyer, P. (2005), *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, page 58.

we stand to solve the problematic ambiguity for Kant's critical theory of ideas. But as we utilize the Kantian framework of transcendental philosophy, we also stand to bring Heidegger's esoteric thought into the light of a proper metaphysical system.

Framing Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment through the lens of Heidegger's ontological difference, the transcendental ideas represent a ground of nature that expresses a radical form of *practical reality*. The willful ground of beauty and the infinite abyss of sublimity do not correspond to an alternative realm of transcendent things – postulated, or merely hypothetical. Rather, they reflect the *origination and nihilation of a meaningful praxis*. That is, beauty and the sublime represent the *coming to presence and the withdrawing into absence of appearance itself*. And the moral self represents the contemplative praxis that holds these two grounding movements together in the unity of thought. But how can the practical reality of aesthetic phenomena be the ground for the object of appearance? Surely, in Kant's analysis, the 'product' of reflecting judgment is merely subjective. That is, a subject in a state of harmonious free play, accompanied by a feeling of pleasure. How can this subjective and formal purposiveness be the ground of objective nature? Having made all necessary preparatory steps, we now finally arrive at our definitive argument for aesthetic judgment as the subjective foundation for causal meaning of nature.

6. BEAUTY AND SUBLIMITY REPRESENTS THE SUBJECTIVE FOUNDATION OF CAUSAL MEANING

The logical idea of nature as a unified system is realized by a radical praxis that acts out a formal thoroughgoing interconnection of lawfulness through harmonious free play.

Interpreting the transcendental ideas at play in aesthetic judgment through the Heideggerian lens of ontological difference, we present beauty and sublimity as the putting in motion of a praxis that grounds existence itself. That is, the willful ground of beauty and the infinite abyss of sublimity does not represent a parallel reality of transcendent existent entities, but the incitement and disruption of a meaningful whole that holds all determinate objects of appearance. The pure transcendental expression of this practical meaning is the formal purposiveness of a subject in a state of harmonious free play. But this subjective state is simultaneously the ultimate foundation for the causal meaning of nature. Our determinate objective cognition of a given natural phenomena is always incomplete. Yet, our investigation and understanding of nature will always orient particular existent entities and their

interconnections from within the idea of nature as a complete logical system. The manifestation of this thoroughgoing complete system is practical. That is, *causal meaning is ultimately something that we act out*. The completion of the system – to 'fill out of the gaps' of an incomplete determinate objective cognition – is secured by a subject incited by formal purposiveness. That is, when the lawful transition between two causally determined objects remains unknown to me, I nonetheless act out *as if* the two were determined according to a continuous and thoroughgoing system. By committing myself to such causal action – that is, as a radical form of natural technique – I am granted the phenomenal presence of a lawful juxtaposition of appearing objects. This gives my understanding of everyday tools and tasks a sense of unity and coherence, and it enables me to discover new forms of determinate connections.[958] But such praxis is never the product of a transcendental subject. Rather, subjectivity itself is animated by the meaningful praxis put in motion by the ground of nature.

7. THE FINITE CAUSAL MEANING OF NATURE IS NORMATIVE

Aesthetic judgment reveals the systematic unity of natural lawfulness to be at stake, disclosing the causal organization of nature as a normative meaning.

As an empirical being, man is always already situated in a place of causal meaning. That is, in the intermediate and dynamically evolving relationship between determinate cognition of partial causal laws, and the indeterminate idea of a complete logical system of natural lawfulness. Aesthetic judgment reveals beauty as the willful ground that incites a subjective yet foundational praxis for causal meaning. And it reveals sublimity as the abysmal disruption of this praxis, which nihilates all meaning. This aesthetic revelation entails a manifestation of the

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[958] Hannah Ginsborg's would certainly not endorse our interpretation. But she does make an argument that seem to demonstrate a structural similarity: "It is a natural psychological fact about human beings that, if shown a certain number of trees, they will develop a disposition such that the perception of one tree will tend to call to mind other previously perceived trees. What makes the corresponding associations rule-governed is not that they are guided by a specific, antecedently grasped rule, but rather the fact that we take them to have normative significance. The associations are rule-governed because in carrying them out I take myself to be doing not only what I am disposed to do, but also what I (and everyone else) ought to do. That is, I take my actual associations, blindly habitual though they are, to manifest conformity to a normative standard applicable to everyone. The rule-governedness of my associations is thus a function of my taking them to be rule-governed, which is in turn a function of my taking my natural dispositions as exemplifying a universal norm." Ginsborg, Hannah (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, page 162.

finitude of nature – that is, *nature becomes an environment*. In what way? Because it accentuates the twofold possibility of preservation and destruction, the aesthetic judgment reveals that the causal meaning of nature is always *at stake*. The finitude of nature is reflected by the fleeting vulnerability of its foundational praxis. However, finitude does not thereby encapsulate nature as a distinct whole, to be measured and evaluated from an outside observer. There is only nothingness 'outside' of the environment. Finitude is an event of demarcation *from within* a given particular environment, as the dissolution of its own internal meaning. We now recall our earlier articulation of normativity – as the simultaneous possibility of being and non-being. Causal meaning is always already present in the appearance of nature. But through the revelation of its finitude, aesthetic judgment reveals the causal organization of nature as a normative meaning. This is our final definition of the *environment: the revelation of the finite causal normative meaning of nature*.

