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The Doctrine of Self-positing and Receptivity in Kant's Late Philosophy

A Dissertation Presented

by

Cynthia María Paccacerqua

to

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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I argue that in the *Opus postumum* – specifically in what is known as his “doctrine of self-positing” – Kant provides both a logical structure and a genetic account of the subject’s insertion into a natural world that is of its own making. In addition, I show how the doctrine contains an expanded role of the faculty of sensibility, an account of embodiment and the opening of an epistemological field proper to philosophical anthropology, both physiological and pragmatic. By identifying two levels of the doctrine of self-positing, I develop what appears as a new account of the function of the faculty of receptivity that always already entails a form of activity through which the subject makes it possible for data to be capable of being given to it. The dissertation is composed of four sections. The first provides an analysis of the concept of positing in Kant’s earlier theoretical philosophy. The second contextualizes the doctrine of self-positing within the *Opus postumum* as a whole, introduces the systematic location of the doctrine and situates its problematic historically. The third part examines the “analytic level” of the doctrine. And the fourth brings the former sections to bear upon the reconstruction of Kant’s doctrine of self-positing, especially with regards to receptivity.

Dedicated to my mother.

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Abbreviations

KrV A/B	<i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i> (Ak: 3 – 4). <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
Anthro	<i>Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht</i> (Ak: 7). <i>Anthropology from a Practical Point of View</i>
BDG	<i>Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes</i> (Ak: 2). <i>The Only Possible Proof for the Existence of God</i>
BL	<i>Logik Blomberg</i> (Ak: 24).
Br	<i>Kants Briefwechsel</i> (Ak: 10 – 13). <i>Kant's Correspondence</i>
Fort	<i>Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?</i> (Ak: 20).
IAG (KGS8).	“Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht”
JL	<i>Jäsche Logik</i> (Ak: 9). <i>The Jäsche Logic, Lectures on Logic</i>
KU	<i>Kritik der Urteilskraft</i> (Ak: 5). <i>Critique of Judgment</i>
MAN	<i>Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften</i> (Ak: 4). <i>Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science</i>
MS	<i>Die Metaphysic der Sitten</i> (Ak: 6). <i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>
NG	<i>Versuch den Begriff der negativen Grössen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen</i> (Ak: 2). <i>Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy</i>
Pro	<i>Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können</i> (Ak: 4). <i>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</i>
R	<i>Reflexionen</i> (Ak: 15 – 19)
UE	<i>Über eine Entdeckung nach der alle Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll</i> (Ak: 8).
WH	“Was heisst: Sich im Denken orientiren?” (Ak: 8). “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?”

Preface

The interest in the *Opus postumum* originated from a number of aspects that made this text truly unique. The first one was the fact that the text represented Kant's last word on his philosophy, and thus the culmination of that Kantian art of self-critique. As such, it seemed to be the best, most mature place from which to start unraveling the whole of his Transcendental Philosophy. The second reason resided in its historical uniqueness; it was a text that in fact had no influence in the history of philosophy, presenting both a potential break in the coherent narrative we have constructed about the development of Western thought, and the possibility for new insights and lines of thought stemming from one of the greatest known thinkers of all time. A third reason was the wisdom I associate with age; I was drawn to the romantic idea of listening to the old Kant as he noted his thoughts, struggling with the problems that kept his philosophical inquiry alive. His notes were not necessarily meant to be read by third parties, so it was a window into the way and actual process through which he developed his ideas and position. And finally, the philosophical themes of subjectivity, sensibility, materiality and epistemology, which had sustained my interests throughout my graduate career at this university, were at the heart of the *Opus postumum's* section on the "doctrine of self-positing." In this way my philosophical interests were happily satisfied by being drawn to this singular text, and not vice-versa. Having said all of this, I wouldn't want to do any of it differently.

Now let me introduce briefly the actual project at hand. The general aim of this dissertation is to provide a close analysis of the section of the *Opus postumum* that is referred to as the doctrine of self-positing or *Selbstsetzungslehre*. Although the close

analysis leads us to a number of insights that are particular to the doctrine itself, there are three main organizing topics developed during this analysis which are then connected to the work of these thinkers: first, the constructivist and genetic aspect of the subject's constitution of itself and of experience; second, the role of sensibility within the doctrine, which is both heightened and given its own object; and third, the physiological and embodied nature revealed in the subject's self-constitution, together with the anthropological implications of the doctrine itself. This project is the beginning of a larger investigation that brings into dialogue Kant's late thought and 20th Century philosophers in order to expand the reach of critical philosophy into theoretical areas unanticipated by Kant himself.

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late thought.

I also want to thank those who have helped me make it through at a more personal level. Whether it was your active encouragement – with a gaze or question of concern and support, lifelong or true friendship, love, laughter, active critique and challenging intellectual exchanges, and financial support – or steadfast presence, please know that I am here because of you. To mention some of you: Hadas Cohen, Andrés Colapinto, Sarah Flink (for your friendship and a lot more), Betina Fornieles (por ser mi major amiga, aún cuando las mejores amigas ya no son posibles), Daniel Hershenzon (por tantas cosas), Fernando Guerrero (por creer en la belleza y no en las tonterías académicas), Chris Johns, Katie Lauter (for seeing and believing me), Hoyeon Lim, Sara McNamara (for saving me more than once), Lee Miller (for your acknowledgment), Danae Mcleod, Flavio Paniagua (por hacerme sonreír), Iván Pérez (por hacerme reír), Vicente Rubio Pueyo (por escucharme pensar en voz alta y en Spanglish), Senem Saner, Gema Santamaría (por despertarme de mi slumber intellectual y cultural, y hacerme ver algo en mí que yo sola no puedo), Nicholas Smith, David Snyder, Sebastián Stival, Julia Sushytska (for being there), Ernesto Turcato (por estar presente desde que tenemos siete años y no dejarme jamás creer que la amistad no es possible), Adam Wilkins (for all of it), and last, but certainly not least my sister Flavia and father Héctor.

There is one last person that escapes all of these categories, and that is James diGiovanna. You showed up and believed and helped right there at the very end, when I was in most need. And, in doing this, you did not allow me to cease believing that there really are exceptional persons that silently “walk the walk.” Thank you James.

Introduction

The *Selbstsetzungslehre* refers to Kant's writings in fascicles vii of the *Opus postumum* (henceforth *Op*). According to the commonly accepted order provided by Adickes, fascicle vii was written between April and December of 1800. It is also an appendix of sorts (a *Beylage*) to two other fascicles, x and xi, which have as their content what is known as Kant's "doctrine of self-affection" or of the "appearance of the appearance," retaining still a significant engagement with the question of the possibility of physics as a system of empirical cognitions. In so far as fascicle vii exhibits a clear turn towards thinking at the level of transcendental philosophy, while at the same time maintaining the specter of the former, it represents almost a translation and potential grounding of the implications of these other two fascicles.¹ And, yet, while the *Beylage* appears as a rather independent set of considerations of a higher order, one still finds enough similarities among the fascicles, which can sometimes shed light in any attempt to decipher each other.

The *Selbstsetzungslehre* thus represents Kant's return to his transcendental philosophy after a long engagement with the question of the possibility of providing an *a priori* ground for a science of physics, which had began anew in 1796—the year of the "inception" of the *Op*. One of the clearest signs of this return is the constant restatement of the philosophical problem addressed by his original critical philosophy, that is: how are synthetic *a priori* propositions possible? Paralleling the structural elements of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (henceforth *KrV*), the main thoughts that accompany the

¹ The fascicles that together make up the *Op* are not numbered according to their dating. The most obvious case of this is that fascicle i, which is to be found at the very beginning of the two volume Akademie edition of the text, was the fascicle Kant wrote last.

repetition of this question within the doctrine of self-positing are articulations of the power and functions of the faculties of both spontaneity and receptivity. The reciprocal relationship between these two levels of the subject, which was known from Kant's previous work to bring forth the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition, constitutes the core of the doctrine of self-positing. There is, however, a difference from the first *KrV*; since the doctrine of self-positing provides also a much more robust elucidation of their relation to the sphere of the empirical, which is to say, as these capacities participate in the constitution and conditioned nature of a finite subject, its world domain, and, most importantly, the way in which this world opens to a subject that both inhabits and aims to know it through the construction of experience. As Kant carries with this topic, he expounds upon the role of sensibility as the receptive faculty that functions, in the broadest sense, as the source of a field of determinability from which a theoretical account of a transition between the *a priori* to the *a posteriori* cognitive fields becomes possible. This transition is exhibited in so far as sensibility is thought as both an *a priori* function of the mind as well as a virtual sphere where the subject configures itself as embodied; a configuration that takes place by means of the subject's self-positing, which is to say through the repetition of the spontaneous activity of thought. This heightened role of sensibility as the faculty of receptivity and its reciprocal relationship to the spontaneity of thought that characterizes the doctrine of self-positing can be found encapsulated in Kant's idea of an "act of receptivity."² This idea is the topic of this dissertation.

The work done here in order to arrive at a philosophical understanding of this "act

² Ak: 22:32.

of receptivity” reveals also the extent to which in the doctrine of self-positing Kant makes available to us a new formulation of his concept of a “subject.” It is new not in that it breaks from Kant’s earlier operative idea of the kind of resources necessarily available in a subject for there to be any experience at all, but in the manner in which these constitutive parts are brought to bear on one another and in the introduction of aspects that either were implicit in his earlier work or, if brought to light for the first time, are not in contradiction with it. In this regard, Kant’s reflections in the doctrine of self-positing shed light on underdetermined concepts or obscure passages found in the *KrV* (oftentimes in its footnotes).

As will be shown, this new formulation or presentation of the facultative powers and resources of the subject also indicate the beginning of a figuration, or possibility thereof, of what Kant with all of the elements developed in his entire critic-theoretical enterprise is now able to address: What is the human being? It is well known that Kant introduces this question in the *Logic* as the fourth question about which philosophy must concern itself. The answer to this question can now begin to be thought from within its proper systematic place. In this way, a more complete understanding of Kant’s introduction of “finitude” through the critical project of grounding metaphysical and empirical cognition on a spatio-temporally conditioned subject becomes available. The elemental figuration of “man” is presented in this first part of the dissertation through the analysis of the doctrine.

Before entering into a full analysis of the doctrine of self-positing, a few contextual remarks are in order, directed mostly to those for whom the text is relatively unknown. What follows presents a reflection of the status of the *Op* as a text, the main problematic

it stands to solve, as well as a summary of some of the dominant positions and interpretative trends. Hopefully the latter will help in introducing some of the key concepts at stake that remain operative (although not always exactly with the same meaning) throughout the *Op*.

ii. The Text of the *Opus postumum*

The secondary literature on the *Op* has been characterized by an almost compulsive reiteration of both the odd character of the text and the unique historical trajectory from the time of its inception to its final publication in the Academy edition of Kant's complete works.³ It was perhaps a symptom of a need to "orient oneself in thought" in the face of what at the beginning of the last century appeared as a maelstrom of Kant's unexpected declarations (e.g., "We ourselves make everything" [*Wir mache alles selbst*]), new potentially problematic deductions (e.g., the possible *a priori* deduction of the existence of "ether"), apparently borrowed concepts (e.g., to posit [*setzen*]), and de-contextualized household notes ("Marzipan comes from Russian clergy" [*Marcipan ist von russischen Geistlichen entlehnt*]).⁴ By now, enough has been written in the form of introductions to books, translations, talks and articles that not only authorizes, but also philosophically

³ Cf. Förster, "Introduction" in *Opus postumum*; Duque's "Prólogo [Preface]" and "Introducción [Introduction]," in *Transición de los principios metafísicos de la ciencia natural a la física (Opus postumum)*, or his "Vuelo cansado del águila. La relación de Kant con Fichte y Schelling en el *Opus postumum*," and Prieto's "El *Opus postumum* de Kant: la resolución de la física en filosofía trascendental," among others.

⁴ AK: 21: 5

enables thinkers in the twenty first century to no longer be burdened by such restlessness. This state of affairs, however, does not come without its own burdens; once the interpretative axes and terms of the debates have been laid, it becomes ever more difficult to approach a text with fresh eyes and in this way avoid missing the potential of—to borrow an image from Nietzsche—a “thousand secrets crawl[ing] out of their hiding places” from within the complexity of the *Op*.⁵

One such interpretative axis within the commentary on the *Op* pertains to the topics of “the gap” and “the ether deductions;” and the literature available in the English language is particularly marked by an almost exclusive attention to the relationship between these. Both of these topics touch upon what is considered Kant’s late development of his doctrine of nature, central to the first part of the *Op*. The problem of “the gap” refers to Kant’s acknowledgment that there was a “*Lücke*” in the “system of critical philosophy.”⁶ What is remarkable is that Kant makes this statement after the publication of *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (henceforth *KU*), a text that according to its

⁵ Nietzsche, F. *The Gay Science*, § 34.

⁶ Kant to Garve, September 21, 1797. Ak: 12:257. *Correspondance*: I see before me the unpaid bill of my uncompleted philosophy, even while I am aware that philosophy, both as regards its means and its ends, is capable of completion. It is a pain like that of Tantalus through not a hopeless pain. The project on which I am now working concerns the “Transition from the metaphysical foundations of natural science to physics.” It must be completed, or else a gap will remain in the critical philosophy (551). Original: *Die völligen Abschluß meiner Rechnun, in Sachen welche das Ganze der Philosophie (so whol Zweck als Mittel anlangend) betreffen, vor sich liegen und es noch immer nicht vollendet zu sehen; obwohl ich mir der Tunlichkeit dieser Aufgabe bewußt bin: ein Tantalischer Schmerz, der indessen doch nicht hoffnunglons ist.—Die Aufgabe, mit der ich beschäftige, betrifft den „Übergang von den metaphysischen Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft zur Physik.“ Sie will aufgelöst sein, weil sonst im System der kritischen Philosophie eine Lücke sein würde.*

introduction was “to conclude” his “entire critical enterprise.”⁷ That this “gap” was of significant concern to Kant is not only apparent from the just cited letter to Garve, but also by secondhand remarks made by his contemporaries (e.g., Hasse, Jachmann or Wisianski), who interestingly enough report Kant’s mentioning of the problem of a “gap” or need for a “last building stone” not always in terms of his “system of critical philosophy,” but sometimes in reference to his “doctrinal philosophy” or his “transcendental philosophy.”⁸ While these secondhand remarks are certainly not the source of the difficulty, their references to distinct areas of Kant’s philosophy certainly point to the challenge of ascertaining where this “gap” belongs in his system of thought as well as to its degree of significance. For example, from a theoretical perspective, a “system of critical philosophy” can refer to the bare architectonic (of complete and certain principles) or idea on the basis upon which a “transcendental philosophy” is to be constituted, while “critique” itself is the assessment of the subject’s cognitive powers and limits with respect to the possibility of synthetic *a priori* cognition.⁹ Thus the science of transcendental philosophy depends upon and belongs at the systematic level to the *KrV*, but the latter only offers the “complete estimation of synthetic *a priori* cognition.” What systematically distinguishes the science of transcendental philosophy is that it goes beyond this estimation; specifically it requires for its completeness “an exhaustive analysis of all of human cognition *a priori*,” in so far as the latter is understood in the

⁷ Ak: 5:170. Pluhar, 7-8.

⁸ Prieto, Leopoldo. “Invitación al estudio del Opus postumum de Kant,” in *Alpha-Omega*, 3(3) (2000), 514-515.

⁹ *KrV*, A13/B2. *KU*, Ak: 5:176. Pluhar, 15.

form of “principles of synthesis” and presuming that its *a priori* cognition of concepts be pure.¹⁰ With respect to the systematic location of what Kant calls a “doctrine,” on the other hand, critique establishes if and how our cognitive powers can construct such a field of knowledge as well as the norms from which to judge its “scientific” value. And conversely, unlike critique, which either has no value or its object exists only in general, a doctrine has a “particular domain of objects” and depending on the nature of these (i.e., empirical or rational) its value with regards to degree of certainty is established.¹¹ Having said all of this, “critical system” may also refer to all three critiques and the different kinds of metaphysical cognition or general principles grounded on them. In summary, while much can be said about the meaning of what is being referred to in the above mentioned secondhand remarks, the point here is that their different systematic connotations point to the difficulty of ascertaining the place of the “gap” in Kant’s philosophy. Since the *Op* represents Kant’s effort to solve it, understanding the gap’s systematic location is ultimately the key to grasping the reach of the problem itself and that of the theoretical effects of a solution that is to be found in the text as such.

That Kant at first thought of the “gap” as located in the theoretical part of his philosophy is clear from the projected title of the *Op*, which was originally conceived as a manuscript for future publication: *Transition from the Metaphysical Principles of Natural Science to Empirical Physics*.¹² Taking the title literally, it is possible to say that the

¹⁰ *KrV* B28/A15.

¹¹ *KU*, Ak: 5:176. Pluhar, 15. For an account of the different kinds of doctrines of nature, for instance, cf. Kant’s “Preface” in *MAN* (Ak: 4:467-79. Friedman, 183-193).

¹² “*Übergang von den Mataphysischen Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft zur empirischen Physik.*”

“gap” was to be solved by a “transition” between kinds of cognition of nature: metaphysical and empirical. When the conceptual elements mentioned in this title are related to his published works, echoes resonate from multiple locations. For example, even though in the third *Critique* Kant announces the completion of the critical apparatus, he also notes that his next project will be to transition or advance [*schreiten*] into the doctrinal part of his system and thus also indicating that his “doctrine of nature” as worked out, at least in part, in his *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (henceforth *MAN*), was not yet complete.¹³ The *KU* itself also embodies a sustained effort to think the relationships, tensions and potential transitions between different “domain[s],” “realm[s],” and “territor[ies]” of thought and facultative powers, most importantly between the region of the pure concepts of understanding (nature) and that of reason (freedom), but also for example between imagination (sublime) and reason (idea of unconditioned).¹⁴ One finds as well a frequent use of expressions such as: “abyss,” “mediating link,” “bridge,” and “transition.”¹⁵

Echoes also resonate from the *Metaphysik der Sitten* (henceforth *MS*), where Kant compares the need for a “transition” from pure metaphysical principles of duty to their application in experience with an analogous need within his theoretical philosophy; this is

¹³ Tuschling makes this last point regarding the relationship between the remark in *KU* and the incompleteness of the *MAN*. Tuschling, Burkhard. “*O.p.*: Transitional Idealism,” in *Kant and Critique: New Essays in Honor of W. E. Werkmeister*, ed. R. M. Dancy. Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993, 154.

¹⁴ Ak: 5:176-7. Pluhar, 15-6. Original: “*Gebiet*,” “*Feld*,” and “*Boden*,” respectively.

¹⁵ Prieto Leopoldo. “Invitación al estudio del Opus postumum de Kant,” in *Alpha-Omega*, 3(3) (2000), 515.

a transition that has its own “special rules.” He writes: “Nevertheless, just *as a passage from the metaphysics of nature to physics is needed—a transition having its own special rules*—something similar is required from the metaphysics of morals: a transition which, by applying the pure principles of duty to cases of experience, would *schematize* these principles, as it were, and present them as ready for morally practical use.”¹⁶ This analogy is particularly informative, since the very title of the project of the *Op* is identified here at a systematic level with its equivalent in practical philosophy. The tension described in the text is one between “metaphysical first principles of a doctrine of virtue,” which are part of a system of pure ethics, to “duties of virtue” among human beings, conceived as the translation of the first principles (formal) into rules for their application in experience (material). The translation entails the conceptualization of the differential application of the *a priori* principles in accordance with the differences found in the concrete moral subject (e.g., differences of “rank, age, sex, health, prosperity, or poverty and so forth”).¹⁷ Since the concrete moral subject is found in the empirical world, unlike metaphysical first principles of a doctrine of virtue, the organization of rules of the duties of virtue can never be thought as complete. Because of this, moreover, it would be a contradiction to say that they belong to a broader “system” of ethics, as the latter is in the strong sense restricted to rational knowledge capable of completeness in its systematization; in Kant’s words, this type of organization or “doctrine” of rules of virtue “can only be appended to the system.”

Returning to the above cited passage, then, it is the “special rules” for carrying out

¹⁶ Ak: 6:468. Gregor, 584.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

this “appendage” that needs to be philosophically developed in the “transition.” Thus, in critical philosophy a conceptual relationship of application between the metaphysical sphere and the empirical one must be capable of development so that any organization of rules of duty may be glued onto the ethical system, despite the former’s potential incompleteness. The allusion to rules of schematization, “as it were,” in order to describe the nature of the special constitutive rules of the transition is also significant here. Since for Kant schematization is not possible in practical philosophy, as its concepts are not representational, a description that refers to imagination’s schematization in theoretical cognition and presented here in the form of an analogy implies that the rules of transition in theoretical philosophy would be of schematization. In these published works one thus finds hints at pertinent “transitions” in various contexts: projects to be undertaken and completed on the basis of the *KrV* and *KU* by him; an immanent dimension of his thought that requires the cognitive, reflective, practical and theoretical movements or relations between different parts of the whole; and finally, a concrete analogy within practical philosophy of the function and possible constitutive character of a transition from metaphysical foundations of natural science and empirical physics.¹⁸

The “ether deductions” in the earlier parts of the *Op* have also proven to be the natural place from which to gauge, in a backwards-looking approach, where the “gap” that they are intended to address is to be found.¹⁹ An intensive debate has sprung up in

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Brian Hall notes that in the very first parts of the *Op* Kant’s approach to the transition is to develop merely a “general theory of nature,” emphasizing its bounds, systematization, and the concepts of force and matter. Hall, Bryan. “A Reconstruction of Kant’s Ether Deduction on *Übergang 11*,” in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (4) (2006), 721.

the English language literature that appears to favor such an approach, sometimes at the expense of considering other later parts of the *Op*, which may bear upon the understanding of the “gap.” For instance, since the doctrine of self-positing’s renewed focus on role of the subject’s cognitive faculties simultaneously addresses the character of any science of “transcendental philosophy,” it could serve as a guide in locating the gap in the latter.²⁰ The most prominent contemporary scholars who have focused on the relationship between the gap and the ether deductions are Jeffrey Edwards, Michael Friedman, Brian Hall and Kenneth Westphal. Eckart Förster has been a key interlocutor as well, but his approach extends well into the doctrine of self-positing, including even its practical aspect. Briefly, these ether deductions, of which there are fourteen numbered drafts that were written in mid-1799, are Kant’s attempts to prove the existence of “ether” *a priori*. The basics for this proof are that “ether,” or more generally matter [*Stoff*], is a condition for experience. Since this deduction provides the *a priori* knowledge of the necessity of this existence, this condition may be qualified as a *material transcendental* condition for experience which functions logically at the same time as the object for physics – or any doctrine of nature.

There is one more detail to mention; the ether is a stand-in term for a concept of matter that is dynamic, which is to say, a relation of material forces that fill space (i.e., not “a space”).²¹ This quality is argued for because for Kant it is impossible for the subject to *sense* empty space; for there to be any outer experience at all, the character of

²⁰ *KrV*, A15/B30.

²¹ In the *MAN* the filling by matter *qua* body is delimited to “a space” and not “space,” hence one indication in the “ether deductions” of a (potential) change in his position on the *a priori* qualitative constitution of matter in the *Op*.

the material must be dynamic and in this continuous and mutually affecting dynamics of forces always already unified as one. As a consequence of this, one can no longer legitimately maintain any atomistic paradigm of matter, which assumes the possibility of empty space. Three points are noteworthy here: first, the transcendental condition spoken of is *material*, while those introduced in the *KrV* are merely formal; second, since according to the *KrV* one can only apodictically know formal conditions of possibility of experience, one of the discovered limitations in any *KrV* is precisely reason's inability to give an *a priori* ontological argument; and third, in the second cosmological dialectic of reason, which arises out of reason's thinking the category of quality, Kant affirmed the undecidability of the fundamental character of matter (atomistic or dynamic).

