Critique and Transcendence: A Phenomenological Investigation into the Normative Foundation of Critical Social Theory

Mahdi Ghanbari

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

October 2024

Abstract: This dissertation investigates the normative foundation of critical social theory, arguing that a lack of recognition of epistemological subjectivity as the foundation of normativity has permitted various forms of objectivistic (metaphysical) thinking to dominate the field. Metaphysical thinking uncritically posits a reality grounded solely in the mind's 'intentional' theoretical projections as a mind-independent object. By adhering to this mode of thought, critical social theory misconstrues social reality, which is primarily formed through the practices of real human subjects, as being metaphysically constituted. Metaphysical thinking also falsely integrates transcendental subjectivity in the objective order of things and, thus, overlooks the essential need for transcendence as the foundation for normative practices. To liberate social theory from this alienation of the transcendental subject, this project begins with an analysis of metaphysical thought in general, drawing on Edmund Husserl's method of transcendental phenomenology, and offers an expanded version of Kant's critique of speculative reason. The scope of Kant's critical investigation is confined to scholastic metaphysics, which limits its applicability in contemporary contexts. To overcome this limitation, this dissertation explores further transcendental elements at work in metaphysical thinking beyond those investigated by Kant and analyses two examples of contemporary metaphysical thinking, namely, the philosophies of Heidegger and Derrida. Transcendental phenomenology has been critiqued for purportedly advocating an ahistorical, disembodied, purely epistemological notion of subjectivity. This dissertation challenges such critiques by showing that commitment to transcendental-theoretical subjectivity allows for an analysis of material and historical subjectivity as part of a broader understanding of transcendental phenomenology. A phenomenology of material subjectivity then traces the origin of the fundamental concepts of social theory—such as alienation, justice, freedom, etc.—back to the economic structure of the lifeworld while asserting that a purely materialist and genetic analysis of these concepts fails to reveal their essentially normative nature. By maintaining a firm distinction between the transcendental and the material through epoche, transcendental phenomenology is capable of providing a normative ground for critique. This approach lays the groundwork for developing a phenomenologically clarified notion of teleological rationality on non-metaphysical grounds as an alternative to the instrumental rationality dominant in Western civilization.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Joan Steigerwald, for her unwavering support, invaluable guidance, and insightful feedback throughout the course of this research. I am particularly thankful for her diligence in revising each chapter of this dissertation and providing vigilant and precise comments. Her expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation.

I am also profoundly grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Terry Maley whose thoughtful and constructive suggestions have significantly enriched this work, and Philip Walsh whose support was integral to the completion of this project.

Table of Contents

Introduction

1. The Uncertainties of Critical Social Theory vis-à-vis Its Philosophical Foundation

The evolution of the concept of human subjectivity in the history of modern European philosophical and social thought has been riddled with persistent conflicts. A close examination of this history unveils a pattern of progress and regress panning out in three main waves. First, René Descartes's subjective revolution, which attempted to found philosophy on the absolutely undoubtable ground of the thinking subject in contradistinction from the material world, met with increasing resistance from the rationalist camp culminating in Baruch Spinoza's monistic metaphysic of substance. Second, Immanuel Kant's critique of pure reason furthered the Cartesian project by critically investigating the subjective origin of speculative reason as the basis for metaphysical thinking. The reactions to Kant's subjectivism were greater in extent and power compared to the first period as they were diverse. Metaphysical reactions almost immediately followed Kant's philosophy by F.W.J. Schelling, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, and G.W.F. Hegel. In particular, in Hegel's speculative dialectic, Kant's critical subject was turned into a universal thinking subject comprising all the spheres of reality. Conversely, Karl Marx's historical materialism sought the genetic roots of subjectivity in the socio-historical processes of production, paving the way for a dogmatic combination of materialism and Hegelian dialectic in the doctrine of dialectical materialism of Frederik Engles and Soviet Marxism. Other variants of genetic historicism, whose reverberations still resound to this day, were crafted by Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Nietzsche in response to both Hegel's universalism and Kant's subjectivism. In a third renewal of the philosophy of the subject, Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, taking its *Leitfaden* directly from Descartes's revolution, utilized descriptive psychology and further purified it of metaphysics through the method of reduction to re-establish the transcendental life of the subject as a firm foundation for philosophy. Despite

phenomenology establishing itself as a new philosophical tradition, none of the major phenomenologists following Husserl developed phenomenology in the direction of its founder. Non-phenomenological motifs dominated phenomenology as early as the publication of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), which culminated in a full-on return of metaphysics, this time in relativistic forms, in the philosophies of the late Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas. In contemporary France, the attacks on the philosophy of the subject by figures such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Alain Badiou consolidate themselves in various forms of metaphysical relativism. Flattered to have undermined all central pillars of critical philosophy, metaphysical thinking no longer even feels the necessity to offer justification for its origins.

This project locates itself within the conflictual horizon of the third historical period. In addressing the question of the philosophical foundations of critical social theory, this project, thus, finds itself compelled to deal with the problems concerning the nature of philosophical practice. The question of the philosophical foundation of social theory inevitably stirs up another question: out of many available philosophies, what type of philosophy would best serve as the foundation for social theory? This question cannot be answered without an assessment of various philosophical systems to the end of arriving at the most "reliable" one. But it is precisely this assessment that has preoccupied many post-Kantian philosophers. Critical theorists cannot simply turn to philosophers for an answer to the above question, since the current status of philosophy is marked by perplexity regarding its foundation. This is the reason that the prominent figures of social theory, from Marx to the present day, found it necessary to confront the question of the nature of philosophy.

The above historical sketch schematically lays out the terms of the conflict in which philosophy is entangled in our time. In the twentieth century, a primary characteristic of philosophical practices from Heidegger onward is their anti-subjectivism and anti-humanism. As evident in the historical waves outlined above, the reactive anti-subjective forces have been quick in their suppressive response to the emergence and re-emergence of the philosophy of the subject, debarring it from establishing itself as a

philosophical tradition that can form a point of reference and rich resources for the critical social theory. This is evidenced by the historical fate of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as registered by some of his last poignant reflections on the state of phenomenology: "Philosophy as science, as serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous, science—*the dream is over*…. A powerful and constantly growing current of philosophy which renounces scientific discipline, like the current of religious disbelief, is inundating European humanity" (Husserl, 1970, pp. 389–390). The reconfiguring of the transcendental scope of human subjectivity in favor of genetic accounts of subjectivity coupled with metaphysical tendencies has set phenomenology on a decaying path, one that misplaced the domain of its philosophical tasks and diminished its critical capacity for an ultimate clarification of its transcendental origin. These uncritical metaphysical tendencies are only augmented as philosophy, in the so-called postmodern time, abandons phenomenology altogether and proceeds by a radical negation of subjectivity on purely speculative bases. Mirroring the condition of philosophy, in critical social theory the anti-subjective and dogmatic forces have historically held sway.

To be able to boldly underscore the root cause of the uncertainties surrounding the philosophical foundations of critical social theory—and, thus, the ultimate meaning of the conflictual historical situation of philosophy—I shall now present, in brief, the main thesis of this project. My thesis is that the dismissal of the human subject in its transcendental-epistemological and material-corporeal autonomy is responsible for the historical uncertainties regarding philosophy and the philosophical foundation of critical social theory and that only through a return to a notion of the human subject, worked out through the method of transcendental phenomenology, can it be hoped to arrive at a consistent philosophical foundation for social critical theory.

I would like to spotlight the two aspects of human subjectivity's autonomy in the above thesis that hold prominent positions in the following diagnostic evaluation of critical social theory regarding its philosophical underpinnings, namely, the transcendental-epistemological dimension and the material-corporeal dimension. I shall try to show that the pervasive lack of recognition of one or both dimensions

of human subjectivity by some of the major figures of critical social theory has led to confusion and uncertainties regarding the philosophical foundation of critical theory. The following analysis aims to demonstrate that a full assertion of the autonomy of human subjectivity in its dual dimensions is imperative for the theoretical coherence of social critical theory. The full implications of this argument will only become apparent through the course of this project.

Marx's early thought is characterized by assertion of the material subjectivity and rejection of ideal (philosophical) subjectivity. In "Theses on Feuerbach" (1845), Marx blames the mechanistic or objectivistic materialism of his time for neglecting the "*sensuous human activity, practice*" (Marx, 1974, p. 121). His suggested materialism can be termed subjective materialism since it is founded upon the subjectivity of human social activities. The restoration of material subjectivity is important for his project, since in the absence of subjective materialism, "the *active* side was developed abstractly by idealism—which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such" (Marx, 1974, p. 121). In the "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole" (1844), he also critiques idealism for taking over the "active side." In his assessment of the status of "modern criticism," Marx asserts the critical core of Hegel's philosophy to be the concept of alienation. He, however, refutes Hegel's treatment of this concept. Hegel's phenomenology grasps the alienation of "real, sensuous man" in the abstract, as the alienation of self-consciousness. All the essential human power and the history of its practices, which are first and foremost creative material activities on real objects, are ascribed to the "Absolute Mind" that, in reality, exists nowhere but in mind of the philosopher. In Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy, the subject, which in Hegel's philosophy is delivered only to the abstract thinking, is redeemed as the material activity of the real individual subject:

> He [the human being] creates or establishes only *objects because* he is established by objects—because at bottom he *is nature*. In the act of establishing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of "pure activity" into a *creating of the object*; on the contrary, his *objective*

> product only confirms his *objective* activity, establishing his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being. (Marx & Engels, 1988, p. 151)

While for Hegel, the only form of activity (subjectivity) is knowing, for Marx activity is fundamentally material and corporeal.

It is based on this theory of subjectivity that Marx refutes self-consciousness and philosophy as a purely theoretical activity independent from the material corporeal activity:

> When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. (Marx & Engels, 1974, p. 48)

Marx's materialism contains a theory of subjectivity, but one that denies the independent existence of the theoretical subjectivity of the subject. There is only one type of practice and one history, namely, the history of material creation. The capacity for pure reflection is, thus, excluded from the origin of human subjectivity. Marx's reformulation of subjectivity determined the orientation for the treatment of the question of the philosophical foundation of social theory by future Marxist philosophers. Most importantly, the complete dismissal of the autonomy of pure theoretical subjectivity foreclosed the avenues for an epistemological critique of materialism and shifted the balance toward dogmatic metaphysics as a contender for the philosophical foundation of materialism.

Engels's *Anti-Duhring* (1877), the first and the most important philosophical text of orthodox Marxism, presented the doctrine of dialectical materialism as the philosophical foundation of Marxism. Similar to Marx, Engels's formulation of materialism is motivated by a critique of mechanistic materialism along with the "old metaphysics" that conceived material objects as dead finished objects (Engels, 1996, p. 45). However, instead of turning to material human subjectivity to inject dynamism into

the materialistic outlook, Engels reverts to Hegel's dialectic. Turning Hegel's idealistic dialectic upside down, he established nature as an ultimate self-moving reality that incorporates into itself all the spheres of human life—social, economic, scientific, aesthetic, etc.—through its intrinsic laws. "Dialectic, however, is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion, and development of nature, human society, and thought" (Engels, 2010, p. 131).[1] Consequently, the materialistic autonomy that Marx reserved for human subjectivity is lost sight of under a metaphysics of nature. When dialectical materialism becomes incorporated into the official philosophical outlook of Soviet Marxism (Mendelson, 1979, p. 65), the theoretical suppression of subjectivity finds its parallel in the undemocratic practices of the Communist Party.

These dogmatic and metaphysical motifs continue to inform Louis Althusser's reflections on the theoretical status of Marxism. Althusser contends that the nature of Marx's thought is scientific, not philosophical. Marx's historical materialism marks an epistemological break, through which history becomes the subject matter of scientific study (Althusser, 2001, p. 38). The main category of this science is social production, and it proceeds by investigating the evolution of the historical patterns of this social production. The science of historical materialism does not need philosophy for its theoretical consistency. Historical materialism reveals that philosophy is nothing more than ideology with no independent history. "It is to say that philosophy strictly speaking has no object, in the sense that a science has an object" (Althusser, 2001, p. 56). The philosophical debates are mere representations of class struggle in society and the history of philosophy can be explained only on materialistic premises. Any attempt to present Marxism in a self-sufficient theoretical system amounts to upholding the idealistic and bourgeois modes of philosophical expression. As a result, the correct philosophical position finds its justification only in the political position it represents.

[1] It should be noted that, unlike Engles, Marx does not assign dialectic a metaphysical status. Marx's use of dialectic excludes the realm of nature and solely focuses on the interaction between social and historical forces within human world, making it an empirical concept.

Although, as a science, Marxism does not need any support from philosophy, for strategic reasons—that is to say, as a "theoretical weapon" in the hands of revolutionaries—a philosophy *for* Marxism can be invented. This philosophy, according to Althusser, is a materialism of the encounter, "and of the aleatory, and of contingency" (Althusser, 2006, p. 167) that, inspired by the atomistic metaphysics of Epicurus, theorizes the essence of the world as emerging out of the original aleatory encounters of the atoms due to a "swerve" (Althusser, 2006, p. 169). The amalgamation of the atoms, itself "just a pure effect of contingency," thus "becomes the basis for all reality, all necessity, all Meaning and all reason" (Althusser, 2006, p. 169). Based on this new formulation of materialism, Althusser refutes Engel's dialectical materialism as rationalistic and, thus, idealistic. History does not proceed rationally and has no subject or telos, it is rather the site of random confrontation of forces.

The heavy weight of this anti-subjectivist and relativistic reformulation of Marxism fails to stifle ideality altogether, though, when in defining science Althusser finds himself compelled to put it in strictly idealistic terminology: "A science in the strict sense: a theoretical, i.e. ideal (*idéelle*) and demonstrative discipline, not an aggregate of empirical results" (Althusser, 2001, p. 41). What takes an ideal demonstrative discipline beyond the mere aggregate of empirical facts is the *synthesizing act of a theoretical mind* that in its scientific attitude organizes scattered empirical givens into a unified theoretical whole according to a telos. Althusser's explicit embracement of this purely ideal practice, however, is at odds with his anti-subjective materialism. The lack of recognition of the subject's transcendental-ideal activities precludes an examination of the theoretical conditions of the possibility of science in general as well as the conditions for a critical examination of metaphysics. Materialism is in a state of self-conflict since it cannot assert the subjective realm as the basis of its possibility. As a result, the very theoretical foundation of materialism is left in the dark, and materialism becomes dogmatic.

Within the phenomenological tradition, broadly understood, the attempts to construct social critical theory have been more sympathetic towards the subject. For example, both Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, have employed insights from phenomenology to rethink the foundation of critical

social theory, with Marcuse leaning more heavily in this direction. Socially and historically situated subjectivity lies at the heart of Marcuse's rethinking of critical social theory and its relation to philosophy. In particular, material subjectivity is asserted in his notion of the individuals' collective capacity for the re-organization of their lives in accordance with their needs (Marcuse, 1968a, p. 104). The social and historical subject also forms the starting point of philosophizing:

> To be sure, the philosopher is first an individual human being in his own individual, personal situation… But: the personal situation is what it is under the impact of his "*time;*" his *Lebenswelt* which is *man's Lebenswelt*: the human condition in the *historical continuum*. Consequently, the philosopher does *not* choose his problems *arbitrarily*. His material is given to him as that of his Lebenswelt. And in this Lebenswelt is reflected—*in different historical forms and stages*—the *fundamental dichotomy* in the human condition: the conflict between the potential and the actual. (Marcuse, 2017, pp. 2–3)

The task of philosophy, then, is to learn, know, and analyze the established facts, transcend them, dissociate itself from them, and "'*judge*' them in the light of the potentialities which they deny or distort" (Marcuse, 2017, p. 3). The philosophical analysis operates upon an already established "dichotomy" between the potential and the actual. It is crucial to grasp the particular nature of this dichotomy. While the potential and the actual are essentially irreducible to one another, they should not be conceived as belonging to two ontologically separate spheres, otherwise, the historical character of the critical theory will be replaced by a metaphysical search for an a-historical transcendence:

> [S]uch "transcending" analysis of the facts in the light of their arrested and denied possibilities, pertains to the very structure of social theory. It is opposed to all metaphysics by virtue of the rigorously historical character of transcendence. The "possibilities" must be within the reach of the respective society; they must be definable goals of practice. (Marcuse, 2013, p. Xli–Xlii)

It is based on this characterization of the above dichotomy within the lifeworld that Marcuse criticizes Husserl's theory of essences according to which "the concept of essence is relevant only within the dimension of pure subjectivity" (Marcuse, 1968b, p. 40). Marcuse launches a phenomenological-materialistic critique of Husserl's theory of reduction in which the essence (potential) is severed from the real being (actual) and, thus, the critical tension between them is eliminated (Marcuse, 1968b, p. 43). Thus, Marcuse's theory of subjectivity acknowledges the social, historical, and material autonomy of the subject, but the transcendental dimension, that is, the subject's capacity for pure theoretical practice, is negated as a bourgeois tendency that disconnects it from the type of practice aimed at the real transformation of the society (Marcuse, 1968b, p. 45).

In Marcuse, a de-transcendentalized reading of phenomenology—influenced by Heidegger—grounds a non-dogmatic materialism. Nevertheless, the course of his reflections renders inevitable the appeal to a type of ideality, for example, in his assertion of an idealism and abstractness necessary for overcoming bad materialism (Marcuse, 1968a, p. 113), and in the criteria he provides for judging between different historical projects (Marcuse, 2013, p. 222). With regard to the latter point, the dismissal of the independent root of the subject's transcendental activities does not allow Marcuse to recognize the full extent of their necessity in the construction of social theory. Philosophy judges the actual in the light of the possibilities that are opened up in the *Lebenswelt*. But on what basis does philosophy establish its criteria for judgment, since the possibilities are all given within certain socio-historical situations? To differentiate rational from irrational possibilities, philosophy must already be supplied with the idea of rationality that is not immanent in the specific socio-historical situation being judged. In other words, without an a priori understanding of the idea of rationality, the judging subject wouldn't be able to discern between the good and the bad possibilities in its concrete social analysis. This calls for an a priori process of reflection that takes place above and beyond the premises of a specific social situation and, thus, a field of theoretical activity that is essentially distinct from the subject's worldly activities.

The postmodern tradition of political philosophy has no recognition of either the subject's theoretical or socio-political practices. The style of the postmodern philosophies summons forth the spirit of the pre-Kantian speculative metaphysics. What lends this metaphysics a semblance of novelty is its relativistic nature on the basis of which it justifies its dismissal of transcendental critique. Claiming to have undermined the philosophy of the subject and its associated critical method, it sets itself up as an ultimate form of philosophical thinking. But precisely because of its dismissal of the theoretical subject, postmodern political theory relies on theoretical speculation and, thus, becomes dogmatic and uncritical. In pure speculation, then, the social and the political are hypothesized through abstract concepts, and the active core of social subjects is removed from them and attributed to trans-subjective forces.

For instance, under the influence of Derrida's deconstructionism, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe conceptualize society as being constituted through the limitless self-conflictual contingent forces of differences. Consequently, the subject cannot be the basis and the origin of social relations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 115). Social practice, therefore, "always consists in the construction of new differences. The social *is* articulation [of the signifier-signified relations] insofar as 'society' is impossible" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. 114). The same Derridian conceptual model applies to all social phenomena, including democracy: "[P]luralist democracy becomes a 'self-refuting ideal,' because the very moment of its realization would coincide with its disintegration" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014, p. xviii). In *Specters of Marx* (1993), Derrida interprets the idea of communism, which for Marx contains nothing other than a particular social formation and is, thus, only an empirical reality, on the basis of the self-differential ontology of differance: "In this regard, communism has always been and will remain spectral: it is always still to come and is distinguished, like democracy itself, from every living present understood as plenitude of a presence-to-itself, as totality of a presence effectively identical to itself" (Derrida, 1994, p. 123).[2]

[2] For a similar analysis of Marx's concept of capital see (Mansfield, 2011, p. 231).

In a similar vein, Deleuze and Félix Guattari hypothesize the social based on a version of the metaphysics of difference in which the social is constituted through subjectless movements of "territorialization" and "deterritorialization" (Roffe, 2010, p. 40). These concepts legitimize themselves first and foremost not through their empirical applicability, but in the abstract speculation as theoretical components of a comprehensive speculative system. Therefore, the concepts that apply to the social are equally applicable, with minor adjustments, to all fields of being. Within this metaphysical purview, the social is integrated into the broadest reality, namely, being *qua* being, and, thus, the social practices of the real individual subjects are projected as the workings of an objective reality.

By dismantling subjectivity, the postmodern social critical thought loses all foundations for normativity, which is reflected most plainly in its ethical theories. For Derrida, the ethical action is caught in general self-refuting conditions: "The ethical can therefore end up making us irresponsible. It is a temptation, a tendency, or a facility that would sometimes have to be refused in the name of a responsibility that doesn't keep account or give an account, neither to man, to humans, to society, to one's fellows, or to one's own" (Derrida, 1996, pp. 61-62). Deconstructionism at both the political and ethical levels fails to provide the ideal conditions for actions, necessary to discriminate oppressive action from democratic practice and the ethical from the unethical. Similarly, Deleuze's "immanent ethics" that embraces the perpetual creation of new possibilities is ultimately in need of transcendent criteria to discriminate good possibilities from bad possibilities. However, Deleuze's commitment to an immanent ontology negates any assertion of normative transcendence.[3] Moreover, the ontological inversion of the subjective ground of society creates a fantastic conceptual world in which social oppression, injustice, inequality, and so forth are borne by "desiring machines" and "lines of flights" rather than real corporeal

[3] For a similar line of critique of Deleuze's ethics see Todd May (May, 1994, pp. 121–157). In response to Todd May, Nathan Jun has argued that Deleuze's ethics promotes "mindful" and "responsible" "creation of values" by individuals in contingent situations rather than implicitly appealing to universal values (Jun, 2011, pp. 104–105). The concept of responsibility, however, carries in itself an appeal to normativity. Additionally, this reading cannot evade the need for a universal criterion to discriminate between good and bad values.

human subjects. This latter point leads us to the elucidation of the necessity for a return to the subject and the proper method of investigating it, namely, transcendental phenomenology.

By reducing the realm of subjective experiences to the pre-subjective conditions, the mainstream philosophical development of the twentieth century aimed to delegitimize the subject as the starting point for theoretical and social practices. This dislocation, however, has taken place differently in the traditions of genetic phenomenology—Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Marcuse, Habermas, etc.—and the postmodern philosophical tradition. The former preserves some meaning for the active subject but undermines the transcendental-eidetic side of subjectivity, appealing to a genetic-historical account of the conditions of subjectivity—materiality, discursivity, historicity, etc. The latter, however, places the sources of all originally human activities—theoretical and practical—in the trans-subjective conditions of subjectivity and hypothesizes these conditions in the form of a comprehensive relativistic ontology—in concepts such as being, differance, becoming, multiplicity, etc. Postmodern philosophies share their dogmatic ground with the speculative materialism discussed above.

2. The Necessity for Recognition of a Transcendental Phenomenological Critique of Subjectivity

This project presents its approach to subjectivity in response to the two major traditions discussed above: in response to the genetic phenomenology, it emphasizes a balance between the pre-subjective—practical, material autonomy—and subjective—transcendental, ideal—autonomy of the subject. In response to the postmodern tradition, it resists the metaphysical assimilation of the subject into the order of abstract hypothesization. I argue that transcendental phenomenology affords an account of the philosophical foundation for critical social theory, one that does not compromise the full capacity of the subject, that is, its theoretical and practical autonomy. This project rests on the conviction that critical social theory should abandon its one-sided emphasis on materialism and its uncritical dismissal of the philosophy of the

subject; instead, critical social theory should stand on two legs, idealism and materialism, firmly establishing itself on solid ground, which is none other than the individual subject in its material and theoretical activities.

The source of the inconsistencies regarding the role of philosophy in critical social theory sketched above is the ongoing suppressive historical forces that have prevailed in its development. To be more specific, the history of philosophy and social theory in the twentieth century has been, for the most part, the history of the *theoretical* suppression of subjectivity. The logic of this suppression, just like suppression in the social and political sense, is essentially self-conflictual and, thus, irrational. In the above-discussed philosophical streams, the subjective declares itself in the very moment of its suppression, thereby revealing a conflict within the theoretical structure of social theory. This symptomatic reading of the history of social critical theory is an immanent critique that reveals the subject as the basis of all theoretical practices in which it has been suppressed. To borrow from psychoanalysis a terminology that must be applied in a strictly transcendental sense—a sense that excludes references to the psyche's natural functions and focuses purely on its transcendental life—the concept of the 'suppression of the subjective,' once linked to the crisis of sciences highlighted by Husserl, can be reformulated as follows: the crisis of sciences is the crisis of the reason's theoretical *functions* in which reason enters into conflict with itself and becomes self-alienated.

To elucidate this point further, the self-alienation of reason occurs when reason loses itself in its theoretical production, that is, when reason conflates its innermost functions with its outer manifestations. This form of alienation was first captured by Kant's reflections on the dialectical illusions into which reason gets entrapped when reason, in its speculative function, hypothesizes "object[s] that can be given nowhere but in our thoughts" (A481/B509). Dialectical illusions arise when a product of reason's theoretical activities is taken as a real object having the ground of its existence in itself. Metaphysical thought is established by this form of reason's illusion in which reason is caught in an *objectivistic* mode of thinking. In metaphysics, reason attributes not only existence but all sorts of higher powers to its

creations, giving birth to an entirely new theoretical attitude in which reason along with all subjective capacities of human individuals are thought as products of an absolutely objective reality. In metaphysical thinking, which itself is a function of reason's pure theoretical activities, reason ascribes its original active core—which exists only subjectively—to outer reality and, thus, falls prey to a misrecognition of its nature and the scope of its activities. It is in this transcendentally twisted and ill-formed attitude that reason posits as the ultimate active ground of all reality concepts such as being, difference, becoming, multiplicity, etc. on the basis of which, then, it proceeds and forms a new concept of itself, in which it is devoid of all of its essential powers.

The self-disintegration of theoretical reason is the root of the crisis of sciences. In the contemporary history of theoretical reason, the crisis is perpetuated through anti-subjectivist and relativist *theoretical* attacks on reason. A phenomenological-epistemological critique of reason proceeds by uncovering reason as the active force behind these assaults on reason. Such critique reads the history of philosophy as primarily the history of theoretical reason's activities and, thus, is able to highlight the moments when reason misunderstands itself. This theoretical alienation of reason can be rectified only when reason becomes aware of its subjective limits and firmly grasps itself within those limits. This implies that reason rediscovers itself as the active force behind all its theoretical practices, especially in those practices that, contradictorily, negate its active nature. Thus, again in a transcendentally refined psychoanalytical terminology, the theoretical self-reintegration of reason can only be attainable through overcoming its diminished self-consciousness, otherwise, reason is condemned to perpetually repeat the defective circle of redefining itself based on its inessential determinations. The means for this rectification lies in transcendental phenomenology, as only a transcendental phenomenology of the mind can observe reason in its living activities.

Now it can be seen more clearly that the above-discussed theoretical uncertainties of social critical theory regarding its philosophical foundation are rooted in reason's self-alienation. By thematizing the critique of reason's theoretical self-alienation, transcendental phenomenology opens a

new path in the study of the subject's self-alienation. While from Marx's early writings onward, social critical theory has attended to the task of the critique of human alienation in its material (and cultural) form,[4] the critique of theoretical alienation has never been fully appreciated. Consequently, critical social theory has been afflicted by the theoretical crisis of science, unable to even recognize its affliction due to the dogmatic exclusion of the subject's eidetic activities from the scope of its study. Transcendental-phenomenological critique, thus, benefits social critical theory by preventing the theoretical reason active in it from succumbing to objectivistic forms of theorization.

Most importantly, this critique argues that the transcendental subject is the absolute ground of all theoretical activities, the ultimate origin from which all scientific activities spring, thereby taking a crucial step towards the realization of a unified foundation for philosophy and social critical theory. A transcendental phenomenological reading of the history of philosophy and social theory sees them not as dispersed theories randomly appearing here and there, each following their own purposes, but rather as the workings of human subjects once they enact their theoretical capacities, thus, rediscovering them in the unity of the history of transcendental mind. This reading of the history of theory acquires its critical edge from an evaluation of how thoroughly each theory acknowledges its grounding in the theoretical reason.

Thus far, within the tradition of Husserlian Marxism, two significant works have been published that attempt to integrate Marxism with phenomenology. The first work is Enzo Paci's *The Function of Sciences and the Meaning of Man* (1963), and the second work is Ian H. Angus's *Groundwork of Phenomenological Marxism* (2021). Neither of these works thematizes human theoretical alienation as one aspect of the crisis of sciences. For Paci, the crisis of sciences is to be located within the broader crisis of human alienation brought about by capitalism. According to his reading, Husserl's epoche is, thus, not merely an epistemological practice but a social and historical movement that annuls alienation

[4] In chapters two and three of *Black Skin, White Mask*, Frantz Fanon develops an account of the cultural and psychological alienation in the colonial situation.

by returning to the subject as the agent and the telos of all socio-economic practices. Paci, thus, fails to grasp the purely transcendental and epistemological nature of scientific practices and their specific form of alienation. However, I believe that both forms of alienation are internally connected and should be discussed together.

Angus, on the other hand, develops his phenomenological Marxism outside of the humanistic framework of Marxism on which Paci builds his project. As a result, the theme of alienation does not concern him. Like other genetic phenomenologists, Angus preserves the pre-theoretical agency of the human subject on which he builds his intriguing account of the "essence of the lifeworld" as formed through human labor. His synthesis of Marx and Husserl culminates in his account of Marx's conception of labor through Husserl's analysis of kinesthetic motility. This account relies on the pre-theoretical capacities of the subject for bodily movement and aims to explain how the lifeworld is structured before any attempt to study it from a transcendental perspective. His approach to phenomenology departs from Husserl's as he characterizes transcendentality as "Nothingness" (Angus, 2021, p. 477), a concept that Husserl never used to define the transcendental realm. For Husserl, the realm of transcendence is a distinct ontological realm; the transcendental reduction, thus, does not take us to a realm of nothingness but to a new realm of being, namely, the realm of phenomena (Husserl, 2014, pp. 65–66).

Angus's *Groundwork* does not fall clearly within the tradition of Husserlian Marxism not only because it dismisses the transcendental realm, but also because of its endorsement of the superiority of the perspective of Heidegger's approach over that of Husserl (Angus, 2021, p. 494). Following Heidegger, the final pages of *Groundwork* theorize a "metaphysics of *polemos*" (Angus, 2021, p. 496). This theoretical shift is at odds with the principles of Husserl's phenomenology and deviates from the original promise of the book, which is to finish Husserl's unfinished work, *Crisis* (Angus, 2021, p. 9). The *Groundwork*, thus, does not surpass the limitations of genetic phenomenology and postmodern metaphysics, the philosophical and political currents this work critically confronts.

3. The Divisions of this Project

The above analysis yields the conclusion that the anti-subjectivist tendencies in the social and philosophical thought of the past century are the root cause of uncertainties regarding the philosophical foundations of social critical theory and that the remedy lies in the return to the transcendental phenomenological reflection on the foundation of the theoretical subject. But this project puts forward another claim equally significant: that the return to transcendental phenomenology does not mean the absorption of material subjectivity into the abstraction of the ideas—the move with which idealism has often been charged. On the contrary, significant portions of this project focus on a description of the conditions of social and material subjectivity in its distinction from ideal subjectivity. Despite what many post-Husserlian phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty claim, transcendental phenomenology is capable of accounting for the empirical world existing independently of the transcendental mind. Transcendental phenomenology, however, contests the fallacy—common in post-Husserlian phenomenology—of identifying the subject with the genetic conditions of its subjectivity and contends that aspects of the subject transcend its historical, social, psychological, linguistic, material, and perceptual conditions. What distinguishes a transcendental phenomenological approach from a merely genetic approach is that the former studies these conditions in accordance with the idea of the telos of subjectivity, that is, the ideal of humanity. Consequently, transcendental phenomenology is, from the beginning, tasked with an ethical ideal. Hence, unlike genetic phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology can provide a normative foundation as the condition of the possibility of the subject's critical activities, including social critical theory.

To fully develop the above argument, this project delves into the investigation of aspects of two major domains of the subject's experience, namely, the transcendental experience and the material experience. Each of these fields can offer an infinite number of interconnected issues for consideration. For example, the transcendental phenomenology of pure consciousness investigates the structure of

consciousness, its modalities, etc. My goal, however, is limited: in the first part, my analysis focuses on pure consciousness only in its metaphysical practices with the aim of isolating the transcendental roots of metaphysical thinking in general. The second part provides illustration of such metaphysical practices through in-depth analyses of Heidegger and Derrida as examples of genetic phenomenology and postmodern metaphysics. The third part discusses issues regarding the transition from the realm of pure consciousness to the realm of the empirical world (lifeworld) and aims to show that transcendental phenomenology can account for the existence of an independent empirical world. It also assumes the task of illustrating the phenomenological foundation of a subjective materialism (the conditions of the possibility of practical subjectivity). In the following, I try to highlight the key steps in the overall argument of the project.

The demand to overcome metaphysical thinking has captured the spirit of modern philosophy and political thought since Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). However, since the critique of metaphysics has not been carried out systematically it has often resulted in a complete dismissal of the subject's capacity for transcendental reflection. The post-Husserlian genetic phenomenology, some branches of social critical thinking, and postmodern philosophy associate transcendental phenomenology with metaphysics. This association, however, arises from the general confusion regarding the nature of philosophical and critical tasks. Light can be shed on these instances of confusion when, through a transcendental phenomenological inquiry, the philosophical activities of the subject are clearly distinguished from its metaphysical activities. Philosophy and metaphysics are both fields of theoretical activities of the subject. Their distinction, however, will be brought to the fore only when they are considered activities of the theorizing subject, each enjoying its own techniques, methods, concepts, etc. It is for this purpose that Part I embarks on a comprehensive transcendental critique of the mind in its metaphysical attitude, a project that has not been taken seriously in the post-Husserlian philosophy. It is exactly as a result of the negligence of a critique of metaphysics that speculative philosophy has

experienced a resurgence in postmodern philosophical thought. This critique's objective is to clarify the uncertainties in which critical social theory is entangled with regard to its philosophical foundations.

Part I draws on insights from Kant's critical philosophy, particularly his doctrine of "transcendental dialectic," and from Husserl's method of transcendental reduction. For Husserl, transcendental reduction is a universal method that suspends the validity of all beliefs in the existence of a mind-independent world, thereby revealing them as pure phenomena that reside only in the mind. Transcendental reduction deactivates the objectivistic claims of our ordinary beliefs. However, in Part I, I use this method for a more particular purpose; I apply this method only to metaphysical statements (beliefs) and suspend their claim of objectivistic validity, thus, revealing them as mere phenomena, that is, *as mere products of the theoretical reason in its attempts to gain knowledge of reality as a whole* (the subject matter of metaphysics). By putting out of play the objectivistic assumptions of metaphysical systems, transcendental reduction allows us to study them as the workings of theoretical reason and to determine whether their claims to objective validity are legitimate.

Transcendental reduction, thus, gives us the key to a universal critique of metaphysical thinking that unlocks the box that contains the transcendental tools, methods, and techniques that the mind employs to construct a system of metaphysics. The second chapter of Part I focuses on the three essential eidetic acts that constitute the speculative attitude of reason. The first act is the act of positing the subject matter of metaphysics, that is, the idea of being *qua* being (the thing-in-itself) through which the speculative reason projects in the idea of being *qua* being the totality of all reality as objectively existing. In the second act, the metaphysical mind ascribes a conceptual determination to the idea of being *qua* being which yields what can be called the fundamental metaphysical proposition: "Being *qua* being is…". The ground of the possibility of the existence of a diversity of metaphysical systems lies in this second act since each metaphysical system defines the nature of being through different conceptual determinations. The third act, metaphysical demonstration, itself is implemented in two steps: in an initial step, through conceptual demonstration, namely, further conceptual development of the first metaphysical proposition

which is necessary for establishing a system whole. Then in a subsequent step, through empirical demonstration, speculative reason turns to the empirical world and reappropriates it in the abstract conceptual system it has built in isolation from experience.

In metaphysics, the mind portrays the empirical world in the image of the idea of being *qua* being and conceptually embellishes it until a coherent conceptual system emerges in general accordance with experience that claims to be the most truthful statement of reality. Metaphysics is, thus, an explanation of the empirical world through non-empirical concepts, namely, concepts that are not driven from experience, but are fabricated in abstraction from experience by the mind in its theoretical activities. In metaphysical thinking the scope of empirical life and its diverse fields are grounded upon abstractly created concepts. The empirical world, including the subject itself in both its material and transcendental life, becomes manifestations of an abstractly enlivened reality. Part II analyses, by way of example, two of the major examples of metaphysical thinking in the twentieth century, Heidegger and Derrida, drawing on the above three eidetic elements of metaphysical thinking. This analysis gives full content to the somewhat formal exposition put forward in Part I and elaborates the claim that metaphysical thinking is in full force even in Derrida's thought, often considered the most "critical" towards metaphysics. In Derrida, the "generalized system of significations," which is active in all realms of existence, is to be understood, from a transcendental phenomenological perspective, as a concept that determines the nature of being *qua* being. "Difference" simply replaces Spinoza's substance or Hegel's reason as an alternative concept upon which a universal objectivistic ontology is established. The individual subject in its transcendental and material life is understood based on the self-sufficient life of forces of differance. Such metaphysical thinking results in the self-alienation of the subject and its empirical life in its theoretical activities.

The first two parts, thus, demonstrate that metaphysics is a misuse of theoretical reason. Part III explores how transcendental phenomenology, on the other hand, is capable of transcending the metaphysical use of reason and employing reason in a fruitful way to make reason conscious of its transcendental illusions. Transcendental phenomenology does not share the same starting point as

metaphysical thinking. The ground on which the former stands is the pure consciousness in its lived phenomenality—as it is presented to the phenomenological observer—whereas the latter starts from the illusional positing of the idea of the being *qua* being as the absolutely objective reality. Transcendental phenomenology, thus, remains within the confines of (lived) experience, while metaphysical thinking soars in the sky of empty concepts. Consequently, philosophical activity is sharply distinguished from metaphysical activity.

Another significant consequence of the employment of the method of transcendental reduction within the realm of reason's metaphysical use is that by bringing to sight the eidetic functions of theoretical reason—functions that necessarily remain hidden from metaphysical thinking—transcendental phenomenology identifies reason in its actions. In this sense, the transcendental-epistemological critique of reason evaluates reason's actions according to an ideal. The judgments of this critique are, thus, ethical in nature. Accordingly, theoretical reason is not, as such, above and beyond practical reason as the transcendental-epistemological critique is inherently an ethical-practical critique of reason's theoretical activities. Pure reason is not immune from and above all ethical justifications, but ought to conduct itself according to ethical ideals. It is on the ground of this *ethico-epistemological critique* that the judgment is arrived at that the relativistic theories that undermine the foundation of ethics, that is, subjectivity, are unethical theoretical practices. Chapter Six explicates the foundation of this ethico-epistemological critique.

Transcendental phenomenology liberates the empirical world from the hypothesized conceptual system in which metaphysical thinking envelops it. The description of the world, as it appears to the experiencing subject, replaces the metaphysical conceptualization of the world. Here too, just as in the case of the description of the field of pure consciousness, transcendental phenomenology faces an infinite number of problems to investigate. Thus, a delineation of the problems is necessary. The main question that Part III poses is this: how is the empirical world constituted in itself unmediated by all metaphysical theorization? In other words, how can transcendental phenomenology account for realism, which is a

central tenet of materialism? This question faces an immediate challenge, one that has been brought up against the two sources of inspiration for this project by materialists and genetic phenomenologists: How can either Kant or Husserl, whose philosophies are premised on the Cartesian primacy of the subjective realm over the outer world, account for the mind-independent existence of the material world? Kant attempted to show that his transcendental idealism is compatible with empirical realism, namely, the doctrine of the independent existence of the material world. In Chapter Five, I argue that Kant's transcendental idealism is deeply troubled by its complex conceptualization of the relation between the subject and the outer world and cannot accommodate an account of the empirical reality of the world. However, Husserl's theory of subjectivity allows an account of empirical realism without compromising the foundation of idealism. This account is made possible through an all-important distinction that Husserl makes between natural attitude and transcendental attitude. The subject for Husserl is an embodied subject living in the world experiencing it perceptually. Nevertheless, it has the freedom to turn its mental attention away from the natural dimensions of its life and attend to them as mere phenomena present solely in its consciousness. The existence of the natural world, the corporeality of the subject, and the social, historical, and cultural relations in which the subject lives are not questioned. However, they become materials for philosophical reflection only when the subject *intends* to consider them as nothing but mere phenomena. Transcendental idealism, thus, presupposes the empirical reality of the world prior to the transcendental reduction. After the reduction, the existence of the world is simply bracketed, that is to say, deliberately disregarded for methodological purposes and never ontologically negated. Husserl, thus, resolves the question of the existence of the material world in a way that eluded Kant.

Transcendental phenomenology, it is claimed in Chapter Five, is able to consistently reconcile (phenomenological) idealism with (empirical) realism without jeopardizing their distinctness. Maintaining this dualism is crucial not only to prevent us from falling back to speculative metaphysics—which violates the distinction between the subjective and the objective realms by hypothesizing both on a single determination—but also for the construction of materialism that, as indicated above, is essential for the

task of social critical theory. It now can be confidently asserted—contra Marx, Althusser, Marcuse, Merleau-Ponty, etc.—that materialism does not need to find itself constantly in a theoretical war with idealism, since transcendental phenomenology acknowledges the subject's active core in both material and theoretical practices. Transcendental phenomenology can afford this unification only because it has negated both the one-sided exclusion of the subject's activity by embracing the subject as the ultimate ground of all activities and the metaphysical hypothesization of the material or ideal realms.

Reconciliation of the material and ideal on the ground of the subject is not to be confused with a Hegelian synthetization of dichotomies. Quite the contrary, it is the establishment of a dichotomy on the basis of the different realms of subjective experiences, so that their difference is not moderated through a higher synthesis. The subject's theoretical and material practices are essentially distinct. It is on the grounds of this vital distinction that transcendental phenomenology establishes robust, uncompromising types of idealism and materialism. Nevertheless, a harmonious relationship between them calls for explanation. Before delving deeper into the dynamism of the ground of harmony of these two dimensions of subjectivity, more needs to be said about the conditions of the material activity of the subject.

Chapter Six assumes two tasks: first, a phenomenological account of the conditions of the subject's material practices. Second, a phenomenological account of the teleological reason as the foundation of normativity of all subjective practices. The first issue is pursued through a discussion of the structure of the empirical world. From a phenomenological perspective, the outer world is constituted through the practices of the subject. The phenomenologists' descriptions of the subject's surrounding world vary depending on which subjective capacities they prioritize as the primary mode through which the subject engages with the world. For example, while Heidegger bases his description on the hermeneutical relationship between the subject and the world, Merleau-Ponty develops his description on the grounds of the subject's perceptual capacities. As I argue, only when phenomenology of the pre-theoretical life focuses on an analysis of the material condition of life, can it claim to have grasped the condition of the possibility of life by its root. Paci, an Italian Marxist phenomenologist, refers to the

material structure of the empirical world (lifeworld) as the "precategorical economic structure of the lifeworld", which is constituted through subjective and intersubjective material practices aimed at the subsistence of life (Paci, 1972, p. 266). The essence of the subject's material activity, thus, lies in the satisfaction of material needs as the basis of life. The reason for the primacy of material practices over the perceptual, linguistic, and hermeneutical practices of the subject is that, although they form essential aspects of our existence in the world, the latter are conditioned by the material condition of life, namely, the satisfaction of needs through labor. Consequently, phenomenology must not confine itself only to the description of the linguistic, cultural, and perceptual dimensions of subjectivity but should also study its brute material dimensions. The material practices of production of the means of subsistence precede the linguistic and cultural life of the subject. The phenomenology of material life, then, takes a critical stance towards the linguistic turn in philosophy and the critical theories that confine their task solely to cultural critique.

This phenomenology of the pre-categorical world grounds the concepts of the social critical theory, the most important of which is oppression, in the constitution of material subjectivity. The material necessity of life drives the subjectivity toward the satisfaction of need, which requires human labor and means of production such as tools and machinery. Regardless of how technologically progressed the means of production are, instrumentality is an essential constitutive moment of productive practices and the satisfaction of needs. At the most basic level, the satisfaction of needs, which characterizes our fundamental relationship with the outer world, requires a level of instrumentalization either of the subject's own labor power, of the subject's inorganic and organic nature, or of another human subject's labor power. It is within the structure of the material practice of the subject that the possibility for both social oppressive and emancipation lies. The oppression of a group of people, in all its forms, makes itself felt first in the person's experience of suffering. The most severe forms of suffering are the ones that most directly target the material condition of one's life. From the perspective of phenomenological materialism, the instrumentalization of labor is necessary for the formation of an

intersubjective community of the embodied subject. But in the social experience of oppression, always an experience of the corporeal subject, the subjectivity of some group of the society is either tampered with— such as in capitalist societies— or completely undermined— such as in colonial conditions— through excessive instrumentalization. This phenomenological analysis, then, reveals that instrumental rationality, active in the capitalist mode of production, is a form of anti-subjective or objectivistic thinking that prioritizes instrumentality over subject life.

Instrumental rationality sees the social life devoid of telos. The capitalist social system and its theoretical ideologies theorize human labor as a mere instrument detached from its subjective basis. The instrumentality becomes the end in itself and the organization of the social production becomes a matter of mechanical management of instruments—a tendency that reaches its highest point in slavery. In this situation, the subject basis of the society that alone forms the telos of life is lost. Human labor is socially organized as the functionary *of* a system whose autonomy is established in the ruins of dispersed human practices. Both the capitalist and colonial systems are the historical institutionalization of instrumental rationality, with their cultural and religious accomplices.

But for a phenomenological analysis of instrumental rationality, the necessary instrumentality of the essential material practices of the subject is only one side of the story. Instrumental rationality would not be possible without some eidetic a priori elements in which transcendental phenomenology takes an interest. As a form of rationality, instrumental rationality relies, for the basis of its possibility, upon certain elements of theoretical reason. Thus, instrumental rationality is more than just a descriptor of a form of oppressive social formation. Instrumental rationality *abstracts* from the pre-categorial instrumentality of the subject's productive practices and turns it into the ground of all the subject's activities, thus, providing the *theoretical* ground for all ideologies of oppressive socio-political regimes such as fascism, racism, neo-liberal economic theories, etc.

The description of the material condition of subjectivity, thus, clarifies the phenomenological-material foundation of key concepts of social critical theory, such as oppression, justice, etc. A

phenomenological description of the pre-theoretical, merely corporeal experiences of all forms of oppression, although they might appeal to sentiments, lacks the universality that can be provided only a priori. There is no necessity in sentiments, rendering them susceptible to manipulation by the various social regimes of meanings. Only reason, indeed, the *teleological reason* that is phenomenologically established, can furnish an a priori ground for social critique. Although oppression makes itself felt first and foremost at the sensuous level, social critique cannot establish itself merely on the sensuous experience of oppression. The *real* negation of oppression and alienation requires a shift in the social organization, one that brings about the inversion of the priority of instrumentality over subjectivity. In other words, it requires a shift that re-discovers instrumentality as a component within the context of the intersubjective life of the society.

This real negation, to be brought about by the social and political practices, however, needs to be guided by the universal insights provided by reason in its teleological attitude. At the theoretical level, teleological rationality negates the objectivistic subordination of the subject to one of its capacities, that is, instrumentality, and posits the subject as the ultimate end of both social-material practices and theoretical practices: "to posit … as an end in itself" is, phenomenologically speaking, a mental activity which can be termed normativization on which teleological reason is founded.

It is through this teleological function, that is, normativization, that transcendental phenomenology extends beyond mere description and lays the normative foundation of the subject's critical practices in general. A merely genetic form of phenomenology, which does away with the transcendental mind, falls short of providing an account of social critique, since norms, which are the basis of all critical attitudes, cannot be given in embodied experience alone, but rather can be only offered a priori through the legislative capacity of the subject.

At the theoretical level, teleological reason regulates all critical practices, both in the realm of social theory and epistemological critique of pure theoretical reason. The use of the concept of alienation in the context of the critique of pure theoretical reason, outlined in Parts I and II, is justified on the

grounds of this teleological reason. Thus, alienation of the theoretical reason refers to the misrecognition of reason's telos. All theoretical-critical activities should be considered normative activities the investigation of which falls within the tasks of transcendental phenomenology.

Teleological rationality claims the highest unity as regards the subject's life practices through the application of norms. In this sense, the teleological reason delivers the promise of the speculative reason, namely, the unification of various fields of life, but on the ground of a priori normative unity of all subjective practices, and not based on the abstractly posited concept of being *qua* being. The unification that teleological reason bestows, therefore, is ethical, not metaphysical, that is, it is to be actualized within the intersubjective life of subjects. Like speculative reason's ideas, the concepts of teleological reason are constructed a priori. However, unlike speculative reason's ideas, they find their application exclusively in the experience, that is, in the subjects' experiences of their practices (which take place in the natural and intersubjective world). By asserting the a priori eidetic character of the norms together with the empiricity of their application, transcendental phenomenology avoids, on the one hand, the relativistic pitfall in which genetic phenomenology necessarily is entrapped, and, on the other hand, metaphysical hypothesization of the ground of subjective life. In this sense, this project remains committed to the spirit of Kant's critical thought.

A critical social theory that is illuminated by the insights of transcendental phenomenology will favor a politics that is committed to both democratic and rational principles. It refutes any metaphysical foundation for politics, whether rationalistic, such as dialectical materialism adopted by Soviet Marxism, or relativistic, such as postmodern metaphysics embraced by anarchism. Metaphysical thinking as such is deterministic. Determinism here refers to any principle that involves trans-subjective forces dictating to the subject a form of existence. By violating the ontological dualism between the subjective and the objective, metaphysical determinism, including relativism, grounds politics on non-subjective, unifying forces governed by a self-regulating logic. Transcendental phenomenology is able to avoid metaphysical hypothesization of subjects' political practices and, thus, both the extreme rationalization and

irrationalization of the social realm. On this basis, politics maintains a form of a priorism, that is, its commitment to the ideality of the norms, yet does not pursue the project of the "rationalization of the society" on deterministic grounds. Rationalizing social practices requires the "application" of rational norms to empirical relations. The Kantian concept of application presupposes, on the one hand, an ontological dualism and, thus, the pure ideality of rational concepts—which metaphysicians deny on objectivistic grounds— and, on the other hand, experimentation, care and, to use Kant's terminology, "wit." Therefore, this politics is tolerant of irregularities, irrationalities, abnormalities, and disorder. It is in the free space for the play of irrationalities created by this ontological dualism that the critical subject searches for the real parallels for its reason's ideals. The application of the reason's ideals is always situational and historical; the ideals themselves, however, are non-empirical and trans-historical. The unity of the two realms, namely, social and historical subjectivity and transcendental, trans-historical subjectivity, is a matter of *actual* harmony between particular configurations of socio-historical practices and a priori conditions of an ideal ethical life.

Part I: Phenomenology of the Metaphysical Mind

Introduction

... [T]he primary and most important concern of philosophy is to deprive [metaphysics] once and for all of its disadvantageous influence, by blocking off the source of the errors. (*Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxxxi; my alteration of translation)

1. Speculative Metaphysics as the Philosophical Manifestation of the Crisis of Sciences

Transcendental idealism can be taken broadly as a characterization of both Kant's and Husserl's philosophies. Husserl acknowledges the thematic unity of his idealism—namely, the field of subjectivity— with that of Kant, David Hume, and George Berkeley. In the following passage, while defining his idea of idealism, he credits Kant for the transcendental turn of idealism:

> As I said, only idealism, in all its forms, attempts to lay hold of subjectivity as subjectivity and to do justice to the fact that the world is never given to the subject and the communities of subjects in any other way than as the subjectively relative valid world with particular experiential content and as a world which, in and through subjectivity, takes on ever new transformations of meaning;… This explains, by the way, why I call the phenomenology I have developed transcendental and why I speak in it of transcendental subjectivity. For when Kant gives the old word a new meaning through his critique of reason, one can easily convince oneself that the quite

> different idealism of Berkeley and Hume, indeed any idealism, looked at more closely, has the same thematic field and poses questions within this field which are only differently formulated. (Husserl, 1970, pp. 337–338)

In his teleological schema of the modern history of philosophy, Husserl interprets certain idealist movements as struggling to achieve the universal philosophy. Defining philosophy as rationalism (ibid. p. 338), he accounts for the previous idealist movements as the continuation of a movement toward the realization of an ideal of reason that first emerged in Greek philosophical history.

> Seen from the inside, however, it is a struggle of the generations of philosophers, who are the bearers of this spiritual development, living and surviving in spiritual community, in the constant struggle of "awakened" reason to come to itself, to an understanding of itself, to a reason which concretely understands itself in understanding the existing world, existing in its whole universal truth. [To say that] philosophy, science in all its forms, is rational—that is a tautology. (ibid. p. 339)

Transcendental philosophy, thus, is the rational investigation of the universal structure of subjectivity and the world as it is present for this subjectivity.

The task of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is to establish the pure field of transcendental subjectivity in which alone reason can first come to a true understanding of itself. In his reading of the history of philosophy, various philosophies are to be evaluated based on how successful they have been in realizing this ideal of reason. For Husserl, only the idealist sorts of philosophy have the minimum condition for achieving such an ideal, since reason exists only ideally. The objectivistic framework of the modern mathematical sciences and the speculative metaphysics, themselves functions of human reason, dismiss the apodictic origin of reason and therefore fall short of clarifying the very ground of rationality. In both modern positivist sciences and previous idealist systems reason has been functioning but only in a limited way. In other words, modern positivist sciences and philosophy employ

a restricted form of rationality that excludes important concepts such as value, *telos*, and above all subjectivity itself as the ground of rationality. The sciences as functions of reason are in crisis because their very origin has been removed from the legitimate field of scientific inquiry as a result of the "positivistic reduction of the idea of science" (Husserl, 1970, p. 7). Reason, thus, has ceased to be the sole bestower of meaning to human life, relinquishing the role historically endowed upon it by ancient Greek philosophers.

For Husserl, the fact that the possibility of metaphysics has become a theme for philosophical reflection is a sign that reason can no longer deliver its highest mission to comprehend human life in its essentiality. The remedy, however, does not lie in a reconstruction of a speculative system of metaphysics; quite the contrary, it lies in finding a new foundation for philosophy. Past speculative systems of metaphysics begin with objectivist assumptions that the method of transcendental reduction would put in suspension from the outset. In the speculative metaphysical framework, reason resides outside of the concrete transcendental subjectivity, namely, the "philosophizing ego." For Husserl, however, reason must be examined strictly within the transcendental ego accessible only to philosophizing individuals. Hence, only an idealist philosophy that is enlightened regarding the absolutely pure nature of this subjectivity, uncontaminated by natural outlooks, is capable of overcoming the dominant objectivism, positivism, and mysticism that has dominated humanity in our age.

> It is precisely with this that there begins a philosophy with the deepest and most universal self-understanding of the philosophizing ego as the bearer of absolute reason coming to itself, of the same ego as implicating, in his apodictic being-for-himself, his fellow subjects and all possible fellow philosophers. (ibid. p. 340)

As far as the commonalities between Kant's and Husserl's transcendental idealism are concerned, the idealization of reason— a theme shared by both— necessitates the critique of speculative metaphysics that treats reason in an objectivistic manner. The critique of metaphysics commands a substantial portion of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and in a sense serves as the *telos* of Kant's project. Husserl, on the other

hand, preoccupied himself with the positive construction of the transcendental philosophy. I suggest that Kant's critique of speculative metaphysics is already an inherent possibility of the theme of transcendental idealism, that is, subjectivity as subjectivity, and forms a crucial dimension of transcendental idealism in its critical task. In other words, the critique of speculative metaphysics should be considered an integral step toward the realization of Husserl's ideal of philosophy as a universal science, a science that also serves as the foundation for social critical theory and political economy.

Kant himself did not embark on the systematic exposition of a universally valid rational philosophy, yet his critical vision of reason can very well be incorporated into the general direction that Husserl has given to transcendental idealism. In *Idea of Phenomenology* (1913), the first clear formulation of his phenomenology, Husserl characterizes phenomenology as epistemology whose task is the critique of knowledge:

> The task of epistemology, or the critique of theoretical reason, is first of all a critical one. It must expose and reject the mistakes that natural reflection upon the relation between knowledge, its sense, and its object almost inevitably makes, and it must thereby refute the explicit or implicit skeptical theories concerning the essence of knowledge by demonstrating their absurdity. On the other hand, its positive task is to solve the problems pertaining to the correlation of knowledge, its sense, and its object by inquiring into the essence of knowledge. (Husserl, 1964, p. 19)

The critique of reason and metaphysics as one of its products can be pursued within Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. As I suggest, the intersection of Kant's and Husserl's critique of reason would bring out the essential critical power of transcendental idealism under the title of the critique of *self-alienation of reason*, a theme shared by both Kant and Husserl and that motivated their thinking in crucial ways. In this part, I aim to present the critique of the self-alienation of reason as the central critical discipline of transcendental phenomenological idealism. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, the section "Transcendental Dialectic" which forms about half of the book, is devoted to the critique of the speculative use of reason, that is, when reason exceeds the limits of possible experience, as a result of

which reason yields self-contradictory results. Transcendental logic, that is, the science that studies reason in its a priori applications is also responsible for discerning the moments when reason in its a priori use becomes self-contradictory or, to use Kant's terminology, illusional. The "Transcendental Dialectic" investigates reason in its illusory state, that is, when reason runs into conflict with itself. According to Kant, transcendental illusions are at work in all specific departments of scholastic metaphysics—rational psychology, cosmology, and theology. The root of the transcendental illusion is that reason exceeds the limits of its valid application. Reason then starts to deal with objects that are nowhere to be found in the real world, the world of experience. As the following detailed analysis will show, in its speculative use reason starts by positing the objective validity of the thing-in-itself, something that is never to be given to us through sense experience. As a consequence, it ceases to make sense and becomes illusional. Through the transcendental critique of reason, it becomes clear that metaphysics once claimed itself to be the highest science rests altogether on illusions. Thus, reason in metaphysics becomes unreason, irrational, and self-alienated.