Rigorous Game, Improvised Play, and Spontaneous Dance

Our technical argument for aesthetic judgment as the subjective foundation for causal meaning is now complete. However, due to the unique nature of subjective and formal purposiveness, any attempt to articulate or even to 'prove' the reality of this subjective foundation will ultimately remain insufficient. The judgments on beauty and sublimity reflect an *aesthetic rationality* that is conceptually indeterminate – that is, a mere *formal* purposiveness.[959] Although we claim these judgments to reflect the ground and abyss for the conceptual determination of lawful nature, the foundation itself is purely subjective. Any technical argument – that is, as a rigorous form of theoretical reasoning through *conceptual analysis and inference* – will not be able to give a direct and literal articulation of the original aesthetic phenomenon. Despite our best efforts, we must ultimately concede that Kant's analysis of beauty and the sublime, as well as our own arguments for aesthetic judgment as ontological foundation, can only serve as *allegorical arguments*. Or better yet, they are *inverse* allegorical. What do we mean by this claim? An allegory is the pictorial representation of an idea or a

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[959] The term "aesthetic rationality" is inspired by Hjördis Nerheim, in *Estetisk rasjonalitet – En analyse av konstitusjonsbegrepet i Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Solum Forlag A/S, Oslo 1991.

principle. This means that the *picture* is understood as a symbolic representation of a phenomena that is otherwise considered conceptually determinate. However, in the case of aesthetic judgment, the root phenomenon is ultimately considered to be conceptually indeterminate. The technical arguments given are therefore inverse allegorical, in the sense that the conceptual framework is ultimately a symbolic representation of a phenomenon that is fundamentally pictorial *qua aesthetic*. In the effort to expand upon what is ultimately depicted (inversely) allegorically in the subchapter above, we now turn to the power of the *example*.

We will present three examples: rigorous *game*, improvised *play*, and spontaneous *dance*. These examples will illustrate *three different degrees of conceptual determination at play in aesthetic judgment*. In the case of the rigorous game, the rules for causal action are predominantly determined through concepts. In the case of improvised play, the rules are still largely determinate, but in constant development – that is, in a state of flux. And in the case of spontaneous dance, there are no determinate rules, but only a formal purposiveness of harmonious free play. By varying the degree of conceptual determination, we will be able to flesh out the foundation of subjective and formal purposiveness, which remains the unifying constant throughout all three examples.

1: Rigorous game. We begin with the generic example of a team sport. Like football, basketball, volleyball, et cetera. Such sports reflect a rigorous game, in the sense that most of the essential rules that constitute such games are conceptually determinate; often written down in a rule book. Some of the rules may not be articulated, but they are nonetheless articulable; for example, the rule that each player should do his best to win the game. Other rules may be more difficult to explain, or even downright inarticulable. If the coach instructs the players to perform according to a certain formation, this instruction will typically contain a lot more information than what is explicated. That is, a form of tacit understanding of the kind of behavior that is expected of the players. What makes either the individual player or team perform satisfactorily is not simply a matter of conforming to determinate rules. It is also by acting out behavioral patterns that the players have adopted, internalized, and perfected through hours of practice. Patterns that a seasoned spectator may recognize and acknowledge, without thereby being able to explicate conceptually – that is, not without relying heavily on metaphorical representation.

The usually unspoken yet foundational premise of any game is the imperative to preserve its very existence. All causal actions performed by the players, and the purposive presence of the sports field, equipment, and supporting apparatuses – that is, the *instrumental rationality* internally at play in the game – are all contingent on the manifested reality of the

game itself. Things demonstrate a definite sense of meaning that is often uniquely specific to the game played. And the players demonstrate behavior and social interactions that, outside the court, may be seen as inappropriate or even antisocial. In short, all causally determined components that go into the game presuppose the existence of the game itself as a meaningful whole. This is the foundation which Heidegger identifies in his novel interpretation of Aristotle and the *final cause* in the unconcealment of *techne*, and which we now have explicated through a teleological twist on Kant's regulative idea of nature as a logical system. This primordial assembly – *Versammlung* – of the game and its players emerge through the sports field – that is, as the manifestation of nature as a particular finite environment. We cannot reduce this assembly to the subjectivity of the players. For the existence of the subject *as a player* is only made possible as an environmental manifestation of the sports field. This manifestation is ultimately practical. On the surface, we depict such practice as the acting out of determinate rules. However, these conceptually determinate actions are only made possible because the players are incited to a subjective yet foundational state of harmonious free play. It is this foundational praxis that unites the game into a meaningful whole, in which all its components interconnect into a unified system. The game is never merely an aggregate of different actions and causally determined things; it is always already a unified whole, which enable us to act out as if the interconnections were determinate, and to look for new determinate connections that were initially merely indeterminate.