In the context of the ether deductions, it is also important to point out that Kant was dissatisfied with the results of his earlier *MAN*, particularly the chapter dedicated to the schematization of the pure aspect of the empirical concept of matter, under the category of "quality." The heading of this section is entitled "The Metaphysical Foundations of Dynamics" and through the proofs of eight propositions, Kant's aim is to establish the three necessary characters of matter from a "qualitative" perspective: 1) the real or solid in space fills this space through repulsive force ("reality"); 2) in a negative-counter relation to repulsive force, an attractive force penetrates this space ("negation"); and 3) and the limitation of the repulsive by the attractive force, which determines the degree of filling of "a space" (not just "space") of an object of outer sense ("limitation").²² However, in a later evaluation of his own work in that chapter, Kant acknowledges that

²² Ak: 4:523. Friedman, 233. Under the table of the *a priori* categories of the understanding, "reality," "negation," and "limitation" are the three parts that constitute the category of quality (*KrV* B95).

his account was circular. As Förster notes: “On the one hand, attraction is said to be always proportional to the quantity of matter; on the other hand, Kant argued that only ‘by such an action and reaction of *both* fundamental forces, matter would be possible by a determinate degree of filling of space,’ hence by a determinate quantity.”²³ In other words, while attraction is accounted for in relation to quantity of matter, quantity of matter is being accounted for in terms of attraction as one of the two fundamental forces. Without going any further into the meaning of this within Kant’s overall metaphysics of nature, knowing that he was not satisfied with his early first step in developing a metaphysics of nature gives further context to the significance of the *Op*, particularly the relationship of his “ether deductions” to any systematic “gap.” If the published text of the *MAN* is a failed project, then one has to ask how great the gap is and what we ought to understand when Kant speaks of a “transition” that originates—according to the projected title of what today is called the *Op*—from “the metaphysical foundations of natural science.”

The emphasis on addressing the question of the “gap” in terms of the “ether deductions” in the English language literature has created an interpretative asymmetry, as it were, when compared to the kind of treatment that has been given to the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. The root of this asymmetry may be partly traced to the reception of the text in the early twentieth century—a reception that inscribed a two-part structure to the *Op*. Vaihinger, Vörländer, and Krause held that the manuscript was composed of two distinct texts; the first was considered “The Transition of the Metaphysical Principles of

²³ Förster, E. “Kant’s *Selbstsetzungslehre*” in *Kant’s Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques and the O.p.*, ed. Eckart Förster. Stanford, Stanford University Press 1989, 224. Förster’s citation: Ak: 4:521. Friedman, 231.

Natural Science to Physics” and the second “The System of Pure Philosophy in its Context.”²⁴ And Adickes, who was responsible for the dating of the fascicles, for example, also strongly emphasized the two distinct parts of the text; the first dealing mostly with natural sciences and metaphysics of nature, while the second presented a doctrine of self-positing, which he then subdivides into different themes (i.e., self-affection; thing in itself).²⁵ This general two-part vision of the text by no means accounts for why one section has been studied more than the other, but it certainly opens up a door to such an interpretative tendency.

It is also worthwhile noting that, when the second part of the *Op* is treated, moreover, some authors tend either to just do lip service or to jump over the doctrine of self-positing to focus on the big systematic repercussions of Kant’s last reflections—and in doing so tying it to the conclusions drawn with respect to significance of the “gap” and the standing of the “ether deductions. This is accomplished by interpreting the very last

²⁴ Prieto, L. “Invitación al estudio del *O.p* de Kant,” in *Journal Alpha omega; revista di filosofia e teologia dell’ Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum* Vol. 3, Issue 3 (2000), 511.

²⁵ This is not to say that Adickes privileged the first part over the second. According to him, since the first part dealt with the physics and chemistry of Kant’s time, it was of no value to the contemporary scientist or philosopher of science; his position on the second part is more complex, as he thought of the doctrine of self-positing as the result of Kant falling into the “positing mania” of the time. As a result, he simply rescues what he saw as further support of his theory of double affection, basically Kant’s supposedly re-articulation or clarification of the status of the “thing in itself.” Despite all of this, Adickes’ general evaluation of much of the *O.p* is encapsulated in disparaging remarks, such as it being “uncritical and senile transgressions with respect to favorite opinions [“*Unkritische, senile Nachgiebigkeit gegen Lienlingsmeinungen*”],” or mere “airy speculations [*Luftige Spekulationen*].” None of this, however, negates Adickes enormous contributions to the scholarly understanding of the text. Adickes, E. *Kants Opus postumum, dargestellt und beurteilt*. Berlin, Reuther & Reichard, 1920, 394 and 590. Cf. Prieto, L. “Invitación al estudio del *O.p* de Kant,” in *Journal Alpha omega; revista di filosofia e teologia dell’ Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum* Vol. 3, Issue 3 (2000).

fascicle written by Kant between 1800 and 1803. Kant's reflections in these pages are, one could say, at the macro level; one finds here formulations of his system of transcendental philosophy as a whole. Because fascicle i is in its character the most scattered, incomplete, and schematic (e.g., there are what appear as possible titles for either the *Op* or perhaps his philosophical position in general; one finds the names of other thinkers – such as Spinoza, Schelling, Lichtenberg – as placeholders for philosophical positions through which Kant appears to be situating his own; etc..) it has proven to be a fecund source for provocative interpretations of the ultimate significance of the *Op*. For instance, some have claimed that Kant situates his work within Schelling's "System of Transcendental Idealism" (e.g., Tüschling) or, more broadly speaking, within a kind of "Spinozism" (e.g., Edwards), both of which would challenge some of the most important tenets of Kant's earlier vision of his critical and transcendental philosophy.

However, although not always found contained in a single book, more holistic approaches to the interpretation of the *Op* can be pieced together in the literature written in other languages; for instance in Spanish (e.g., Duque, Pietro), Italian (e.g., Matheau), French (e.g., Ferrero) and German (e.g., Förster). References to the *Op* can also be found in the works of now canonical authors of the 20th Century, such as Heidegger and Foucault on the topics of being, finitude and subjectivity, or Deleuze on the change in the status of space over time as forms of intuition. Ultimately, the differences in interpretative paths may suggest that the source of the asymmetry in the English language literature and the tendencies and uses elsewhere result from different philosophical traditions and cultural specificities (e.g., a preference for epistemology in Anglo tradition

and subjectivity in Europe). Noting these differences, however, exposes—to borrow Deleuze’s concept—possibly new “lines of flight” in our philosophical encounter with the *Op*.

Focusing as it does on the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, this dissertation does not directly address the question of either the “gap” or the status of the “ether deductions.” Nonetheless, there are at least two important reasons to undertake this new study of the doctrine in the *Op*, reasons that are still internal to Kant scholarship. First, this section brings to the fore that there is much continuity between what is presented there and Kant’s thought in the *KrV* and other critical works. This continuity offers both an extra source for clarifications of points that remained obscure in the earlier work as well as caution with respect to the overall evaluation of the newness and systematic consequences of what is present in Kant’s late thought. For example, is it possible to claim as Brian Hall does that Kant enters a “post-critical” stage in his last unfinished work? Or as Kenneth Westphal argues, that the *Op* confirms that the *KrV*’s transcendental deduction assumes, contrary to Kant’s own intentions, a “material realism”? Or is it, on the other hand, that by looking into Kant’s return to his “transcendental philosophy” in the doctrine of self-positing one finds a deepening or unpacking of the significance of the “empirical realism” side of a *sustained* critical position, as Duque suggests?²⁶ In other words, a growing understanding of the doctrine invites us to evaluate Kant’s position in the *Op* in the wake of his early reflections on physics and the ether deductions. This is especially important if one finds that Kant in

²⁶ In the second edition of the first *KrV* and as a response to accusations that his work does not escape a form of idealism, he describes his position as both a “transcendental idealism” and an “empirical realism.” *KrV*, B519.

the doctrine of self-positing attempts to work out at the more radical transcendental level the conditions for such physics and deductions. Since the doctrine of self-positing returns to the basic cognitive faculties upon which the estimation of our possible synthetic *a priori* knowledge is determined, it seems natural to go to this last section of the *Op* to evaluate the extent to which the “critical” foundations are still in place.

The second reason for undertaking this study is that an analysis of the doctrine of self-positing also provides resources from which to ask again where the gap identified by Kant may be located within the whole of his critical philosophy. Showing the extent of Kant’s ongoing engagement with the question of the status of space, time and the material intuitive content as well as the spontaneity of thought raises the question as to whether the gap is not ultimately grounded in the relationship between the faculties of sensibility and understanding. The problematic of the relationship between these faculties had been a concern of Kant’s contemporary readers and critics from very time of the publication of the *KrV*. Is it possible that Kant’s concern with the transition between metaphysical and empirical spheres of cognition leads him to acknowledge that there indeed is a “gap” that arises out of the heterogeneity of these two faculties? And isn’t the heterogeneity of these two cognitive faculties mirrored and problematized in the logical and empirical duality found in Kant’s concept of the subject, when confronted with the epistemological need to be materially determined? While this dissertation is not intended to argue that ultimately Kant locates the aforementioned “gap” to be within the relationship between spontaneity and receptivity—this would require a much more historical approach that would reveal developmental stages within the *Op* as a whole as well as a return to the originally conceived “gap” to evaluate the potential ramifications for it—the focus on what takes

place in the doctrine of self-positing provides resources for the possibility of engaging in such a project.

Chapter One: A Preliminary Study of the Concept of Positing

i.

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, it is helpful to come to terms with the meaning that Kant attributed to the concept of *setzen* and *Setzung*, or its Latin derived *Positio* or original *positio* (in its English equivalent, to posit and the positing or position respectively). There are a number of reasons to start

preemptively with this retrospective elucidation. First, because the term is many times repeated and used in philosophy and theory as if its meaning were self-evident. While, as Kant says, “[i]t is certain that anywhere else in philosophy the concept could confidently be employed in the undeveloped form in which it occurs in ordinary usage,” the centrality of the concept of *Setzung* to the object of this investigation requires a more subtle understanding.²⁷ Second, because the term is prevalent in the works of many German idealist thinkers.²⁸ This means that it is important to work out the distinctive uses that may be found in Kant’s work and evaluate the prevalence and function of the concept in his pre-*Op* thought. With this in hand, one is on firmer ground to consider not only the extent to which the *Selbstsetzungslehre* may or may not threaten the integrity of his critical position, but also situate the latter with regards to some of his contemporary thinkers. Finally, this overview of the concept is useful because within Kant’s doctrine of self-positing, there is a systematic distinction in the uses of the word *setzen* and *machen* that is many times understated within the secondary literature on the doctrine and can potentially lead to dogmatic reading of it.²⁹ Thus, by beginning with a clear understanding of the first, one is then able to see in what way it relates to the second, and hopefully appreciate that this late doctrine of Kant’s is just as much of the self-positing of the subject knower as it is of the subject knower’s self-construction and making of

²⁷ *BDG*, Ak: 2:70. Walford, 116. Kant’s comment is about the closely related concept of existence, yet it is just as applicable to positing.

²⁸ J.G. Fichte stands out among them.

²⁹ In his monumental interpretation of Kant’s *Opus postumum*, Adickes, for example, does not make any explicit conceptual distinction between them during his exposition of the doctrine.

experience by means of the cognitive resources operative within it.

Following is an overview of Kant's use of the concept. The meaning is elucidated by tracing the concept's definition and function in some of Kant's pre-critical writings as well as in the *KrV* and *KU*. The result is a conceptual map of its predominant philosophical significance within his theoretical philosophy prior to the *Op*.³⁰

While *Setzung* refers to a basic (but essential) logical function, in Kant's pre-critical work this logical meaning finds itself embedded in a richer philosophical one, inextricably connected to that of existence: it is synonymous with *Sein*, thought of as either copula in a possible judgment or *Dasein*.³¹ It thus concerns affirmation in an ontological or transcendental sense, expressing different modalities of being in general.³²

One first finds this term defined in Kant's pre-critical text *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes* (henceforth *BDG*), where the

³⁰ This project is limited to the theoretical side of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. As a consequence, this chapter lacks references to the usage of *setzen* in Kant's practical philosophy.

³¹ T. Trappe writes in his entry in the *Wörterbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Bd 9: Se-Sp) that the term's philosophical significance in the history of philosophy begins with Kant. However, if one looks to the entry for "Positiv," which derives from the Latin *positum* and *ponere*, then it does appear to have been embedded in philosophical meaning before. For instance, *Setzung* appears as the opposite of "nature" (in the sense of constituted); opposite to "negativ" (in the sense of *seiend* or affirmation); in the context of discussing the nature of the reality of the divine and human in Christ; and of the method of "Positive Theology" (Bd 7: P-Q). In Caygill's *A Kant Dictionary* the term has no entry. The same is the case for Eistler's French edition of the Kant-Lexicon, although interestingly enough, a possible translation of the term *setzen*, or the English to posit, is to postulate. To postulate or postulates is a technical term in Kant's theoretical philosophy, used in the *KrV* in relationship to his discussion of the principles of modality – thus very much in the keeping with the terms of the discussion that follows. Cf. *KrV*, B200; B265; and B289.

³² Transcendental in both the traditional sense of metaphysical, but also applicable to the more restricted meaning it takes on later in Kant's critical philosophy.

meaning of its particular relationship to the concept of existence is made explicit.³³ In his essay *Versuch den Begriff der negative Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (henceforth *NG*), Kant employs the concept precisely as he argues for the need to differentiate between two kinds of opposition and ground: logical and real. In the latter, the function of *Setzung* or *Position* is essential to his ability to articulate his notion of negative magnitudes in relation to the real (+*A* to –*A* as opposed to the logical negation: *A* and non-*A*).

In his *KrV*, however, Kant employs the concept philosophically³⁴ in a much more diverse set of contexts, making it quite hard for the reader to pin its meaning down. This is compounded by both the presence of *setzen* within Kantian technical terminology (e.g., *zusammensetzen/zusammengesetzt* [to compose/composite]) as well as an invisibility produced in the English translation of the *KrV*, where *setzen* is many times translated as: to place, to set, to put, and/or to add.³⁵ Thus, in order to narrow the rather complex interpretative field, this part of the analysis focuses more analytical attention to those places where Kant uses the Latin *Positio* or its derivative *Position* (after all, in the *KrV* Kant says that the use of Latin guarantees a more precise meaning of the concept, which

³³ H-E Hengstenberg asserts falsely that Kant never defines this concept. This probably results from the fact that his essay only focuses on his *KrV* and *KpV*. Hengstenberg, Hans-Eduard. “Die Kategorie der Setzung in Kants Vernunftkritiken, in der Phänomenologie und der Wissenschaftstheorie,” in *Philosophia Naturalis*. Meisenheim/Glan, Verlag Anton Hain. Band 19 (1982), 53.

³⁴ Philosophical in this instance simply means as a function that is more than a merely logical.

³⁵ This does not necessarily mean that the translations are inaccurate. The point is that the relations of identity of the concept and its presence in composite words can be lost to the English language reader.

ought to secure a better understanding of the term³⁶). Two of the three places where he does so are in the context of the *KrV*'s discussion of the ontological proof, providing thus a direct relationship with its pre-critical function in the treatment of the same philosophical problem – now however marked by the incorporation of the constraints of a subjectivist paradigm. In addition, there are at least four other identifiable uses of *setzen* in the text; these are in the contexts of the discussion of: 1) the self-affection of the subject knower; 2) the second analogy of experience; 2) the relation between the “I think” to intuition; and 4) the limits of the use of reason.

Despite the paradigm shift inaugurated with the *KrV*, the function of the concept of *Setzung*, *Positio*, and/or, *setzen* is consistent throughout the texts considered in this analysis: to articulate the age-old philosophical problem of the relationship between thought and its instantiation in the real. The fundamental conditions for grounding the possibility of this relationship changes with Kant's critical turn, but the concept is at the heart of the theoretical project to establish the legitimacy of this relationship and in this way secure the possibility of making objective knowledge claims.

ii. Pre-Critical

³⁶ *KrV*, B412-3. XXXXX Original: “Übrigens habe ich wegen der lateinischen Ausdrücke, die statt der gleichbedeutenden deutschen wider den Geschmack der guten Schreibart eingeflossen sind, sowohl bei diesem Abschnitte, als auch in Ansehung des ganzen Werks zur Entschuldigung anzuführen: daß ich lieber etwas der Zierlichkeit der Sprache habe entziehen, als den Schulgebrauch durch die mindeste Unverständlichkeit erschweren wollen.”

ii. a. Ontological Proof

In its common use within a basic logical form of thinking, to posit is to connect a subject and a predicate (its characteristic mark) in a judgment. This common function appears clearly in Kant's definition of "determination," when in the *Nova Delucidatio* (henceforth *ND*) he writes: "determination is the positing of a predicate to the exclusion of its opposite [*determination est ponere praedocatum cum exclusione oppositi*]."³⁷ It is expressible in the form *s* is *p*. Other related German terms within this logical use are: *Bestimmung, Bejahung, Behauptung, Voraussetzung, Hypothese*.³⁸

This logical function of *Setzung* is complemented in pre-critical Kant by explicitly distinguishing the latter with another sense of position. It has a key function in the possibility to express not only logical but also existential or ontological claims.³⁹ In *BDG*, where Kant first introduces his well known thesis that existence cannot be a predicate, the concept of *Position* is specifically related to the so-called problem of existential propositions. He defines for us what he means by positing,

The concept of position [*Position*] or positing [*Setzung*] is completely simple and identical with the concept of being [*Sein*] in general. Now,

³⁷ Ak: 1:392. Walford, 11

³⁸ "Setzen, *Setzung*." Def. in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Band 9: Se – Sp. Basel, Schwabe & Co. Ag. Verlag, 1995.

³⁹ Given that this piece is an attempt to construct a mere map of the meaning of *Setzung* in Kant's theoretical work prior to the *OP*, in order to contain the scope of our present analysis for this particular purpose, I only analyze the use of this term in those pre-critical essays in which it is also being designated by the Latin *Position*. This not only keeps with Kant's preference to follow the use of the Latin terminology to secure philosophical clarity, but it helps us leave out the common usage of the term in everyday German. An in depth analysis of this concept would indeed be a useful and interesting project on its own, but it lays outside the scope of my current project.

something can be thought as posited merely relatively, or, to express the matter better, it can be thought merely as the relation (*respectus logicus*) of something as a characteristic mark of a thing. In this case, being, that is to say, the positing [*Position*] of this relation, is nothing other than the copula [*Verbindungsbegriff*] in a judgment. If what is considered is not merely this relation but the thing [*Sache*] posited in and for itself, then this being [*Sein*] is the same as existence [*Dasein*],⁴⁰

There are two main points in this definition of *Position* or *Setzung*. First that it is identical to what we mean with being in general, that is to say, in the most indeterminate sense of the concept of being. An inquiry into its meaning provides the elements that serve as the ground of the lower or more determinate concepts under it. And, second, that by this general concept, being can take two forms: a relative form and an absolute form. These two forms are the distinct ways in which being can be said of something; the two ways in which position or being in general can be said or affirmed.

The first of these forms takes us back to our above discussion of positing having a logical sense. Here Kant makes explicit that a relative position is a merely logical relation represented by the copula *is* in a judgment (*s is p*). Relative position thus grants us the possibility to conceptually express that *s* is in such a way that *p*, a certain determination or character trait, belongs to it. This determination of its being is expressed by the predication in a judgment. Thus far, what is granted to *Sein überhaupt* within a relative position is a mere analytical relation of containment; this is the case

⁴⁰ Ak: 2:73. Walford 119, modified. Original: *Der Begriff der Position oder Setzung ist völlig einfach und mit dem vom Sein überhaupt einerlei. Nun kann etwas als bloß beziehungsweise gesetzt, oder besser bloß die Beziehung (respectus logicus) von etwas als einem Merkmal zu einem Dinge gedacht werden, und dann ist das Sein, das ist die Position dieser Beziehung, nichts als der Verbindungsbegriff in einem Urtheile. Wird nicht bloß diese Beziehung, sondern die Sache an und für sich selbst gesetzt betrachtet, so ist dieses Sein so viel als Dasein.*

because the only operative rule for the validity of this relation is the principle of contradiction. In fact, as the only legislating principle, the lack of contradiction is what restricts the modality of the said position: it is logically possible.

An account of a merely relational function of *Setzung* opens up the possibility to think another mode of *Sein überhaupt*: absolute position. Even if all the relative positions in a subject are determinable according to the rule of contradiction, one would still only know a set of thought relations that may or not present themselves as being the case in and of itself [*die Sache an und für sich selbst*] – the position of *s* in relation to all of its characteristics is still only a conception of *Sein überhaupt* that with regards to existence, is valid only as a logical possibility. Relations posited as united under a common concept are being established, but whether or not the concept with all of its predicates actually exists as a state of affairs outside thought, remains fully unknown. Thus far, with respect to its modality, *position* expresses *Sein* as a possibility in *respectus logicus* of the said relations of determination.

The other form of *Sein überhaupt* is what Kant qualifies as absolute position. This means that what is addressed is the actuality or existence of the set of relations of determinations over and beyond its relative position in non-contradictory thought. Considered thus independently from the concept under which the subject is posited as a set of thought relations, what is accounted for is that which is in and for itself; as Kant says in the passage: so this being [*Sein*] is so much as being-there [*Dasein*]. The mode of being that is said of something posited absolutely is real existence.

The distinction that Kant draws in his analysis of *Setzung*, however, does not accommodate the possibility of complete independence of one mode of being in general

from the other. When something is posited absolutely, for instance, what is understood as belonging to this existent is the same as what is contained within its concept – the determinations of what exists and the predicates or characteristic marks of its relative position are one and the same. Kant writes,

...I maintain that nothing more is posited in the existent thing [*Existirenden*] than is posited in a merely possible [*Möglichen*] (for then one is speaking of the predicates of the thing). But more is posited through an existent thing [*Existirenden*] than is posited through a merely possible thing [*Möglichen*], for positing through an existing thing [*Existirenden*] involves the absolute positing [*Position*] of the thing itself [*Sache selbst*] as well.⁴¹

In this regard, the difference between what is possible and what is actual lays in that through which the relations of determinations are posited: the copula or what is existent. What absolute *Position* adds to the *Position* of a copula is the *Sache selbst*. Thus, positing through what exists entails simultaneously not only the set of possible relations of determination, but also its logical character and coherence. Absolute position is to be understood as an actual instantiation of that possible unity in *Dasein* [what is there – the actual].

Thus, out of Kant's definition and discussion of the concept of *Setzung* in *BDG*, there are three key radical components of such idea: that it means *Sein überhaupt*; that there are two ways of considering it (i.e., relative or absolute/ possible or existent); and that when being in general is posited through what exists, its relative position is contained therein.

⁴¹ Ak: 2:75. Walford, 120 (emphasis added). Original: “[...] *so sage ich: in einem Existirenden wird nichts mehr gesetzt als in einem blos Möglichen (denn alsdann ist die Rede von den Prädicaten desselben), allein durch etwas Existirendes wird mehr gesetzt als durch ein blos Mögliches, denn dieses geht auch auf absolute Position der Sache selbst.*”

In the context of the *BDG*, the nature of *Setzung* plays an essential role in Kant's construction of the proof for God's existence – an entity whose *Dasein* must be shown to be absolutely necessary. In order to be able to ground the unconditional necessity of this existence, Kant develops the framework within which the two senses of *Setzung* discussed above are brought into relation with the third category of modality: necessity. A condition for doing this is to establish that in *Setzung*, possibility as relative position be shown to be conditioned by the rule of contradiction in such a way that a necessary relationship to existence be established. In other words, the problem to be solved is: on the basis of what can a notion of possibility as mere relations of determination be the inner possibility of what is posited absolutely? The capacity to answer this is what leads to and distinguishes his proof from those who came before him. Following is a brief outline of his argument for establishing the conditions for inner possibility and on the basis of this, the foundation for the proof of god's existence:⁴²

1. Relative position or *Sein überhaupt* understood as logical relations of determinations within an absolute position, that is to say “inner possibility,” is composed two elements:
 - a. Formal or logical element in possibility
 - b. Material or real element of possibility

Sein überhaupt posited through the copula of a judgment is necessarily governed by the principle of contradiction in two senses. First, in so far as no contradictory judgment can be thought. Put differently, the possibility of the unity of a subject and a predicate would be unthinkable if contradictory. This is what Kant means here by “formal or logical element.”