The transcendental investigation into the subjective origin of knowledge that allows us to distinguish valid knowledge from illusion comprises a diagnosis of reason. Once Kant's project of critique of reason is viewed in the light of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, the pathological terminology becomes more and more conspicuous. Could not Husserl's discussion of the sickness of (European) humanity, that is, the crisis of reason, and the transcendental illusions of reason, occurring in the transcendental field, be regarded as having the same root? In Kant, reason in its speculative use fails to stay true to its nature by succumbing to objectivist positing of the thing-in-itself and falsely believing in the reality of its own purely subjective act. Reason ascribes reality to what is only its own product, then it forms a new understanding of itself as a mere product of that reality. The task of critique is to inform reason of its limits in the hope of freeing it from such objectivistic claims about things that are merely subjective. Speculative metaphysics is one form of objectivistic thought that the transcendental critique of reason seeks to overcome. By shedding light on the subjective origin of reason's illusions, this critique

also provides the remedy to the self-alienation of reason as increased awareness is the path to reason becoming rational. “Knowing” in all its forms is an act of reason. When reason becomes illusional, it loses the ability to understand itself, its essential components, its task, its field of operation, its method, and its powers. In light of the critique of the self-alienation of reason, the Kantian concept of limits can be understood as referring to the realm of the essential functions of reason. Thus, in a transcendental critique of reason, reason expands its knowledge of itself *transcendentally* as much as it diminishes its speculative scope.

Both in the modern positivistic sciences and in speculative metaphysics reason deals with trans-subjective objects and begins to tailor itself according to the requirements of those objects, thereby losing itself in its negation. This character of the self-alienation of reason designates a mode of the use of reason. So far as reason works on the objectivistic assumptions, it remains unconscious of the full scope of its functions, its motivations, its limits, and its ultimate ends. The transcendental phenomenology of mind that assumes the task of a critique of reason is a form of psychology of mind including its unconscious dimensions. Here, psychology must not be understood in the empirical sense of the word, but rather in the transcendental sense. “Thus pure psychology in itself is identical with transcendental philosophy as the science of transcendental subjectivity” (Husserl, 1970, p. 258). Transcendental phenomenology shares with psychology its realm of study, that is, the realm of the psychic. Their difference lies in their distinct approaches: transcendental phenomenology studies the psychic from a transcendental view, while psychology studies it from a natural perspective.

Reason remains illusional as long as it acts on certain unconscious motivations. Thus, reason whose essence is knowing falls short of knowing itself; it then becomes self-disintegrated. Kant speaks of “reason’s state of nature” that he, referencing Hobbes, defines as a state of war. To remedy reason from this situation requires an analysis of the unconscious dimensions of reason’s functioning. The critique of reason can be formulated as the critique of the transcendental unconscious of the transcendental subjectivity. In so speaking, however, it is important not to turn the unconscious itself into a separate

realm of the transcendental consciousness, but to understand by it only the same realm of transcendental consciousness in so far as it is functioning without having a proper understanding of the scope of its function. From a phenomenological perspective, it is possible to connect the notion of the transcendental unconsciousness to Kant's description of reason's illusions as natural. By saying that transcendental illusions are natural and unavoidable he means that these illusions are not transient and accidental, but an essential *possibility* of the way that reason functions.

> Hence there is a natural and unavoidable dialectic of pure reason, not one in which a bungler might be entangled through lack of acquaintance, or one that some sophist has artfully invented in order to confuse rational people, but one that irremediably attaches to human reason, so that even after we have exposed the mirage it will still not cease to lead our reason on with false hopes, continually propelling it into momentary aberrations that always need to be removed. (A299/ B355, 356)

It is crucial, especially in our age that is rife with skeptical and relativistic views, not to turn this natural inclination of reason toward illusion into the essence of reason and thereby turn the whole critical nature of Kant's project into a new form of dogmatic metaphysics. Rather, one must read these lines in the light of the fundamental phenomenological lights of Kant's project and locate reason's dialectic within his critical reflection that reason can have both legitimate and illegitimate *uses*. In other words, reason *may* deviate from its true application if one decides to put it to irrational use, as do metaphysicians. Thus, from a phenomenological perspective, one cannot speak of the constitution of reason as itself dialectical but the essential diverse uses of reason by the thinking subjects.

Understood in these terms, one can speak of the critique of pure reason as the pure psychoanalysis of transcendental subjectivity whose aim is to remedy reason from its illusions. If the transcendental illusion means that reason deems real ideas that are merely subjective, then the sickness of reason is a form of objectivistic thought of which metaphysics is one type. Metaphysical thinking is the purely theoretical manifestation of objectivistic thought, which, as Husserl asserts, is also operative in

formal instrumental rationality. This line of thinking can potentially give us a clue as to why a complete elimination of metaphysics is not achievable. But as the pure analysis of transcendental subjectivity, such an assertion does not simply appreciate metaphysics' right to exist; rather it investigates the origin of its recurrence and the minds who are propelled to engage it. Metaphysics will be studied as the recurrent dreams of spirit-seers.

Our age, in its philosophical movements, is an age of metaphysics, which means an age where reason is led astray in its capacities, tasks, methods, and ultimate ends. In the twentieth century, metaphysical thinking experienced a revitalization in Heidegger's attack on transcendental subjectivity, a foundation central to Descartes, Kant, and Husserl's philosophies. This critique, in a sense, sets the tone for the subsequent development of metaphysics in the Western world, particularly in Germany and France, so that the critique of subjectivity becomes customary in almost all post-Husserlian philosophies. In doing so, philosophy lost sight of its origin and ultimate end, thereby persisting in an unceasing state of crisis. The first part of this project will concentrate on laying the foundation of a transcendental phenomenological investigation of the transcendental mind in its metaphysical activities, hoping to enhance reason's self-understanding.

2. The Method of this Investigation

Turning to the subject matter of our study, that is, metaphysics, we must first determine our method. Broadly speaking, phenomenology came to announce itself as a philosophy through Husserl's deepening and refining of Descartes's methodic doubt through epoche (the connection to Descartes's philosophy is evident from the *Idea of Phenomenology* that is Husserl's earliest work where he provides the first formulation of his phenomenological approach). Methodic doubt is a process through which the thinking subject, to use Husserl's words, refrains from taking any position regarding the being or non-being of the

world (Husserl, 1970, p. 77). In other words, we put in suspension the ontic validity of all our beliefs. Performed radically and universally, epoche suspends not only our beliefs in the existence of the world and the objects around us but also the validity of all the statements of sciences so far as they carry in themselves an implicit claim to the objective world. Through this radical skeptical performance, the doubter emerges as an absolutely undoubtable. Consciousness itself and its content are now at the disposal of the doubter as self-evident materials for analysis. It is on this basis that transcendental phenomenology claims to have established a new approach towards philosophy. The universality of this approach, which is what raises it to the level of philosophy, is ascertained by the fact that it is capable of studying all fields of being as they are immanent in the consciousness of a subject.

The Cartesian methodic doubt or epoche is a form of critique of knowledge.

> The lowest stratum of all objective knowledge, the cognitive ground of all hitherto existing sciences, all sciences of "the" world, is, we can say, for the first time called into question in the manner of a "critique of knowledge" (Husserl, 1970, p. 76)

All forms of knowledge carry, often implicitly, objectivist assumptions regarding their subject matter. All scientifically established knowledge—as well as pre-scientific and extra-scientific knowledge—lay a claim to the objectivity of their statements. Knowledge presents itself as if it emerges from the things themselves, as the truth of the matter. This natural objectivistic tendency of knowledge can lead to concealing the origin of knowledge: by presenting itself as the reflection of the truth of the matter, knowledge can forget that it is first and foremost a human practice, a product of a thinking subject. Knowledge can then lose itself in its object and become alienated from its origin. The critique of knowledge then is tasked with assessing the objectivistic claims of knowledge by considering it as belonging to a subject, that is, as a system of phenomena. Phenomenological critique of knowledge investigates knowledge as a particular mode of a subject's practice or experience. "In all of its manifestations, knowledge is a mental experience: knowledge belongs to a knowing subject" (Husserl, 1964, p. 17). Once made accessible as a human practice, transcendental phenomenology then proceeds to

investigate questions regarding the *telos* of this practice. In this way, the critique of knowledge incorporates the ethical assessment of our epistemic practices, including social critical theory.

In this part, relying on the above method of critique of knowledge, I aim at the renewal and expansion of the Kantian critique of pure reason in its metaphysical use. This renewal and expansion of the Kantian critique to the contemporary metaphysical philosophies, however, demands some new techniques that, as I argue, can very well be incorporated into the Kantian broader approach without losing sight of its essential components. Kant's understanding of metaphysics, which was limited at his time to the scholastic kind of metaphysics, is deeply reflected in the structuring of his critical system. Pure reason, for Kant, is structured according to the departments of scholastic metaphysics. To expand Kant's critical vision to contemporary metaphysics, it is necessary to search for new structures within the transcendental subjectivity that allow for the formation of new metaphysical systems. Overcoming Kant's limited understanding of the transcendental structure of the theoretical power of subjectivity, I claim, leads to a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon of metaphysics and its transcendental origin.

In my expanded version of the critique of the theoretical reason in its metaphysical use, I observe three transcendental moments or acts at work: the first is the positing of the idea of the thing-in-itself or being *qua* being as an absolutely objective reality. This act is the very first and the founding moment through which the subject matter of metaphysics is determined. The second act is the further determination of the thing-in-itself. Through this step, a metaphysical system conceptually determines its subject matter: reason, substance, will, difference, God, etc. Thus, for Hegel, philosophy (that is, metaphysics) is tasked with studying reason, because reason comprehends the totality of reality (the thing-in-itself). The third transcendental act is the metaphysical demonstration that itself is performed in two ways: conceptual development, through which the first conceptual determination of the thing-in-itself is further conceptually explicated, and the empirical demonstration, through which the empirical world is interpreted based on the conceptual determinations of the thing-in-itself (metaphysical inversion of the world).

This study evolves within the horizon first opened up by Kant's Copernican revolution and subsequently continued by Husserl and ultimately culminating in the works of Paci (Paci, 1972). It is hoped that this inquiry will be a step forward toward the clarification of the meaning of a phenomenologically grounded critical philosophy as the theoretical foundation for social theory. The reconstruction of the inner meaning of the Copernican revolution and a return to human subjectivity is offered in response to the current theoretical crisis of sciences as the functionaries of humanity.

Chapter 1: The Necessity of the Thematic Expansion of Kant's Critique of Metaphysics

1. Metaphysics in the *Critique of Pure Reason*

In the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant describes metaphysics as the "battlefield of endless controversies" (A viii). While reason in all its scientific activities—logic, mathematics, and natural sciences—has already entered a secured path, metaphysics has yet to make any significant progress toward attaining scientific status. Rather than a secured field of science in which methodological research brings about reliable results, metaphysics is a battlefield that attracts those interested in "mock fights" over subjects spawned by reason. Seeing metaphysicians "groping among mere concepts" was one thing that let Kant assume the task of the critique of reason by beginning with raising questions regarding the possibility of metaphysics as a science: "Now why is it that here [in metaphysics] the secure path of science still could not be found? Is it perhaps impossible?" (B xiii).

In Kant's articulation of the problem of metaphysics, two questions can be raised: first, what is the nature of the battlefield? In other words, what are the problems in which metaphysics cannot make any progress? Second, what causes the fight? Here I do not try to simply sketch out Kant's answers to these questions, as that is the assignment of a commentary on Kant's philosophy. I should instead treat these questions in light of the seminal task of this project, namely, the revival of the Kantian critique in the contemporary philosophical scene. This means that rather than merely repeating Kant's solutions to the problem of metaphysics, I reconsider the assumptions that implicitly and explicitly shape the structure of Kant's critique. The first thing to do is to explicate Kant's understanding of metaphysics.

The structure of *Critique of Pure Reason* is modeled after the general division of traditional metaphysics as presented by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, Kant's predecessor in the analysis of metaphysics, in his book, *Metaphysics* (1738). Baumgarten divides metaphysics into four areas: "To

metaphysics belong ontology, cosmology, psychology, and natural theology" (Baumgarten & Kant, 2013, p. 99). The ontology which he refers to as "universal metaphysics," and "first philosophy," "is the science of the more general predicates of a being" (ibid, p. 100). The other three areas of metaphysics are to be designated as "special metaphysics:" cosmology studies the "predicates of the world," rational psychology studies the "predicates of the soul," and theology, the "science of God," inquiries into the essence of God and its attributes. Different parts of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are responsible for critically dealing with four areas of metaphysics. "Transcendental Aesthetics" and "Transcendental Analytics" study the a priori conditions of possibility of the objects of experience in general provide an alternative to and a criticism of the universal ontology. "Transcendental Dialectic" is responsible for assessing the three areas of the special metaphysics separately.

Essential to the critique of all the areas of metaphysics is the distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves. This distinction results from Kant's basic assumption that we, humans, have only two sources for cognition: the faculty of intuition, through which objects affect sense organs, and the faculty of understanding, which provides us with the concepts. Each of these faculties has its own a priori forms: time and space are the a priori forms of sensibility and categories are the a priori forms of understanding. We consider the knowledge of an object valid in so far as it satisfies *all* the formal conditions of the possibility of objectivity (or experience), namely, in so far as it is founded upon the data of sensibility (appearances), already made possible through the application of the forms of sensibility, and concepts of understanding. It is only under these conditions that we can gain knowledge of an object for ourselves. We cannot form any concrete knowledge of anything without the possibility of that thing being represented to us through senses. Even in mathematics, a science that deals with numbers in their purity and abstractness, it is the capability of sensory representation of the numbers that bestows it with significance:

> Although all these principles, and the representation of the object with which this science occupies itself, are generated in the mind completely *a priori*, they would still not signify

> anything at all if we could not always exhibit their significance in appearances (empirical objects). Hence it is also requisite for one **to make** an abstract concept **sensible**, i.e., display the object that corresponds to it in intuition, since without this the concept would remain (as one says) without **sense**, that is, without significance. Mathematics fulfills this requirement by means of the construction of the figure, which is an appearance present to the senses (even though brought about *a priori*). In the same science, the concept of magnitude seeks its standing and sense in number, but seeks this in turn in the fingers, in the beads of an abacus, or in strokes and points that are placed before the eyes. (A239-40/B 299)

For a valid cognition of an object, the concepts of understanding are as necessary as sensible intuitions. Human knowledge has two sources and it is the combination of them, namely, the sensory data and the formal concepts of understanding, that gives us a sense of reality "*in concreto*." As Kant puts it "With us **understanding** and **sensibility** can determine an object only **in combination.** If we separate them, then we have intuitions without concepts, or concepts without intuitions, but in either case representations that we cannot relate to any determinate object" (A258/B314).

From this analysis of knowledge, Kant draws important consequences about metaphysics. Metaphysics is claimed to be a valid knowledge of the objects despite violating the above element, namely, that all possible knowledge requires both understanding and sensibility *in combination*. There are two ways to break this combination and to consider the elements of knowledge in *abstraction* from one another. The first is limited to sensory intuition and does away with the concepts of understanding. This abstraction undermines the possibility of knowledge altogether as pure empirical experience alone would leave us with the multitude of givens of sensible intuition in themselves insufficient for the construction of an object (since the concept of an object requires some concept of unity which the sensible intuition cannot provide). The second abstraction isolates the concepts of understanding—causality, substantiality, etc.—from sensible intuition (including its formal conditions, time, and space). This type of abstraction, Kant contends, carries the root of metaphysical "knowledge," since metaphysics uses the concepts of

understanding to determine things not as they present themselves to our sensibility but in abstraction from them. Thus, metaphysics yields no concrete and determined cognition of things, but only speculations about things in abstraction from their relationship to human sensibility, namely, as they are in themselves. The application of the categories to appearances results in objective cognition, and the application of them to things in themselves constitutes the illegitimate use of the concepts of understanding and does not bring about any cognition of the objects.

Kant's critique of general metaphysics is an argument for the replacement of speculations about things in themselves with the cognition of phenomena—defined as appearances to the extent that they are thought of according to the unity of categories. Having represented the conditions of objectivity in this way, Kant goes on to declare ontology an illegitimate branch of knowledge that should be replaced by a more modest doctrine of "a mere analytic of the concepts of understanding" (A247/B303). Since this doctrine teaches us about the a priori conditions of the possibility of experience (objectivity), it also provides the key to the problem of metaphysics. It teaches us that, for example, in merely sticking to the pure principle of causality without any reference to appearances, this principle remains empty, unable to tell us anything about the constitution of the objects. Metaphysics wrongly assumes that by dismissing the sensible intuition and relying only on abstract concepts and principles it can arrive at the constitution of things as they are in themselves. Such procedure, however, amounts to no more than illusions.

The distinction between things in themselves and appearances is foundational for Kant's critique of the three parts of special metaphysics. Following Baumgarten, metaphysics as ontology deals with the general characteristics of things in themselves, while the special areas of metaphysics treat each of their subject matters as things in themselves. Thus, in rational psychology, the human soul is studied as a substance, namely, with regard to the conditions of its existence in general. In cosmology, reason demands the unconditioned totality of the whole series of appearances, which cannot be given in experience, to ascend to the absolute totality of all conditions (world). It thereby turns the absolute totality of the series of appearances, which in itself is nothing but an idea, into an existing thing-in-itself. And in

theology, the ontological proof of God ascribes to the idea of the highest being the "predicate of existence" (A598/ B626) outside of the mediation of experience and, thus, posits the existence of the highest being in abstraction. Kant calls idea the subject matter of each of these three departments of metaphysics, soul, God, and world.

On the definition of idea, Kant writes:

> By the idea of a necessary concept of reason, I understand one to which no congruent object can be given in the senses. Thus the pure concepts of reason we have just examined are **transcendental ideas**. (A327/B383)

Unlike understanding that contains categories, reason is the site of the transcendental ideas, which are defined as the "totality of conditions of a given conditioned" or the "unconditioned" (A322/B379). Reason, relies on the concepts of understanding, but liberates them from the conditions of experience. Kant is strict about the number of transcendental ideas, restricting them to the three forms of syllogism as the function of reason (categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive).

> Consequently, all transcendental ideas will be brought under **three classes**, of which the **first** contains the absolute (unconditioned) **unity** of the **thinking subject**, the **second** the absolute **unity** of the **series** of **conditions of appearance**, the **third** the absolute **unity** of the **condition of all objects of thought** in general**.** The thinking subject is the object of **psychology**, the sum total of all appearances (the world) is the object of **cosmology**, and the thing that contains the supreme condition of the possibility of everything that can be thought (the being of all beings) is the object of **theology** (A334/B391).

Since the ideas do not have any object in experience to adequately represent them, reason, in the three areas of metaphysics, falls prey to dialectical inferences by treating them as the determinations of things

in themselves. The mind is led to these ideas by its essential syllogistic nature, which are not based on any empirical premises.

> Now at least the transcendental (subjective) reality of pure concepts of reason rests on the fact that we are brought to such ideas by a necessary syllogism. Thus there will be syllogisms containing no empirical premises, by means of which we can infer from something with which we are acquainted to something of which we have no concept, and yet to which we nevertheless, by an unavoidable illusion, give objective reality. (A339/B397)

With regard to each of the three ideas of reason, Kant claims, there occur sophistical inferences. The class of sophistical syllogisms in rational psychology is termed transcendental paralogisms, while in cosmology are referred to as antinomies, and in theology they are called the ideal of pure reason.

Although in both prefaces to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents the problems of metaphysics as involving matters of contradictory nature, the solution to which can never be consistently provided, his account of metaphysics in the "Transcendental Dialectic" presents only one department of special metaphysics, namely cosmology, to be involving such matters. Antinomy happens when, in dealing with cosmological objects, reason produces the assertions that, each by themselves involve no contradiction, but can be met with opposing assertions with equal validity and support (A421/B449). Kant interrogates these conflicting assertions of cosmology in section II of the "Antinomy of Pure Reason" titled "Antithetic of Pure Reason:"

> If any sum total of dogmatic doctrines is a "thetic," then by "antithetic" I understand not the dogmatic assertion of the opposite but rather the conflict between what seem to be dogmatic cognitions (*thesin cum antithesi*), without the ascription of a preeminent claim to approval of one side or the other. Thus, an antithetic does not concern itself with one-sided assertions, but considers only the conflict between general cognitions of reason and the causes of this conflict. The transcendental antithetic is an investigation into the antinomy of pure reason, its causes and

> its result. If in using principles of the understanding we apply our reason not merely to objects of experience, for the use of principles of understanding, but instead venture also to extend these principles beyond the boundaries of experience, then there arise **sophistical** theorems, which may neither hope for confirmation in experience nor fear refutation by it; (A420-21/B449)

Kant identified four sets of conflicting assertions in cosmology: first, the assertion that there is a beginning of the world and that the world has no beginning in time; second, every composite substance consists of simple parts and there is no simple substance; third, that there is freedom of freedom and that there is no freedom in the world; fourth, there is an absolutely necessary being as its part or as its cause and that there is no such being.

The task of the antithetic of pure reason is restricted to the study of antinomies that, according to Kant's articulation, occur only in cosmology. The battlefield of controversies that Kant uses as a general description for metaphysics applies, strictly speaking, only to one department of special metaphysics, while in other departments the syllogisms are simply sophistical, but do not take the antinomical form. The "Transcendental Dialectic" deals exclusively with three domains of special metaphysics. The number of illusions corresponds to the number of ideas of reason driven from the logically exclusive number of the forms of syllogism (as the inferences of reason). Nevertheless, Kant asserts that the pure concepts of understanding can also have dialectical use when they are applied to the objects in general, not as they are presented to us on our sensibility (A63/B88). Yet he develops no elaborate and independent account of the dialectical use of the concepts of understanding. Kant studies the transcendental illusions only within the syllogistic structure of reason as dialectical "inferences" and leaves out a careful study of the possibility of controversies and contradictions arising within the first and most important part of metaphysics, namely the general ontology. This leads us to an important limitation of Kant's treatment of the problem of metaphysics.

2. The Thematic Limitation of Kant's Critique of Metaphysics

It is a limitation of Kant's project that his critique of reason remains confined to the three departments of scholastic metaphysics and, thus, is not inapplicable to the other types of metaphysics. To expand his critical method to all forms of metaphysical thinking, it is required to overcome its restricted focus on the scholastic form of metaphysics. To do so, our attention must be shifted to the most essential elements of metaphysical thinking in general, irrespective of the particular actualizations. To demonstrate the impossibility of metaphysics, a comprehensive phenomenological critique should first lay bare those essential (eidetic) elements that make up metaphysical thinking in general. The performing of this "eidetic variation" would lead us to the most universal elements of metaphysical thinking as a kind of mental activity. Thus, the renewal of the Kantian critique requires more than just adjustments of its components and updating it as a suitable critical tool for our contemporary purposes. The renewal is itself an expansion, not to include more specific forms of metaphysical thinking, but to first enable the critique to grasp metaphysics in its essential form (*eidos*). As a philosophical method, the method of phenomenological reduction and its associated elements aim at attaining a cognition of the phenomena (in our case metaphysical thinking) in its "possibility" (as opposed to "actuality"), namely in its ideality.

The quest for the eidetic elements of metaphysical thinking is partially provoked by the historical observation that metaphysical thinking persisted and reemerged after Kant in forms profoundly distinct from its scholastic origin. Shortly after the publication of the first *Critique*, metaphysics resurrected and became a fashionable mode of philosophizing, particularly in the works of figures such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, Wilhelm Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche. None of these early developments in metaphysics adhered to the scholastic classification of metaphysics; however, they did reproduce the speculative mode of thinking that sets metaphysics apart from other sciences. The twentieth century saw an even wider array of metaphysical philosophies that broke away from those early appearances of metaphysics immediately after the first *Critique*. In the post-Kantian era, metaphysics

proliferated with new methods, concepts, and techniques. This merely factual and historical development of metaphysics in the post-Kantian era points to an essential shortcoming of Kant's critical project, namely, that in its transcendental analysis, Kant did not arrive at a full presentation of metaphysical thinking in its essential ideal form.

That this limitation is eidetic and transcendental means, more precisely, that in his critical system, the transcendental structure of theoretical reason is based on one of its particular historical and factual objectifications, namely, the scholastic form of metaphysics. In the "Transcendental Dialectic," by ascribing to reason the function of syllogistic inferences and limiting the forms of syllogism to only three, Kant traces back, in a more or less transcendental phenomenological manner, the ideal origin of the objects of the three departments of special metaphysics to the essential functions of reason. The transcendental structure of reason is based on its particular functions manifest in the divisions of scholastic metaphysics. Kant did nothing wrong in transcendentally tracing back the essential functions of reason by first observing the factual manifestations of those functions—how else is one to infer the functions of reason, other than by looking at its actual manifestations? The limitation, thus, does not come from the misapplication of the transcendental method—which is not to say that his employment of the transcendental method is flawless in other respects—but rather that his factual observation of what counts as metaphysics was restricted to a particular actuality of metaphysical thinking. The shortcoming of Kant's critique is that it is too narrowly focused on only one historical manifestation of metaphysics and, thus, fails to grasp metaphysical thinking in all its possible forms or all of its historical realizations. Had he arrived at a full exposition of the possible elements of metaphysical thinking, he would have studied scholastic metaphysics as only one of the actual manifestations of metaphysics as a mode of thinking. Put differently, his critique fails to grasp the entirety of theoretical reason's capacities for metaphysical theorization. I am not accusing Kant of not predicting the future non-scholastic developments of metaphysics. His critique also excludes the Greek forms of metaphysics; if he were to make them a subject of consideration, it would have radically altered his formulation of pure reason in its metaphysical

use. This factual limitation is reflected in his articulation of the transcendental essence of theoretical reason as confined to three objects of the special metaphysics, syllogistically inferred. Kant turned a factual manifestation of reason into its essential structure. As a consequence, his critique cannot cover the forms of metaphysics whose transcendental origins are not traceable to either of these three syllogistic functions of reason.

Historically speaking, there is little doubt that Kant's critique of scholastic metaphysics played a major role in the decline of this form of metaphysics. But it never meant, at least to prominent philosophical figures, the end of metaphysics in general but only the end of one specific form of metaphysics.[5] The subsequent attempts at re-establishing metaphysics on new grounds attest to the fact that Kant's critique has never been taken to mean an effective attack on the validity of metaphysical thinking in general, but only to one of its forms. In many philosophies, such as that of Hegel and Schopenhauer and the late Schelling, this led to a complete abandonment of the original insights of Kant's Copernican revolution. A more detailed analysis of the degree to which Kant's critique was responsible for the later rise of metaphysics cannot be provided here, as that would require a discussion of the influence of the *Critique of Practical Reason* on post-Kantian philosophy.

Whatever the causes of the re-emergence of metaphysics after Kant, a question can be posed by those who want to remain faithful to the original intentions of Kant's critical project: if Kant's characterization of reason remains essentially limited to one of its factual manifestations, namely, the three domains of scholastic special metaphysics, could there be other elements of reason, unexplored by Kant, on the basis of which an account for the transcendental ground of not only the scholastic form of

[5] In the Preface to the first edition of *Science of Logic*, Hegel asserts that metaphysics has fallen into disfavour primarily referencing the three branches of scholastic metaphysics: "What was hitherto called "metaphysics" has been, so to speak, extirpated root and branch, and has vanished from the ranks of the sciences. Where are the voices still to be heard of the ontology of former times, of the rational psychology, the cosmology, or indeed, even of the natural theology of the past, or where are they allowed to be heard? Inquiries, for instance, into the immateriality of the soul, into mechanical and final causes – where is interest in them still to be found? Even the former proofs of God's existence are cited only out of historical interest, or for the purpose of edification and the uplifting of the mind. The fact is that interest, whether in the content or in the form of the former metaphysics, or in both together, has been lost" (Hegel, 2010, p. 7).

metaphysics but all metaphysical thinking could be provided? And if there are such transcendental elements, how are they to be exposed?

There is no method available other than what Kant used to identify the structure of reason, namely, to begin with an observation of the factual manifestations of our theoretical capacity in its metaphysical use and to inquire back into the ground of their possibility. The difference is therefore not in the method itself so much as in the materials: the observations must not be restricted to any specific form of metaphysics but must include all of its forms. This method is a phenomenological method that interrogates "metaphysics" in its phenomenality, that is to say, as it appears to a subject. All the metaphysical appearances accessible in any form, including written forms, whether systemic or fragmentary, statements, and opinions, become the subject matter of this study. The field of materials of such phenomenological study coincides with the philosophical canon broadly construed. In each instance, phenomenologists' gaze can turn to a particular metaphysical statement or a systematic presentation of metaphysical thinking to provide a description that suits their purpose. In all the moments when phenomenologists are engaging in the description, however, they are committed to the neutral position brought about by the transcendental reduction, which means that the validity of the particular content of the metaphysical thought that comes before phenomenologists' gaze falls outside of their interest. The phenomenological neutrality, thus, does not allow phenomenologists to be involved in either rejection or assertion of the metaphysical item being studied; the task is rather to direct the gaze toward what is essential but manifests itself in a particular form in that piece. It is only by committing to this neutral position that phenomenology makes metaphysical thinking the subject matter of its study. Only in this way can phenomenology hope to attain the eidetic grounds of metaphysical thinking as such.

3. The Thematic Expansion of the Critique of Metaphysical Thinking

Attaining the essential elements of metaphysical theorization demands, as explained above, an expansion of the conception of metaphysics. Both "Preface" and "Introduction" to the *Critique of Pure Reason* suggest that what led Kant to raise the question of the possibility of metaphysics in the first place was the observation of the apparent failure of metaphysics to resolve the fundamental and persistent contradictions. For a field of study cannot rightfully be considered a science if it fails to present its subject matter in a consistent enough manner to prevent the inevitable questions regarding the nature and the subject matter of that science. However, the contradictions and controversies at first might not be seen as fundamental issues if it is maintained that an ultimate solution is possible, even if not presently available to anyone. For Kant, the contradictions of metaphysics signified an essential impossibility that cannot be solved by further advancing in metaphysical inquiry and seeking more refined systems. Therefore, the solution to the problem of metaphysics could not be perceived by the adherents of metaphysics themselves and called for a change of perspective. Kant's critique of metaphysics questioned the nature of the battle itself and the conditions under which it takes place. It is this neutral perspective that entails abstention from participating in the metaphysical assumptions under observation that forms the core of the Kantian Copernican revolution. In the "Antithetic of Pure Reason" Kant gave expression to this neutral perspective in the following way:

> This method of watching or even occasioning a contest between assertions, not in order to decide it to the advantage of one party or the other, but to investigate whether the object of the dispute is not perhaps a mere mirage at which each would snatch in vain without being able to gain anything even if he met with no resistance— this procedure, I say, can be called the **skeptical method**. (A423-24/B451)

Although the antinomies are primarily attributable to cosmological assertions, there is a general sense in which such conflicts can be observed in all fields of metaphysics. I suggest that by remaining committed to Kant's skeptical method—or the phenomenological disinterested observation—and expanding it beyond the three departments of special metaphysics a new field of metaphysical conflicts opens up that

remained undisclosed to Kant. By demonstrating that the field of controversies of metaphysics can expand beyond special metaphysics, the domain of our critical task will also be expanded. If it can be demonstrated that these conflicts concern the most central theme of metaphysics, a new conception of metaphysics is made available though initially only indirectly, that is, through the controversies around it.

Although asserting the possibility of the dialectical use of the concepts of understanding (A63/B88), Kant offered no detailed account of its dialectical use and whether it could give rise to controversies. The first department of scholastic metaphysics, general ontology, studies the general features of being *qua* being through categories. By treating the categories epistemically, that is by turning them into the forms of knowledge, the "Transcendental Analytic" is the transcendental replacement of general ontology which deals with the universal determinations of things as they are in themselves. In doing so, the "Transcendental Analytic" offers an account of the categories in which they can have either empirical or dialectical use, thus, identifying the source of the errors in general metaphysics as consisting of the dialectical use of categories. The subject matter of general metaphysics is not the categories as such, but being *qua* being or things in themselves whose essential determinations are claimed to be known solely through categories in their dialectical use. Although in scholastic metaphysics controversies exist with regard to the number of categories, their relation to being *qua* being, their relations to each other, and their nature. But the concept of being *qua* being—things in themselves in Kant's terminology—never raised major concerns, because the pure concept of being was commonly understood to be the most abstract and self-evident concept of all, which made the question of its nature redundant.[6]

The scope of the Kantian critique would begin to expand considerably, I suggest, when the problem of the possibility of metaphysics is grounded in the controversies around the nature of being *qua* being. Thus, by zooming out Kant's narrow focus on scholastic metaphysics, a whole new battlefield of controversies emerges, namely, to use Plato's words, the battle of giants concerning being. The question

[6] This understanding of the concept of being *qua* being was particularly common amongst many Islamic philosophers and some Christian philosophers such as Duns Scotus.

of the nature of being *qua* being is as old as the metaphysics itself and, as I try to show in the following, it is the most central question of metaphysical thought in general. Therefore, the fundamental idea upon which metaphysical thinking in general is operating is none other than the idea of being *qua* being. This is not to say, however, that metaphysicians always begin their work by already having at their disposal a clear understanding of what being *qua* being means. Indeed, from the perspective of the transcendental phenomenological critique, being *qua* being needs to be investigated as the ultimate battlefield of most fundamental metaphysical controversies. Therefore, by defining the concept of being *qua* being as the fundamental concept of metaphysics, I by no means intend to provide a universal definition of metaphysics. Quite the contrary, the concept of being *qua* being is to be exposed through a phenomenological study of metaphysical thinking as the source of its impossibility as a science. Thus, the elaboration of the thesis that the fundamental object of metaphysics is being *qua* being will be pursued through an exhibition of this concept as the ground of a vast field of contradictory assertions about its nature.

In the Baumgarten formulation of scholastic metaphysics to which Kant adhered, general ontology is tasked with investigating the most general characteristics (categories) of being *qua* being. The scholastic division of metaphysics into general ontology and special metaphysics acknowledges the priority of the discussion of the general characteristics of being *qua* being as a discipline that provides access to the particular departments of metaphysics. Thus, the thematic expansion of metaphysics requires a shift of critical attention from special metaphysics to general ontology where the latter no longer simply carries its scholastic association, but now refers to all forms of inquiries that take as its object being *qua* being. Moreover, this thematic expansion will allow a view of the problematic of metaphysics more fundamentally as it allows the identification of the battlefield of controversies at the heart of metaphysical thinking, the idea of the being *qua* being. A phenomenological description of the controversies around the nature of the subject matter of metaphysical thought in general, then provides both the universal theme of

metaphysical thinking and thereby an expanded concept of metaphysics and an articulation of the problem of metaphysics that would also include all forms of metaphysical thinking.

Metaphysics is primarily a theoretical practice aiming at the elucidation of the general features of things as they are in themselves. Despite the claim to scientificity, it has never been able to produce reliable results about its object. The critique of metaphysics can evolve under the guidance of Kant's question regarding the scientific state of metaphysics, except now with regard to the object of general ontology, that is, being *qua* being. This has, as I aim to demonstrate here, remained the sole object of all metaphysical practices since the birth of philosophy and continues to be so today. Thus, by demonstrating the question concerning the nature of being *qua* being as the central task by which metaphysics is to be distinguished from other scientific activities, the limits of Kant's thematization of metaphysics are overcome while the scope of his questioning is broadened.

4. General Ontology as the Battlefield of Endless Controversies

In contrast to other branches of knowledge, philosophy has the tendency to require anyone seeking to establish themselves as a new philosopher within the history of philosophy to first define philosophy afresh. The history of philosophy is indeed nothing but the history of philosophies, each portraying the world in its own image. Although traditions of philosophical thought can be observed, among the prominent philosophies one can barely discover a unitary trajectory that develops along a unifying thread. Conflicts, quarrels, and disputes dominate the history of philosophy while the question of the *essence* of philosophy often drives new philosophies to raise and claim the attainment of the ultimate meaning of philosophy and the resolution of its internal conflicts. Yet, these new attempts, no matter how elegant and novel they may be in their approaches and how persuasive they may sound to their supporters, often find themselves embroiled with their adversaries, which exposes their vulnerable positions or the emptiness of

their pretensions. Driven by these conflicts, the history of philosophy continues to entice the young inquisitive minds to join the battle, all in pursuit of an ultimate victory. The battle is so heated and the dust so high that visibility is severely limited. It is necessary to pick a viewpoint outside of the battlefield to gain a clearer view of the object of the structure its purpose and its nature. By choosing the position of an observer, it becomes possible to refrain from taking part in the battle. This allows a new theoretical interest to emerge, namely, the interest in a pure (disinterested) description of the *modus operandi* of the battle itself.

The transformation in the role of the philosopher from a raging warrior to a tranquil observer radically re-orients the historical direction of philosophy. It can be argued that for the first time in the history of philosophy, it was through Kant's "skeptical method"—the method of observing the grounds of philosophical practice—that philosophy broke with its unconscious drives towards meaningless conflicts and assumed the task of reflecting on the source of its conflicts. It is through this reflection that the reflective subject can realize that the battlefield of all the controversies lies within itself, more precisely, in its capacity for theoretical practices.

Since the early stages of its development in ancient Greece, philosophy has been predominantly occupied by the problems concerning its foundation. The question of "What is philosophy?" has been dealt with in the light of another query, that is "What is being?" Aristotle asserted that the question that has baffled philosophers from the dawn of philosophy is the question of the nature of being (Aristotle, 2014). In his interpretation, the history of philosophy appears as the history of the question of the nature of being. He assessed the history of philosophy up to his time by evaluating his predecessor's responses to the question of the nature of being. The unity of the history of philosophy is rooted in the unitary source of their inquiry. The realm of philosophy is the realm of being. Despite the divergences in the approaches and solutions to the question of being, the investigative vision that motivates the question has never been compromised. In Aristotle's terminology, "primary causes," "elements" or "principles" refer to the fundamental determinations of being *qua* being and the task of philosophy consists in illustrating

these causes and principles: “We are seeking the principles and the causes of the things that are, and obviously of things *qua* being” (Aristotle, 2014, p. 84). The history of the pre-Socratic philosophy exhibits great perplexity and bewilderment regarding the quantity and quality of the elements of being *qua* being. While some philosophers advocated for the existence of only one element of all things, others suggested that there are two or four, and still, others argued for an infinite number of elements. Water, air, infinite, fire, earth, the full, the empty, numbers, form, substance (essence), love, strife, and mind are among the suggested principles of being that Aristotle reviews. Of course, he finally draws his discussion of previous philosophers to his conclusion that they never fully understood the most fundamental feature of being, which in his view, is substance. If being is first and foremost substance, then the primary task of philosophy is to study the features of substance:

> And indeed the question which, both now and of old, has always been raised, and always been the subject of doubt, viz. what being is, is just the question, what is substance? For it is this that some assert to be one, others more than one, and that some assert to be limited in number, others unlimited. And so we also must consider chiefly and primarily and almost exclusively what that is which *is* in this sense. (ibid, pp. 89-90)

Aristotle laid the ground for a method of interpreting the history of philosophy that was later adopted in a more developed form by Hegel and to some extent by Heidegger. Aristotle read the history of philosophy up to his time as if it culminates in his own philosophy. Once he established in his philosophy that being primarily refers to “substance,” he went on to interpret the history of philosophy based on the meaning of being as substance. Therefore, when raising the question about the nature (or, in Aristotle's terminology, the causes) of being as being, the early philosophers were, in fact, preoccupied with the essential attributes of substance, albeit without explicit understanding. In this interpretation of the history of metaphysics, the metaphysician first projects what he argues is the ultimate ground of being, then proceeds to investigate the history of philosophy on the basis of that original projection. Thus, the history of philosophy is metaphysically interpreted.

By contrast, a transcendental phenomenological approach to the history of metaphysics cannot participate in any metaphysical premiss of the pertinent phases of the history of metaphysics it intends to investigate. In other words, by demonstrating the impossibility of metaphysics as a distinct field of theoretical practice, transcendental phenomenology also calls into question the metaphysical construction of the history of philosophy. As a rupture in the history of metaphysics, the perspective of transcendental phenomenology radically differs from that of metaphysics and, thus, has its own historical development sharply distinguished from the history of metaphysics. Transcendental phenomenology is not interested in the historical problems of metaphysics and has no intention to provide any solution to them. It rather calls for a total transformation of that history. This transformation seems to have commenced with Descartes but was first fully elaborated by Kant. As Kant writes:

> Now the concern of this critique of pure speculative reason consists in that attempt to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics, undertaking an entire revolution according to the example of the geometers and natural scientists" (Bxxiii).

It is important to return to Aristotle's interpretation of the history of early philosophies to fully grasp the problem Kant sought to address. Concise and summative, metaphorical and obscure, the early philosophers resemble "unarmed men in fights, for they go round their opponents and often strike fine blows, but they do not fight on scientific principles, and so these thinkers do not seem to know what they say" (Aristotle, 2014, p. 9). These statements seem to suggest that according to Aristotle, the early philosophers did not have a clear idea of what they were fighting for. The very object of the battle, namely, the nature of the being *qua* being (substance, for Aristotle), was shrouded in obscurity. The consistent presentation of being and its essential structure, which for Aristotle can only be achieved on the basis of what he calls "scientific principles," is a basis yet unknown to the early philosophers.

It is not accidental that Aristotle's report on the status of philosophical inquiry in the early stages of the development of philosophy contains battle metaphors, though the ground and the meaning of this battle remained undisclosed to his speculative approach. Rather than embarking on a transcendental

inquiry into the ground of the battle, his philosophy opened a new horizon, which although intended to bring the battle to a halt, only relocated the battlefield. From the perspective of the later development of philosophy in the Christian and Islamic world, Aristotle's philosophy, although deeply influential, did not seem to offer more than a secular picture of the world. Did not Hegel consider the Ancient Greek philosophy, Aristotle's philosophy included, only one stage, a comparatively primary one, in the progress of the spirit that ultimately culminates in his own system? Hegel argued that, although Aristotle's metaphysics makes decisive progress, it is still far from a perfect philosophical system. Or, in a quite opposite direction, did not Heidegger, influenced by Nietzsche, contend that it was the pre-Aristotelian philosophers who possessed a deeper understanding of Being and the nature of philosophizing and it was precisely Aristotle's concept of substance that paved the way for what he refers to as "forgetfulness of Being"? Maybe, after all, the early philosophers were not just "lisping infants" or "unarmed fighters," but rather mature, robust, and fully armed warriors, just not speaking in Aristotle's language. However, I suggest resisting the temptation to jump into the battle and try to settle it by hastily taking one side against the other. Instead, I argue for taking the Kantian perspective and raise this question: is it perhaps possible that this fight is of a nature that can never be won or lost? Can it be that the question of being can never be satisfactorily answered? Can one speak of a dialectic within the theoretical dynamic that gives rise to the question of the essence of being? Such dialectic would comprehend the nature of metaphysics in its entirety.

The advent of Christianity and later Islam completely transformed the philosophical scene. The socio-political domination of these religions amongst the philosophically active led to the theoretical domination of religion over philosophy. During the medieval period, free philosophical inquiry was often oppressed and condemned as a secular form of thinking. When it was allowed, it was made a servant of religion and given a new purpose: to provide rational grounds for the correctness of the religious doctrines, especially the existence of God. Scholastic metaphysics, specifically after Thomas Aquinas, turns God, a religious phenomenon, into a metaphysical one, namely the highest being

(metaphysicalization of religion). Philosophy can no longer ignore God and confine itself to a secular description of existence. There is now a hierarchy in existence that installs God at the highest level and regresses sequentially down to the lowest level, through angels, humans, animals, and plants, to lifeless matter. The task of philosophy, thus, becomes to demonstrate that God encompasses the entirety of existence even though God somehow remains separate from it. In metaphysical terms, the concept of God designates the most fundamental determination of being *qua* being. As the creator—a concept absent in Greek philosophy and theology—God is the absolute source of existence. Existence first and foremost belongs to God and other entities receive it only from God. Thus, in scholastic metaphysics, God as an ontological concept replaces Greek ontological concepts such as substance, infinite, water, etc. Ontology in scholastic metaphysics is theologically defined and theological problems shape the content of ontological investigations. As Hegel quite correctly points out in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1827): "Scholastic philosophy is identical with philosophy; theology is philosophy, and philosophy is theology" (Hegel, 2006, p. 80). God forms the ultimate ontological category and the ultimate meaning of being.

As discussed above, the domination of theology over general ontology, supported by the socio-political domination of the institution of religion, prevented the question of being to be posed outside of the theological horizon. The free investigation into the nature of being was not an option for the philosophers and metaphysicians who operated under the evident assumption that God is the supreme being and whose only task concerns the rational presentation of already established truth. Philosophers have never arrived at the truth of being (God) through their philosophical inquiry; such inquiry was undertaken at best as an auxiliary to faith. Hence, a prolonged period of unanimity in the historical life of metaphysics can be observed, during which the metaphysicians busied themselves with the internal problems of an already established form of ontology (problems such as God's knowledge of particular things, the mode of existence of angels, the creation of the world, the existence of God, etc.). Under such external necessities, the battlefield had been displaced and the metaphysicians found themselves in

already arranged fight fronts. In contrast to the history of Greek philosophy, which presents a plethora of ontologies radically diverging in their characterization of the essence of being, the whole vast scholastic philosophical literature, which emerged under the absolute authority of religion, should be considered as one ontological development.

As mentioned above, the unified way in which the scholastics answered the question of being explains why Kant's critique of metaphysics only examines dialectical inferences within the particular fields of metaphysics without taking into consideration the more fundamental question of the nature of being *qua* being. In the horizon of scholastic metaphysics, the battlefields were delineated across the internal problems of the main metaphysical-theological objects—God, soul, world—and the question of the ground of ontology was no longer on the agenda. In contrast, the question of the possibility and nature of philosophical knowledge was the center of the focus of Greek philosophers in various forms. Plato's and Aristotle's struggle with the relativists of their times, such as Heraclitus, took the form of establishing philosophical inquiry on firm absolute principles. Part of the history of Greek philosophy was the quarrel about the nature of philosophy itself, while in the Christan and Islamic periods philosophy could not answer the question of its essence outside of the theological horizon to which it was externally constrained.

Although Kant's critique radically changed the philosophical scene and was extremely influential in the philosophical developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, by no means it meant the end of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysics, though not in its scholastic form, survived Kant's critique. In fact, one is tempted to say that Kant's critique functioned only as a bridge from one phase of the history of metaphysics to another. Soon after him, the post-Kantians developed their metaphysical systems, all of which were deeply indebted to Kant. However, the fact that Kant's critique marked a transition from an old form of metaphysics to a new one should not be taken to mean that his approach was deeply flawed. Although not all changes in the history of philosophy are always purely philosophically determined, his

critique was quite successful in casting out the scholastic metaphysical style from the philosophical province.

At present, my aim is not to discuss Kant's role in the resurgence of metaphysics, but rather to briefly show the sense in which metaphysics as the battlefield of reason's conflicts continued after the *Critique of Pure Reason*. How should the return of metaphysics be understood? Did metaphysics rise from its ashes after total destruction or was it never fully destroyed? One might respond to this question by recalling Kant's statement that metaphysics is rooted in the natural dialectic of mind and, thus, can never be fully erased. But as we saw earlier, his conception of metaphysics was limited to that of the scholastic style. In fact, viewed in the light of the development of metaphysics after him, it can be said that his critique had a freeing effect on metaphysics: Kant's tearing down the edifice of scholastic metaphysics for many was a call to establish new grounds for metaphysics.

In the preface to his book, *Essays on a New Theory of the Human Capacity for Representation* (1789), Karl Reinhold, one of the most prominent contemporary interpreters of Kant, reviewed the disoriented status of philosophy leading up to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The fleeting fame of the Leibniz-Wolff system was succeeded by the desire for experience-based philosophies that can deduce from experience the universal principles of ethics and religion. While the faith in rational metaphysics was already beginning to falter, the new form of philosophy that could revere experience was yet to be born: "The absence of universally accepted principles was clearly evident in the publications of the philosophical world mentioned above and the need for these was becoming more and more urgent in the culture that had made such progress in other respects" (Reinhold, 2011, p. 7). Convinced by the truth of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Reinhold's goal was to present the critical system scientifically and systematically, in a way that eliminated the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Kantian system and cannot be refuted but "in its entirety." For Reinhold, the source of all misunderstandings of Kant's critical system is the concept of "representation" which was understood differently by his critics than by Kant himself. The refutation of Kant's critics required, according to Reinhold, the presentation of

his system as a "*universally valid*" system. Thus, what initially was only a practical attempt to defend the *Critique* from its opponents set the tone for new and independent philosophical systems to be developed by Fichte and Hegel. This perhaps was because of the excessive emphasis in Reinhold's work on the scientific and systemic presentation of Kant's critique.

Moving in the same direction as Reinhold, Fichte defined the task of philosophy as the systemic elaboration of the "system of representations" that can integrate theoretical and practical philosophy. What holds this system together is its "first principle," which for Fichte is the "absolute self," the absolute infinite creative source (Fichte, 1982, p. 109). One does not fail to already notice the return of the familiar metaphysical terms in Reinhold and Fichte's re-appropriation of Kantian philosophy, terms like "absolute I," "infinity," and perhaps the most important, "first principle." The concern to establish transcendental consciousness deductively from a first principle in a systematic way, namely, in a way in which all parts harmonize with each other in an entirety, is certainly a metaphysical motive that becomes increasingly central to the re-emergence of metaphysics after Kant. Later, the requirement of "systematicity" becomes the touchstone by which Hegel not only criticizes Kant's and Fichte's subjective idealism but also establishes his whole dialectical method that necessitates the incorporation of all finitude ("one-sidedness," to use his terminology) into an ultimate presentation of reality in "system of science." In Hegel's philosophy, the idea of system takes up an ontological implication and the system of philosophy becomes ontologically grounded. Thus, the systematic presentation of transcendental subjectivity turns into the systematic presentation of objective *and* subjective reality together forming absolute reality.

Hegel's philosophy can be characterized as the greatest systematic establishment of philosophy that has ever been attempted. It proclaimed to accommodate all the diverse departments of reality—natural, familial, social, religious, political, economical, scientific, historical, philosophical, logical (a-historical), and aesthetic—into one total system of knowledge. The subject and its experiences must not be understood as independent from the object, but rather as two moments of one whole. The subject is the substance (object):

> That the true is only actual as a system, or, that substance is essentially subject, is expressed in the representation that expresses the absolute as *spirit* – the most sublime concept and the one which belongs to modernity and its religion. The spiritual alone is the *actual*; it is the essence, or, what *exists-in-itself*. – It is what is self-*comporting*, or, the determinate itself, or, *otherness* and *being-for-itself* – and, in this determinateness, to be the self-enduring in its being-external-to-itself – or, it is *in and for itself*. (Hegel, 2018, p. 16)

By surpassing the limits of subjective idealism, Hegel undermines the very foundation of Kantian critique of metaphysics. This surpassing of the limits of subjectivity, itself carried out systematically, is a metaphysical motive to obtain the fundamental determination of being *qua* being. The perspective of Hegel's philosophy is ontological, not epistemological. Spirit, reason, absolute, subject, substance, science, and system are all different names for one and the same reality—being. Hegel's philosophy is the most complete ontological system ever created in which reason designates the ultimate determination of being.

However, did this enormous system with its extraordinary explanatory means, dialectic, successfully bring into unity all philosophical oppositions of the past and its present time? Was "reason," in the sense that Hegel defined it, capable of reconciling all dualities at least at the philosophical level and excluding the irrational altogether? Might there not exist alternative forms of philosophy whose premises directly oppose that of Hegel's philosophy, particularly the assertion that "the real is the rational and the rational is the real"? Indeed, such philosophies were already in development during the same period as Hegel's philosophy. For example, Schelling and Schopenhauer's blistering critiques of Hegel's philosophy were themselves metaphysically motivated. Here I briefly focus on Schopenhauer's metaphysics.

Schopenhauer's reappropriation of Kant is another way in which metaphysics emerged in the post-Kantian era. Reducing the number of categories to only one, namely causality, Schopenhauer proposes that the world as represented by our theoretical faculty is a world in which appearances are

governed by the law of causality, which he defines as the principle of sufficient reason. The world of appearances is, thus, causally rational. Representations, however, have a ground that is not itself a representation and cannot be represented as such. This ground, which Kant called the thing-in-itself, is for Schopenhauer will. His *magnum opus*, The *World as Will and Representation* (1818), describes in two main parts the world of appearances as rationally (causally) represented and the ground of the world as inherently irrational. Since his project requires transgressing the limits of appearances, it can legitimately be described as metaphysical:

> But what now prompts us to make inquiries is that we are not satisfied with knowing that we have representations, that they are such and such, and that they are connected according to this or that law, whose general expression is always the principle of sufficient reason. We want to know the significance of those representations; we ask whether this world is nothing more that representation…. Or we ask whether it is something else, something in addition, and if so what that something is. (Schopenhauer, 2014, pp. 98-99)

If humans were nothing more than purely knowing subjects, they would have only access to representations; but since they are also bodies, they can perceive things beyond representations. The body is immediately—without the mediation of representation—given as an "objectified will." Body and will are the same thing; the will is perceived bodily actions. At first, Schopenhauer seems to remain within the confines of a phenomenology of will and the body and does not seem to violate the principles of Kant's transcendental idealism until he proposes that the will that is immediately perceived in the body gives the clue to the inner nature of all objects. The will is groundless, and it is the body that is the phenomenon of the will (ibid, 107). Thus, by determining the nature of the thing-in-itself as will, Schopenhauer exceeds the limits of the possible experience as defined by Kant and constructs a metaphysics of will:

> Phenomenon means representation and nothing more. All representation, be it of whatever kind it may, all *object*, is *phenomenon*. But only *will* is *thing-in-itself*; as such, it is not representation at all, but *toto genere* different therefrom. It is that of which all representation, all object, is the

> phenomenon, the visibility, the *objectivity*. It is the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole. It appears in every blindly acting force of nature, and also in the deliberate conduct of man, and the great difference between the two concerns only the degree of the manifestation, not the inner nature of what is manifested. (Ibid, p. 110)

As the ultimate ontological determination, will is eternal and remains constant through changes:

> Just as a magic lantern shows many different pictures, but it is only one and the same flame that makes them all visible, so in all the many different phenomena which together fill the world or supplant one another as successive events, it is only one will that appears, and everything is its visibility, its objectivity; it remains unmoved in the midst of this change. (ibid, p.153)

While for Hegel reason designates the nature of things in themselves, namely, the unchangeable milieu that encompasses all the changes, for Schopenhauer it is the will that characterizes the eternal essence of being *qua* being. In contrast to the power of representations of human subjectivity, and as the ground thereof, the will is irrational and blind.

After Kant, the history of philosophy once again becomes the scene of competing metaphysics. In stern opposition to each other, Schopenhauer and Hegel developed two different metaphysical systems. Is it possible to conceive their unification? How can such unification be carried out? Can room be made in the Hegelian system for the irrationality of will as Schopenhauer described it? In this case, would that not mean the assimilation of the total irrationality of will into Hegel's rational system and undermining the whole of Schopenhauer's project? In fact, Hegel's system has already made room for irrationalities by considering them as potential rationalities that will be "sublated" as the dialectical unfolding of reason carries on. This, however, would not satisfy Schopenhauer who believed in the exact opposite, namely, that the human power of reason is itself a manifestation of the irrational will. While for Hegel reason is ultimate and unreason is subordinated to it, for Schopenhauer it is the irrational will that objectifies itself

in the rational forms of life. Thus, the Hegelian appeal to “reconciliation” meets its limits in the kinds of metaphysics that postulate irrationality.

Having arrived at this point, again rather than succumbing to the temptation to achieve a reconciliatory middle ground, I argue for following the Kantian insight that here as in all branches of metaphysics, it is a matter of a field of controversy whose participants are each arguing for their positions. The opposition is stark—as is manifest in both Schopenhauer's vitriolic attacks on Hegel—but the opposites engage in the fight on the same ground: the thing-in-itself or being *qua* being. Once again it is the question of the nature of the Thing, being *qua* being, that is at stake and the general ontology has emerged as the field of philosophical conflicts.

Although greatly overshadowed by Hegel, Schopenhauer’s irrational legacy became a source of inspiration for Nietzsche and through him for the so-called postmodern philosophies. As I attempt to show in the next chapter, postmodern philosophies as far as their metaphysical ground is concerned, rely on a conception of being as irrationally determined.

Chapter 2: The Phenomenological Critique of General Metaphysics: The Eidetic Elements of Metaphysical Theorization

The revival of the Kantian question of metaphysics concerning the general ontology has required adopting a broader perspective on the history of metaphysics. The last chapter aims at showing that general ontology is also, to speak Kant's language, dialectical, thereby expanding the concept of metaphysics. The theme of being *qua* being or the thing-in-itself is the sole theme of metaphysics. The inquiries in the general ontology, a term to be equated with metaphysics now, concern the essence of being *qua* being. Thus, the perplexities in general ontology regard the nature of its subject matter. The question of the possibility of making being *qua* being accessible for scientific study will have serious consequences for all the other forms of inquiry that in any way rely on metaphysical discourse.

In Kant's understanding of metaphysics, things in themselves are the object of general ontology. Within the confines of scholastic metaphysics, the job of the metaphysician is to explain the essential features of being using categories. Categories are the ontological features of being in general. By transferring the categories to the human mind and epistemologizing them, Kant transformed them into pure forms of understanding whose content must be provided by sensibility. The most fundamental features of things are, thus, bestowed on them by the human mind. This change of perspective, which is known as the "Copernican revolution," allowed Kant to distinguish two modes of using the categories. In the legitimate usage of the categories, one applies them to the appearances of sensible experience and arrives at the fully determined and concrete object. In the illegitimate usage of the categories, one applies them not to the real givens of sensibility, but to the thing-in-itself. Now the thing-in-itself is not a given of sensibility and therefore is nothing determined and concrete. It is rather a mere concept that exists only in the mind. As discussed earlier, the thing-in-itself is completely undetermined and, therefore, can be given

only as an idea. The essence of things, the thinghood of things, or the being of entities is not itself an entity amongst other entities and, therefore, can be given only a priori, that is, only as an idea.

So far, I have shown that Kant overlooked a vast field of metaphysical controversies and therefore his account of reason's dialect remained confined to the departments of Scholastic special metaphysics. The thematic expansion of the concept of metaphysics from scholastic metaphysics to general metaphysics—the theory of being *qua* being—requires the expansion of the field of transcendental investigation of the subjective components involved in metaphysical theorization. As illustrated above, Kant's method of investigating the transcendental ground of the three objects of special metaphysics consists in observing the mental processes that give rise to the three departments of special metaphysics. Now that the notion of metaphysics has been expanded, the question arises: what are the mental processes involved in the creation of the general metaphysics or ontology? The concept of being *qua* being is the object of metaphysics in general. By the thematic expansion of metaphysics, it now becomes necessary to expand the search for the transcendental ground of the object of general ontology, namely being *qua* being. In the following section, I investigate the question concerning the transcendental status of Kant's conception of things in themselves. This investigation will introduce a phenomenological analysis of metaphysical thinking in general.