The game that plays out on the sports field is normative. Because its foundational praxis is incited by the field itself, while simultaneously containing the possibility of disruption. It is not a normativity *of* the player. For the ground and abyss of the field is simultaneously the realization and nihilation of the player itself. The player can but respond to this normative meaning as his existential residence. However, the normativity at play in the meaningful praxis of the rigorous game is *usually and for the most inconspicuous*. How so? Because the negative possibility of disruption is not immediately apparent. In fact, a player that is not fully consumed by the harmonious free play of the game – that is, a player that does not remain oblivious to the possibility of his own negation – becomes hesitant and thereby a bad player.

2: Improvised play. The next example should be easily recognized by two familiar forms of social practice. The first variant is the child's play of *make-belief*. The second is basically the adult's version of the same social practice, which we refer to as *improvised role-play*. The two examples accentuate different but complementing aspects of aesthetic judgment: If the child's play represents a greater purity of subjective and formal purposiveness, then the adult's improvisation is more likely to come with a matured sense of situational awareness and

thereby an acknowledgment of the normativity that bounds them. Improvised play is the acting out of familiar tasks, situations, and other behavioral patterns. Ranging from mundane everyday operations to narratives of epic fantasies and fairy tales. We may accentuate the unique nature of improvised play by distinguishing it from the acting out of an established theatrical play. In a conventional theatrical play, the roles, scenes, and narratives are all mostly fixed. Much like the sportsman from our first example, the actor in a theater excels by conforming to behavioral patterns that are conceptually predetermined, typically represented by a written script. The improvised play may at times reflect the same kind of rigorous conformity, but it is ultimately driven by an underlying sense of freedom to radically alter the very same rules and thereby the course of the practice. However, despite such blatant violation of the determinate rules that may govern the play at a temporary state, there is still an urgent and invariable sense of commitment to abide by the play at hand. That is, there is an underlying formal purposiveness at play that perseveres throughout the constant fluctuation of instrumental rationality. And this underlying sense of an indeterminate imperative to conform by the play is commonly shared by all its actors. For example, when the princess of the children's make-belief play suddenly attains a set of magical abilities, that were absent only a moment ago, she is nonetheless deeply offended by the knight-errand boy who refuses to play along. Because the conceptually determined rules of improvised play are all contingent and fleeting, the determining ground for its continuation cannot be the concept of an end. Rather, the foundational *telos* of the play is simply the preservation of the subjective state of free play itself. When acting out this radical form of subjective praxis, the players our filled by a sense of pleasure. This feeling itself functions as a driving force for the continuation and preservation of its own state.

The normative meaning of improvised play is significantly more conspicuous than in the rigorous game, precisely because the players are constantly confronted by the fleeting nature of its own determinate rules, which in turn accentuates the need to abide by the subjective imperative of free play itself. That is, in the playful exploration of new and often radically different forms of behavioral patterns and interactions, the players are simultaneously granted an acute awareness of the possibility to withdraw from the praxis and thereby their own improvised character. In fact, it is this very acknowledgment, that the continued existence of the game is fundamentally at stake, which renders the players in a state of exhilarated satisfaction.

A caveat regarding the example of improvised play should be noted. In comparison to rigorous game, and as we will see, to spontaneous dance, there is no doubt that our second example is far less suited to demonstrate the aesthetic manifestation of the willful ground of

subjective and formal purposiveness. Strictly speaking, the foundational environment of improvised play is never actually present – there are no props or fixed background settings required to play along. The players instead choose to act out from the mere idea of a hypothetical environment. The primary achievement of the example becomes instead to illustrate the commonly shared sensibility of the players for the foundational incitement of its subjective praxis. However, this does not mean that we can reduce the example of improvised play to the social construction of human subjectivity. For the acting out of its social patterns is only made possible because its foundational environment is already present through its idea. That is, the subject can only realize itself through the behavioral patterns of the play because it has already acquired a sense of environmental familiarity during past experiences.

3: Spontaneous dance. If *choreography* is the determination of dance according to a set of fixed behavioral patterns, often organized by a particular order of succession, then a dance is *spontaneous* when it is free from all forms of choreography. But this indeterminate state does not render the dance unlawful. Instead, it reflects a subjective lawfulness of harmonious free play. The manner in which music can incite this state is perhaps one of the clearest examples of how aesthetic phenomena represents a willful ground for praxis. Spontaneous dance cannot be reduced to the will of subjectivity. It is rather a response to the surroundings, which animates the subject *as a subject* through action. It may come as a subtle tapping of the foot to a beat. As the gentle rocking of the hips to a melodic tempo. And, as the full bodily emersion on the dance floor.

Spontaneous dance is the acting out of a praxis put in motion by the rhythm and harmonies of the aesthetic ground of music. The causal meaning of the environment of the dance is entirely formal and indeterminate. That is, the finite causal meaning is simply the subjective praxis of the dance floor. Because the praxis is indeterminate, so too does the subjectivity at play transcend all forms of determinate self-awareness. The dancer becomes *ecstatic*, elevated above the concerns of everyday instrumental rationality. But in this elevated state, the dancer easily becomes oblivious to the normativity of his existential situation. It is only when the music stops that the dancer fully regains himself, by reinstating a determinate sense of his surroundings.