⁴² Depending on the reader's familiarity with the general structure of the proof, it may be sufficient to attend to the first two points and then jump to the short summary commentary on page 13.

And second, in so far as the lack of contradiction can only be established if there are elements or parts that can be judged to be in such non-contradictory a relation. The copula cannot function as a unity if there is nothing to evaluate. This is what Kant means here by “material or real element of possibility.”

Therefore, there are two elements of possibility that are necessary for the principle of contradiction to be fulfilled in a relative position. The necessity of these constitute the meaning of possibility understood as “inner possibility.”

2. The inner possibility of all things presupposes some *Dasein* or other (some absolute position).
 - a. Based on the above determinations of “inner possibility,” something is impossible if there is nothing that can be given for thinking the relations of determination in a judgment of relative position. Something is impossible if there is no “datum” given to thought, some given “thinkable” thing, or something that is *cogitabile*.
 - b. In the absence of a *datum*, the full criteria for the application of the rule of contradiction is not fulfilled – the material element of possibility – and this thus lead to the impossibility of determining the formal element of all possibility as well.
 - c. Thus, some *Dasein* that is capable of being given to thought is a necessary condition for the inner possibility. Put differently, nothing is internally possible if there is not some *Dasein*.

So far we know what are necessary conditions for the inner possibility of a relative position, but not the conditions under which to secure that inner possibility itself is shown to be unconditionally⁴³ possible.

⁴³ The use of the word “unconditionally” in lieu of the more intuitive “absolutely” is in order to maintain what in these sections of the essay is a fairly consistent distinction in usage between “*schlechterdings*” and “*absolut*.” The latter is used in contexts in which the concept of *Sein* as “absolute position” is brought to bear on the analysis. For example, in this section of the essay, there is no place where *absolut* is found to qualify *unmöglich*. If my observation is correct, in this context *absolut* would be qualifying or indicating *Nichts*. David Walford’s translation in the Cambridge edition of Kant’s works

3. It is unconditionally impossible that nothing at all should exist. There are two meanings for this:⁴⁴
 - a. Formally: the unconditionally impossible – or that through which all possibility in general is cancelled – is what is self-contradictory.
 - b. Materially: the unconditionally impossible is that through which all that exists is negated, for this would also negate the *datum*, what is given to be thought.

4. There are two forms in which possibility is given in something actual:
 - a. *A posteriori*, or through experience: the possibility of something is given as the determination of an existent thing, *Dasein*.
 - b. *A priori*: the inner possibility of something is grounded in another *Dasein*, which Kant names “the first real ground of this absolute possibility.”⁴⁵
 - c. The concern here is with point b., the *a priori* relationship of possibility to something real outside itself, which alone can provide a necessary ground for inner possibility – or what Kant is now calling “absolute possibility,” due to the specific concern: the ground for the shared content as determinations between “relative *Setzung*” and “absolute *Setzung*.”

makes no distinction, most of the time choosing to use the more intuitive absolute for both terms.

⁴⁴ In his analysis of Kant’s *BDG*, Klaus Reich claims that the sole purpose of this point is to indicate a methodology or key definition by which one is to account for unconditional necessity, the ground of which can extend beyond mere contradiction in thought and apply to a “material” or “real” subject. Kant uses the same thought structure later on in relation to an absolutely necessary existence. So under Reich’s reading, point 3 from Reflection II is not in itself a key argument within the essay’s larger proof, but a nominal tool for it. Reich, K. *Kants einziger möglicher Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Dogmatismus und Kritizismus in der Metaphysik*, Leipzig, 1937, 14.

⁴⁵ Ak: 2:79. Waldorf, 124.

5. The ground for the validity of inner possibility's relationship to something *Wirkliches* lays in existence.
 - a. As said earlier, the fulfillment of the principle of contradiction in inner possibility requires two elements – formal and material.
 - b. In order to fulfill the formal it is necessary to establish that in the material element of inner possibility (predicates or characteristic marks) no contradictions arise.
 - c. The conceptual content of predicates can be made distinct and known through analysis.
 - d. Analysis can go *ad infinitum* or reach a concept that has no more content – there is either no end in securing the complete lack of contradiction, or no content that can be contradicted.
 - e. This incapacity shows that the principle of contradiction is unable to sufficiently establish the inner possibility of the logical element alone.
 - f. All that is left when considering the *Wirkliches* of that inner possibility is *that through which* something was given as material element of possibility. In other words, *that through which* something is posited absolutely: existence or *Dasein*.
 - g. It follows that the inner possibility of something actual is grounded in something else that exists.
 - h. To serve as *a priori* ground, the said existence must be shown to be an “unconditional necessary existence.”

6. There exists an unconditionally necessary *Wesen* [being or entity]:
 - a. To determine “absolute real necessity,” it must be shown that there is a reason why it can absolutely not be the case that an existent thing not be.
 - i. Since existence is not a predicate, this cannot be accounted for through contradiction.
 - ii. The alternative is that the negation of all existent things eliminates the *datum* or material element of possibility and with it thought itself.

- b. We know that a condition for inner possibility of all things is that there be some *Dasein* or other.
- c. Thus, the negation of all *Dasein* entails the negation of all possibility
- d. However, we also know that that which cancels all possibility is unconditionally impossible:
 - i. contradiction
 - ii. the absence of any material element of possibility.
- e. Material element of possibility is the thinkable, *cogitabile*, the *Datum*.
- f. Nothing thinkable can be thought if there is nothing that exists (so not even the highest principle of thought – contradiction – can be exercised).
- g. As a consequence, there exists something absolutely necessarily.

Without addressing Kant's further arguments for the specific determinations of an entity with absolutely necessary existence (i.e., single, simple, unchanging and eternal, and as containing supreme reality), which would lead to a distinct concept of God as well as the final proposition "*Es ist ein Gott*," the above outline shows sufficiently how essential the function of *Setzung* is in Kant's ontological proof. The concept of inner possibility, upon which the ontological argument is built, results from Kant's notion that to posit absolutely is to posit the same relations of determination contained in a relative position plus the *Sache selbst*. In the section where Kant first introduces his concept of *Setzung*, the nature of the described relationship between possibility and actuality that emerges from positing something through existence had not been established. It was still necessary to ground *a priori* inner possibility of what is posited absolutely. Or, in the more traditional and basic philosophical terms, there was still a need to explain *a priori* the way thought/form and being/matter meet (precisely the terms of the discussion that Kant is redefining, though).

Creating a conceptual split within his notion of *Setzung* or *Sein überhaupt* allows

Kant to think the concept of inner possibility as determined by not just a formal/logical element, but also a material/real one. This distinction within inner possibility results from (or at the very least is already present in) Kant's earlier description of the congruence between the content of the concept of what is posited relatively (expressed as predicates in a mere logical form of judgment) and the character traits actually exhibited in existence, that is to say, the characteristic marks of what "is" in absolute position – *Dasein*. This becomes apparent if one keeps in view two things. In the first place, since *Sein* is conceived of at the highest level of generality, when posited relatively it is – and there is – nothing more than the copula of a possible judgment in general. In the second place, within the parameters of Kant's discussion, human thinking is not creative.⁴⁶ This means that the conditions for the possibility that there be any predicates for the copula to unify (possibility) and be actualized through the absolute position of an existent thing (actuality) cannot be accounted for by the form of thought alone. Inner possibility must allow for more than just a logical element.

The presence of a material element in inner possibility is what necessitates that any account of an ultimate ground for the possibility of inner possibility be a

⁴⁶ The introduction of a subjective – human – factor may appear counterintuitive at this stage of Kant's thought, but there are references that appear to indicate this as being a rather present in *BDG*, especially in his more introductory and general remarks: the introduction of the concept of representation to distinguish between an empirical concept with or without content; the (methodological) idea that to search for the correctness of an existential proposition one "examines the source of one's cognition of the object [dem Ursprung der Erkenntnis das ich davon [dem Dasein einer solchen Sache] habe;" and the evaluation that "the nature of the object [existence] in relation to the faculty of our understanding does not admit of a higher degree of distinctness," which itself represents the result of Kant's appreciation for the fact that "the whole of our cognition ultimately resolves itself into unanalysable concepts." Ak 2: 72; 73; and 74, respectively. Waldorf, 117; 118; 119.

Realerklärung – an explanation of the necessity of the existence of something conceived as outside its mere concept. And conversely, the proof for the reality of an absolutely necessary existence is ultimately possible because of the identification of a material element of possibility. The lynch pin between the two directions of these arguments is Kant’s proposition that “the inner possibility of all things assumes some *Dasein* or other” – itself the first outcome of the recognition of a material element.⁴⁷

The material element is characterized as that which is thought, what is given in thought, the *Datum*. And, as argued above, if all *Dasein* (as source of what is given to or for thought) is cancelled, so is all data (as predicates for unity in the copula). Thus, if nothing exists, there can be no inner possibility, and nothing can be posited either relatively or absolutely (the *Sache Selbst* plus all predicates). Simply put, if there exists nothing, then there can be no thought. With this Kant introduces “a real condition for the actuality of all thinking.”⁴⁸

A *Realerklärung* of an absolutely necessary existence requires that it be proven that the cancellation [*Aufhebung*] of all that exists (that there be nothing) is unconditionally impossible. Early in the proof, one of the two ways that Kant identifies as that which is unconditionally impossible is the elimination of all possibility through the cancellation of all *Dasein*. This is a return to the “hinge” proposition for which the material element of inner possibility plays its key function. The cancellation of all that

⁴⁷ Reich describes this proposition as containing the “*springenden Punkt der Beweises*.” Reich, K. *Kants einziger möglicher Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Dogmatismus und Kritizismus in der Metaphysik*, Leipzig, 1937, 22.

⁴⁸ Reich, K. *Kants einziger möglicher Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes: Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Dogmatismus und Kritizismus in der Metaphysik*, Leipzig, 1937, 23.

exists, which is the cancellation of the condition for the material element of inner possibility, is the cancellation of possibility itself. The latter is what it means to express that something is “unconditionally impossible.” The possibility of a *Realerklärung* for the ontological proof resides, again, in Kant’s identification of the material element of inner possibility.

The generality and key – yet primitive – philosophical function of the concept of *Setzung* as it appears in Kant’s *BDG* is certain to have made its elucidation thus far extremely abstract, somewhat repetitive, and fairly entangled. This is perhaps to some extent unavoidable, as the discursive resources available to work through its meaning most likely share in the same constraints as the concept itself. However, if nothing else, it is clear that the concept is in itself of utmost philosophical significance and its particular character in *BDG* reveals very specific Kantian concerns and parameters of investigation. For instance: 1) that in our basic philosophical concern with *Sein überhaupt* we distinguish between its position through the copula from its position through the existent; 2) that in light of the recognition of this difference, a different type of philosophical account is necessary – a conceptual account that does not itself reduce the real to mere logical forms of thought or conceptual relationships; 3) that part of any such *Realerklärung* consists in thinking of the possibility of something in general as determined both formally and materially; and 4) that in this way we establish the conditions for the possibility for legitimate reality and truth claims. It appears as if the fate of the concept of *Setzung* as *Sein überhaupt* may be essential to any measure of Kant’s ontological commitments.

ii. b. *Setzung*'s Function as Positive Magnitude

Setting aside its definition and the distinct modalities of *Position*, in *NG* one finds an instantiation of the way and context in which the concept can function within philosophical thought.⁴⁹ At the most radical level, the concept functions to designate the positive value of reality as a whole. At a slightly more particular level, it functions to designate a *loci* of individuation that exhibits a determinate value – or positivity – that can be understood as resulting from the possibility of “negative magnitudes” within the domain of the positively real. In this way, *Position* represents a “something in general” as well as a particular something individualized out of the real possibility of “nothing(s).” It thus stands in contrast to and as the representation of the very concept that the essay wants to introduce into our method of philosophical thinking. The concept of negative magnitude in philosophy is the tool by which one can move from a merely logical determination of what is (A or non-A) to a conception of the individuation of what is real (here is an example of what Kant sees as the profitable way in which philosophy can be related to mathematics as a science). This is the domain in which opposition can be represented as A and – A.

The concept of negative magnitudes is the direct result of Kant's thinking negative relations of positivity, the outcome of which is what he calls a negation. A key result of this negation is that these states make it possible for the whole of reality in the world to exhibit limitations that provide a kind of form immanent to reality itself. Kant provides two cases of through which negation can be accounted for through the concept

⁴⁹ In this essay the use of the term *Position* is more predominant. Hence the switch of emphasis in this section of the chapter.

of negative magnitude. The first concerns real opposition and the second – although not without relation to the first – concerns change.

From a mathematical perspective, a magnitude is negative, relative to another magnitude, in so far as it “cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself.”⁵⁰ In his transposition of this concept to develop an account of real opposition, Kant writes that it “involves a true ground of the positing [*Position*] and another ground which is opposed to it and which is of the same magnitude.”⁵¹ What is expressed here is clearly the ontological alternative to logical opposites that cannot be thought together as well as the source from which to account for the possibility of thinking “nothing” as a consequence of real opposition in existence. A common example of this type of opposition is understanding that a body is at rest as a consequence of a deprivation (= 0) that results from the presence of a motive force (positivity) that is cancelled by an opposite force (negativity) of the same value, or magnitude.

Within Kant’s account, both of these opposed forces belong to the same subject or *Position* as determinations of it. In this respect, each force can be characterized as having opposite value, as either positivity or negativity. Thus, the concept of *Position* functions to designate the loci within which the negative magnitude of one force impinges upon the other and that to which the state of rest, as a “nothing” or privation of movement, can be attributed. However, it would still be possible to shift the perspective and posit each force independently from the subject and thus each other; thought in this way each is conceived as having its own positivity or *Position*.

⁵⁰ Ak: 2:174. Walford, 213-4.

⁵¹ Ak. 2:177-8. Walford, 217.

Negation can also result from change, which Kant conceives here as a coming to be or ceasing to be. While in the earlier case each positive and negative thing could be seen as the real ground for a consequent – a body’s state of rest – negative magnitude was conceived in terms of simultaneous real opposition within a same subject. In the case of change, the *Position* becomes or vanishes and in doing this creates an effect of negative magnitude in a new *Position*. Or more elegantly said with respect to vanishing, “Every passing away is a negative coming to be.”⁵² If earlier Kant was thinking the “real” alternative to logical contradiction, he is now thinking the “real” alternative to “logical ground” (as the category of causality in *KrV*)

There are three key parts to his account change. In the case of coming to be they can be represented as follows: *Position* A; Negation –A; ground; and totality of the world = 0. As a “natural” change (the cause and its effect belong to the world alone), coming to be entails the *Position* of what did not exist, and as such is attributed positive value. This event, however, necessitates a simultaneous negation of its value in the world. Both of these events arise out of the same real ground – or cause – and neutralize the value of the positivity that constitutes the totality of the world. In other words, when A and its individuating value did not exist, which means that the world had the value = 0 with respect to A’s existence. As A comes into being, its positivity necessarily draws from the same pull of positivity that makes up the world. This means that the ground for A had the simultaneous and necessary effect of constituting a –A, understood as the subtraction of the value of what came into being. Thus, when the totality of the world is thought of in terms of this particular coming to be, its value remains the same before and

⁵² Ak: 2:190. Walford, 227-8.

after the consequence of the appearance of A, which is = 0.

Without going any further into *NG*, it is possible to see that within Kant's conceptualization of negation *qua* reality, the concept of *Position* functions as a fold over and against the concept of negative magnitude. Common to two real opposite predicates, the *Position* of the subject functions as the positive placeholder or loci of the consequence of their relation. In this way it marks a particular individuation out of relations of positivity and, in the case of relations of real opposition, positivity conceived as negativity with respect to its opposite. The negation that results from these relations constitute real determinations of the thing that is posited – the body is at rest, for example – which in turn configure possible determinations of immanent relations among the sum total of posited things in the real world.

With *NG* it is possible to see in what way the concept of *Position* plays out as one of the constitutive parts of a different –yet intimately related – point. The function of the concept appears to be in complete agreement with what is said in *BDG*, and the essay as a whole can be seen as an extension of the latter. If the *BDG* introduced a definition of the concept as well as the kind of inner possibility and ground that belongs to any complete account of *Sein überhaupt*, *NG* developed the concept of negation, not as *aufhebung* (essential to *BDG's* arguments), but as the result of positive relations in reality. The latter is a natural outcome of both thinking *Sein überhaupt* as absolute position and understanding further the characteristics of the material element of inner possibility.⁵³

⁵³ This is not to deny that some of the elements in *NG* were already discussed in *BDG*; they were. It is simply that they are now at the heart of Kant's thought, and, for the purposes of this chapter, the essay represents a different place where *Position* acquires significance.

ii. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*

ii. a. The Ideal of Reason

Even though in the *KrV* Kant's position on the ontological proof is that there is no legitimate ground from which to claim that there is an absolutely necessary existence with god's singular qualities, the concept of *Setzung* maintains the same definition. As in *BDG*, the concept is synonymous with *Sein überhaupt*: being in general cannot be thought to be a real predicate; the copula of a proposition functions as that which merely posits a predicate in relation to the subject and thus expresses possibility alone; absolute position is the positing of an existent object in relation to its concept; and when one thinks absolute position – as the “it is” [*er ist*] – one adds nothing to the determinations of the concept.⁵⁴

In accordance with what was just said, when it comes to god's existence, the elements that belong to Kant's definition of *Sein* are expressed in the form “god is” or “there is a god” (as opposed to “god is existing”). The essential difference in the *KrV* is that the absolute necessary existence of this entity is reduced in status to an idea of reason (i.e., a necessary concept of reason that seeks to establish the absolute totality of conditions of synthesis, but for which no object can ever be given to the senses that can

⁵⁴ *KrV*, A599/B627; A235/B287n.

fulfill that quest).⁵⁵ In the *KrV*, this means that with this idea of god, reason can neither a) extend the subject's cognition as to what exists; nor b) provide an *a priori* account of the possibility of the synthesis by which the subject is given the connections of real properties in a thing. This is because realities cannot be given *a priori* to the subject and synthetic cognition can only be achieved in relation to experience (*in concreto*).⁵⁶

The question here is how Kant gets from the same concept of *Sein überhaupt* to an opposite conclusion on the possibility of an ontological proof. From a strictly critical perspective, it is possible to claim that in so far as Kant now rearticulates the conditions for real “inner” possibility⁵⁷ from the perspective of the limited cognitive resources of the subject, any possible cognition of an appeal to a transcendent entity is preemptively

⁵⁵ *KrV*, B382-3.

⁵⁶ *KrV*, A602/B630. The analytic mark of possibility, which consists in the fact that mere positings [*Positionen*] (realities) do not generate a contradiction, of course, cannot be denied of this concept; since, however, the connection of all real properties in a thing is a synthesis about whose possibility we cannot judge *a priori* because the realities are not given to us specifically – and even if this were to happen no judgment at all could take place because the mark of possibility of synthetic cognitions always has to be sought only in experience, to which, however, the object of an Idea can never belong – [...]. Original: *Das analytische Merkmal der Möglichkeit, das darin besteht, daß bloße Positionen (Realitäten) keinen Widerspruch erzeugen, kann ihm zwar nicht gestritten werden; da° aber die Verknüpfung aller realen Eigenschaften in einem Dinge eine Synthesis ist, über deren Möglichkeit wir a priori nicht urtheilen können, weil uns die Realitäten specifisch nicht gegeben sind, und, wenn dieses auch geschähe, überall gar kein Urtheil darin stattfindet, weil das Merkmal der Möglichkeit synthetischer Erkenntnisse immer nur in der Erfahrung gesucht werden muß, zu welcher aber der Gegenstand einer Idee nicht gehören kann [...].*

⁵⁷ Although in need of qualification, this pre-critical metaphysical terminology can be said to be congruent to the concept of real possibility thought of according to the postulates of empirical thought. For example, Kant does something similar when in the introduction of *MAN* he uses the metaphysical concept of “nature” (i.e., essence) in the introduction to the *MAN*, even as he is presenting the reader with a critical and thus completely revised concept of it *via* a science of nature grounded on the results of the *KrV*. Ak: 4: 467-8. Walford, 183-4.

foreclosed. This is precisely what the postulates of empirical thinking are to address: the modality of the relationship of the subject with regards to its object of experience (e.g., the possible is “whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience; etc.).”⁵⁸ The establishment of the subject-based conditions for the possibility of cognizing an object with all of its determinations – conceived through a rule governed synthesis of intuition under a concept – replaces here the question of the elements and conditions of the inner possibility of a particular *Dasein* and its ultimate ground in the necessary existence of an entity. Thus, while the concept of being in general as it appears in the Transcendental Dialectic is the same as in *BDG*, the *KrV*’s perspectival shift puts into question the very theoretical interest in the “it is” when the attempt to understand and ground its possibility, actuality and necessity is performed with the “trick” of a “God’s eye view,” both with respect to a particular *Dasein* and an absolutely necessary entity.⁵⁹

The impossibility of accounting for the unconditional necessity of an existing entity, however, does not mean that the subject’s idea of god is irrational in itself. The logic behind the theoretical necessity of an (empty) idea of this entity resides in reason’s

⁵⁸ *KrV*, A218/B265.

⁵⁹ This a concept (or expression) borrowed from Haraway. While it is indeed true that Haraway uses this concept within a theory of the situated nature of objectivity that is far more concrete, organic and affective than what Kant’s subjectivism can offer in its original form, it is also true that the critical turn effectuated by the latter is a genuine precursor to her position. Kant is a target of Haraway’s critique of Western epistemology – *qua* abstraction and formalism – but both thinkers are committed to accounting for the possibility of objectivity through immanent conditions in which the subject is a significant player in determining or accounting for the character of any object (it may even be possible to stretch this to include their shared concern with the significance of the relationship between objective knowledge and the possibility of politics/ethics – this congruence would apply only with respect to the usefulness of the former towards the latter and not vice-versa – as it would be the case for Haraway. Cf. Haraway, D. “Situated Knowledges” or “Ciborg Manifesto.”

function of searching for the totality of the conditions by which particular objects are made possible. In the section of the *KrV* entitled “The ideal of pure reason,” Kant shows the trajectory of thought that reason follows and that leads the subject to a position in which the proposition “God exists” appears justified – despite its illusory nature. While the latter trajectory differs from Kant’s own trajectory of the argument in the *BDG*, there are nonetheless some significant intersecting moments worth noting. The thread that connects both trajectories as they intersect is the concept of possibility, articulated from the perspective of the “real” (i.e., as opposed to the logical).

Whereas for Kant concepts of the understanding can be exhibited *in concreto* when applied to appearances, (cosmological or theoretical) ideas of reason for Kant can only regulate given empirical cognition in such a way as to enable the subject to think a systematic unity of the totality of conditions in the sensible world. The completion of such a totality of conditions remains a mere promise, however, as the determination of these within given appearances can only be “asymptotic” in its progress.⁶⁰ In this process, reason may posit the existence of a ground that, outside of experience, supports the possibility for appearances to be given to the subject – the transcendental Object. However, just as reason is limited to an asymptotic determination of the conditions of objects of the senses, it can only posit the transcendental Object “as if” its existence were absolutely necessary as ground for appearances. It is here that reason, in its natural tendency towards the unconditioned, commits a subreption, transforming a critically conceived transcendental Object into *Sein* in itself.