1. First Eidetic Element: The Transcendental Positing of the Idea of Thing-in-Itself

It is by no means an easy task to determine the origin and the nature of things in themselves with their objectivist associations in Kant's critical system. Kant's scholarship is divided on the issue of the status and nature of things in themselves. Based on some passages from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, some of Kant's scholars assert that things in themselves are a separate class of objects of which we can never form

theoretical cognition.[7] Others deny the ontic status of things in themselves by arguing that the concept of things in themselves refers to nothing more than an abstraction.[8] Since I discuss some of these interpretations of Kant's concept of things in themselves in Chapter Five, here I confine myself to refuting the suggestion that things in themselves exist even though we cannot attain cognition of them. I also defer, for the sake of brevity, a discussion of the broader implications of my argument for Kant's system to Chapter Five.

Many passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason* suggest that things in themselves exist independently of our cognitive faculties without thereby granting us the legitimacy to make any claim as to their cognition. The critical system cannot prove or disprove the existence of things in themselves; it rather declares that such an undertaking is a matter of theoretical cognition of things in themselves that it proscribes. We cannot determine an object merely through the application of concepts of understanding and without any recourse to sensibility. Without sensible intuition, we do not have any materials upon which to build our cognition given that our cognition is structured by sensibility and a priori concepts of understanding alone. When the mind attempts to know things using its concepts in abstraction from sensible intuition, it engages in a transcendent use of the concept that would yield no cognition at all. In so doing, the mind thinks objects directly through the concepts of understanding in the hope of arriving at a determinate cognition of them as they are in themselves, that is, as unrelated to any knowing subject. When the mind thinks of objects in abstraction from the sensible intuition then they are called, according to Kant, noumena (B306). Kant describes the concept of noumena as problematic:

> I call a concept problematic that contains no contradiction but that is also, as a boundary for given concepts, connected with other cognitions, the objective reality of which can in no way be cognized. The concept of a **noumenon**, i.e., of a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself. (A254/B310)

[7] See Rae Langton's *Kant's Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*, (Clarendon Press, 1998).
[8] See Henry Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, (Yale University Press, 2004).

Kant does not reject the possibility of a non-sensible intuition, namely, an intellectual one (divine intuition), the nature of which is, of course, unknown to us. He, therefore, indicated a "positive" notion of noumena—to be separated from the "negative" sense of noumena, which refers to noumena insofar as "it is not an object of our sensible intuition" (B307). From this, it follows that the possibility of the existence of the noumena independently of us also cannot be dismissed. Calling noumena "beings of understanding," he stated that: "there may even be beings of understanding to which our sensible faculty of intuition has no relation at all…" (B308-9).

However, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant acknowledges the possibility of the application of the categories to the noumena for *practical purposes* in the realm of suprasensible and therefore their objective reality.[9] The critique of the theoretical reason, thus, not only does not entirely do away with things in themselves, but "secured the concept of noumena—i.e., the possibility, indeed the necessity, of thinking such [things]" (Kant, 2021, p. 61). The existence of the noumena is, thus, asserted, although their determinate significance can only be given practically not theoretically. The problematic concept of noumena only reflects the limitations of our epistemological capacities not the very existence of things in themselves. An inquiry into the existence of things in themselves, so far as it is carried out within the limitations of our theoretical reason, yields no determinate result.

It is important to note the difference between things in themselves and the ideas of reason in Kant's text. Things in themselves or noumena are kinds of objects, but the ideas of reason are pure

[9] In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant stated: "In fact, however, the concept of an empirically unconditioned causality, although theoretically empty (without an intuition that fits it), is nonetheless always possible and refers to an undetermined object; and in place of this [lacking signification] (translator's note) the concept is nonetheless given signification in the moral law and consequently in a practical reference. Therefore, the concept, even though I do not have an intuition that would determine its objective theoretical reality for it, does nonetheless have actual application that can be exhibited *in concreto* in attitudes or maxims, that is, it has practical reality that can be indicated; and this is indeed sufficient to justify it even with regard to noumena. But this objective reality of a pure concept of understanding in the realm of the suprasensible, once introduced, now gives objective reality to all the other categories as well—though always only insofar as they are linked necessarily with the determining basis of the will (the moral law)—except that this objective reality is one that has merely practical applicability, while having not the slightest influence on theoretical cognition of these objects, as insight into their nature by pure reason, so as to expand this cognition" (Kant, 2021, p. 76).

concepts whose origin Kant demonstrates within the syllogistic structure of pure reason. One can speak of the concepts of reason as having their objects, which would be nothing other than noumena that can never be theoretically determined through those concepts. The practical determination of them through those concepts is, however, very well thinkable.

> It can be said that the object of a merely transcendental idea is something of which we have no concept, even though this idea is generated in an entirely necessary way by reason according to its original laws. For in fact no concept of the understanding is possible for an object that is to be adequate to the demand of reason, i.e., an object such as can be shown and made intuitive in a possible experience. But we would express ourselves better and with less danger of misunderstanding if we said that we can have no acquaintance with an object that corresponds to an idea, even though we can have a problematic concept of it. (A339/B397)

Things in themselves are objects, not ideas created by the transcendental mind. The classification of things in themselves as objects carries with it a tacit ontological claim regarding the independent existence of things in themselves, the theoretical demonstration of which is denied to us. However, even within the boundaries of Kant's theoretical system, the ontological assertion of the existence of things in themselves undermines the consistency of the system.

The task of the expansion of Kant's critique of metaphysics requires the dismissal this objectivistic remainder in the critical system. To do so, I suggest that the concept of things in themselves and its tacit claim to objectivity must be accounted for purely subjectively. Thus, by applying the transcendental epoche to Kant's concept of the thing-in-itself, its implicit claim to objectivity is reduced and is considered as a mere idea, a pure creation of the mind in its transcendental activity. Thus, a phenomenological interpretation of the concept of things in themselves no longer considers it as belonging to a class of objects, but as belonging to a class of ideas whose nature and origin also can be investigated without any recourse to objectivistic assumptions.

The full implications of this suggestion can only be elaborated in Chapter Five. Here, I must assume some of these implications without offering their full justifications. An important consequence of this phenomenological shift in view on Kant's things in themselves, that is, the shift from considering them as real objects rather than ideas created by the transcendental mind, is the denial of the noumena (suprasensible) world upon which Kant establishes his ethical philosophy. Consequently, there is only one world and that is the world of experience (lifeworld, to use Husserl's term, a concept still unknown to Kant), namely, the world of determinate empirical objects and ideal objects that can have empirical use. As a result, things in themselves can have no origin other than the transcendental mind. This implies that the phenomenological task of inquiring into the ideal origin of things in themselves is partially provoked by the broader implications of the phenomenological view on the human subject, the world, and their relationship (the subject matter of Chapter Five). There is only one class of objects, namely, objects of experience and things in themselves belong to the realm of ideas perceptible only by a transcendental mind.

The phenomenological transcendental reduction makes it possible for us to examine the origin and the basis of the application of our ideas after reducing their objectivistic claims. There is no doubt that there are worlds of mathematical, geometrical, and logical objects (ideas) as well as the worlds of a priori conditions of ethical actions, but unlike things in themselves that have no bearings in experience, these objects are both determinate and can very well have empirical use, which indicates their limited objectivity. Amongst all our ideas, then, it is only the idea of the thing-in-itself that stands out as exhibiting peculiar features, namely, the claim to absolute objective reality and indeterminacy (beyond all empirical use). From now on, since the thing-in-itself is treated as *an* idea, I use the singular hyphened form instead of the term things in themselves that still carries the objectivistic assumptions in Kant's thinking, as if there are things that exist in themselves, that is, independent of the mind and apart from their empirical appearances. This transcendental phenomenological path was not disclosed to Kant; he never asked about the ideal origin of the idea of the thing-in-itself because, for him, it is more than a

concept. It is exactly his commitment to the objective reality of things in themselves that forms his allegiance with metaphysics (general ontology) and renders his critique of metaphysics limited.

Now a question might arise: Why does the mind give rise to such a fantastic idea so remote from empirical realities? The answer to this question should be sought, I suggest, in the orientation that philosophy, since its historical origin in ancient Greece, has taken. Philosophy was born as the science of All, that which comprehends everything. Philosophy was born as a science of being, which does not discriminate the mental and subjective from the real and objective. Philosophy was born already assuming a great deal about itself, excluding the need for further research on its nature. Nevertheless, as briefly indicated in Chapter One, it has always been grappled with questions regarding its nature. A phenomenological transcendental critique of knowledge teaches us that as a human practice, philosophy needs to gain awareness about its origin, nature, subject matter, and field of operation through a fundamental reassessment of itself. It is exactly by taking this first step, namely, by a skeptical suspension of philosophy's image of itself, that phenomenological transcendental critique of knowledge launches a radical reassessment of philosophy. Since its inception, philosophy assumed its access to the things as they are in themselves, thus, presenting itself as the logos *of* things. Never before Kant had the question ever occupied philosophy whether it has any legitimate ground to assume such an affinity with objects. But to raise this question in the first place signifies a shift in the philosophy's attitude: instead of seeing itself as the exposition of things as they are in themselves, it becomes conscious of its human origin and starts to know itself as a form of human practice. Philosophy, as the highest manifestation of the human's theoretical power, has from its very beginning been disoriented: rather than beginning from reflection on the subjective capacities for knowledge and their ultimate ends, it misrecognized its task, by ascribing objective reality to the creation of the mind's theoretical workings.

It was on this threshold that Kant stepped; he questioned our access to things in themselves, but never questioned their existence. Hence exactly at the moment when metaphysics faced its most substantial setback, it succeeded in reemerging under new guises. In the post-Kantian philosophical

atmosphere, there was no doubt, at least not in the mind of Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer that even for Kant there are things in themselves, the theoretical access to which Kant wrongly deemed impossible. Thus, for example in Hegel, the reconstruction of metaphysics was more a matter of re-assessing Kant's understanding of theoretical cognition and showing that knowledge can reach the nature of things in themselves, as he indicates in the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). There has never been a question that things in themselves exist. In the history of philosophy, Kant's critique simply functioned as a bridge between the scholastic form of metaphysics to newer forms of metaphysics. Metaphysics survived the transcendental critique because the transcendental critique has never been fully accomplished. The phenomenological reassessment of Kant's critical system should identify the un-critical commitment to the original orientation of the project of metaphysics in ancient Greek philosophy and suggest rectifying it by returning to the subjective origin of the concept of the thing-in-itself as the subject matter of general ontology.

Therefore, the idea of the thing-in-itself as the subject matter of a form of "scientific" activity is to be accounted for as a requirement of the metaphysical attitude adopted by the theoretical mind (reason). The transcendental origin of the idea of the thing-in-itself is the pure activity of the theoretical mind that, in its metaphysical attitude, that is, at the moments when attempting to entertain the most general features of reality, *posits the idea of the thing-in-itself as an absolutely objective reality*. Beyond and above all empirical determinations, the thing-in-itself is posited as the idea of an indeterminate, yet objective reality. This item of mental activity is the source of all metaphysicalization of the world and the self-alienation of the mind.

The description of this mental process can be enriched by further phenomenological descriptions of the processes that might be involved prior to arriving at this final stage of its completion. For example, the pure concept of existence or being *qua* being must already be presented to the mind in order to be projected as an objective reality. The concept of being *qua* being is itself not directly derived from experience as it is greater than any empirical concept determined by the experience. Therefore, as a mere

concept, it is a product of the abstractive capacity of the mind that is operative in the creation and comprehension of any universal concept, empirical or non-empirical. Precisely because the objectivity of the concept of being *qua* being does not rest on experience, its assumed objectivity must be non-empirical, that is, supplied purely subjectivity. Therefore, in a second act, the mind ascribes objectivity to the mere concept of being that is necessarily an absolute kind of objectivity since it is supplied purely a priori. The concept of being *qua* being emerges as a groundless and absolutely objective reality beyond and above all empirical determinations. The act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself is the first and necessary transcendental act through which the mind in its metaphysical activities presents to itself the object of its reflections. Unconscious of these mental processes, the metaphysical mind thinks that it has discovered a real object that cannot be classified amongst empirical objects and, thus, calls for a separate science for its cognition.

The idea of the thing-in-itself carries in itself two illegitimate assumptions, absolute objectivity and existence, whose transcendental ground can now be unveiled. The act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself as absolutely objective reality is the grounding transcendental act of metaphysics in general that first bestows it with its subject matter, namely being *qua* being. Since this purely subjectively granted objectivity is not mediated by sensibility at all, it takes on the resemblance of an absolute objectivity, that is, an objectivity that belongs to the idea itself—now considered as objective reality. By contrast, the objectivity of the concepts in their empirical use is always partial (concrete, in Kant's words) as it is possible only in relation to the subject. The projected absolute objectivity of the idea of the thing-in-itself, however, surpasses the limits of experience and is, thus, only a transcendent abstract objectivity founded upon none other than mere ideas. As an all-encompassing reality, the thing-in-itself or being *qua* being is itself considered in metaphysics to be a groundless reality that grounds everything. It is the same as the concept of existence as such that does not simply belong to either the subjective or objective realm but encompasses both. The thing-in-itself is the concept of self-subsistent, indeterminate existence in general.

This transcendental description of the origin of the idea of the thing-in-itself sheds new light on Kant's concept of transcendental illusion. Although Kant does not deny the possibility of dialectic illusions occurring in the general ontology, his account of them is exclusively restricted to the illusional use of the three ideas of reason corresponding to special metaphysics. As a result, he fell short of offering an account of a comprehensive account of the transcendental root of the transcendental illusion. He defined transcendental illusion in contrast to the logical illusion:

> Transcendental illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism (e.g. the illusion in the proposition: "The world must have a beginning in time"). The cause of this is that in our reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition) there lie fundamental rules and maxims for its use, which look entirely like objective principles, and through them it comes about that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves. (A297/B353)

In his discussion of each area of metaphysics, Kant shows that when certain subjective conditions of theoretical knowledge are taken as the determinations of things in themselves, then we should speak of the illusory use of ideas. The idea of the thing-in-itself, as I reconstruct it above, is then essential for all the illusory uses of reason's ideas. Rational psychology, cosmology, and theology treat their objects as things in themselves.

In the "System of Transcendental Ideas" at the beginning of the "Transcendental Dialectic, Kant demonstrates, in his deductive mode, how the subject matter of each of these metaphysical fields is produced by the syllogistic activities of reason (A334/B391). In a way, Kant performs a transcendental reduction regarding these three concepts by tracing their origin back to the subjective conditions of knowledge and treating them as mere ideas. His account of the illusory use comes upon a limit, however, when instead of describing the source of transcendental illusion, he simply characterized them as mistakes and misuses (A289/B345, A296/B352), although inevitable and natural ones. What is missed in his

account is that the act of mistaking the "subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts" for an "objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves" (A297/B353), requires that the idea of the thing-in-itself be already given to us as a purely psychic reality. As discussed above, although Kant denies what can be called "theoretical objectivity" for the noumena, his practical philosophy necessitates securing a general sense of their existence (as a non-phenomenological and therefore dogmatic remainder). Kant's ontological commitment seems to have hindered his exploration of the subjective roots of the idea of the thing-in-itself. The subjective re-discovering of the thing-in-itself signifies seeing the transcendental mind as the creator of this idea when it is engaged in constructing a metaphysical theory. The act of positing the thing-in-itself, thus becomes the origin of the transcendental illusion, as it posits an idea as containing objective reality. Being a mere product of the mind, the idea of the thing-in-itself can never have empirical use and, thus, always remains a mere idea that falsely carries in itself a claim to objectivity. The illusory character of this idea is now established upon the transcendental act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself, that is the founding transcendental act of metaphysics.

By asserting that the pure act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself as the transcendental ground of the transcendental illusion in metaphysical theorization in general, it is now possible to enrich Kant's analysis of transcendental illusion. To "*take"* the "subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts" for an "objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves" means, to be more precise, that the ideas of reason which have a purely subjective origin, are put in transcendental use, that is to say, are applied to the idea of the thing-in-itself. The transcendental "mistake" is itself an act of the transcendental mind whose nature has not been quite clarified by Kant. For him, none of the components of the transcendental mind—a priori forms of intuition, understanding, and reason—taken as subjective components contain any claim to objectivity. They can only attain objectivity when they are put in connection to our intuition, whether a priori or a posteriori. In metaphysics, however, the ideas of reason claim objectivity without having any grounding in our mode of intuition. But the concepts of reason considered in themselves, that is, in abstraction from experience contain no claim to knowledge. The

metaphysical consideration of the concepts as the determination of things in themselves—to use Kant's words—must go beyond both the pure conceptuality, that is, their essential subjectivity, and their empirical application and put them in relation to things in themselves. Thus, it is revealed that the transcendental illusion, as an essential operation of the metaphysical mode of thinking, rests on a transcendental act that connects the pure concepts to the idea of the thing-in-itself. The transcendental use of the concepts and ideas can now be articulated by thinking of the transcendental illusion as the *pure act* of the *application of the concepts and ideas to the idea of the thing-in-itself*. This suggests that the groundless claim to the objectivity of the ideas of reason must be provided merely subjectively, thereby making this merely subjectively grounded objectivity necessarily illusory.

Through the phenomenological reconstruction of the ground of the transcendental illusion, it can be asserted that ideas of reason are given absolute objectivity as the transcendental mind—in its metaphysical activities—applies them to the idea of the thing-in-itself as a result of which the illegitimate absolute objectivity projected into the idea of the thing-in-itself *extends* to the three ideas of reason. The idea of the thing-in-itself is a singular idea while concepts and the ideas of reason—and any other determinations that other metaphysical systems may posit as their objects—are diverse. The application of the concepts to the idea of the thing-in-itself renders each concept as a thing in itself, thereby giving rise to the semblance of there being things in themselves. Hence, the unraveling of the subjective ground of the idea of the thing-in-itself requires a change in terminology: there are no things in themselves, there is only the singular idea of the thing-in-itself that forms the ground of all illusory things that metaphysics takes as its object.

The transcendental illusion, thus, is founded upon two items of pure transcendental activities. The act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself is the foundational act of metaphysical theorization in general that grounds general ontology. In the scholastic form of metaphysics, the transcendental illusions that occur in general ontology comprise *the act of applying the concepts of understanding to the idea of the thing-in-itself*, whereas transcendental illusions in the three areas of special metaphysics entail *the*

application of the ideas of reason to the idea of the thing-in-itself. In all fields of metaphysics, the act of positing the thing-in-itself as an objective reality is the ground of transcendental illusions.

The idea of the thing-in-itself, which is the fundamental idea of general metaphysics, is foundational to the illusory use of the three ideas of reason, each designating the object of one area of special metaphysics. The idea of the thing-in-itself is the idea of the being *qua* being which encompasses all entities, including God, the world, and the human soul. The investigation into the general features of the being *qua* being does not discriminate entities. Consequently, the features identified for being *qua* being necessarily apply to all entities. Thus, at the transcendental level, the act of the application of the concepts of reason to the idea of the thing-in-itself is merely the eidetic ground of the dogmatically assumed arrangement of the scholastic metaphysics according to which the general ontology is prior to the special metaphysics.

In metaphysical thinking and through the transcendental positing of the idea of the thing-in-itself, the mind negates itself in its own product. In metaphysics, the mind knows itself as an entity that belongs to a higher order (being *qua* being) of which it is only a manifestation. Metaphysics is the theoretical fetishization of human reason, where reason misunderstands its powers, capacities, nature, limits, and ends. Since knowing is the function that belongs to the essence of reason; by misunderstanding itself in metaphysics reason loses its essential function.

In this section, I have discussed the first eidetic element of metaphysical theorization through which the transcendental mind produces the object of metaphysical thinking. I now continue my study of metaphysical thinking by describing further eidetic elements involved in the construction of metaphysics.

2. Second Eidetic Element: The Conceptual Determination of the Idea of the Thing-in-Itself

As outlined above, the mental process concerned with the formation of metaphysical systems comprises three steps of which only the first has been explored in detail. These three steps are the phases through which transcendental subjectivity forms a theory of being *qua* being, that is, a theory that defines "something" as the essence of being and demonstrates it. Through the first step, the transcendental mind posits the idea of the absolute objectivity of the thing-in-itself. This section extends my analysis to the second step of the process of metaphysicalization, that is, determining the essence of being.

Kant's critique examines the general ontology within the confines of scholastic metaphysics. In scholastic metaphysics, being *qua* being is studied based on categories. Kant does not provide an independent section on the dialectical use of the categories although he asserted the possibility thereof (A63/B88). My analysis suggests that the reason for this is that general ontology as a field of controversy remained undiscovered to Kant. However, in answering the question of the nature of being *qua* being, metaphysicians have confronted great troubles and since new answers are still being attempted after more than two millennia, one can justifiably raise the possibility that here one is dealing with an endless battle. In Kant's system, there is no room for an investigation of this question. In line with scholastic perception, Kant treats general ontology as the department of categories where the categories are used to determine the most general features of being *qua* being. Thus, the question is: how can one subject the central concern of the general ontology, namely, the question of being, to Kant's critique? The critical system is so rigorously structured that its modification would perhaps completely transform it. Here instead of incorporating a new section into the structure of Kant's critique, I attempt to accommodate the question of the nature of being within the Kantian "perspective." This means remaining within the field of transcendental subjectivity and studying the matter from the purely epistemological (subjective) angle.

As discussed above and will be elaborated in the following, Kant's subjectivism is essential for the critique of metaphysics. However, the particular manner in which he structured the epistemic subjectivity based on scholastic metaphysics is nonessential for our purpose. As the definition of metaphysics is expanded from the scholastic form to the general ontology, it is important to set aside the

elements in critical philosophy that are grounded in the scholastic form of metaphysics. For Kant, reason is logically defined so that reason's functions are logical functions elaborated in the science of logic. As discussed above, in pure reason the syllogism is the function of reason as the site of the transcendental ideas or the dialectical use of the categories. In theoretical reason or understanding, these logical functions are articulated through the forms and structures of judgment as productive of categories that have transcendental use in application to intuitions. The logic that was considered as logos of being in the pre-Kantian metaphysics is now attributed to faculties of human subjectivity and describes the a priori forms of their activities (transcendental logic). This de-ontologization of logic itself is a necessary step in Kant's critical strategy, but one that is most suitable for the critique of scholastic metaphysics. Reason in scholastic metaphysics was objectively, that is, ontologically determined; in other words, reason was deemed to have direct access to the ultimate structure of reality (being). Reason was considered capable of truthful reflection on the structure of reality. The subjectivization of reason in Kant breaks the identity between reason and reality; reason becomes pure and in need of experience for its content to result in real knowledge. In the scholastic world, human reason was merely uncovering the already existent logic of the world. Reason was divine reason already residing in the world. Kant's Copernican revolution transferred reason to human subjectivity. As a result, reason is no longer ontologically determined, but embedded in the human agent who is connected to the surrounding world through sensibility. Therefore reason, separated from its content that must be provided through sensibility, becomes pure reason. This movement was a significant step forward in the concretization of reason and its liberation from its alienated deployment by metaphysicians. The study of transcendental subjectivity then corresponds to the study of reason in general relation to human experience (sensible, ethical, and aesthetic). Reason forms the entirety of human transcendental subjectivity.

Now, since the task of the revival of the Kantian critique requires surpassing the narrow limits of scholastic metaphysics, it is necessary to dismiss the scholastic-based elements of his method. Thus, the table of categories, established according to the forms of judgment is of no use for our purpose and the

critique of the dialectical use of categories is no longer appropriate for the critique of the kinds of metaphysics in which categories play no central role. Furthermore, the three ideas of reason which in Kant's system are logically driven from the three forms of syllogism are no longer relevant for the critical assessment of the kind of metaphysics that do not take them as their objects.

Locating this analysis within the "critical perspective" rather than committing to the critical system opens the door for the critical assessment of not only the metaphysical systems that start from rational postulates but also the type of metaphysics that conceptualizes the irrationality of the world. The very task of critique, which first provoked Kant's work, necessitates abandoning the notion of reason structured on the basis of scholastic metaphysics and grounding the analysis on a broader notion of transcendental subjectivity. Instead, the essential subjective mechanisms that ground metaphysics should be sought in theoretical discourse. The transcendental mind posits the idea of the absolute objectivity of the thing-in-itself. It is the mind that creates this idea since, as such, the thing-in-itself cannot be given in any experience as experience only deals with determined things (things in time and space). Therefore, the thing-in-itself always remains only an immanent reality in the mind or, as Kant with reference to Plato puts it, only an idea that can never be actualized outside of the mind.

To extend my analysis to the second step of the process of metaphysicalization, that is, "determining the essence of being," I begin by examining the simplest form of metaphysical proposition that always comes as an answer to the question of "what is being?" This takes the form: "being is …." In this proposition, the subject is the idea of the thing-in-itself as containing the assumptions of absolute objectivity and the predicate is a concept that determines the subject merely conceptually. Interestingly, the very first philosophem with which the history of philosophy began, that is, Thales's statement that "everything is water," is expressed in this exact propositional form. Philosophy was born with this seemingly simple statement. This statement contains the essential structure of a metaphysical theory. Thales's statement first opened up a new horizon for humanity, namely, the horizon of "everything." It contained the seed from which a new field of human practice could emerge, a practice directed towards

exploring a new object that appeared to be so distinct from all other objects. Thus, the act of inquiring about this "object" could not be confused in type with other forms of inquiry. Although in order to solidify into a more developed and separated branch of theoretical activity, philosophy must wait for Plato and Aristotle, the experience of the beginning was so striking that immediately lent itself to traditionalization. Since the beginning, there never was doubt that in Thales's statement "everything" did not simply mean the sum total of all things, but rather things in as the totality of being. "Everything" indicated that which is essential to all things; it transcends all particular things; it is the *Thing*, or the thinghood of the things. This transcendence from particular things that is essential for the ideal construction of the idea of Thing was conveyed in Thales's statement. Thales's statement was the historical manifestation of a *transcendental possibility*, the basis of which was a set of transcendental activities that was now meant to be passed down from generation to generation of inheritors.

This transcendental legacy still addresses us today. The critique of metaphysics must situate itself within this *history of transcendence* and can never fully detach itself from it. The critique can only redefine our relation to this tradition of transcendence and that is indeed an important task of thinking today. The relation of critique to this tradition, however, is to be marked by questioning this tradition. It carries out this questioning from a transcendental perspective. Critique is the critique of transcendence and one of its central responsibilities is to refine the concept of transcendence. The historical responsibility of critique concerns the whole history of philosophy since the field in which philosophy as a practice of humanity is established is nothing other than "transcendence." Metaphysics and transcendental critique are both operating in the transcendental field, however, while the former can never grasp this ground of its operation, the latter's task lies exactly in the explication of this ground. The critique of transcendence—as the shared ground—then becomes the self-critique of philosophy. Its method can be none other than phenomenology since it is only through transcendental observation that one can penetrate the nature of the philosophical activity and discern where it goes astray. The ways in which philosophers have made sense of transcendence is a central concern of critique.

Thales's statement reads as if it is an answer to an implicit question: what is "everything?" The question, however, already presupposes the concept of the thing-in-itself. In other words, the transcendental act of positing "absolute objectivity" in the idea of "everything" is already operative in the subject of the statement. Metaphysics, thus started with a dogmatic commitment. How could it have begun otherwise? The nature of metaphysics necessitates concealing its origin, which is nothing other than the transcendental mind, the originator of the idea of the thing-in-itself that posits it as an absolutely objective thing. It is, thus, the task of the critique of mind (reason in Kant's terminology) that can uncover the source of this illusion. By positing the idea of being *qua* being, the mind subjects itself to its product and becomes the object of its own creation. The thing-in-itself is universal and absolute and comprehends everything. Thus, the human mind as an entity becomes only an entity existing in the context of being. The critical task consists of the return to the subject as the source of all metaphysical discourse. Through this critique, the mind realizes itself once again in its self-activity, namely, in its real mode of existence. The historical emergence of metaphysics coincides with the historical emergence of transcendence in general. In Thales's philosophem, philosophy is established but in its metaphysical, that is, in its alienated form. Humanity first comes to be grasped in metaphysics, which is a possibility of its essence, namely, the possibility for transcendental reflection. This means philosophy has never been established on its true basis, transcendental subjectivity. Their attributes can be inquired once the essential features of being *qua* being are exposed, and only as variations of those essential features.

Thales's "everything is water" is important for another reason, namely, that it contains the most fundamental form of the *metaphysical proposition*, through the analysis of which one can uncover the mental process of the formation of all metaphysical theory in general. As a theory, metaphysics is a creation of the theoretical capacity of human subjectivity. In its simplest form, metaphysics begins with a single judgment issued by the theoretical mind: "being is…". In the subject of this judgment, the mind posits the idea of being, the thing-in-itself; in the predicate, it posits the essence of being, namel,y that which describes being as so and so. A metaphysical system begins with the act of the positing of the

thing-in-itself but is not completed without the determination of the idea of the thing-in-itself. The question of the essence of being is answered in the propositional form where the concept of "being" is predicated by another concept. The original metaphysical motivation expressed in the question "what is being?" demands that the thing-in-itself must be elaborated upon and become further determined. It is the search for an answer to this question that has troubled metaphysicians of all times and prompted them to create conceptual systems that best capture the essence of being. Metaphysics defines itself as a branch of knowledge that not only answers the question of being but also substantiates and further demonstrates that answer through argumentation. However, all metaphysical systems, whether or not they begin by explicitly posing the question of the essence of Being, already begin with some sort of answer to this question.

In answering the question of the essence of being *qua* being, the transcendental activity consists in applying a concept to the idea of the thing-in-itself as an absolutely objective reality. In Kant's system, this step is explored as the application of the concepts of understanding to things in themselves in general metaphysics, and the application of the ideas of reason to things in themselves in each particular area of metaphysics. General metaphysics, in its scholastic form, studies being through categories. Therefore, Kant's system discusses the two forms of application of categories: the legitimate application that consists in their application to the object of experience and the illegitimate application that consists in their application to the thing-in-itself. Now that these scholastic influences of Kant's system are abandoned, a new horizon of concepts is opened up to the critical task. It can be seen that from its inception to the present, the metaphysical mind has found itself *at liberty* to utilize any concept deemed suitable for characterizing the thing-in-itself. By freeing the transcendental mind from the strict structure that Kant gave it, a wider variety of metaphysical discourses can be seen, each distinguished from the other by the way they answer the fundamental question of metaphysics. In general ontology, the transcendental mind has an *infinite horizon* of concepts at its disposal, even those that are utterly irrational and originate solely from imagination, to comprehend the being of entities. In the broader history of metaphysics, Kant's

categories are too limited to one specific form of metaphysics, that of scholastics. A revival of the critical task of metaphysics needs to expand its vision to include all forms of metaphysical discourses. Once more, this emphasizes the necessity to shift away from the strictly logical structure of Kant's system to a broader critical perspective that allows the tracing of the transcendental workings of the mind as it constructs metaphysical theories. By doing so, I am remaining faithful to Kant's original approach, which can be broadly identified as phenomenological, without obstinately adhering to its overly rigid structure. The history of metaphysics presents an arbitrary list of concepts by which it attempted to define the essence of being: water, infinite, God, substance, void, multiplicity, will to power, difference, reason, and so on. Ironically, surpassing the rational structure of Kant's system makes evident the arbitrariness that has persisted throughout the history of metaphysics from the beginning to this day.

The "mere random grouping amongst concepts" with which Kant describes the "procedure of metaphysics" (Bxiii), can be observed in the different ways in which metaphysicians deal with the question of essence (the whatness) of being. The question of whether metaphysics is a science or not that Kant raised for the first time is in a broader perspective a question of whether metaphysics can once and for all become clear about "what" its subject matter of study is, whether it can overcome its internal contradictions and establish itself as a consistent field of scientific activity. This becomes crucial when one situates metaphysics within the broader context of human scientific activities and raises the question of the *telos* of sciences and their human function. In that context, metaphysics appears not simply as a discipline that suffers from internal contradictions but as a problematic field of human activity. This line of analysis leads to a re-thinking of the overall meaning of philosophizing in the present time. In a time when metaphysicians are still busy uncritically generating new metaphysical systems, the questions regarding the ultimate meaning of philosophy, its relation to today's human situation, and the crisis of reason have been largely sidelined. This does not mean that metaphysically oriented philosophers do not concern themselves with these issues, but that their approaches to the extent that they are affected by metaphysics are abstract and therefore potentially misleading.

Now under this arbitrariness, metaphysics applies a concept to the thing-in-itself and thereby attempts to render the thing-in-itself, which is the most indeterminate concept of all, determinate. By asserting a concept for the thing-in-itself that claims to conceptually determine being *qua* being the mind is seemingly relieved from its desire to know what being is in itself. The answer to the question of the nature of being determines the subject matter of a metaphysical system and is, as such, the very first step in the formation of metaphysics into a systematic exposition of its subject matter. In the passage quoted above from Aristotle, he described how the philosophers preceding him were baffled by the question of being and that each answered the question in their own way. Unsatisfied with the previous answers, he then suggests his own solution to the puzzle summed up in the concept of "substance." The fundamental metaphysical proposition of Aristotle's metaphysics is "being is substance." By establishing *being as substance*, that is, by applying the concept of substance to the thing-in-in-itself, he opens a new field of problematic in the study of being *qua* being. From now on, the question of what being is will be pursued in the form of another question, namely, what substance is. All the problems of metaphysics then become problems concerning substance. Aristotle's passage is an accurate dogmatic representation of a transcendental moment when metaphysical theory starts to form itself into a systematic configuration. With the accomplishment of the second transcendental moment in the formation of metaphysical theory, the metaphysical mind is now freed from the perplexity caused by the ambiguity of the indeterminate idea of being and is conferred with a more determinate task, namely, the elucidation of what essentially belongs to substance. It is, thus, only after the question of the nature being is answered that metaphysics can be developed coherently. The answer to the question of being indicates the general direction of the further conceptual developments of the system.

The application of a concept to the idea of thing-in-itself then sets the ground for the realm of problems with which metaphysical systems must deal. Metaphysical systems sometimes concoct new methods to deal with their regional problems and sometimes use the already existing ones. For example, Thomistic-Aristotelian metaphysics relies on logic for its methodology and proceeds through the logical

deduction of concepts. Hegel has created his own famous method of dialectic, which has then been adopted, often with modification, by later Marxist materialist thinkers. Most importantly, the determination of the essence of being determines the field of problems and the later conceptual development required to deal with those problems. For example, in Aristotle's metaphysics once it is determined that being is substance a range of problems arises: the definition of substance, the number of substances, the accidences and their relationship to substance, the relation between substances, and so on. Likewise, in Hegel's philosophy once it is determined that reason is the ultimate essence of being, some of the problems to be considered are the definition of reason, the relationship between reason and the world, history and human society (including all its structures, such as family, politics, economy, and its processes, such as war peace, trade, etc.). Providing viable solutions to these problems then becomes the seminal task of these metaphysical systems. In Hegel's system, all problems are, in one way or another, problems concerning the essence and the dialectical movements of reason. Of course, in the course of developing a metaphysical system, many more problems arise and the attempts to find answers to these problems form much of the preoccupation of the metaphysicians and the main body of their system.

The problems to which the original conceptual construction of a given metaphysical system gives rise may be unique to that system or may already exist in the previous systems and are supplanted into the new system and need to be dealt with in the new conceptual atmosphere. The problems may not be successfully solved, which provides the ground for yet another metaphysical system to show up with a new set of conceptual instruments specifically designed to tackle the problems that the previous system could not solve. The intellectual need to solve a metaphysical problem might require changing the concepts of the previous systems or leaving them untouched and instead changing their definition or the arrangement of their conceptual construction to better fit the new conceptual environment. Here a good example would be Descartes's ontological theory that hypothesizes being as fundamentally determined by two types of substances: one spiritual and the other material. From the transcendental phenomenological perspective adopted here, Descartes's philosophy has an ontological ground. The fundamental assertion of

his philosophy, “I think, therefore I am,” can be rewritten in the form of the fundamental metaphysical proposition: “being is thinking.” Here “thinking” comprehends the entirety of all being so that anything that is not characterized by thought or is not immanent in the thinking does not exist. Being and consciousness are one and the same thing. This ontological determination leads to a problem: what about the existence of non-thinking beings, material things—which are asserted by experience? Descartes’s commitment to the ontological priority of thought over the matter—the latter is proven after the discovery of the former—gave rise to his famous dualism: that mind and body are two distinct substances whose interaction is now in need of metaphysical explanation. This and other problems resulting from Descartes’s ontological formulations form the horizon of the problematic of philosophy after him and define the program and terms of the philosophical discourse. It is the demand for a solution to the Cartesian dualism that led to Malebranche formulation of the theory of “occasionalism”—that God coordinates mind and body without asserting any real relationship between the two substances—and to Leibniz’s theory of monads (substances) as the mirror of the entire universe—therefore they are all somehow connected—and to Spinoza’s reduction of mind and body to “attributes” of one infinite substance that he terms “God” or “nature.”

The new solutions for such metaphysical problems may require a change in the definition of the prior concepts—Spinoza’s solution to Descartes's dualism demands a transformation of the definition of substance and attributes. The conceptual reconstructions themselves, then, might give rise to new problems. Spinoza’s commitment to the infinity of substance—itself invoked as a solution to the Cartesian dualism— generates further problems such as the relationship between substance and its finite modes, which is a metaphysical problem, and the problem of pantheism, which is a theological problem. Spinoza’s creative solutions, thus, change the terms of the problems and open a new field of problematics. The problems of metaphysics are never fully solved; they re-emerge in new facades. The original Cartesian formulation of dualism is now to be pursued within Spinoza’s system: how is it possible that two essentially different attributes, mind and body, belong to the same totality? For example, Hegel was

not convinced that Spinoza's account of substance recognizes substance as "subject," that is, as thinking subject. Thus, in Hegel's view, Spinoza has not even formulated the terms of Cartesian dualism correctly, let alone arrive at a solution. Hegel's own solution to dualism again rests on a complete transformation of the meaning of concepts of substance, subject, body, etc.

With regards to the charge of pantheism, Spinoza's solution parallels another old metaphysical issue, namely, the relation of God to the world, at the heart of which lies an unsolvable contradiction: if God is the perfect being nothing can lie outside of his providence, and therefore he is omnipotent and omnipresent. Equating God with nature is, then, necessitated by the very definition of God, but itself leads to dissatisfaction of the believers as it implies equating God with what is not God, namely, the material nature. This contradiction itself forms a new battlefront for many metaphysical systems. For instance, Hegel's critique of Christianity's account of God's providence moves in the direction of Spinoza's pantheism, criticizing Christianity for conceiving God as separated from the world. In Hegel's view, God and his providence become identical with reason and immanent in the world-history (Hegel, 1953, p. 14-15). This, in turn, raises Søren Kierkegaard's objection, for whom God is wholly other than the finite world.

A transcendental phenomenological study is not invested in providing solutions to any of these metaphysical problems. As a "disinterested observer," its task is only to describe how the problems are raised, formulated, addressed, reconstructed, solved, argued for, and substantiated. Metaphysical works draw on a range of mental activities. The process of working out the metaphysical problems is itself a transcendental process that the transcendental mind carries out once it takes up the metaphysical attitude. As a phenomenology of mind, it is only interested in finding the necessary mental processes through which metaphysical problems arise and the solutions are offered and elaborated upon. The web of the problems that arise is to be regarded only within the structure of theoretical reason as it develops a metaphysical construct. From the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, the problems of metaphysics—which form the endless battlefield of controversies—find their origin in the transcendental

act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself and as such should be traced back to that original mental act. Therefore, the activity of the mind in its attempt to solve metaphysical problems begins by assuming the thing-in-itself as absolutely objective reality and then moves forward within the maze of ever-growing complexities. The development of a metaphysical system always takes place within a multiplicity of battlegrounds. The problems of metaphysics, however, are not valid for transcendental phenomenology and, as such, must be bracketed. These problems carry in themselves the original fiction, that is, the idea of the objectivity of the thing-in-itself and attempts directed at discovering solutions to them are never a real achievement of mind.

Kant believes that such conflicts are rooted in the natural tendency of reason to involve itself in transcendent speculation; however, he also asserts the reason's capacity for reflection on the root of this involvement:

> Unfortunately for speculation (but perhaps fortunately for the practical vocation) of humanity, reason sees itself, in the midst of its greatest expectations, so entangled in a crowd of arguments and counterarguments that it is not feasible, on account either of its honor or even of its security, for reason to withdraw and look upon the quarrel with indifference, as mere shadow boxing, still less for it simply to command peace, interested as it is in the object of the dispute; so nothing is left except to reflect on the origin of this disunity of reason with itself, on whether a mere misunderstanding might perhaps be responsible for it, after the elucidation of which perhaps both sides will give up their proud claims, but in place of which reason would begin a rule of lasting tranquility over understanding and sense. (A464-65/B492-93)

The "disunity of reason with itself" comes to the fore only when the mind, instead of engaging in the blind desire to forge more metaphysical systems to resolve the problems of the former systems, begins to reflect on the roots of this very activity. This reflection is itself an activity of reason, a capacity unreachable by metaphysics. The struggles of metaphysicians are indicative of the disunity of reason with itself, its self-alienation, and the self-misunderstanding of reason. Thus, in this critical approach, reason

undergoes a transformation in its self-understanding and its functions and, instead of engaging in abstract speculations, reason begins reflecting on its capacity for producing knowledge, a subject matter much more accessible to reason than objects of metaphysics. In this sense, Kant's critique of reason can be described as a critique of "philosophical irrationalism," since it uncovers the ways in which reason becomes alienated from its essential functions. In metaphysics, reason ceases to understand itself and make sense of its own functioning and instead becomes entangled in illusions.

The attempt to determine the essence of being, the second transcendental act of the formation of a metaphysical theory, simultaneously elevates and conceals the question of being *qua* being. The systematic development of ontology requires this step since being as such is a self-evident empty concept, whose simplicity does not pose any challenge for comprehension and therefore renders the need for further investigations futile. This is why Heidegger, whose metaphysical project revolves around the revival of the question of the "meaning of being," needs to reject the concept of being that was understood by the scholastics to be the most general, empty, and self-evident concept. These attributes would not allow the question to be raised. However, like Heidegger, metaphysicians have always felt the need to ask about the essence of being *qua* being; in fact, the question has always already been asked and answered in one way or another. But in addition to allowing for the systematic development of ontology, the ascription of a concept to the idea of thing-in-itself also extends the claim of absolute objectivity, now inherent in the idea of the thing-in-itself, to the predicate. The fundamental form of the metaphysical proposition, namely, "being is ..." establishes identity between the subject and the predicate. For example, in Derrida's philosophy, according to my analysis, the concept of "differance" determines the essence of being and is to be subjected to further conceptual development. This occurs, on the one hand, positively, through additional concepts such as "pure trace"—"the pure trace is differance" (Derrida, 2013, p. 62)—and "arch-writing," "dissemination," "supplement," and, on the other hand, negatively, through excluding from the concept of differance concepts such as "center," "book," "pure inwardness," and the most important of all "presence" and "identity." This theoretically developed conceptual constellation must

differentiate itself from, say, that of Hegelian philosophy, which requires the same transcendental process of conceptual development, just with a different set of concepts. I discuss the examples of Heidegger and Derrida as metaphysical systems in Part II. For the present, the point to be made is that the second step of the theoretical formation of metaphysical theory consists, to use Kant's words, in the "ascription of objective reality to an idea" (A509/B537), an idea that is conceptually, and not empirically, more determinate than the idea of thing-in-itself. Thus, the ascription of a concept to the idea of the thing-in-itself never brings about an empirical concreteness but only a conceptual specification.

Metaphysical systems randomly turn ideas into objective realities. This ascription of the objective reality to a concept, in my analysis happens through the mediation of the idea of the thing-in-itself. In Kant's description of the three ideas of reason of scholastic metaphysics, the idea of the thing-in-itself is shown above to be the necessary condition for the transcendental illusion. In all branches of metaphysics, the idea of the thing-in-itself is the ground of all theorizations. The transcendental dialectic, thus, requires the application of a concept to the idea of the thing-in-itself, the transcendental formation of which, requires an act of positing absolute objectivity in the idea of the thing in general. The identity between the subject and the predicate of the metaphysical proposition is another transcendental component of any metaphysical theorization, through which absolute objectivity is extended to the predicate. The further conceptual determination of the predicate is essential since without it, further conceptual development of ontology into a system of thought is impossible.

3. Third Eidetic Element: Metaphysical Demonstration

The extension of the absolute objectivity inherent in the idea of the thing-in-itself to the predicate in the fundamental metaphysical proposition is essential for bestowing the whole conceptual determination of a metaphysical system with absolute objectivity. This step is also essential for the metaphysical claims to

scientificity most strongly accentuated by Hegel, but also more or less put forward by others since Aristotle's attempt at presenting philosophy in a coherent scientific manner. As a system of metaphysics further develops conceptually the whole of the system, every corner of it, now gets marked by the original illusion of objectivity abstractly projected into the concept of the thing-in-itself. While the second moment of metaphysical construction adds only one conceptual determination to the idea of the thing-in-itself, a whole system can be built only with a coherently interconnected combination of concepts. Thus, after the formation of the original determination of the idea of the thing-in-itself in the fundamental metaphysical proposition, further conceptual development becomes necessary.

Metaphysical demonstration refers to the transcendental process through which theoretical reflection establishes the validity of a given fundamental metaphysical proposition. To be more precise, this process involves presenting arguments to justify the attribution of a specific predicate to the subject. If, for instance, it is determined that "being is difference," then this proposition must be substantiated. This process constitutes the most significant portion of metaphysical works. As the methodological and teleological necessities may require different conceptual configurations, the methods of demonstration employed by each metaphysical system may also vary. Here I try to describe the two general forms in which metaphysical systems demonstrate the validity of their foundations. The first type of demonstration is conceptual demonstration, through which the internal consistency of the derivative concepts (the concepts other than the first concept predicting the thing-in-itself in the fundamental metaphysical proposition) is established. The second type of demonstration is the empirical demonstration, which explains the empirical world based on merely conceptual determinations. In the former, the mind is only concerned with internal relations between the concepts of a metaphysical system. In the latter, it turns to the world of experience and conceptually reappropriates it.

3.1. Conceptual Demonstration

Determining a concept for the idea of the thing-in-itself, is a necessary step towards the conceptual thematization of the object of metaphysics, that is, being *qua* being. However, further conceptual expansion is needed to fully form a system of metaphysics. This further expansion takes the form of demonstrating the coherence of the interconnection of the additional concepts employed to substantiate the original proposition. It must be noted here that this transcendental necessity is not specific only to the rationally grounded metaphysics, but as the necessary ground for the transcendental possibility of metaphysics in general, it also applies to the irrational forms of metaphysics prevalent in our present day.

The further conceptual development of a particular metaphysical system takes the form of illustrating the predicate of the fundamental metaphysical proposition ("being is …"). For example, in Deleuze's ontology, when it is asserted that "being is difference," the predicate "difference," which is a mere concept or a mental entity as the "being," is turned into an absolutely objective reality existing on its own. The problems of ontology, the solutions, the expositions, the methods, techniques, the conceptual interconnections, and developments, are now all guided by the foundational concept of "difference." "Difference" is now the essence of "what is," it comprehends reality as a whole, and the discourse of being is now the discourse of difference. The ontological exposition of difference is carried out in the form of the conceptual elaboration of difference and the objective validity, which is primarily abstractly projected into the thing-in-itself, is now expanded to all the later conceptual developments. Thus, the statement that "difference is becoming" as a further conceptual demonstration of the concept of difference establishes an identity between "becoming" and thing-in-itself and turns the former into an objective reality. This conceptual identification occurs across all concepts within Deleuzian metaphysics: deterritorialization, de-territorialization, virtuality, plain of consistency, actuality, affect, rhizome, lines of flight, schizophrenia, assemblage, desire, desiring machines, intensity, etc.

Likewise, Alain Badiou's thematization of the concept of "void" as the essence of being is developed both positively and negatively. The concept of multiplicity should not be confused with the empirical multiplicity of this or that set of objects. It refers to the multiplicity *in itself,* or as Badiou

himself puts it “multiplicity of multiplicity.” Multiplicity is the internal nature and the essence of the thing-in-itself, which is reflected in his statement that “one is not” (Badiou, 2007, p. 26). If multiplicity forms the totality of a thing, then “oneness” must be excluded from its nature. And if multiplicity exhausts the nature of things, then one can never arrive at a monolithic unity at the bottom of this multiplicity. Hence, the “Thing” is fundamentally defined as “void”: “If the one is not, what occurs in the place of the 'many' is the pure name of the void, insofar as it alone subsists as being” (ibid, p. 35). The determination of the thing-in-itself as void requires that Badiou argue against the Aristotelian doctrine that the existence of void is impossible (ibid, pp. 70-77), which is itself an idea required by his original determination of being as substance defined as “one.” In each metaphysical system, the additional concepts are coherently driven from the original concept that determines the thing-in-itself through conceptual demonstration.

The requirement of coherent exposition of conceptual development is, thus, an absolute necessity for the theoretical construct of any metaphysical system. Without such coherence, one could easily and without any sense of oddness or incongruity apply the concepts from, say, Aristotle’s metaphysics to that of Badiou and make a statement such as, “differance is substance,” a statement that is explicitly refuted by Badiou (ibid, p. 56). Despite Badiou’s definition of being as “inconsistent” and “paradoxical,” the fact that he could not go so far as to be inconsistent only indicates that his metaphysics, just like other anti-rational metaphysics—e.g. those of Derrida, Deleuze, Badiou, etc., —relies on an underlying rationality belonging to the nature of human transcendental reason. This rationality, as it is made evident in my analysis, underlies the transcendental condition of the possibility of their systems as metaphysical *theories*. As theories, all metaphysical thinking is subject to transcendental processes, some of which have been analyzed here. The irrational ontologies share with the rational ones all the structural necessities on which the transcendental mind relies as it constructs such metaphysics. The three moments—namely, the positing of the idea of the thing-in-itself as the absolutely objective reality, the application of a concept to it, and the metaphysical demonstration—are necessary transcendental conditions of the formation of all

metaphysical constructs. From the transcendental perspective, it is indifferent what kind of concepts determine the nature of being. Deleuze's "difference" and Badiou's "multiplicity" are as much creations of the mind as Hegel's "spirit" and Thales's "water." The validity of all metaphysical systems is in question because they rely on the idea of an absolute objective Thing, which does not exist anywhere except in our mind. Through the application of a concept to the idea of the thing-in-itself the mind embarks on establishing a conceptual edifice that is, as such, a description of nothing but an illusory idea. This is the reason metaphysicians do not necessarily need to turn to experience to obtain any knowledge about the subject matter of their investigation, to support a piece of argument, or to refute opposing views. "Multiplicity of multiplicity" and "differance" are nowhere to be met within the realm of experience; they are only concepts created by the mind in its pure activity, lifeless thought-entities enlivened by the illusional mind.

An important consequence of the critical introspection of the transcendental process of the formation of metaphysical theory in our time is that it unmasks the real dogmatic guise covered under the deceptive claims to a manner of philosophizing that not only proclaims its novelty but also purports to have broken free from the domestic metaphysics of the past. It is falsely assumed that since they have replaced concepts such as identity and presence with "difference," "absence," and "multiplicity," they have completely subverted metaphysics and opened a radically new path in philosophy. In our critical analysis, however, by locating these concepts within the transcendental structure of the metaphysical form of thinking, it is made clear that they have not been able to move away an inch from their metaphysical predecessors. It is now shown—and will be further elaborated in detail in Part II—that Derrida's deconstruction is just as much a metaphysical construct as Hegel's reason or Spinoza's substance. The transcendental ground of the illusion of innovation and abandonment of the metaphysical tradition rests on the replacement of one predicate in the fundamental metaphysical proposition with another predicate. This replacement, which is originally a mental activity hidden from the metaphysical gaze, is to be supported by further argumentation and conceptual development themselves as illusional as the original

act. The transcendental replacement of one concept with another in the metaphysical mind takes the form of a radically new beginning of philosophical thought. What is in reality a replacement of one concept with another that is, a transcendental act in which a new concept is chosen to determine the essence (whatness) of being—then takes up the illusional guise of a founding philosophy on a new basis.

Through the constant deceptions of philosophical innovation, philosophy has managed to always offer a fresh new start to the younger generations who are fed up with old-fashioned philosophies. But one question has always failed to be asked: why philosophy is always in need of grounding itself anew? Why is it always in search of its own basis? Can one hope that philosophy after more than two thousand years of searching for its ground, finally comes to find it and settle? Or could it be that the very search itself is futile, mere groping and random wandering around after something that exists only in the imagination? Where does the metaphysician find the confidence that, despite witnessing the same battle being lost over and over again by the greatest wrestlers, in entering the battle they will emerge triumphantly? Of course, metaphysicians reflect on the history of metaphysics, but they do so only from a metaphysical perspective, which means they metaphysicalize their history and produce an illusory history of a history of illusion. The history of metaphysics is, thus, the history of self-alienation of reason. A comprehensive critique of transcendental reason in its metaphysical attitude would allow us to see the history of metaphysics as the history of reason in its concrete activities.

From the phenomenological perspective adopted here, metaphysics is to be considered a pure conceptual construction. This perspective is not interested in the claims that any metaphysical system makes to the reality of things but only in how it is constituted as a phenomenon, that is, as a mental reality. The conceptual demonstration then appears as an “eidetic” component of a series of mental (theoretical) activities involved in the constitution of metaphysics as a theory. The concept of metaphysics as well as their development into a systemic order is to be considered as mere phenomena belonging to the transcendental mind. Thus, no matter how meticulously and convincingly a metaphysical system may sound to us, it remains before the phenomenological eyes a mental construct. The conceptual

demonstration is a necessity for the very constitution of such as system. The phenomenological perspective however regards the interconnections of the concepts in their pure ideality, that is to say, in their isolation from the reality their claim to present. This isolation is required by phenomenological reduction.

3.2. Empirical Demonstration

The empirical demonstration is another eidetic element of metaphysical theorization and is necessitated by the very nature of the metaphysical attitude. The major parts of all metaphysical books are devoted to the empirical demonstration of the validity of their conceptual configuration. In the empirical demonstration, the mind turns to empirical life in all its departments—common sense, factual events, natural processes, discoveries of sciences, technological developments, cultural lives, socio-political processes, etc.—to provide an exposition of empirical life *in its entirety* based on transcendent concepts. The conceptual development of the system now should be set in relation to the empirical world and enrich itself through it. The conceptual edifice must prove itself relevant to real life, namely, the life of immediate perception, sensibility, and common sense. No metaphysical system claims to remain a purely abstract conceptual construct. That is why Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812) must necessarily form only the first phase of his system; the purely logical science should eventually become empirical when it steps into the realms of history, religion, art, politics, etc. But even before Hegel, in Aristotelian philosophy and the scholastic philosophies under his influence, although logic was considered a mere conceptual instrument for argument and hence considered an auxiliary science to theology (ontology), it was not fundamentally questioned that the structure of reality is logical and logic is the science of being. But what I am describing here does not concern specifically the relationship between logic and ontology. Rather the subject matter of this study is the transcendental and necessary process through which metaphysical thinking returns to the empirical life and interprets it through its conceptual reservoir. Therefore, in the

empirical demonstration, the metaphysicians aim to show that concepts like substance, reason, difference, multiplicity, void, etc., namely, the transcendent concepts used to determine the nature of being, are not purely abstract concepts, but rather truthful descriptions of the *reality* of all things as they are in their empiricity.

This step is a necessary consequence of the positing of the idea of thing-in-itself as absolutely objective reality. From the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, all metaphysical interpretations of the world are necessarily driven by the fact that the idea of the thing-in-itself is *the ground of all empirical things*. As the idea of the general thing, the thing-in-itself represents, though only in the abstract, all things. In the fundamental metaphysical proposition, the idea of the thing-in-itself is conceptually determined and further conceptually developed through conceptual demonstration. The empirical demonstration, then, consists in showing how the transcendent concept—the predicate in the fundamental metaphysical proposition—determines the inner life of all empirical things. This demonstration calls for demonstrating that in each corner of empirical life, it is the thing-in-itself that manifests itself. The thing-in-itself as determined by the fundamental metaphysical proposition becomes the spirit and inner life of the empirical things. This element of metaphysical demonstration is the highest point of the theoretical construction of metaphysics since it is here that it must be demonstrated most convincingly what was suggested to constitute the essence of being imbues in all sensible and non-sensible things. Here, the transcendental illusion perfects itself by turning to the empirical world and attempting to ground it on the world of transcendent concepts. Every metaphysical system must demonstrate how the empirical world is only a manifestation of a deeper and more fundamental determination. The illusional absolute objectivity of the idea of the thing-in-itself, now extends to the entire empirical realm.

In its recourse to the empirical world, metaphysics, which has never relied on empirical methods and never required empirical validations, must employ a trick that is nonetheless essential to its project. Specifically, it must frame its return to the empirical world not as a search for empirical validation of its

proposition, but rather as a demonstration of how the world is itself a manifestation of a more fundamental reality. It, thus, puts forward the claim that the empirical world is established on the determination it ascribes to thing-in-itself. In metaphysics, the empirical world is alienated and grounded in a non-empirical reality. Real life and everything in it, the natural world, histories, cultures, etc., are all conceived not in their empiricity but as belonging to something outside of the empirical realm.

In this transcendental activity, the empirical demonstration of the fundamental metaphysical proposition lies the possibility of a dualism that has always haunted the metaphysicians, involving the immanent and the transcendent, a dualism that is associated with another dualism involving the finite and the infinite. All metaphysical systems are struck by the difficult issues concerning the demonstration of the immanence of the transcendent. Plato, after determining the ideas as the essence of all things, needed immediately to explain how the transcendent, immaterial, and eternal ideas form the essence of material finite things. When Aristotle defines the essence of things as the substance that underlies their sensible features, he commits himself to the transcendence of substance from its sensible accidence, which raises the still-debated question of the relationship between non-sensible (transcendent) substance and its sensible accidences. In scholastic metaphysics, this problem takes various theological forms, all of which regard the nature of the relationship between God and the empirical world. For instance, the problem of the creation of the material world by God, who by definition is incorruptible and, thus. immaterial, has troubled metaphysical explanations. A subbranch of the same problem is the problem of God's knowledge of material things. Since God's knowledge is not dependent on sensory perception like mortals' knowledge, he cannot gain knowledge of material things in the same way as mortals. For Hegel, who takes the "whole" as the point of departure of his philosophy, God is considered immanent in the empirical life; the finite is therefore only a moment in the dialectical unfolding of the whole. The dialectical life of reality is already rationally determined and must exclude the possibility of accidents—the irrationalities—as existing independent from the rational whole. Therefore, the right of the empirical phenomena to be irrational (inconsistent, accidental, nonsensical events such as tragedies) is

transcendentally denied in his rationalizing system. One can observe the same problem re-emerging, for instance, in the debate between Badiou and Deleuze over the immanence of difference. Badiou blames Deleuze for turning being into a "univocal" reality "beyond" the differences and yet still preserving the transcendence (Badiou, 2000, pp. 45-46). In his account, he formulates immanence as "Void," a non-existence inconsistency that characterizes the "internal" structure of the Thing. However, the question arises: does not multiplicity itself characterize a universal feature of all things and therefore form a transcendent structure as such? After all, void, multiplicity and the paradoxical are not themselves empirical things and, as such, transcend them. Transcendence is the essence of metaphysical thinking yet bound to be misunderstood by it.