Nature presents itself through the causal meaning of environments. If we begin by defining "nature" in the abstract as the sum total of existent objects of appearance, then the factual presence of these appearing objects in empirical experience is always already organized according to a finite unified system. The reflection of aesthetic judgment reveals beauty and sublimity as the ground and abyss for causal meaning. Beauty is the willful ground that incites a radical praxis of subjective and formal purposiveness that acts out the practical reality of the transcendental idea of nature as a logical system. And sublimity is the abysmal disruption of such foundational praxis, which nihilates all meaning. However, through this sublime nihilation, man simultaneously gains an awareness of the twofold ground of nature. That is, by confronting the existential vulnerability of his environmental residence – *the finitude of oikos* – man comes into contact with his own moral essence – *the abiding ethos*.

Having established our interpretation of aesthetic reflection as a revelation of fundamental ontology, we now stand to determine the nature of the human subject. Throughout this dissertation, we have invoked Heidegger's radical yet enigmatic notion of *Ereignis*, as the event of appropriation where man *comes to himself* in the presence of being. Formulating our program of ecological humanism, we presented the idea of humanity as a realization that the empirical self of a human being is existentially contingent on its environment. When we connected this Heideggerian insight on the origin of human subjectivity to Kant's grounding of human morality in chapter two, we asked about the exact relationship between the willful subject and the causally determined object. Following Heidegger's own reading in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, we looked to the concept of the *transcendental apperception*. With this concept, Kant determines the "I think" of subjectivity as the primordial unity reflected in the representation of the lawful object of appearance. We then presented the radical proposition that the *spontaneous act* of the transcendental apperception is ultimately an expression of free will. We now finally stand to make good on our promise to elaborate on this proposition. That is, through the radical self-awareness of aesthetic reflection, we are now in position to unite Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis* and Kant's claim to the spontaneous act of the human self.[960]

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[960] In her review of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's aesthetics, Ingvild Torsen makes a similar point on aesthetic experience as ground of subjectivity: "The judgement of taste is recognition of a demand that the beautiful makes on us. The elements of spontaneity and receptivity are intrinsically linked in this judgement and

The human subject is the unity of thought expressed by the utterance "*I think…*" which accompanies all representation. This identity is nothing else than the unity of nature as a finite system. That is, the human subject emerges as the unity of the environment, manifesting through the willful praxis of formal purposiveness. The complete individuality of a real-life person will always be an aggregate of subjective manifestations throughout a multitude of environments. These varying identities will sometimes greatly overlap, and other times they may diverge, or even contradict each other. That is, the behavioral patterns that define one environmental identity will reflect varying degrees of compatibility with the identities of other environments (e.g., the soldier and the father; or the carpenter and the theoretical physicist). But the original nature of the subject will always be the unity that emerges through a particular environment, and not some ethereal multi-environmental soul.

However, when identifying the unity of the environment as the human subject itself, have we thereby reduced the concept of nature to the projections of subjectivism? Certainly not! For the subject is a *possibility* that emerges through the environment, and never its foundation. Our ecological turn for humanism represents a *reversal* of the traditional subjectivist interpretation of Kant's transcendental philosophy. This reversal is revealed when facing the possible disintegration of our grounding environmental meaning. Only in the presence of the finitude of nature do we come to see the willful ground of nature as the foundation of our own subjectivity – a foundation which is always at stake of being taken away. That is, by recognizing the abyss of nature as the source of my own destruction, I also come to see the ground of nature as my existential origin. Aesthetic reflection relates the willful ground of subjectivity to the simultaneously present abysmal ground of nihilation, which reveals the unity of the subject as a spontaneous act – that is, as the *animation of subjectivity from nothingness*. This juxtaposition of the possibility of the animation and the loss of one's own self is the primordial meaning of the synthetic unity of free will.

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in it *Dasein* (be it individual or plural) sees itself as bound by something which it is and which is outside itself. That something is neither nature, as given and determined, nor freedom, as spontaneous, self-legislated normativity; it is, however, that which *grounds* both. Kant calls this grounding the supersensible substratum of humanity. For Heidegger, that something, that common ground of the opening of world, on the one hand, and our spontaneous projection of a purposive way of being-in-the-world, on the other, is the event of an artwork—a happening of truth." Torsen, I. (2016), "Disinterest and Truth: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetics", page 31f. In an altogether different line of interpretation, Hannah Gingsborg too tries to connect the transcendental apperception of the first *Critique* with the free play of aesthetic judgment in the third *Critique* (however, without the Heideggerian connection to free will). See Ginsborg, H. (2015). *The Normativity of Nature – Essays on Kant's Critique of Judgment*, "Essay 9", page 202-224.

In the former subchapter we utilized the examples of game, play and dance to illustrate beauty as the willful incitement of the foundational praxis of formal purposiveness, and thereby the animation of a subject in a state of harmonious free play that can act out the causal meaning of environments. We will now present another example that illustrates the opposing abyss of sublimity, as the nihilation of environmental meaning and thereby the loss of self. We do so by revisiting our earlier example on the *bewilderment of the wilderness*, but now finally utilizing the image on the front page of this dissertation – *The Monk by the Sea*, by Caspar David Friedrich.