Unfortunately for the reader who is well acquainted with Kant’s critical world,

⁶⁰ *KrV*, A663/B691.

none of this is particularly new. Nonetheless its reintroduction helps contextualize the way in which reason's trajectory towards an interest in an ontological proof intersects with that of *BDG*. With this different conceptions of the modality of *Sein* reveal themselves, whether they are held or critiqued by Kant.

The correlate to a concept *in concreto* for the faculty of the understanding is an idea *in individuo* for that of reason. Kant calls this an ideal of reason: "an individual thing which is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone."⁶¹ Despite its inability to have its own object of cognition, reason nonetheless thinks its necessary concept or idea as determined *qua* reality. The ideal is the concept of the absolute position of the unconditioned that is thoroughly self-determined by the corresponding idea. As such, the possibility of what is conditioned therein is not only accounted for in terms of the principle of determinability (*qua* predication by one of two disjunctive predicates in every concept, within the parameters of the universality [*Allgemeinheit*] of this form of thought – thus in an idea alone), but also the principle of thoroughgoing determination (*qua* relations of the predicates of possible things as always already within an allness [*Inbegriff; universitas*] of possible predicates – thus in an ideal).⁶² It is the account of possibility according to the latter that leads reason to overstep the critical bounds of experience, ultimately leading to the concept of god.⁶³

⁶¹ *KrV*, A568/B596.

⁶² *KrV*, A572/B600.

⁶³ *KrV*, A570/B598. Kant writes: The aim of reason with its ideal is, on the contrary [*per* principle of determinability], a thoroughgoing determination in accordance with *a priori* rules; hence it thinks for itself an object that is to be thoroughly determinable in accordance with principles, even though the sufficient conditions for this are absent from experience, and thus the concept itself is transcendent. Original: "Die Absicht der Vernunft

Assuming that the role of logical determination is clear by now to the reader, what follows here are what Kant presents as the moments of reason's thinking the thoroughgoing determination of a thing through the reciprocal relations of positivity [*Sein*] and negation [*Nichtsein*] of the whole of reality.⁶⁴ These moments are:

- 1) The possibility of each thing stands under the principle of thoroughgoing determination. So the complete determination of a thing depends on which of all possible predicates applies to it.
- 2) The predicate that applies to a determination of a thing arises out of the comparison between each positive/negative pair of possible predicates.
- 3) Every single predicate of a completely determined thing must also stand in differentiated relation to the sum total of all predicates.
- 4) The sum total of all possible predicates, thus, stands as the whole of possibility [*gesammte Möglichkeit*] of things in general – the placeholder of the material of all possibility.
- 5) Every possible thing, in turn, stands as a derivation of this whole of possibility, which considered as an *a priori* ground, is the *a priori* source of the data contained in the possible predicates for the determination of each particular or individuated thing.

So far, there are four main levels at play in reason's idea of an absolute totality here: a) *a priori* ground; b) data; c) possible predicates; and d) possibility of particular things. The *a priori* ground is presupposed transcendently to contain the "material" of all possibility, which functions as source for the "data" contained within the predicates. In this respect, the data is the content of predicates that, in their resulting specificity under

mit ihrem Ideale ist dagegen die durchgängige Bestimmung nach Regeln a priori; daher sie sich einen Gegenstand denkt, der nach Principien durchgängig bestimmbar sein soll, obgleich dazu die hinreichenden Bedingungen in der Erfahrung mangeln und der Begriff selbst also transcendent ist."

⁶⁴ *KrV*, A574/B603.

relations of thoroughgoing determinations, allow for the particular forms of possibility in each distinct thing.

These levels are not entirely unfamiliar when one thinks back onto the *BDG*. Since both trajectories begin from a conception of being in general in which existence cannot be predicated of a concept, there is a shared endeavor to re-think anew the modality of being by accounting for an element qualified as “material,” “content,” or “real.” The strongest moment of intersection between the *BDG* and the section on the transcendental ideal in the *KrV* concerns the identification of a “data” from which the concrete meaning of predicates becomes possible. With this in hand, both texts provide accounts of the possible determination of a thing in the unity of these content laden predicates.

Even as both accounts underpin the “content,” “material,” or “real” aspect of any ground for the possibility of things, what is also significant is the form by which all possible predicates of a thing (i.e., with content) are united in and for the possible determination of each particular thing.⁶⁵ This concerns nothing other than the “principles” under which this potential unity or “synthesis” is made possible. In the *BDG* the highest principle remained – despite the introduction of a material element of inner possibility – that of contradiction in thought; in the case of reason’s concept of the ideal

⁶⁵ Klaus Reich points this out in a larger argument concerned with the way in which Kant’s own pre-critical “dogmatism” fairs according to the critical tenets of the *KrV* and in light of the absence of any reflexivity on Kant’s part (i.e., he only treats physico-theological, cosmological, and ontological forms of proof). Setting aside what might have been lost in translation, my reading of both the *BDG* and the *KrV* in relation to the ontological proof is indebted to Reich’s short monograph. Reich, K. *Kant’s einzig möglicher Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Dogmatismus und Kritizismus in der Metaphysic*. Leipzig, Felix Meiner, 1937.

in the *KrV*, however, it is the principle of thoroughgoing determination.

In light of this distinction in the form of the unity constitutive of the possibility of a thing in general, it is useful to take note of what is added in the discussion of the transcendental ideal with regards to the unique relationship among those four identified elements. In his account Kant adds that even if at first reason thinks of its idea as the sum total of all possibility in general, what is presupposed as an *a priori* transcendental condition cannot itself be conceived as a total addition or a multiplicity of the predicates that are constitutive of all possibility.⁶⁶ This would imply that the possibility of the unity of its parts would depend on yet another ground. It would also mean that it stands against its very nature as ground of the principle of the thoroughgoing determination of all possible predicates, since the very idea of a *thoroughgoing* determination requires that there be no break in the continuity of the relationships among all predicates.⁶⁷ Thus, for the possibility of any one thing conceived as the result of a complete determination of its predicates with regard to its opposites and the entirety of all other possible predicates, it is necessary that this transcendental ground be an original (i.e., not derived) idea of an individual. In other words according to Kant's earlier quoted definition, it is an ideal of reason that contains in its own original idea the complete determination of itself.

The nature of a thorough determination thought of as immanent to the very object

⁶⁶ A571/B602; A579/B607

⁶⁷ Indeed, continuity is one of the principles of reason's form of systematizing the use of the understanding by thinking the understanding itself as the object of its idea of the totality of the possible experience – which in reason's empirical use, remains determined only asymptotically. The other two, which will also apply here shortly, are homogeneity and specification. The principle of homogeneity is represented here in the next paragraph, and that of specification was already at play in the idea of the sum total of all possibility, or which is the same, the sum total of the possible predicates of things in general. *KrV*, A658/B582.

that exhibits it must share in the latter's nature. In the current discussion, this means that the principle of thoroughgoing determination takes the form of internal relations of and within reality. In other words, since the ideal is conceived as an individual that functions as the ground of all possibility – as the source of the data or material and thus the condition for the possibility of all predicates of things – it must also be thought of as a thoroughgoing reality (*omnitude realitatis*). Furthermore, since all determination entails a form of negation (i.e., non-A or $-A$), when accounting for the possibility of determination *qua* thing the key is to show how a thoroughgoing reality (a something) can present within itself and out of itself (the case of reason's ideal) a lack (nothing).

It is safe to say that the answer to this question was already under development in *NM*, discussed earlier with respect to the function of *Position* as both the positivity of reality in general and *loci* of individuation. The answer in *NM* was given through the mathematical concept of negative magnitude, under which a magnitude is negative when, relative to another magnitude, it “cancels as much in the other as is equal to itself.”⁶⁸ When transposed to the domain of philosophy, this meant that the negativity, or negation, was conceived as the result of: a) taking the absolute position of something as a reference against which its predicate was cancelled by another (whether internal or external to the posited subject) and b) that the content of the equal but opposite negative magnitude, when considered in itself, had its own positive or real value.

Despite the fact that in this section on the ideal of reason Kant does not use the language of magnitude (it does appear however in both his discussions of the categories of reality, in terms of intensive magnitude, and of causality in reference to the state of

⁶⁸ Ak: 2:174. Walford, 214.

equilibrium of before and after the event = 0) ⁶⁹ and that his account is rather brief, the form of by which determination is brought about is the same. In both cases the negation through which the determination takes place is derivative from the real. Kant addresses this by pointing out two things: a) that every negation is an opposition grounded in affirmation and b) that the content of the negative concepts itself originates from the “transcendental substratum” understood as the “entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates are possible.”⁷⁰ Ultimately, within this thoroughgoing reality, negations are nothing but the result a self-limitation that arises from the nature of the ideal itself. Indeed, in so far as the object of this ideal is thought necessarily as: the sum total of all possibility, original, individual, *omnitudo realitatis*, and immanently determined, it follows also that it is the unlimited [*Unbeschränkte*] – the All [*das All*].⁷¹ It is of the highest reality.

This trajectory of reason’s thinking *in individuo* the idea of the transcendental presupposition from which to account for the possibility of things – under the principle of thoroughgoing determination – continues to amass essential characteristics marks congruent with those attributed to god (i.e., *ens originarium*, *ens summum*, *ens entium*, and highest understanding or intelligence). The most apparent critical problem is when reason thinks this ideal as an absolute existence; when it moves from an idea or necessary concept to the representation of it in the ideal, and then from there to the hypostatization

⁶⁹ *KrV*, A165/B208; A207-8/B253.

⁷⁰ *KrV* A579/B607. With respect to the relationship between reality and negation, Reich points out that the move that makes reality primary to negation is a mere analytic move between both categories. Perhaps the same be pointed out with respect to limitation.

⁷¹ *KrV*, A575/B604.

of this ideal and its final personification. Reason moves from an idea or concept (logical possibility) to the necessary existence of a transcendent entity. However, an earlier critical problem was at the very start of its inquiry into the conditions for the possibility of particular beings or things, instead of limiting itself to the objective cognitions of the subject in experience.

Without going any further, it is worth returning briefly to the differences in the principles of determinations between *BDG* and this section of the *KrV*. To account for the possibility of things or *Dasein* is ultimately to show that the conditions for the possibility of these things are themselves necessary. When this is done by attending to the material aspect of *Setzung*, the key is to show that a synthesis in the unity of the predicates that determine a particular position is really possible. In other words, out of what necessity can the possibility of an actually existing subject – a posited entity – be explained, so that one can get at the truth of what it is.

In *BDG* such an account was developed out of a concept of inner possibility that contained a formal and a material element. Ultimately, the conditions for fulfilling these were thinking in general (principle of contradiction) and the real conditions for actual thinking (data – something actual – for thinking the predicates of the non-contradictory proposition). Since that which cancels all possibility (contradiction and unthinkability) is impossible (*qua* concept of possibility), then inner possibility must necessarily be possible. And, knowing that it requires data as a condition for thought, something must have absolute existence.

From this summary of the main idea argument in *BDG*, it is possible to see here that, contrary to the later warning of the *KrV*, Kant's early ontological proof begins from

a mere concept of inner possibility and on the basis of this attempts to conclude the existence of something. Even if *BDG*'s operative concept of inner possibility aims at incorporating a material component to get at the *Sache selbst* of any absolute position, the nature of the function of the latter is elusive. The concept is *quasi* empty. Lacking a careful account of what this relationship between the data and its ability to be thought is, there is not a strong enough argument for a synthesis of possible predicates of a thing that can provide much more than just a concept. In what way can it be legitimately said here that the relations of determinations of a subject are anything more than non-contradictory concepts if the supreme principle is still ultimately that of contradiction? It may indeed be true that something must exist and be given to thought, for there to be possibility in general, but the capacity and necessity of this existing entity as ground for the inner possibility of something remains nonetheless vague.

At this point, the discussion in this section may appear to have left the topic of this chapter entirely behind. In other words, one may be asking if this is not rather tangential to the study of the concept of *Setzung* in Kant's work before the *Op*. Not exactly, since understanding the different accounts by which the conditions for the possibility of something are said to be grounded, is precisely to come to know what *Sein überhaupt*, *Setzung*, or absolute position mean in each context of Kant's reflections. What does it really mean to say that something is posited absolutely? That question is not divorced from its conditions for possibility and our capacity to gain access to that knowledge and orient ourselves in that understanding. At the very least, one is able to begin to grasp the problem that arises out of what according to the *KrV* is a natural reaction provoked by a finite subject's confrontation with "inscrutable" forces, of which

it perceives only its effects. In a Deleuzian moment, as if speaking directly to the latter's concept of a "dark precursor,"⁷² Kant writes, "The unconditional necessity, which we need so indispensably as the ultimate sustainer of all things, is for human reason the true abyss," to which he adds, "[h]ere everything gives way beneath us, and the greatest perfection as well as the smallest, hovers without support before speculative reason, for which it would cost nothing to let the one as much as the other disappear without the least obstacle."⁷³

iii. b. A Function of Cognitive Activity

Once we abstract it from the *KrV*'s discussion of the transcendental ideal and, to the extent to which this is possible, from the larger context of the function of the categories of modality, *Setzung* in the form of a noun is no longer the predominant manifestation of the concept in the text. What one finds is the use of the concept in the verbal form of *setzen*. This introduces a set of difficulties in attempting to provide a relatively consistent outline of the significance of the concept in Kant's thought in general and the *KrV* in particular. On the one hand, the use of the verb is fairly common in the German language and, on the other hand, it forms part of composite words that are part of Kant's technical terminology (e.g., *zusammensetzen*). In the first case, it means that one can think a use of the term significant, when it is merely the most useful and natural word to use and repeat in any given context. In the second

⁷² Cf. Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, 119. The same moment of intersection is found when reading Kant's "How to Orient Oneself in Thought" together with Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on "The Plane of Immanence" in *What is Philosophy?*

⁷³ *KrV*, A613/B641.

case, it means that the treatment of such technical terms require in and of themselves entire sections dedicated to them, which may be essential for one's understanding of *setzen* but is not possible within the scope of this project. So the (open) question is the extent to which what follows has any value at all, beyond the problematization of the concept itself within a subjectivist paradigm that continues until the very end with the *Op.*

Despite these difficulties, however, there are at least two very general constants that are identified here. The first is in direct relationship to Kant's predominant shift from the use of the noun *Setzung* or *Position* to the verb *setzen*, or conversely, this same verb presented as a noun, *Setzen*. The characteristic use of the verb in the *KrV* appears as indicating an activity carried out by the mind in different contexts. The second broad constant is that such activity of the mind entails – albeit rather diverse in its embodiments – some form of relationship between thought and its content. The latter is the closest line that can be said to run through all of the texts analyzed thus far. If the analyses provided above are correct, one of the main problems with *BGD* was precisely the lack of a principle that give a valid account of the nature and possibility of the unity between the “data” necessary for all propositional thought. Looking at the *KrV* and considering its very project, neither the internalization of *setzen* as an activity of thought in a subject nor its function within Kant's attempt to solve the problem of the possibility of synthetic *a priori* knowledge through a transcendental idealism, is surprising. These two characteristics of the concept are present to greater and lesser degrees in the following cases: 1) the forms of self-affection of the mind, particularly in time, but also in the representation in space; and 2) the schematization of the

category causality in the second analogy. There is a third context in which the concept is used, precisely within passages that very much resemble or echo ideas on the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. Due to this, it seemed more appropriate to address them directly within the later interpretation of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*.

iii. a. 1. Self-affection

In the “Transcendental Aesthetic” of the *KrV*, *setzen* is used at times to describe the subject’s ability to affect itself through the representational functions of the mind.⁷⁴ Since any form of affection assumes that there is a cognitive level open to undergoing such affection as well as a capacity to effect the latter, the famous purported problem of the interaction between the faculties of sensibility and understanding comes to the fore here. While the latter is certainly of interest in itself (and briefly discussed within its historical context in chapter two), the focus here will however treat different possible roles that space and time can play within the faculty of receptivity. These subjective forms of intuition can serve or instantiate what in philosophy are normally conceived as mutually exclusive domains: as *a priori* form as well as content. Space and time exhibit these two sides of intuition in their role as condition for the possibility of cognition in general.

With respect to time as the subject’s *a priori* form of all intuition, *Setzen* means the act of inserting “into it” the representations of outer sense, or, which in this context is the same, “the material with which we occupy our mind” (reminiscent of the data

⁷⁴ *Krv*, B67-8-9.

necessary for possible predicates of determination in *BDG* or in the Dialectic of *KrV*).⁷⁵ In this case to posit is a kind of activity exercised by the mind over itself. Time functions as a formal subjective condition – or ground – understood as a necessary manner, way, or sensible mode in which representations are given to the subject. Bringing together both time and positing, Kant writes that time is “the way in which the mind is affected through its own activity, namely this positing [*Setzen*] of its representation, thus the way it is affected through itself.” In light of this discussion of time, *setzen* appears to entail the temporalization of representations given in outer sense and in this way takes part in the capacity for the mind to apprehend and synthetically determine a manifold in inner sense.⁷⁶

The relationship of “what” is posited and time brings to light the latter’s function as ground for the posited representations. Time functions as the form that determines the different qualitative relationships among the given representations in so far as they are posited in the mind by the mind. Its legitimacy as such grounding form resides in the fact that time is shown to be a necessary form of all intuition that precedes *a priori* any affective content (i.e., determinations of thought, given multiplicities or representations, or unity in self-consciousness, etc.). In its a priority time is completely independent of all experience, and as such pure.

⁷⁵ *KrV*, B67-8-9.

⁷⁶ Sample passages in which the *setzen* appears are with respect to time in the *KrV*’s “Aesthetic” section are: “[...] the time in which we place [*setzen*] these representations [...] grounds the way in which we place [*setzen*] them in mind [the] as formal condition” (B67); “[...] in so far as something is posited in the mind” (B68) “I assert that the quality of space and time – in accordance with which, as condition of their existence [!], I posit both of these [bodies and my soul] – lies in my kind of intuition and not in these objects in themselves” (B69-70).

Just as time functions as the form by which representations can become available to the mind, it is also the case that without the positing of these representations in the form of time, the latter could not itself be represented at all. When considered as form of intuition alone time is pure and thus empty of any proper representational or recognizable content; as such “it does not represent anything except insofar as something is posited in the mind,” Kant explains. As a condition for the possibility of its representation in self-consciousness, time is the form in which a given multiplicity from outer sense are to be posited and made available to the subject for thought. Simultaneously, time itself becomes perceptible to the subject through the given that is posited or inserted into time.

In addition, in the context of *setzen* there are two instances in which time can be thought of as content: first, when thought of in abstraction from its function as mode of the positing of representations, and second, when it itself is the *a priori* content of a category of the understanding (the latter case is discussed in the next section). Time in its pure intuitive or sensible form may not be perceptible but it nonetheless has content in the form of pure relations – of succession, simultaneity and persistence.⁷⁷ Here the issue is that at the level of pure intuition, there is no recourse to the traditional distinction between form and content, for there are no identifiable sources for either of these determinations within the sphere of pure intuition alone. As the result of the passivity characteristic of the faculty of sensibility, there is no activity proper to it alone to create

⁷⁷ “[...] it [time] contains nothing but relations, it is the form of intuition, which since it does not represent anything except insofar as something is *posited* in the mind, can be nothing other than the way in which the mind is affected through its own activity, namely this *positing* [*Setzen*] of its representation, thus the way it is affected through itself, i.e., it is an inner sense as far as regards its form (*KrV*, B67-8-9).

any such recognizable distinction.⁷⁸ Hence the underlined expression above is appropriate (i.e., time has content in the form of pure relations); time as a subjective form of all intuition is in itself neither form nor content and both at once. Or, to borrow a phrase from Kant – in the context of discussion on the relationship between the I and time – “The *continens* is at the same time *contentum*.”⁷⁹ As a result, functioning as the form in which given representations are posited by the mind, the content of pure time is precisely what underlies the very form of relations in which those posited representations appear.

Within the context of describing the function of *setzen* with respect to the role of time as a formal condition for the possibility of all cognition, the concept of *Sein* or existence is not addressed directly. However, in so far as the verb is: a) implicated in an activity of self-affection of the mind with respect to the form of time, a form under which any data for thought is capable of being given, and b) a necessary element within a relationship among key conditions for the possibility of cognition (the sensible, the given, the form of the given, and an activity of thought), there is a way in which the verb participates in the very construction of that which is claimed to “be” objectively. Thus, this cognition exists, and one can account for the conditions of its possibility, even if only relative to the structure of subjectivity. It is, then, actual.

What has been said here, nonetheless, begs the question as to whether *Setzen* is a cognitive activity of the imagination or the understanding, both of which share in their

⁷⁸ Not the case in thought, for instance. The understanding as an active faculty can create a higher level concept containing lower level concepts that, in particular logical relationships, stand under it as its content. This is the case even if they partly originate by abstraction from objective/real cognition.

⁷⁹ Ak: 18:314. Reflection n° 5655.

spontaneous nature. Or perhaps it refers to a more primitive activity, as a mere act of placing, taking in, or sustaining given representations within temporal relations without concept or determination. In other words, what is the cognitive origin of the act positing the mind? What is the status of what is posited? And, what function does its outcome play within the whole?

The concept of *setzen* appears again within a discussion of self-affection of the mind, but this time with regards to space *qua* form. Despite the fact that in this example the outcome of the mind's activity is a consciousness of synthetic determination of space (i.e., a geometrical one), the former can still be thought of as an act of self-affection internal to the mind alone, for what is determinable by it is the form of intuition alone – available to thought *a priori* and with no determinations of its own.

In §24 of the “Transcendental Deduction” of the second edition of the *KrV*, Kant uses three different concepts to describe different instances by which a transcendental synthesis of the manifold of relations in space are carried out. These examples are: drawing [*Ziehen*], construction [*beschreiben*], and positing [*setzen*]. The first two – the drawing of a line and the construction of a circle – concern what one may call secondary limitations upon space, for even if their possibilities are immanent to the form of space, the outcome of the syntheses do not instantiate any essential aspect of its form. In contrast, Kant uses *setzen* to refer to a transcendental synthesis that results in a representation of a key aspect of the form of space itself. Echoing what he said about time, Kant writes: “We cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without positing three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point.”⁸⁰ As a result, what is

⁸⁰ *KrV*, B155/6.

posited is twofold: a representation of the form embedded in all representations of outer sense as well as the representation of the manifold of pure relations that constitutes space in its pure *a priori* form.⁸¹

There is still one more parallel difference between construction and drawing on the one hand and *setzen* on the other. The first two are said to be the necessary activity to think the circle or the line, respectively. The second is said to be the necessary activity to represent three dimensional space. Within the same paragraph, Kant moreover qualifies the transcendental synthesis of the imagination that is common to all three of these as a “productive” faculty in the sense that in doing this the imagination “does not find some sort of combination of the manifold” already in the form of intuition, but produces it through self-affection.⁸²

With neither the grounds nor the intention to draw a grand conclusion from what may be a chance choice of words, the contrasts do suggest potential interpretive paths or aspects to consider. For instance, when it comes to the thinking of geometrical figures, for Kant the concept of such a figure and its construction are one and the same (a luxury philosophy does not share). Remembering this, one may find the present delimitation of the use of “think” may not be completely insignificant. The contraposition to represent

⁸¹ Here is the full passage being referenced, *KrV*, B155: We also perceive this [figurative synthesis of the manifold contained in the mere form of intuition] in ourselves. We cannot think of a line without **drawing** it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without **describing** [*beschreiben*] it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without **placing** [*setzen*] three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point [...]. Original: “Wir können uns keine Linie denken, ohne sie in Gedanken zu ziehen, keinen Cirkel denken, ohne ihn zu beschreiben, die drei Abmessungen des Raums gar nicht vorstellen, ohne aus demselben Punkte drei Linien senkrecht auf einander zu setzen [...].”