It is not an exaggeration to summarize the seminal task of metaphysics, with Hegel, as explaining how the infinite (the transcendent) manifests itself in the finite. What are "infinite" and "finite"? A transcendental phenomenological approach cannot simply follow metaphysicians in providing a truthful conception of these terms, since the ground of their thinking is contaminated by dogmatism. Besides, the answer to this question depends on the metaphysical system within which it is addressed. While for Plato ideas are eternal and material things perishable, for Aristotle it is the substances (ultimately genera) that are eternal. All scholastics would univocally say that any entity other than God is finite. For Hegel the infinite is reason and for Schopenhauer, it is will. One loses hope in receiving a final answer to the question of the nature of the infinite from metaphysicians. The situation here is comparable to the one posed by the question of the nature of being *qua* being. The concept of infinite, in metaphysical discourses, is equivalent to the concept of being or thing-in-itself.

As the above analysis shows, being *qua* being, the subject matter of general metaphysics, is created by the mind in its transcendental activity that was characterized as positing the absolute objectivity of the idea of thing-in-itself. The idea of being *qua* being is an empty one, and, thus, as such lies beyond all determinations. The determined concepts, such as water, substance, reason, multiplicity, etc., contain a higher level of determinacy than the idea of the thing-in-itself. The application of a more

determinate concept to the absolutely indeterminate concept of thing-in-itself is a necessary ground for the systematic exposition of metaphysics. The absolute indeterminacy of the idea of thing-in-itself is the transcendental ground of the idea of infinity and eternity since the latter necessarily surpasses all the conceptual limitations that belong to any determinate concept. Thus, from the phenomenological perspective, infinity and finitude refer, respectively, to the most general concept and the determinate concepts. The source of the problem of transcendent/immanence must be sought in the conceptual contrast between the pure concept of existence and the determinate concepts of specific things. Once ontologized, this problem is dealt with as a central problem of metaphysics that calls for empirical demonstrations. What is merely a conceptual contrast from a phenomenological perspective becomes an ontological one from a metaphysical perspective.

The concepts of infinity and eternity also imply unchangeability and incorruptibility, while the concept of finite things includes changeability and perishability. In the construction of the concept of infinity, the possibility of change is conceptually denied by emptying a concept of all determinations: how can being *qua* being, which is nothing but being, change into something else? As an absolute being, it is nothing other than itself; therefore, it cannot change into anything else. The first philosopher who introduced the concept of infinity in the history of philosophy was perhaps Anaximander. As Simplicius reports:

> Of those who say that it is one moving and infinite, Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian, the successor and the pupil of Thales, said that the principle and the element of existing things was the *Apeiron* [indefinite or infinite]… he said that it was neither water nor any of the so-called elements, but some other Apeiron nature, from which come into being all come into being all the heavens and the worlds in them. (Kirk & Raven, pp. 105, 106)

As Hippolytus reports, he also believed the nature of Apeiron was unchanging: “This nature is eternal and also surrounds all the worlds” (ibid). Apeiron is then qualitatively indefinite.

Anaximander's thematization of the concept of infinity and his critique of Thales is decisive for the historical development of the general ontology. In the above sections, it is shown that the first fundamental proposition determines the nature of being. Thus, the Greek question of what the first element of all existing things is, is to be responded to in the form of this fundamental proposition: "being is …" Then we saw that for Thales what characterizes the nature of being is water. Now Anaximander's refutation of Thales and the assertion of infinity for being further elaborates the concept of being itself; being is not this or that particular thing, but the boundless and indeterminate nature of things. Unlike Thales and many other metaphysicians, Anaximander does not respond to the question of what being is with a more determinate concept, but rather merely further illustrates how the concept of being must be understood. The concept of infinity was already present in Thales's "everything" and Anaximander does not further determine it, but only expands through concepts as indeterminate as the concept of "everything."

But this explicit stipulation of the inclusion of the concept of infinite in the concept of being becomes an essential component of all metaphysical theorizations. Through the application of a concept to the idea of the thing-in-itself in the fundamental proposition, the idea of infinity *extends* to the predicate. Therefore, any metaphysical system assumes that its subject matter is not just supernatural and trans-empirical but also infinite in nature. God, substance, will, difference, subject, spirit, etc. are all infinite and eternal, otherwise metaphysicians would not bother occupying themselves with them and leave them to other sciences that deal with particular aspects of reality. The subject matter of all metaphysical theorization is absolute, infinite, boundless, and therefore non-empirical.

What are finite things? If the mind begins with the theoretical projection of the absolute concept as eternal and objective reality, then is there any room left for the consideration of the empirical in its empiricity? The transcendental activity of the mind that grounds metaphysics posits the thing in its purity as a general thing. This mental act that is, to use Kant's concepts, a priori and therefore unrelated to experience, creates a notion of thing that is accessible only through speculation. The thing-in-itself is not

itself any particular thing to be encountered in experience; it is not anything to be seen, touched, or felt in any way. It is rather a mere construct of the speculative capacity of human subjectivity. What the mind in its metaphysical theorization does is that it *substitutes* the empirical things with the transcendent thing, that is, the thing-in-itself. This substitution of the empirical thing with the thing-in-itself is already intended in the transcendental structure of metaphysical theorization. The speculated, that is, imagined *in-itselfness* and *generality* of the metaphysical thing negates the thing in its real empirical existence. Metaphysicians always define metaphysics as a universal and absolute science, that must take a perspective on things from outside of the realm of experience, otherwise its boundaries with particular sciences would be blurred.

In this substitution of the empirical thing with the transcendent thing that is necessitated by the metaphysical demonstration lies a great deal of deception and illusion. Through this substitution, the original illusory idea of absolute objectivity extends to the whole empirical life, depriving it of its independence and turning it into a mere manifestation of the thing-in-itself. Metaphysicians do not recognize the empirical in its own right, but only as an abstract residue of the infinite. The function of the empirical demonstration in metaphysics lies in the inversion of the empirical world and grounding it on the transcendent. Thus, the finite is a description of the empirical things given by metaphysics, indicating that the empirical is already grounded in the infinite. The empirical becomes haunted by the transcendent and alienated from its concrete reality. The unfathomable richness of experience, all the varied perceptual qualities, the content of the psychic intertwined with the social and economic life, and the historicity and situatedness of their lives are rehabilitated under the requirement of an abstract conceptual structure generated by the transcendental mind. Metaphysicians reverse the real order and extract the experience from pure concepts. Here the empirical demonstration supports the conceptual demonstration since the logical coherence of the conceptual construction that gives it a pretension of validity is to be developed in consistency with the general experience (common sense) or the particular fields of the empirical world studies by particular sciences. For example, Schopenhauer's metaphysical interpretation of love as the

manifestation of the will to live, and pain and suffering as strains on the freedom of will the account of will as the fundamental determination of the thing-in-itself, is developed in consistency with certain episodes of our lived experience.

In Deleuze's ontology, all sciences and their internal concepts give expressions to the ontological structure of reality. In his philosophy, biological terms such as "molecular," "cellular," "molar," "rhizome," "root," etc. do not designate purely scientific categories, but also social, psychological, political, and philosophical ones. Sciences such as geology, biology, zoology, psychoanalysis, linguistics, etc. are all understood as residing on the ontological realities:

> Nowhere do we claim for our concepts the title of a science. We are no more familiar with scientif-icity than we are with ideology; all we know are assemblages. And the only assemblages are machinic assemblages of desire and collective assemblages of enunciation….An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independently of any recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific or theoretical corpus). (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 2)

In Deleuze's metaphysics, sciences are not subjective practices of the human agency under the guidance of universal a priori principles but emerge as "assemblages of multiplicities" (sciences of multiplicities). According to my analysis, "assemblage" is another name for how being is structured and presupposes the mental act of positing *in abstracto* the concept of the thing-in-itself. In this movement, Deleuze's metaphysics alienates from reason what essentially belongs to it, namely, the scientific practices. Science which is a rational activity becomes mystified and irrational. This irrationalization of the sciences happens equally in all metaphysical thoughts, regardless of whether they are rationally constructed or not. However, in the irrationally constructed metaphysics, like that of Deleuze, the irrational conceptualization is projected to the sciences:

> Sciences as such is like everything else; madness is intrinsic to its reorderings…. These political influences or determinations would not exist if science itself did not have its own poles, oscillations, strata, and destratifications, its own lines of flight and reorderings, in short, the more or less potential events of its own politics, its own particular "polemics," its own internal war machine. (ibid pp.143, 144)

In irrational metaphysics, not only is the mind alienated from its functions, but sciences have become detached from their human meaning and stripped of their origin.

It is in this sense that the re-emergence of metaphysics in the present age has contributed to the "crisis of sciences" as described by Husserl (Husserl, 1970) and Paci (Paci, 1972). The alienation of sciences as the "functionaries" of human subjectivity manifests itself not only socio-historically as the domination of the technological and instrumental rationality in the mode of capitalist production, but also in the realm of theory and the mode of philosophizing. Humanity can become self-alienated not only from its productive capacities, its relation with others, and its products but also from its theoretical faculties. When the philosophical-theoretical capacities of human subjectivity are squandered on speculation with empty concepts, sometimes even in the name of critique, it is the human lifetime that is wasted in the service of a non-human purpose.

In the metaphysical discourse, the empirical is already a metaphysical determination. Metaphysics can never meet with the empirical. Here another aspect of alienation reveals itself, namely, the alienation of empirical objects. For the metaphysician, being is the ground of all entities, so the empirical object is always already haunted by the transcendent. At this point, metaphysicians perform a remarkable sleight of hand by speaking of empirical things in such a deceptive way that they appear to be working with the real empirical object when in reality it is dealing with the speculative object, the thing in general. This transcendental insincerity—or what Kant calls "transcendental subreption" (A537/B509)—causes the work of metaphysicians to resemble that of magicians and illusionists who perform a dual reality show, presenting the empirical and the speculative as if they are the same thing. Unlike the

magicians, who are aware of the illusion they create, however, the metaphysicians are themselves deceived by their own trickery and often beam with pride when successful. In the discussion of rational psychology, Kant articulates this move in the following way: "It does indeed deal with an object of experience, yet it deals with it only in so far as it has ceased to be an object of experience" (A395/B497). The surreptitious identification of the speculative object, that is, the thing-in-itself, with the empirical thing, which is the kernel of the empirical demonstration, allows metaphysicians to assimilate the empirical world into the abstract system of concepts. It is futile to expect that metaphysicians debunk the trickery to which they themselves are being subjected. Perhaps someone in the audience, who is watching the performance from a distance and does not share the same interest as the performer, could expose the deception. To accomplish this, it is necessary to recognize a fundamental duality, namely the duality between the subjective reality and the empirical world. Kant's transcendental critique and Husserl's method of epoche rely on this dualism. It is this distance between the two realms, which is never truly recognized within metaphysics, that makes the critique of metaphysics possible.

Metaphysical alienation is a multifarious phenomenon. It affects the entirety of the empirical world and the sciences that investigate it. In the eyes of the metaphysicians, the table at which I am sitting now is not simply a useful instrument for the satisfaction of a need, rather it is "will," "reason," "multiplicity of multiplicities," "substance," "God's creation" etc. Metaphysicians, thus, misrepresent the empirical things by depicting them in the image of the thing-in-itself. Claiming to have access to the inner nature of things, it even privileges itself over the sciences. This is the transcendental foundation of Hegel's comprehensive idea of philosophy as the "encyclopedia of philosophical sciences" and Heidegger's "ontological priority of the question of being" that asserts that "fundamental ontology" grounds the "ontic sciences" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 10). In metaphysics, although the methodological independence of sciences is recognized, their autonomy concerning their subject matter is denied. For Hegel, all sciences are philosophical sciences and the manifestation of a phase of development of the

spirit. In Heidegger's hermeneutical approach, an understanding of being always already grounds the understanding of entities and therefore establishes the priority of being over them.

A fundamental consequence of this metaphysical encroachment over the empirical world for the nature of philosophical work is the negation of the transcendentality of human subjectivity and the proper methods for its inquiry. The transcendental phenomenology of mind opposes this "despotic rule" of alienated thinking over the world of sense. Transcendental phenomenology, thus, shares with empiricism certain components of its approach toward the human mind since like empiricism it adopts an empirical approach guided by a priori principles. It resists the hypostatization of its subject matter by adopting a critical attitude that studies the mind as it manifests itself in the stream of experience. Through a comprehensive examination of the theoretical faculties involved in the construction of metaphysical attitudes, it becomes evident that transcendental phenomenology is the genuine form of philosophical inquiry that should replace speculative metaphysics.

Concluding Remarks

The moment when transcendental phenomenology becomes aware of its critical task, it ceases to be a purely philosophical discourse devoid of all human interest and begins to emerge as a human practice directed towards retaining the fullness of human experiences (abstracted by metaphysics). In this sense, the operation of phenomenological reduction is at the same time a political action *par excellence*. As such, political action requires a human agency as its ground, otherwise it will lose sight of human life in its totality and risks becoming acts of manipulation, duplicity, and oppression. The idea of a unified human life in connection with nature (the planet Earth) and its natural mode of social existence, that is, as freed from the oppression of man by man, in one word, the human experiences carried out based on human intentionalities, has been the leading idea of the critique of metaphysics as the alienation of human being. The concept of alienation was first been brought to light by Marx in his critique of Hegel's philosophy, but it still needs further exploration. Asserting that Hegel had already touched upon a

formulation of human alienation, albeit in an abstract mode, Marx stepped onto the thresholds of a phenomenology of the metaphysical mind. For Marx, the alienation of man occurs in the realm of the "natural," the "sensuous" life of humans, and should ultimately be addressed in that realm. Hegel, however, transferred all of the natural components of human life, including its *real* alienation, to the sphere of abstract pure thought. Thus, in his account, human labor, mind, religion, art, nature, etc. are themselves alienated from their real basis. In Hegel's philosophy, all these have validity only to the extent that they are thought by the absolute mind; they are only "spiritual" entities:

> When, for instance, wealth, state-power, etc., are understood by Hegel as entities estranged from the *human* being, this only happens in their form as thoughts…They are thought-entities, and therefore merely an estrangement of *pure*, i.e., abstract, philosophical thinking. The whole process therefore ends with Absolute Knowledge. It is precisely abstract thought from which these objects are estranged and which they confront with their arrogation of reality….
> The humanness of nature and of the nature begotten by history—the humanness of man's products—appears in the form that they are products of abstract mind and as such, therefore, phases of mind—*thought entities*. (Marx, 1969, p. 147)

This analysis aligns with what I refer to as "empirical demonstration." In Hegel's philosophy, the "real," that is, the empirical history of humanity and the phases of its development are considered the stages of the unfolding of the absolute mind, and since for him, the true form of mind is thinking, they are dealt with as "thought-entities." For Marx, Hegel's phenomenology of mind did not describe the reality of its object, that is the historical development of humanity, but is itself a presentation of the real self-alienation of mind, that is, mind that grasps itself in the realm of abstract pure concepts:

> Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, beginning as it does with Logic, with *pure speculative* thought, and ending with *Absolute Knowledge*—with the self-consciousness, self-comprehending, philosophic

> or absolute (that is, superhuman) abstract mind—is in its entirety nothing but the *display*, the self-objectification, of the *essence* of the philosophic mind, and the philosophic mind is nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement—i.e., comprehending itself abstractly.
>
> The self-abstracted and fixed for itself is man as *abstract egoist—egoism* raised in its pure abstraction to the level of thought. (ibid, p.146-151)

Although Marx effectively underlines the abstractness of Hegel's philosophical position, his analysis came upon a limit: it failed to account for the underlying transcendental processes that make such a "pure abstraction" possible in the first place. Therefore, he was unable to account for how Hegel's absolute mind is created by the real human mind, except by resorting to his genetic method of historical materialism. He instead ascribed Hegel's standpoint to the modern political economy (ibid, p. 151). This lack of sufficient transcendental ground for critique can be addressed by a phenomenology of mind. Marx was simply too materialist to even feel the need for such ground. A phenomenological approach is not only useful in delineating the particular nature of metaphysical alienation, but will, on a broader scale, significantly contribute to the clarification of the theoretical ground of materialism as well. The critique of abstraction and a return to "the concrete"—which is yet to be elucidated—remains the guiding idea throughout this work.

What gives Hegel's philosophy a critical status is Hegel's thematization of alienation, but what makes it uncritical is his "abstract" mode of theorization. This seems to be the general fate of critical theory since Marx himself. More specifically, in the late twentieth century, with the so-called linguistic turn and post-structuralism, the concept of human subjectivity—and the category of alienation so central to the social critique—has been erased from the theoretical and philosophical scene. Thus, they present an even higher level of alienation than Hegel's philosophy. The reactivation of the concept of alienation in the critical theory should be carried out in such a way as to enable us to reassess the theoretical

foundation of the new forms of alienation. Based on the phenomenological ground laid out here, the next two chapters will discuss the prominent moments in the later history of the development of critical theory wherein these types of alienation are most apparent.

Part II: Concrete Transcendental Analysis of Two Contemporary Instances of Metaphysical Resurgence

The greatest and perhaps only utility of all philosophy of pure reason is thus only negative, namely, that it does not serve for expansion, as an organon, but rather, as a discipline, serves for the determination of boundaries, and instead of discovering truth it has only the silent merit of guarding against errors. (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A796/B824)

Introduction: The Inability of Metaphysics To Elucidate Its Ground

A peculiar characteristic of metaphysical thought is its insatiable urge to constantly redefine and re-establish itself. The history of metaphysics is the history of a branch of philosophy that has never been able to obtain a firmly established ground that can put an end to the controversies around its nature, its subject matter, and its method. Therefore, philosophy, in so far as it is understood as metaphysics, has been in a constant state of crisis. The root cause, the meaning, and the remedy of this crisis are not accessible within metaphysical thinking as it always arrives too late to observe its feeble foundation being constructed. The observation of the construction of foundations of metaphysical thinking falls within the tasks of another mode of thinking, one that does not share grounds with metaphysics.

The transcendental phenomenological framework that informs the current study provides insights into not only the question of what philosophy in general is, but also why, when regarded as metaphysics, it is constantly in need of redefining itself. The question of what philosophy is can be addressed within

the transcendental phenomenological framework only after the clarification of the subjective capacities involved in the theoretical activities that constitute philosophy as such. But to explore the vast land of transcendental subjectivity or even only the portions that are directly related to the constitution of philosophical thinking in general exceeds the scope of the present study. However, as the preliminary steps towards such study—which will not be undertaken in this work—it is necessary to distinguish between the two forms of theoretical activities, namely, metaphysical and philosophical. As the kind of investigation that undertakes the responsibility of the critique of metaphysics, philosophy, that is, the transcendental-phenomenological study of the grounds of metaphysics, reaches beyond the scope of metaphysical thinking in order to describe the eidetic acts that make metaphysical thinking possible.

It is an essential and unredeemable tendency of metaphysical thinking itself to identify philosophy with metaphysics. As discussed in Part I, speculative metaphysics begins with the theoretical act of positing the idea of the thing-in-itself as an absolutely objective reality, thereby claiming to have established itself as the "science of reality." Transcendental phenomenology, on the contrary, abstains from making judgments regarding objective reality, that is, reality as independent from our perception. By applying the method of transcendental epoche, a transcendental phenomenological critique of metaphysics becomes capable of studying all metaphysical thinking as epistemological practices of a thinking subject, thus, putting in suspension the claim of absolute objectivity all metaphysical systems make. This shift in attitude is the first and the most crucial stride in the critical assessment of metaphysics; it unveils the very origin from which metaphysical thought arises, an origin that remains elusive to metaphysical thought and, thus, drives metaphysics to engage in unfounded speculations about its origin. Transcendental phenomenology, however, is by no means just a critical tool; it is rather itself a philosophy, a philosophy that sharply distinguishes itself from speculative metaphysics by restricting itself to a more modest task, namely, the investigation into the nature of the general structure of consciousness. This study is then non-metaphysical in the sense that it does not need to begin with the dogmatic positing of the idea of the absolutely objective Thing. Part I investigates the essential theoretical

acts involved in the process of metaphysical theorization. These theoretical acts belong to the realm of transcendental subjectivity, which is itself not a hypostatized realm, but a capacity of the human form of subjectivity.

In this Part, from the perspective of transcendental phenomenology, the following question is posed: Why are metaphysicians unable to obtain unanimity on the definition of philosophy understood as metaphysics? The answer is to be sought within the eidetic elements involved in the process of metaphysical theorization. Any metaphysician who aspires to erect their system would at some point have to deal with the question of the nature of metaphysics. The specific mode in which metaphysicians deal with this question is of interest to the transcendental phenomenological critique of metaphysics. Transcendental phenomenology can observe closely the processes that the transcendental mind undergoes when redefining metaphysics. The metaphysicians' continuous attempt at redefining metaphysics is itself an important phenomenon closely related to the inner crisis of metaphysics. Phenomenological critique can provide many fruitful insights into this phenomenon. In Part I, by expanding Kant's critique beyond special metaphysics, it became apparent that the controversies in which metaphysics gets entangled also affect the principal subject matter of general metaphysics. It is through the expansion of Kant's questioning of metaphysics in the transcendental phenomenological direction that it is now possible to analyze, as part of the problem of the possibility of metaphysics, the persistent desire felt by the metaphysicians to always begin anew.

Today, more than two and a half centuries since the publication of *Critique of Pure Reason*, philosophy, in its major trends, still blindly continues identifying itself with metaphysics and, thus, all too easily dismisses the question of the possibility of metaphysics. The expansion of Kant's questioning in the direction of transcendental phenomenology will draw attention to the occasions when metaphysics itself, in the most deceptive ways, begins to speak about the conditions of its possibility without first justifying the legitimacy to do so. The metaphysical speculations about the possibility of metaphysics have become customary in the post-Kantian metaphysical developments, particularly in early Heidegger's and

Derrida's works, which use the language of transcendental philosophy in an objectivist manner. Thus, the perspective from which they raise the question of the nature of metaphysics and the ground upon which they answer that question are themselves dogmatically posed. Hence, metaphysical attempts at defining the nature of metaphysics can never break this vicious circle; instead, they lead to erecting new systems, that although built with great care and skill, cannot guarantee their demolishment and subsequent replacement by other systems just as splendid.

For metaphysicians, the question of the nature of metaphysics is simply one problem amongst many problems they consider from a metaphysical point of view. To illustrate this point, I locate the metaphysical attempts at defining metaphysics common in the twentieth century within the framework provided in the previous chapters. I distinguish three eidetic moments where certain mental activities are involved in the formation of a metaphysical theory. In the first moment, the metaphysical mind simply posits the idea of the thing-in-itself as an absolutely objective idea. In the second moment, the mind attempts to define the nature of this thing-in-itself through additional concepts. Once the first metaphysical proposition is determined, in the third moment, the metaphysical mind proceeds to demonstrate it through further conceptual and empirical expansions. The metaphysical mind always begins considering the question of the nature of metaphysics either after the posting of the thing-in-itself (as in the case of Heidegger) or after the determination of the thing-in-itself through additional concepts (as in the case of Derrida). In doing so, metaphysicians deal with the most important question of their field, only after uncritically assuming both the objectivity of the thing-in-itself and its specific determination, which are the founding assumptions of metaphysics. For example, based on his definition of philosophy, Hegel rejected Spinoza's definition of metaphysics as being restricted to the study of "substance" and excluding the subject, instead of attempting to dialectically overcome their dualism. Similarly, determining philosophy as the ontological study of "differance," Derrida disputed Hegel's concept of reason and its dialectical unfolding as unfit for the subject matter of philosophy.

In these attempts to redefine metaphysics, metaphysical thinking never really raises the question of why it always needs to do so over and over again. Instead, metaphysicians often presume to have certain knowledge right from the inception of their system and unhesitatingly place blame on previous systems for not accurately and definitively defining philosophy. In a rather narcissistic way (in a specifically *transcendental* psychological sense of the term), each philosopher designs their own system in isolation or rather in opposition to the other. The critical stands that the philosophers take against each other are justified through their determination of the thing-in-itself that grounds their definition of philosophy. Exactly because they always start from an objectivistic assumption (the thing-in-itself) and remain bound to it, metaphysicians can never look deeper into the grounds of this assumption. As a consequence, instead of contributing to the cultivation and growth of human civilization, metaphysics has become a form of destructive and nihilistic activity.

How can philosophy be saved from this dire situation? Can the philosophical scene shift from a fight amongst the geniuses who, with their bright arguments, do their best to undermine their opponents and towards a common space of cooperation? In other words, can philosophers finally become a scientific community of thinkers who, rather than using their mental energy to undermine each other, work toward building a common space where the results of their philosophical inquiries improve through critical engagements with one another? Finally, and most importantly, can the philosophical practices of this community be regulated according to the highest ethical ends? What would that common space be? These are the questions that motivated Husserl's philosophical pursuits in the first place and inspired this analysis in the critique of metaphysics:

> Instead of a unitary living philosophy, we have a philosophical literature growing beyond all bounds and almost without coherence. Instead of a serious discussion among conflicting theories that, in their very conflict, demonstrate the intimacy with which they belong together, the commonness of their underlying convictions, and an unswerving belief in a true philosophy, we have a pseudo-reporting and a pseudo-criticizing, a mere semblance of philosophizing seriously

> with and for one another. This hardly attests a mutual study carried on with a consciousness of responsibility, in the spirit that characterizes serious collaboration and an intention to produce Objectively valid results. "Objectively [*objectiv*] valid results"—the phrase, after all, signifies nothing but results that have been refined by mutual criticism and that now withstand every criticism. But how could actual study and actual collaboration be possible, where there are so many philosophers and almost equally many philosophies? To be sure, we still have philosophical congresses. The philosophers meet but, unfortunately, not the philosophies. The philosophies lack the unity of a mental space in which they might exist for and act on one another. (Husserl, 1960, p. 5)

The "mental space" to which Husserl refers here could be interpreted as the transcendental field that was first opened up by Descartes' *Meditations*. "Descartes, in fact, inaugurates an entirely new kind of philosophy. Changing its total style, philosophy takes a radical turn: from naive Objectivism to transcendental subjectivism" (ibid., p. 6). By returning to the transcendental ego, the philosophers can observe the origin of their philosophical activities. This study moves within this mental space and attempts to understand the transcendental origin of a specific type of philosophical activity, namely, metaphysics. Husserl never developed this line of analysis, but as discussed in the first chapter, Kant already provided insights into the transcendental grounds for the critique of metaphysics. Kant's critique, however, serves as an introduction to a scientifically grounded philosophy, an introduction that by clarifying the origin of errors that debar the unification of philosophy works towards the realization of that philosophy. By returning to the subjective grounds of philosophizing—Husserl's transcendental epoche—philosophy stops wandering around in the realm of illusory ideas and starts to rethink its nature clear of distortion.

The philosophical developments after Kant and Husserl are in a way similar: in both cases, the true critical power of their approaches was abandoned, and philosophy regressed again towards

speculative metaphysics. Part I briefly outline how the efforts of Reinhold to scientifically reconstruct Kant's system ultimately resulted in a speculative system that culminated in Hegel's philosophy. Likewise, Schopenhauer independently established a metaphysics of will. In the case of the philosophical development after Husserl, however, a different situation arose: many of the philosophers after Husserl not only attacked Husserl's attempt to establish a scientific philosophy, but attempted to distance themselves from the metaphysical or ontological style of philosophizing in general. While the Hegelian and Schopenhauerian philosophies were strongly founded upon metaphysical and ontological grounds, some of the post-Husserlian philosophers take issue with being classified as metaphysicians or ontologists. Each philosopher defines ontology and metaphysics in different ways.

From Heidegger's viewpoint, while metaphysics has always defined itself as thinking of being, it has never been able to fully grasp being in itself and has always ascribed the characteristics of entities to being and, thus, contributed to the concealment of being. Heidegger understands being as "presence," which is to be delineated from "the present" (entities) (Heidegger, 1993, p. 432). He argues that the fundamental mistake in the history of metaphysics is that it has always preoccupied itself with "the present" instead of inquiring about the nature of the "presence" as such.

Distinguishing metaphysics from ontology, Levinas asserts that "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: the reduction of the other to the same…" (Levinas, 2012, p. 43). Metaphysics, on the other hand, is favorably defined as a "desire that tends towards absolute other" and, as such as a critique of ontology (ibid, pp. 33-43). This metaphysical questioning of the spontaneity of the ego is, for Levinas, an ethical movement, a "welcoming of the other by the same" (ibid). Thus, ethics and metaphysics become closely associated.

In contrast, for Derrida metaphysics refers to "ontotheology" and, thus, embraces ontology (Derrida, 1982, p. xvi). Metaphysics, in his thinking, includes any form of thought that centers around ideas such as presence, identity, same, reason, center, origin, totality, phenomenality, subjectivity, etc.

"Difference," then, is supposed to be an escape from metaphysical discourse, a displacement inaugurated by the play of unruly forces of differance that evade the totalization of metaphysical conceptualizations.

There is no unity in the manners in which the twentieth century philosophers define ontology, metaphysics, and philosophy. Even amongst the philosophies that thematize the same concept as the subject of philosophy, such as the concept of "multiplicity" in Badiou's and Deleuze's philosophies, the difference in the metaphysical presentations of that concept provoked belligerent disputes. In adverse situations such as these, the transcendental phenomenologist refrains from interfering and attempting to judge who is right or wrong. Instead, he follows the path of the transcendental epoche, positioning himself in a more modest stance and abandoning the ambitious desire to provide a solution to such speculative quandaries. The path of the transcendental epoche leads out of speculative metaphysics and directs attention toward the mental activities that underlie it. Thus, it introduces a new form of philosophy, a philosophy that takes as its starting point the analysis of the essential elements of human subjectivity. This change of viewpoint sheds new light on the nature of metaphysics by locating it within the life of the transcendental subjectivity and, thus, considering it as a manifestation thereof. The transcendental mind then appears as the unitary stage on which metaphysical systems are being played out. The phenomenological observer is now able to observe the different plays put on by metaphysicians without being deceived into mistaking them for reality. The plays change and actors come and go, but the stage remains the constant element. The transcendental mind is the origin of metaphysics without thereby installing itself as yet another metaphysical entity. All speculative metaphysics begins with positing the idea of the thing-in-itself as an absolutely objective reality. As the origin of positing this subject matter of metaphysics, the mind itself is not to be conceived as a metaphysical entity. Rather, the transcendental mind is only one capacity of the human individual. The history of metaphysics is, thus, the history of the activities of the human subject in its purely theoretical capacity. Metaphysics is one of the manifestations of the transcendental mind and, as it was argued in the last chapter, a dubious manifestation, that is, one

that distorts the transcendental mind. The history of metaphysics is the history of reason constantly misunderstanding itself. It is, thus, a history of self-alienation of reason, a history of the crisis of reason.

The unity of the history of philosophy lies in the unity of the transcendental mind. The history of philosophy is the history of the manifestation of the human consciousness in its transcendental theoretical capacity. The full justification of this claim goes far beyond the current investigation. Here as in the last part, I am only concerned with one particular dimension of the transcendental mind, that is, the one that is directly involved in metaphysical theorization.[10] However, it is important to note that the exposition of the unity of the history of philosophy is not carried out by way of *over*-rationalizing this history by integrating the content of the previous philosophies into one ultimate rational system. This was the path that Hegel pursued in his lectures on the history of philosophy, where he stated: "What the history of philosophy displays to us is a series of noble spirits, the gallery of the heroes of *reason's* thinking" (Hegel, 1987, p.9). In this sentence, reason does not simply mean the rational thinking of the individual thinkers. The rational thinking of the great philosophers construed systematically constitutes the highest manifestation of reason, that is, the highest phase of the self-awareness of reason. In his system, the development of the philosophies occurs according to a necessarily determined order. Philosophy is not the work of the individuals' minds, but the activity of the "Idea" that brings itself to full fruition as absolute Mind in the final phase of its historical unfolding (Hegel, 1984, p. 198). As it develops, reason actualizes its essence and, thus, gains higher cognition of itself. Since reason comprehends everything, the subject of this self-actualization cannot be anything other than reason itself. Just like any other historical event, the philosophical thinkings of the individual philosophers are manifestations of "Mind."

[10] In Husserl's characterization, transcendental mind is an infinite field whose analysis can never come to an end. However, what constitutes the essence of the transcendental mind is "intentionality." Throughout this work, the intentional nature of the transcendental consciousness is presupposed. The three moments of the metaphysical theorization can ultimately be complemented through an analysis of the intentionality of the mind. Such study would ultimately deepen our knowledge of the metaphysical theorization by further elucidating the more remote components of the transcendental mind that foreground those three moments.

In Hegel's account, the history of philosophy is metaphysically constructed. Reason—Mind—is a metaphysical hypothesis, a product of the transcendental illusion. Hegel's reason is an absolute objective reality that does not simply reside in a subject realm. Thus, although his sketch of history involves reason constantly overcoming its self-alienation by ascending to higher levels of self-actualization and self-knowledge, from a transcendental phenomenological perspective it is itself made possible through the transcendental acts that make up metaphysical thinking and, thus, contains the seeds of human self-alienation. In Hegel's theory, the unification of reason in philosophy happens only in the realm of metaphysical thinking, which is itself a product of the human mind in its transcendental capacity. Hence, his philosophy falls short of fulfilling its fundamental promise, that is, to reconcile the dichotomies that have plagued philosophy as well as all other fields of life. The transcendentally illegitimate objectification of reason, which belongs first and foremost to the human subject as one of its subjective capacities, grounds Hegel's system. Hegel's philosophical rationalism falls prey to transcendental illusions and, thus, amounts to no more than a pseudo-rationalism. Thus, at the core of this grand attempt at integrating all the fields of existence under the all-encompassing power of reason resides a conflict of reason with itself.

The inner meaning of Kant's critique of reason, which can provide a remedy to the dis-unity of reason with itself, was misunderstood by Hegel. Reason for Kant is not a metaphysical determination diametrically opposed to experience. Rather reason in its legitimate use is constitutive of experience and natural sciences. Reason is one capacity of human individuals; its manifestations can be observed and studied in the scientific activities of the scientists. Thus, the true method of studying reason is a phenomenological method that enables us to observe it as it actualizes it in human life. Here I am concerned with only one department of reason's activities, namely, metaphysical activities. Therefore, the past metaphysical systems are of interest only as products of reason, that is, only as *theories*. As theories, metaphysical systems are *functions* of reason. Within the transcendental phenomenological framework, a systematic account of the unity of reason would never amount to a characterization of it as an objectively existent power imbuing all existence. Reason exists only subjectively, that is to say, ideally. It is only after

a sharp distinction between the objective and the subjective is drawn, employing the method of epoche, that the infinite horizon for the analysis of rationality becomes accessible. Phenomenology is not a science of the real, but a science of the ideas, namely, things as they appear to us.

In the following, I engage an analysis of two major figures of twentieth-century Western philosophy, Heidegger and Derrida. My goal is to demonstrate that their philosophies are determined by metaphysical motives. The following analysis will attempt to falsify the common understanding that Derrida's and, to some extent, Heidegger's philosophies are non-metaphysical and that metaphysics is still as alive in twentieth-century philosophy as it was in the Middle Ages. It thereby highlights the importance of a critical reflection of the ground of philosophy itself and critical theory insofar as it draws on recent philosophical engagements. Most importantly, this analysis is motivated by a call to gain insights into the ethical implications of the practice of philosophy, in the hope that by shedding the transcendental illusions that have afflicted philosophy in our age, it can obtain clarity as to its critical task in confronting the crises of our age.

Chapter 3: Heidegger and the Restoration of Metaphysics: Transcendental Interpretation of Heidegger's Ontological Difference

During the early twentieth century, while the German philosophical landscape was still dominated by philosophical trends such as neo-Kantianism, positivism, and the empiricism of the Vienna circle, Heidegger's *Being and Time* represented a notable return to ontology. However, his early works draw from many sources of inspiration: Aristotle, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, Kant, and most importantly Husserl's phenomenology. In an atmosphere still largely dominated by interests in Kant's thought, Heidegger's early philosophy searches for the "possibility of ontology in general" and is, in a sense, a "transcendental" ontology. Since it takes as its starting point the analysis of the "existential components" of human existence, it is often referred to as an existential philosophy. Influenced by Dilthey, Heidegger's philosophy also studies the existential moments of human existence in their intricate relation with the surrounding world in which humans live (Being-in-the-world). Finally, his method of interrogation is said to be phenomenological in the sense that through it the basic structures of the being of Dasein (Heidegger's term for human being) are made known. Heidegger's later works abandon the early emphasis on the centrality of human existence as the access point to being and attempt a more direct way of presenting being *qua* being. In this section, I confine myself to an assessment of his early thought.

Before I delve into the analysis of Heidegger's revival of ontology, I must emphasize a crucial point: Heidegger's "transcendental phenomenological" analysis of Dasein must not be confused with the Husserlian understanding of this expression. The major distinction, amongst many, between the two employments of phenomenology is that while for Heidegger the ontological condition of human existence is the starting point, Husserl uses the phenomenological method to study the essential structures of consciousness. This analysis relies on Husserl's conception of phenomenology and launches a critical assessment of several dimensions of Heidegger's philosophy, including his interpretation of the phenomenological method. Heidegger's use of phenomenology, to the extent that it has been ontologized,

presents a distortion and degradation of Husserl's employment of it. Heidegger metaphysicalizes transcendental phenomenology and, thus, undermines a core element of it, namely, Kant's Copernican revolution. His philosophy, thus, marks a regression of philosophy into speculative metaphysics of an irrational type, the parallel of which can be observed in Germany's political life in which Heidegger has ominously played a part. In the following, to ensure clarity and avoid confusion, I enclose terms such as transcendental, phenomenology, science, and intentionality in quotation marks whenever they are used in a specific Heideggerian sense.

Heidegger's metaphysicalization of phenomenology has many aspects of which the two most important are his critique of Cartesian subjectivity and his revival of the "question of being." Here my primary focus is on the second aspect, although, since in Heidegger's explication the two aspects are intertwined, the second aspect will also be discussed, if only marginally.

1. Philosophy as the "Science" of Being

I shall begin by briefly presenting Heidegger's characterization of philosophy and the steps he takes to substantialize it. Heidegger's philosophy marks one of the greatest efforts to re-establish philosophy as ontology in the twentieth century. Taking phenomenology as its point of departure, his re-interpretation of phenomenology is also a turning point in the later developments of phenomenology. The following analysis will, thus, focus on both the assessment of his overall vision of philosophy and his ontologization of phenomenology.

Central to Heidegger's early and later philosophical project is a distinction between "being" (*Sein*) and "beings" (*Seiende*). According to Heidegger, philosophy's essential theme is being:

> We assert now that being is the proper and the sole theme of philosophy. This is not our own invention; it is a way of putting the theme which comes to life at the beginning of philosophy in antiquity… At present we are merely asserting that is the proper and the sole theme of

> philosophy. Negatively this means that philosophy is not a *science of* beings, but of *being* or, as the Greek expression goes, *ontology*. (Heidegger, 1988a, p. 11)

The distinction between being and beings, which he terms an "ontological difference" (ibid, p.17), is to be firmly grasped for philosophy to be established as a distinct "science." All other sciences have as their themes "some being or beings" (ibid., p. 13). The ontological distinction is the ground of the distinction between philosophy and other sciences, and only when this distinction is solidly established can one be sure that the thematic independence of philosophy is secured.

> This distinction is not arbitrary; rather, it is the one by which the theme of ontology and thus of philosophy itself is first of all attained. It is a distinction which is first and foremost constitutive for ontology. We call it the *ontological difference*—the differentiation between being and beings. Only by making this distinction—krinein in Greek—not between one being and another being but between being and beings do we first enter the field of philosophical research. Only by taking this critical stance do we keep our own standing inside the field of philosophy. (Ibid., p. 17)

According to Heidegger, the history of philosophy has suffered from a misrepresentation of the subject matter of philosophy, "being." Throughout its history, although philosophers always had some understanding of the ontological distinction, they have never achieved a full clarification of it. Thus, philosophers have attempted to make being itself the theme of their thinking, yet they have always fallen short because of their lack of recognition of this ontological difference.

> When Thales answers the question What is that which is? by saying "Water," he is here explaining beings by means of a being, something that is, although at bottom he is seeking to determine what that which is, is *as* a being. In the question he therefore understands something like being, but in the answer he interprets being as a being. This type of interpretation of being then remains customary in ancient philosophy for a long time afterward, even after the essential advances made by Plato and Aristotle in formulating the problems, and at bottom this

interpretation has remained the usual one in philosophy right down to the present day. (Ibid, p. 319)

The first task of philosophy is to show the possibility of the ontological distinction. How does philosophy accomplish this task? Heidegger posits that all humans have an "implicit understanding" of being, beings and their distinction in their "everyday dealings" with the things around them, with others, and with themselves. The ontological distinction is, thus, first made accessible to us implicitly, namely, pre-conceptually and pre-philosophically. The task of philosophy is to elaborate this pre-philosophical everyday understanding of being as the ground of the possibility of the conceptual grasp of the ontological difference. In other words, Heidegger suggests that if the pre-conceptual understanding of the ontological difference is adequately described, a path is paved toward the conceptual understanding of it and thus the establishment of philosophy as a "science" of being.

According to Heidegger, since the ground of the possibility of ontological difference is in humans' pre-philosophical understanding, an analysis of the structure of this understanding must be the first step. "Understanding" is an existential character of Dasein. The analysis of the existential structure of Dasein's understanding is carried out as part of the general analysis of Dasein's existence. The method of this analysis is "phenomenology" since it studies the structure of our pre-categorial dealings with the everyday things (beings) around us. This analysis forms the central task of Heidegger's fundamental ontology: "Ontology has for its fundamental discipline the analytic of the Dasein" (ibid., p. 19). The gist of Heidegger's argument is that in Dasein's dealings with surrounding things, a movement from beings to the being of beings occurs. We always understand beings based on their being, and being always manifests itself as the being of a being. The understanding of beings never simply remains confined to the beings, but "transcends" beings towards the being of beings. "With this distinction between being and beings and the selection of being as theme we depart in principle from the domain of beings. We surmount it. Transcend it. We can also call the science of being, as critical science, *transcendental science*… We are surmounting beings in order to reach being" (ibid., p. 17). This "transcendental

movement" first and foremost happens in Dasein's pre-conceptual understanding of the beings that forms the ground of the ontological difference. The difference is inherent in the transcendental movement from beings to being.

Although Heidegger's early project is hermeneutical in nature, "understanding" in his texts does not refer to any mental or intellectual process but, rather, a practical concern with things. The "analytic of the Dasein" also aims to show that the conception of the human being as the thinking subject misses a more fundamental reality about human existence. According to his scheme of the history of philosophy. the subjectivist understanding of the human being predominates for most of the history of philosophy but culminates in Descartes's, Kant's, and Husserl's philosophies. Heidegger's Dasein analysis aims to provide an alternative to the subjectivist conception of the human being by developing an existential account that situates human beings in their everyday surrounding world. "The closest world of everyday Dasein is the *surrounding world*" (Heidegger, 2010, p. 66). In the surrounding world, the things are not "objects" but "useful things" such as a pen, a desk, a mug, etc. What differentiates objects from useful things is our attitude towards them; things are objects insofar as we are studying them scientifically and "pieces of equipment" insofar as we deal with them in our everyday practical concerns. In our pre-scientific, pre-thematized dealing with things, they appear based on their "serviceability, helpfulness, usability, handiness," etc. (ibid, p. 68). In the surrounding world, useful things always appear in an interconnection. This is evidenced by the fact that each useful thing carries in itself a reference to another useful thing: "The structure of being of what is at hand as a useful thing is determined by references" (ibid., p. 74). Each useful thing is useful for something: "For example, the thing at hand which we call a hammer has to do with hammering, the hammering has to do with fastening something, fastening something has to do with protection against the bad weather. This protection "is" for the sake of providing shelter for Dasein, that is, for the sake of a possibility of its being" (ibid., p. 82). These references, then, form a "referential totality" or "totality of relevance" against which a useful thing always pre-reflectively, that is, practically appears (ibid., p. 83). This referential structure in which Dasein deals with useful things

has, thus, two prominent components, namely, the relevance of each useful thing to another useful thing, which Heidegger terms the "for-what," and the ultimate end of the whole referential totality, which he terms "for-the-sake-of-which" of the referential totality. The "world" in this analysis is the "in-which" of the referential totality: "*As that for which one lets beings be encountered in the kind of being of relevance, the wherein of the self-referential understanding is the phenomenon of the world*" (ibid., p. 85).

In Heidegger's phenomenology, the world refers to the totality of references in which Dasein is also always related to useful things as the ultimate end. The world and Dasein do not exist independently. It is based on this analysis that Heidegger takes an issue with Descartes's model of the human relationship to the world in which the world and human subjectivity exist independently. In contrast, for Heidegger, the world is the ontological constituent of Dasein so that Dasein is characterized as "being-in-the-world." To put it more concretely, within our everyday dealings with things around us, we always have an "implicit" understanding of ourselves as a being who is always concerned with things in one way or another. The things around us are always of some use and thus the totality of their relationship is ultimately opened for the sake of Dasein.

How can this analysis of Dasein help establish the ontological difference? A closer examination of the terms "beings" and "being" makes this difference clear. Within the framework of the analytic of the Dasein as the fundamental discipline of ontology, beings are defined as "pieces of equipment." From Heidegger's "phenomenological" perspective, things are not primarily objects of scientific inquiry or substances existing in themselves but appear in their usefulness for certain practical purposes. Useful things, however, always appear within a totality of referential nexus in which alone they gain their determinate usefulness. "Strictly speaking, there "is" no such thing as *a* useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is" (ibid, p. 68). This totality of relevance is the "being of a being":

> The fact that the being of things at hand has the structure of reference means that they have in themselves the character of *being referred*. Beings are discovered with regard to the fact that they

> are referred, as those beings which they are, to something. They are relevant *together with* something else. The character of being of things at hand is *relevance*. … Relevance is the being [Sein] of innerworldly beings, for they are initially freed. In every instance, the innerworldly beings as beings have relevance. That they have a relevance is an *ontological* determination of the being of these beings, not an ontic statement about beings. (ibid, p. 82)

We experience the being of beings in our everyday dealings with useful beings. In each case, the being of beings manifests itself in a specific way. The context of the relevance of each useful thing determines what that thing and its being are. Thus, the being of a being is not simply a structural determination, but a content that is experienced—or to use Heidegger's terminology, "understood"—in our everyday activities. He writes: "To the being of this being there belong its inherent content, the specific whatness, and a way of being. The *whatness* of the beings confronting us every day is defined by their equipmental character" (Heidegger, 1988a, p. 304). The being of a being is the "equipmental contexture" of an equipment (being) that gives it its "thisness" or "individuation" (ibid., p. 292). Thus, the being is the useful thing and the being of a being is the specific mode of existence of that being, namely, the totality of references against which it appears as this or that particular useful thing.

We understand a being from its being. The being of beings is, thus, antecedent to beings; working with a piece of equipment presupposes an antecedent familiarity with the other pieces of equipment and their interconnections. Heidegger describes this process as follows: "We understand being only as we project it upon being" (ibid., p. 280). "Projecting something upon something" is the formal structure of understanding. In understanding a being we project it upon its being, namely, its referential totality. It is within this structure that the difference between being and beings is understood. This difference, however, is not explicit to Dasein, who is pre-philosophically immersed in dealing with the pieces of equipment; it is primarily only implicitly, that is, pre-reflectively understood. Nevertheless, the difference is there; it is given in the different ways in which being and beings are understood and dealt with. "The way in which being is given is fundamentally different from the way beings are given" (ibid., p. 281). In understanding,

Dasein transcends beings by moving toward being. The mode of existence of Dasein is transcendence. Being manifests itself first in our daily practical dealings with useful things.

Thus, the discipline of the analytic of the Dasein has shown, through an analysis of the Dasein's pre-philosophical concern with things, that being and beings are two different modes of reality. However, at this pre-ontological level, Dasein has only a practical, not a theoretical understanding of being and its difference from beings. In other words, Dasein has only a sense of what something like being, or what Heidegger terms the "like of being" is (ibid, p. 227). Nevertheless, this pre-thematic understanding of being in its distinctness of beings forms the ground for the theoretical thematization of it in philosophy. The scientific working out of being, which is the task of ontology, relies on the pre-thematic accessibility of being: "As a specific type of cognition thus described, science constitutes itself essentially on the basis of what is in each instance already in some way given. What is already unveiled pre-scientifically can become an object of scientific investigation. *A scientific investigation constitutes itself in the objectification of what has somehow already been unveiled beforehand*" (ibid, p. 320).

The conceptual thematization of being, beings, and their difference is made possible first through Dasein's pre-ontological understanding of beings and beings. The only task left for philosophy is to make this distinction explicit. This task is done through the analysis of Dasein, which is itself a theoretical construction of the pre-theoretical understanding of being and beings. Heidegger refers to his ontology as "fundamental ontology" since it assumes the task of establishing ontology by showing the ground of the possibility of ontology. This ground is in Dasein's pre-ontological understanding as an essential component ("existential") of his existence. Although the pre-philosophical understanding grasps being and beings and their differences, it does so in an undifferentiated way. "The experience of beings does not have any explicit ontology as a constituent, but, on the other hand, the understanding of being in general in the pre-ontological sense is certainly the condition of possibility that being should be objectified, thematized at all. It is in the objectification of being as such that the basic act constitutive of ontology as a science is performed" (ibid, p. 281). The clarification of the ontological difference is a step towards the

objectification of being in general, since it is first through it that we grasp being in its distinctness from beings.

When this distinction between being and beings is made explicit, the terms distinguished contrast with each other and being thereby becomes a possible theme for conceptual comprehension (logos). For this reason, we call the distinction between being and beings, when it is carried out explicitly, the *ontological difference* [*die ontologische Differenz*]. The explicit accomplishment and the development of the ontological difference is therefore also, since it is founded on the Dasein's existence, not arbitrary and incidental but a basic component of the Dasein in which ontology, that is, philosophy, constitutes itself as a science. (ibid, p. 319)

2. Transcendental Phenomenological Critique of Heidegger's Interpretation of Ontological Difference

Now that I have briefly outlined Heidegger's early philosophical project, it is possible to assess his theory of ontological difference as the ground of ontology from the transcendental phenomenological outlook laid out in Chapter Two. Building on Kant's phenomenological analysis of the metaphysical uses of reason as a faculty that belongs essentially to human subjectivity, it was made possible to uncover some of the mental processes that are involved in metaphysical theorization. These mental processes will now direct my analysis of Heidegger's ontology. The fundamental eidetic act that constitutes metaphysical theorization in general is the transcendentally fallacious objectivist positing of the concept of being. The later steps of the metaphysical theorization, namely, the further conceptual determination of being and its metaphysical demonstration may be enacted in various metaphysical systems in different ways. The ways in which these transcendental elements are taken can be determined only through close phenomenological scrutiny of each metaphysical system. After all, phenomenology knows no authority other than the

phenomena themselves to draw its insights. Here, the sphere of phenomenality is each metaphysician's transcendental activities in forming a metaphysical theory.

In the following, I attempt to untangle the intricate threads of Heidegger's arguments to show the underlying transcendental (mental) processes at work in constructing his fundamental ontology. This attempt will run against a core element of Heidegger's way of reviving ontology, that is, to introduce a more "concrete" manner of grounding ontology. In the introduction to *Being and Time*, he famously refutes the three prejudices prevalent in the scholastic of ontology regarding being, according to which being is the most universal, self-evident, and indefinable concept (Heidegger, 2010, p. 2,3). These "prejudices" render the search for the ultimate meaning of being futile. Additionally, these prejudices grasp being in an abstract and general way. Heidegger's ontology, by contrast, is motivated partially by an attempt to demonstrate a more concrete and immediate way of accessing being. Thus, the analytic of the Dasein shows that we first come to understand being not as a mere concept, but within our practical pre-reflective coping with things, as the context of the functional significations of those things. He claims that the being that is, thus, disclosed to us is not first conceptually and theoretically grasped, but only implicitly and pre-theoretically. Being is, first and foremost, "circumspectly" disclosed within the world of ordinary things. Ontology, Heidegger posits, must be existentially grounded. Nevertheless, as a science, ontology must thematize being and bring it to the theoretical level. The pre-theoretical meaning of being that we encounter in our daily lives is not yet suitable for the scientific construction of being. As is shown above, ontology objectifies being and, thus, deals with it conceptually. The appropriate term that Heidegger uses for the objectified being is "being in general."

However, it is not clear at all how the pre-thematic understanding of being forms the ground of the thematic and theoretical understanding of being in the science of being. In fact, as I show, these are two completely different concepts that cannot be related to each other without the involvement of some fallacies. As is discussed in the above section, the concept of "being of a being" indicates the referential totality that is the necessary context in which a thing appears in our dealing with it as a useful thing. This

referential totality is also the ground of the individuation of that thing that allows a thing to appear as this or that particular piece of equipment (this mug on my table, that lamp over my bed, etc.) and is, as such, specific to that particular useful thing. Every referential context is specific to both the equipment and how it is used by each Dasein. The "being of a being" has a contextual mode of existence that makes it particular and, thus, not suitable for scientific treatment.

But Heidegger's genetic account of ontology as a science never moves further than asserting that the being of beings is the pre-thematic ground of the thematized concept of being. Even if it is conceded that the pre-thematized referential totality of the useful thing can be termed "being," there is a generic difference between the "being of a being" and "being in general." True, in dealing with a thing, we always do so on the basis of a pre-established context of interconnected meanings that allow that particular thing to be given to us with particular usability. But, in our daily dealings with things, we never come across anything like being in general, that is, not the being of this or that being, but being as such. This means that being in general does not appear to us in any particular situation in which we deal with pieces of equipment. The universality required by the conceptual form of the scientific approach would be attained only when being is seen as surpassing all contextualization. Heidegger focuses on showing how the non-conceptual understanding of being provides us with a "sense," though an implicit sense, of what something like being is. He concludes that the explicit accomplishment of being as ontology is not "arbitrary and accidental" since it is firmly grounded in the real existence of the Dasein in the world. However, he presents no account of how exactly this conceptualization of being is worked out. For example, is it through some kind of abstract generalization that we attain the concept of being in general? If so, does not this involve some mental activities? Heidegger never provides a full account of such mental activities. Thematization or "objectification" are subjective activities whose cognition requires an analysis of human theoretical capacities. Such analysis, however, goes against Heidegger's existential account of human being. Had he ventured into such analysis, he would have undermined his commitment to a non-subjectivist account of the human being.

This matter requires a more in-depth exploration. The fallacy in Heidegger's argument lies in the conflation of the two distinct concepts of being, that is, the "being of a being" and "being in general." Heidegger treats these concepts as if they refer to the same reality that is first perceived pre-theoretically and later grasped theoretically. His solution to the problem of the possibility of ontology on existential grounds rests on this premise; ontology as the scientific study of being is possible because we always already have an implicit understanding of being. The being with which we are always already familiar, and which can become the subject matter of "phenomenological" study is the totality of the referential meanings. The being in general, however, is nowhere to be met. It cannot simply be identified as the being of a particular being (this or that equipment we work with daily) since it then would only be a particular "being of a being." The universality of the concept of being in general is not and cannot be accounted for within the parameters of the analytic of Dasein. The analytic of Dasein as the discipline of fundamental ontology does not deliver its promise. As a result, ontology cannot be established on the basis of our pre-theoretical familiarity with "being." This critique still needs further elaboration.

In the first part, I suggest that the concept of being *qua* being is a product of a specific act of the theoretical mind in its metaphysical activities, that is, the act of positing the thing-in-itself. Heidegger starts from the assumption that being is the proper theme of philosophy: "This is not our own invention; it is a way of putting the theme which comes to life at the beginning of philosophy in antiquity" (Heidegger, 1988a, p. 11). He is correct in acknowledging that philosophy (understood as metaphysics) has only one subject matter, namely, being. He is also right to assert that so long as he is concerned with ontology, it is being in general that must be thematized. He is, however, wrong in assuming that the concrete analysis of the contextual understanding of our dealings with things would somehow lead us to a more fundamental grasp of the theme of philosophy, being in general. The concept of being in general is a positing of the transcendental mind in its theoretical-metaphysical activities (the first element of metaphysical theorization) and as a concept, it exists only ideally. The fallacy involved in Heidegger's argument is fundamentally the same as in all ontological thinking from the birth of philosophy, namely, the

transcendental rendering of a concept into a transcendent reality. Transcendent here simply means a reality that subsists on its own outside of the mind. In this sense, the empirical things around us, such as this table at which we may be sitting, are also a transcendent reality, but in a recognizable empirical sense. To turn a concept that is not found in the realm of experience into a self-subsistent reality, however, is what constitutes transcendental illusion. The idea of being in general that Heidegger asserts as the sole theme of philosophy is, thus, a mental product that cannot be experienced in our daily dealings with empirical things.

The analysis of what Heidegger calls the being of beings, that is, the referential totality, cannot provide any valid ground for the thematization of being in the scientific attitude. In other words, his hermeneutical analysis of our understanding of things as being contextually determined can be valid in itself but only as an empirical account of how human embodied agents relate to their surrounding world. In his hermeneutical theory of the human relationship with the surrounding world, Heidegger is influenced by Dilthey and perhaps indirectly by the early developments in gestalt psychology. This theory can very well stand on its own as a description of our daily comportment towards things and ourselves. Heidegger, however, takes a further step and ontologizes this theory. For him, the context against which a thing is always determined is termed the "being of a being." This shift of terminology is indicative of a transcendental shift in view: what is merely an empirical determination is converted into a transcendent reality. The context of references along with the things in the foreground are themselves empirical realities and any theory that describes them (whether Dilthey's hermeneutics or gestalt psychology, etc.) remains within the realm of experience as an empirical theory about empirical realities. Heidegger's ontological conceptualization turns these empirical realities into an ontological reality, or variations of an ontological determination, that is, being. The referential totality against which a thing stands out and becomes a useful thing is itself only an empirical reality and, thus, essentially different from the concept of being in general. The latter does not exist as a particular context in which useful things get used. Heidegger never clarifies what are the characteristics of this generalized concept of being. For instance,

he never asserts that being in general refers to the ultimate totality of all referential totalities. Such a totality of all referential totalities cannot itself be a concrete reality understood in a pre-thematized way by a Dasein and, thus, cannot be "phenomenologically" described.