The painting depicts a monk dressed in a red robe, standing on a barren and rocky shoreline against a vast and violent ocean. What kind of interaction is represented by the monk and the sea? What does the monk see and feel? What kind of experience or event has been put into play in this image? We imagine the monk living in a monastery at some distance from the ocean. His daily life is filled by the toil and grind of monastic duties – by his assigned chores and craftsmanship; the regularity of his prayers; and by attending service and other religious rituals. The monk has devoted his life in service to God, but in the day-to-day monastic living this service comes in the form of regularity and order – through routine and discipline.

One afternoon, when finished with his obligations, the monk sets out for a specific walk, which he makes from time to time. The route first takes him through a farming area, and then on a narrow path towards an increasingly desolate and rugged landscape, walking for an hour or so. As he ventures closer to the ocean, the monk feels a growing sense of unease. A careful but uncanny form of excitement. The monk knows exactly what awaits him, but in this knowing, he also experiences a waning sense of familiarity with his surroundings. The wind is strong, and the sky is still dark and heavy from an earlier rainfall. As the monk approaches the shoreline, the water foams on top of the violent waves that are incessantly thrown against the rocks.

Finally arriving at the edge, the monk does not feel any sense of fear. The waves cannot touch him, and the wind is not strong enough to throw him away. The monk is safe from harm. But precisely because of his fearless state, the monk is enabled to experience something altogether different. By confronting the absolute magnitude and power of the vast ocean and the ominous sky, the monk suffers a radical sense of disorientation. The otherwise immediate connection to the lawful tasks and commitments of the monastery and its surroundings are now broken. The everyday life of the monk fades away into oblivion. And in this event of bewilderment from his habitual environment, the monk experiences a radical sense of losing

himself. In the presence of the sublime abyss of the ocean, the monk becomes an ecstatic dwelling on the total disintegration of his own self.

The monk lingers for a while in this elevated state. Before he eventually comes back to himself, turns around, and starts walking back towards the monastery. It is only now, in the retreat to all things domestic – that is, in the subsequent descent from the *ecstasis* of sublimity – that the encounter with the magnitude and power of the ocean can translate into contemplation. This contemplation reflects a twofold realization. The monk now sees the environment of his monastic life as the foundation of his very existence – the ground of his subjectivity. In the sublime encounter with the abyss of nature, his very identity was taken away, revealing the environmental contingence of his being. But thinking back on the violent ocean, he also comes to realize the vulnerability of his existence – that is, that his environmental foundation is always already at stake, through a ground of nature that ultimately transcends him. This twofold realization now carries on in the everyday life of the monk, as a reminder of his origin. It fills him with an acute sense of situational awareness in his tasks, commitments, and aspirations. And it permeates his religious activities with a sense of awe. However, after some time, when the revelation of the ocean has passed on into the forgetfulness of everyday habituation, it is time for the monk to make another journey.

Willing and Freedom

The aesthetic judgment on beauty and sublimity reflects a ground and abyss for the causal meaning of nature. Extending Kant's original analysis of aesthetic phenomena and the transcendental principle of formal purposiveness, we have presented beauty as a *willful ground* of a subjective yet foundational *technique of nature*, and sublimity as the *abysmal ground of freedom* which disrupts the same technique. We shall now basically repeat the same argument of our interpretation once more, but in a manner that accentuates aesthetic phenomena as the primordial expression of willing and freedom. That is, we will now provide a short but technical definition of *willing and freedom as the ontological ground of nature*.

We chose Kant's system of critical philosophy as the basis for our metaphysical unification of ontology and ethics. This choice was initially made due to a unique feature of Kant's philosophy, in that he defines willing and freedom, and thereby the essence of human morality, in relation to the causal determination of nature. But despite this seemingly pivotal

connection between theoretical and practical philosophy, there is also no doubt that Kant, through his original analysis of pure practical reason in *Groundwork*, ultimately defines the will and its freedom as a property of the human subject. However, in our Heideggerian appropriation of Kant, we argue that the significant development for causal determination that takes place in *Critique of the Power of Judgment* – introducing the idea of a natural technique through the principle of formal purposiveness – entails an equally radical development for the meaning of willing and freedom. That is, although Kant himself does not make this claim, we argue that the analysis of reflecting judgment enables a more radical understanding of willing and freedom as ground of nature. In the following, we will present two definitions of human volition. The first, which we name the *instrumental definition*, corresponds to the conventional subjectivist interpretation of Kant's critique of practical reason. Whereas the second, which we name the *aesthetic interpretation*, reflects a more radical level of analysis, revealing willing and freedom as ground and abyss of nature.