⁸² *KrV*, B155.

points to the fact that in the act of positing what the imagination is bringing forth is, as it were, already there *qua* form of space. The real difference is that here the imagination “translates” a form of *a priori* intuition – impossible to determine from within the singular field of intuition alone – into a general form of representation accessible to the conscious mind. Thus, despite what could be perceived as an apparent demotion in the “productive” character of its transcendental synthesis, from a subjectivist point of view, what is posited is equivalent to bringing a representation into the distributive unity of all other representations under the same “I.”

Or perhaps, looking back, the concept just means to place, which would support the Cambridge translation as well bring to light that a circle, a line, and a point (of unity of the perpendicular lines) are limitations of space. In other words, they are the appropriate form that any transcendental synthesis of the manifold of *a priori* space would take due to the latter’s nature as unbounded and singular whole. The simple synthetic act to posit the point of intersection as opposed to move does indeed give credence to distinguishing between thinking and representing.

Clearly, this first attempt at deciphering some unique function of the concept of *setzen* within the more constructive aspects of *KrV* has posed more questions than given answers. However, if nothing else, it has also opened up possible interpretative paths and located a not insignificant conceptual space where the verb can function within the system of Kant’s critical philosophy, which is in the sphere of interaction among: given and *a priori* intuition, self-affection of the mind, and the possibility and necessity of a pure transcendental synthetic act of the imagination upon the mere forms of intuitions. The latter is at the heart of Kant’s theoretical project and the verb *setzen* appears to

express an instance of it.

iii. b. 2. Schematism of Causality⁸³

The condition for the possibility of the cognition of an object recognized as standing in a relation of causality lies (primarily) in the necessity of the possibility of an *a priori* transcendental synthesis. Earlier in the *KrV*, Kant had established that a synthetic unity of apperception stood as the source and ground of the unity of all thought, analytic and synthetic, and that the categories of the understanding were expressions of that original unity (the grounds for this are discussed in more depth in chapter 3). The faculty of the imagination, moreover, is said to share in the same spontaneity as thought (not *qua* form, but *qua* generating ability – within the subjectivist domain of representation), and is hence also an active faculty with respect to the passive faculty of receptivity. In the above section on positing and self-affection, such productive synthesis of the imagination was introduced through Kant’s examples of the syntheses of the manifold of the *a priori* form of space, with no reference to any anticipation of a possible empirical given content. It was delimited to the *a priori* domain of pure form and thought alone. In contrast, in the case of causality (as in all other categories of the understanding) the form of intuition under consideration in this kind of *a priori* synthesis is the form of time (the form shared by all representations, which cannot be said of space); the validity of the results of the

⁸³ *KrV*, A189/B233. In the first edition, the principle is entitled “Principle of Generation” and it consists in that “Everything that happens (begins to be) presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule.” In the second edition, the principle is entitled “Principle of temporal sequence according to the law of causality;” which is articulated as follows: “All alternations occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect.”

latter (as for the other dynamical categories) rests moreover on the anticipation that an empirical manifold of intuition will be given.⁸⁴

Under his discussion of the principle of causality, one finds Kant's exhibition of the character of the rule under which a synthesis can and must take place in order for the subject to be capable of recognizing a representation out of a manifold of intuition under the category. It is by basing its synthesis on the rule that the imagination's transcendental act generates a schema – in inner sense and on the basis of time as the latter's *a priori* form – that in its generality is capable of determining all representations, which are themselves conditioned by time as their form.⁸⁵ By means of such immanent form of determination it is, furthermore, to make a judgment about a changing state of affairs.⁸⁶ If in the above case it was necessary that the subject posit a point of intersection of three perpendicular lines in order to represent three dimensional space, then in this case, one asks after the form of the schema through which an apprehension of temporally related content of intuition can and must acquire determinations of time.⁸⁷ It is the latter

⁸⁴ *KrV*, A160-1/B199-200. Kant qualifies the *a priori* necessity or evidence of the dynamical (or physiological) categories as mediate or indirect; in the case categories of quantity or quality, on the other hand, the evidence is immediate (i.e., the concept of an object is the same as its construction in space).

⁸⁵ *KrV*, A141-2/B182.

⁸⁶ In §24 of the “Transcendental Deduction” Kant explains how a determinate intuition is possible: “... only through the consciousness of the determination of the manifold through the transcendental action of the imagination.” *KrV*, B154.

⁸⁷ Like the second exposition of the usefulness of the concept of negative magnitudes in *NM*, what is at hand is the task of establishing the conditions for the possibility of an event of “ceasing to be” and “coming to be” that cannot be captured by logical forms of judgments alone.

determination of time that “make the representation of an object possible.”⁸⁸

The concept of *setzen* functions to demarcate the act by which a transition is possible between two levels within Kant’s subject based system. It is from the level of perception – a whole of a temporally conditioned manifold of representations – to cognition – a representation of an object determined in time within a composite of other such objects. Each of the following three passages capture a different moment that belongs to the general progress in both the account of the possibility of the cognition of causality and the very “making” of the subject’s experience. In the first, Kant poses the problem at hand; in the second, what it means to determine time with respect to an already temporally grounded manifold of given intuition; and third, the event in which the representation of causality were not possible, or that it was but the judgment of causality is does not hold to be true.

In the “Second Analogy” Kant writes,

Now how do we posit an object for these representations [in us], or ascribe to their subjective reality, as modifications, some sort of objective reality?⁸⁹

Confronted with the whole of representations that stand both in temporal relations among each other and under the same subject, the problem is to find a criterion for positing an object – a representation whose possibility lies in a determination of the unity of a concept and a content of intuition. Upon a careful reading, the passage equates “posit an object” to “ascribe...objective reality.” It is the verb by which such kind of legitimate

⁸⁸ *KrV*, A199/B244-5.

⁸⁹ *KrV*, B242. Original: “*Wie kommen wir nun dazu, daß wir diesen Vorstellungen ein Object setzen, oder über ihre subjective Realität als Modificationen ihnen noch, ich weiß nicht, was für eine objective beilegen?*”

unity is expressed.

In the second and third passages *setzen* again appears to function as the affirmation of a determinate condition or state of affairs. He writes,

... according to a rule: from which it results, first, that I cannot reverse the series and place that which happens prior to that which it follows; and, second, that if the state that precedes it is posited, then this determinate occurrence inevitably follows.⁹⁰

... if this is posited, the other would necessarily have to follow. Contrariwise, if I were to posit that which precedes and the occurrence did not follow it necessarily, then I would have to hold it to be only a subjective play of my imaginings, and if I still represented something objective by it I would have to call it a mere dream.⁹¹

Here the affirmations of the “objectivity” of these states of affairs occur over the temporal succession characteristic of the apprehended manifold (merely subjective). And, by such positing, the succession changes in character from being a flow of representations with no relationship among one another to acquiring an ordered series of a before and after (or first, second, third, etc.). By means of the rule in the schematism, the series of representations are neither reversible nor contingent. If there are any changes in a state of affairs, it is now possible to evaluate the changes in an object in

⁹⁰ *KrV*, B243. Original: “[...] d.i. nach einer Regel, folgt: woraus sich denn ergibt, daß ich erstlich nicht die Reihe umkehren und das, was geschieht, demjenigen voransetzen kann, worauf es folgt; zweitens daß, wenn der Zustand, der vor|hergeht, gesetzt wird, diese bestimmte Begebenheit unausbleiblich und nothwendig folge.”

⁹¹ *KrV*, B247. Original: “[...] wenn dieses gesetzt ist, das andre nothwendig folgen müsse. Soll also meine Wahrnehmung die Erkenntniß einer Begebenheit enthalten, da nämlich etwas wirklich geschieht: so muß sie ein empirisches Urtheil sein, in welchem man sich denkt, daß die Folge bestimmt sei, d.i. daß sie eine andere Erscheinung der / Zeit nach voraussetze, worauf sie nothwendig oder nach einer Regel folgt. Widrigenfalls, wenn ich das Vorhergehende setze, und die Begebenheit folgte nicht darauf nothwendig, so würde ich sie nur für ein subjectives Spiel meiner Einbildungen halten || müssen und, stellte ich mir darunter doch etwas Objectives vor, sie einen bloßen Traum nennen.“

relation to what came before, and judge a relation of causality (that may or may not judge the nature of the cause correctly, but has the conditions that make the latter consideration possible).

vi. General Conclusion: Domains of Positivity

This chapter traced the significance and function of a concept that comes to dominate Kant's articulations of his transcendental philosophy in his *Selbstsetzungslehre*. The trajectory began with a study of the implication of the concept of *Setzung* in Kant's pre-critical proof for the existence of god, proceeded then into an account of its involvement in Kant's account of the possibility of determination of particulars by means of a concept of negative magnitude grounded on the positivity of existence, and finally ended with the use of the concept to refer to a function of self-affection of the subject's mind that enacted the necessary determinations for the possibility of cognition of an object. Every single one of these texts – including the Dialectic's depiction of reason's natural need to give itself an ideal object – exhibited the centrality of finding a legitimate ground from which to understand and secure the possibility for a synthesis between the unifying role of the copula and predicates that contain more than just further analytically composed concepts. That ground for the possibility of synthesizing more than the predicative content of a concept, of determining the concept as also being-there, was at first posited in a necessary existence of an entity – god – to only then be situated within the introduction of space and time as the *a priori* sensible forms of intuition, as part of

Kant's new transcendental idealism.

The unifying conceptual thread at the heart of *Setzung* and its verb reveals both a consistency in its concern with status of what "is" and a capillary dispersion of its function within this very problematic. The entire trajectory is one that is in an ongoing struggle and negotiation against a philosophical tradition in which principles of logic and the representational use of concepts were seen as containing the sufficient resources from which to account for existence, including what for Kant appeared as the remainder of the *Sache selbst*. The transition in the grand perspective – not concern – from the pre-critical to the *KrV* is made explicit from a shift in the orientation from which the question of existence and its modalities are approached: from *Sein überhaupt* to *Object überhaupt*; from *Dasein* as a thing to *Dasein* as object; from an interest in a "data" that is capable of being thought to a data that is capable of being given through our *a priori* forms of intuition; from the qualification of absolute to that of empirical or relative (*qua* subject knower); among others. In other words, from the transcendental ground for absolute existence to the subjective possibility of cognizing an object – the possibility, actuality, and necessity of which are now relative to the latter.

The most radical place in which this re-orientation of the concept of *Setzung* to *setzen* occurs is in the replacement of the function of god as an *a priori* ground for both the data and synthesis of all inner possibility (or "storehouse of all possible predicates" and original unity whose determinations are immanent to it), with the function of the *a priori* sensible forms of intuition: space and time. As seen above, in the discussion of both self-affection and causality, space and time are the *a priori* forms out of which the transcendental imagination produces representations of spatial figures or temporal

schemas that present consciousness with what would have otherwise remained “nothing” to it. And time as the form of all that is given becomes the form of the determinable – the form of the relations among all that can be synthesized into a predicate – enabling thus the metaphysical significance of synthetic *a priori* propositions. While the form, function, and thus determination of thought does not change, the need to think categories in light of the singular nature of the form of intuition, introduces limits to the domain of the positivity out of which objectivity can be established.

Therefore, as a whole, the ongoing problem with the concept’s very significance has been centered in the ability to establish a legitimate account of the “synthesis” between the “material” and “formal” aspects of any account of possibility (of a thing or object) that intends to go beyond mere analytical approaches. The subjectivist move in Kant’s *KrV* presents an internalization of the problematic of what it means to posit something, that is to say, to position something. From the restrictions of the conditions for the possibility of the subject’s experience, the question with which one is confronted is what cognitive resources, functions, and acts are necessary for the possibility of an object whose representation must and can contain a legitimate claim to actuality. This is an actuality that is necessarily grounded as to its possibility in a subject, but for which this ground is not sufficient. A synthesis of the given must take place for the position of any object. The *KrV*’s project to establish this *dabile*, exhibits the concept of *setzen* as designating precisely that acts involved in the constitution of the objectivity of a representation – by the acts of self-affection of the mind. Ultimately, after the *KrV*, one is left with a multiplicity of domains in which the ontological weight embedded in such a verb is delimited by the immanent configuration of domains that enable, exhibit, or

idealize what can be claimed to be.

Chapter Two: Context and Structure of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*

i.

The first place in which Kant clearly puts forth what will become the backbone of the doctrine of self-positing is early in fascicle vii.⁹² The following passage both presents the basic two level structure of the doctrine and inserts it within a larger philosophical tradition in the West, in which *to know thyself* has been a primary concern of philosophy.⁹³ He writes,

I am [conscious] of myself as thinking subject	} conscious
I am [conscious] of myself as object of intuition	

Self-consciousness of intuition and thinking, united together in a representation, is the cognition and the imperative to which the understanding submits itself (*nosce te ipsum*)[:] is the principle through which to make of the subject itself an Object of intuition in a concept, or the subordination of the former to the latter.

The thinkable (*cogitabile*) precedes the sensible (*apprehensibile*)[:] the concept as principle, [precedes] perception; the form, [precedes] the material of the existence in space and time.⁹⁴

⁹² Duque, Félix Pajuelo. “Notas de la tercera parte,” *Transición de los principios metafísicos de la ciencia natural a la física (Opus postumum)*. ed. and trans. Felix Pajuelo Duque, Madrid, Anthropos, 1991, 583n 42.

⁹³ For another passage in which this imperative is alluded to cf. Ak: 22:73.

⁹⁴ Ak: 22:22. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster’s translation). However, please note the difficulty of the translation of the first schematic, in which the [] insert the “conscious” implied in the expression *meiner selbst* (to myself, or for myself). As a result, the schematic appears to say that to be conscious “entails” or “assumes” both the possibility of a consciousness of myself as thinking and a consciousness of myself as Object of intuition. If this is correct, then in the latter, there is already an I in that being for myself an Object of intuition. This would allow for a self-consciousness of an identity with the “I” in that Object. In *Fort*, Kant say in passing “the I of the Object,” although does not clearly unpack the significance of this expression in itself (Ak: 20: 270). Original:

<i>Ich bin meiner selbst als denkenden Subjects</i>	} bewusst
<i>Ich bin mir meiner selbst als Objects der Anschauung</i>	

The structure in the schematic of this passage is essentially dualistic in that to be self-conscious is described as the “I” being for itself a thinking subject and the “I” being for itself an Object⁹⁵ of intuition. This distinction between the thinking and Object of intuition is the most radical structure that is found throughout the doctrine, and it is reminiscent of Kant’s earlier works. What follows after the above schematic is a breakdown of the unity of these aspects into a multiplicity of elements, logical orders, and processes, the primacy of which appear to be *for* the cognition of the “I”—a kind of self-knowledge. Indeed, this multiplicity introduces conceptual resources from which to begin to peel off the layers, as it were, of the duality presented in the schema. The doctrine of self-positing, in fact, embodies this peeling off the layers immanent to what otherwise appears as a simple duality in the forms of self-consciousness. The last sentence in particular is representative of a characteristic unfolding movement of the doctrine of self-positing, which goes from the most indeterminate to the most determinate or concrete. Importantly, this movement is methodologically the inverse of the one presented in the *KrV*, which starts from the most concrete—being in space and time—and ends with the most indeterminate—the “I think.” This early passage is a good

Das Selbstbewustseyn der Anschauung und des Denkens zusammen vereinigt in einer Vorstellung ist das Erkenntnis und der Imperativ dem der Verstand sich selbst unterwirft (nosce te ipsum) ist das Princip sein Subject als Object der Anschauung zu einem Begriffe zu machen oder jenes diesem unterzuordnen.

Das denkbare (cogitabile) geht vor dem Spührbaren (apprehensibile)[,] der Begriff als Princip vor der Warnehmung[,] die Form vor dem Materialen der Existenz im Raum u. der Zeit vorher.

⁹⁵ In order to note the distinction between *Object* from *Gegenstand* in this dissertation, the former term will be translated as “Object” (i.e., by capitalizing the first letter of the word).

introduction of both the two level structure and manifold of elements that are at play in the doctrine of self-positing.

Already present at the inception of his critical philosophy, Kant's dualistic model of the subject breaks with the initial framework of the Cartesian subjectivist turn in the history of Western philosophy.⁹⁶ Both of these frameworks shift away from a tradition that in its primary concern with a science of being assumes a simple identity between thought and being, and in its stead introduce the "I" (*cogito*) as that which functions as the locus of any identity relationship between thought and being. However, while in Descartes the self-conscious "I" exhibits an immediate self-referential relationship between thinking and itself as the being that is performing this thinking (*cogito, sum*), in Kant the "I" contains an irreducible split that denies the possibility for such immediacy. In Kant's critical theory of subjectivity, the "I" that is conscious of itself is a thought that is always already a "twofold I;" echoing the earlier cited schematic in the doctrine of self-positing, Kant notes in the *Preischrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik* (henceforth *Fort*) (1974) that this "I" contains "the I as subject, and the I as Object." While Kant affirms there that this is a "fact" that cannot be explained, he describes the former "I as subject" in terms of a "logical I as *a priori* representation" and the latter "I as Object" in terms of a "psychological I as empirical consciousness."⁹⁷ Self-consciousness within this

⁹⁶ Baum, M. "Subjekt und Person bei Kant," in *Transzendenz und Existenz. Idealistische Grundlagen und modern Perspektiven des transzendentalen Gedankens. Wolfgang Janke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Baum and Klaus Hammacher, Amnsterdam/Atlanta, GA 2001, 3. Presented as Hegel's interpretation of the Cartesian turn in the history of philosophy, while simultaneously arguing that Kant's subjectivism must not be easily conflated the latter. Hegel appears to do this as he mentions Fichte, a purported follower of Kant, as a more developed instantiation of the Cartesian tradition.

⁹⁷ Ak: 20:270. Heath, 362 (translation modified). Allison translates "Ich" as "self" and

critical model entails thus the subject's ability to differentiate itself from itself, or, as he describes in his anthropology *Handschrift*, the ability to have a "doubled consciousness of this I," which remains nevertheless singular.⁹⁸

At this juncture, there are two significant items at stake with the twofold nature of the "I" within self-consciousness. The first item relates to the fact that it is grounded on the famous distinction that Kant makes between thought and intuition; this is the case even if the two folds do not neatly map onto the latter distinction, but instead reveal different perspectives on the relationship found between thought and intuition within the same subject. In other words, this internal self-differentiation of the "I" in thought that distinguishes Kant's critical theory of subjectivity from Descartes', follows from the former's insistence that thought and intuition result from two distinct cognitive capacities: *spontaneity* and *receptivity*. The second item that is at stake here relates to the fact that the first fold holds the source of the essential characteristic of what makes of the subject a "person," whereas the second fold indicates the perspective from which the "I of the Object that is intuited by me" is known from a moral perspective as a mere thing "like other objects outside me."⁹⁹ Briefly, for an entity to be qualified as person, according to Kant, it must be capable of being self-conscious of itself as the active

not "I," which obscures the identity between the two folds as well as with that about which is said to contain them.

⁹⁸ Kant, Immanuel. "Anthropology from a Pragmatic point of view," trans. Robert B. Loudon, in *Anthropology, History, and Education* ed. and trans. Robert B. Loudon and Günter Zöller. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 253n.

⁹⁹ Ak: 20:270. Heath, 362. Referenced in Baum, M. "Subjekt und Person bei Kant," in *Transzendenz und Existenz. Idealistische Grundlagen und modern Perspektiven des transzendentalen Gedankens. Wolfgang Janke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Baum and Klaus Hammacher, Amnsterdam/Atlanta, GA 2001, 4.

subject of both thinking and intuiting. The fact of the subject's activity of thinking itself as the logical subject of all its representations is what ultimately makes it possible to *attribute* free actions to this entity and thus capable of entering the sphere of morality, of having moral worth.¹⁰⁰ The reason for the significance of these two items at this point in our investigation is simply that when one takes into account the parallel structure between the quoted passage from the *Op* and the references from his other texts on the nature of self-consciousness, it becomes possible to begin to situate the doctrine of self-positing within Kant's larger system of critical philosophy.

Thus, the doubled consciousness in the Kantian model of self-consciousness touches, on the one hand, upon the two basic faculties that delimit the domain of theoretical knowledge and, on the other hand, it points to the distinctions that are at play in the consideration of the nature of human being as either a person or as an object of psychology or anthropology. In this way, it is possible to say that what lays at the heart of the doctrine of self-positing are the subject's role in the constitution of theoretical knowledge as well as the relationship between this model of subjectivity and the concept of the human being. Of course, one could very well say that in so far as the subject is the main object of reflection in the doctrine of self-positing, its relevance within Kant's subjectivist paradigm necessarily permeates his entire system. Indeed, this is certainly the case—hence the importance of the doctrine for Kantian scholarship in general. However, the fact that in the bulk of what constitutes the doctrine one finds, first, a

¹⁰⁰ Ak: 7:127. Louden, 239. Ak: 20:270-1. Heath, 362. There are of course other requirements for the possibility of the human being having moral worth, reason as the faculty of desire, for instance, or “transcendental freedom.” But from a theoretical perspective it is the possibility of attribution in the sense that the subject is capable of positing a concept (as its creation and as end) that must be able to be attached to the “I think” that differentiates it as human being, in contrast to animal.

continuous reiteration of the most fundamental question of Kant's theoretical work (how are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?); second, an ongoing consideration of the different conditions and levels known to be necessary for theoretical cognition in experience (as in the above quoted passage) and; third, an imperative to know oneself, leads us to orient the present analysis within Kant's theoretical philosophy and the implications of the latter for understanding any conception of the moral or anthropological human being. Indeed, it could be said that with the doctrine of self-positing we find ourselves back in the domain of the *KrV*.

Back in the domain of the *KrV*, there are nonetheless differences, one of which is its methodological approach. As mentioned above, Kant's starting place in the later text reverses the order of the elements (i.e., aesthetic and analytic sections) as presented in the *KrV*. Without yet going into the exact nature and repercussions of this issue for Kant's philosophical position as a whole with respect to the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, there is a disclaimer that must be made as to the approach of our current analysis here. There are two ways to go about analyzing the doctrine itself, one is to start with it by addressing space and time and their status as forms of intuition, only then proceeding with the topic of self-consciousness. The other approach is to start with self-consciousness and follow Kant's enumeration of the subsequent layers of it, as seen in the above passage. The possibility of choosing either path reflects a certain consistency found in fascicle vii (in so far as the nature of the text allows the reader to discern these patterns, in the midst of many other considerations). The pattern consists in the fact that the passages that thematically address the issues that concern the *Selbstsetzungslehre* do sometimes have a separate "paragraph" or "section" where Kant asks what space and time are as well as

sometimes give one word descriptors such as “not objects [*nicht Gegenstände*],” “different forms of sensible intuition [*verschiedenen Formen der Sinnenanschauung*],” “boundless [*grenzenlos*],” etc.; the paragraphs are sometimes even paired with the question “*wie sind synthetische Sätzen a priori möglich?*” These annotations are also many times located above the types of passages that resemble the one quoted above. However, it is only passages similar to the above quoted one that exhibits a consistent and explicit “ordering” as “first..second...etc.,” where one finds Kant's repeated use of the words *setzen* (not evidenced in the above passage because it is the first approximation to the doctrine to be developed), and together with this, a more direct path to genetic model of the self-constitution of the subject that is present in the doctrine. Thus, if one follows the first approach, the continuities with the *KrV* are emphasized, especially the initial originality of his investigation concerning his acknowledgment of the positive role of the faculty of sensibility and its forms in the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments—which is to say, a critical/transcendental ontology (as opposed to a theological one).¹⁰¹ Despite the importance of highlighting these continuities, the first approach nonetheless displaces what is at the heart of what makes the *Selbstsetzungslehre* original: the primary function of *setzen*, a verb that from a systematic-theoretical perspective points to an activity uncomfortably located between the *necessary* conditions for the *possibility* of a legitimized *idea* of experience and *actual*, embodied experience. By centering upon *setzen* as an inherently *modal* verb, what is underscored by the second interpretative approach is that the *Selbstsetzungslehre* represents Kant as thinking the “making”

¹⁰¹ So-In Choi's analysis of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* in her published dissertation follows this first approach. Cf., Choi, So-In. *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstanschauung*. Berlin - New York, Kant-Studien Ergänzungshefte 130, 1996.