The concept of being in general is a creation of the transcendental mind and the concept of the being of a being is an empirical reality that can be perfectly explained in empirical terms (a shift from an ontological perspective towards a scientific one that requires renouncing the ontological terminology). When in our practical dealings with things we gain a pre-thematic understanding of the context of our dealings—the being of a being—we do not gain an implicit understanding of the theme of philosophy as ontology. Ontology as a science—whatever the elements of it might be—has its roots in an essentially a different activity than the practical everyday dealings with things. The concept of being in general is a product of a specific form of theoretical activity of human transcendental subjectivity and, thus, as a science cannot be solely grounded on a pre-scientific basis.

Heidegger's early project as a fundamental ontology, which searches for the grounds of the possibility of ontology in our everyday concern with things, rests on this flawed inference of a transcendent reality from an empirical one. The concept of the being of a being is an empirical one and the concept of being in general is a mere idea (that lacks any objective reality). But how can Heidegger take this into account, when he has already genetically reduced the transcendental subjectivity to the existential structure of Dasein? By undermining transcendental subjectivity, Heidegger is left with no means to explain the source of the concept of being. Thus, the illusion must carry on. Heidegger's philosophy must have a dogmatic starting point, namely, the positing of being in general as a mind-independent self-subsistent reality because he has already reduced human capacity for theoretical reflection to the pre-theoretical existence in the world. Heidegger's refutation of Descartes's (and Kant's and Husserl's) accounts of subjectivity is consistent and even necessary for his reconstruction of ontology. But exactly this is the source of his confusion regarding the concept of being and the characterization of philosophy, both in his early and later periods. Thus, the concept of the being of a being is an empirical

concept and the concept of being in general is a transcendental concept. They have different sources. In thinking being in general, Heidegger is thinking something that cannot be given in experience. The connection between the two, contrary to what he claims, is completely arbitrary. Being in general is not an explicitly grasped version of the implicitly understood being. The former is created as a mere concept through the mental process underlying all metaphysical theorizations, while the latter can be seen as an element of the actual mode of our perception of the surrounding material world.

An objection might be raised against my critical assessment that for Heidegger being is not an abstract reality but manifests itself only in Dasein's understanding of it and is essentially dependent on Dasein's existence. If there is no Dasein, there would be no being. Thus, he provides a subjective account of ontology rooted in his hermeneutical approach in which being is not an objective reality, but the meaning of being is to be investigated. However, this objection fails to take into account the distinction between the being of beings and being in general and the argument that the latter is not a situational concept of being that is made above. The being of a being appears only to a Dasein who has the capacity for understanding a piece of equipment and its referential totalities so that without a human being who deals with that equipment in certain ways, the contexts of functionalities based on which that equipment becomes this particular usable equipment will not exist either. But what is being in general? Is it a conceptual abstraction that indicates the general idea of the "being of beings"? If so, then being in general designates only a conceptual generalization of the "being of beings" and, as such, does not enjoy any more reality than the particular relative referential totalities that open up in particular situations. In this case, being in general is only the general concept of the being of a being and, thus, the whole distinction between the being of beings and being in general collapses and there will be nothing for the ontology as a science of being to study. As a result, the "discipline of the analytic of Dasein" would exhaust all that philosophy can say about being (as indicated above there is nothing specifically ontological about it). In other words, what Heidegger calls the being of beings is in and of itself only an empirical determination and thus cannot be the object of ontology as a non-empirical a priori science.

The central contradiction of Heidegger's fundamental ontology can now be made clear: on the one hand, being is to be made accessible to use "phenomenologically" as being of beings; and, on the other hand, being as such, being *qua* being, which is not simply identical with the being of beings, must be raised as the subject matter of the science of ontology. Being in general, understood as an objective reality, cannot be made accessible through phenomenology. Phenomenology, which considers things only as phenomena, that is, as they appear to us, considers things only in their essential relationship with the human subject. Heidegger takes this step in constructing ontology and gives us the concept of the being of beings. However, as soon as he speaks of being in general, he violates the first principle of phenomenology and commits to speculative objectivism. Again, being in general can be used as a general concept to describe all the possible referential totalities, that is, as the general concept of a referential totality and, thus, only as a substitute term that contains no more reality beyond the empirical referential totalities themselves. Insofar as Heidegger's analysis remains confined to the limits of his "phenomenological method," the only concept that can be studied under the label of being is the referential totality of the useful thing. But the concept of being in general that has been the theme of metaphysics since the beginning of philosophy refers to a transcendent reality beyond the specific referential totalities. The full consequences of this objectivist commitment transpire only in Heidegger's later works.

3. Ontologization of Phenomenology

So far, I have presented the first transcendental element of metaphysical theorization at work in Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Reflecting on the problematic identity between the being of a being and being in general leads to another transcendental element of metaphysical theorization, namely, the empirical demonstration. In the exposition of the three transcendental elements that lay the foundation of metaphysical theorization in Part I, I define the third moment as the metaphysical demonstration that can be performed in two ways: conceptually and empirically. Through empirical demonstration, a

metaphysical system seeks to show the empirical relevance of the first purely conceptual construction. This element is most fully manifested in Hegel's philosophy when he started from the science of logic, which is a purely formal exposition of his system, and the philosophy of spirit, which is the content-filled exposition of that formal conceptual system. His central metaphysical claim is that the formal logical structure discussed abstractly in the science of logic defines the inner structure of reality in its full richness. And since this logical structure is first and foremost a determination of reason as the essence of the thing-in-itself, the empirical realities are in this way determined by the concept of reason. At the core of this reasoning is an identity between the transcendental concept of the thing-in-itself and the empirical world. In empirical demonstrations, the metaphysicians think that they are dealing with the real world and gaining knowledge about it from a philosophical point of view—which is often considered a privileged point of view that is not accessible to other sciences. In doing so, the empirical world is grasped from an abstractly constructed conceptual system and presented as if the conceptual system and the empirical reality are one and the same thing. The transcendental structure that each metaphysical system proposes is meant to belong to the essence of the empirical thing.

This element of the transcendental illusion is also manifest in Heidegger's Dasein analysis. The surreptitious identity between the referential totality and the being in general is presupposed rather than explained. As discussed above, it is possible to speak of the referential totality outside of the ontological framework of fundamental ontology—as it has been done before Heidegger and after him, both in Gestalt psychology and phenomenological schools. But Heidegger ontologizes the gestalt theory of perception, by terming the "background" the "being of beings." The explication of the holistic theory of perception is carried out in an ontological terrain. The world of experience—the pre-thematic dealing with things that is also developed by the non-ontological approaches of Husserl—is already rendered metaphysical. The horizon of our perception of ourselves and things that is discussed in psychology and phenomenological theories of perception is conceptualized as being only to pave the way for the later objectification of it in the science of being. Thus, being is always already there in every dealing with a useful thing. We confront

being in the banal everydayness of our life, in the thoughtless act of reaching for a coffee mug while engrossed in a conversation with an acquaintance on the phone, in our indifferent grabbing the doorknob, or in adjusting our chair to suit the proper height of the table. Through the analysis of Dasein's understanding in its mundane everydayness, the entirety of the pre-theoretical lifeworld is ontologized. This ontologization of an otherwise empirical theory is an essential step in the construction of Heidegger's argument for the establishment of ontology. What is simply an empirical description of an empirical reality—the background of understanding and perception—becomes identical with a transcendent idea that cannot be experienced in the empirical world. His claim regarding the grounding of ontology on a concrete and immediate confrontation with being in general is, then, rested on a fallacious inference.

According to Heidegger's analysis, the science of being only objectifies being to the extent that it is already pre-ontologically given in my everydayness. But Heidegger's description of the everyday dealings with things is itself already ontologized through the transcendental (eidetic) projection of the concept of being to the whole empirical life. What Heidegger presents as a "phenomenological analysis" of everydayness, which first proclaims itself to be an immediate, concrete, and, thus, truthful account of our relationship with the "nearest" surrounding world is already a theoretical framing of the pre-theoretical understanding. His description of the pre-theoretical understanding of things is itself an ontological account of this understanding insofar as it frames this understanding as the understanding of being.

This analysis leads to another theme of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, namely, his interpretation of the phenomenological method. For Heidegger, phenomenology is not a science responsible for inquiring into the essential structures of consciousness, but the method through which the being of beings is unveiled.

> Phenomenology is the way of access to, and the demonstrative manner of determination of, that which is to become the theme of ontology. Ontology is possible only as phenomenology. The

> phenomenological concept of phenomenon, as self-showing, means the being of beings—its meaning, modifications, and derivatives. … As far as the content goes, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings—ontology. (Heidegger, 2010, p. 33)

The ambiguity of the concept of the being of beings overshadows Heidegger's characterization of phenomenology. The being of beings is what shows itself to the phenomenological observer within the structure of Dasein's existence. This being, then, must be objectified to form the theme of ontology as a "science." The phenomenon is already ontologized and, thus, defined as the being of beings. The things around me are not "beings," but simply this or that useful (or unuseful) thing. They do manifest a field of referentiality, but that field of referentiality does not present itself as the "being of" that useful thing. Furthermore, this referential totality is not what metaphysicians have always tried to investigate in various ways. It is Heidegger who makes all these connections. These connections are first made possible, as I argue above, through abstractly positing the idea of being as such within the realm of transcendental consciousness. This position is not an act of a pre-reflective Dasein, since it is not a practical one, but an act of the theoretical mind. Heidegger thinks that by beginning from the pre-thematic understanding of being, one grasps more concretely what has already been the subject matter of all philosophical inquiries. However, by conceptualizing "phenomenon" as the being of beings, he is already working on a theoretical attitude in which the idea of being *qua* being forms the ground of all empirical entities. To define "phenomenon" as the being of beings is another instance of the transcendental process that I term empirical demonstration in which the empirical is abstractly founded upon the transcendent (not transcendental) ideas. This metaphysicalization of phenomenology is essentially incompatible with the original motivation of phenomenology and its ultimate end, which is to remain confined to phenomena as they appear to us. Being as such is not a phenomenon, but a mental construction that is falsely projected as the objectively valid ground of all phenomena. Heidegger's fundamental ontology remains within the confines of objectivistic metaphysics.

4. Transcendental Analysis of "Ontological Difference"

I shall now turn to Heidegger's account of ontological difference. The ontological difference can be considered Heidegger's most prominent contribution to the history of metaphysics. His emphasis on this difference is part of his diagnosis of what he believes to be a significant misunderstanding of the nature of philosophy that has led to the crisis of its foundation. The task of fundamental ontology is to show the possibility of philosophy in an age where philosophy has been looked upon with suspicion by natural scientists, positivists, pragmatics, neo-Kantians, Marxists, etc. But his diagnosis assumes a dogmatic beginning: that being is the sole theme of philosophy. He posits that, rather than attempting to know being based on its essential determinations, "metaphysicians" have always approached it through the determinations of beings (*Seiende*). Being has always been mistaken for some being and, thus, the central theme of philosophy has always been lost. As shown above, Heidegger proposes that the demonstration of the possibility of making being *qua* being the theme of philosophy, apart from all the determinations of beings, must become the primary aim of philosophy. This aim is to be achieved through the analysis of Dasein's pre-theoretical understanding, since it is in this understanding that the distinction between being and beings is first grasped, although only implicitly and pre-thematically.

So far, I have shown that the analysis of the Dasein itself rests on certain transcendental (mental and theoretical) presuppositions, the most important of which is the position of the idea of the thing-in-itself or being in general. I also describe another process at work within the theoretical structure of Heidegger's description of our pre-theoretical relationship with the world, based on which the so-called phenomenological analysis of everydayness is already ontologically defined. Dogmatic objectivism can be used as a general description of Heidegger's characterization of phenomenology as a whole, which, as shown above, ultimately ends up negating the very foundation of phenomenology. It can be shown that all the themes of his philosophy are in some way affected by dogmatic objectivism, but such a survey lies out of the scope of the present study. Furthermore, in his treating ontological difference, Heidegger's starting point is dogmatic objectivism, meaning that he thinks the difference between being and beings is simply

there in the constitution of Dasein's existence and the only task of philosophy is to bring it to light by conceptually presenting it. This naïve characterization of the difference between the concept of being *qua* being and the concept of beings can be reassessed from the transcendental perspective outlined in Part I. In the analysis of the ideal structure of metaphysical theorization, it was shown that the second element is the conceptual determination of the idea of the thing-in-itself. Through this step, metaphysical systems define what the essential determination of the thing-in-itself is. Thus, the first metaphysical proposition is formed: "being is …". This initial conceptual determination then sets the tone for the further conceptual determinations of the concept of the thing-in-itself.

It is first within this element of the theoretical structure of metaphysics that the difference between being and beings emerges. The difference between being and beings is the difference between the concept of being or the thing-in-itself and the further conceptual determination of it. In one of the passages quoted above from Heidegger, he asserts that since Thales philosophers have always "explained being by means of a being." Thus, being itself has never become the theme of philosophical reflection. "Explaining being by means of being" is exactly what we described as the second transcendental-ideal element of metaphysical theorization. Heidegger's "phenomenological" analysis of Dasein aims to show that this distinction is somehow implicit in our pre-philosophical dealings with things. However, as we saw above, his analysis of understanding as projecting "something upon something," in which a transcendence from beings to the being of beings happens, does not suffice as a ground for the possibility of a scientific grasp of being *qua* being. The concept of being *qua* being is a purely mental projection. Thus, the difference between being and beings in general—as opposed to the useful thing and its contextual referentiality—is also a distinction that is first founded by the theoretical mind. Once the mind adopts the theoretical-metaphysical attitude, it proceeds by first positing the idea of the thing-in-itself as the sole theme of philosophy. The next step, which is necessitated by the question "What is the thing-in-itself (Thing, being *qua* being)?", is to be answered by a more determinate concept (water, substance, God, subject, reason, will, etc.). It is in response to this question that the first metaphysical proposition is

born: “being is …” Within the structure of the metaphysical-theoretical attitude, the subject and the predicate of the first metaphysical proposition are respectively what dogmatic ontology terms “being *qua* being” and “beings” and the difference between the subject and the predicate is the “ontological difference.” Dogmatic ontology, however, thinks of these concepts as realities independent of the mind. As a result, it thinks of their difference also in an objective way. Thus, Heidegger’s search for the ground of ontological difference within the existential structure of Dasein is the wrong starting point. His analysis of Dasein and the ontological difference is moving within a theoretical-metaphysical attitude wherein the concepts of being and beings and their difference are initially manifested.

Does Heidegger’s refutation of a determination of being through the characteristics of beings—the second transcendental component of metaphysical theorization—make his thinking less metaphysical? Heidegger’s search for a “no longer metaphysical thinking” that flourishes in his later period is driven mainly by a heightened focus on the ontological difference.

> Metaphysics thinks beings as beings. Wherever the question is asked what beings are, beings as such are in sight. Metaphysical representation owes this sight to the light of Being. The light itself, i.e., that which such thinking experiences as light, no longer comes within the range of metaphysical thinking; for metaphysics always represents beings only as beings. Within this perspective, metaphysical thinking does, of course, inquire about the being that is the source and originator of this light…. Because metaphysics interrogates beings as beings, it remains concerned with beings and does not turn itself to Being as Being. (Heidegger, 1998, p. 277-8)

“Thinking” in Heidegger’s later philosophy assumes the task of contemplating being as such and, thus, is characterized as essentially different from a “metaphysics” that approaches being through beings. Being is the ground of beings, which allows beings to present themselves in various ways. Being itself, however, is the “presence as such” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 445). By limiting themselves to the ontic view, metaphysicians do not raise the question of the presence as such and, thus, fall short of grasping the true

object of philosophy (ibid, p. 447). Thinking must free itself from all the conceptualizations that metaphysics—in Heidegger's sense— invokes when treating the question of being. This is why Heidegger's later writings appeal to a sort of poetic language that is presumably a non-conceptual language to provide more direct access to the essence of being as presence.

Of the elements constitutive of the metaphysical attitude only the first one, namely, the positing of the thing-in-itself is a necessary element. The application of the subsequent conceptual and empirical developments of the idea of the thing-in-itself is contingent upon the specific ways in which each metaphysical system evolves. The first step is foundational, as metaphysics must first establish its subject matter if it is to be founded as a distinct field of theoretical activity. For instance, in the case of Thales's statement, only the two first elements are discernible. He never developed a full ontological system, yet his singular statement is not less metaphysical than, say, Hegel's encyclopedic metaphysics. The difference between Thales's singular metaphysical statement and Hegel's system lies in the third moment of the theoretical elements of metaphysical attitude, that is, the metaphysical demonstration that is performed in two forms, conceptual and empirical demonstration. Now in the case of Heidegger, both in his early and later periods, there are multiple instances of conceptual and empirical demonstrations. But his emphatic refusal of a single conceptual determination does not make his thinking less metaphysical, since the concept of being *qua* being is already posed as the ground upon which his thinking evolves. His later philosophy, thus, assumes a poetic-speculative form, in which the concept of being *qua* being is developed through the sort of concepts that have not been conventionally employed by metaphysicians, especially the ones that are tightly associated with subjectivity and reason. Thus, concepts such as "clearing," "openness," "presence," and "language" should be considered as further elaborations of the concept of being, and statements such as "language is the house of being" (Heidegger, 1993, p. 217), "man is shepherd of being" (ibid, p. 234), or "nothing itself nihilates" (*Das Nicht selbst nichtet*) (ibid, p. 103) can be considered as the original conceptual determinations of the concept of being.

The above analysis serves to demonstrate, through the method of transcendental phenomenology, the speculative nature of Heidegger's philosophy. Above all this analysis reveals the illegitimacy of the fundamental concepts of Heidegger's philosophical project on the basis of which he prescribes a diagnosis of the crises of the contemporary world. Any use of Heideggerian concepts, even if they meant to be eclectic, should attend to the legitimacy of employing these concepts. Critical social theory, thus, cannot naively take for granted the validity of Heidegger's metaphysical concepts since these concepts carry in themselves claims to the objectivity of illusory realities. A transcendental phenomenological critique of Heidegger's philosophy reveals the uncritical foundation of his philosophy and, thus, serves critical social theory in its search for a clearer presentation of its subject matter, namely, human being in its social determinations.

Chapter 4: Sophistic Metaphysics

1. Deconstructionism

In the history of Greek philosophy, sophists were thinkers and teachers who, with the skilled use of rhetoric, fabricated fallacious arguments to mislead their listeners. They did not pursue truth but rather were skeptics and relativists whose arguments were aimed at concealing or denying truth. They are held to be, in part, responsible for the emergence of the earnest search for truth most elegantly manifest in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Plato's theory of ideas and Aristotle's theory of substance were both, to some extent, driven by the attempt to refute the sophistical arguments of their times. If, according to this common understanding of the history of Greek philosophy, their search for truth led to the emergence of metaphysical theories, then Aristotle's *Metaphysics* represents the pinnacle of this search. *Metaphysics* is certainly the greatest effort from that time to establish dogmatic metaphysics scientifically.

Scholastic metaphysics, both in its Christian and Islamic forms, borrowed many of its foundational principles from Plato and Aristotle. Therefore, just like its Greek predecessors, Scholastic metaphysics remains largely dogmatic and anti-relativist and thus anti-sophist in spirit. Almost all its main areas, that is, theology, cosmology, ethics, and psychology, are based on some form of dogmatic realist foundation that presupposes our (rational) access to reality as it is.

The Kant's critique of reason challenged this understanding of the relationship between sophism and metaphysics. In an interesting passage from the "Transcendental Dialectic," in a discussion of the

cosmological conflicts, Kant sides with Zeno, whose sophistical arguments always concluded in contradiction, to make a point about the nature of cosmological arguments:

> **Zeno** the **Eleatic**, a subtle dialectician, was already severely censured by Plato as a wanton sophist who, to show his art, would seek to prove some proposition through plausible arguments and then immediately to overthrow the same proposition through other arguments just as strong. He asserted that God (presumably for him this was nothing but the world) is neither finite nor infinite, is neither in motion nor at rest, and is neither like nor unlike any other thing. To those who judged him, it appeared that he wanted entirely to deny two mutually contradictory propositions, which is absurd. But I do not find that this charge can be justly lodged against him. (A503/B535)

In this passage, Kant's primary goal is to use Zeno's arguments to establish his definition of "dialectical opposition." The dialectical oppositions contain something more than is required for mere contradiction, namely, the position of a thing-in-itself (which in this case is the world). In cosmological arguments, the transcendental illusion consists in the fact that the mind posits the concept of the world as "a thing active in itself" (A505/B533), while, in Kant's view, the concept of the world contains nothing more than the conditioned series of representations that are, as such, only appearances. The transcendental illusion is also present in other branches of metaphysics. All metaphysical arguments are in one way or another affected by it and are, thus, illusional. Metaphysics is thus sophistical in nature, but only in a transcendental sense. If the kernel of Greek sophism can be recognized as eliciting contradictions, not just in the opponent's statements as a mere rhetorical strategy, but also in ethics and ontology, then its opponent, dogmatic metaphysics, is just as sophistical. By using Kant's critique, the true meaning of the transcendental form of sophistry is disclosed through a transcendental-idealistic study of the theoretical capacities of the human mind.

Outside of the framework of Kant's transcendental critique, there is a clear distinction between dogmatic metaphysics and Greek sophism. But is it possible to speak of the transcendental illusion in

Greek sophism as well? The answer to this question would be positive if it could be determined that transcendental illusion is also active in Greek sophism; in other words, if it can be shown that sophism is itself a form of speculative metaphysics. In this section, I argue that Derrida's philosophy is a case of metaphysical sophism and that it incorporates both realist and transcendental sophism. Therefore, the analysis of his thoughts must be pursued at two levels. First, an exposition will be given of the objectivist ontology developed on the basis of the self-refuting (self-negating) concept of differance. Second, the constitution of this ontology will be subjected to a transcendental-phenomenological critique that will unearth the transcendental sophistical elements at the core of the theoretical construction of his metaphysics. This double sophism is not specific to Derrida; other versions of it have been developed by postmodern philosophers such as Deleuze and Badiou. The philosophical approach of postmodernism is metaphysical and dogmatic in nature. In the following, I first provide an account of the concept of differance and characterize it as the concept of the paradoxical. I then argue that the transcendental or eidetic origin of this concept can be traced back to the epistemic act of negation of the principle of non-contradiction. The concept of the paradoxical, then, is abstractly applied to the concept of the thing-in-itself yielding the concept of differance as an absolutely objective reality residing on its own.

2. The Conceptual Construction of Differance

In his essay "Difference," where Derrida provides the most direct and comprehensible elucidation of the concept of differance, he claims that "*Differance* is neither a word nor a concept" (Derrida, 1982a, p. 7). Words designate things and things are supposedly either substances underlying attributes or the attributes of a thing. A thing always implies unity. Concepts promise the representation of things in their essential character, that is, as they are in their selfsame unity. Hence, Derrida prefers to use the term "sheaf" to refer to differance, since it better grasps its non-unitary nature:

> What am I to do in order to speak of the a of differance? It goes without saying that it cannot be exposed. One can expose only that which at a certain moment can become present, manifest, that which can be shown, presented as something present, a being-present in its truth, in the truth of a present or the presence of the present. Now if *difference* is (and I also cross out the "is") what make possible the presentation of the being-present, it is never presented as such. It is never offered to the present. In every exposition it would be exposed to disappearing as disappearance. It would risk appearing: disappearing. (Derrida, 1982, p. 6)

Differance is not absolutely unrepresentable, a total absence or disappearance. It presents itself, but it presents itself in its un-presentability; it appears as disappearing. It is this character of differance that Derrida refers to as "trace:" "The (*pure*) *trace* is difference" (Derrida, 2013, p. 62). A trace simultaneously marks the appearance of something and its disappearance. Trace is located at the crossroad of appearance and dis-appearance. It is a movement from presence to absence and vice versa. It does not possess a self-sufficient field of its own; it transgresses both determinations and puts into question their authority and identity:

> It is because of *differance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called "present" element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. (Derrida, 1982, p.11)

It is always too late or too soon to catch the presence of the present moment. Presence as such never presents itself. Differance is a differing-deferring movement. What is deferred in any case can be the full presence of a meaning, the complete understanding of a text, or the fulfillment of a desire. This, however, does not mean that meaning can never be grasped. It is rather a description of the way that meaning

presents itself to us. The meaning is produced through a differantial process. The meaning is constituted by a signifier and a signified and every signifier refers to a signified, that is, to something other than itself. The difference between the two is necessary for the constitution of meaning. The signified is, in turn, itself a signifier. The chain of references never yields to a final master-signified that refers only to itself and serves as the origin of the whole system of meanings. The signifier/signified chain is endless. Differance always drives us into further multitudes of differences, movements, and references.

According to Derrida, "presence" is the leading idea of metaphysics that provoked it from its birth in Greece up until Heidegger's philosophy. Differance, however, violates the discourse of presence and cannot be described by the ontological categories:

> *Differance* is not only irreducible to any ontological or theological—ontotheological—reappropriation, but as the very opening of the space in which ontotheology—philosophy—produces its system and its history, it includes ontotheology, inscribing it and exceeding it without return. (Derrida, 1982, p. 6)

Differance locates itself neither within the field of "metaphysics" nor outside of it; it beholds an always polemical and problematic relationship with "metaphysics." Derrida's relationship with "metaphysics," thus, cannot simply be described as "anti-metaphysical," but rather as a complex relationship that is asserted by the movement of differance itself. Difference constantly frees itself from the oppositions of the history of metaphysics and above all the very opposition between the "metaphysical" and "non-metaphysical." Derrida declares that difference, as the constant restless movement that lacks any origin and *telos*, dislocates the boundaries of all the ontological discourses, rendering any effort towards conceptualization fruitless:

> There is no essence of *dfferance*; it (is) that which not only could never be appropriated in the *as such* of its name or its appearing, but also that which threatens the authority of the *as such* in general, of the presence of the thing itself in its essence. That there is not a proper essence of

> *differance* at this point, implies that there is neither a Being nor truth of the play of writing such as it engages *differance*. (ibid. pp. 25, 26)

Its wavering, its "implacable" motion, subverts all the theorization—since theorization and conceptualization aim at grasping things in their calm, unchanging essence.

According to Derrida, differance cannot be described by the ontological categories. Ontology is the study of being *qua* being and its essential characteristics. Heidegger, whose conception of being influenced Derrida's understanding of the nature of ontology, argues that the essence of being for Greeks lies in 'presence' [*praesens*]: "In Aristotle's time *ousia* in its every day, pre-philosophical sense is still equivalent to property, estate, but as a philosophical term it signifies presence" (Heidegger, 1988, p. 315). Like Heidegger, Derrida sees the history of metaphysics as determined by the interest in the investigation of being understood as presence:

> The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix—if you will pardon me for demonstrating so little and for being so elliptical in order to come more quickly to my principal theme—is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence—*eidos, arche, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject). (Derrida, 1978, p. 352)

Derrida's "critique" of "metaphysics" comes out of a formulation of differance that can be described as paradoxical. Differance is not simply the difference between two opposed terms; it is in a way operative in both of them. Derrida, however, is careful not to explain this concept through what he terms the language of the metaphysics of presence. Difference cannot simply be thought of as an origin, source, or cause of differences since its very nature would negate such ontological primordiality. This results in paradoxical characterizations of difference:

> What is written as differance, then, will be the playing movement that "produces"— by means of something that is not simply an activity—these differences, these effects of difference. This does not mean that the difference that produces differences is somehow before them, in a simple and unmodified—in-different— present. Differance is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences. Thus, the name "origin" no longer suits it. (ibid., p. 11)

In these passages, Derrida characterizes differance in contradictory terms: it is an "activity that is not simply an activity," or an "origin that is not an origin." Differance that produces differences does not do so in a simple cause and effect model; it does not come "before" the differences as possessing a separate field outside them. In what sense, then, does differance "produce" differences? Derrida writes:

> If such a presence were implied in the concept of cause in general, in the most classical fashion, we then would have to speak of an effect without a cause, which very quickly would lead to speaking of no effect at all. I have attempted to indicate a way out of the closure of this framework via the "trace," which is no more an effect than it has a cause, but which in and of itself, outside its text, is not sufficient to operate the necessary transgression. (ibid., p.11)

To break out of the closure of the cause-and-effect framework, the trace must assume a *paradoxical* operation: it must cause an effect without being the cause of that effect and must be caused without being an effect. But where is the "outside" of this closed framework? Does differance hold a territory beyond the identity of the oppositions from where it exercises its function? Derrida's answer to these questions is not less self-contradictory:

> It [differance] does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such a plenitude. Although it does not exist, although it is never a being-present outside of all plenitude, its possibility is by rights anterior to all that one calls sign (signified/ signifier, content/expression, etc.), concept or operation, motor or sensory. This differance is therefore not more sensible than intelligible… (Derrida, 2013, p. 62)

Independent of all the fullness of the oppositions—conceptual/sensuous, and so on—difference is the very condition of their possibility. Here Derrida uses the language of transcendental philosophy, which is, according to him, entangled in the "metaphysical" conceptualization, since the conditions of the possibility of something must transcend that thing and have an essentially different mode of existence. In a way, he even asserts the "transcendence" of the play of differance in the following passage:

> The concept of play keeps itself beyond this opposition [between philosophical/empirical], announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end. (Derrida, 1982, P. 7)

The unity of the opposition cannot be based on either of the terms; it must be rooted in a third reality that surpasses the "opposition," as such. In other words, in order to have the unifying effect in any possible manner, it must drive its force from a source other than the opposites. But does this formulation bring differance to close to the Hegelian dialectic? In other passages, Derrida, paradoxically, denies such a superiority for differance:

> It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority. … Not is there no kingdom of difference but difference instigates the subversion of kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. (ibid., p. 22)

How can differance "instigate" or carry out any sort of activity without enjoying any fullness and selfhood upon which to establish its agency? Questions like this certainly cannot be answered by difference. In effect, it is the very "unanswerability" and "inexplicability" of these questions that are celebrated by differance. Difference must hold us within the wonder of questioning, in the very *constant quest* for an answer. An answer whose full presence, although already promised, will never fully arrive to bring a closure to the openness of the endless and unsettling curiosity of questioning.

Another important feature of differance is that it is often described as a movement and action: "Thus, differance is the name we might give to the "active," moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces…" (ibid., p.18). Derrida explains the moving nature of differance:

> [B]ut in a way it defers itself, or at least does so more readily than any other word, the *a* immediately deriving from the present participle (*différent*) thereby bringing us close to the very action of the verb differer, before it has even produced an effect constituted something different or as difference (with an e). In a conceptually adhering classical stricture "differance" would be said to designate a constitutive, productive, an originary causality, the process of scission and division which would produce and constitute different things and differences. (Derrida, 1982, pp. 8,9)

Differance is a constitutive movement that constitutes differences; it "disseminates" them in an endless adventurous creativity. But Derrida warns against the attempts to conceptualize this movement as creative. Differance is not simply the creative source of differences, like God is to the world. That differance produces differences does not mean that it brings the differences into being, into the present; rather it creates differences at the same time as it defers their presence: "Differences, thus, are "produced"—deferred—by differance" (ibid, p.14). Thus, the movement of differance is neither simply an active nor a passive movement. The movement of differance is self-refuting and paradoxical in nature:

> But, because it brings us close to the infinitive and active kernel of différer, différance (with an a) neutralizes what the infinitive denotes as simply active, just as mouvance in our language does not simply mean the fact of moving, of moving oneself or of being moved. We must consider that in the usage of our language the ending-ance remains undecided between the active and the passive. (ibid., p. 9)

> What is written as differance, then, will be the playing movement that "produces"— by means of something that is not simply an activity—these differences, these effects of difference. (ibid., p. 11)

In these phases, differance is characterized as a form of "activity," namely, a "productive movement" that produces in a "playful" manner, that is, without an already determined unifying finality.

Through this playfulness, differance differentiates itself from any sort of movement directed towards an ultimate end, the best model of which is perhaps Hegel's dialectic. As Derrida puts it, with an "oblique movement," differance traverses the discourse of logos, constantly dislocating itself within and beyond it. Its movement cannot be fully absorbed within the logo-centrism of Western metaphysics, that is, the "metaphysics of presence," and encoded by its categories. For Hegel, a prominent figure in "Western logocentrism," reason is essentially a process that inscribes reality as a whole. It has the absolute authority to fully govern and determine reality according to a *telos* (Hegel, 1953, P. 31). Reality as such is, then, constituted, by a dialectical process that unifies it in its end. Dialectic is a "purposeful" movement that rationalizes the irrationalities as it unfolds in history. Reason is present throughout this process of unfolding reality and, as "presence," constitutes the phenomenality of all phenomena. The irrationalities that happen here and there, in wars and oppressions, will be resolved once the reason reaches its full actuality in history. Irrationalities are, thus, only potential rationalities waiting to be sublated sooner or later by the force of reason. In Hegel's philosophy, reason is both the origin of the world and its *telos*. By contrast, differance is described by Derrida as a purposeless movement:

> In the delineation of differance everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a telos or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the development of the field. Finally, a strategy without finality, what might be called blind tactics… (Derrida, 1982, p. 7)

Differance is, thus, a paradoxical movement without any origin and purpose. Unlike the Hegelian dialectical movement that overcomes the differences by synthesizing them into higher forms of identity, differance produces, creates, and preserves differences by deferring identities.

But is this fixation on the contradictory relation able to defy the metaphysics of identity? What if this very impenetrable "incomprehensibility" itself is turned into a metaphysics? What if the differing and deferring of the metaphysics of presence is itself a mask for a metaphysics, a metaphysics that substantializes the absolute permanence of "presence-absence"?

3. The Transcendental Analysis of the Metaphysical Foundation of Deconstructionism

In the last section, the focus was on providing an account of what Derrida means by differance. This account must naturally come before the critical analysis of differance since it forms the materials for the phenomenological analysis that is to be undertaken in this section. The phenomenological method is distinguished from the method of speculative philosophy in that the content of its inquiry must be first given to it a posteriori. As the science of phenomena, it knows no authority higher than the phenomena themselves (or to use Husserl's terminology, things themselves). However, transcendental phenomenology is not a pure empirical study of empirical facts. As a transcendental science, it looks for the essences of the phenomena. Broadly speaking, phenomena are everything that can be presented in the consciousness. Phenomenology, thus, is the universal philosophy, as it holds the potentiality to subject the entire field of phenomenality to its inquiry. Depending on the specific region of phenomena it intends to investigate, phenomenology can be branched out into subfields; for example, phenomenology of religion studies the religious phenomenality (religious world) and phenomenology of art inquires into the artistic phenomena.

The field of phenomenality that is the focus here is metaphysics. Thus, as discussed above, metaphysical thoughts, conceptual systems, principles, methods, techniques, and modes of argumentation

are regarded as phenomena, that is, as materials for phenomenological observation. By reducing the content of a metaphysical system an important shift in attitude occurs that puts the validity and invalidity of that metaphysical system in bracket. Hence, in the following phenomenological analysis of Derrida's concept of differance, it is not in my interest to dispute the truth-content of his statements, but rather to examine them based on the eidetic conditions that have made them possible in the first place as a theoretical form.

Unsurprisingly, this study generates resistance among those who are well acquainted with Derrida's philosophy. After all, a big part of his thinking is a critique of the assumptions upon which this inquiry rests. How is it possible to subject differance, which purports to escape phenomenality, to a subjectivist and phenomenological study? Does not differance entail an essential escape, a deviation from the centrality of the thinking subject and its dominating identity? Considered on the basis of its inner power, does not differance subvert metaphysical and phenomenological discourses whose foundation is laid via a claim to the authority of the "same" and "presence"? Can differance be formulated according to the theoretical capacities of a subject? Does not Derrida stipulate that differance is not a subjective (nor an objective) determination? Therefore, do I not risk a terrible misrepresentation of Derrida's philosophy to read it from a Kantian-Husserlian perspective?

Grounding differance in the subjective capacities of the theoretical subject does violate what is most essential to its function and, therefore, brings out the contrast between the two attitudes, namely, the transcendental-phenomenological attitude and the objectivist attitude of deconstructionism. But now the question of what critique means becomes more complex. On the one hand, I assert that the transcendental-phenomenological attitude does not make any judgment regarding the validity of Derrida's philosophy. On the other hand, such a critical assessment based on a subjective ground will raise concerns about misreading his thinking. Does a phenomenological critique dispute the inner elements of Derrida's philosophy—or any philosophy, for that matter—or not? The answer lies in the important switch of attitude that is required by performing phenomenological reduction. This switch of attitudes is itself the

first and the most critical part of the critique. Now with regards to the limited task of the phenomenological critique of metaphysical thinking, once the reduction is performed, the content of the metaphysical system under examination is reduced to its pure ideality. Before the reduction, a metaphysical system's statements are all considered to have the ground of their validity in themselves. Thus, within this objectivist approach, no critical intervention is launched concerning their eidetic ground, and therefore their statements remain critically untouched. The only thing that is reduced is the claim to the (absolute) validity of the metaphysical statements while the entire content of that system is delivered to transcendental consciousness as the materials for phenomenological investigation. The phenomenologist, then, examines a metaphysical system according to the general ground for the possibility of metaphysical theorization.

The necessity of such a change in attitude in the study of metaphysics is already presented by the fact that all metaphysical systems are theoretical products of human epistemic capacities, more specifically their theoretical capacity. Thus, a cursory glance reveals that no matter how far and convincing deconstruction might sound in its critique of Western metaphysics, ontology, and transcendental phenomenology, as a theory it remains bound to the theoretical capacities of the subject. The reduction reveals differance as a theoretical construct and allows us to observe its constituent components. The shift of our gaze towards the theoretical, that is, the eidetic existence of difference would put in suspension its validity claims. Differance as a theoretical construct would then no longer be regarded as a reality constituted independently from the mind, but as will be shown below it is just as less real (objective) as any other metaphysical determinations proposed by its preceding metaphysical systems.

To avoid any confusion that might arise from these cursory remarks more detailed analysis is needed. First, it is important briefly to recap the basic ideal elements of metaphysical theorization in general just to have in view which elements are going to be mainly discussed. All metaphysical theorization is made possible, first, by positing the object of metaphysics, that is, the thing-in-itself. In a

second movement, the idea of the thing-in-itself is conceptually determined. The propositional form of this ideal determination is this: “being is …” (the original metaphysical proposition). In a third movement, metaphysical systems involve further conceptual and empirical demonstration of the original proposition. The above analysis of deconstructionism demonstrated through the first transcendental act the insertion of deconstructionism in the metaphysical theorization. The concept of differance is, then, the original determination of the idea of the thing-in-itself (the predicate in the fundamental metaphysical proposition, “Being is…”). Thus, the original metaphysical proposition of Derrida’s deconstructionism is this: being is differance. I subsequently examine some episodes of the conceptual and empirical demonstrations given by Derrida. Due to the complexities specific to the concept of differance and the potential confusion that might result from our characterization of it, I begin with a phenomenological analysis of the eidetic origin of the concept of differance.

3.1. The Eidetic Constitution of the Concept of Differance

In the previous section, differance was defined as a paradoxical movement. Here I begin by first considering the paradoxicality of difference. After the application of the phenomenological reduction to differance, I consider it in its mere ideality. Since metaphysical theorization, in general, is a conceptual mode of activity, the reduction of a metaphysical system will necessarily render it as a conceptual construction. The metaphysical system then becomes the subject of study in its mere conceptuality. To the extent that metaphysical theorization as such is the subject of a transcendental-phenomenological assessment, ideality means conceptuality. It is only after this reduction that it is possible to ask, as did Kant, whether the metaphysical concepts refer to any reality (experience) or remain empty of content. Before the critical moment of reduction, there is no means to hold a philosophy accountable for its claims. Metaphysical thinking uncritically assumes a purely conceptual access to reality and falsely believes that pure concepts in their isolation from experience can determine the object of thinking.

Having reduced differance to the *concept* of differance, the question of this investigation is determined: as a concept, what does difference entail? What is contained in the concept of differance? This question must be answered with regards to the pure ideality of this concept. The analysis of the concept of differance must be pursued only in the terrain of ideas. So far, it has become clear that the concept of differance involves the concept of the paradoxical. The verb *différer* in French means both differ and defer. What does differance differ from and what does it defer? Derrida responds: "It differs from, and defers itself" (ibid., p. 20, 21). Differance is self-differing and self-deferring. It should be understood in contrast to the concept of the self-same identity, that is, the unchanging unity whose mode of existence remains always consistent; the concept of self-presence or the "same." What is differed and deferred is differance itself. It is never fully present, never fully itself; differance is not the self-presence of an identity. I focus my analysis first on the self-differing aspect of differance and subsequently explore the self-deferring aspect.

As self-differing, differance is self-differentiation, non-coincidence with itself. By contrast, the concept of self-identity and self-presence entails absolute consistency and coincidence with itself. Differance, thus, is a binary concept, that is, it contains an essential opposition between presence and absence ("presence-absence"). In logic, which is a purely eidetic science, this form of opposition is known as contradiction, which, simply put, refers to the assertion of the existence and non-existence of the same thing at the same time. Such an assertion is self-contradictory and, therefore, unintelligible. In the history of philosophy, it was perhaps Aristotle who first clearly formulated the principle of non-contradiction. For Aristotle, the principle of non-contradiction is not only a logical principle but also an ontological one, which means that this principle can be explicated at both logical and ontological levels. He indicated these two levels of application of this principle in the following passage:

> The most certain principle of all is that regarding which it is impossible to be mistaken; for such a principle must be both the best known (for all men may be mistaken about things which they do not know), and non-hypothetical…. Evidently, then such a principle is the most certain of all;

> which principle this is, we proceed to say. It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect … For it is impossible for any one to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think Heraclitus says. (Aristotle, 1984, p. 46)

This principle is a negative principle, that is, it asserts the impossibility of the same thing both to be and not to be. Although, as indicated in Aristotle's text, this principle is an ontological principle, as the ground of all rational thinking, it can only be grasped by the power of rational reflection and, thus, like all rational abstract principles exists, only *ideally*.

The idea of the paradoxical, that is, the content of the concept of differance, emerges as the *negation* of the principle of non-contradiction. The *eidetic act of negation of the principle of non-contradiction is, thus, the eidetic ground of the possibility of the concept of differance*. It is important to bear in mind, when considering the idea of the paradoxical, that as an idea it exists, even though its content refers to the ontological impossibility of the existence of a self-contradictory existence. The difference between the existence of the idea of the paradoxical and the paradoxical itself can be explained in this way: we can think or express the paradoxical statements such as, "square circle exists," but from the mere act of thinking or expressing this statement one cannot conclude that square circle is a real possibility.

In the idea of the paradoxical, a relationship between two opposites is thought—first and foremost, between being and non-being of a thing. This idea implies the self-contradictory, self-negating, or inconsistent mode of existence of a thing. This relationship is in itself a logical impossibility that can only be thought, that is, it exists only as a mere idea. But as a contradictory relationship, it assumes the two terms of which it is a relationship, namely, being and non-being, (or to use Derrida's terms presence and absence). The idea of the paradoxical thus contains the concepts of presence, absence, and their essential relationship in the concept of a thing. The concept of a thing is thus thought as self-negating, self-contradictory; in Derrida's terminology, the thing *differs* from *itself*. This amounts to the paradoxical

statement that the thing both is and is not itself. This paradoxical structure grounds many of Derrida's statements about differance.

The negation of the principle of non-contradiction is at the same time the negation of the principle of identity, which states that each thing is identical with itself. The principle of identity establishes the consistency and self-identity of a thing with itself. The principle of identity is more fundamental than the principle of non-contradiction; thus, the latter relies on the former. The principle of non-contradiction focuses on the negation of a thing's identity, implying that it already assumes the concept of identity. Thus, the concept of the paradoxical also contains in itself the concept of pure identity and pure non-identity as both negated, in their essential relationship in the concept of a thing. The concept of presence that is fundamental to Derrida's critique of the history of metaphysics—the "metaphysics of presence"—finds its transcendental ground first in the principle of identity. In the following, it is shown how the pure concept of identity and the pure concept of the paradoxical form the transcendental ground of Derrida's understanding of the metaphysics of presence and his method of "deconstructive critique" of this metaphysics. The concept of the paradoxical is correlated with the concept of pure identity (presence) and cannot be thought independent of it. The paradoxical inherently embodies a negative relation, an impossible relation, and, thus, always assumes the concept of pure and positive identity.

The third and final logical principle associated with the last two principles is the principle of the excluded middle term. This principle states that contradictory attributes cannot be denied to a thing at the same time. Aristotle formulates this principle in the following passage: "But on the other hand there cannot be an intermediate between contradictories, but of one subject we must either affirm or deny any one predicate. This is clear, in the first place, if we define what the true and the false are" (Aristotle, 1984, p. 57). An example can help illustrate this principle: a person cannot be neither healthy nor ill at the same time. Of the contradictory terms, one must be true of a thing. This principle also relies on the principle of identity and ascribes an underlying identity to a thing fully determined in itself. It is also related to the principle of non-contradiction in that it also involves contradictory terms. If a thing is fully determined by

one concept it cannot at the same time be fully determined by another concept that is in contradiction with the former. Therefore, there is no middle ground between contradictory terms. The negation of the principle of excluded would yield propositions of the following structure: "a thing is neither … nor…" in which the blank spaces must be filled with contradictory concepts. The inclusion of a middle term between the contradictory terms in the concept of a thing (or a subject) negates the determinate identity of that thing and, thus, the principle of identity. This propositional structure is also contained in Derrida's concept of differance. As a self-differing reality, difference is never fully present and never fully absent. In a discussion of the concept of supplement in *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida gives expression to this propositional form in the following ways:

> The supplement is maddening because it is neither presence nor absence and because it consequently breaches both our pleasure and our virginity. ". . . abstinence and enjoyment, pleasure and wisdom, escaped me in equal measure." (Rousseau, *Confessions*, qtd. in Derrida, 2013, p. 154)

> The concept of origin or nature is nothing but the myth of addition, of supplementarity annulled by being purely additive. It is the myth of the effacement of the trace, that is to say of an originary differance that is neither absence nor presence, neither negative nor positive. (Derrida, 2013)

The eidetic ground of the possibility of such statements is the eidetic act of the negation of the principle of the excluded middle term—itself an eidetic principle.

It should be obvious that here I am not concerned with anything like a logical deduction or even a reduction of the concept of differance to the three logical principles. Instead, I attempt to *observe* what is included in differance in its mere conceptuality. Reduced to its pure conceptuality, it has become apparent that the concept of differance bears a strong connection with the fundamental logical principles. I claim that the concept of differance as the ground of deconstructionism is eidetically constituted of three main components: first, the negation of the principle of non-contradiction, second, the negation of the principle

of identity, and third, the negation of the principle of excluded middle ground. The three negations are themselves theoretical activities of the theoretical mind at work of constructing the theory of differance. Thus, differance is constituted as the idea of a thing that is both presence and absence and neither presence nor absence. It is this idea that is then predicated of the idea of the thing-in-itself in the first metaphysical proposition of deconstructionism: being is difference.

3.2. Differance as the Thing-in-Itself

In the transcendental perspective adopted here, I am only interested in the mere ideality of the constituting components of the concept of differance. What is at stake is to show how the concept of differance is defined in opposition to the discourse of logic and its foundational laws. This is made possible, first, by reducing the objectivist claims that differance makes, such as the claims of it being a "movement," a "force," and an "activity," As undertaken below. These attributes of differance will not remain valid after reducing it to its pure eidetic components. This eidetic critique of differance has already violated one of Derrida's principal statements, namely, that differance is not a concept. On behalf of Derrida, the objection might be raised that to consider differance as a mere concept would miss the core of his thinking. This objection assumes that differance is more than its conceptual existence and is rather also an objective reality. To consider differance as a mere concept means to assimilate its unruly gestures into the rationality of human subjectivity. Derrida is explicit about the fact that differance (supplement) does not belong to the human realm:

> For on the other hand, supplementarity, which is nothing, neither a presence nor an absence, is neither a substance nor an essence of man. It is precisely the play of presence and absence...That supplementarity is not a characteristic or property of man does not mean only, and in an equally radical manner, that it is not a characteristic or property; but also that its play precedes what one

> calls man and extends outside of him. Man calls himself man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity. (Derrida, 2013, p. 244)

The play of supplementarity is in a sense prior to man, so that by calling himself man, man abstracts himself from the differantial plays of supplementary forces. In other words, it is man who finds himself in relation to the forces of differance. Supplementarity constitutes man, not vice versa.

It is precisely in passages like these that the metaphysical nature of deconstructionism that lies in the moment of transcending from the ideal to the real is laid bare. Put differently, differance in Derrida's text is itself a metaphysical entity at the moment when it steps out of the realm of pure ideality and is turned into a real entity existing on its own. The concept of differance is abstractly applied to the idea of the thing-in-itself. The idea of the thing-in-itself is not an empirical idea, that is, an idea that is given to us through experience. It is, thus, the idea of the universal thing plus the claim of objectivity. The thing-in-itself is the concept of an absolutely objective reality that grounds the empirical. By application of the concept of differance to the idea of the thing-in-itself, the objectivity that is abstractly, that is, purely subjectively, attributed to it extends to the concept of differance and difference becomes a reality independent from the subject. It is then after these transcendental-eidetic steps that differance gains its right and power to critique transcendental subjectivity.

Once driven to its ultimate consequences, this transcendental analysis can provide the key to the puzzling and persisting objection that can be raised on behalf of Derrida that my analysis is missing the non-conceptual and non-subject nature of differance. As my assessment of the content of the concept of differance showed in the last section, differance designates a relationship between contradictory terms, both the assertion and the negation of contradictions are derived from the concept of a thing. The application of the concept of differance to the idea of the thing-in-itself renders real these two forms of contradictory relations that can exist only as ideas. The contradictory relations inherent in the concept of difference then become the absolute ontological structure of reality as such. Differance is deemed as the

transcendent reality that exists outside of the realm of knowing subjectivity. This means that the concept of the paradoxical as the content of differance is turned into a real entity.

It is precisely this step, which is the core of what Kant calls transcendental illusion, that bestows on differance its philosophical dignity as well as its deconstructive power. The idea of the paradoxical which can exist only in mere ideas is turned into a self-dependent living movement and, exactly because in itself it is a self-contradictory process, it can no longer be absorbed into any non-paradoxical entity, such as the subject, God, nature, etc. With this transcendental step, differance becomes an ontologically independent realm (Derrida, 1982, p. 24). The impossible paradoxical relations, which are merely ideal and logical conceptuality are turned into real and positive self-refuting, self-differing reality existing in itself; difference becomes the thing-in-itself. As an ontological determination, or better, an absolute ontological authority, differance now has the basis of its validity in itself. It is on the ground of this ontological primordiality that differance can be proclaimed as the ground of the possibility of conceptuality as such: “Such a play, *differance*, is thus no longer simply a concept, but rather the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general”(Derrida, 1982b, p. 11). But as will be shown below, differance is also the ground of possibility of all entities. From the differantial perspective of deconstructionism, conceptuality is only another thing in which the constitutive movement of differance is discernible. As a universal metaphysical attitude, it views all things as made possible by the differantial movements.

As a mere idea, difference has no power with which to initiate the play of signifier and signified, no force with which to traverse “obliquely” the discourse of metaphysics and displace its binary oppositions, and no movement to fuel the eternal postponement of presence and production of differences. However, since the concept of differance contains contradictory relations, everything that is asserted of it must also be at the same time negated from it, thus presenting itself as an impossibility. The impossibility of difference, which is appreciated in deconstructionism, lies in the unintelligibility of the eidetic negation of the principle of non-contradiction and excluded middle term. However, in Derrida’s thinking it is raised

to the level of an ontological determination of the language itself—which ontologically designates the essence of reality. Only when the idea of the paradoxical is turned into an objective reality, can it claim that it belongs neither to the subjective nor objective field, since now it is a self-sufficient realm. Before the ontologization of the concept of differance, it is simply a mere concept amongst many other concepts and as such belongs to the subjective realm and has no objective claim. As a mere concept thus, it cannot deconstruct the binary oppositions of the history of metaphysics, nor can it challenge the authority of the theoretical subject that thinks it. The ontologization of the concept of differance bestows its content, that is, the idea of the paradoxical relations, a *living active existence* that then becomes an active force with real effects in all fields of reality, literature, philosophy, linguistics, psychoanalysis, society, economy, etc.

It is now possible to address the above-mentioned objection regarding the non-conceptuality of differance. Still conditioned by the limits of conceptuality, the concept of the paradoxical cannot refute its conceptuality, that is, its ideality, and belongs to the field of pure ideality. Thus, in the statement "differance is not a concept," differance is already ontologized; it has already ceased to be a mere concept and designates a metaphysical reality since it is now more than the ideality of its subjective presence. It is only as ontological existence that difference, based on its paradoxical ("maddening") *operations*, can claim "*to deviate"* and "*to displace*" the subjective order; otherwise, as a mere concept, it is only one concept amongst others immanent in the subjective mind. Thus, the deconstructive critique of subjectivity can itself be located within the transcendental structure of metaphysical theorization. Therefore, differance does not operate prior to the subject, as having a field of its own; on the contrary, its movement and forces presuppose an ideal process of ontological positing, which is in itself an eidetic act performed by the mind in its transcendental capacity.

The question that transcendental phenomenology poses is this: What is the basis of the existential positing of the concept of differance? What is the basis of the legitimacy of the ontological claims of differance? But in response, one might object by asking: why can differance not have the source of its existential validity in itself? Why can it not be ontologically self-sufficient? There are realities around us

that can be encountered through sense experience. There are also realities around us that are not merely sensual but have an empirical mode of existence such as social constructions, economic systems, cultural configurations, etc. The question of the existential validity of these objects never bothers philosophy (even though their nature can be the subject of endless debates). For example, in debates around democracy, one can raise questions about whether the idea of the current political system of a given country is truly democratic, which in turn might stir up questions regarding the nature of the democratic regime in general and the conditions of its actualization. It is possible to pursue such debates without feeling the need to take recourse to any universal ontological claims about the nature of reality as such—although some have done so falsely, I claim. Within this discourse, the phenomenon of democracy, or any other social and historical phenomenon, is always conditioned by the empirical conditions that decree its mode of possible actualization. However, the situation is completely different with differance (or any other metaphysical determination), whose scope of application extends far beyond a particular field thus laying a claim to absolute validity.

Thus far, I have discussed the concept of differance as "differing," that is, as containing contradictory relations. But according to Derrida's explication, differance also indicates "deferring." Although both elements imply activeness and movement—differ*ing*, deferr*ing*—deferring highlights the temporality of differance. What is deferred in each case is the full presence of self-consciousness, meaning, the fulfillment of a desire, or the realization of a will:

> *Différer* in this sense is to temporize, to take recourse, consciously or unconsciously, in the temporal and temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment or fulfillment of "desire" or "will," and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect. (Derrida, 1982, p. 8)

The temporal characterization of differance brings out its ontological nature more clearly, and it does so in many ways. Husserl speaks of the temporality of the structure of consciousness in isolation from the worldly temporality of existent things. This concept of temporality remains within the bounds of

subjective consciousness and its inner experience. The "temporization" of differance, by contrast, must not be attributed to a subject's inner structure. Time is an essentially differential movement; differance is active within the structure of time as such; time itself defers. To put it in the precise ontological language that highlights the absolute priority of differance, differance is the basis of the possibility of temporality. Differance, as the essence of all reality, is also the essence of time. The movements of differance are, thus, temporal movements, but as the above quote expresses, they are not consistent movements with origin and end. The movement of temporizing differance is paradoxical: it is annulling, neutralizing, and de-effecting as much as productive, confirming, and amplifying. In the following passage, Derrida explains in temporal terms the nature of signification, revealing differance at the foundation of time and language:

> It is because of differance that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called "present" element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. (Derrida, 1982b, p. 13)

Each moment in time is essentially constituted through its relationship to a moment other than itself, just as a signifier in language is what it is thanks to its relation to a signified. The present moment is only "present" because it is constituted by the past and future which are precisely the absence of presence. What constitutes the presence is the absence of presence. This differantial structure is the universal structure of presence or, as Derrida puts it, "everything that is thought on the basis of presence."

Through an eidetic process that I term empirical demonstration, this differential structure of differance is extended to all empirical things. Thus, time, language, will, meaning, desire, life, democracy, communism, power, philosophy, ethics, literature, cinema, etc. become the scenes of manifestation of the plays of differance. All elements of reality are, then, *essentially* differential: "the symbolic is the immediate, presence is absence, the nondeferred is deferred, pleasure is the menace of death" (Derrida, 2013, p. 154). The ontologization of the concept of differance, that is, the application of the concept of the paradoxical relations to the thing-in-itself, renders differance as the essence of the empirical things. The attribute of absolute objectivity already posited in the concept of the thing-in-itself extends to all fields of existence.

In the above section, it is argued that contradiction is always a form of oppositional relationship between two terms, or to be more precise, between the being and non-being of something. Now the application of the concept of the paradoxical to the thing-in-itself requires the universalization of this relationship and expansion of it to all forms of relations. Therefore, by focusing primarily on the binary oppositions in a text, the deconstructive method of reading turns that text into the field of manifestations of self-contradictory relations. This is a form of empirical demonstration through which the empirical relations are interpreted based on a transcendent concept. The concept of the paradoxical, as is shown above, contains in abstraction the contradictory relationship between pure being and pure non-being of an attribute in the concept of a thing. The negation of the principle of the excluded middle term that resulted in the negation of the contradictions from a thing, "neither being nor non-being of a thing," makes up another component of the concept of differance. Difference is, thus, constituted as both "presence and absence and neither presence nor absence."