(**1**) **The *instrumental* definition of volition**. In *Groundwork*, Kant defines the will as a *kind of causality* – that is, as the ability to act in accordance with the representation of laws. And a will that is free reflects the ability of such causality to act out independently of the lawful determination of nature.[961] These definitions are quite abstract and in need of further clarification. The backdrop for Kant's grounding of human morality is *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here causality is defined in the second analogy of experience as the necessary order of succession for all temporal events in nature as appearance. The *transcendental necessity* of causation – in relation to which negative freedom expresses its independence – refers to the lawful schema of simple mechanical relations. Through this backdrop, Kant provides his critique of practical reason based on an instrumental conception of causality – a *instrumental rationality* – defining volition as the acting out from the *determining ground of means and ends*. This instrumental structure reflects a generalization of the original mechanical form of cause and effect. Willing then becomes the *affirmation of an end*, as the acting out of the means that are necessary for its attainment. Whereas freedom represents the exertion of causal independence through the *negation of ends*. These definitions hold true for both the hypothetical and the categorical imperative, where the end of volition is either given empirically or *a priori*. The instrumental definition of volition expresses the *objective element of willing and freedom*.

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[961] See GMS 4:412 & 446.

It is 'objective' because it defines the structure of volition based on concepts – that is, as the affirmation and negation of conceptually determined means and ends.

(**2**) **The *aesthetic* definition of volition**. The instrumental definition of volition is certainly correct. But does it exhaust the original phenomenon? We now present the aesthetic definition of volition as the *subjective element of willing and freedom*, which serves as the necessary foundation for the objective element of instrumental rationality. In the form of beauty and sublimity, *willing is the grounding movement that incites the subject into a radical praxis of formal purposiveness, and freedom is the abysmal disruption of this praxis*. This radical praxis engages the subject in a state of harmonious free play that grounds the finite causal meaning of environment, through which the affirmation and negation of instrumental rationality can take place.

How can we make sense of this claim? If we regard Kant's initial critique of practical reason in the abstract, then human volition is a reflection on the *simultaneous presence of necessity and contingence for the lawful determination of nature*. Articulated through the instrumental definition, willing represents the affirmation of causal necessity, and freedom represents its negation. However, as long as we base our concept of causal lawfulness solely on the second analogy of experience, the instrumental definition of willing and freedom remains incomplete. In the following, we present *two foundational problems for instrumental volition*, which will serve to accentuate the need for the aesthetic ground of beauty and sublimity.

The **first** foundational problem points to the fact that instrumental rationality is dependent on causal meaning. The transcendental necessity of mechanical causality simply determines the necessary order of succession for all change in appearance as temporal events. It does not specify the *types* of causes and the *types* of effects that are connected in these events. For there to be a meaningful sense of instrumental rationality, we require that the aggregate of simple and unrelated mechanical relations be classified and differentiated according to a system of conceptually determined means and ends. But as long as we confine the concept of causation to the analysis of *Critique of Pure Reason*, willing and freedom would simply reflect the necessary connection between some *arbitrary and unspecified* mean to some *arbitrary and unspecified* end. Thus, we need to rearticulate willing and freedom in a manner that expresses causal determination of nature as the necessity and contingence of the organized state of causal meaning.

The **second** foundational problem for instrumental rationality addresses the need for a causal basis that incites the subject into a *behavioral mode of volition*. If the objective element of willing and freedom is the affirmation and negation of ends and their means, then the *act of*

affirmation and negation itself must reflect a foundational comportment of the subject. That is, to will something presupposes a *normative force* that compels the subject into action, and thereby enables the practical effectuation of its conceptually determined ends. This foundational comportment of volition cannot itself be conceptually determinate. The mere logical possibility of affirming and negating an end does not itself contain the *proclivity to realize* these possibilities. The determining ground of willing and freedom must ultimately be subjective.
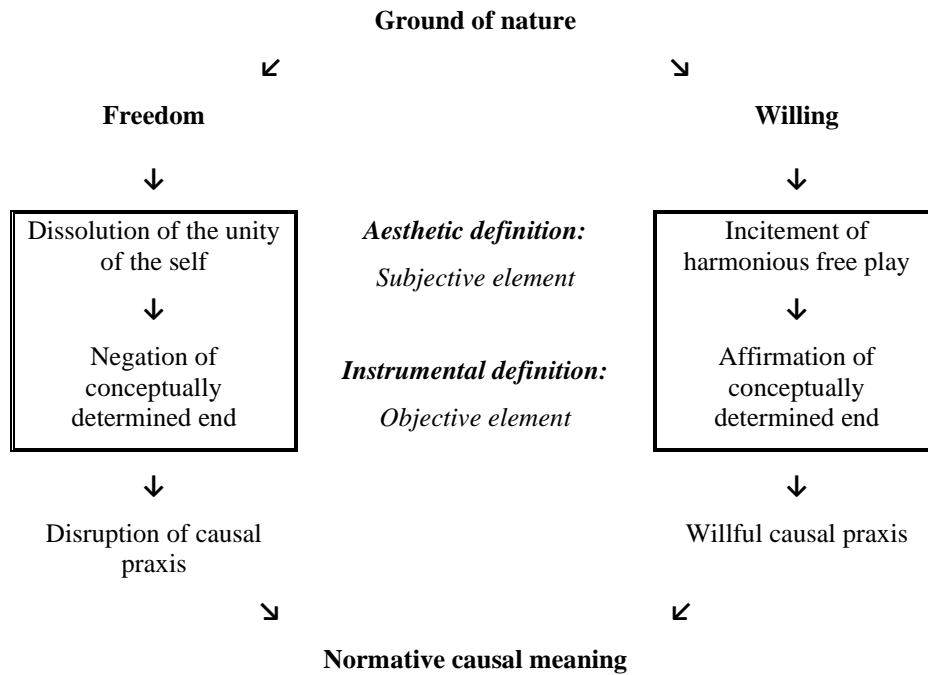
Ground of nature