[*machen*] of experience with the sought after legitimacy of the types of cognition and judgment within and constitutive of it, including, if not most importantly in the context of the *Op* as a whole, empirical ones.¹⁰² In order to take a more direct path to approximate an account of the latter aspect of the doctrine, this current analysis will follow the second methodological approach.

ii. Interpretative Thesis

Having introduced and contextualized both the elements at play and the methodological approach of this interpretation of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, it is now possible to enter the text fully and to reach thus an immanent interpretation of it. Kant makes two overarching conceptual moves in this doctrine: an analytic and an ontological one. The analytic move takes place on the basis of the principle of identity, and concerns a proof of the “I am” from the proposition “I think.” It takes place at the level of self-consciousness or apperception alone and as such refers merely to an expression of the subject's possibility to think itself as the only subject of all thoughts, which in this capacity also implies the possibility of taking its own activity of thinking as an object of

¹⁰² One such element is the genetic account of subject formation. Rescher points this out in his untitled essay in Rescher, N. In *Sixth International Kant Congress* at the Pennsylvania State University, 1985, ed. G. Funke and Th. M. Seebohm. Lenham, University Press of America, 1991. Also, in conversations with Manfred Baum, the latter also remarked that some of the language used in the *Op* with respect to spontaneity or activity is new, referring especially to “*Ich bin*” as “*Verbum*”. This is the case even though in his interpretation of Kant's notion of the subject, and without reference to the *Op*, Baum clearly anticipates such aspects of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. Cf. “Subjekt und Person bei Kant,” in *Transzendenz und Existenz. Idealistische Grundlagen und modern Perspektiven des transzendentalen Gedankens. Wolfgang Janke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Baum and Klaus Hammacher, pp. 3-19. Amnsterdam/Atlanta, GA 2001.

thought. The different articulations that Kant provides in regards to this first level leads to different senses from which to interpret it; here apperception appears as: 1) logical act; 2) object; 3) existent; 4) the locus for Kant's critique of Descartes; and finally 5) *Verbum*. The second and fifth of these senses of apperception are the most original at this level of the doctrine, both of which point to the essential constructive character of the "I" *being* the outcome of its own sustained activity of self-objectification as well as the source of the *copula* of all predication, whether in judgments or propositions.

The ontological conceptual move is the most complex, as it encompasses the functions of all the faculties involved in the making of experience possible. This ontological level contains three overarching moments; they are *Actus* of: *Spontaneität*, *Receptivität*, and *Reciprocität*. Assuming the "I" as outcome of the analytic move through the principle of identity, it first articulates the particularizing function of the existence of this "I" understood as, in Kant's terms, a *Verbum*. Or, more precisely, it appeals to a conception of the "I" that is already embedded as condition for the possibility of a logical self-consciousness, which is as an *Act der Spontaneität* by means of which the subject *posits* [*setzt*] itself as more than mere thought (form) and thus into the domain of intuition (material). Having this concept of the existing "I" as *Verbum* or spontaneous activity at hand, the second moment of the ontological move exhibits the fields of determinability that will not only be shown to have an analytic relation to this "I," but also be that within which this "I" takes place. In other words, the conditions under which the subject *posits* itself. Space, time, dynamic intuition, *empeiria*, and "x" are the fields of determinability, although the last one more in the sense of potentiality

and not actuality.¹⁰³ These fields, moreover, are at times introduced as products of the imagination or the outcome subjective self-relations of affection, positing, and making. In the latter sense, this second moment presents the reader with a double perspective; fields of determinability suggest a passive state upon and within which determination occurs, while being products or outcomes implies the presence of a certain generative activity. This is the interpretative problem of understanding what Kant means with an *Act* that is parallel to that of spontaneity, an *Act der Receptivität*. Kant's distinction of two *Actus*, furthermore, introduces into the fields of determinability the possibility of an active dimension that, potentially independent from spontaneity, is immanent to the fields themselves. The third ontological moment is what Kant identifies as an *Act der Reciprocität*; a relational event that unifies the first two ontological moments or *Actus*, but that resists complete unity or the subsumption of any one of them over the other. The outermost contours of this reciprocity are the outcome of reason by means of an idea of experience on the formal side of mere thought and the outcome of the imagination on the material, intuitive one. The innermost source of the unity in this reciprocal activity lies in the faculty of judgment, whether determinative or reflective. The source for the possibility of this type of “critical” unity of reciprocity between the *Actus* of spontaneity and receptivity rests elsewhere, however; it does so in the *given*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Kant does not use *empeiria* in the doctrine, but following Duque's use of the term in the interpretation he provides in his dissertation, it appears to be the most suitable term to describe what is at play here, as described below.

¹⁰⁴ While it is possible to raise the objection that Kant seldom uses the terminology of these three *Actus* within the doctrine, their presence nonetheless provides useful coordinates from which to think the structural whole of the theoretical *Selbstsetzungslehre*, especially in that the “reciprocal” relation between the parts help us steer away from thinking of a potential a systematic closure of the doctrine. Here are two passages where Kant uses these terms: “Pure *a priori* intuition contains, in the subject as

The analytic and ontological parts in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* are furthermore framed within a discourse that articulates them as being *for the purpose of experience* or, in Kant's words, *zum behuf der Erfahrung*. In this respect, they can be situated within the *Op*'s larger project of finding legitimate grounds for the possibility of a science of physics understood as a system of empirical cognitions; a system that in the doctrine is articulated as nothing other than a single experience. In addition, without stepping out of this framework, one finds that three ontological *Actus* also introduce a genetic account of the individuation of the Kantian subject—until now known theoretically in terms of the constitutive elements of a subjective universality—as participant in a dynamical unbounded world of *empeiria*. The character of this *empeiria* as such is the result of the differential relations in and among the fields of determinability brought forth by the subject's *Act der Receptivität*. Because for the purpose of the making of experience these fields must be essentially capable of being given for them to become determined, it is also necessary that the subject to which they are given *posit* itself through an *Act der Spontaneität*. It does so in two senses. In this latter *Act*, the subject affirms itself simultaneously *as* these fields of determinability and *in* them; it is concurrently the source of the conditions that constitute the character of what can be given and it is positioned within these conditions in order to come to the encounter of that which is given. In positing itself as such, the subject confirms and configures its own basic cognitive character as source and limit *of* as well as subjection *to* the spatio-temporal, dynamic and unbounded world of *empeiria*. The Kantian model of the subject that

thing *in itself*, the acts of spontaneity and receptivity, and (through their combination to unity) the act of reciprocity – [...].” Original: *Die reine Anschauung a priori enthält die actus der Spontaneität und Receptivität und durch verbindung derselben zur Einheit der Act der Reciprocität [...]*. (Ak: 22:28. Förster 172). Cf. Ak: 22:31. Förster, 173.

functions as ground to a universal system of philosophy is now presented in its particularity as well.

Based on his earlier critical work, the Kantian subject is known in the last instance, at least from a theoretical point of view, as nothing more than a set of functions that in their different relations constitute the *possibilities* for cognition as well as aesthetic and teleological judgment. However, for these functions to be *actually* exhibited as the nature or principle of the latter, it is *necessary* that mental powers [*Kräfte*] corresponding to these functions be animated. The instigation or arousal of these mental forces occurs, moreover, in their encounter with the given. The positing required for this encounter to take place points to an unlocalizable space and is in this way a dislocated event of sorts. On the one hand, this unlocalizable space is where the subject posits itself *a priori* as the bearer of the conditions for the possibility for its experience; and on the other hand, where the subject is subjected to something over which it has no control. This locus of the occurrence of the self-positing of the subject in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is sensibility, which considered in isolation from the imagination (*qua* faculty of sensibility, not of understanding) is the seat of the virtuality of the “I.” In this sense, sensibility is the critical sphere of the deployment of the powers of the mind; it is the “blinded” and “disorienting” temporal, spatial, and dynamical relations, where in the different repetitive acts of reason, understanding, judgment, and imagination, the subject individuates itself temporally, spatially and materially in and from a whole that precedes its parts. In sensibility the “I” sustains its conscious existence as *Verbum* in the cognition of itself, of objects, and other subjects, indeed, even in the feeling of pleasure and pain.

iii. Historical and Facultative Tensions:

The movement exhibited between the analytic and the ontological levels as well as the unfolding of the three ontological moments also make the *Selbstsetzungslehre* a fertile ground from which to also ask whether or not Kant finally addresses one of the most common critiques launched by his contemporaries: how is it possible that the two main cognitive sources of the subject accord with one another in the synthetic unity of apperception, considering the heterogeneity of their functions and forms of representation?¹⁰⁵ Lacking an account of *how* spontaneity and receptivity accord – rather than just providing the proof that their unity is necessary if experience is to be possible (*per negationem oppositae*) – was also part and parcel related to other charges against Kant's *KrV* at the time.¹⁰⁶ The heterogeneity of the faculties and their respective forms of representation had also lead to a degree of ambiguity as to the meaning, status and ultimate cognitive value of what is designated as “object” at the different systematic levels of Kant's position; in the *KrV* different senses of the concept of object appear: object of intuition, object of cognition, object in general, thing itself [*Sache selbst*], transcendental object, and of the thing in itself (in addition less direct references, such as

¹⁰⁵ A clear statement of this problem is found in a letter Kant addressed to Herz, May 26, 1789, where he paraphrases Maimon's identification of it: “How do I explain the possibility of agreement between *a priori* intuitions and my *a priori* concepts, if each has its specifically different origins, since this agreement is given as a fact but the legitimacy or the necessity of the agreement of two such heterogeneous manner of representation is incompatible” (Ak: 2:50. Zweig, 313).

¹⁰⁶ We find that form of argument in § 16 of the “Analytic” in the *KrV*.

appearance, *phenomenon*, and *noumenon*).¹⁰⁷ Thus, Kant's original introduction of receptivity as positively involved in making synthetic *a priori* judgments possible due to the unique representation it is capable of exhibiting – pure sensible intuition¹⁰⁸ – introduced a difference in kind (instead of the more traditional conception of degree of clarity and distinctness, operative for instance in Descartes' or Leibniz' positions)¹⁰⁹ in relation to the concepts that arise out of the spontaneity of thought. The *Selbstsetzungslehre's* genetic account of the making of experience as well as of subject formation indirectly addresses how to think of the relationships between these faculties and their respective forms as they play out at and between the different levels of the

¹⁰⁷ For instance, Beck points out this problem in a letter to Kant, November 11, 1791: “The *Critique* calls 'intuition' a representation that relates immediately to an object. But in fact, a representation does not become objective until it is subsumed under the categories. Since intuition similarly acquires its objective character only by means of the application of the categories to it, I am in favor of leaving out that definition of 'intuition' that refers to an object” (Ak: 2: 311. Zweig, 397). Beck repeats a request for clarification regarding the senses of “intuition” and “object” again in a letter dated May 31, 1792 (Ak: 2: 38-9. Zweig, 414). In a letter dated November 10th of the same year he also expresses his regret that in the *KrV* Kant had mentioned the distinction between things in themselves and appearances to begin with (Ak: 2:382. Zweig, 438).

¹⁰⁸ Baum, M. “Kant on Pure Intuition,” in *Minds, Ideas, and Objects: Essays on the Theory of Representation in Modern Philosophy*, Vol. 2. North American Kant Society, ed. Phillip D Cummins and Guenter Zoeller. Atascadero California, Ridgview Publishing Co., 1992, 303. Baum cites the *Prolegomena* (henceforth *Pro*), where Kant explicitly acknowledges the originality of his discovery a “pure sensible intuition.” See Ak: 4:375n. Hatfield, 162.

¹⁰⁹ “To posit *sensibility* merely in the indistinctness of representations, and *intellectuality* by comparison in the distinctness of representations, and thereby in a merely *formal* (logical) distinction of consciousness instead of a *real* (psychological) one, which concerns not merely the form but also the content of thought, was a great error in Leibniz-Wolffian school” (Ak: 7:141n. Louden, 251n). Original: *Die Sinnlichkeit blos in der Undeutlichkeit der Vorstellungen, die Intellectualität dagegen in der Deutlichkeit zu setzen und hiemit einen blos formalen (logischen) Unterschied des Bewußtseins statt des realen (psychologischen), der nicht blos die Form, sondern auch den Inhalt des Denkens betrifft, zu setzen, war ein großer Fehler der Leibniz-Wolffischen Schule [...]*.

doctrine. In this way, it holds some answers to his contemporary critics.

In the *KrV*, Kant describes in broad terms the difference of the two faculties as follows:

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources of the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is **given** to us, through the later it is **thought** in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition [...].¹¹⁰

The contrast between these sources of representation is clear: the first refers to an undergoing [*leiden*] while the second to a doing [*tun*]. That these are the “two fundamental sources of the mind” is, according to Kant, a fact about which nothing can be said as to their origin, but that can be proven to be necessary conditions to cognition. And, as shown in his discussion of intuition in the “Aesthetic” section of the *KrV*, they exhibit *a priori* forms of representation that are significantly different in character. Because from Kant's subjectivist position any critique of pure reason establishes both their essential cognitive roles¹¹¹ as well as the different philosophical domains that arise from them, this dualism inevitably permeates Kant's entire system. One sees the significance of this duality extend far beyond the field of cognition alone; in the

¹¹⁰ *KrV*, B75. Original: *Unsre Erkenntniß entspringt aus zwei Grundquellen des Gemüths, deren die erste ist, die Vorstellungen zu empfangen (die Receptivität der Eindrücke), die zweite das Vermögen, durch diese Vorstellungen einen Gegenstand zu erkennen (Spontaneität der Begriffe); durch die erstere wird uns ein Gegenstand gegeben, durch die zweite wird dieser im Verhältniß auf jene Vorstellung (als bloße Bestimmung des Gemüths) gedacht. Anschauung und Begriffe machen also die Elemente aller unserer Erkenntniß aus [...].*

¹¹¹ *KrV*, B74. Original: “*Anschauung und Begriffe machen also die Elemente aller unserer Erkenntniß aus, so daß weder Begriffe ohne ihnen auf einige Art correspondirende Anschauung, noch Anschauung ohne Begriffe ein Erkenntniß abgeben können.*”

Handschrift, when he writes:

The mind (*animus*) of the human being, as the sum total of all representations that have a place within it, has a domain (*sphaera*) which concerns three parts: the faculty of cognition, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire. Each of these has two divisions, the field of *sensibility* and the field of *intellectuality*. (the field of sensible or intellectual cognition, pleasure or displeasure, and desire or abhorrence)¹¹²

In other words, it affects the theoretical, practical, and reflective divisions that form part of Kant's philosophical position. And at the risk of stating the obvious to anybody minimally acquainted with Kant's work, but in order to bring further home the endemic nature of this cognitive dualism, here are just some of the places in which this dualism is manifest: understanding vs. sensibility (faculty); thought vs. intuition (representation); analytic vs. aesthetic (elements of the system); active vs. passive (character); discursive concept vs. sensible intuition (bounds of experience); categories vs. space and time (pure forms of representation); form vs. content (relational quality); extension/intention vs. limitation (determination); general vs. singular (unity); error in judgment vs. unfalsifiable sensibility (truth value); forms of thought vs. pure relations (necessity of each form); object of cognition vs. immediate representation of an object; unconditioned vs. unbounded (*Totum*); theoretical and practical (cognition, *qua* presence or absence of sensible intuition); theoretical vs. aesthetic judgment (presence/absence of a concept); determinative vs. teleological judgment (the absence of the applicability of anticipations of experience through categories); and so on and so forth.

In light of this systematic picture as well as the fact that many of Kant's contemporaries found the heart of the problem in the potential irreconcilability of the faculties of receptivity and spontaneity, their criticism of critical philosophy puts into

¹¹² Ak: 7:142. Louden, 254

question its very validity. And, even if their views are (many times) based on their misunderstanding of the nature and relationship of these faculties or the *KrV*'s general methodological approach, their criticism nonetheless challenged Kant's philosophical standing within the academic community at the time, making them just as significant to the latter. In his correspondence, one finds Kant repeatedly answering inquiries regarding this issue while at the same time expressing concern about a developing tendency of displacing the importance of intuition in favor of thinking only.¹¹³ To some extent, Kant also appears to momentarily cede to the pressure when in the *Preischrift* he states tentatively that there is a ground in the subject for the possible unity between the forms of intuition and the concepts of their synthetic unity, and that as such this ground must be, at the very least, innate.¹¹⁴ Thus, any new account or articulation found in the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, whether systematic or descriptive, contributes to furthering the ability to better position Kant within the philosophical discourse of a particular historical moment and to understanding in more detail the different layers of the whole of Kant's

¹¹³ Cf. Kant to Tieftrunk, October 13 and November 5 of 1797. In the latter Kant comments upon Beck's misguided idea of starting out his analysis with the categories and reasserts the advantage of starting with intuition instead (Ak: 12:206. Zweig 527. & Ak: 12:212. Zweig, 529-530). The same concern is expressed in his reactions to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, under the guise that it concerns the "mere form of thinking, void of content, therefore of such a nature that reflection upon it has nothing to reflect about, nothing to which it could be applied, and this is even supposed to be transcend logic!" or that Fichte's "attempt to cull a real object out of logic is a vain effort." The former can be found in a letter from Kant to Tieftrunk, April 5 1798 (Ak: 12:241. Zweig 544). The latter in his *Open Letter on Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre* (Ak: 12:370-1. Zweig 559-600).

¹¹⁴ Ak: 8:221-2. Allison, 312. "There must indeed be a ground for it in the subject, however, which makes it possible that these representations can arise in this and not other manner, and be related to objects which are not yet given, and this ground at least is *innate*." Original: "*Es muß aber doch ein Grund dazu im Subjecte sein, der es möglich macht, daß die gedachten Vorstellung so und nicht anders entstehen und noch dazu Objecte, die noch nicht gegeben sind, bezogen werden können, und dieser Grund wenigstens is angeboren.*"

thought.

While the spirit of the criticism that ensued from the publication of the *KrV* is commonly shown to be encapsulated by F.H. Jacobi's sarcastic epigram that "I need the assumption of things in themselves to enter the Kantian system; but with this assumption it is not possible for me to remain inside it,"¹¹⁵ the critics that are more directly related to Kant's *Op* are: K.L. Reinhold, G.E. Schulze (*Anaesidemus*), D. Tiedemann (*Theätet*), J.S. Beck, J.G. Fichte, F.W.J. Schelling, G.C. Lichtenberg, and B. Spinoza. They are considered as such because one either finds their names or positions mentioned or their original concepts used and their works' titles referenced. For the purpose of this dissertation, in keeping with the above interpretative thesis, and in anticipation of the results of the analysis below, let us mention some points of critique that concern specifically the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. Through these it is possible to appreciate the philosophical value of some of the doctrine's aspects or ideas from a historical point of view. What follows is a brief presentation of three points at which the works of Reinhold, Schulze and Beck¹¹⁶ intersect with the *Selbstsetzungslehre*:

¹¹⁵ Beiser, Frederick C. *The Fate of Reason*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1987, 124.

¹¹⁶ The selection of these three authors over the others is not entirely contingent. Each one of them represents a tendency in the reception of and response to the *KrV*. Reinhold's represents the beginning of a movement towards its idealist interpretation, Schulze represents its rejection from an empiricist-skeptical standpoint, and Beck represents the most faithful attempt at its interpretation, but by way of changing the order of exposition, an order that would later become mirrored by the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. The choice to ignore Fichte, Schelling, and Tiedemann are at this stage mostly pragmatic. The idealist positions of the first two are too complex in and of themselves to address within this limited project, and their relationship to the *Op* has been taken up by other scholars already (e.g.: Adickes, Werkmeister and Tuschling have argued that in *Op* Kant makes an idealist turn by adopting a Fichtean or Schellingean position or orientations, while Duque argues against both of these lines of interpretation, in part with an argument

- iii. a. K.L. Reinhold and the question of accounting for “how” experience is made possible through the common nature of all forms representations

Reinhold's critical turn against Kant's *KrV* signals the beginning of a philosophical and historical movement away from criticism and towards German idealism. This occurs partly as Reinhold thinks it necessary to shift the focus from what he considers to be Kant's established “science of the characteristics (determined *a priori*) of objects” to a higher “science of the characteristics (determined *a priori*) of mere representations.”¹¹⁷ Under the premise that Kant's propaedeutic to metaphysics is not yet scientific because the *KrV* arrives at the concept of experience by merely proving *that* the *a priori* necessary conditions for its possibility reside in the different cognitive faculties of the subject, Reinhold argues that a solid foundation is still missing. This new foundation entails finding what is common among the cognitive faculties of representation (i.e., common to representation *qua* sensibility, *qua* understanding, and *qua* reason) under the idea of a “science of the *entire faculty of representation as such*.”¹¹⁸ In other words, one needs a science that can address the shared nature of

directed specifically to Tuschling's reading). Tiedemann was an empiricist and his name (under the title of his book *Theätet*) appears many times in Kant's doctrine, mostly together with Schulze's, most likely as representatives of the same empiricist criticism. Otherwise, his name appears seldom anywhere else in Kant's work—mentioned in some letters with little philosophical import and in one reflection that treats precisely the difference between empiricist, dogmatic and critical philosophies (Ak: 18:297, reflection n° 5649).

¹¹⁷ Reinhold, Karl Leonhard. “The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge,” in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, ed and trans. George Di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Co. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2000, 70.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

faculties of representation in light of their specifying differences (e.g., concept, intuition, idea, etc.) and the fact that they are nevertheless said to work together for the cognition of objects. It is necessary, thus, to provide a philosophical “explanation of *how* experience is made possible, i.e., of how the faculty of cognition is constituted.”¹¹⁹ Here lies Reinhold's own way of articulating and solving the identified problem of the heterogeneity between the faculties of sensibility and understanding.

The elements at play in Reinhold's alternative to Kant's propaedeutic to metaphysics can be ordered as follows: 1) a science of the faculty of representation is needed to ground the science of the faculty of cognition; 2) the concept of representation as such is drawn from “the consciousness of an *actual* fact [*Tatsache*]” by means of reflection, leading thus to the identification of a “principle of consciousness”; 3) the actual fact of which we are conscious is that “in consciousness representation is distinguished through the subject from both object and subject, and is referred to both;”¹²⁰ 4) immediately at the ground of this fact lies a concept of representation that is simple, empty and belongs to the very possibility of consciousness, and as such is capable of being the “first principle of all philosophy;”¹²¹ and 5) a second, this time complex, concept of representation can then be determined in terms of the actual facts of consciousness and the task of a theory of representation is to give an exhaustive account of its concept. Within what for Reinhold is a more complete paradigm, consciousness here presupposes a simple concept of representation as an *a priori* ground of its

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70; 79.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

possibility, while the reflection and comparison of the contents of actual consciousness is the source of a complex concept of representation.

From this brief sketch it is possible to grasp one of Reinhold's basic criticism and answer to Kant's *KrV*; in the latter there are some points of intersection with the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. What is apparent is that Reinhold attempts to provide a first ground for the unification of the different faculties of cognition by means of his "principle of consciousness;" the concept of representation found therein and as the intermediary between subject and object functions as the unified basis from which to begin to construct *how* experience is made possible; the determined nature of representation can only be found from within the realm of *actual* consciousness; and the method of analysis takes place by starting from the most general concept of representation to the most specific. As will be seen below, all of these points can be said to be touched upon in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* (there is a further development of the interactions and constructed nature of experience; the "I think" is articulated from the perspective of its actuality; and it too begins from the most abstract conditions of experience to the most concrete ones).