The application of this conceptual content, that is. the (logically and ontologically) impossible relation, to the thing-in-itself is a constitutive eidetic act of deconstructionism. Within the parameters of metaphysical theorization, the idea of the thing-in-itself is the transcendent substitute for the empirical thing. Hence, the self-contradictory essence that is first and foremost thought in the concept of differance

is extended to all entities. Through this transcendental inversion, empirical reality as such becomes a transcendent reality. The transcendent in metaphysical theorization contains the root of the transcendental illusion; it is the scene where the metaphysical magic happens, that is, where the transcendentally posited Thing is embellished as the empirical thing. It is the scene on which philosophy as metaphysics has played its most marvelous and most credible tricks that have kept its audience entertained for centuries. As a consequence, each thing appears as itself being differantial in itself:

> Thus one could reconsider all the pairs of opposites on which philosophy is constructed and on which our discourse lives, not in order to see opposition erase itself but to see what indicates that each of the terms must appear as the differance of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same (the intelligible as differing-deferring the sensible, as the sensible different and deferred; the concept as different and deferred, differing-deferring intuition; culture as nature different and deferred, differing freedom, history, deferring; all the others of physis—*tekhne, nomos, thesis*, society, freedom, history, mind, etc.—as *physics* different and deferred, or as *physis* differing and deferring. *Physis* in *differance*. (Derrida, 1982b, p. 17)

All the domains of reality, even including nature, become immanent in the plays of differantial forces. Deconstructive interpretation of a phenomenon reads into it what the transcendental mind in its metaphysical attitude projects into the idea of the Thing. Things always exist within a referential structure of signifier-signified, presence-absence in which each signifier is at the same time its own absence. Each present element exists in so far as it is the absence of itself. The relationship between the signifier and signified, the presence and absence, is not governed by any rational finality; it takes on the form of a game, a play of significations. This universal system of significations is what Derrida sometimes refers to as "writing." According to the usual, that is, empirical use of the term writing, writing can refer to the act of inscribing one's thoughts in letters, or to a written text. Based on the transcendental ground of the metaphysical theory, the concept of writing in Derrida's use is an ontological reality that determines the nature of "All" as inherently paradoxical. The following passages clearly state this:

> And thus we say "writing" for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural "writing." One might also speak of athletic writing, and with even greater certainty of military or political writing in view of the techniques that govern those domains today. All this to describe not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities but the essence and the content of these activities themselves. It is also in this sense that the contemporary biologist speaks of writing and *pro-gram* in relation to the most elementary processes of information within the living cell. And, finally, whether it has essential limits or not, the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be the field of writing. (Derrida, 2013, p. 17)

That there are choreographic writings, athletic writings, political writings, biological writings, etc. only indicates the "universal" nature of writing, its absoluteness, its a priority, its metaphysical nature that can be studied only by a new "science," that is, grammatology, the science of writing. In other words, these fields are not external to writing, but writing comprehends them and animates them, constituting their movements, forces, differences, and unities. Writing is their *essence*. The particular sciences responsible for each of these fields—writings—are not sufficient to study what is essential to them. A "science" is needed to investigate them as writings, that is, as they are fundamentally formed by the plays of differance. Particular sciences pertaining to each of these fields always come upon a limit, that they fail to regulate these fields with the general ontological demand of a philosophical sort, namely, a metaphysical claim to a universal outlook. From a transcendental-phenomenological view, this ontological regulation is itself an eidetic act grounded within the theorizing subject that produces such ontology. This act is a condition of the possibility of the studiability of these fields in their totality. The totalization of all fields has already happened with the position of the idea of the thing-in-itself that transcendentally replaces the empirical things. Therefore, the empirical differences of empirical things are sacrificed in order to establish a transcendent difference. The philosophy of difference is not an empirical

appreciation of differences and denial of unity, as is the case with Hume's empiricism, but rather is itself a form of metaphysics that hypostatizes the concept of differance as a universal a priori character of all empirical things. Differance designates the inner structure of the thing-in-itself.

What are the conditions of a "science" that studies such forces? If an answer is demanded to these questions from Derrida's perspective, it should not be expected to have a straightforward answer, one that starts from the definition of science and ends with a classification of grammatology among sciences. This approach would locate science within the logocentrism of Western metaphysics from which grammatology wishes to divert. In Derrida's concept of science, the operation of differance is already assumed, that is to say, the self-neutralizing movement of a force thus allowing grammatology to be pronounced as science while at the same time debarring its full establishment: "I would like to suggest above all that… such as science of writing runs the risk of never being established as such and with that name. Of being able to define the unity of its project or its object. Of not being able either to write its discourse on method or to describe the limits of its field" (ibid., p. 4).

But what if an answer is demanded from a non-Derridian perspective, namely, a perspective that does not presuppose the constitutive movements of differance, but takes one step back and looks at the very theoretical elements that make the thought of differance as a conceptual construct possible in the first place? This question would call attention to the moment when deconstructionism is born into the philosophical scene as a distinct *approach*. What can be learned from an analysis of grammatology that regards it as nothing more than an approach? As soon as a metaphysical system is regarded as an approach, it results in a radical reduction of that whole system and the basis of its validity, since as an approach it belongs to a subject who adopts it (and of course can abandon it as well). As an approach, a theory, a method, a mode of thinking, deconstructionism would immediately appear as a "doing" of a subject, that is, an epistemic subject. This change in attitude to deconstruction radically overturns it. Deconstructionism, as a metaphysical mode of thinking, can never implement this change of attitude without undermining itself. Thus, it can never rightfully contemplate itself on the basis of its scientificity.

In the above-quoted statements on the incapacity of grammatology to be established, the absolute objectivity of difference, which is inherently illusional, is already assumed.

The existential positing of the idea of paradoxical relations is the transcendental act grounding deconstructionism as a metaphysical approach, based on which Derrida then considers the notion of science, including grammatology itself. The play of differantial forms, itself an ontological positing of the transcendental mind, governs Derrida's use of the language of transcendental philosophy when he writes: "This means that differance makes the opposition of presence and absence possible. Without the possibility of differance, the desire of presence as such would not find its breathing-space. That means by the same token that this desire carries in itself the destiny of its non-satisfaction. Differance produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing that it makes impossible" (ibid., p. 143).

4. The Eidetic Construction of the "Metaphysics of Presence"

No metaphysical system can ever begin to comprehend the grounds of its possibility since it always rests on the dogmatic beginnings and its attempts to arrive at a description of those grounds would never surpass the boundaries of the fictitious worlds it has created. When considering the matter of the ground of its possibility, metaphysical thinking has already transformed the concepts of ground and possibility into metaphysical realities. Deconstructionism cannot think the ground of its possibility, that is the transcendental mind whose theoretical practices give rise to the possibility of universally effective reality, differance. The adjective "effective" is not used here in an anti-Derridian sense, as it applies to the entirety of the content of the concept of differance and, thus, does not presuppose its ontological objectivity. The introduction of transcendental reduction makes it possible to de-effectivize the ontological functions of differance, that is, its plays, its forces, its productivity and effectivity as well as its neutralizing, vitiating, and tempering activities. The phenomenological reduction applies to the totality of the ontological functions of differance. The real functions of the conceptual content of differance, that is, the paradoxical relations between binary pairs including effectivity and de-effectivity are suspended.

Therefore, the field of transcendental subjectivity in which the ontologically suspended concept of differance appears is never accessible to the ontological functions of differance, as those functions belong to a metaphysically projected world by the transcendental mind. By the first transcendental de-effectivization of differance through transcendental reduction, it is possible to lay bare the eidetic elements that, in a second movement, posits it as a metaphysical entity.

It follows that the "critical" power of differance is premised on a series of subjective acts. The ontological functions of differance are only the projections of the transcendental mind deeming objective what is purely subjective. The transcendental critique of differance has important consequences for Derrida's characterization of metaphysics, according to which the history of philosophy has always been operating on the basis of the concept of presence as undisturbed by its "other," absence. This Derrida terms the "metaphysics of presence" to which deconstruction is supposed to provide a contrasting view. Differance cannot be included within the "closure" of metaphysical language, it moves beyond it although with an "oblique" movement. The metaphysics of presence refers to the desire for what Derrida calls the "transcendental signified," by which he means the presence of an absolutely self-sufficient element outside the system of significations. "I have identified logocentrism and the metaphysics of presence as the exigent, powerful, systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a signified" (Derrida, 2013, p. 49). The metaphysics of presence is motivated by the desire for the "transcendental" origin of the world that is itself beyond the world, the being of beings that is itself not a being, the essence of the perceptible things that is itself not perceptible. In the history of metaphysics, there are many names for "transcendental" signified: reason, God, primary being, one, etc. From Derrida's viewpoint, Heidegger's quest for being in its distinction from beings is to be located in the metaphysics of presence just as much as Husserl's search for an absolutely evident ground for knowledge.

The "transcendental" signified is an end in itself as a groundless origin, which while making possible the play of significations, is not itself simply a part of the chain of signifier-signified. The signs that make up the plays of differences in writing are themselves constituted by differance and its

conflictual forces, while the "transcendental" signified sets a limit to the plays of differences. Within the plays of differences, there is no privileged element. "One could call *play* the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence" (ibid., p. 50). This is why differance poses a challenge to all metaphysical systems that are premised on a "transcendental" signified. In this sense, the metaphysics of presence has been essentially onto-theological in all its periods. Metaphysics is driven by the force of mastery of identity over differences, and the assimilation of them into the self-presence of the same. Differance, however, cannot be grasped by the metaphysics of presence:

> [*D*]*ifferance* in its *active* movement--*what* is comprehended in the concept of *differance* without exhausting it--is what not only precedes metaphysics but also extends beyond the thought of being. (Derrida, 2013, p. 143)

Differance evades the order of presence, the domination of being. The discourse of the metaphysics of presence cannot give expression to differance, because it does not exist: "*difference is not*" (Derrida, 1982b, p. 22). "*The trace itself does not exist*. (To exist is to be, to be an entity, a being-present, *to on*.)" (Derrida, 2013, p. 167). Also, since to exist means to be present, manifest, a phenomenon, both discourses of ontology and phenomenology fall short of comprehending differance without reducing its radical difference to the logic of the "same." In the case of differance, to not exist means to operate outside of the authority of onto-theological discourse in which everything is ordered hierarchically.

From the transcendental phenomenological attitude, the question arises: what are the eidetic grounds of this characterization of metaphysics? It has been shown that the concept of difference can be eidetically explained in relation to the principle of identity (or the idea of the absolute identity of a thing with itself), the principle of non-contradiction, and the principle of excluded middle term. As such, differance contains the concept of contradictory relations that are hypostatized through their application to the thing-in-itself. Difference, then, becomes the force that animates the plays of signs that constitute writing. But writing, as has been shown, is another name for reality and as such comprehends the totality

of existence (the thing-in-itself). It is within this ontological projection and in relation to it that Derrida's concept of metaphysics of presence as the assertion of a "transcendental" signified is made possible. Here the term "transcendental" refers to anything that surpasses the relations of presence-absence and, instead, positions itself as a pure presence and refuses to succumb to the plays of differantial forces—which as we will see is impossible. The concept of identity or presence, therefore, must be denied any ontological status: "as regards the absence of the referent or the transcendental signified. There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]" (Derrida, 2013, p. 158).

From the transcendental phenomenological perspective, the statement that "differance is not" cannot be taken strictly in Derrida's sense, namely, that differance is essentially beyond ontological categories (being and nothingness) but refers to a mode of existence that is different from the mode of existence of an absolutely present element. Instead, it can be argued that differance *exists* as a self-contradictory element or as the paradoxical. But exactly at this point, an objection might arise: that to exist means to be a unity, so how can a paradoxical exist? Even within Aristotelian logic, the paradoxical is an ontological impossibility. Does not Derrida, thus, have a point in denying differance an ontological status? In response to this argument, I offer the following counter-argument. Yes, Aristotle denied an ontological status for the concept of the paradoxical and, as a result, he fundamentally rejected the position of Heraclitus who, according to him, believed that contraries can be predicated of one thing at the same time. Derrida, on the other hand, similar to Herliclitus, does not restrict the paradoxical to a mere idea but turns it into a real force with certain effects. There is no question that differance, for Derrida, is more than just a mental reality.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind that, within the framework of metaphysical theorization—as opposed to a metaphysical approach—when I speak of ontologization of the concept of differance, I am not suggesting that this ontologization renders differance as an objective existent reality. Quite the contrary, being a purely eidetic process, the ontologization of a concept never yields an objective reality. This is the essential principle of Kant's critique that I am implementing here. The root of

the discomfort felt in the discussion of differance—a discomfort of which Derrida is very well aware and of which he speaks in an appreciatory way—is nothing but the vain attempt at ontologization of a logical (an ontological) impossibility. Nevertheless, the impossibility of such enterprise does not falsify my phenomenological analysis, since in my analysis it does not matter which concept is picked as the subject of ontologization. As an eidetic act, ontologization is itself a vain adventure that posits as an objective reality what is essentially a mere idea, be it the concept of reason (Hegel), God, will, or, in the case of Derrida, the paradoxical. This is why my critique of the ontological ground of Derrida's metaphysics remains indifferent to the illogical character of its original concept, differance. Thus, my critique is not primarily to question Derrida's decision to choose the concept of the paradoxical as the ground of his metaphysics, but solely to show the eidetic ground of doing so. The ontologization of the idea of the paradoxical does not turn it into a reality any more than the ontologization of the concept of reason in Hegel's philosophy. But in the case of Derrida, we are facing more difficulties, as the original concept of his metaphysics is illogical and counter-intuitive as a result of which many confusions arise.

These puzzles are essential for the relativistic position of Derrida's metaphysics. At the beginning of this chapter, two kinds of sophism are briefly discussed, first the older and more familiar form of sophism, which is to be broadly identified with relativism, and second, the Kantian transcendental sophism, which occurs in all metaphysical practices. At this juncture in the analysis, it can be seen how these two forms of sophism intertwine in Derrida's metaphysics. In the idea of identity, only the unity of a thing with itself is thought; it excludes any relation with anything other than the concept of a thing. However, the concept of differance, which is the concept of the paradoxical, contains the relation between the contraries. It is of the essence of this relation to include two opposites and, thus, the assertion that neither prevails over the other. In a sense, the concept of the paradoxical, whose structure is "both… and …." and "neither… and …," is essentially a relational concept, in which one opposite cannot be thought without the other. The universalization of this structure, which gives it a philosophical status—through their eidetic application to the thing-in-itself—grounds metaphysical relativism in which all elements of

reality can exist only in their essential relation to each other. This ontological positing has two dimensions. On the one hand, the relationality of the contradictory ideas is turned into the mode of existence of things rendering them essentially self-negating. On the other hand, the logical impossibility of a mere idea is turned into an ontological constitution of all things: "Because the impossible has *already* occurred" (Derrida, 1978, p. 98). The metaphysical hypostatization of the contradictory relations then denies ontological status for the concept of unity:

> [I]n the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (Derrida, 1978, p. 354)

The system of differences that constitutes writing is infinite. The concept of the infinite is a metaphysical concept, designating nothing that can be met within the empirical world. By describing something as infinite, one must have already surpassed the limits of possible experience.

In Chapter Two, I describe the close association between the concept of infinite, in its metaphysical use, and the idea of the thing-in-itself. Metaphysics always describes its subject matter as infinite, an infinite that somehow grounds the finite. In the above passage, the infinite status of differance is guaranteed by excluding the "transcendental" signifier, the idea of absolute unity, from the plays of signification. At the phenomenological transcendental level, what necessitates this existential exclusion of unity from the plays of differance is the application of the concept of the differance to the thing-in-itself that renders it infinitely differantial. In other words, by applying the concept of differance to the thing-in-itself, the essence of the thing-in-itself is determined as differantial, which necessitates the exclusion of identity from the essence of the thing-in-itself. The domain of the plays of the significations extends as far as the thing-in-itself that, as a non-empirical concept of thing, is infinite. Within the scope of metaphysical theorization, the concept of infinity is constituted as an essential character of the thing-in-

itself. Through the application of the concept of differance to the thing-in-itself, an identity is established between the thing-in-itself and differance, and the infinite nature of the former is extended to the latter. The concept of differance, then, describes the totality of things. It is the true essence of being *qua* being; it is the primary being that has no ground, the groundless, the infinite.

An important consequence of this transcendental analysis emerges in direct opposition to the way that Derrida characterizes metaphysics, namely, that differance is a metaphysical determination as the so-called "metaphysics" of presence. Thus, it becomes clear the expression "metaphysics of presence" refers to the eidetic denial of the ontological status of the concept of presence, which is itself valid only in the general metaphysical attitude in which the concept of differance is hypostatized as the essence of being. The concept of transcendental in "transcendental signified" refers to that which surpasses the realm of relative self-negating, which is itself only a mental projection. As far as the deconstructive method of reading the history of philosophy is concerned, the concept of "transcendental" signified or pure presence, which is the leading idea of the metaphysics of presence, is a correlational concept and has meaning only in relation to the movements of differance. It is not accidental that in Derrida's text, the metaphysics of presence is usually described as a desire, a desire that can never be fulfilled since a fully self-same identity cannot "exist." The metaphysics of presence remains a motivating force determining most of the history of philosophy, but differance shows us that it will permanently remain an unattainable desire.

Derrida's critique of the oppositional binaries prevalent in the history of philosophy has two main objectives: First, it is to show that philosophy has always desired strict boundaries between the oppositions—nature/culture, subject/object, interior/exterior, material/spiritual, etc.—boundaries that can protect the purity of the two opposites in their unperturbed identity. Second, it is to show that these boundaries are constantly and, contrary to the desire of philosophy, being violated and disturbed by a more fundamental play of differences constitutive of each oppositional element, so that undermining the identity of each element also undermines their rigid opposition. The deconstructive critique of philosophical binaries, however, does not "sublate" the dualities, but rather it shows that, contrary to the

firm belief of philosophy that oppositions are external to each element, they make up the internal constitution of every single element in an oppositional relation, thus approving of oppositional logic at a deeper level. The metaphysics of presence, on the other hand, oppresses these internal plays of differance, relegating them to the external relation between the two self-same elements, a form of relation that because of its externality does not touch upon the inner nature of the opposites.

The expression "metaphysics of presence," thus, has meaning only in contrast to the determination of the inner structure of things in general as differantial, which is itself a metaphysical act. By limiting the concept of metaphysics to forms of thinking that start from the centrality of the idea of identity, deconstructionism then declares itself as an approach that shakes metaphysics. But can this be regarded as only a terminological manipulation? If metaphysics is a theory about the nature of things in general (thing-in-itself), is not deconstructionism itself just as metaphysical as the so-called metaphysics of presence? Is it fair or even correct, then, to categorize the entire history of philosophy under the title of the metaphysics of presence, which has meaning only within Derrida's own metaphysics? Can this not be recognized as a form of transcendental deception? Is not this style of thinking itself an ultimate form of deceptive sophism? It seems that the transcendental illusion, which in my analysis is primarily confined to the positing of the thing-in-itself as the fundamental act of the metaphysical attitude, can perpetuate itself throughout a metaphysical system in different ways so that it imbues the whole system with metaphysical thinking. This is especially evident in the relativistic metaphysics that often teem with all sorts of sophistry. A transcendental phenomenological critique of metaphysics is particularly attentive to the manners in which metaphysicians define terms such as philosophy, empiricism, metaphysics, and critique, as they are inevitably affected by the original transcendental illusion. These terminological manipulations are techniques used by metaphysical thinking to justify, legitimize, and validate itself.

In the case of Derrida, on the one hand, the term metaphysics is exiled from the field of the plays of difference, which are staged as non-metaphysical. On the other hand, the field of differance is originally defined as a non-metaphysical and non-ontological field. The ultimate end of these

terminological manipulations is to immunize deconstruction against potential critiques. To describe differance as a primarily non-metaphysical determination and to redefine metaphysics as the thinking of presence would divert critical attention from the grounds upon which differance itself is operating. This deceptive diversion, however, happens in a transcendentally unconscious manner. In order to survive, that is, in order to preserve its dogmatic objectivistic grounds, metaphysics disguises itself under non-metaphysical pretenses. In Derrida, an ultimate form of relativism has been employed as a "critique" of metaphysics. Such relativistic ground is unable to raise the question of its ontological ground, let alone provide a satisfactory response to it.

Internal to the deconstructive method of reading a text is the abstract application of the concept of presence—and the binary oppositions—to the subject matter. This renders a text as a metaphysical scene, on the one hand of the rigid oppositions of identities and, on the other hand, of the plays of differance constitutive of those identities. Consequently, the inner life of a text is sacrificed in favor of a transcendent ploy. In the case of philosophy, the whole history of philosophy becomes the scene for the plays of differance constantly deferring and differing within identities. The scene is, thus, already arranged for the plays of differance, before the dawn of philosophy, "on the eve of philosophy and beyond it"(Derrida, 1982b, p. 7). Differance encloses all philosophical texts, just as any other texts. All texts must be turned into the theater of irreducible conflicts of forces. For the deconstructive approach, it is not a question of whether the history of Western philosophy has *empirically* developed under the authority of reason and its unifying force. Metaphysics of presence is not an empirical induction. As a correlative notion, the metaphysics of presence obtains its validity only within the theoretical projection of the metaphysics of differance. This is why difference can always only move within already given binary oppositions "obliquely" and can never fully destroy it. Hence, the term de-construction is coined to disavow the merely negative operation of differance.

Having reached this point, it is worthwhile to compare Derrida's interest in dualisms of the history of philosophy to that of Hegel's rational system. In the *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's*

System of Philosophy (1801), Hegel famously states that dichotomy is "the source of *the need of philosophy*" (Hegel, 1977, p. 89). Philosophy is needed to get us out of the scattered manifold of a culture lacerated by rifts and divisions. The unification of the dichotomies and dualities is to be carried out by the power of the absolute reason itself. The dichotomies are the source of the need for philosophy because the historical unfolding of reason works through the ever-higher unification of dichotomies. Although it is reason that gives rise to the dichotomies—through its power of negation—reason's ultimate end and inner nature is set to reconcile and unify the opposites. A deconstructive perspective would find this scheme caught in the metaphysics of presence on many fronts: not only because of the overriding superiority of reason and its unifying power, but also because even before the "sublation" the opposite terms are perceived within their self-same unity preserved by their negative exteriority from one another. The movement of dialectic is exterior to the inner unity of its elements and, although it transforms their content, it maintains the transformation within the boundaries of certain identity. Thus, by each sublation of a negation between the two opposites a new identity and therefore a new negation is formed. Negation and identity are correlated. Hegel's dialectic—and metaphysics of presence in general—can never free itself from the binary oppositions. Derrida presents his reading of metaphysics in the following passages from *Of Grammatology*:

> To the extent that he [Rousseau] belonged to the metaphysics of presence, he dreamed of the simple exteriority of death to life, evil to good, representation to presence, signifier to signified, representer to represented, mask to face, writing to speech. But all such oppositions are irreducibly rooted in that metaphysics. Using them, one can only operate by reversals, that is to say by confirmations. The supplement is none of these terms. It is especially not more a signifier than a signified, a representer than a presence, a writing than a speech. None of the terms of this series can, being comprehended within it, dominate the economy of differance or supplementarity. (Derrida, 2013, p. 315)

Deconstructionism seeks to transcend this logic of identity and negation—the exteriority of identities—by undermining the very assumption of identity at the bottom of the metaphysics of presence. But before going deeper in the analysis of this characterization of metaphysics, a question can be raised: Does not the supplement itself replicate the movement of metaphysics in an equally robust manner? Does not deconstructionism ascribe to things an inner differantial structure? Rather than a critique of metaphysics, it seems that deconstructionism just replaces one metaphysical vision with another: while previous metaphysical systems perceived the Thing as constituted by stable identities, deconstructionism sees them as constituted by paradoxical relations. While in Hegel's speculative dialectic empirical things—that is, things as they appear to us in our everyday life in a natural kind of attitude—are subordinated to a transcendent order of identity, in deconstructionism they are subjected to a transcendent order of difference. In both cases, the empirical is sacrificed for the transcendent. Deconstructionism is just as much a theory about the thing-in-itself as Hegel's rational system.

However, the transcendentally deceptive restriction of the meaning of metaphysics to the metaphysics of presence has itself a metaphysical function: by excluding itself from the realm of metaphysics, deconstructionism is able to proclaim itself as a non-metaphysical critique of metaphysics. This is a crucial point in understanding the metaphysical nature of deconstructionism. It is an example of the unconscious tendency of the metaphysical thinking to preserve itself. This reformulating, or better, manipulating, the meaning of metaphysics is itself a metaphysical and thus illusional technique of the metaphysical mind that can be exposed only by a transcendental phenomenological critique. Deconstructionism is the highest example of the struggle of metaphysics to survive in an atmosphere unforgiving to metaphysical thinking—still remotely under Kant's influence. In such an environment, metaphysical thinking attempts to adapt to the fashionable mode of thinking without compromising its nature. Thus, it dresses itself up as non-metaphysical philosophy, a radically new beginning in philosophy, etc. This practice then becomes the source of many illusional perceptions of metaphysics and the nature of philosophy.

So far, the eidetic ground of the metaphysical projection of the concept of difference has been demonstrated. But since a deconstructive reading of the history of philosophy describes it as governed by the concept of pure presence/identity, it is legitimate to speak of the eidetic ground of the metaphysics of presence as well. The eidetic act of projection of the concept of pure presence is necessary for the deconstructive method of interpreting the history of philosophy since it makes possible the generalization inherent in the concept of metaphysics of presence, namely, its universal application to all the philosophies it aims to "critique." The status of this eidetic act that makes the concept of metaphysics of presence or pure presence is different from the act of the application of the concept of differance to the thing-in-itself, since within the metaphysical-theoretical parameters of deconstructionism the concept of pure presence is denied ontological status. In the case of the concept of pure presence or identity that, according to Derrida, lies at the bottom of the oppositional binaries of the history of philosophy, it is an eidetic act of abstract generalization through which deconstruction identifies a philosophical—but also political, linguistic, literary, etc.—position as being fundamentally constituted through the concept of presence. Phenomenologically speaking, the deconstructive method of interpretation constituted itself at the eidetic level, first, by categorizing a text under the concept of pure presence, and second, "criticizing" the pure presence as itself being grounded in a deeper ontological level, that is, the plays of differance. Put differently, to categorize a philosophy under the concept of metaphysics of presence is itself an abstraction performed by the mind in its transcendental capacity to the end of a consistent construction of the deconstructive method. The concept of the metaphysics of presence is a theoretical component of deconstructionism as a theoretical system of metaphysics. It is the transcendental mind that, once equipped with the theory of deconstruction, begins to see in the different philosophical systems pure presence at work, since without already established pure identities and the resulting oppositional binaries, deconstruction would lose its functionality. Just like the concept of differance, the concept of pure presence/identity is not an empirical determination, but only a theoretical projection of the metaphysical attitude.

This generalization and categorization of philosophies under the metaphysics of presence has led Derrida to many faulty interpretations of the history of philosophy. Here I briefly discuss his reading of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology. According to Derrida, Husserl's phenomenological critique of speculative metaphysics is already "controlled by metaphysics itself" (Derrida, 1973, p. 5). Derrida argues that Husserl's phenomenology has never been able to free itself from the language of metaphysics that lives on in the concept of presence. Husserl's pure transcendental subjectivity is defined through its absolute self-presence, thus excluding from itself anything whose mode of existence is not primarily determined by what Derrida calls the "factor of presence." The analysis of the transcendental life presupposes the fundamental unity of that life, which is grounded within the subject as defined by its pure presence. The subject of transcendental subjectivity is, thus, to be distinguished from the external world including the existence of other subjects. Phenomenology studies the world and other subjects only to the extent that they are present in consciousness. Thus, transcendental phenomenology commits itself to the binary opposition of subject/object and affirms the exteriority of identity or same to other, subject to the world, idea to matter, etc. From this Derrida concludes that: "the whole phenomenological discourse is, we have sufficiently seen, caught up within the schema of a metaphysics of presence which relentlessly exhausts itself in trying to make difference derivative" (ibid., p. 101). In interpreting Husserl's transcendental phenomenology as being embedded in the metaphysics of presence, Derrida employs the same deconstructive method that he applies to other philosophies. The concepts of presence, same, identity, and their corresponding oppositions are at work regardless of the specific text being interpreted. What is at stake in this interpretive practice is what, from the phenomenological standpoint, is referred to as the generalization of the concept of presence and its application to certain textual elements. It is exactly this generalization that causes misinterpretation within the framework of deconstruction.

Let me illustrate this point by examining two distinct instances of deconstructive reading, one concerning Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and the other concerning Heidegger's ontology. The deconstructive interpretation reads both Husserl's and Heidegger's philosophies as equally determined by

the metaphysics of presence. From a deconstructive perspective, both Husserl's transcendental subjectivity and Heidegger's being are metaphysical determinations. But what would be the relationship between these two terms outside of a deconstructive method of interpretation? The answer would depend on which perspective is chosen. From Heidegger's perspective, Husserl's transcendental subjectivity is the concealment of the essence of being (which Heidegger himself characterizes as presence) and it is the task of philosophy to overcome this concealment by surpassing subjectivism entrenched in the history of Western metaphysics. From the standpoint of the late Heidegger, Western metaphysics has been complicit in the concealment of being and thus should be overcome. From Husserl's perspective, Heidegger's ontological philosophy remains trapped in the objectivist metaphysics integral to the natural attitude that must be reduced if one is to obtain the secure ground of philosophization. What Heidegger calls presence as the essence of being as such does not qualify for Husserl as presence at all. Thus, outside of the deconstructive standpoint, Heidegger's ontological philosophy and Husserl's transcendental phenomenology diametrically oppose one another. Indeed, not only do they lack any essential commonality, but their conceptions of presence are in radical opposition. It follows that an element within the theoretical structure of the deconstructive approach brings together these two otherwise entirely opposing philosophies. This indicates that the term presence, as used in the deconstructive context, does not carry the same meaning as it does in the texts of Husserl and Heidegger. It is the theoretical mind that when adopting the deconstructive theory reads into these texts—not only these texts, and not only philosophical texts but all texts—what it already assumes to be essential in them, namely, the concept of presence as a correlation of the concept of differance. The deconstructive gaze already abstracts the text it intends to interpret; it brings into the text conceptual elements that are parts of its theoretical structure, namely, the concept of pure presence and the concept of differance. It is the generalizing approach of deconstruction itself that sees in the history of philosophy the domination of presence and its binary opposition and, thus, renders it as the history of the metaphysics of presence. The "scene of writing" is the scene of the illusional theater of the endless plays of identities and differences.

It is discussed above that, in his characterization of the metaphysics of presence, Derrida is indebted to Heidegger for whom presence is the essence of being as such. The history of metaphysics for both is the history of being understood as having the fundamental character of presence. It is based on this understanding that Derrida includes Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in the history of metaphysics. The flawed consequence of this abstract generalization is evident from Derrida's reading of a passage from Husserl's *Cartesian Meditation* (1931), where Derrida characterizes the results of Husserl's phenomenological reflections as metaphysical.[11] Derrida's reading of Husserl—as well as other philosophers—is primarily controlled by the abstract generalization of the concept of presence as part of his overall metaphysical position. Thus, the difference between Husserl and Heidegger in the characterization of the presence must be ignored in a deconstructive reading. This abstract generalization is essential for the theoretical development of a reading of the history of philosophy as a metaphysics of presence. In the case of Husserl and Heidegger, the deconstructive reading already misses the radical difference between their philosophies and, in particular, misses what is essential to Husserl's project, namely, the very experience of thinking subjects, their transcendental life. The fundamental defect of Derrida's interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology is the identification of the self-evidence of transcendental ego with the notion of presence that he—under Heidegger's influence—ascribes to the rest of Western philosophy.

It is exactly in opposition to such abstract generalizations that Husserl's phenomenology coined the slogan "back to the things themselves." Moreover, the method of epoche radically distinguishes between the objective realm and the subjective realm, rejecting the position of a universally applicable concept encompassing both. The deconstructive method, since it relies on the abstract application of the

[11] In the essay titled "Phenomenology and The Closure of Metaphysics: Introduction to the Thought of Husserl" Derrida presents a more faithful account of Husserl's phenomenology by asserting the transcendental core of Husserl's metaphysics. But even though in this essay he does not launch a deconstructive interpretation of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, he still frames Husserl's attempt at transcending speculative metaphysics as restoring metaphysics and occurring within the metaphysical language that is centered around the concept of presence (Derrida, 2005). His analysis is thus guided by the abstraction generalization of the concept of presence.

concept of presence, cannot account for the radical dualism established by the method of epoche. The deconstructive reading of Husserl's phenomenology also reduces the *experience* of the self-evident subject to a conceptual characterization of it, thus, missing the experiential content of self-presence. Husserl's beginning in philosophy is the very experience of the subject that could be conceptualized in many ways, some of which might turn out to be inaccurate as the transcendental description of the consciousness develops into higher stages. What the deconstructive reading of transcendental phenomenology loses sight of is the difference between the real experience of the subject's existence as absolutely evident and the concept of presence as abstractly appliable to all subject matters of philosophies. Thus, deconstructionism misreads transcendental phenomenology to the extent that it categorizes it under the abstract concept of presence.

Husserl did not use the concept of presence to specifically define the nature of the transcendental ego. A conceptual characterization of the ego necessarily comes after the experience of its indubitable existence by the phenomenologist. Phenomenology is first and foremost a form of practice, an experience, not a discipline formed under a conceptual regime. Husserl's terms, such as pure evidence, absolute self-givenness, etc., are not abstract "conceptualizations" but descriptions of that which is given to us *here and now*. All mental phenomena are described by phenomenology as they are occurring, as "this-here." For a phenomenologist of transcendental life, it is the *actual* presence of the phenomena in the experience that forms the ground of description. The real experience of the subject comes before its conceptualization. The phenomenological operation does not gain its validity on the ground of an appeal to the concept of presence, but rather from the real (ideal, in Husserl's terminology) experience of a subject. The experience of presence is prior to its conceptualization as presence. Deconstructionism, however, relying on objectivist grounds, bases its reading of transcendental phenomenology on an abstract conceptualization and applies it equally to the objective as well as subjective realm.

The dogmatic objectivist nature of deconstructionism renders it susceptible to the transcendental phenomenological critique—which I have been pursuing here. I, thus, turn the table and spoken of a

transcendental phenomenological critique of deconstructionism and inquired about the eidetic ground of deconstructionism. I commit myself to a phenomenological beginning and let deconstructionism itself appear as a phenomenon. The type of this phenomenon is epistemic and theoretic. As a theory, then, deconstructionism appears within the transcendental life as one of its manifestations. More specifically, deconstructionism appears as a theoretical product of the thinking subject itself. The task is to study deconstructionism with regards to its theoretical grounds in the theorizing subject while it is performing deconstructionism. Deconstructionism gains its theoretical power only when it is *performed* by a subject, that is, only when it is activated. It appears to the phenomenological gaze as an activity, a form of theoretical experience, and must be described while it is occurring. Only a thinking subject can perform such an activity. To deconstruct a text means to be involved in subjective activities, such as demonstrating, arguing, concluding, negating, etc., all of which are essential for the construction of a theory. I ask: Can deconstruction still be performed without a subject who first understood and formulated it distinctly as a mode of interpreting texts but also as a philosophy? Is it possible to be committed to a specifically deconstructive mode of thinking without ruling out other modes of thinking? Is it not necessary first to be convinced by the truth of deconstructionism in contrast to other thoughts to assert it as a distinct mode of reading? Understanding a mode of thinking, being convinced by it, adopting it, approving it, and even negating and rejecting it, are all subjective actions that form the background against which deconstruction can operate as a theory. Phenomenological reduction allows the exploration of deconstructionism from a non-deconstructionist perspective and, thus, transcend it. The thinking subject conceives deconstructionism as one of its modes of activity. In this way, the validity of deconstructionism is suspended and is discredited to the extent that it claims a non-subjective mode of existence for itself. The transcendental phenomenological critique compels deconstructionism to confront its origin, and, thus, problematics its "problematization of the concept of origin."

The question also can be raised as to why deconstructionism—in fact, postmodern thought in general—is so apprehensive about the notion of origin. The systematic oppression of the question of the

origin even though takes up an entirely new dimension in the postmodern philosophies, is by no way a new phenomenon. As previously discussed, metaphysics has no access to the intentional (theoretical) basis of itself in the subject, since as a dogmatic practice it always begins from that which is only an assumption. The metaphysical handling of the question of origin thus must always be observed with great suspicion, since in the metaphysical trends commonly categorized as rationalists the origin is necessarily to be located dogmatically and in the relativistic trends it is denied altogether. The transcendental phenomenological study of the concept of origin in the history of metaphysics reveals a battleground between the two camps. Neither side is interested nor capable of settling the battle on origin. The perplexity of metaphysics regarding the concept of origin cannot be cleared up by metaphysics itself, because the origin of metaphysics is unavailable to metaphysical thinking. Therefore, the fights over the concept of origin in the metaphysical terrain would never yield a final resolution. The relativist denial of the origin, however, can mask itself as non-metaphysical insofar as the real origin of metaphysical thinking remains uncovered. Only a transcendental phenomenological critique can discredit this pretension and expose that it is just as metaphysical as its absolutist rivals.

Concluding Remarks

In the history of philosophy, Heidegger's appropriation of phenomenology marks a regression towards metaphysical speculation. What is sometimes deceptive about particularly Heidegger's early philosophy is that his account of subjectivity is often contrasted with that of Husserl and more concrete, situated and historical. My above analysis attempted to show that Heidegger's account of Dasein is made possible through transcendental-epistemological elements at work in the theoretical projection of fundamental ontology as a philosophical theory. Within the theoretical projection of fundamental ontology, Dasein's understanding of itself and its surrounding world (by which it is defined) are projected as ontological. The

historicity of Dasein is thus at the same time ontological and metaphysical. Heidegger, thus, moves away from the concreteness of the subject as he ontologizes it in his fundamental ontology.

Both in Heidegger's texts and the historical development of his legacy have taken Dasein to be a replacement of Cartesian-Husserlian subjectivity: Dasein is not a thinking subject whose existence is self-determined; rather it exists "out there," in the world. Heidegger's theory of concrete human subjectivity presupposes the opposition between the concreteness of the subject and its capacity for universal-transcendental reflection. This legacy remains quite definitive for the later development of phenomenology. However, as I try to show, the lack of recognition for the transcendental subjectivity has prevented a phenomenological clarification of the epistemological assumptions underlying fundamental ontology as a theoretical work.

In the introduction to this part, I put forward the claim that philosophical developments of postmodernism are metaphysical in nature in a sense that can be described only from a transcendental phenomenological perspective. However, except in the case of Derrida's deconstructionism, some philosophers of this stream are quite explicit about their commitment to the metaphysical mode of philosophizing. Deleuze famously referred to himself as a "pure metaphysician" (Beaulieu et al., 2014, p. vii). His metaphysics aims at characterizing the concept of "pure difference" as the essence of being *qua* being. "The essence of univocal being is to include individuating differences, while these differences do not have the same essence and do not change the essence of being" (Deleuze, 2004, p. 36). The difference is taken in itself, ungrounded in anything more fundamental. The ungrounded difference is itself the ground of all things. Badiou's *Being and Event* is another major metaphysical effort to thematize the concept of difference or multiplicity as the fundamental ontological category. In his ontological scheme, every entity is constituted by the essential character of "multiplicity." Therefore, a thing is not primarily a unity a oneness, but multiplicity based on which the fundamental proposition of Badiou's ontology forms, which is "one is not," a proposition that is merely based on a "decision" (Badiou, 2007, p. 23). The

concept of multiplicity is then posited as the essence of things and ontology becomes the science of multiplicity as such:

> On this basis the following thesis may be inferred: if an ontology is possible, that is, a presentation of presentation, then it is the situation of the pure multiple, of the multiple 'in-itself'. To be more exact; ontology can be solely *the theory of inconsistent multiplicities as such*. "As such" means that what is presented in the ontological situation is the multiple without any other predicate than its multiplicity. Ontology, insofar as it exists, must necessarily be the science of the multiple qua multiple. (ibid, p. 28)

The dogmatism of postmodern philosophy often conceals itself beneath the guise of the "critique" of the concept of unity and the associated concepts such as subjectivity. Building on a problematic characterization of the history of philosophy under the concept of unity, oneness, presence, subjectivity, etc. postmodern philosophers credit themselves with introducing an entirely new mode of thinking that is capable of transcending Kant's philosophy. They find solace in the assumption that Kant's critique has no authority in putting the foundations of their thoughts in question since they have already undermined the very assumptions upon which it was rested. Kant's (and Husserl's) subjectivity is dismissed on the premise of an ontology of difference. But is this a fruitful philosophical confrontation with Kant's critical project? Can one not pose Kant's question of the possibility of metaphysics to them?

Our time, the so-called postmodern age, is a time of metaphysics. The revival of Kant's questioning of metaphysics is not only of purely epistemological and philosophical importance. Within the horizon of this critique, the crucial questions concerning the ethical motivation of philosophical practice arise, questions that metaphysics can never even raise let alone answer. This is because the ethical critique of the metaphysical practice takes root in the land of transcendental consciousness that remains foreclosed to metaphysical thinking. The full explication of the ethical critique of the transcendental practices should be the task of an independent study to which our critique of metaphysics merely serves as a prolegomenon. Here I confine myself to a brief outline of some of the questions

concerning the ethical motivations of metaphysical practices. The very first question perhaps is this: to what extent is metaphysics as a dogmatic objectivist mode of practice ethically justified? This question addresses the philosophers before they start their work as philosophers, before their decision regarding the content of their philosophies. It concerns the method and the starting point of their projects. This question calls for reflection on the ethical grounds of the very act of practicing "philosophy." Such a question can be raised only within a transcendental horizon because it presupposes that philosophy, whether or not philosophers call it science, is a form of epistemic activity and, more specifically, a theoretical one. Therefore, just like any other human action, it can be studied from an ethical point of view and ethics can make this class of activities the subject matter of its judgements.

It now becomes evident that the questions of the ethical nature of the metaphysical practices have never been fully exposed and it is not surprising that the metaphysicalization of ethics and its subjugation has been complicit in this. Metaphysics can never raise the crucial question of the self-responsibility of the philosophers and thus remains in the dark as to its ethical beginning. Metaphysics can never make ethics its subject matter since the subject matter of ethics is already missed in metaphysics. The human subject that metaphysics addresses is already an objectified thing belonging to a trans-subjective order. Thus, all metaphysical treatments of ethics are already based on an alienated notion of the ethical subject. Having left behind the ground of ethics, metaphysics moves forward bravely, unbound by any understanding of responsibility. Since it always starts from an objectivist ground, metaphysical thinking as such begins from a non-ethical stance.

However, the question of the ethical motivation of the metaphysical practice takes a new dimension when discussed in the context of postmodern metaphysics. As characterized by a double sophism, postmodern metaphysics has given the question of ethics sophistically overcomplicated gestures. In his reading of Kierkegaard, Derrida writes:

> The ethical involves me in substitution, as does speaking. Whence the insolence of the paradox: for Abraham, Kierkegaard declares, *the ethical is a temptation.* He must therefore resist it…. The

> ethical can therefore end up making us irresponsible. It is a temptation, a tendency, or a facility that would sometimes have to be refused in the name of a responsibility that doesn't keep account or give an account, neither to man, to humans, to society, to one's fellows, or to one's own. Such a responsibility keeps its secret, it cannot and need not present itself. (Derrida, 1996, pp. 61–62)

In Derrida's account, the ethical categories are grounded upon the relativistic ontology of differance, rendering a self-sufficient ethical theory impossible. The challenges that the metaphysicalization of ethics poses, however, should not be thought of merely as problems concerning ethics. The ethical category of responsibility is in a sense—that yet has to be explored more fully—an a priori scientific category that can be applied to all scientific or, more broadly speaking, all epistemic practices of humanity. From an ethical perspective, the question of the ethical nature of all theoretical practices is an a priori one, since all actions can be judged based on the universal ethical conditions of action. Thus, the question of the ethical conditions of philosophical practice in general falls under ethics as well.

It follows that those metaphysical systems that think about the ultimate ethical ends do so not only from a naïve objectivist position, but also probably with a clandestine appeal to the true subjective ethical grounds that they at the same time preclude. This renders their metaphysical treatments of ethics ideological, that is, illusional. But more importantly, by reducing human subjectivity—also the subject of ethical acts—to an alien power, the metaphysical theorization debars the possibility of transcendence that is a condition of critique. All critical activities including the scientific activities of critical social theory as a newly established discipline depend on a notion of transcendence for critique. The critique of social configurations explicitly or implicitly involves appeals to ethical categories as the critique of a social situation requires, at the level of imagination or theory, a transcendence from that actual situation. Thus, reflection on the ethical motivations of our philosophical capacities is closely associated with the ethical grounds of critical social theory. It is on this path that reflections will proceed in the subsequent part.

Part III: Transcendental Phenomenology as the Philosophical Foundation for Critical Social Theory

Introduction

In Part II, I discuss at length two major developments of metaphysical thinking in the twentieth century, both of which have been influential for social and political theory. Heidegger's metaphysically grounded, fundamental ontology marks a regressive phase in the history of philosophy in the twentieth century. Following Husserl's efforts to establish philosophy on non-dogmatic grounds, speculative metaphysics makes a powerful comeback in Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger's critique of subjectivity has turned out to be highly influential for not only main European philosophical streams but also for some streams of social and critical theory, particularly the postmodern variants. Drawing on the renewed Kant's critique of speculative reason in Part I, my analysis of Heidegger's early thought in Chapter Three subjects Heidegger's reformulations of phenomenology, in particular, and ontology, in general, to an epistemological-phenomenological examination with the aim of uncovering the conditioning elements of the transcendental mind at work in the theoretical formation of his thought. The dominance of metaphysical thinking over philosophy is only reinstated in later developments of phenomenology, in Merleau-Ponty and Levinas as well as the so-called postmodern reactions to them in the late twentieth century. As an example of postmodern metaphysical thinking, I offer an analysis of Derrida's thought in Chapter Four.

The critical analysis of the First Part has two important objectives. First of all, it provides a critique of the objectivistic (alienated) forms of philosophical theorization. The self-integration of the transcendental-theoretical mind of the subject forms the ultimate motivation of this analysis. Metaphysics is the misuse of the theoretical reason in which reason enters into conflicts with itself. Transcendental phenomenology makes the analysis of the self-alienation of reason its critical pursuit and, in this way, opens a new chapter in the critique of human alienation, beyond the critique of social alienation that has traditionally been a concern of social critical theory. The inclusion of the critique of reason within critical social theory expands the fields of its tasks and forms a ground for the unification of transcendental phenomenology and critical social theory. Additionally, the critical analysis locates the critique of reason within the context of the "experience" of alienation. As a form of human experience, metaphysical thinking is the theoretical equivalent of the social forms of alienation. The critique of metaphysical thinking shows that human theoretical capacities should not be spent on mere fabrications of speculative reason, but rather should be directed by the highest ends of human life—the clarification of which is a task of teleological reason, as will be illustrated in Chapter Six.

The analyses of the previous chapters, however, yield another significant consequence. They demonstrate—through the example of Derrida—that postmodern philosophies are disqualified as legitimate foundations for critical social theory, since, as metaphysical modes of theorization, they begin with a projected concept of being and subsequently base the empirical world—encompassing social and political realms—on the illusory fabrications of the speculative mind. In these philosophies, concepts such as society, political power, justice, equality, democracy, etc. are primarily theorized as realities structured on the differential logic of reality—being *qua* being. For example, in *Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari develop an account of the nature of society based on a set of interconnected mechanisms that originate from a unified metaphysical outlook. First of all, metaphysically, the whole of existence is conceptualized, by Deleuze and Guattari, as deterritorializing movements and flows that must be restricted through mechanisms of "coding" or "axiomatization" (territorialization and

reterritorialization) if a specific social formation is to shape (Roffe, 2010, p. 40). Territorialization and deterritorialization are first and foremost derivative concepts that are, secondly, enlisted to theoretically elaborate the fundamental determinations of being *qua* being, that is "becoming" ("chaos," "body without organs," "rhizome"). In their philosophical project, the real life of embodied human beings involved in all kinds of life projects through their physical, spiritual, and mental capacities—the proper subject matter of phenomenology—is theoretically grasped in the abstractly posited conceptual webs.

A transcendental phenomenological critique of these metaphysical theorizations moves in two directions. First, it provides an epistemological critique of the pure elements of reason at work in the theoretical construction of these philosophies (the task of Part I). Second, it provides a phenomenological account of the real subjects of social and political life that these metaphysical theories conceal. The postmodern metaphysical political philosophies study society, which is constituted through the practices *of* human subjects—economic, political, cultural, communicative, legal, etc.—in the name of concepts constructed in mere speculations. The products of human subjects, namely, the whole sphere of social and political life, are presented as workings of trans-subjective self-subsistent forces. Human subjectivity is, thus, alienated in the theoretical discourse of postmodern philosophies.

Besides this theoretical alienation, postmodern political philosophy, by exiling human subjectivity from the social and political realms, already misses the real ground for the theoretical construction of the essential concepts of critical social theory. Concepts, such as freedom, justice, equality, oppression, justice, etc., make themselves felt first and foremost in the material and subsequently in the spiritual (cultural) conditions of the life of embodied human subjects. Laying the theoretical foundation of these concepts, thus, calls for a phenomenological description of the embodied subjects involved in the social, political, and economic practices as the bearers of the experience of unfreedom, injustice, etc. "Lines of flight," "movements of deterritorialization," "body without organ," and differential movements of "becoming" cannot bear the suffering of racial and economic oppression. Such abstract

conceptualizations can be made sense of only by tacitly translating them into their realm meanings—meanings that can be made explicit only through phenomenological description.

This part of the dissertation—Chapters Five and Six—focuses on the task of illustrating a transcendental phenomenological foundation for critical social theory. In the previous parts, the analysis has remained mainly confined to the realm of pure theoretical reason in its metaphysical functions. The essential task of critical social theory, namely, the critique of alienation, however, requires the extension of phenomenological observations beyond the merely theoretical form of alienation and the acknowledgment of the empirical and corporeal existence of subjects through which they experience social forms of alienation. I pursue this task within the broad horizon of transcendental phenomenology, but will start by seeking an answer to the following question, first posed by Kant's transcendental philosophy: Does Kant's transcendental idealism have the resources to adequately account for the empirical life of subjects, or does it remain too idealistic in its scope? Kant attempted to distinguish his idealism from that of Berkeley by indicating that his idealism does not amount to assuming the subjective existence of external objects. His transcendental idealism, he claimed, is only a formal idealism that is harmonious with "empirical realism," namely, the doctrine that posits the independent existence of the empirical objects. I take Kant's empirical realism as the starting point for my account of "materialism," which will be exposed fully only in the Chapter Six. In Chapter Five, I argue that Kant's account of empirical realism is not self-consistent, and that Husserl's transcendental idealism offers a more satisfying account of its equivalent—even though Husserl himself has never used the expression "empirical realism." I attempt to show that even though Kant's version of transcendental idealism falls short of offering a plausible account of realism (and materialism), this failure does not undermine transcendental idealism as a universal philosophy. Chapter Five, then, paves the way for a more substantial account of realism (that I then call materialism) that follows in Chapter Six.

An account of empirical realism lies at the center of the overall argument of this dissertation for two reasons. First, as I elaborate below, objective knowledge, unlike speculative metaphysics, is

necessarily rooted in the empirically intuited object and, thus, presupposes the existence of an empirically self-grounded world of objects independent of mind. Second, the phenomenological task of laying the foundation of critical social theory calls for an account of the empirical material world in which subjects live and where they experience oppression, injustice, and unfreedom. Chapter Five, therefore, undertakes a twofold task: a critical assessment of Kant's empirical realism, and a transition from the realm of pure theoretical investigation—assumed in Part I—to the phenomenology of the empirical world (lifeworld)—which is the focus of Chapter Six. To complete this transition, I proceed with a discussion of Kant's empirical realism and attempt to show why it is not self-consistent. I then argue that in Husserl's phenomenological transcendental idealism, a more consistent account of empirical realism can be found. First, however, the problem of Chapter Five needs to be further clarified.

In Part I, it is argued that the renewal of Kant's critique of reason in its metaphysical use requires the expansion of both the concept of metaphysics and the transcendental elements involved in the formation of metaphysical thinking in general. By overcoming Kant's restricted conception of metaphysics and addressing the consequent constraints on the scope of his critique, a description of the eidetic elements of metaphysical thinking in general is developed. As the first step in carrying out the expansion of Kantian critique, it is proposed that general ontological concepts of things in themselves should be transcendentally reconsidered. Under the guidance of the search for the *eidos* of the metaphysical intentionalities and performing Husserl's method of epoche, the thing-in-itself was established as an idea posited by the transcendental mind in its theoretical activities aiming at constructing a purely a priori science of the things as they are in themselves. Through this step, the ontological implications of Kant's concept of things in themselves are transcendentally clarified. The objectivity of the thing-in-itself was shown to be mentally provided, purely an idea, which means that no things in themselves exist outside of the mind as a class of mind-independent objects inaccessible to our perception. The idea of the thing-in-itself is a transcendental component of a distinct mode of mental

activity, that is metaphysical thinking; it exists only mentally and only when the mind attempts to know systemically the ultimate essence of reality scientifically.

An important consequence of this reconstruction of Kantian critique of knowledge is that metaphysics is impossible, not because of the inherent limitations of our knowledge of things, but because there is no class of objectively valid objects as things in themselves—the essential claim of metaphysics. Any branch of knowledge that claims to gain cognition of things as they are in themselves remains necessarily delusional. Underlying this reconstruction of Kant's critique of metaphysics lies an ontological shift: from things in themselves whose ground of existence is (supposedly) in themselves, to the idea of the thing-in-itself that is posited illusionally as an objective reality purely through transcendental activity of mind. The expansion of Kant's critique of reason frees it from its merely epistemological character and renders it sensitive to the ontological implications of such critique.

Questions regarding the consistency of this reconstruction of Kant's critique with his overall philosophical project can arise. Asserting the pure ideality of the thing-in-itself removes the complex problems that Kant's system faces regarding things in themselves and their relationship to appearances. As discussed in Chapter One, Kant never asserts the merely mental origin of things in themselves. Had he done so, he would have come closer to attaining the ultimate transcendental ground of all forms of metaphysics. Therefore, for Kant, things in themselves must somehow exist independently of the mind, but the recognition of their mode of existence is forever banned for theoretical knowledge as this knowledge has access only to the things as they are given to the experience. But in what sense can Kant claim the existence of things in themselves? Within the boundaries of theoretical knowledge, there is no meaningful way for such an assertion, as for Kant the concept of existence can only be applied to the appearances, not things in themselves. That theoretical reason cannot determine the existence of things in themselves, however, ought not to be taken to mean that they simply do not exist. From the perspective of theoretical reason, it is possible to take a step further than the assertion that the existence or non-existence of things in themselves cannot be determined. Kant admits that the existence of suprasensible objects is

contingent on "presupposing that another kind of intuition than the sensible kind is possible, which, however, we are by no means justified in doing" (A255/B310).

But it is hard to imagine that in the broader context of Kant's project, which includes the critique of practical reason, things in themselves can be dismissed as mind-independent realities. Kant's position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, his first critical work, regarding things in themselves, that is, his agnosticism, is compatible with the use that he made of them in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, his second critical work. Only because the critique of theoretical reason allows us to think the possibility of the existence of things in themselves could he allow, in the second *Critique,* for the practical postulate of the objective reality of the suprasensible realm, since it is impossible to establish morality in the phenomenal world. In fact, after the practical demonstration of the objective reality of the suprasensible objects, such as the immortal soul and God, Kant contends that the theoretical reason asserts the existence of such objects without thereby determining them theoretically. As he argued in the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

> Nonetheless, theoretical cognition, *not indeed of these objects* but of reason as such, has thereby been expanded insofar as through the practical postulates those ideas have after all been *given objects*, because a merely problematic thought has thereby for the first time acquired objective reality. This was, therefore, no expansion of the cognition of *given suprasensible objects*, but still an expansion of theoretical reason and of its cognition with regard to the suprasensible as such, insofar as theoretical reason was compelled to grant *that there are such objects*, even though it could not determine them more closely and hence could not itself expand this cognition of the objects (which have now been given to it on a practical basis and also only for practical use). (Kant, 2021, pp. 171-72)

Theoretical reason must be informed of the practical expansion of reason. Thus, theoretical reason *indirectly* asserts the objective reality of the suprasensible, that is, based on the postulates of the practical

reason that directly asserts these objects. The practical postulates of suprasensible objects expand theoretical reason so that it comprehends the existence of suprasensible objects on a practical basis.

The problem of the status of things in themselves in Kant's system cannot find a solution within the context of the first *Critique*. Kant's critical project goes beyond the critique of knowledge. The concept of critique, for him, defines the boundaries of the realms of natural science and morality in such a way that they can consistently exist alongside each other. The critique of speculative reason does not, therefore, aim to annihilate the objects of metaphysics, namely, the suprasensible world, but only to delineate the possible field of application of theoretical reason against the scope of the practical reason.

The Copernican turn, which implies observing the world from the perspective of the subject, was carried out by Kant as part of the project of demarcation of the boundaries of the realms of the *application* of reason. This project is phenomenological and epistemological concomitantly since it takes as its starting point the world as it appears to a subject. The concept of boundaries or limits is purely an epistemological concept that leaves out the ontological status of the subject matter of metaphysics. As a result, the project of critique remains partial in that it accepts uncritically the existential position of the subject matter of metaphysics and defines merely epistemologically the limits of knowledge of that subject matter. Kant's critique of theoretical knowledge defines the scope of the applicability of knowledge and falls short of proceeding further into the ontological implications of his Copernican turn. Kant's Copernican turn, by delineating the limits of theoretical knowledge, namely, the scope of human theoretical subjectivity, makes room for faith (Bxxix-xxx). This concept of critique as the enterprise of demarcation of limits was perhaps informed by Kant's overarching aim to attain a harmonizing philosophical presentation of all spheres of human life, a goal he shared with the later German idealists.

Thus defined, the critical project also conditions Kant's philosophical method in the first *Critique*, which is described in Part I as transcendental-phenomenological. To the extent that a realm of suprasensible, which exceeds theoretical reason, is asserted, transcendental phenomenology finds itself externally constrained by an unknown realm, accessible to us only through faith. Kant's Copernican turn

is incomplete because it defines the task of critique merely epistemologically; it determines the boundaries of theoretical knowledge, in part for the purpose of making room for the domain of non-empirical reality. Thus, Kant's fundamental conception of critique remains complicit with the traditional metaphysics.

What makes Kant's conception of critique possible? As I try to show in Chapter Five that at the bottom of Kant's formulation of critique as the demarcation of limits lies certain ontological assumptions that are left unexamined. The possibility of practical reason hangs on the assertion of the objective reality of a suprasensible world. The critique of reason must be carried out merely epistemologically if ethics and religion are still going to have some foundation. Thus, the critique of theoretical reason is possible, within the broader critical context of Kant's thought, only if the suprasensible world is left ontologically intact. The critique only concerns *modes of our access* to the world, sensible and suprasensible, and never undertakes the incorporation of a more radical task into its critical agenda, namely, that of critically examining the ontological structure of the world itself. As a result, it retains a great deal of ontological assumptions about the ontological structure of the world from its uncritical ancestors, the most important of which is the acceptance of the existence of a suprasensible world. Not only did Kant not question why the world should be divided into sensible and suprasensible, but he entrenched it, as indicated above, as an indispensable component of his conception of critique. It is, thus, an ontological necessity that the concept of things in themselves appear everywhere in the first *Critique*, a necessity that is grounded in his broader conception of critique, not the limited project of critique of pure reason. Itself immune from critique, this ontological assumption regarding the structure of the world, then makes his Copernican turn and his concept of critique possible: distinguishing the specific modes of our access to reality, which includes sensible and suprasensible realms.