↙   ↘

Freedom   **Willing**

↓   ↓

Dissolution of the unity of the self ↓ Negation of conceptually determined end	*Aesthetic definition:* *Subjective element* *Instrumental definition:* *Objective element*	Incitement of harmonious free play ↓ Affirmation of conceptually determined end

↓   ↓

Disruption of causal praxis   Willful causal praxis

↘   ↙

Normative causal meaning

Figure 16: The ground of nature as willing and freedom.

Figure 16 (above) illustrates the ground of nature as willing and freedom.[962] The two enclosed boxes represent the subjective and objective element of willing and freedom, corresponding to the aesthetic and instrumental definition of volition. Taken together, they form the normative praxis of causal meaning. How is the subjective element of volition foundational to the objective element? In response to the two foundational problems of instrumental rationality presented above, we begin with the subjective ground of causal meaning. Throughout this chapter, we have demonstrated how the subjective state of harmonious free play in the reflecting judgment of beauty serves as the transcendental basis for the realization of the causal meaning

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[962] We see that figure 16 represents only a minor adjustment of figure 14.

of environments. And equally, the judgment on sublimity as a reflection on the ground which nihilates all meaning. The determinate objective cognition of nature as a logical system will forever remain incomplete. But through the willful incitement of beauty, the subject is engaged by the harmonious free play of formal purposiveness that *acts out the practical reality of an indeterminate yet complete system of nature*. And when faced with the unpurposive abyss of sublimity, the subject suffers a total disintegration which nihilates causal meaning.

Turning to the second foundational problem for instrumental rationality, we ask: In what way does the aesthetic foundation of *beauty and sublimity reflect the normative force of volition*? The conventional Kantian answer is that the comportment of a willful subject acting to attain an end is driven by an *interest* – that is, as a *desire to realize the object of the end*. And if freedom is the negation of an end, then a subject acting out its causal independence would do so based on a sense of disinterest or disgust, or on the conflicting interest of another end. This depiction of the subjective inclination of willing and freedom no doubt seems correct. However, the reflecting judgment on formal purposiveness enables us to conduct a more radical analysis of willful comportment, revealing an aesthetic condition for the possibility of a subject with interests and desires.

The instrumental volition of means and ends is always already situated within an environment of causal meaning, acted out by a subject in a state of harmonious free play. The *end* willed in the willful action of subjective and formal purposiveness is not rooted on the interest for a singular determinate object. The aesthetic judgment is purely subjective and without interest. But through the transcendental connection to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, the reflecting judgment of formal purposiveness is *enforced and maintained by a disinterested sense of satisfaction*. In this aroused state, the end willed is simply the subjective unity of causal meaning. That is, the 'product' of its volition is nothing more than the subject itself, as the unity of its environment. It is only through this subjective unity that the actions of instrumental rationality can unfold. *For the interests of a subject is fundamentally the possibilities of its environment. And the normative force that enables the subject to act out these possibilities, is the state of harmonious free play, and the feeling of pleasure that serves to enforce and maintain this state*.[963]

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[963] In making this claim, we seem to address a problem that Allison presents as, to some extent, unsolvable: "For when all is said and done, we are still left with the simple question of how someone who takes pleasure in beauty can be indifferent to the existence of the object that are the source of this pleasure. The short answer is that one cannot be indifferent, but that, appearances to the contrary, the disinterestedness thesis does not really require

Environmental Responsibility and the Anthropocene

Our metaphysics of man and nature for the Anthropocene represents an ecologically oriented humanism. If humanism is the inquiry into and concern for the moral essence of man – the *ethos* of humanity – then humanism becomes ecological if the ultimate meaning of ethos is to reflect on the environment as man's existential foundation – the home of *oikos*. In this chapter, we have established the concept of environment as the phenomenal appearance of nature as normative causal meaning; grounded by the willing and freedom of subjective and formal purposiveness. As the final piece of our metaphysics, we now present the notion of *environmental responsibility*. What is responsibility? The primordial meaning of *being responsible* is not expressed by the ability of an active subject to respond to a given task. Rather, it is the *contemplative responsiveness of a moral person, in recognition of a call given*. The call arises from the ground of nature, and the answer is the coming to awareness of our environmental belonging. Responsibility is not a state of the subjects own making, but an event which the subject suffers and endures. Let us now go through the nature of this event, by using the transformative event of the Anthropocene as the leading example.