And yet, in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* Kant does not move upwards to a common concept of representation. Instead, while in the doctrine he too articulates further the relationship between sensibility and understanding in the making of experience and begins from consciousness, Kant nonetheless remains focused on a notion of consciousness understood first in terms of *thought* – "I think" – arriving immediately to the necessary possibility of self-consciousness from there (first analytic and then synthetic). It is only then that he descends to unfold in more detail the cognitive conditions, not in terms of the different kinds of representations *qua* representation, but

particularly in their presence, unique involvement and mutual relationship in making possible that something be capable of being given to the subject for cognition. In the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, Kant's concern is still primarily with the status of the cognition of objects (although now especially empirical ones) and thinking remains the valid ground for any solution; the concern is neither with the shared nature of the different forms of representation involved in the cognition of objects nor with grounding his theoretical philosophy on a higher general faculty of mere representation. This is because an appeal to such a unified faculty (*vis representativa*), even if its existence can be speculated to be a condition for the possibility of consciousness, it cannot be central to a philosophical project of legitimizing a critical system upon which to construct a metaphysics. Reason, governed by principles of thought alone can serve to demonstrate apodictic truth to serve for such a foundation.

iii. b. G.E. Schulze (*Aenesidemus*) and the possibility of necessity in outer sensations

Known under the pseudonym Aenesidemus, Schulze was a Humean skeptic who launched a serious enough attack against Kant's critical philosophy that he becomes (together with Tiedemann under the pseudonym *Theätet*) one of the most referenced names in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* (especially fascicles vii and i). There is agreement that Schulze's critique is directed mostly against Reinhold, as the latter had been the first to represent and clarify Kant's critical philosophy after the publication of the *KrV*. To conclude from the doctrine of self-positing that Kant was either concerned with providing an alternative explanation of his philosophy in order for it to become clearer and thus less

subject to false critiques, or that there is in fact a valid critique in Schulze's work that occupied his mind until the very end.

Schulze's attack of Kant's theoretical philosophy is that, despite his intentions, Kant is incapable of providing a convincing account of the possibility of cognition of empirical objects by merely exhibiting that the origin of the possibility of necessary synthetic *a priori* judgments lies *a priori* in the mind. For Schulze, the above mentioned problem of the relationship between understanding and sensibility is localized not in a systematic need for a unifying faculty of representation to be found in consciousness (Reinhold). Instead, it results in a skepticism concerning the reach of the validity of cognition of empirical objects that acquires the necessity of its possibility from a mere "inner source" of mental representations and not from outer sensations. Furthermore, Schulze argues that Kant's very acknowledgment of the fact that only appearances can be cognized, and not things in themselves, further supports the skeptic's perspective that what Kant claims we can know is no knowledge at all.

Schulze's problem with Kant's proof for the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments in the *KrV* is that the latter assumes that their necessity must originate exclusively *a priori* in the mind; this is on the basis that it is only under the conditions of synthetic *a priori* judgments that objective representations are possible at all. In response to this problem, Schulze presents counter examples that he believes put into question this assumption. The first lies in the historicity of human beings and Kant's lack of a proof as to why the origin of the necessity of these *a priori* conditions could not be said to arise out of this historicity. This perspective thus opens up an alternative where the necessity of synthetic *a priori* judgments may not only be relative to the impossibility of a subject

knower to thin an objective representation in any other way, but also relative to cultural change. In other words, even if it the character of our cognition remains an *a priori* condition for the possibility of experience at any one historical moment, the source of this character of necessity may nonetheless be *a posteriori*, grounded on outer cultural and historical conditions.

Schulze identifies a second possible source for the necessity of synthetic judgments that Schulze identifies is sensation. For instance, according to him it is not only possible that all knowledge “has its origin in the efficacy that objects present *realiter*” (i.e., generic empiricism), but also that “the necessity encountered in certain of its areas is generated by the special manner in which external things occasion cognition in the mind by affecting it.”¹²² Before the presence of any object, it may be possible to think its absence (as Kant does in the “Aesthetic” with respect to the exhibition of space as form of outer sense), but not cease to have a specific sensation of it. In his words: “Here we have an actual case, therefore, of objects outside us arousing in the mind by their influence on it a consciousness of necessity, making it impossible to perceive something otherwise than it is perceived.”¹²³ While the singular sensations may be subject to a very specific moment in the presence of any one object, and hence not permanent, for Schulze there is nonetheless a necessity present in this occasion that is common to all perceptual experience. In this way, external objects could generate

¹²² Schulze, Gottlob Ernst. “Aenesidemus.” In: *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, ed and trans. George Di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised Edition. Hackett Publishing Co. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2000, 142-3.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 144.

cognition that carries a kind of necessity of which the subject can be conscious.¹²⁴ As a result, Schulze finally raises the problematic of the theoretical contingency involved in finding necessity in the mind or in the object. In either case, because things in themselves are unknowable and the true modes of operations of either subjects or objects remain inaccessible, the universality and necessity of cognition, according to Schulze, ultimately remain equally incomprehensible.¹²⁵

While the *Selbstsetzungslehre* will not address the question of the “origin” of the necessity of synthetic *a priori* judgments in particular, it does speak considerably to the role of outer sense in securing a basis from which to build a system of empirical cognition that can give physics the legitimacy of a science. As shown below, outer sense is not only understood in terms of space as being its pure form, but also as sensible, which brings Schulze's interest in objects of sensation as a source of a kind of necessity in the cognition of empirical objects into the fold. An important part of Kant's account in the doctrine, moreover, concerns the need for the subject to posit itself not only as sensible space, but also as in it, that is to say, as embodied. Considering the number of times Kant makes indirect reference to Schulze through the name *Aenesidemus*, together with the fact that when he references *Theatät*, the other skeptic that appears in the

¹²⁴ It is not clear, however, why Schulze appears to emphasize that this potential source of necessity resides in the objects and not in the faculty of sensibility, or at the very least, in both simultaneously. The latter does appear to follow from his position, but in his critique of Kant, it remains unthematized as such. This may be the result of the inescapably problematic status of the body – source of outer impressions and outer object among other objects.

¹²⁵ Schulze, Gottlob Ernst. “Aenesidemus.” In: *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, ed and trans. George Di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Co., 2000, 145.

doctrine, the name is oftentimes qualified with a “*kein*,” this moment of intersection with the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is significant in understanding the skeptical critique that concerned Kant as he was writing these last fascicles of the *Op.*¹²⁶ Kant was clearly compelled to respond to the skeptical attack.

iii. c. J.S. Beck and the proper standpoint from which to arrive at an understanding of the construction of experience

There is growing consensus in the secondary literature that if any one of Kant's students or self-proclaimed followers of critical philosophy is genuinely represented in Kant's *Selbstsetzungslehre*, this would be Beck.¹²⁷ This is a shift from earlier interpretations that focused mostly upon Kant's supposed turn towards Fichte's thought, an interpretation prompted in part by the former's repeated use of the concept of *setzen*, *positus*, or Position in relation to the activity of the “I” – a concept that is characteristic of Fichte's thought.¹²⁸ However, as already seen (in chapter one), when one looks back

¹²⁶ For references to *Aenesidemus*, cf., Ak: 22:5; 19; 72; 99; 104; 109 (fascicle vii) and Ak: 21: 23; 67 (fascicle i). For references to *Theatät*, cf., Ak: 22:11; 73 (fascicle vii) and Ak: 22:445; 447; 448 (fascicle xi).

¹²⁷ Cf., Duque, F. P. “El vuelo cansado del águila: La relación de Kant con Fichte y Schelling en el *Opus postumum*,” in *Ágora*, Vol. 23. Number 1 (2004), 85-120, or Förster, E. “Fichte, Beck, and Schelling in Kant's *Opus postumum*,” in *Kant and his Influence*, ed. George MacDonald and Tony McWalter, pp. 146-169. Bristol, Thoemmes Antiquarian Books Ltd., 1990.

¹²⁸ Cf., Adickes, Erich. *Kants Opus postumum, dargestellt und beurteilt*. Berlin, 1920; Werkmeister, W. H., “The Two Thesis of Kant's ‘Opus postumum’.” in *Kant & Critique: New Essays in Honor of W. H. Werkmeister*, ed. R. M. Dancy, pp 169-187. Netherlands, Kluwer Publishers, 1993; or, to some extent, Tuschling, Burkhardt. “Kant and Critique: New Essays in Honor of W.H. Werkmeister,” ed. R. M. Darcy, pp 151-167. Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993.

upon Kant's earlier pre-critical and critical work, it is evident that the concept of *setzen* is already a distinctive mark within the latter. It is also very much part of other important technical terms in Kant's thought, the most obvious of which is “*zusammnesetzen*” (to compose)—related precisely to that which is carried out by the application of concepts (understanding) over intuition (sensibility) in the cognition of an object. Because the fruitful intersecting points between Beck's interpretation of Kant's critical philosophy and the late *Selbstsetzungslehre* are multiple, the focus here will be only on methodology of exposition.

In the third volume of his *Erläuternder Auszug aus den Kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant auf Anraten desselben*, subtitled *welcher den Standpunkt darstellt, aus welchem die Kritische Philosophie beurteilt werden muss*, Beck argues for a standpoint from which it is best to understand Kant's *KrV*. This is Beck's response to the general confusion that had given rise to some of the criticisms against Kant, the origin of which he blamed on the method of exposition of the *KrV*. Instead of starting with the “Aesthetics” section, he thought Kant's position would be best understood by starting directly with the “Analytic” section. By reversing the order, Beck argued that it was possible to bring to the fore what he identified as the “*ursprüngliche Vorstellen*”¹²⁹ of the categories and repair thus the apparent insurmountable gap between sensibility and understanding, or, systematically speaking, between the Aesthetics and the Analytic sections of the *KrV*.

The advantage of starting any exposition of Kant's critical philosophy with the categories is that in their original activity of representing, they are always already related

¹²⁹ One finds a reference to this Beckian concept of “*ursprüngliche Vorstellung*” in fascicle vii of the *Op.* Ak: 22:88.

to intuition. This status brings to the fore that their uniqueness as categories, or pure concepts of the understanding, is that what they are is but functions or rules of synthesis of intuition (general or sensible); the Kantian idea that categories function as rules of synthesis simply makes no sense if they are thought of as being empty. From Beck's perspective, then, this starting point avoids what he saw as a common tendency to first think the nature of concepts on the one hand and then that of intuition on the other, to finally think the application of the former over the latter.

Kant's first response to Beck's *Standpunkt* was negative, as he understood it as beginning with the categories as mere forms of thought that are missing any sense and significance when they lack intuitive content. He writes:

Let me only remark on this point that when he [Beck] proposes to start out with the categories he is busying himself with the mere form of thinking, that is, concepts without objects, concepts that as yet are without any meaning. It is more natural to begin with the *given*, that is, with intuitions insofar as these are possible a priori, furnishing us with synthetic a priori propositions that disclose only the appearances of objects. For then the claim that objects are intuited only in accordance with the form in which the subject is affected by them is seen to be certain and necessary.¹³⁰

Ironically, the problem that Kant identified with Beck's approach (i.e., there is nowhere to go from empty concepts) is precisely what Beck attempted to avoid all together. Beck's intention becomes clearer when one understands that his methodological reversal did not mean a reversal that would start with a principle in which consciousness is reducible to an empty determining or function of all unity. On the contrary, what is necessary from methodological point of view is to begin with synthesis itself and, as Beck recommends, to "transpose ourselves into the very original mode of

¹³⁰ Ak: 13:463. Zweig, 527.

representing.”¹³¹

An important implication of this starting point is that it makes the thinker attend to the different kinds of cognitive acts out of which one can understand how it is possible “to generate for ourselves the representation of an object.”¹³² In other words, in lieu of attending to either the elements that are necessary for the possibility of the cognition of an object, or of asking “What joins the representation of an object with its object?,” the thinker in transcendental philosophy stands upon the idea of an “original representing.”¹³³ Attending to the acts, however, requires that Beck identifies thus the highest principle as “represent to yourself an object originally;” but simultaneously limits the sphere of the principle to that of “the entire employment of the understanding.”

As already proposed in the above interpretative thesis, the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is not only a reordering of the presentation of the foundational elements of Kant’s critical philosophy, but it is simultaneously a set of acts by which the making of both the subject and the object becomes possible. Indeed, there are many more points of intersection between both thinkers worthy of investigating beyond mere historical curiosity, which unfortunately will not be addressed here.

¹³¹ Beck, Jacob Sigismund. “Explanatory Abstract of the Critical Writings of Prof. Kant, in Consultation with the Same,” in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, ed and trans. George Di Giovanni and H. S. Harris. Revised Edition. Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Co., 2000, 212.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 215.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Chapter Three: The Analytic Level

1. To posit oneself
2. To posit for oneself as object of intuition, not of empirical sense-intuition, but *a priori*, according to the formal element, space and time
3. Subjectively as appearance prior to all perception
4. Synthetic *a priori* propositions (transcendental philosophy) which contain the possibility of experience under a principle¹³⁴

The consciousness of myself is not yet an act of self-determination for the knowledge of an object, but is only the modality of knowledge in general by which a subject makes itself into an object in general. Space and time, each of which is an absolute whole, together with the undetermined manifold, are what is given (*dabile*); to which something else is juxtaposed as what is thinkable (*cogitabile*). The representation as an act of knowledge is then called appearance, which contains a coordination (*complexus*) according to the principles of positing oneself.¹³⁵

Despite their terminological differences as well as the fact that the first is from fascicle x (so technically not part of the doctrine of self-positing), both of these passages exemplify the unfolding of the constitutive levels and elements of Kant's

¹³⁴ Ak: 22:421. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster's translation). Original:

1. *Sich selbst zu setzen*
2. *Sich einen Gegenstand der Anschauung zu setzen nicht der Sinnenanschauung empirisch sondern dem Formalen nach a priori Raum u. Zeit.*
3. *Subjectiv als Erscheinung vor aller Wahrnehmung*
4. *Synthetische Sätze a priori (Transsc: Phil.) welche die Möglichkeit der Erfahrung unter einem Princip enthalten.*

¹³⁵ Ak: 22:87. Förster, 192. Original: *Das Bewusstseyn meiner selbst ist noch kein Act der Selbstbestimmung zur Erkenntnis eines Gegenstandes sondern nur die Modalität des Erkenntnisses überhaupt wodurch ein Subject sich selbst überhaupt zum Object macht und das Förmliche der Anschauung überhaupt. Raum und Zeit deren jedes ein absolutes Ganze ist mit dem unbestimmten Manigfaltigen ist das gegebene (dabile) welchem ein Anderes gegenüber steht als denkbar (cogitabile). — Die Vorstellung als Erkenntnisact heißt alsdan Erscheinung welche eine Zusammenfassung (complexus) nach Principien sich selbst zu setzen enthält.*

Selbstsetzungslehre. They also bring the results from chapter one's preliminary study of the concept of *Setzung* into the purview of the present analysis. The first passage is exemplary of those places in the *Op* where Kant makes explicit use of the concept. The second makes apparent that in the doctrine of self-positing the problem of modality remains central and thus likely point to the very function the doctrine is to play as a whole. For the purpose of this chapter, the first sentence of each passage introduces what belongs to the sphere of analytic level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*.

At this first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing, the form by which the position of the subject is made possible is analytic, purely intellectual, and primordially expressed in the logical relationship between the propositions "I think" and "I am." While Kant's procedure at this level is analytic and thus in itself quite simple in both execution and appearance, this chapter is designed to weave its different aspects together with pertinent insights and results from the *KrV*. On the one hand, this is necessary in order to grasp the subtle diversity of angles from which Kant approaches this first level. Engaging the range of Kant's descriptive tones, moreover, is a good opportunity to at the same time reveal some of the most important aspects of Kant's theory of the thinking subject, which can provide necessary resources from which to move ahead into the ontological level. On the other hand, it is justified not only because of the standing of the *KrV* within the Kantian architectonic or because the doctrine is in itself an evident return to the basic elements and principles of Kant's transcendental philosophy, but also because there are moments in the text that parallel, in method and substance, the doctrine of self-positing. The most important of these is at the end of the

“Paralogisms” section.¹³⁶ Despite the fact that Kant there makes no direct appeal to the ideality of space and time as forms of the subject’s sensible intuition in his concluding remarks against the possibility of any rational psychology (i.e., *qua* modality, this means that there is no method from which to show the existence of a soul and build a science upon it).¹³⁷ In light of what has been said, this chapter’s interpretative axis should allow for a more robust reconstruction of the parts of Kant’s more general theory of the thinking “I” while retrieving what constitutes distinctly the analytic level of the doctrine.

Within the structure of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* one finds the fundamental function of apperception, or self-consciousness, to be an *a priori* vehicle through which the necessary elements for the possibility of experience are to unfold into a doctrine for the purpose of the constitution of the subject and experience. Conceived as vehicle of all thought, apperception is at the heart of both the analytic level as well as the first moment

¹³⁶ *KrV*, B418-23; B426-32.

¹³⁷ Mathieu finds the long footnote on B422 to be the only place in the *KrV* where a transition between the otherwise divided “I think” and “I sense” could be shown to be possible in light of a self-positing. The footnote is in my perspective the *KrV*’s most succinct and coherent approximation to what Kant is presenting in the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. The most interesting and systematically relevant difference between the two is that in the footnote Kant limits his discussion of positing to time as the form of intuition (*modi*), excluding thus space as well as sensible space, which are now subject to the doctrine of self-positing. It is also important to note that the section of the “Paralogisms” to which the footnote belongs touches upon key elements of the doctrine (sometimes in the form of unresolved problem or impossibility): modality, analytic method, orientation of the unfolding (i.e., *zum behuf einer möglicher Erfahrung*), the mind/body and time/space relationships, self-knowledge, and what he incidentally calls a “doctrine” of self-affection, among others. What distinguishes these discussions and the footnote found therein is that the latter is an account written from the perspective of his critical philosophy. In the former, as indicated above, Kant develops a critique that is immanent to the assumptions of rational psychology itself. The discussions to which I am referring can be found in the portion rewritten for the second edition of the *KrV*, located at the very end of the “Paralogisms” (B418-23; B426-32). Cf., Choi, So-In. *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstanschauung*. Kant-Studien Ergänzungshefte 130. Berlin/New York, , Gruyter & Co., 1996.

of the ontological level of self-positing – the *Act der Spontaneität*. The number of passages where this function is expressed within the text is numerous. Nonetheless, there are threads or thematic repetitions that are identifiable and which are here organized as follows: 1) apperception as logical act; 2) apperception as Object; 3) apperception and existence; 4) apperception as the locus for Kant’s critique of Descartes; and finally 5) apperception as *Verbum*. The two most original moments in this first level of the structure are the second and fifth. The second moment exhibits first an instance within a greater process of self-objectification, one that here is brought about through self-consciousness understood as a logical act. It is an account of the way in which it is possible to say that the subject knower is for itself both subject and Object, even if restricted to the sphere of thought alone. Despite this limitation, however, the second moment initiates a process of self-objectification that will continue into the ontological level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. As to the fifth moment, Kant’s main idea is that the “I am” – having been found analytically contained within the “I think” by the very act of self-consciousness, and yet as an object identified with thinking itself – functions as a *Setzen*. The “I” that is thinking (*Sum*) is the noun of the activity for all possible determination.¹³⁸ It is the *Verbum* by which the subject makes an object of itself.

None of the other moments within this first level of the doctrine are particularly new, since one can find them already treated in the *KrV*. Nonetheless, they are moments that play a crucial role in understanding and making possible that which is original about

¹³⁸ Nicholas Rescher claims that this description of the “I am” in the *Op* is new. Manfred Baum, in conversations on the topic, also agreed that this articulation is, if not completely new, then at least it appears very seldom in Kant’s theoretical philosophy (i.e., he did not recollect any other text where one could find it).

the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. In this respect, the aim here is to elucidate their meaning with the help of his earlier work and from out of this make clear what the “analytic” self-positing is with respect to apperception.

i. a. Apperception as Logical Act

Apperception’s most basic function in Kant’s theoretical philosophy is that of unity of elements, whether exclusively of thought (such as in concepts or judgments) or of the given in intuition (pure or empirical), hence enabling both logic and transcendental logic respectively. In the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, this function is encapsulated in the concept of a “logical act.” The following are sample passages from the *Op* where this articulation appears; he writes:

The first act of the faculty of representation is the consciousness of myself which is merely logical act underlying all further representation[...] ¹³⁹

The faculty of representation proceeds from the *consciousness* of myself (*apperceptio*), and this is a merely logical act, an act of thought, through which no object is yet given to me. ¹⁴⁰

The *consciousness* of myself is logical merely and leads to no Object; it is, rather, a mere determination of the subject in accordance with the rule of identity. ¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Ak: 22:77. Förster, 185. Original: “*Der erste Act des Vorstellungsvermögens ist das Bewustseyn meiner Selbst[,] welches ein blos logischer Act ist[,] der aller übrigen Vorstellung zum Grunde liegt [...]*”

¹⁴⁰ Ak: 22:79. Förster, 187. Original: “*Das Vorstellungsvermögen geht vom Bewustseyn meiner selbst aus (apperceptio) und dieser Act ist blos logisch, der des Denkens, wodurch von mir noch kein Gegenstand gegeben wird.*”

¹⁴¹ AK: 22:82. Förster, 188. Original: “*Das Bewustseyn meiner selbst ist blos logisch und führt auf kein Object sondern ist eine bloße Bestimmung des Subjects nach der Regel der Identität.*”

That Kant takes the first structural level to entail apperception or self-consciousness as an *a priori* logical act is obvious from these passages' reference to "the first act;" the question is what is meant by this. One way of narrowing the possible ways of tackling this interpretive question is to take as a guiding thread the reference to "*Vorstellungsvermögen*" or faculty of representation from the first two passages. Since the first passage also notes that this act is ground of all other representations, the natural place to begin in the *KrV* is the second part of the "Doctrine of Elements," especially in "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding." It is there where Kant addresses the dependence of all thinking and cognition of the understanding on the possibility of self-consciousness. In other words, it is necessary that apperception be possible for there to be any mental representation at all.

That representations need to be able to be accompanied by self-consciousness expressed under the proposition "I think" is one of the ways to understand in what sense it can be said that they are grounded by it as a logical act. There are at least three ways to grasp the perspective under which the possibility of representations relies on what Kant designates distinctly as the "the analytical unity of apperception."¹⁴² Kant points to two instances in which we are not capable of attaching the representation "I think" to other representations and where as a result these so-called representations can be said to "either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me."¹⁴³ This occurs, first, if the representations contradict themselves. In other words, in the case that two representations are contradictory, they cannot be thought together by our understanding.

¹⁴² *KrV*, B133.

¹⁴³ *KrV*, B132.

Not being able to be thought by the understanding implies that there is no way for the expression “I think” to be attached to such so-called representation. If the “I” of the subject knower cannot think this contradiction then it is nothing to it. The impossibility for this lies in a formal aspect of thought: that it cannot violate the principle of non-contradiction (parallel in form and function to what in *BDG* was called the formal or logical element of inner possibility). Second, and perhaps more intuitively, it occurs when representations are unconscious. Any representation that is unconscious, or rather, incapable of becoming conscious, cannot be attached to the “I think” because it is not accessible to be presented to thought. In this case, the impossibility lies in the very nature of the representation itself, that is to say, taken as material of thought (parallel in function to *BDG*’s material or real element of inner possibility).¹⁴⁴ From this discussion, what has been clarified is that when the “I think” cannot be attached to a representation, then that representation is nothing for the subject knower; in fact, since it is nothing, the very use of the term “representation” within this context loses all coherence.