Nevertheless, Kant's starting point both in the first and second *Critiques* remains subjective and, therefore, it can be argued that there is a strong sense in which his conception of critique is phenomenological and not just metaphysical. Even in the second *Critique*, the suprasensible object's

objective reality is necessitated by the moral law belonging to the human practical reason. The *Critique of Practical Reason* presents a sophisticated phenomenology of the suprasensible world that elevates the subject matter of theology by saving the suprasensible world from the pitfalls, to use Kant's words, of "anthropomorphism," "superstition," and "fanaticism" (Kant, 2021, p. 172). The mode of access of practical reason to the objects of theology renders them purely rational by forestalling the formation of the antinomic theoretical theories about them or relying on revelations based on suprasensible intuition. The suprasensible objects, although given objective reality, present themselves only within the limits of practical reason and its requirements. From a phenomenological perspective, however, this treatment of the suprasensible objects remains fundamentally inconsistent as it commits itself to the existence of a non-phenomenal reality.

In Part I, applying the method of epoche to Kant's concept of things in themselves results in a complete dismissal of the objectivity of things in themselves and thus a suprasensible world. This method allows the consideration of the concept of "things in themselves" in its pure ideality, as an idea, opening up the possibility of investigating its eidetic ground. Through this investigation, it is realized that "things in themselves" is a concept posited by the transcendental mind in its metaphysical activity. As a pure eidetic position of the mind, then, this concept has no mind-independent objective reality. This allows the observation of the first mental act that constitutes the subject matter of metaphysics, namely, being *qua* being. This step is executed by the radicalization of the phenomenological tendencies inherent in Kant's philosophical method, the very tendencies that motivated his Copernican turn. The same philosophical experiment in which Kant spelled out his solution to the problem of metaphysics is re-enacted and it is asked: what if "things in themselves" as a concept is taken as a reality that resides only in the subject's mind, that is, as merely a mental reality and the philosophical inquiry into its origin is undertaken exclusively within the mental realm? This experiment presents a solution to the problem of the possibility of metaphysics in general, which lies beyond the limitations of Kant's critique of theoretical reason.

However, the assertion of the ideality of the concept of "things in themselves" also means that it is no longer meaningful speak of a suprasensible world. Hence, not only scholastic metaphysics but also Kant's practical philosophy, which relies on the objective reality of suprasensible objects, become untenable. This new phenomenological outlook calls for new foundations for ethics. Also, in light of this phenomenological expansion of Kant's critique of speculative reason, a new significance must be given to the concept of critique. If the ontological impossibility of an objective suprasensible realm is granted, critique no longer designates the philosophical delineation of the boundaries of the sciences of the sensible world and suprasensible world. Instead, it indicates the transcendental phenomenological analysis of forms of objectivistic thought, starting from the broad but apodictic conviction that objectivism in all its forms is itself a mode of subjective thinking. The critique of metaphysics, thus, remains a critique of theoretical reason in its pure activities, since metaphysics is a product of theoretical reason. But it takes a step beyond Kant's theoretical critique and discovers the eidetic ground of the possibility of the idea of the thing-in-itself (this step was accomplished in Part I). Thus, this expanded critique makes possible a freedom from the objectivistic remainders in Kant's system, namely, things in themselves, by uncovering the subjective basis of claims of their objective reality. This new non-compromising critique no longer needs to define itself in relation to an uncritical ontological realm of suprasensibility. In Kant's thought, the method of transcendental phenomenology remains caught in a critical project defined as the demarcation of limits that carries forward the objectivistic assumptions from the uncritical era. By radicalizing Kant's critique of theoretical reason in a phenomenological manner, the critical project can be founded upon purely phenomenological grounds.[12]

An important consequence of the phenomenological expansion of Kant's critique of pure theoretical reason is the dismissal of dualism between sensible and suprasensible worlds as two distinct ontological realms. The critique no longer needs to be concerned with the boundary between the realm

[12] This paves the way for the realization of the idea of philosophy as a universal science that served as the motivating idea for Husserl's philosophical work. This project is operating under the title of Husserl's philosophy but does not involve an extensive exploration of it.

where things exist in themselves and the realm of appearances. As expounded in Part I, after the exposition of the eidetic ground of the sole theme of metaphysics, namely, being *qua* being, there remains only one source of reference in relation to which objectively valid knowledge can be acquired and that is sense experience. Through the transcendental unraveling of the mental processes involved in the formation of the subject matter of metaphysics, the conclusion is drawn that there is a false claim to mind-independent objectivity in the positing of the idea of being *qua* being that necessarily renders it illusional. The structure of this transcendental illusion is as follows: an idea whose origin is to be located solely in the realm of the mind presents itself as if it exists independently of the mind. The exposition of this illusion demonstrates that the idea of the thing-in-itself lacks objectivity entirely, as for an idea to be objectively valid it must demonstrate its applicability in the realm of experience. The metaphysical mind itself thinks being *qua* being as an object inaccessible to the senses. The indeterminacy of the idea of being *qua* being is also a conceptual testimony that no empirical object in experience can adequately represent it, since all empirical objects are determined through time and space.[13] Nevertheless, the idea of being *qua* being, which indicates the concept of pure existence, claims objectivity beyond particular existing things. This concept of pure being always remains empty and abstract, as only that which presents itself in experience, which is necessarily a determinate thing, can rightfully be said to exist. Therefore, the claim of an objectively pure existence, that is, pure existence independent of the mind, is invalid. This leads to the suggestion, as a result of the phenomenological search into the mental sources on which metaphysics operates, that this claim of objectivity must be provided by a transcendental action, and, for this very reason, it is to be considered illusional.

[13] Here I do not assume with Kant that time and space are necessarily the subjective conditions of empirical knowledge as there are other phenomenological theories that account for time not on strictly subjective basis. I believe that such alternative theories are necessary, not the least because Kant's assertion of the subjectivity of time and space is counter-intuitive and falls short of describing faithfully the experience of time and space. However, irrespective of how one accounts for time and space, they necessarily condition the mode of existence of empirical objects.

Connection to the objects of experience is, therefore, a necessary condition of the objective validity of knowledge. This objectivity assumes that the objects of experience *must exist* outside of our mind and independently of it and that we have access to them. It becomes evident that for the critique of metaphysics to hold, a dualism must be consistently established between the realm of mind and the realm of mind-independent empirical objects, since without such dualism it is impossible to distinguish between transcendentally illusional knowledge, which cannot be called knowledge in principle, and objectively valid knowledge. If the illusional ideas are given objectivity without any support of sense experience that connects them to the external objects, then, non-illusional knowledge must be grounded in the sense experience and through that in the external objects. An external mind-independent realm of objects that are available to our sense experience is, therefore, a necessary condition for the objectivity of our knowledge.

By locating the source of "things in themselves" in the transcendental mind—which, therefore, should be referred to as the *idea* of the thing-in-itself—the Kantian *objectivistic* dualism of the sensible/suprasensible world is dismissed. But this very move requires an account of the existence of a mind-independent realm of things, whose mode of existence is not the same as things in themselves, that is, indeterminate, that are, nevertheless, independent of mind. Without the existence of an actual empirical realm of objects, objective knowledge would lack its necessary content. This line of argument brings me to the pivotal question of Chapter Five, namely, the question of the constitution of empirical object or reality. Metaphysics has always asserted its exclusive domain over the question of the nature of reality. This question cannot be dismissed even by a phenomenological critique of metaphysics. However, phenomenological critique must offer a conception of reality that is no longer under the influence of metaphysical thinking. This conception of reality, therefore, should be necessarily merely empirical, to furnish the phenomenological critique of reason with the benchmark based on which it assesses the illusory status of metaphysical statements. Although the transcendental phenomenological critique of speculative begins by reducing metaphysical thinking to its eidetic elements, it ultimately finds itself in

need of a consistent account of realism as the guarantee for the validity of its evaluations. The type of realism that transcendental phenomenological critique of metaphysics must itself be non-metaphysical and, therefore, empirical. Empirical realism accounts for the constitution of reality as a merely empirical determination, that is, without the meddling of speculative reason. In the following, I read Kant's account of empirical realism as his doctrine of realism.

Transcendental idealism needs to present itself as a limited type of idealism, not only to ground the justification of objective knowledge but also to distinguish itself from various types of absolute idealisms, an idealism that is compatible with a form of realism. Absolute idealism, whether in its Berkeleyan or Hegelian type, is essentially metaphysical in that it reduces the existence of the outer objects to their subjective presence. Absolute idealism turns the subject into the ground of existence of all beings—an ontological claim that cannot be legitimately made within the boundaries of theoretical reason. Transcendental idealism must not fall prey to this danger and must ensure that its commitment to the ideality of knowledge does not contradict the assertion of the existence of an independent world of real objects. Therefore, transcendental idealism is not only responsible for the clarification of its exclusive realm, namely, the realm of ideality, but must also explicate the constitution of the empirical world existing independently of the realm of ideality and its relation to the transcendental subjectivity.

The status of the empirical object is nebulous in Kant's philosophy. I argue that, in Kant, the problematic assertion of the existence of things in themselves affects the ontological status of the empirical object, the subject matter of objective knowledge, that is, natural sciences (but also all sciences that claim objectivity), and thus problematizes the very status of these sciences as well. If, as suggested by some of the passages in the first *Critique*, appearances are manifestations of something that remains unmanifested (A253), then natural sciences, which deal exclusively with phenomenal objects, might appear in the context of an objectivistic sort of metaphysics claiming a superior knowledge.[14]

[14] The metaphysical interpretation of Kant has been most comprehensively developed by Heidegger. See: *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1997) and *Kant and the Problem of*

In Chapter Five, I concentrate on the above problem and seek to determine what Kant's transcendental idealism has to offer and whether or not it is tenable. In particular, I argue that Kant and some of his defenders on this matter fail to provide a consistent account of a realism compatible with his idealism. The reason for Kant's failure is to be sought in his lack of recognition of the ontological implications of his Copernican turn and, more specifically, his transcendental idealism. Just as his Copernican turn necessitates, as is discussed above, an ontological critique of the suprasensible world, in a complementary move it requires a re-establishment of the world as the world of empirical objects. As I try to show in the following, Kant's restricted epistemological approach to realism falls short of offering a more robust form of realism required by the recognition of the mind-independence character of empirical objects.

The limitations of Kant's version of empirical realism, however, do not indicate that transcendental idealism cannot be reconciled with empirical realism. In last section of Chapter Five, I argue that in Husserl's formulation of transcendental idealism more clarity can be obtained regarding the connection between the realm of the ideal and the realm of the real and the necessity for the clarification of their ontological implications. Unlike Kant's idealism, Husserl's idealism is founded upon the ontological distinction between the realms of the real—the existence of the outer objects—and the ideal—the realm of the pure consciousness. Husserl's phenomenology takes as its starting point the empirical objects as they present themselves to us and proceeds to reduce their actual existence through the method of epoche to arrive at their phenomenal being. Pure consciousness is responsible for the constitution of things only as phenomena, leaving the outer existence of them out of the play. By distinctly demarcating the two realms of existence, Husserl offers an articulation of transcendental idealism that embraces both strong idealism and strong realism, thereby, fulfilling the promise of transcendental idealism.

Metaphysics (1965). For a contemporary version of a metaphysical interpretation of Kant's philosophy see: De Boer, Karin. *Kant's Problem of Metaphysics: The Critique of Pure Reason Reconsidered* (2020).

Before the discussion of empirical realism, it is important to briefly address the significance of the above-mentioned ontological dualism in relation to the critique of metaphysics in the above parts. In the context of Chapter Five, ontological dualism does not refer to a new metaphysical theory. In fact, the contrary is the case. This ontological dualism is itself an essential element in a transcendental phenomenological critique of metaphysics. Metaphysical ontology which is critiqued above is monistic since it attempts—in vain—to establish a unified ground for all beings and ultimately resolves all oppositions and differences. (In Chapter Four, I attempt to show that even Derrida's philosophy follows this logic). The transcendental phenomenological basis of my critique of metaphysics departs from this ontological monism in so far as it upholds the two realms of being, real and ideal, subject and object, in their irreducible duality. Any attempt to re-establish these two realms on a unified synthetic ground arises from metaphysical monistic aspirations. This part, thus, plays a key role in the elaboration of this essential component of the transcendental phenomenological critique of speculative reason.

Chapter six engages in a phenomenology of the material lifeworld as constituted through human labor. Central to this chapter is the claim that, so far as the critique is concerned, a description of the precategorical material life cannot dismiss an appeal to ideality. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty's genetic phenomenology remains uncritical since it does away with non-situational meanings that can serve as a higher standpoint for critique. In contrast, I attempt to show that the fundamental concepts of critical theory, such as equality, justice, pacification, and above all, humanity cannot be grounded purely pre-theoretically. These concepts carry in themselves an implicit appeal to the ideals that are thought by a thinking subjectivity in its ideal capacities. Thus, certain ideal functions of the thinking subject are involved in the constitution of the phenomenological description of these concepts.

The original ideal appeal to a norm that constitutes the fundamental concepts of critical theory is investigated under the authority of teleological rationality. A phenomenological interpretation of teleological rationality reduces its scholastic (objectivistic) implications and locates it at the heart of the subject's experiences. Just like any other concept that is reduced to its a priori epistemological function,

teleological rationality after phenomenological reduction is considered as a function of the thinking subject. Therefore, apart from a transcendental investigation into the a priori condition of teleological rationality, a phenomenology of teleological rationality is also burdened with the task of clarifying the legitimate use of teleological rationality. This clarification takes the form of a perpetual task that needs to be carried out in close consultation with the pre-theoretical empirical condition of its application.

Chapter 5: Transcendental Phenomenological Grounding of Materialism (Empirical Realism)

1. Kant's Empirical Realism

I begin the chapter by noting two interconnected problems regarding the issue of the relationship between the two realms of real and ideal. Firstly, the long-standing problem of correspondence between representations of the external objects and external objects concerns the condition of the truthfulness of our knowledge of those external objects. Secondly, the problem of the constitution of the empirical objects—the correlates of our representations—raises the issue of its independence from knowing subjects. These problems are among the major problems encountered by subjective idealists. Kant was fully aware of the necessity for a solution to the first problem and attempted to provide one within the section of the first *Critique* titled "Fourth Paralogism of the Ideality (of Outer Relation)" (A366-80). He called his position "empirical realism." With regards to the second problem, however, his philosophy has not much to offer. The lack of recognition of this second problem, as I show, undermines his solution to the first problem. I contend that an account of the independent existence of the empirical object is an essential prerequisite for resolving the issue of correspondence. Every idealist system must be able to establish the existence of the external objects before entertaining the problem of correspondence between the representations of those external objects. The lack of a satisfactory solution to the former places his critical system at a disadvantage in addressing the latter problem as well.

Kant opens the "Transcendental Aesthetic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason* by indicating that without being affected by the objects we would lack any sensible intuition of them (A19/B33). This definition of sensible intuition presupposes the existence of external objects. To refute both skeptic and dogmatic forms of idealism, Kant argues, in his discussion of empirical realism, that our representations of external objects are immediately related to the external objects. While for the "skeptical idealist" the existence of the external objects remains doubtful, the "empirical idealist" denies their independent

existence altogether. The idealist position draws this conclusion based on the conviction that knowing subjects have an immediate perception of only what is presented internally, namely, the representations of the external objects. The existence of our representations is perceived by us immediately and no doubt can be cast on their existence, whereas we perceive the external objects only through the mediation of our representations of them and, therefore, their independent existence cannot be asserted with the same level of certainty as their representations. The existence of the external objects requires some sort of inference or proof. The idealist is, therefore, troubled by the question of whether it is the external objects that cause the representations in us or "a mere play of inner sense" (A368). What is at stake is the nature of the relationship between our representations and the actual external objects to which they refer.

Kant's solution to this problem revolves around the elimination of mediation between our representations and the external object. He claims that within his transcendental idealism, the problem of mediation does not arise, because the need for mediation will rise when one considers the "outer appearances" as things in themselves. Kant calls the position of those who regard space, time, and appearances as things "given in themselves (independent of our sensibility)" transcendental realism and contends that an empirical idealist is, in the last analysis, a transcendental realist:

> It is really this transcendental realist who afterwards plays the empirical idealist; and after he has falsely presupposed about objects of the senses that if they are to exist they must have their existence in themselves even apart from sense, he finds that from this point of view all our representations of sense are insufficient to make their reality certain. (A369)

Once the external objects are considered as things in themselves, that is, as things that exist independently of our sense experience, then it becomes necessary to present them to ourselves through the mediation of representations. As a result, our perception of them can never be direct and, thus, as certain as our perception of inner objects such as our inner intuitions, our representations, and our self-consciousness. By declaring that our sense experience can never reach things in themselves, Kant claimed to have removed the source of the problem. The objects of the outer senses exist only in relation to our senses and

therefore only as representations. Thus, the external objects are no less certain than the objects of the inner sense, since as representations they both enjoy the same level of certainty. The difference between them consists in the mode of their representation only: the inner objects are given in connection with the inner sense and its a priori form, that is, time, while the outer objects are given with connection to the outer sense and its form, space.

> But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them. Thus external things exist as well as my self, and indeed both exist on the immediate testimony of my self-consciousness, only with this difference: the representation of my Self, as the thinking subject, is related merely to inner sense, but the representations that designate extended beings are also related to outer sense. (A370-1)

Within the parameters of Kant's solution, the external objects must not be understood as things that exist in themselves but, as "species of my representations," they exist only as objects of our senses, namely, as representations in space. Kant, therefore, must clarify an ambiguity that arises when speaking of outer objects:

> But since the expression *outside us* carries with it an unavoidable ambiguity, since it sometimes signifies something that, as *a thing in itself*, exists distinct from us and sometimes merely something that belongs to outer *appearance*, then in order to escape uncertainty and use this concept in the latter significance—in which it is taken in the proper psychological question about the reality of our outer intuition—we will distinguish *empirically external* objects from those that might be called "external" in the transcendental sense, by directly calling the "things *that are to be encountered in space*." (A373)

Although that which is given to the outer sense exists as representation, this does not indicate that it can be arbitrarily invented by imagination. Kant's argument for why the representations of external objects

cannot be creations of the imagination is phenomenological in the sense that it is based on the distinct modes of presentation of the objects of the outer sense and of the objects of imagination. What is given to the sense of experience cannot be invented by imagination. Rather imagination relies, for its creativity, on the data of sense experience. Only the objects whose mode of representation is determined by sense experience can be considered actual or real, whereas the creations of imaginations are not given to us through the outer sense, that is, in space. As Kant puts it, the material thing necessarily presupposes perception and, therefore, cannot be given to us in any other way (A373).

From the above argument, Kant concluded that only the objects that are represented in space are "actual" or "real." Of course, space itself exists only in us, namely, ideally, but what is represented in space is real. Since the mode of presentation of sense perception gives us the real content of our knowledge, a thing can be called real only in so far as it is given to us through sense experience, not through inventions of imagination.

1.1. The Ambiguity of the Concept of Object in *Critique of Pure Reason*

I suggest that the main problem with Kant's formulation of empirical realism is not the idealist foundation of his philosophy as such, but a mischaracterization of the ontological implications of his transcendental philosophy. This ontological mischaracterization of the transcendental turn makes itself manifest in his theory of the object constitution. In the following, I attempt to show that because of an ontological miscarriage, Kant's transcendental idealism lacks the essential means to be reconciled with realism and, therefore, remains too close to absolute subjective idealism. I trace this ontological failure in Kant's theory of the constitution of the object, where it is most evident.

Regarding Kant's notion of the object, the immediate consideration is that, according to him, a combination of data of sensibility and forms of understanding is a necessary condition of objectivity

(A258/B314). The manifold data of sensible intuition does not present us with a determinate object just as the pure forms of understanding do not yield any determinate object unless filled with the sensory content. But the real issue arises when it is questioned whether objects, as thus constituted, exist independently of the mind or are mind-dependent realities. In other words, do the objects of experience belong to a realm of mind-independent reality or reside in the mind? Obviously, the forms of understanding are purely subjective conditions of objectivity, but the appearances are presumably given to us from an outer source.

Kant's commentators have had a difficult time explaining the epistemological and ontological status of the source of appearances. What is that which affects our outer senses and causes appearances in us? This is the question that the post-Kantian philosopher C. G. J. Jacobi famously posited in the form of a dilemma: on the one hand, if the affective objects are things in themselves, it necessitates the application of the category of causality to things in themselves, a notion prohibited by Kant's philosophy. On the other hand, if the affecting things are appearances, then the same appearances, which we have on the basis of affection, are the source of that affection. The affecting thing cannot be the same as the empirical object either, despite what Kant seemed to suggest, since the empirical object is the result of the collaboration of understanding and sensibility. If it is argued that things in themselves cause appearances, things in themselves are ascribed substantiality, causality, and existence, concepts that can be applied only to the things as they appear to us.[15]

[15] Vaihinger expands on Jacobi's dilemma into a trilemma, by adding a third option that enlists Kant's distinction between the empirical and transcendental object:

1. Either we understand the affective object as things in themselves; then we come to the contradiction already discovered by Jacobi, Aensidem et al. that we apply the categories of causality and substantiality, which have sense and signification only within the experience, [to the objects] outside of experience.
2. Or we understand the affective objects as the objects in space; for Kant, however, these objects are only appearances, like our representations, thus we come to the contradiction that these appearances, that we first have on the basis of affection, should provide us that very affection.
3. Or we accept a *double affection*, a transcendental one through things in themselves and an empirical one through the objects in space; thus, we come to the contradiction that a representation of transcendental I later be a thing in itself for the empirical I, whose affection now in I above and beyond that transcendental representation of the object, evokes an empirical representation of the same object. (Vaihinger, 1922, p. 53)

Any discussion about the constitution of the empirical object necessarily involves the ontological status of things in themselves, appearances, and their relationship in Kant's system. Kant's scholarship encompasses a diverse array of interpretations regarding these concepts, ranging from purely epistemological readings to dualistic and metaphysical interpretations. For example, Paul Guyer thinks that, beyond the ordinary objects and their representations, Kant "does not postulate another set of ghostlike objects" (Guyer, 1997, pp. 334–335).[16] Peter Strawson, on the other hand, reads Kant as committing to a dual ontology by asserting the existence of a separate sphere of non-spatial and non-temporal things while limiting our knowledge to the spatiotemporal objects of experience (Strawson, 2018, pp. 336–337). A recent strand of Kant's scholarship theorizes that appearances and things in themselves are not two distinct sets of objects, but two aspects of one object (Marshall, 2013).[17]

In the following, I briefly assess four of the most prominent interpretations of Kant on the issue. The interpretations of Henry Allison (2004) and Robert Hanna (2001) adopt an epistemological approach, while the interpretations offered by Rae Langton (1998) and Lucy Allais (2015) are metaphysical. My objective in this assessment is to demonstrate that these interpretative attempts to uphold the consistency of Kant's position falter, as they rely, in one way or another, on the same problematic ontological characterization that has given rise to the issue in Kant's philosophy. Without a critique of Kant's problematic characterization of ontological implications of the transcendental turn, I claim, the problem of the constitution of the empirical object cannot be solved. More specifically, none of these interpretative accounts are able to satisfy the two following elements of Kant's transcendental idealism: a) a strong commitment to idealism, that is, the assertion of the mind-dependence of the mode of existence of appearances; and b) a strong commitment to the mind-independence of the empirical objects, that is, an empirical realism that is non-metaphysically grounded. By robust idealism, I mean the assertion of an

[16] Also see: (Cleve, 2003, p. 12)

[17] In similar manner and in a realistic framework, Karl Ameriks reads Kant as presupposing the existence of outer reality and, therefore, finds Kant deeming the need for an argument for outer reality against Berkeley futile (Ameriks, 2006, p. 128).

ontologically mind-dependent field of entities, such as ideas, concepts, etc. And by realism, I mean a doctrine that posits the existence of mind-independent entities, such as this table, that house, etc. Within the confines of Kant's transcendental idealism, only an empirical sort of realism is allowed as opposed to the transcendental form of realism that transcends the limits of possible experience.

I should also note that my aim in examining these interpretative approaches to address the problems associated with Kant's theory of the constitution of objects is to show that a viable solution to this problem within the confines of the Kantian system is not feasible. Certainly, numerous interpretations of Kant on this matter exist. Due to the constraints of this investigation's scope, only a select few of them were included in the above assessment. However, the chosen example, I believe, suffice to indicate where the Kantian scholarship stands today with regard to the issue at hand.

To confront the difficulty outlined above, Allison offers a radically new interpretation of Kant's Copernican revolution, contending that it constituted a methodological shift rather than an ontological one. According to Allison, Kant's Copernican revolution was a "paradigm shift" from the "theocentric model" to the "anthropocentric model" of cognition (Allison, 2004, p. xvi). According to the theocentric model of cognition, the cognition of the subject is assessed against divine cognition, a non-conceptual intuitive cognition of objects as they are in themselves. In contrast, in the anthropocentric model of cognition, cognition becomes limited to the conditions of human cognition. The subject cognizes things only under the "epistemic conditions," which are defined by Allison as the "necessary conditions for the representation of objects" (Allison, 2004, p. 11). Kant's transcendental idealism is a methodology, that is, only a standpoint on conditions of cognition that itself does not lay any claim to the establishment of any sort of ontology. In other words, neither the a priori conditions of cognition nor things in themselves refer to ontological realities.

Based on the above reformulation of Kant's transcendental idealism, Allison addresses Jacobi's dilemma. With regards to the first horn of the dilemma, namely, the statement that appearances cannot be the effective cause of representations, Allison thinks that it arises from a misunderstanding of the status of

appearances: “If appearances are understood as mind-independent entities, considered as they appear in virtue of the subjective conditions of human sensibility, this whole line of objection dissolves. Kant can perfectly well speak of a causal (as opposed to an affective) relation between phenomena and the human mind, because at the empirical level the mind is itself part of the phenomenal world and subject to its conditions” (Allison, 2004, p. 67). As to the second horn of Jacobi’s dilemma, namely, that things in themselves cannot be the cause of our representations, Allison rejects the independent existence of things in themselves: “Indeed, the temptation to worry about the existence of things in themselves disappears once it is recognized that Kant is not primarily concerned with a separate class of entities, which, unlike appearances, would supposedly “be there” even if there were no finite cognizers” (Allison, 2004, p. 51). By drawing a comparison between the contrasting pair of concepts “transcendental object”/ “empirical object” and things as they are in themselves/things as appear to us, Allison suggests that the difference between appearances and things in themselves are to be understood as “two perspectives from which ordinary empirical objects may be considered rather than two ontologically distinct entities” (ibid., p. 79). Thus, in Allison’s view, “such expressions as “things as they are in themselves,” “noumena,” the “transcendental object,” and their correlates are to be understood as “technical terms within this metalanguage rather than as terms referring to transcendentally real entities” (ibid., p. 73). By refuting the idea that things in themselves are “real entities” existing independently of appearances, Allison rejects the second horn of Jacobi’s dilemma.

This interpretation, however, faces a significant challenge. To begin with, what makes Allison’s epistemic interpretation possible is a presupposed ontology based on which there is only one class of legitimately existing things, namely, “the empirical ordinary things.” This ontological presupposition must be established independently of either theocentric or anthropocentric models of cognition since the former allows the existence of things in themselves and the latter, which is Kant’s view, regards things in themselves as they appear to human cognition while being agnostic about their existence. Denying an independent noumenal existence, Allison’s ontological presupposition violates Kant’s agnosticism

regarding the existence of things in themselves. Allison's rejection of the existence of things in themselves de-problematizes Kant's problematic concept of things in themselves.

Thus, despite its claim to be merely methodological, Allison's interpretation appeals to an underlying ontology. In his treatment of the first horn of Jacobi's dilemma, he takes appearances to be identical with empirical objects. Besides textual evidence against this claim in Kant's text (for example, B520-21), there is a surreptitious ontological claim at work in Allison's reading that blurs the ontological boundaries between the mental realm and the outer world—a Cartesian ontological framework strongly present in Kant—by turning the human mind into an empirical reality that, like any other external objects, can be affected by the external objects. What makes Allison's methodological interpretation possible is, thus, a hidden appeal to an ontologically grounded realism presupposed independently of Kant's transcendental idealism, that already determines his solutions to problems of the latter. Allison's ontological realism takes certain facts as already established, facts such as "appearances are identical to ordinary objects of experience," "things in themselves do not exist" and "the mind is part of the empirical world" all of which are to be addressed only within the framework of transcendental idealism. The solutions to the problems that arise from Kant's ontological confusions are already decided, in Allison's interpretation, in a realistically grounded ontology alien to Kant's dualistic ontology. Thus, Allison's empirical realism is achieved at the expense of dismissing Kant's ontological idealism that accepts the reality of the human mind and replacing it with epistemic conditions. In conclusion, reading Kant's Copernican turn as a paradigm shift not only does not relieve us from the need for clarification of the ontological implication of the turn but is itself made possible through a particular kind of ontology that is presupposed, rather than critically clarified. Allison's interpretation narrows the scope of Kant's transcendental philosophy by absolving it from the responsibility of the clarification of its ontological grounds.[18]

[18] Building on Allison's epistemic interpretation, Paul Abela also reads Kant's philosophy to be an epistemological position rather than an idealism. He writes: Allison's suggestion that the central principle behind the Copernican

Unlike Allison, Robert Hanna thinks that Kant's "Anthropocentric Condition expresses a metaphysically substantive form of idealism" and, therefore, is more than merely epistemic conditions. Refuting both the two-aspect interpretation, which posits the existence of only one class of objects, and the two-object interpretation, which asserts two ontologically distinct classes of objects, Hanna presents an alternative theory that he terms the "two-concept" theory (Hanna, 2001, p. 110). According to his reading, Kant argues that there are two essentially different ways of thinking or conceptualizing an object of representations—or a generic transcendental object = X—relative to pure concepts of the understanding" (ibid.). In the first way of conceptualizing an object, we think the object through pure concepts alone, which yields no cognition of the object. In the second way of conceptualizing an object, we think the object by applying the *a priori* concepts of understanding to the data of sensible intuition. Since the latter way of conceptualizing an object relies on the sensory data, it brings about concrete cognition of the objects. Thus, according to Hanna, Kant theorizes two conceptual modes of thinking an object:

> Kant holds that every pure concept of the understanding is such that it can be used either (a) merely to think the generic object = X transcendently as a noumenal object, or (b) to think the generic object = X immanently as a phenomenally possible or actual object via the sensory data contributed by human intuition. Thus noumenal objects logically possibly can have being (but are completely uncognizable), and phenomenal objects really possibly or actually exist (and are indeed cognizable). (ibid. p.111)

From this analysis, Hanna concludes that there are no distinct classes of objects equally existing independently of the mind. He also rejects the theory that there is only one class of objects having two

---

experiment is an identification of objectivity with conditions of human cognition no doubt correctly locates the epistemic hinge on which turns Copernican revolution turns" (Abela, 2002, p. 38). Michael Wenisch argues that since Kant, and following him, Allison and Abela turn certain aspects of knowledge to subjectivity, which are in reality originated beyond subjectivity, they fail in their attempts to feasibly reconcile transcendental idealism with empirical realism (Wenisch, 2008). Wenisch, however, sees the problem as a logical incompatibility between transcendental idealism and empirical realism and does not trace out the ontological implications of the issue.

distinct qualities, noumenal and phenomenal (I will discuss examples are this interpretation later). He suggests that noumenal objects have only a "logical" and therefore "possible" mode of existence, whereas phenomenal objects exist in a real and "actual" manner (ibid., p. 112). He contends that this way of reading Kant is compatible with his agnosticism regarding the ontological status of things in themselves. "Kant is thus a metaphysical agnostic about the ontological status of things in themselves, and an epistemological skeptic about knowing those things in themselves. In principle things in themselves can exist (in the thin or purely logical sense of the concept *exist*), but whether they do or not, and what their intrinsic natures might be, are completely uncognizable and unknowable for all creatures minded like us" (ibid., pp. 101-102).

Objections can be raised, however, regarding the effectiveness of Hanna's interpretation as a response to the difficulties that Kant's transcendental idealism faces regarding the constitution of the empirical object. Although he asserts that noumenal objects exist "in the thin purely logical sense of the concept exist," the question can still be asked whether this concept of existence contains anything more than Allison's abstraction thesis—that things in themselves are the results of the abstraction from the essential conditions of human cognition. Since Hanna asserts that "phenomena alone can actually exist" (ibid. p. 111), the purely possible sense of the existence of the noumenal object would necessarily remain subjective and never actual. Therefore, in the last analysis, "the possible and logical existence" must refer to the mode of existence of the *idea* of things in themselves rather than to the possibility of the actual existence of things in themselves beyond the phenomenal world, the latter of which seems to be what some of Kant's passages indicate. In other words, by asserting that only phenomena can exist actually, Hanna denies the ascription of an *actual* mode of existence to things in themselves. One can say, with regard to the existence of an object, that it is possible when that object is capable of existing actually. But things in themselves, according to Hanna's interpretation, can never exist alongside the phenomenal objects, that is to say, actually. His interpretation would align with the two-world theory, should he acknowledge the possibility of the actual existence of things in themselves, which he rejects.

Consequently, his statement that things in themselves can only possibly and logically exist when acceded that only phenomenal objects actually exist, can only be taken to mean that things in themselves can exist only in an ideal sense—namely, within the realm of the mind alone—and never to mean that they can exist externally. This aligns his position closely with that of Allison, who posits that there is only one class of actually existing objects.

Hanna's reading, however, differs from Allison's significantly on the problem of the ground of appearances. While Allison refutes the concept of noumenal cause altogether, Hanna suggests that a "problematic" concept of noumenal cause is compatible with Kant's position: "We cannot legitimately assertorically posit or cognize a noumenal cause of outer affection; nevertheless, we quite naturally and automatically form for ourselves a problematic concept of such a cause—the idea of unconditioned spontaneous production or freedom. This is in part because outer affection is a brute fact that needs explanation" (Hanna, 2001, p. 116). The appeal to a transcendental and suprasensible source of sensibility, he asserts, arises from the need for a rational explanation of sense experience and this concept remains only an explanatory concept, not a metaphysical one (ibid. p.117). From this interpretation, it can be inferred that the mode of existence of phenomena is mind-dependence with their outer source remaining theoretically problematic for us.

With regard to the empirical objects, Hanna acknowledges that their meaningful empirical presence depends on the existence of human subjectivity: "If creatures minded like us had not existed, then purely logically speaking something might still have existed, but the assertion that it did exist would have been at the very least empirically meaningless and without a truth value" (ibid. p. 105). The thin logical meaning of the existence of external objects is simply too feeble to establish empirical realism upon. Hanna's interpretation is consequently overly idealistic, leaving little ground for a robust empirical realism.

A different stream of Kant's commentary suggests that the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is the distinction between two aspects of the same object. Characterizing Kant's

position as “epistemic humility” rather than idealism, Rae Langton argues that things in themselves should be understood metaphysically not epistemologically. According to her, Kant thinks that objects exist independently of our mind. Considered in itself an object is a substance and considered in relation to other things the same object is a phenomenon (Langton, 1998, p. 19). Unlike epistemological dual-aspect reading, Lanton’s interpretation is metaphysical since it assumes that there exist objects that have two distinct sets of properties, noumenal and phenomenal:

> An object in itself is a thing that exists independently of its relations to other things. An object in itself is a substance, which has intrinsic properties. A phenomenon is an object in a relation to something else. The same object can be described both as phenomenon and as object in itself, precisely because the same object that has relations to other things also has an ‘intrinsic nature.’ … An object that is in a relation to human sensibility is an object that is in a relation: and if we must *in general* distinguish an object as it is ‘in a relation,’ from an object as it is ‘in itself’ (B307), then we must also in this case ‘distinguish, this object as appearance’ from the object ‘as object in itself.’ (ibid.)

Langton’s reconstruction of Kant relies heavily on the elements that Kant inherited from Leibniz's philosophy, particularly in relation to his view on substance. Langton suggests that Kant, following Leibniz, thinks of objects as substances with intrinsic properties and extrinsic, namely, relational properties. What distinguishes Kant from Leibniz, however, is that while Leibniz believed that we can know the intrinsic properties of substances through sensation—although only in a confused way—Kant thinks that sensation does not give us any access to such properties. Thus, Kant’s epistemic humility consists in the idea that things in themselves as substances exist, but our knowledge is limited only to their extrinsic properties.

This interpretation confronts a few challenges. To begin with, Langton attempts to overcome the duality between things in themselves and appearances on a purely ontological (metaphysical) basis. In doing so, she transfers the tension between the reality of things in themselves and the ideality of the

appearances to the structure of objects understood as substance. Therefore, in what I consider to be a regressive shift—because it deviates from Kant's transcendental insights—she transforms Kant's problematic, originally meant to be addressed within the confines of transcendental philosophy, into a metaphysical one, which entails establishing a duality between the intrinsic properties of the substance and its extrinsic properties. However, even if one does not consider this a regressive step, the problem of the relationship between the substance and its accidence is no less intricate than that of things in themselves and appearances. The relation between the inner nature of the substance and its external properties has been the center of debates amongst metaphysicians for centuries since the inception of the concept of substance in Aristotle's philosophy.

In fact, it was precisely this problem that led Hume to question the existence of substance as a legitimate ontological concept to explain the unity of our sensory perceptions of objects. Partially concurring with Hume's assessment, Kant then strived to account for a notion of substance in the "Second Analogy" of the first *Critique*, the application of which is entirely confined to phenomena. Langton's ascription of substantiality to things in themselves runs counter to this transcendental insight central to Kant's critical project. Langton's interpretation also requires the ascription of existence to things in themselves.[19]

In an attempt to reconstruct a moderate metaphysical interpretation of Kant's position, Allias, like Langtong, contends that objects have a nature that is unknown to us. However, while Langton uses the term substance, Allais defines the unknown nature of the objects as "a way that things are in themselves" (Allais, 2015, p. 68).[20] Things in themselves and appearances are not two distinct classes of objects, but rather two aspects of the same thing. She also refutes the epistemological agnosticism that commentators

[19] Ascription of existence to things in themselves, as Allen Wood argues, is illegitimate as the category of existence can only be applied to phenomena (Wood et al., 2007, p. 6). In his formulation of Jacobi's dilemma, Vaihinger also added the category of substantiality.

[20] In the following paper, Allais distinguishes her interpretation of Kant from that of Langton: "Intrinsic Natures, A Critique of Langton on Kant", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* Vol. 73, No. 1 (Jul., 2006), pp. 143-169

like Hanna find in Kant: “But he [Kant] simply never says that the notion of things as they are in themselves is the representation of something of which we can say neither that it is possible nor that it is impossible. Rather, he says that if there are appearances there is a way things are in themselves and that things in themselves ground appearances” (ibid.).

Based on this reading of Kant’s theory of the constitution of the object, Allais then attempts to respond to the objection that positing things in themselves as existent realities is not allowed in Kant’s system. She argues that considering objects as having a way things are in themselves does not involve a separate ontological commitment in addition to the commitment to the existence of appearances:

> In saying that there is a way things are in themselves we are not positing distinct supersensible things but only talking about an aspect of the things we know, so we are not making new, unjustified existential commitments. There is no commitment to a new object but rather a claim about the objects of our knowledge: they have a nature which grounds the way they appear. (ibid. p. 70)

This argument, however, is problematic, because it presumes that the unification of things in themselves and appearances in one object would spare us a dual ontological commitment. Allais’s dual-aspect theory illegitimately introduces a noumenal aspect into the constitution of the object and assumes that one ontological position suffices for the object thus constituted. It can be argued that, for Kant, an object can be posited as existing only if it is given to us *entirely* phenomenally. Only phenomena can be said to exist because we have no access to whatever that may be beyond the mere phenomena. The ontological commitment to the empirical objects, therefore, posits them as entirely empirical and not as empirical plus an unknowable non-empirical aspect. Therefore, annexing an unknowable aspect to the object would require a separate ontological assertion, a proposition that is, of course, considered problematic by certain passages in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

1.2. The Ontological Ambiguity of Kant's Theory of Object Constitution

The *telos* of a commentary is to strive toward a coherent presentation of the original text of a philosopher. In my assessment of the above readings of Kant, I do not intend to suggest that these commentaries have fallen short in their efforts. Quite the contrary, I take their challenges to be largely rooted in the nature of their task, which is to remain truthful to the spirit of Kant's texts. It is precisely because these interpretations aim to present Kant's texts coherently that they fall short of reaching a consensus on the fundamental principles of transcendental philosophy. Even though the meanings of many of Kant's concepts are fluid and prone to multiple interpretations, the conflicts and contradictions in his texts are large enough to provoke readers to pursue the solution to the problem of the constitution of the empirical objects beyond exegetical efforts and to raise the possibility of attaining a viable solution through a reassessment of Kant's project. However, if the philosophical attempts towards the establishment of the coherence of transcendental philosophy surpass mere textual interests and become an end in itself, then a new philosophical approach is opened up that considers Kant's text as an instantiation of transcendental philosophy and not the most perfect one. This philosophical approach, then, suggests the need to look for the solutions to the problems not within the confines of Kant's texts, but in the fundamental insights that motivated transcendental philosophy in the first place.

As I point out above, Kant's commentators have either to abandon or to dilute one or both of the following elements of Kant's theory of the constitution of objects: a) a strong commitment to idealism with regard to the mode of existence of appearances; or b) a strong commitment to realism with regard to the mode of existence of the empirical objects. Allison's epistemic interpretation, as I attempt to show, establishes a realism independently of both Kant's idealism and Kant's realism by abandoning the ontological commitments of Kant's project. Hanna remains a strong idealist in his reading of Kant and therefore undermines legitimate grounds for conceiving the possibility of an empirical realism. Langton's

and Allais's interpretations do not satisfy the empiricity of Kant's realism and ascribe a hidden nature to the empirical object.

Despite the valuable insights and contributions, Kant's scholarship, however, is still struggling with the tensions within Kant's formulation of transcendental idealism. Before I move to the next section, I would like to lay down the terms of the conflict drawing on the following passage from Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783), where he addresses some of the idealist charges brought up against him:

> Idealism consists in the claim that there are none other than thinking beings; the other things that we believe we perceive in intuition are only representations in thinking beings, to which in fact no object existing outside these beings corresponds. I say in opposition: There are things given to us as objects of our senses existing outside us, yet we know nothing of them as they may be in themselves, but are acquainted only with their appearances, that is, with the representations that they produce in us because they affect our senses. Accordingly, I by all means avow that there are bodies outside us, that is, things which, though completely unknown to us as to what they may be in themselves, we know through the representations which their influence on our sensibility provides for us, and to which we give the name of a body – which word therefore merely signifies the appearance of this object that is unknown to us but is nonetheless real. Can this be called idealism? It is the very opposite of it. (Kant, 2004, p. 40)

This passage from *Prolegomena* suggests that for Kant realism consists in the assertion of the mind-independent existence of the outer existence of objects in themselves that are necessarily unknown to us. This statement conflicts with his statement in *Critique of Pure Reason* where he establishes an identity between the appearances of things and their outer existence and blames the dogmatic idealist for assuming things in themselves beyond their representations: "But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are

something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them" (A370). In another passage from the first *Critique,* he writes: "[I]f I were to take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world would have to disappear, as this is nothing but the appearance in the sensibility of our subject and one mode of its representations" (A383).

Kant, thus, oscillates between two formulations of realism: according to one formulation, mind-independent objects are unknown to us, and their mode of existence remains indeterminate. This formulation encounters the problem of the ontological positing of things in themselves. According to a second formulation, namely, his empirical realism, which gives ontological status to empirical objects. The problem with this formulation is that it entails a species of objects other than things in themselves and appearances, namely, the empirical objects. This oscillation then extends to the concept of appearances: appearances are sometimes identified as empirical objects, and sometimes taken to belong to the unknown things in themselves. To this one can add a third difficulty, namely, that the mode of existence of appearances seems to be purely mental; this makes their relationship to outer objects, whether those objects are considered to be empirical objects or things in themselves, utterly problematic.

At stake is, therefore, the ontological characterization of three concepts, namely, things in themselves, appearances, and empirical objects. The first two play a role in the constitution of empirical objects. However, Kant's theory of the constitution of objects suffers from a lack of clarity regarding the relation between these components of objects. More specifically, the ontological status of the empirical object is torn between the appearances that exist merely subjectively and things in themselves that exist entirely objectively. Kant's theory of object constitution fails to make room for a separate ontological sphere specific to the empirical object, since by its very nature, the empirical object is something that resides outside of the mind. Thus, its mode of existence must not be explained idealistically, but realistically; it is fully accessible to our sense experience, that is, its mode of existence does not include a hidden component inaccessible to experience. In the next section, I argue that Husserl's articulation of

transcendental idealism, more specifically, his method of reduction, enables us to accommodate an empirical realism that does not conflict with idealism.

2. From Things in Themselves to the Things Themselves

In this section, I proceed by explicating aspects of Husserl's articulation of transcendental idealism that are most relevant to the problem discussed in the context of Kant's philosophy. I attempt to demonstrate that Husserl's phenomenological idealism can coherently accommodate empirical realism. I begin with certain passages from *Cartesian Meditations* (1931) where Husserl defines his philosophical phenomenology as transcendental idealism. The following passages contain some of the essential elements of his phenomenological transcendental idealism. By further teasing out these elements, I contrast Husserl's theory of the object constitution with that of Kant.

> Carried out with this systematic concreteness, phenomenology is *eo ipso "transcendental idealism",* though in a fundamentally and essentially new sense. It is not a psychological idealism, and most certainly not such an idealism as sensualistic psychologism proposes, an idealism that would derive a senseful world from senseless sensuous data. Nor is it a Kantian idealism, which believes it can keep open, at least as a limiting concept, the possibility of a world of things in themselves. On the contrary, we have here a transcendental idealism that *is* nothing more than a consequentially executed self-explication in the form of a systematic egological science, an explication of my ego as subject of every possible cognition, and indeed with respect to every sense of what exists, wherewith the latter might be able to *have* a sense for me, the ego. This idealism is not a product of sportive argumentations, a prize to be won in the dialectical contest with "realisms". It is *sense-explication* achieved *by actual work,* an explication carried out as regards every type of existent ever conceivable by me, the ego, and specifically as regards the

> transcendency actually given to me beforehand through experience: Nature, culture, the world as a whole. But that signifies: systematic uncovering of the constituting intentionality itself. *The proof of this idealism is therefore phenomenology itself.* (Husserl, 1960, p. 86)

For the sake of the argument, I narrow my focus on specific aspects of the above passages. Initially, I discuss Husserl's rejection of Kant's things in themselves. This rejection sets the stage for the exploration of Husserl's formulation of "empirical realism." I then delve into Husserl's theory of object constitution and explore its distinctions from Kant's theory. Finally, I examine the ontological implications of Husserl's transcendental idealism.

Husserl is very explicit in his rejection of Kant's idea of things in themselves:

> The hypothetical assumption of something real outside this world is, of course, "logically" possible; obviously it involves no formal contradiction. But when we ask about the essential conditions on which its validity would depend, about the mode of demonstration demanded by its sense, when we ask about the mode of demonstration taken universally essentially determined by the positing of something transcendent — no matter how we might legitimately universalize its essence —- we recognize that something transcendent necessarily must be experienceable not merely by an Ego conceived as an empty logical possibility but by any *actual* Ego as a demonstrable unity relative to its concatenations of experience. (Husserl, 2014, p. 108)

For Husserl, the assertion of a world apart from our spatiotemporal world is "materially countersensual" (ibid. p.109). A world that is completely out of experience's reach is only a logical possibility. The objects exist only in so far as they are factually experienceable by an actual Ego. Sense experience discloses objects in a chain of interconnected experiences. It is within this web of experiences that a thing can be legitimately said to exist, otherwise, the assertion of a suprasensible world amounts to nothing more than a hypothesis that can never be grounded in experience.

Husserl's argument against the existence of things in themselves is made possible on the grounds of what Kant terms empirical realism, namely, the principle that all that exists out there are empirical objects.[21] The realism in Husserl's phenomenology consists in what he terms "natural attitude" which is the starting point of all phenomenological investigations. The natural attitude is the outlook of the "human beings who are living naturally, objectivating, judging, feeling, willing" (ibid. p. 51). Within the natural attitude, the world and the things in it exist objectively, that is, independently of individual subjects. Through different modes of sensuous perception, hearing, touching, seeing, listening, etc. the objects around me present themselves to me. In the natural attitude, I also perceive my body as an object along with other objects and I perceive it both as *my* body and as *a* body among other bodies. Sense perception gives *direct* access to things as they exist out there, not through representation of them. In the natural attitude, I do not consider myself as a knowing subject, but as a student, worker, teacher, friend, father, etc. The whole world, which includes, nature, cultures, social configurations, political systems, and sciences exists in a natural sense, that is to say, *has the ground of its existence in itself*.

Thus, the second fundamental difference between Kant's transcendental idealism and Husserl's is that, unlike Kant, Husserl begins from the natural outlook of the naturally living human being, and not from a knowing subject. The natural starting point of view provides Husserl with a ground for realism that by rejecting the possibility of actual things in themselves, remains fully committed to the empirical mode of existence of objects. But there is an important point here that needs further exploration. Husserl rejects the possibility of the existence of things in themselves on the basis that the existential assertion of things in themselves lacks sensual grounds. Only things that can be experienced can be said to actually exist. This suggests that the existence of empirical objects is contingent upon their capability to be experienced.

[21] Husserl's discussion of Kant's thing in themselves is confined to a mere rejection based on his phenomenological approach to the objective reality. In Chapter One, to the end of uncovering the eidetic ground of the possibility of metaphysical thinking in general, I took a step further and located the transcendental origin of the idea of the thing-in-itself in the metaphysical attitude of transcendental mind.

Therefore, objects of experience are subject-dependent. This, however, is an invalid inference.[22] From the natural kind of standpoint, the objects are perceived as existing in themselves. Outer perception does not create objects; it discloses them in their independent existence. Thus, within the natural attitude, "phenomena" do not refer to the mental representations of the outer objects. Rather, they refer to the object themselves. As Husserl says: "External perception too (though not apodictic) is an experiencing of something itself, the physical thing itself: 'it itself is there'" (Husserl, 1960, p. 23). Also: "As what confronts me, I continually find the one spatiotemporal [world of] actuality to which I belong like all other human beings who are to be found in it and who are related to it as I am. I find the "actuality", the word already says it, as a *factually existent actuality and also accept it as it presents itself to me as factually existing*" (Husserl, 2014, pp. 56–57). The existential positing of the things in their empiricalness that belong to the natural attitude is the ground of Husserl's realism.

Husserl's theory of sense perception is realistic and thus satisfies two of the conditions that Kant's transcendental idealism could not satisfy: namely, that the empirical objects have the ground of their existence in themselves not in the mind, and that they do not have a suprasensible unknowable nature. In *Ideas I* (1913), Husserl designates the realm of the actual existing empirical things as the "world." The various regions of objects in the world become the subject matter of various natural and human sciences. "The world is the sum-total of objects of possible experience and experiential cognition, of objects that, on the basis of actual experiences, are cognizable in correct theoretical thinking" (Ibid. p. 6). After the discovery of the theme of the lifeworld as the total field of all experiential objects in *Crisis*, Husserl speaks of an "ontology of lifeworld" that can be constructed outside of the sphere of any transcendental interest. The ontology of lifeworld investigates the invariant structure of the lifeworld prior

[22] Characterizing Husserl's phenomenology as "epistemological idealism," Richar Holmes suggests that according to Husserl, "The belief that the world exists is legitimate as it is based on the continuous and coherent set of experiences, but that does not tell us whether this belief is true in the sense that the world actually exists" (Holmes, 1975, p. 105). It can be objected that the experience gives us the world as existing independently and, therefore, the beliefs about the world, if they are based on that experience, must also reflect the independence existence of the world. Holmes misses the point that the natural attitude is a realistic perspective not an epistemological one.

to the transcendental epoche (Husserl, 1970, p. 173). What justifies the title "ontology" for the science of the lifeworld is that the lifeworld constitutes a realm of beings self-sufficient in their ground of existence.

None of these claims, however, establishes that Husserl is a mere realist.[23] Indeed, the distinctive feature of his philosophical method, that is, his method of reduction, reveals itself particularly when contrasted with his unique formulation of realism. The starting point of Husserl's transcendental idealism is a "change of attitude" through which the existential thesis of the natural attitude is "bracketed" or "suspended." Like Descartes's methodic doubt, this change in attitude is also initially only methodic. Thus, while previously the world was valid for me as a self-sufficient existing field of entities, now through performing reduction, I consider the surrounding world no longer as factual, but in its mere phenomenality. Putting out of the play the existential thesis presupposed in natural attitude, the world appears now, at the transcendental level, as a correlation of my consciousness. *As phenomena*, the world and all the objects in it, including myself, exist only for my consciousness and through it exist only in a mental space. Through this attitude, the world in its mere phenomenality is opened up as a subject matter of study. After reduction, the world is no longer there for me as a spatiotemporal reality, but as a mere phenomenon residing in the reflective mind. Once reduced to mere phenomenality, the world enjoys the same level of certainty as my own existence, providing philosophy with an apodictic ground.

The transition from a naïve natural attitude to a transcendental one is made possible through our "perfect freedom." Despite the undeniable certainty of the world's existence, my freedom allows me to enact such a radical shift in attitude, even though no justifiable reason to doubt the world's existence can be found within the natural attitude. It is, thus, crucial to bear in mind the attitudinal character of Husserl's realism and idealism. Transcendental idealism is a perspective that is to be enacted by the

[23] In an attempt to defend Husserl against the charge of idealism, Ameriks argues that many passages in Husserl's texts that are taken to serve as argument for idealism should be taken as arguments for realism. For example, Ameriks suggests when Husserl speaks of things as correlates of consciousness, he is trying to make the point that things are not the same as consciousness of the things (Ameriks, 1977, pp. 501–502). However, Ameriks undertakes this interpretation without engaging in any discussion of Husserl's transcendental reduction. Consequently, he overlooks the sense in which Husserl's phenomenology constitutes an idealism.

conscious decision of the subject. As a consequence, as Husserl points out in a passage quoted above, transcendental idealism does not negate realism. In fact, performing transcendental phenomenology constitutes an endless task that requires us to constantly be in transition from the natural attitude to the transcendental attitude, and vice versa.

Another equally crucial point here is that the natural world and the transcendental world—which is attained through reduction—are not ontologically the same world. That reduction is a shift in attitude does not mean that Husserl idealism is perspectival. This point is important because it provides us insights into the intricate problem of the constitution of the objects for which Kant could not find a satisfactory explanation. While the world of phenomena is initially revealed through a deliberate shift in perspective, the new outlook introduces us to a distinct and new realm of being. This new realm of being is none other than the realm of pure consciousness and its correlate, that is, the *eidos* of the world, the world as phenomenon.

> In these studies we shall go as far as is necessary to effect the insight at which we are aiming, namely the insight that *consciousness has, in itself, a being of its own which in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion*. It therefore remains as the "*phenomenological residuum*," as a region of being which is of essential necessity quite unique and which can indeed become the field of a science of a novel kind: phenomenology. (Husserl, 2014, pp. 65–66)

Phenomenology can become the universal philosophy, because after transcendental reduction, the world as it appears to the observer is ultimately present as the "all-communal phenomenon 'world,' 'world for all possible and actual subjects'" in transcendental consciousness (Husserl, 1970, pp. 255–256). Transcendental phenomenology is, then, the universal ontology as "the a priori science of all conceivable beings" (Husserl, 1981a, p. 32). Since transcendental subjectivity has at its disposal the whole reality—as it is lived by the concrete subject—at the transcendental level, the study of the ultimate structure of the

phenomenal existence can be titled universal ontology or metaphysics in the non-dogmatic sense of the word (Husserl, 1960, p. 139).

Husserl, thus, gives a new meaning to the term "phenomena," one which radically deviates from Kant's understanding of the term. Phenomena, in the transcendental sense of Husserl's use of the term, refers solely to the mental entities that can reside nowhere other than in the mind. The mode of existence of phenomena is to be sharply distinguished from that of the actual existing objects that I perceive in the natural attitude. The distinction that Husserl draws between "actual" and "possible" or "real" and "irreal" is quite essential here. As opposed to external material and psychological entities that exist in an actual mode of being, the phenomena or "essences" that are obtained through phenomenological work on phenomena, exist only ideally, or, as Husserl puts it, "irrealy."

> [*P*]*ure or transcendental phenomenology will* become established, *not as a science of matter of facts, but as a science of essences* (as an "*eidetic*" science). It will become established as a science that exclusively seeks to ascertain "cognitions of essences" and *no "matters of fact" whatever…the phenomena of transcendental phenomenology will become characterized as [irreal]…* Moreover, it will become apparent that all transcendentally purified "mental processes" ["*Erlebnisse*"] are irrealities posited outside any incorporation into the "actual world." (Husserl, 2014, pp. xx–xxi)

Kant and his commentators swing back and forth between the view that considers phenomena to belong to things in themselves (or the empirical object) and the view that the phenomena of the things reside solely in the mind. For Husserl, by contrast, prior to reduction phenomena are the things themselves (understood as empirical objects) and, at the transcendental level, they refer to purely ideal, irreal things existing in the mind. He is, thus, able to speak of an empirical realism that is compatible with his transcendental idealism. This compatibility is made possible in his philosophy thanks to a clear ontological characterization of both realism and idealism that keeps them ontologically distinct. With regard to realism, Husserl's theory of perception, which is phenomenological in nature, bars us from

positing imperceptible things because such things cannot be said to *actually* exist. Moreover, according to his theory of perception, the real world, in which I live alongside other objects, has the ground of its existence in itself and not in the knowing subject. The mode of the existence of the real objects is, thus, characterized as actuality. With regard to idealism, Husserl characterizes the mode of existence of the mentally existing things as ideal or irreal. After the reduction of all realities, the phenomena that are considered in their purity, form a field of beings essentially distinct from that of my surrounding world and the objects in it. The empirical object belongs to the actual world and cannot be confused with its transcendental phenomena. Realism is, therefore, the doctrine concerning empirical objects, while the doctrine of phenomena is necessarily idealism.[24]

Finally, thanks to the distinct ontological characterizations of realism and idealism, Husserl's theory of object constitution avoids complications that affect Kant's theory. Husserl's theory of constitution must be understood on the basis of the above-explicated ontological difference between the actual and the irreal realm of beings. Thus, when Husserl speaks of the constitution of the world through absolute consciousness, the world is taken as the phenomena of the world that exists only in an irreal mode of being and not the actual world in which I live. This is a crucial point, as it differentiates Husserl's theory of idealism from Hegel's speculative idealism as well as from Kant's transcendental idealism. For Hegel, absolute consciousness constitutes reality in its entirety. The constitutive subject is ultimately identical to the reality that it constitutes. Hegel's speculative dialectic ultimately overcomes the distinction between the subjective and objective, the real and irreal, essence and existence. Husserl's universal philosophy, by contrast, establishes itself on the ground of pure consciousness alone, whose boundaries are delimited against the actuality of the real world. The essence of the world is, thus, not constitutive of the actual world, but the world as phenomena.