The epochal event of the Anthropocene begins as a state of crisis. Earth system science depicts anthropogenic activity as a major driver for the contemporary developments of planetary processes. And by recognizing our anthropogenic imprint, most of all apparent by our emissions of greenhouse gasses, we also come to acknowledge that our activity is at risk of altering our natural surroundings, in a manner that will destroy or severely deteriorate nature as our own existential foundation. Environmental practices that are central to our continued civilization – our technical utilization and mastery of natural resources – stand to collapse. In and of itself, the emergence of environmental crises is not unique, nor even uncommon. Varying degrees of environmental breakdowns confront us on a regular basis. But whereas the failure of environmental practices usually and for the most part result in swift acts of restoration, or by

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that one be." Allison, H. E. (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, page 94. In our interpretation, we claim that the 'object' willed in the willing of the *disinterested state* of formal purposiveness is simply the subject itself. And because any interest requires the existence of a subject as rational agent, reflecting judgment becomes a condition for the possibility of interest.

retreating into more *safe and familiar* environments, the crisis of the Anthropocene demonstrates a potentially *all-pervasive breakdown for which there is no immediate remedy or escape*. As **figure 17** (below) illustrates, the point is not that the Earth system environment *incorporates* all others, reducing nature to a single and all-encompassing environment. Rather, the Earth system environment *permeates* a multitude of others, critically affecting their sustainability. Because there is no escape, the victims of the Anthropocene crisis are instead forced to *linger and dwell* on their environmental predicament.
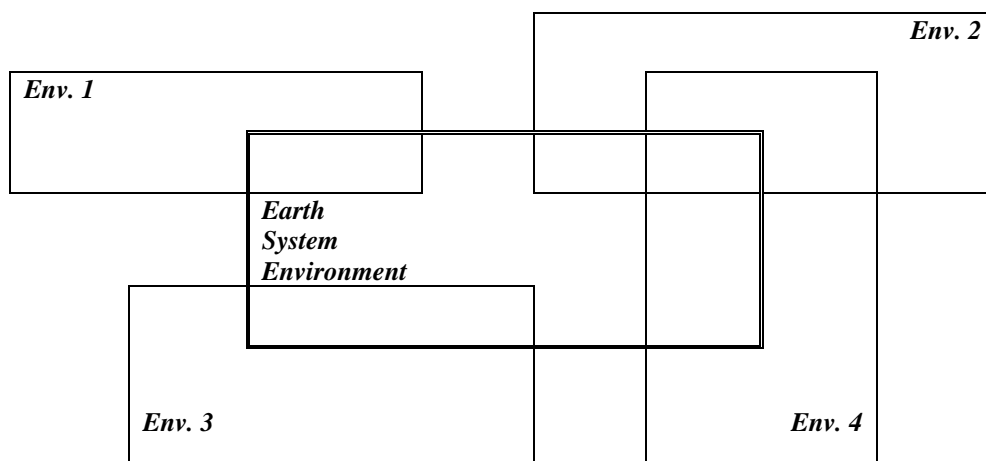

Figure 17: The all-pervasive environment of the earth system.

The Anthropocene crisis begins as a scientific discovery, determining the lawful relations between anthropogenic activity and the developments of the Earth system. But environmental responsibility can only emerge once this scientific discovery has transformed into an existential event that transcends all manner of empirical determination. On an ontologically superficial level of analysis, the pending environmental crisis reflects the loss of natural means to sustain our production of food and material goods, to preserve our homes, and to continue our institutions of a democratic and peaceful civilization. But as we ponder on the pending destruction of our foundational ecosystems, so too do we realize our own environmental contingence. This realization of contingence comes, not as an acknowledgement of empirical understanding, but as an event that nihilates all empirical meaning. The environments that we find ourselves in, whose familiarity and reliability is something that we usually and for the most part take for granted, now suddenly turn against us, revealing our dependence and vulnerability to a nature that is unreliable and even treacherous. Nature manifests as an abyss that nihilates the meaningful whole through which all things lawful may initially emerge.

The confrontation with the pending destruction of our natural surroundings is the ground zero of environmental responsibility. Through this experience alone, the inhabitants of the Anthropocene are reduced to a state of mere angst – a loss of orientation and thereby a deprivation of the self. This is the primordial expression of the pure negativity of freedom – independence of causal meaning manifesting as a nihilating event that devours all meaning. But through this abysmal experience, a new dynamic confronts us. In facing the potential of natural destruction, we also gain an awareness of the practices necessary to preserve our environments. A willful ground of nature emerges as an imperative to act. As an existential experience, the transformative event of the Anthropocene cannot inform us about the specific actions needed to remedy our environmental situation. Such questions are necessarily left to answer by scientists, engineers, innovators, and policy makers. The metaphysical transformation reflects the original event of responsibility, where our ability to commit and alter our environmental practices gains its normative force. That is, our sense of environmental responsibility, whatever empirical practices a responsible person might choose to act on, is ultimately grounded on the existential experience of a person who comes to see the environment as his primordial residence. This contemplative coupling of the twofold ground of nature in our thought, as the nihilating movement of freedom and the imperative to act of willing, is the primordial meaning of human free will.

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