[24] Sebastian Luft discusses the affinity between Kant's empirical realism and Husserl's natural attitude: "The natural attitude's epistemology can be characterized as empirical realism: in the natural attitude, we think that the world exists independently of anybody experiencing it. It takes the being of the world for granted" (Luft, 2007, p. 8). His analysis, however, does not touch upon the ontological foundations upon which each of these philosophers are operating.

In the discussion of Kant's theory of object constitution above, I argue that the ambiguities about the concepts of appearance, empirical object, and things in themselves, and the part that each plays in the formation of objectivity, ultimately comes down to unclarified ontological nature of the real and ideal. Appearances are said to belong to things in themselves but reside merely in the mind. The empirical object is sometimes taken to be identical with the appearances of the objects, which means it cannot exist outside of the mind, and sometimes with the things themselves, of which we cannot gain any cognition. Finally, the very assertion of things in themselves requires the participation of the mental sources that are, in Kant's theory, reserved merely for phenomenal objects. The cross-existence of appearances, empirical objects, and things in themselves is an indication that Kant fails to demarcate clearly the particular ontological fields to which each of these components of objectivity belong. At a deeper level, Kant never attains full awareness of the necessity of this ontological demarcation for the coherence of his system. As a result, Kant's transcendental subject, instead of being purely constitutive of the phenomena of objects, appears at times as the constitutive of the reality of the objects. Hence, despite his explicit assertions that his idealism only concerns the representations of things and not their existence (Kant, 2004, pp.44,45)—an interesting statement that brings his position close to that of Husserl—Kant also maintains that without the existence of the thinking subject no corporeal thing could be said to exist—a position that brings him close to that of Berkeley (and Hegel).

For Husserl, by contrast, the existence of things in the surrounding world is not given or constituted by the subject. The problems of the constitution concern the things only as phenomena whose mode of existence cannot be confused with that of actual things. Thus, transcendental consciousness constitutes things as they are intended by the subject, that is, as they are immanent within the transcendental consciousness.[25] In the passage quoted above from *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl defines one of the distinctive features of his idealism to be "sense-explication" that is carried out with regard to all phenomena: nature, culture, the world as a whole, and the ego itself. Then he clarifies: "But that

[25] For a discussion of this point see: (Luft, n.d., p. 5).

signifies: systematic uncovering of the constituting intentionality itself" (Husserl, 1960, p. 56). Things, as meaning, are necessarily constituted by a meaning-giving subject. But this eidetic constitution itself is made possibly only because the world is already there for me.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I try to demonstrate how Husserl's phenomenological articulation of transcendental idealism can help overcome the difficulties in which Kant's idealism is entangled regarding empirical realism. Kant's philosophy was a significant step toward the realization of the transcendental turn of philosophy; however, in Kant the transcendental turn is still not fully clear about its fundamental ontological implications. The introduction of the natural attitude into the transcendental philosophy allows Husserl to radically reformulate the Copernican turn and offer a proper foundation for a form of realism that is compatible with idealism. For Husserl, there are two realms of existence: the natural worlds of factual beings, and the ideal worlds of phenomena. Although phenomenology takes only the latter as the proper field of inquiry, for its beginning point it needs to rely on our naïve experience of the world and, thus, has to grant the natural validity of the pre-theoretical experience. This allowed Husserl to offer an account of idealism reconcilable with realism and to address the problem of the constitution of the empirical object within the horizon of this reconciliation.

This dualism is, thus, essential for phenomenological work. In the next chapter, I argue that it is equally essential for the philosophical foundations of critical theory, as it is on this basis that the normative grounds of critical practices are to be established. The philosophical investigation into the grounds of critical social theory involves an account of the ontological dualism between the realm of the real and norms. The mode of existence of norms of action is to be described as ideal. Any normative theory thus presupposes—implicitly or explicitly—the distinct ontological realm of norms. This dualism

is thus a presupposition for both the critique of speculative reason—whose sole aim is to overcome this ontological dualism through a projected ontological monism—and also for the ethical promises of critical social theory.

Chapter 6: Teleological Reason as The Foundation of Critical Social Theory

The renewal of the critique of speculative reason put forward in Chapter One is more than merely an epistemological re-assessment of Kant's philosophy. The end of the critique of speculative reason is to free theoretical reason from alienation. Identifying metaphysics as a mode of the functioning of reason in which reason loses itself in its products, the illegitimate use of pure reason is identified as consisting in its alienated (irrational) use. Metaphysical thinking is the self-alienation of reason. The concept of alienation is clarified preliminarily as reason's self-disintegration, manifest in the conflicts into which reason becomes entangled in metaphysics. On an ethical level, the irrational use of reason in metaphysics is to be identified as a form of human alienation in which critical theory should take an interest. The purely theoretical critique of reason, thus, is already guided by teleological insights. Further reflections on the telos of a critique of theoretical reason bring to the fore important questions concerning the foundation of this critique itself. Where are these insights grounded? Why should reason take an interest in the teleological question concerning the critique of theoretical reason? The philosophical investigation into the foundation of critical theory entails a philosophical clarification of the *normative* foundations of critical theory.

The concept of alienation has been widely used in Marxist social critique since it first made its appearance in Marx's early writings. Social alienation refers to the denial of the subjective basis of social life through the subjugation of one social class by another. Social alienation and its consequent ideological forms of rationalities—instrumental rationality, social positivism, dialectical materialism, historicism, etc.— are to be considered as forms of irrationalism. The critique of alienation, thus, is the unified interest of reason's critical attitude both in the realm of pure reason and society. Within the horizon of this interest, the task of critique can be carried out as much with regards to the oppressive social and political forms, such as totalitarianism, racism, etc., as it can within the field of theoretical use

of reason. The critique of alienation is the telos of both social theory and pure philosophy—understood as the critique of theoretical reason.

To bring this unified horizon to full clarity, however, much theoretical work is still needed. The reconstruction of Kant's critique is a purely theoretical endeavor focused on human reason in its pure theoretical capacity. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, the critique of pure reason requires, as an element of its possibility, an account of the empirical world as the basis for the objectivity of empirical theoretical knowledge as opposed to metaphysical knowledge. It is demonstrated that only in Husserl's formulation of transcendental idealism the two dimensions of life, namely, the transcendental and the natural, are coherently reconciled without either of them devouring the other. At the basis of Husserl's articulation of transcendental idealism lies an ontological dualism that conceives of the natural world—consisting of spheres of natural and human life—and the transcendental realm as distinct fields of being. To each of these fields of being corresponds different kinds of experiences. Natural experience in its most basic forms is a sense experience, but at the higher levels includes aesthetic, cultural, and religious experiences and so on. These experiences are natural experiences in the sense that they assume the mind-independent reality of their objects. The transcendental experience, on the other hand, has as its object the pure phenomena, or what Husserl would call "essences," the mode of existence of which is irreal or ideal. These two ontological spheres are distinguished from each other by the distinct modes of existence of their objects: the objects of the natural experience are considered to have the ground of their existence in themselves, while the objects of the transcendental experience, the essences, exist only in the mental space.

With the discovery of the realm of actuality, which Husserl calls lifeworld in his later works, phenomenological transcendental idealism lays out the foundation of materialism and idealism in a non-metaphysical manner. The introduction of the theme of the lifeworld is an important contribution that has various implications for philosophy and the philosophical foundation of critical theory. Phenomenological transcendental idealism does not take consciousness to be an absolute ground of being—as is the case

with Berkeley's absolute subjective idealism and Hegel's speculative idealism. The ontological dualism that lies at the foundation of phenomenological transcendental idealism distinguishes it from any type of metaphysics that hypothesizes a unifying ground of being. Therefore, neither the ideal field of pure consciousness nor the material actual existence of the lifeworld is hypothesized as the ultimate ground of existence. The reduction of consciousness to the material conditions of life, on the one hand, stems from a misunderstanding of the mode of existence of consciousness, which necessarily transcends all materiality. On the other hand, such a genetic reduction of consciousness to the material condition of its existence—undertaken by materialists, but also by some of the phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty—undermines the very ground for the explication of not only the philosophical foundations of materialism and phenomenology but also, as far as the critical theory is concerned, the normative foundation of critical activities.[26] Since the mode of existence of norms is necessarily ideal—irreal—in such philosophies, the reduction of the consciousness to the material conditions of its genesis results in the destruction of the foundation of ethics as the ground of critical theory.

The reduction of the material life of humans to pure consciousness, however, is not less harmful to social theory. Oppression makes itself felt first and foremost at the material level of life. The material conditions of life include not only the brute biological conditions of life, but also the more complex organization of the material production necessary for subsistence. The various organizations of production influence various strata of life, including culture, religion, family, psychology, etc. Injustice and inequality, for example, are concepts whose real application can be experienced only by the natural human being. They become actualized corporeally in the human body and its unconscious structure as suffering, pain, ailment, and psychological conditions.[27] Concepts such as class and race describe social—or international—orders in which a social group's means of subsistence have been hampered by other

[26] For a critique of Husserl's idealism from a dialectical materialist position see: Thao, T. D. *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* (1986), "Author's Preface."
[27] In *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952), Franz Fanon develops a psychoanalysis of the unconscious desire for unconscious racial oppression. See, for example: PP. 74-75

social groups. The real superiority of one social group over the other—be it related to race, ethnicity, religion, class, culture, etc.—manifests itself first and foremost in the material conditions of life of an individual. From a phenomenological perspective, social concepts such as class, race, etc. should be described and formulated first through the structure of the experience of the subjects. Therefore, as far as the philosophical ground of critical social theory is concerned, phenomenology offers a materialism that is grounded in the structure of the experiences of natural human life. This materialism is to be sharply distinguished from the metaphysical types of materialism commonly adopted by various Marxist materialists, as the latter is grounded not in the experience of a subject, but in the dogmatic doctrine of nature.

From the purely naturalistic view, however, social oppression and its forms are simply natural events. A mere materialism cannot go further than describing the various empirical conditions and, therefore, cannot deliver the critical promises of critical social theory. Critique, in all its forms, is not a material activity; rather, like other scientific activities, it is a purely mental activity. The critique of any form of oppression assumes, as its necessary eidetic condition, a normative pole that, because of its ideality, transcends all the material and natural conditions. The very concept of oppression and the relevant concepts such as alienation, fetishization, equality, etc, carry in themselves a link to ideal norms. A merely materialistic attitude, even if it is phenomenologically conceived, cannot differentiate the oppressive from the non-oppressive conditions, as both conditions are equally embedded in the natural conditions. The clarification of the ground of this ideal pole in connection with the materiality of life is a philosophical task that as such falls outside of the critical theory since it constitutes a different ideal activity than the critical theory itself. Nevertheless, the philosophical clarification of the ground of critical social theory and social theory itself are both guided by the same ideals.

Like philosophy, critique is also an eidetic activity. From this fact, it can now be argued that the type of philosophy most appropriate for the above-mentioned task is phenomenological transcendental idealism. It is only this philosophy that can adequately honor both realms of human life, namely, the

eidetic and the actual levels of experiences of human subjects, without letting one encroach upon the other, or attempting, like metaphysicians, to ground both in a hypothetical reality of a higher order.

So far, I have shown in a preliminary manner, that critique as a normative theoretical activity requires an eidetic foundation as well as an assertion of the natural dimensions of human subjectivity. The task of this chapter is to present these two realms of human subjectivity in the unity of a teleological theory. Not all our natural activities have to be guided by those ideal norms and not all our pure activities are immediately related to those norms. When the philosophical ground of a normative theory is concerned, only certain elements of each form of experience, natural or transcendental, should be the focus of our considerations. In this chapter, I examine the necessary elements of both the natural and transcendental life of human subjectivity that jointly make up the ground of our critical theoretical activities. Even within this narrower focus, there is a range of philosophical issues that demand consideration. I limit my analysis to the most essential elements of the natural experience and transcendental experience that are related to the task of the eidetic construction of the normative foundation of critical theory. These essential elements are the a priori conditions of the possibility of critical theory. This investigation is, thus, transcendental in its method since it explores the elements that make possible social critique as a distinct theoretical field.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section, I examine what Paci calls the precategorial economic structure of the lifeworld. I show how Paci's phenomenological approach to the human body and its relation to the surrounding world is fundamentally different from that of Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Teasing out the full implications of this shift in the description of bodily functions equips phenomenology with the necessary conceptual tools for the theoretical construction of the foundation of critical social theory. In the second section, I suggest that Paci's teleological reading of Husserl misses a pure description of the formation of the concept of telos at the transcendental level—what I call normativization. It is through this eidetic process that the natural conditions of corporeal life are purified, modified, and rendered as ideals that can guide our actions. By actions, it is meant both the

theoretical-critical practices and social-political practices. Thus, the transcendental phenomenological investigation of the eidetic ground of critique aims at establishing a comprehensive articulation of the ultimate norms of theoretical and social practices. This paves the way for a transcendental phenomenological description of another branch of reason, namely, teleological reason, which forms the transcendental basis of critique in general and critical social theory in particular.

1. From Things Themselves to Nature

In the last chapter, I discuss, an important shift in some of the themes of transcendental idealism from Kant to Husserl. I attempt to show that Husserl is able to account for a realism that is compatible with his version of idealism by granting the existence of the mind-independent empirical objects without necessarily implying the genetic embeddedness of consciousness in material conditions. This shift is at its basis a shift in the conception of human subjectivity. Husserl made explicit, in his theory of subjectivity, what Kant assumed but never fully developed, namely, that human subjects are natural human beings living corporeally in the natural world. The human body belongs to the world of nature like all other material objects, but at the same time, it differs in its mode of existence from other objects fundamentally.

Apart from the discovery of the theme of the body, Husserl's phenomenological characterization of the human body remains mainly focused on its perceptual capacities. This tendency only intensifies in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), where his analysis of the body is restricted to its perceptual presence in the world ("phenomenal body"). This focus on perception, as I argue in this section, is at the cost of ignoring other aspects of human bodily subjectivity, namely, its absolute dependence on nature through its material needs. In the history of phenomenology, it was Paci, who, following Marx, introduced this dimension of subjectivity into phenomenological studies. This shift in phenomenology make it possible to account for the lifeworld as *economically structured* and, thus,

provides a ground for a description of the material conditions of social life. Such description is necessary for the theoretical construction of critical social theory and its conceptual reservoir. I conclude this chapter by highlighting some of the weaknesses of Paci's Marxist reconstruction of Husserl's lifeworld and attempt to provide viable solutions to them.

Both in Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, the subject's capacity for sense perception shapes their views on a series of issues such as the nature of the body and bodily relationship with the surrounding world. This conception of bodily subjectivity determines what are the most essential features of the material world and, consequently, the most essential features of the relationship between the material world and the human body. In the second chapter of the second section of *Ideas I*, "Consciousness and Natural World," Husserl develops a theory of perception that proves to be influential, particularly for Merleau-Ponty. It is not my intention here to debate Husserl's description of sensory perception nor to deny that such a theory is necessary. What I highlight, rather, is that for these philosophers the natural world is primarily constituted through perceptual determinations.

In a preliminary attempt to demarcate the pure scope of consciousness against the realm of the physical world, Husserl, while acknowledging the "transcendence" of physical objects,[28] gives an account of the inherent composition of the experience of physical objects in distinction from perceived physical objects themselves. The perception of physical objects occurs through a continuum of changing perceptions. For example, the coffee table in front of me is constituted through my discovering the gazes I direct at it from different positions in the surrounding space. Throughout the process of perception, the table remains the same. The table as perceived—the table-perception—however, requires certain subjective capacities to present the table as this particular table. For example, the separate perceptions of the table must be synthesized in my consciousness to form a unified series of perceptions belonging to a unified perceiver. This synthesis, in turn, requires memory—retention and protention. Moreover, the

[28] Husserl uses the term "transcendent" in these contexts to refer to the physical objects that exist independently of the mind. By contrast, the phenomena whose mode of existence is purely mental are referred to as "immanent."

perception of physical objects is always perspectival and, therefore, it requires the bodily movements of the perceiver. It is because of the capacity of my body to move around the table that this table is given to me in my perception as a three-dimensional object. Vision alone cannot give me the perception of depth had it not been already operating kinaesthetically. The movements of the body, or to put it more precisely, the body's capacity for movement, what Husserl refers to as "I can," is an essential component of sensory perception (Husserl, 1960, p. 97). In the temporal continuum of perspectives, various sensory given such as color, smells, tangible qualities, etc., operate on body mobility to provide perceptions of depth and size and together form a unified complex perceptual system.

It is important to note that this theory of perception constitutes only one of the topics of Husserl's phenomenology. The above discussion also serves as a transition from the natural standpoint to the "region of pure consciousness," by ultimately showing the subjective elements of experience as opposed to transcendent physical objects. Sense perception does not necessarily occupy a prominent place in Husserl's phenomenology. It was Merleau-Ponty who, first in *Phenomenology of Perception*, locates sense perception at the center of phenomenological study. *Phenomenology of Perception* is more than a mere phenomenological study of perception. An ontological restructuring of phenomenology is at stake.[29] Perception becomes the source of all meanings, pre-theoretical, theoretical, historical, political, sexual, religious, etc. Merleau-Ponty's philosophical program operates under an entirely different ideal than Husserl's. Although both philosophers characterize the human relationship to the physical world through perception,[30] Merleau-Ponty dismisses Husserl's dualistic ontology and projects a monistic ontology of perception.[31]

---

[29] Richard Zaner elaborates on this point: "The final shape of his [Merleau-Ponty] philosophy, if I may so express it, is the result, not only of his contact with Husserlian phenomenological philosophy, but equally, and perhaps even more, of his own commitment to an "existential ontology"" (Zaner, 2012, pp. 145–146).

[30] Some Merleau-Ponty scholars have argued that there is essentially nothing novel in Merleau-Ponty's account of perception and the subject's relationship with the world that is not already present in Husserl's works. See: (Smith, 2007, pp. 4–5)

[31] Underlying Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological projects are metaphysical impulses which fully develop in his final unfinished work, *The Visible and The Invisible* (1968).

Unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty does not consider perception to be merely an act of the perceiver. In every moment of perception, the perceptual subject moves beyond the boundaries of subjectivity and towards the world. The world is not the site for the collection of all possible objects, but the phenomenal field in which I perceptually live. “Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them” (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. xi). Perception cannot be rationally explained; no pure ideality guides my perceptions of my surrounding world and myself. On the contrary, perception is the root of all kinds of thinking, rational or illusional, since it is first through perception that the world and its rationality are constituted against a background on the basis of which I am capable of discerning the real from the illusory. I am in the world through my body and my body discloses the world through its sensory perception and motility. My body is not a mere object amongst the other objects of the world but grounds the possibility of the objectivity of all objects since it is through the intentional movements of the body and its position in the space that physical objects are first given to me. The body’s “motor intentionality” always operates within a background, that is to say, a concrete perceptual situation (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 127). My body and the background world form a unified system where I orient myself without necessarily rationally calculating my movements and the distance between myself and the objects around me. The same holds true for my relationship with other subjects. I perceive another person’s body within the shared perceptual structure where both our bodies exist as integral moments of a whole. Again here it is the anonymous world of perception that establishes the ultimate horizon within which my relationship with others first takes form (Merleau-Ponty, 2013, p. 410). In Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of perception, all the phenomena are studied as perceptually determined, motivated, and manifest. The essential functions of the human body are recognized to be its perceptual functions.

A question, however, can be raised regarding this phenomenological characterization of the body: to what extent can the body and its essential functions be explained merely based on its capacities for perception? Is it possible that the above descriptions may have overlooked other essential bodily features?

The essential bodily functions fit for a philosophical investigation are the ones that make up our most fundamental bodily relationship with our surrounding world. If it would be possible to show the existence of certain bodily functions beyond perception that more fundamentally determine subjective existence in the world, then phenomenological description would cut deeper into the problem of the natural constitution of subjectivity than descriptions confined to the perceptual level. The deeper level of my bodily relationship with the physical world is characterized by my biological needs, or what Paci refers to as "a new meaning of intentionality" (Paci, 1972, p. 182).[32]

For Paci, material needs and attempts at their satisfaction characterize the structure of bodily subjectivity and the lifeworld. He writes:

> The relation between man and matter is also a relation between the subject who needs goods and the goods that satisfy his needs. On the precategorial level, this means that a phenomenology of the living needs of the subject in the first person can constitute the basis of *political economy* as a science. Intentionality itself then takes a new meaning. It appears not as *consciousness* of something but also as *dependence on something*. On the precategorial economic level, my subjectivity may turn out to be the need of something that conditions life. (Paci, 1972, p. 182)

By shifting the focus from perceptual relations toward the need-relation, Paci studies the structure of the precategorial subject and the world in terms of the satisfaction of needs. The world is no longer just the world of perception, but a place in which I am always already involved in some sort of economic relations. The necessity of this characterization of lifeworld lies in the fact that I, as a biological organism, must satisfy needs in order to be able to function. "In order to live, man must begin to satisfy the most elementary economic needs. The ego is dependent and conditioned by them" (Paci, 1972, p. 256).

[32] In the *Groundwork of Phenomenological Marxism*, Ian Angus develops what he calls the "ontology of the lifeworld," drawing on Husserl's concept of Kineasthetic action and Marx's concept of labor, which parallels what Paci does through a phenomenology of needs (Angus, 2021, pp. 151–152).

A phenomenology of need proceeds by studying the world around human subjects as inherently disclosed through the needs and the means to their satisfaction.

> How do I experience hunger? That I lack something and that this something is away from me: I want it close enough to me to make it my own, i.e., "internalize it." … When I am hungry, the world that I experience is valid for me only as a complex of foods that can satisfy my hunger. I pay attention only to foods—in the same way that a baby pays attention only to the material breast that can feed him. (Paci, 1972, p. 350)

In these passages, hunger is only an example. The same phenomenological description can be applied to other essential needs even though their modes of satisfaction may have become in the present age more complex and demand long-term planning. Irrespective of the nature of the need and how much planning it involves, the world in which I, as a natural organism, live is always there for me only as a world that provides me with the necessary means to satisfy those needs. Thus, the need for shelter, clothes, medications, transportation, education, etc. also opens the world for me as a world where I pursue the satisfaction of my needs in each of these fields.[33]

It is, thus, through the most fundamental pursuits of life, that is, the satisfaction of needs, that human beings enter into relations with each other and form communities of intersubjectivity. The precategorial economic structure of life is always intersubjective. Within this economic community, I must work or rely on other people's work to satisfy my needs. Human labor is the ground of human social

[33] The source of inspiration for this line of phenomenological analysis is, no doubt, Marx's historical materialism, as can be seen in passages from Marx, such as the following: "we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history". But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfill merely in order to sustain human life. Even when the sensuous world is reduced to a minimum, to a stick as with Saint Bruno [Bauer], it presupposes the action of producing the stick" (Marx, 1974, p. 48). Michel Henry, the French phenomenologist, also develops a phenomenological interpretation of Marx that is centered around the "individual subjective life" (Henry, 2019). In a recent example, building on Paci's phenomenological interpretation of Marx, Christopher Araujo argues that "Marx's concept of science, mode of presentation and methods of critique exhibits all the necessary elements of a phenomenology" (Araujo, 2017, p. 102).

life. The precategorial economic life is already characterized by some mode of social production. In a capitalist society with an integrated mode of production, my body lies at the intersection of multiple sectors of production: food industries, cloth industries, housing, education, etc. Being-in-the-world means living in a politico-economic system where the objects around me are there for me not only for their perceptual and hermeneutical values but also for their economic value.

The precategorial economic structure of the lifeworld is, I argue, more fundamental than its perceptual dimensions because it is the very material presupposition of life in general. As Paci puts it, "the precategorial economic structure is thus rooted in the very possibility of life and the conditions that allow life" (Paci, 1972, p. 266). Viewed from the perspective of the need-relation, the world around me is no longer simply a world of colors, sizes, distance, depth, etc., and my body's sole purpose is not to orient itself perceptually in the world I live in. Although every moment of living in the world, including the satisfaction of needs, is filled with various sensory contents, perceptual life presupposes the subject's need-relation. The precategorial economic structure of life precedes the world of perception and should, so long as a primordial description of subjectivity is concerned, come before a merely perceptual description of the world. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger are, thus, limited in their analysis of the pretheoretical life as far as they dismiss this precategorial economic structure that grounds all perceptual and hermeneutical meanings. The economic "meaning-giving" of the precategorial subjective actions that constitute life, therefore, absolutely precede the perceptual and linguistic meaning-giving structures and constitute their telos. Without a description of precategorial economic structure of needs any phenomenological description that claims primordiality remains abstract since it overlooks the real material basis of life.

Consequently, Heidegger's Dasein and Merleau-Ponty's corporeal subjects are not yet concrete subjects. Heidegger's Dasein does not live in an economic system; its meager "hammering" skills do not amount to social production, but rather to the crafting of this pair of shoes or that chair for individual use. Heidegger's description of being-in-the-world also loses its concreteness when "Dasein's

understanding"—its practical dealings with the surrounding equipment—is put in service of revealing the originality of a fetishized notion of being *qua* being. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is often credited with discovering the theme of corporeality and the recognition of the materiality of the concrete phenomenological subject. His treatment of these themes, however, remains problematic so long as the materiality of the world and the subject is only grasped in the perception of the subject. Merleau-Ponty's body is a "phenomenal body," where "phenomena" is understood as that which appears to me in my sense experience. The whole material world as well as my body is valid for me only as synthesized perceptions. In order to carry out its perceptual functions, the body first has to be able to meet its elementary needs.

The difference between the phenomenological materialism of Merleau-Ponty and that of Paci is decisive. Merleau-Ponty describes how perception presents the world as relative to my body. Perceptually disclosed, the world is a world whose characteristics depend on my body's perceptual functions. The kinaesthetic features of my body present the world around me to me based on *my capacities* for perception and its limitations. For example, my inherent embeddedness in space renders my visual sensations of the physical objects perspectival so that I cannot perceive an object in all four dimensions simultaneously. The structure of the world then is shaped by my perceptual capacities and my body's perceptual capacities function on an already disclosed perceptual background. Within this correlative perceptual system, my body and the world are moments of a unified web so that each is a precondition of the other. The phenomenology of perception discloses the world and my body as correlates. By contrast, Paci introduces the perspective of a phenomenology of need, in which the world still is valid for me as the complex means for the satisfaction of my needs, but my relation with the world is by no means correlational. In the structure of need-relation, there is a strong sense in which my body is absolutely dependent on nature. Without my body, or even all human bodies, nature would very well continue to exist;[34] the reverse, however, does not hold true. The world is absolutely transcendent and I depend on it

[34] This is one of the core elements of Marx's materialism as he defines it in his critique of Hegel's idealism: "Nature is man's *inorganic body*— nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself the human body. Man *lives* on nature—means that nature is his *body,* with which he must remain in continuous intercourse if he is not to die. That man's physical and

unilaterally for subsistence of my natural existence. The phenomenology of need, then, leads us to a stronger materialism that does not turn matter into the correlate of my existence—a diluted materialism—but studies it as the absolute ground for my natural existence.

It is worth noting that the rediscovery of the theme of nature by Paci allows the natural world on which my natural existence depends to be regarded as the ground for empirical realism, understood as natural materialism. Nature is absolutely transcendent from my existence—in a natural sense—and yet is unmistakably an empirical existence grasped through my bodily needs—not a thing in itself. My argument is that Paci's phenomenology of need provides a better framework for empirical realism than either Husserl's or Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology since it surpasses the limitations of perception. Beginning from sense perception, philosophy always runs the risk of reducing external objects to the mere perception of them. The phenomenology of need leaves no room for such risk since every experience of a need discloses the object of the need as something that is unambiguously both empirical and external to my consciousness.

It is only after the structure of my relationship with the world is firmly grasped according to the concept of need and the satisfaction of needs, that concepts essential to critical theory, such as alienation, reification, fetishization, oppression, slavery, mastery, property, class oppression, and the material conditions of these concepts—nature and the intersubjective and temporal structure of lifeworld—find their concrete ground in the bodily experience of human subjects. Moreover, this shift paves the way for the phenomenological exhibition of the ideal normative ground for critical social theory (the topic I turn to in the final section of this chapter).

It is in the context of this phenomenological materialism that the material condition of human alienation can be accounted for. Alienation presupposes the natural bodily functions demanded by the

---

spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature" (Marx & Engels, 1988, p. 76).

bodily needs and the resulting intersubjective structure of the lifeworld. Alienation based on the material condition of life is then a mode of life within the precategorial economic structure.

> To be in history means to be originally and precategorially mortal and to have to satisfy hunger. Since, as a real economic and precategorial subject, I must nourish myself, I must work. Also, another subject can make me work for him. This is the social origin of alienation…. Alienation would be impossible if man were not rooted in the precategorial economic structure. (Paci, 1972, p. 351)

The economic structure of the lifeworld is rooted in the biological necessities of my existence. This economic structure is the ground of all particular social orders, capitalistic or not. The possibility of alienation is embedded within the fundamental structure of life itself. The same holds for commodity fetishism and alienation from nature. The alienation from the product of labor occurs only when in the process of labor—whose ultimate end is the satisfaction of material needs—the product is owned by someone other than the workers (exploitation). So long as the product of my labor is the objectification of the lifetime workers spend on the production process, the alienation of the product is also self-alienation. And so long as another class owns the value created by my labor, alienation is alienation from others. The economic structure of lifeworld operates upon the organic and the inorganic nature. Workers' body itself are part of nature. Thus, so long as nature is turned into a necessary means of the process of production, rather than the ultimate locus of life, the preservation of which is an end-in-itself, alienation is an alienation of nature as the material substratum of life.[35]

Paci's interpretation of the lifeworld, I argue, can be extended to consider the phenomenological roots of instrumental reason, a topic of particular interest for the thinkers of the Frankfurt school of critical theory. The instrumentalization of human beings, their work, their bodies, and nature is provoked

[35] In an attempt to address the contemporary environmental crisis, some scholars have developed the argument that the theme of alienation of nature is an integral part of Marx's political-economic critique of capitalism (Foster, 2022, p. 341).

by the manner in which our natural bodily existence is shaped through our biological needs. The tendency towards instrumentalization—and, thus, instrumental rationality—is also immanent in the precategorial economic structure of life itself. Far from being the true mode of rationality, it arises as a result of the lack of sufficient reflection on the material structure of life. The kind of rationality operative in instrumentalism remains at the level of the natural pre-reflective functions of bodies and blindly follows the material necessities for the satisfaction of needs. The instrumentalizing of one social group by the other is a way of satisfying needs, one that is driven by an immediate response to material needs. The satisfaction of all needs requires a level of instrumentalization labor. Instrumentalization is, thus, an essential moment of the precategorial of lifeworld that makes alienation possible.[36]

However, so long as the precategorial structure of the lifeworld or, to be more specific, the instrumentalization as a constitutive component of the lifeworld is naturalized, alienation dominates all aspects of human life. Instrumental rationality is a pseudo-philosophical school of thought that has its roots in the naturalization of some of the elements of the precategorial lifeworld. A nuanced differentiation must be made between the modes of instrumentalization. The process of production requires the instrumentalization of labor. However, instrumental rationality abstracts this element of precategorial production and turns it into the telos of production. What then exists only as a natural tendency is tuned into the essence of the production. Instrumental rationality treats instrumentalization, which is only one component of the social mode of production, as the foundation of production. The process of production justifies itself on the grounds of mere instrumentality; it satisfies needs only in so far as it can turn labor into a mere instrument. Instrumental rationality is, thus, the naturalization of a

[36] In this context, one can speak of the alienation of the concept of need itself. Not all needs are true and genuine the satisfaction of which lead to cultivation and growth. In *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), Marcuse speaks of the necessity and the criterion for distinction between false and true needs: "'False' are those which are superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression: the needs which perpetuate toil, aggressiveness, misery, and injustice. Their satisfaction might be most gratifying to the individual, but this happiness is not a condition which has to be maintained and protected if it serves to arrest the development of the ability (his own and others) to recognize the disease of the whole and grasp the chances of curing the disease. The result then is euphoria in unhappiness" (Marcuse, 2013, p. 7). The study of the true and false needs is closely related to the concept of ideology as the false conception of need is an ideological concept of need.

natural tendency. By naturalization, I mean rendering as objective an element that exists in the lifeworld only relative to the subject. This naturalization, as a mode of thinking (and practice), itself is a rational activity whose eidetic ground can be studied through transcendental phenomenology. A phenomenological description of instrumental rationality unravels the real ground of this naturalization and shows in what sense it plays a real, even necessary, role. At the same time, it demonstrates that instrumentality as a natural tendency is different from the naturalization of instrumentality since the latter is a mode of thinking and production that dominates only under certain social conditions.

Paci's interpretation of precategorial lifeworld as economically structured makes possible an account of the material ground of the structure of human oppression. Alienation, whether it is grounded in the capitalist mode of production or any other social formation, denotes the subjugation of one subjectivity by another (turning human subjectivity into an object). Oppression is a social and political form of objectivist thought. Other forms of oppression, including gender, racial, and ethnic oppression, carry in themselves the precategorial economic meanings of human social life and should be studied in relation to this fundamental constitution of human natural subjectivity. The precategorial economic structure of lifeworld is the ultimate ground of the possibility of all modes of oppression. A phenomenological description of the material grounds of the possibility of the modes of oppression is part of the philosophical task of elucidating the normative foundation of critical theory.

2. The Eidetic Construction of Teleological Reason

That human beings live pretheoretically in a lifeworld that is economically structured is a fact to be laid bare through phenomenological description. This phenomenological description itself, however, is a completely different activity than the pretheoretical activities that one carries out when immersed in the lifeworld. The pretheoretical subject does not know anything about the structure of the lifeworld. The

return to the precategorial, that is, the phenomenological uncovering of the real foundation of material life is itself made possible by adopting a theoretical standpoint. The nature, the interest, and the purpose of this theoretical observation are different from the pretheoretical activities of the subject involved in the lifeworld. To reveal the material structure of life presupposes that precategorial subject own the capacity to suspend the precategorial life and engage with the world from a theoretical standpoint. Insofar as this description concentrates on the question of the essence of the lifeworld, alienation, the economic life of man, etc. it is an inquiry about the ultimate eidetic structure of precategorial life. Thus, by turning towards the precategorial, phenomenology does not adopt a naïve perspective, but rather preserves its interest in the question of the essence of the precategorial experience. Since the "essences" of things are available to us only as ideas, the phenomenology of the precategorial life is at the same time the transcendental eidetic phenomenology.

The phenomenological description of the economic precategorial life is itself a necessary theoretical condition of the negation of alienation since it is through this description that the material condition of alienation is brought to the critical analysis and the possibility of its negation envisaged. As is discussed above, to take away a person's subjectivity presupposes the intersubjective structure of social production. By describing the reduction of the subjectivity of one social class to the means for the satisfaction of the needs of another social class the structure of oppression is theoretically attained. Slavery, racial subordination, patriarchism, colonialist practices, and capitalist exploitation are variations of the experience of alienation that are first felt in the subject's experience. From a naïve descriptive perspective, the instrumentalization of one class by the other can be seen as the natural order of social life. A phenomenological description of the precategorial economic life can clarify the pre-theoretical ground of the social and political theories that naturalize an oppressive social order by showing their root in the natural necessities for instrumentalization. In doing so, transcendental phenomenology performs a type of reduction, which is the suspension of all theoretical attitudes adopted or presupposed by various social

and political theories to arrive at the fundamental structure of the experience at the foundation of those social and political theories.[37]

However, so long as our description of alienation remains merely descriptive, no critical point is generated. The critique of alienation requires a normative standpoint. The formation of this critical standpoint is itself a purely theoretical activity, the description of which is a task of transcendental phenomenology. How is this normative foundation constructed? In addressing this question, I first present Paci's view, followed by an explication of my own stance. Reading Husserl from a Marxian perspective, Paci takes Husserl's epoche to mean a return to subjectivity in order to negate the objectivistic frameworks that lead to alienation. Through the epoche, the "mundane" is reduced and the subject's intentionality is foregrounded, which is the origin of all meaning and purpose in the lifeworld. The subject's intentionality is occluded through the misguided rationality of capital and should be dis-occluded through epoche. The function of epoche is to reverse the alienation by unraveling the subject as the teleological foundation of the lifeworld. Paci writes:

> Because of the economic precategorial structure, when I am forced to produce or when I produce the loss of intentionality, what is threatened in the state of slavery is the meaning of life, of the world and human history. The lack of recognition of the causal-economic conditioning structures of the precategorial life-world and their dependence on the impulses and needs of the concrete monad makes the *spiritual blackmail* possible. In the name of superior values, this blackmail denies the humanity of those who are subjugated and slaves, after having done all that is possible to deny the slaves's superior needs and impulses. (Paci, 1972, p. 269)

[37] Reduction in this sense corresponds to what Husserl describes in *Crisis* as the "epoche of all the objective sciences," which is not be confused with the transcendental reduction (Husserl, 1970, p. 136). By reducing the objective sciences, the road is paved for the thematization of "lifeworld," whereas the transcendental reduction takes us to the realm of pure consciousness.

In the condition of slavery when production is forced, human subjects lose their subjectivity—and intentionality that is the essence of subjectivity—and, thus, the foundation of meaning and telos. For Paci, this means that the condition of life of the slave is not recognized.

At the basis of Paci's discussion of the occlusion of intentionality in the condition of slavery—which for him applies to all capitalist societies—lies an ambiguity regarding the concept of intentionality. As seen in the above section, Paci introduces a new meaning of intentionality that he defines as material dependence on something. Based on this new meaning of intentionality, which remained undiscovered by Husserl, who was only concerned with the meaning of intentionality as consciousness of something, a new field of biological, precategorial experience is opened up for phenomenological description. However, there is no sufficient elaboration of the relation between the two types of intentionality in Paci's text. Apart from a few passages where he points out the two distinct types of intentionality, Paci's account does not distinguish between the two types of intentionality and seems to use them interchangeably. The same ambiguity can be found with regards to the concepts such as meaning and telos.

It seems to me that the root of this ambiguity can be traced to Paci's reformulation of the dualistic ontology upon which Husserl's phenomenology operates. For Husserl, pure consciousness is the absolute field of phenomenological description and the task of description is a purely theoretical one. Whereas for Paci, the phenomenological task is also a social practice whose aim is to abolish the social structure of alienation. But the contrast between Husserl's phenomenology and Paci's is not between a purely epistemological philosophy and a social and political philosophy. Husserl's phenomenology had as its ultimate end the existentialist crisis of humanity through a return to subjects as the ground of all practices, including social, political, and scientific. Nevertheless, the ontological difference between the realm of pure consciousness and the outer world of experience in Husserl, namely, the distinction between the real or actual and ideal or irreal, is not the same as Paci's distinction between the mundane and the teleological life of subjects. In other words, Husserl's distinction is a broader philosophical distinction between two modes of being, a distinction that is in itself ahistorical, while for Paci, the distinction between the

mundane and the teleological life—that might never be fully attained—is primarily a social and historical one. The following passage indicates some aspects of Paci's understanding of the above-mentioned dualism:

> Phenomenology's task is to transform hidden being into true being. This process reappears in Marx's dialectic of appearance. Being becomes real when it is revealed and coincides with the phenomenon. Being is the revelation of what hides behind false, mundane, and fetishized appearances. It forms its own sense (Seinsinn) in successive intentional representations, in their agreement. (Paci, 1972, p. 83)

In this passage, phenomenal being is interpreted as the true being, the de-fetishzed being that is attainable only through a social transformation of the structure of alienation. For Husserl, however, the reduction to the phenomenal being is a purely mental act performed by the mind in its transcendental capacity. I do not go further into the details of the differences between Husserl's and Paci's phenomenologies here. Instead, the point I highlight is that Husserl's merely ontological distinction between consciousness and the lifeworld—the distinction between the real and the ideal—is essential for the constitution of teleological reason. Telos can exist only as an idea and never as actuality. The precategorial structure of life can be organized according to a telos, but the ontological difference between the ideality of a telos and its actuality is not to be erased in this way. This, however, is not to say that Paci completely dismisses this difference:

> The idea as an infinite, teleological idea must give rise to a method of continuous verification. While prescientific life implicitly contains the infinite as chaos, theoretical praxis elaborates theories and techniques that transform the hidden infinite in a progressive revelation, and into a progressive functioning. In other words, prescientific life contains the possibility of being transformed into a life according to a telos. "True science" consists in this teleological transformation. In this sense, it is needed by the *Lebenswelt* insofar as the *Lebenswelt* needs techniques, theoretical praxis, and elaborations of teleological theories. (Paci, 1972, p. 47)

The theoretical elaboration of the teleological concept of reason is the first step toward the negation of alienation. Paci's description of the precategorial economic lifeworld brought to the fore the material condition of alienation. In all the modifications of the precategorial economic structure, an invariant can be identified that forms the core structure of biological, precategorial life, namely, the subsistence of life that necessitates some mode of social production. Alienation arises from certain modes of production where the biological necessities of life are satisfied by negating the subjectivity of some classes of society by other classes. This can be reversed only when subjectivity becomes the telos of social production, that is, only when the material and the spiritual life of social subjects is recognized as an end-in-itself.

As Paci asserts, the telos of life is always implicit or hidden in all our life practices but in a passive way. The ultimate task of phenomenology is to render active the passive teleological life of subjects. I take this to mean that even in their alienated forms, subjects are still performing on some elements of their subjectivity. Even in the state of alienation, the telos is still being experienced in some implicit ways. However, an actual modification of the lifeworld in which alienation is altogether removed is accessible to us only as a telos, as a future possibility, and only through theoretical praxis.

Teleological reason reflects on the ultimate ends of life from a transcendental perspective. It asserts that telos is not a mere concept that can be added to the concrete life of subjects in abstract theorization. The telos of life is what makes life possible, the real lack of which leads to conflict, war, and death or the naturalization of conflict as the condition of life. Instrumental rationality naturalizes the instrumentalization of subjects in the name of the satisfaction of needs, but in doing so, it undermines the conditions of subjectivity of certain social classes. Teleological reason, however, considers the conditions of subjectivity as the telos of social production and investigates various social structures based on those conditions. The method of teleological reason is not, thus, merely realistic, but rather transcendental. Teleological reason's interest in life is interest in the conditions of the possibility of life.[38]

[38] Critical social theory, in its major streams, has often overlooked the transcendental method for the foundation of normativity. There are a few passages where Max Horkheimer briefly indicates the importance of Kant's

The investigation into the conditions of the possibility of life is only one aspect of the eidetic construction of teleological reason. Teleological reason takes one step further and establishes the conditions of the possibility of life as norms of action, which include both practical and theoretical actions. Essential to the task of construction of teleological rationality is an eidetic process that can be called normativization. The teleological reason turns into norms those elements of the precategorial pre-reflective experience that contain the potentiality for universalization. Instrumental rationality cannot afford any concept of universalization, since the instrumentalization of one group by another negates what is essential to their subjectivity, which is the necessary material or spiritual conditions of their life. Whereas teleological reason's perspective on life is furnished with the universality of the essence of precategorial life and, therefore, is capable of transcending the onesidedness of instrumental rationality.[39] An essential function of teleological rationality is normativization as an attitude that extends the scope of its tasks beyond the mere transcendental description of the conditions of the possibility of life and renders those conditions the norms of actions.

It should also be noted that teleological reason has no starting point other than precategorial life itself and, thus, cannot be confused with speculative reason whose objects have no ground in experience. Unlike speculative reason, teleological reason, phenomenologically understood, is committed to the ontological dualism of real and ideal, which, as discussed in Chapter Five, is essential for non-metaphysical thinking. The subject matter of teleological rationality is not being *qua* being, but rather the theoretical and pretheoretical conditions of human life. Teleological reason, thus, does not aim to totalize

transcendental method. In his critique of pragmatism in *Eclipse of Reason* (1947) he writes: "He made scientific insight dependent upon transcendental, not upon empirical functions. He did not liquidate truth by identifying it with the practical actions of verification, nor by teaching that meaning and effect are identical. He tried ultimately to establish the absolute validity of certain ideas *per se,* for their own sake. The pragmatistic narrowing of the field of vision reduces the meaning of any idea to that of a plan or draft" (Horkheimer, 2013, p. 29). In a more contemporary example, Arnold Farr argues that Kant's categorical imperative should be considered as the first principle of philosophy of race (Farr, 2002). But these examples do not amount to a systemic exposition of the transcendental grounding of critical theory.

[39] In "Social Function of Philosophy," (1939) Horkheimer advocates a notion of philosophy as a systemic whole appropriate for the foundation of critical theory (Horkheimer, 1972, pp. 253–273). In this essay, however, he does make clear on what grounds is this philosophy established.

reality on a projected ontological-theoretical basis. Its ends are restricted, rather, to the transcendental clarification of the conditions of unification in the realm of the social. The concepts of teleological reason can have only empirical—that is, practical—use. The reason for this is that these concepts, unlike speculative reason's concepts—being, difference, substance, etc.—emerge from a field of life-experience.

The phenomenological clarification of teleological reason helps reformulate one of the most important concerns of critical social theory, namely, the rationalization of society, which has come under attack for being metaphysical, abstract, and idealistic. The re-organization of the productive forces should not appear as an aspirational project, since the theoretical elements that serve as its foundation are themselves the very condition of the possibility of social life. By distinguishing the field of application of speculative and teleological reason, the phenomenological-epistemological critique of reason makes clear that teleological reason, while relying for its essential functions on the transcendental elements such as normativization, description of essences, etc., has its whole function only in its application to concrete social situations.

Concluding Remarks

Critical activities are normative in nature even though they presuppose some description. The theoretical structure of critical attitudes requires a norm based on which a judgment is formed. An investigation into the philosophical foundation of critical theory inquiries into the normative grounds of critical theory. Through this investigation, teleological reason appears as the ground of all critical activities, including critical social theory and the critique of pure reason. Critique is one of the legitimate fields of reason's activities and, therefore, the study of the foundation of its possibility falls under the scope of phenomenological transcendental idealism as a science that is responsible for the general critique of reason. Phenomenological transcendental idealism benefits critical social theory by discerning the

legitimate uses from the illegitimate uses of reason. With regards to either of these tasks, phenomenological transcendental idealism contributes to the clarification of the concept of reason appropriate to critique.[40]

By critiquing the speculative use of reason (Part I), phenomenological transcendental idealism prevents concepts constructed purely speculatively or metaphysically from being taken as the real ground for social existence. Some examples of metaphysically grounded political thinking are dialectical materialism and postmodern political thought. Dialectical materialism, the official philosophy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, already alienated human subjectivity theoretically by reducing it to the universal laws of matter. The same theoretical alienation of man can be witnessed in postmodern metaphysics (Part II), where the hypothesized concept of difference is projected as the essence of being excluding synthetic functions of reason from social and political fields. A critique of speculative reason benefits critical social theory by exposing the speculative reason that is already at work in the structure of these theories. By grounding the social and the political upon the speculative concept of being *qua* being, these metaphysical political theories not only drive from an alienated form of rationality but also presuppose human alienation in the structure of their social theories.

Speculative reason builds an image of the world and human being independently of human beings' experience of the world and themselves. This is the source of speculative reason's alienation. Teleological reason, in contrast, marks the legitimate use of reason in the realm of human sciences since it relies on the precategorial economic experience of the concrete subject. Unlike the concepts of speculative reason, the concepts of teleological reason are applicable to experience. Teleological reason, thus, does not fabricate its content but relies on the already given content of lived experience. The

[40] In "Renewal: Its Problem and Method," (1923) Husserl describes the task of transcendental phenomenology as the clarification of universal norms. He writes: "But in the domain of human science, it is not merely a matter of "rational explanations," as in the case of nature. With the human sciences a very special case of rationalizing the empirical domain appears: the normative *judgement according to the universal norms*, which belong to the a priori essence of "rational" humanity, and the *guidance* of actual practical activity according to the very norms to which the rational norms of practical guidance also belong" (Husserl, 1981b, p. 328)

description of the precategorial structure of lifeworld—the ontology of lifeworld—is a prerequisite for the teleological reason.

Moreover, since a transcendental phenomenological conception of teleological reason makes possible the study of the conditions of the possibility of critical social theory in general, it makes possible the critical assessment of existing social and critical theory by investigating the mode of the conceptualization of the precategorial social experience of the subjects. Alienation as precategorially experienced can be conceptualized in numerous ways. For example, a racist theory may attempt to diagnose the condition of alienation by attributing its origins to the perceived disregard of a purportedly superior race. Transcendental phenomenology teaches that various social and political theories have their real foundation in the brute experiences of intersubjective life. Bringing these experiences to the clarity of theoretical formulation is the task of social theory. The theoretical formulation of the precategorial social experiences, however, might itself be misled in its operation and, thus, requires critique. The general transcendental phenomenological critique of social theory concerns the conditions under which critical social theories conceptualize precategorial life.

The description of the precategorial structure of the lifeworld outlined above is already directed by the insights of the teleological reason. It is based on the guidance of the teleological reason that Paci describes the structure of the lifeworld as economically formed, thus enabling the observation of the ground of the essential concepts of critical social theory. The critique of speculative reason— outlined in Part I— is also carried out under the guidance of the teleological reason. In this sense, the construction of the telos of life, the task of teleological rationality, is presupposed by the critique of speculative reason since none of its critiques would have been possible without recourse to the concept of alienation. Relying on a phenomenology of the precategorial structure of lifeworld, teleological reason exhibits the eidetic condition of intersubjective life according to the telos of life. It is from the perspective of this teleologically illuminated ideal that critical reason looks back at its theoretical functions and assesses them. In doing so, the critique of reason in its metaphysical use is carried out based on the universal

teleology offered by the teleological reason. The teleological reason thus makes the critique of pure reason possible in the first place.

Finally, the teleological reason is operative in all of reason's critical activities. The clarification of this teleological ground of reason's critical activities is also one of the tasks of the transcendental phenomenological critique of reason that bestows it with an ethical meaning. The critique of reason, whether in its purely theoretical or social and political activities, is an ethical critique, because critical rationality is in nature teleological. Ethics is defined as a field of study that deals with the norms of action. As a field of study, a science, ethics designates a field of theoretical rational activity. From the transcendental phenomenological perspective, this basic definition qualifies ethics to serve as a standpoint from which reason examines its own activities according to its universal norms. What makes this ethical standpoint possible is the original phenomenological perspective that investigates theoretical reason not in abstraction but in its functions. Theoretical reason, thus, is already practical and subject to ethical judgment. By explicating the transcendental meaning of teleological reason, the transcendental phenomenological critique of reason establishes a foundation for the ethical self-assessment of reason.

Bibliography

Abela, P. (2002). *Kant's Empirical Realism*. Oxford.

Allais, L. (2015). *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and His Realism*. Oxford University Press.

Allison, H. E. (2004). *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. Yale University Press.

Althusser, L. (2001). Lenin and Philosophy. In B. Brewster (Trans.), *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (pp. 23–68). NYU Press.

Althusser, L. (2006). *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*. Verso.

Ameriks, K. (1977). Husserl's Realism. *The Philosophical Review*, *86*(4), 498–519.

Ameriks, K. (2006). *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*. Clarendon Press.

Angus, I. H. (2021). *Groundwork of Phenomenological Marxism: Crisis, Body, World*. Lexington Books.

Aristotle. (1984). *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.

Aristotle. (2014). *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 2: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Princeton University Press.

Badiou, A. (2000). *Deleuze The Clamor of Being* (L. Burchill, Trans.). U of Minnesota Press.

Badiou, A. (2007). *Being and Event* (O. Feltham, Trans.). A&C Black.

Baumgarten, A., & Kant, I. (2013). *Metaphysics: A Critical Translation with Kant's Elucidations, Selected Notes, and Related Materials*. A&C Black.

Beaulieu, A., Kazarian, E., & Sushytska, J. (2014). *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*. Lexington Books.

Cleve, J. V. (2003). *Problems from Kant*. Oxford University Press.

Deleuze, G. (2004). *Difference and Repetition* (P. Patton, Trans.). A&C Black.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). U of Minnesota Press.

Derrida, J. (1973). *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (D. B. Allison, Trans.). Northwestern University Press.

Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and Difference* (A. Bass, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1982a). *Margins of Philosophy* (A. Bass, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1982b). *Margins of Philosophy*. University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (1996). *The Gift of Death* (D. Wills, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, J. (2005). Phenomenology and the Closure of Metaphysics: Introduction to the Thought of Husserl. In *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*.

Derrida, J. (2013). *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). JHU Press.

Engels, F. (1996). *Ludwig Feuerbach & the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (C. Dutt, Ed.). International Publishers Co.

Engels, F. (2010). Anti-Duhring. In E. Burns (Trans.), *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (Vol. 25). Lawrence & Wishart.

Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks* (R. Philcox, Trans.). Grove Press.

Farr, A. (2002). Can A Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative? *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *33*(1), 17–32.

Fichte, J. G. (1982). *The Science of Knowledge: With the First and Second Introductions* (Lachs & P. Heath, Eds.; J. Lachs & P. Heath, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Foster, J. B. (2022). *Capitalism in the Anthropocene: Ecological Ruin Or Ecological Revolution*. NYU Press.

Guyer, P. (1997). *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. Cambridge University Press.

Hanna, R. (2001). *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*. Clarendon Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1953). *Reason in History: A general Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (R. S. Hartman, Trans.). The Bobbs Merril Company INC.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1977). *Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy, The: An English Translation of G. W. F. Hegel's Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie* (S. H. Harris & W. Cerf, Trans.). SUNY Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1984). *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Science, Philosophy of Mind* (Vol. 3). oxford.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1987). *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Arnold V. Miller & T. M. Knox, Trans.). Clarendon Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2006). *Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827*. OUP Oxford.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2010). *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic*. Cambridge University Press.

Hegel, G. W. F. (2018). *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Phenomenology of Spirit* (T. Pinkard, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1988a). *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Indiana University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1993). *Basic Writings: Second Edition, Revised and Expanded* (D. Krell, Ed.). HarperCollins.

Heidegger, M. (1996). *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit* (J. Stambaugh, Trans.). SUNY Press.

Heidegger, M. (1998). *Pathmarks* (W. McNeil, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Henry, M. (2019). *Marx: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Holmes, R. H. (1975). Is Transcendental Phenomenology Committed to Idealism? *The Monist*, *59*(1), 98–114.

Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (M. O'Connel, Trans.). A&C Black.

Horkheimer, M. (2013). *Eclipse of Reason*. A&C Black.

Husserl, E. (1960). *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (D. Cairns, Trans.). Springer Science & Business Media.

Husserl, E. (1964). *The Idea of Phenomenology* (L. Hardy, Trans.). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (D. Carr, Trans.). Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, E. (1981a). *Husserl, Shorter Works* (P. McCormick & F. Elliston, Eds.). University of Notre Dame Press.

Husserl, E. (1981b). Renewal: Its problem and Method. In P. McCormick & F. Elliston (Eds.), *Husserl, Shorter Works*. University of Notre Dome Press.

Husserl, E. (2014). *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy: General introduction to pure phenomenology. First book* (F. Kersten, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

Jun, N. (2011). Deleuze, Values and Normativity. In N. Jun & D. Smith (Eds.), *Deleuze and Ethics* (pp. 89–108). Edinburgh University Press Ltd.

Kant, I. (1999). *Critique of Pure Reason* (G. Paul & Allen W. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Kant, I. (2004). *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as a Science*. (G. Hatfield, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Kant, I. (1998). *The Critique of Practical Reason* (P. Guyer, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2014). *Hegemony And Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics*. Verso Books.

Langton, R. (1998). *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*. Clarendon Press.

Levinas, E. (2012). *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Luft, S. (n.d.). *"Real-Idealism": An Unorthodox Husserlian Response to the Question of Transcendental Idealism*.

Luft, S. (2007). From Being to Givenness and Back: Some Remarks on the Meaning of Transcendental Idealism in Kant and Husserl. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, *15*(3), 367–394.

Mansfield, N. (2011). Derrida, Democracy, and Violence. *Studies in Social Justice*, *5*(2), Article 2.

Marcuse, H. (1968a). Philosophy and Critical Theory. In J. J. Shapiro (Trans.), *Negations; Essays in Critical Theory* (pp. 99–119). Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (1968b). The Concept of Essence. In J. J. Shapiro (Trans.), *Negations; Essays in Critical Theory* (pp. 99–119). Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (2013). *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Routledge.

Marcuse, H. (2017). Rationality of Philosophy (1967). In C. Reitz, P.-E. Jensen, & S. Surak (Eds.), *Transvaluation of Values and Radical Social Change: Five Lectures, 1966-1976* (pp. 1–17). International Herbert Marcuse Society.

Marshall, C. (2013). Kant's Appearances and Things in Themselves as Qua-Objects. *The Philosophical Quarterly (1950-)*, *63*(252), 520–545.

Marx, K. (1969). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (D. Jan Struik & M. Milligan, Eds.; M. Milligan, Trans.). International Publishers.

Marx, K. (1974). Theses on Feuerbach. In J. C. Arthur (Ed.), *The German Ideology; Part One*. Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1974). *The German Ideology; Part One* (J. C. Arthur, Ed.). Lawrence &Wishart.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1988). *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto* (M. Milligan, Trans.). Prometheus Books.

May, T. (1994). *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*. Penn State Press.

Mendelson, J. (1979). On Engels' Metaphysical Dialectics: A Foundation of Orthodox "Marxism." *Dialectical Anthropology*, *4*(1), 65–73.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2013). *Phenomenology of Perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). Routledge.

Paci, E. (1972). *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man* (J. Hansen & P. Piccone, Trans.). Northwestern University Press.

Reinhold, K. L. (2011). *Essay on a New Theory of the Human Capacity for Representation* (E. Barry & T. Mehigan, Eds. & Trans.). Walter de Gruyter.

Roffe, J. (2010). Capitalism. In A. Parr (Ed.), *Deleuze Dictionary Revised Edition*. Edinburgh University Press.

Schopenhauer, A. (2014). *The World as Will and Representation* (A. Welchman, C. Janaway, & J. Norman, Eds. & Trans.; Vol. 1). Cambridge University Press.

Smith, A. D. (2007). The flesh of perception: Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. In T. Baldwin (Ed.), *Reading Merleau-Ponty: On Phenomenology of Perception*. Routledge.

Strawson, P. (2018). *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Routledge.

Thao, T. D. (1986). *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism* (R. Cohen, Ed.; D. J. Herman & D. V. Morano, Trans.). Springer Science & Business Media.

Vaihinger, H. (1922). *Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Union deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft.

Wenisch, M. (2008). The Logical Incompatibility of Kant's Transcendental Idealism with Any Genuinely Objective Form of Empirical Realism. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, *25*(4), 337–358.

Wood, A., Guyer, P., & Allison, H. E. (2007). Debating Allison on Transcendental Idealism. *Kantian Review*, *12*(2), 1–39.

Zaner, R. M. (2012). *The Problem of Embodiment: Some Contributions to a Phenomenology of the Body*. Springer Science & Business Media.