The third and most significant way in which apperception grounds representations concerns its necessity for the possibility that objects (*Gegentänden*) be given to us. We find this indicated in the section of the “Deduction” when he writes: “otherwise

¹⁴⁴ This should not be taken, however, as an indication that Kant does not allow for unconscious representations in the mind within his overall philosophical position. For Kant, there may very well be unconscious representations for the subject, but they can only function as affections that influence a subject’s “feelings and desires, without my being aware of it” (Kant to Herz, May 26, 1789. Ak: 11:52). From an epistemological perspective, however, that which is unconscious to the subject knower, because of this very fact, cannot be cognized *as* representation. It appears correct to say also that he does not identify the “unconscious” as a faculty or power of the mind, as it can be taken to be within a framework such as psychoanalytic theory. In this sense, these positions can be said to be essentially different.

something [etwas] would be represented in me that could not be thought at all.”¹⁴⁵ In agreement with the other two cases, but with this in mind, what Kant is addressing is the necessary capacity of the “I think” to accompany the representation of an object (i.e., not attached merely to imagined constructs or merely analytically determined concepts). And, unlike the other two cases, a distinct role must be introduced in the equation, and that is intuition in general. What is addressed here are thus not merely the instances (*qua* form or *qua* matter of thought) in which it is *not* possible that certain representations be for the subject knower and can be accounted for merely through principle of contradiction or their availability to consciousness are sufficient to account. Instead, Kant moves towards an account of the conditions for the subject to have a representation of something that lies outside its contradiction free concept; that is to say, an account for the possibility of cognition.¹⁴⁶ If the “I think” is to be able to accompany this particular kind of representation as well, then thinking must seek outside itself for the possibility of a content that is available to it but not a mere creation of the mind.

The subject’s awareness of the necessity that all possible representations be accompanied by an “I think” that stands for nothing but its own thinking, is congruent with a logical act that identifies that all possible representations are analytically united to one and the same “I” that is thinking. In this sense, all possible representations stand also in a possible relation of thoroughgoing determination.

¹⁴⁵ *KrV*, B131. Emphasis added. Original: “*denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, das garnicht gedacht könnte.*” Passage cited in Baum, M. “Logisches und personales Ich bei Kant,” in *Probleme der Subjektivität in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Dieter H. Heidemann, Stuttgart/Bad, Cannstatt 2002, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Baum, M. “Logisches und personales Ich bei Kant,” in *Probleme der Subjektivität in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Dieter H. Heidemann, Stuttgart/Bad, Cannstatt, 2002, 115

This connection between the single representation “I think” to all other representations assumes a source of unification, an act of connecting.¹⁴⁷ This means that there is yet another sense in which representations are grounded by apperception. As mentioned at the start of this section, unification can be thought of as concerning either purely intellectual elements or intuition. However, regardless of which of these two unities result, the function of unification is the same. In the early discussion of the possibility of the deduction of the categories, in a section entitled “On the Clue to the Discovery of all Pure Concepts of the Understanding,” Kant writes:

The same function that gives unity to the different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the understanding.¹⁴⁸

Hence, from this shared function, the subject knower is capable of attaching the “I think” to every conscious representation, first, in the logical form of the judgment, e.g., “I think,

¹⁴⁷ *KrV*, B133-4.

¹⁴⁸ *KrV*, A79/B104-5. Italicized emphasis added. Original: “*Dieselbe Function, welche den verschiedenen Vorstellungen in einem Urtheile Einheit giebt, die giebt auch | der bloßen Synthesis verschiedener Vorstellungen in einer Anschauung Einheit, welche, allgemein ausgedrückt, der reine Verstandesbegriff heißt.*” This passage belongs to a section of the *KrV* where the deduction proper has not yet been argued for and the dependency of the analytic unity of apperception on the synthetic unity has not yet been shown. Thus, it may appear that the content of the passage is superseded by what comes later, especially with reference to Kant’s footnote in §16 (B133). However, from the perspective of the content of what is united in thought (merely logical predicates or intuitions), the source for the function of unity is the same and grounded in the faculty of the understanding. From the perspective of a supreme principle of all use of the understanding, the analytic unity of apperception presupposes a synthetic unity of apperception, in that the function of the latter is always already present in the former’s very constitution. Thus methodologically speaking, it is already available for it to be found by reflecting upon what is shared by all representations of which the subject is conscious as well as by an analytic or logical act. The very reason for it to be found the function of the synthetic unity of apperception.

S is P.” What is being thought in this first instance by the subject or “I” is the unity between two concepts in which the second is predicated of the first. Thinking is here the very act of uniting these two concepts in the form of a judgment where each is given its particular role. Moreover, by exhibiting this analytic containment, their unification in a judgment is simultaneously an act of conceptualization, in which the concept S contains under it a characteristic mark in the form of concept P. It is important to note that, even though such judgment or conceptual unity being thought is itself analytic, for Kant it still presupposes a “synthesizing” unity.¹⁴⁹ That is to say that, for instance, the connections of representations as general characteristic marks that are being thought as parts unified under a common concept and yet are different from this very concept and each other, presuppose an act of bringing together; the unification must be already present for any analytical relation to be exhibited and thus for the extension of a concept to be known. The same applies to the representation of the relation of concepts in judgments and, most importantly for the current discussion on apperception, for the necessary possibility for the same “I think” to be analytically contained in all of these. In other words, the unification from which analytic knowledge arises is a synthesis of thought performed by a shared identical consciousness.

As indicated in the above passage, another result of this same function of thought is that the subject knower is also capable of attaching the “I think” to an intuition in general, by synthesizing the latter. Upon this function lies the possibility for the subject knower to cognize an object, e.g., “I cognize object x.” In the *KrV* Kant argues that when

¹⁴⁹ *KrV*, B133-4. This clarification that the same function that is operative in both analytic and synthetic judgments is a “synthesis” appears much later than the quoted passage and it is a footnote in the B edition only.

it concerns the possibility of the cognition of objects, there are determinate forms of thought through which this synthesizing function of apperception takes place. The latter are *a priori* concepts or categories, which are themselves derived from the basic laws of all thinking, that is, from the most fundamental forms of possible judgments. It is through these determinate forms for the synthesis of intuition in thought that it is possible to say that a something or *etwas* can be represented by the subject knower; it is through it that this *etwas* can be thought and grasped.

Because it is possible to identify the capability of attaching the “I think” to these representations as a condition for them to belong to the subject knower, in this sense too it can be said, as in the above passages from the *Op*, that apperception is the ground of the faculty of representation. From a facultative perspective, Kant calls the seat of this function the “synthetic unity of apperception.” Kant identifies the latter as being “the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy; indeed this faculty is the understanding itself.”¹⁵⁰ In this respect, the synthetic activity of thought is the highest ground for the capacity of having any representation at all; echoing the above passages from the *Op*, it is the “first” act.

Limiting the discussion here to apperception as the first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing, which concerns thinking alone, and focusing on the necessary synthesis for there to be *something* given to the subject, or “I”, let it be said for

¹⁵⁰ *KrV*, B134n. Original: “*Und so ist die synthetische Einheit der Apperception der höchste Punkt, an dem man allen Verstandesgebrauch, selbst die ganze Logik und nach ihr die Transscendental-Philosophie heften muß, ja dieses Vermögen ist der Verstand selbst.*”

now that there needs to be some given intuitive content for the above discussed synthesis to take place.¹⁵¹ Pointing out this necessity provides one possible interpretative axis from which to address the reason why in these quoted passages from the *Op* Kant qualifies apperception as the first act that grounds all representations with the expression “*blos logischer*” or “merely logical.” This lies in the difference that Kant makes between an intuitive understanding and a discursive understanding; where the first refers to the kind of thought that can be speculatively attributed to a divine being and the latter to the kind of thought present in finite rational beings.¹⁵²

In the case of an intuitive understanding there is no distinction between intuition and concept when it comes to cognition.¹⁵³ And, in so far as these are collapsed, what is being thought is immediately present and at the same time always already a whole that can be said to be, at least in Leibnizian terms, infinitely determined by thought.¹⁵⁴ Contrary to this, a discursive understanding is essentially distinguished from intuition and its content; in the case of human beings, this intuition must be thought of, from the

¹⁵¹ This qualification is a sign of the possible methodological problem that the doctrine of self-positing presents when contrasted with the *KrV*. That is to say, the question of the spatio-temporal nature of human intuition is suspended here because the first level of discussion is limited to thought and not sensibility. Contrary to this, Kant starts in the *KrV* with an exposition of the forms of our sensibility. This dissonance within Kant’s critical position that arises from the *Op* is discussed below, once entire doctrine is elucidated.

¹⁵² *KrV*, A68/B93. I say that it is one of the possible reasons or part of the reason because there are other angles from which this articulation can be unpacked. Another such angle will be articulated below, in the next section, when the main source for the explanation of this first level of the doctrine is Kant’s discussion of the paralogisms of pure reason.

¹⁵³ Cf., *KU* §77; *KrV*, §2.3 & §4.4 and §16n, from the “Transcendental Aesthetic.”

¹⁵⁴ Reich, K. *The Completeness of Kant’s Table of Judgments* Trans. Jane Kneller and Michael Losonsky. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992, 37.

perspective of its relation to the thinking “I,” as *given*.¹⁵⁵ Whether it is *a priori* or in experience, the understanding is limited to the use of mere concepts in its capacity for cognition. As such, they are mere tools to make intuition intelligible to the knower, or “I.” Concepts for Kant are also general in nature and thus refer to their corresponding objects “mediately by means of a mark which can be common to several things.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, within this Kantian paradigm, the subject knower's discursive understanding is conditioned in its cognition of objects by what is given in intuition as well as by a conceptual form of thought that is restricted to the general. Because of this inherent limitation to the subject knower's understanding, it can be said that apperception as the ground of all representations is *merely logical* and not *intuitive*, even in the case of the possibility of attaching the “I think” to an objective representation.¹⁵⁷ The understanding of finite rational beings suffers from an essential poverty of resources.¹⁵⁸

Despite the fact that human thought is merely discursive, there is nonetheless still a productive aspect with respect to it. At this level it is “merely logical,” but nonetheless

¹⁵⁵ *KrV*, B 72. Cf. Allison, H. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven, Yale University Press, Revised Edition 2004, 77.

¹⁵⁶ *KrV*, A320/B377.

¹⁵⁷ This is a reason why Kant calls the schematism of the dynamic categories of the understanding “analogies” of experience, where thought provides only the rules of synthesis.

¹⁵⁸ As is well known, this position challenges past philosophical positions that have ultimately appealed in some way to such divine mode of thought/cognition to ground their systems despite the inherent inability to access or know it (such as Descartes, Mendelssohn, and Leibniz). The idea of a being that could exercise such kind of thought remains for Kant an “unattainable problematic concept.” *KU*, §76. Ak: 5:402. Pluhar, 285.

an “*act*.” This is what Kant refers to as the “spontaneity” of thought.¹⁵⁹ An instance of this activity has already been described above in so far as the necessity of the “I think” being able to be attached to all representations as their condition entails an activity of unifying or synthesizing.¹⁶⁰

Up to this point the notion of apperception referred to in the three quoted passages from the *Op* has been elucidated by taking as an interpretative thread Kant's reference to it as ground for the subject knower's *Vorstellungsvermögen*. The necessity that it be possible for the “I think” to be able to be attached to all representations, both in pure thought or in the cognition of objects, has been discussed: a) in those cases when this possibility is negated; b) as the analytic unity of consciousness; c) in terms the function of unity presupposed both for the latter as well as for judgments, concepts and objects to be possible; d) from the perspective of its merely logical nature of thinking in finite rational beings; and finally e) as the result of the spontaneity in human thought.

As a result, in this section there are two candidates for understanding what Kant means when he writes that self-consciousness is a logical act: a) the analytic unity of

¹⁵⁹ *KrV*, A68/B93.

¹⁶⁰ In addition to this function, in §6 of his lectures on logic, Kant also refers to the more specific ability of the subject knower to come up with or analyze concepts by means of comparison, reflection, and abstraction. Cf. Allison, H. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven, Yale University Press, Revised Edition 2004, 80. This general activity in thought reveals the aspect of Kant's criticism directed against an empiricism in which the unity, connections, or, relations between and among impressions originate not from thought, but instead from the passive repetitions of patterns within impressions that allow for the formation of associations. Indeed, it is precisely because neither the representation “I think” nor any concept whatsoever can be found in these impressions that Kant can argue that it is the *a priori* activity, spontaneity, or, synthesizing power of thought that is a necessary condition for the possibility of all cognition, *a priori* or empirical. As such, apperception as a *logical act* is a principle for the possibility of all representations.

apperception and b) the synthetic one. Both of these concern the sphere of thought alone, itself discursive in nature and conditioned by a necessary connection to a function of unity in a thinking “I.” In both cases of apperception there is also an “act” that can be identified. In the analytic, it is the act of thinking the logical “I” that unites all conscious representations in thought; in the synthetic, it is the act of a synthesis in thought that makes it possible for the subject to contain all representations in the unity of an “I.” And, finally, both are expressed already in an “I think.”

With this indeterminacy in mind, this section by no means exhausts the meaning of what Kant means by apperception as a *logical act*. The full significance of this expression will be evident, however, once all of the sections that address the first level of the doctrine of self-positing are elucidated; the thematic sections, while not contingent, remain artificial as they are philosophically inextricably related.

ii. b. Apperception as “Object”

The way in which apperception can be said to be a logical act was discussed in the previous section by focusing on its function as ground of *all* representations to be possible for a subject knower. This same apperception as a logical act can be addressed also from the perspective of the subject’s possibility of relating to itself as an Object. In the first analytic level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* this occurs in two ways. On the one hand, apperception as a logical act is itself already a form of self-objectification. On the other, the same apperception understood as a logical act is that “*wodurch*” or “through which” the subject is capable self-objectification. As a result, passages from the *Op* reveal two aspects to apperception, one as self-objectification and one the as condition for

the possibility of the latter. Ultimately, in this first level of the doctrine of self-positing, a level restricted to the sphere of the understanding, these two aspects of apperception as self-objectification are found to be in a relationship of reciprocity.

The following passages from the *Op* are clear statements of the fact that at this first level of the doctrine of self-positing the first act is already pointing towards a kind of self-objectification of the subject knower:

The first act of the faculty of representation is that through which the subject makes itself into an object of its representations (*conscientia sui ipsius*) and belongs to *logic*. [It is a] representation through concepts or the thought of the given object, and is analytic.¹⁶¹

I am an Object of my own representation, that is, I am conscious of myself.¹⁶²

Consciousness of itself (*apperceptio*) is an act through which the subject makes itself in general into an Object.¹⁶³

Taken together these passages bring forth three elements: 1) that the subject makes itself into an Object; 2) that it does this through a logical act; and 3) that this act is still considered within the same sphere of the “first act.” The latter point just signifies that the discourse at hand is still within the same first level in the structure of the doctrine of self-positing. The first two, however, need to be accounted for. The two natural places to go to in the *KrV* to find conceptual resources to elucidate these points are the “Deduction”

¹⁶¹ Ak: 22:58. Förster, 216. Original: “*Der erste Act des Vorstellungsvermögens ist der da das Subject sich selbst zum Gegenstande seiner Vorstellungen macht (conscientia sui ipsius) und gehört zur Logik[,]. Vorstellung durch Begriffe oder das Denken des gegebenen Objects und ist analytisch.*”

¹⁶² Ak: 22:98. Förster, 198. Original: “*Ich bin das Object meiner eigenen Vorstellung d.i. ich bin mir meiner selbst bewusst.*”

¹⁶³ Ak: 22: 413. Förster, 180. Original: “*Das Bewußtsein seiner selbst (apperceptio) ist ein Act wodurch das Subject sich überhaupt zum Object macht.*”

and the section “On the Paralogisms of Pure Reason.” In the former Kant addresses not only the function of apperception as ground of all representations, but also, briefly, its nature. In the latter, Kant addresses in what way it is legitimate to claim that one can cognize the “I” of apperception; it elucidates the extent to which it is possible to legitimately take the “I” as Object with the cognitive resources available to finite rational beings.

The subject's act of making itself into an Object is identified explicitly in these passages from the *Op* as self-consciousness (“*conscientia sui ipsius*,” “*Bewusstseyn meiner Selbst*,” “*apperception*,” or “*ich bin mir meiner selbst bewusst*”). Following the lead of what Kant writes in the “Deduction,” one can take this to mean that in so far as the subject is conscious of its own involvement as ground of all of its possible representations, it is grasping itself or the “I” in this conscious thought. In other words, the subject's act of thinking itself as the source of the necessary unity between itself and all its representations is congruent with an act of taking itself as “Object,” even if what is being taken as object of thought is ultimately nothing but a designation (“I”) of its own thinking as a unifying function (“*gehört zur Logik*,” “*Vorstellung durch Begriffe oder das Denken*,” or “*blos logischer Act ist*”).

This account turns on the distinction discussed in the previous section between discursive understanding and intuition; since for a finite rational being cognition is possible only if intuition is *given* to it, the subject is limited at the level of apperception alone to a mere thinking of itself by means of the understanding, which means that the thought of this “I” is itself empty of all intuition. In §25, Kant writes: “...in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as

I am in myself, but only that I am. This representation is a thinking, not an intuiting.”¹⁶⁴
Thus, the subject can only think itself as Object as the logical identity in all representations (together with the necessary synthetic function) and not as its real personal identity.¹⁶⁵

Despite this limitation and the possible connotations that anything identified as an “Object” must be more than just thought, Kant's use of the word “object” to identify the outcome of the logical act of self-consciousness in these passages from the *Op* still appears to be legitimate within the bounds of the *KrV*. This becomes apparent in, for instance, §22 of the “Deduction,” where Kant clarifies that thinking an object and cognizing an object do not entail the same elements.¹⁶⁶ Since there is no intuition at the level of the understanding alone, the object designated in the passages is that of thought. Nonetheless, in the context of the latter quote, the “thought” of an object that is being referred to is that of the categories taken on their own, independent of any intuition. In the case of self-consciousness, the “I” of the “I think” in itself does not immediately reveal the individual forms of thought and synthetic functions thereof. Because of this, in order to capture the sense of Object as it appears in these passages from the *Op* it may prove more useful to refer to the following passage taken from the “Remarks” of his discussion of the second antinomy of pure reason:

...if something is merely thought as an object, without adding any

¹⁶⁴ *KrV*, B157.

¹⁶⁵ Baum, M. “Logisches und personales Ich bei Kant,” in *Probleme der Subjektivität in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. ed. Dieter H. Heidemann. Stuttgart/Bad, Cannstatt 2002, 119.

¹⁶⁶ *KrV*, B146. Original: “*Sich einen Gegenstand denken und einen Gegenstand erkennen, ist also nicht einerlei.*”

synthetic determination of its intuition (as happens in the completely empty representation I), then of course nothing manifold and no composition can be perceived in such a representation...Thus self-consciousness is such that because the subject that thinks is simultaneously its own object, it cannot divide itself (though it can divide the determinations inhering in it); for in regard to its own self every object is absolute unity.¹⁶⁷

In this passage from the *KrV*, Kant uses the concept of an object explicitly to refer to a single representation “I;” he does this despite the fact that there is no content that can be attributed to it when it is taken as an object of mere thought. This is precisely what is being expressed in the *Op* passages when Kant qualifies the act of making itself into an object as belonging merely to the sphere of logic. In other words, if referred to as an object, the “I” at this level cannot be taken as a particular object; in this case it can only be understood merely as an empty representation taken up by thought in the analysis of itself. This is a representation of its synthesizing function.

Another unique articulation of the emptiness of the object of self-consciousness appears in the Paralogisms, when Kant writes: “Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts =

¹⁶⁷ *KrV*, A443/B471. Original: “*Ohne mich hierauf jetzt einzulassen (da es oben ausführlicher erwogen ist), so bemerke ich nur: daß, wenn etwas bloß als Gegenstand gedacht wird, ohne irgend eine synthetische Bestimmung seiner Anschauung hinzu zu setzen (wie denn dieses durch die ganz nackte Vorstellung: Ich, geschieht), so könne freilich nichts Mannifaltiges un keine Zusammensetzung in einer solchen Vorstellung wahrgenommen werden. Da überdem die Prädikate, wodurch ich diesen Gegenstand denke, bloß Anschauungen des inneren Sinnes sind, so kann darin auch nichts vorkommen, welches ein Mannifaltiges außerhalb einander, mithin reale Zusammensetzung beweise. Es bringt also nur das Selbstbewußtsein es so mit sich, daß, weil das Subjekt, welches denkt, zugleich sein eigenes Objekt is, es sich selber nicht teilen kann (obgleich die ihm inhärierende Bestimmungen); denn in Ansehung seiner selbst is jeder Gegenstand absolute Einheit.*”

x.”¹⁶⁸ Once more, the self-objectification that takes place in these passages entails the taking as an Object of thought that which is the logical identity (“I”) shared by all representations in so far as they must all be able to be attached to a single “I think”. And, in so far as this shared “I think” requires for its possibility a unifying function, or, a “determining,” what is being designated is not only a representation of *x* (without intuition), but what is being designated through it is also a mere activity (thinking). Self-consciousness understood as a self-objectification is thus the subject’s grasping of itself in its involvement as a logical act in the grounding all representations.¹⁶⁹

However, the question still remains regarding what it means for self-consciousness as logical act to be that “*wodurch*,” or, “through which” the subject makes itself into Object. One possible source of elucidation follows organically from the sense in which self-consciousness can be understood as an act of self-objectification, even if the designated object of thought is both empty and a mere unifying thinking activity; this source of interpretation is to take note of the way in which this self-objectification fits into the description of what in the *KrV* Kant calls a “constant circle.”¹⁷⁰ This perpetual circle is a sign of the fact that, in abstraction from all empirical content, the thinking subject is only able to think its consciousness of itself through the analysis of the expression “I think” as its object.¹⁷¹ The latter analysis is furthermore itself conditioned

¹⁶⁸ *KrV*, A346/B404.

¹⁶⁹ Hence Kant’s description of this representation as a “thinking” and not an “intuiting” in the passage quoted above. *KrV*, B157.

¹⁷⁰ *KrV*, A346/B404.

¹⁷¹ Reich, K. *The Completeness of Kant’s Table of Judgments* Trans. Jane Kneller and Michael Losonsky. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992, 25. Indeed the very purpose of the “Paralogisms” is to provide such an analysis in order to show refute the

on the possibility of attaching the representation “I think” to this very expression “I think.” Thus, the resulting perpetual circle which Kant speaks of in the “Paralogisms” reveals that, within the sphere of the understanding alone, the most basic requirement for the logical act of self-consciousness (understood here as described in the previous paragraph, i.e., as a form of self-objectification) is that this self-consciousness be possible (understood here as it was described in the previous section, i.e., as the necessity of the possibility of a synthetic unity of apperception for there to be an analytic identity). It is the latter sense of self-consciousness or apperception that brings forth the extent to which it is that “*wodurch*” or “through which” this making itself into an object is possible. Thus this image of the back and forth or vicious circle created by the subject knower’s self-consciousness of its involvement in all thinking brings some schematic clarity to what Kant means in the above passage when he writes that self-consciousness, which is a logical act, is that “through which” the subject makes itself object.

A second way of elucidating the significance of the “*wodurch*” is Kant's description of the “I think” as a “vehicle” of all concepts and judgments.¹⁷² This description takes place in the opening of section of Kant's account of the paralogisms in traditional metaphysical arguments. Kant remarks that the reader must find curious that the “concept” or “judgment” of the “I think” does not appear in the table of the categories that were deduced in the “Analytic” section of the “Doctrine of Elements” in the *KrV*. This is because, even if just as necessary for cognition as the categories of the understanding, it is in fact presupposed by all of them, both analytically (as *a priori* legitimacy of Rational Metaphysics and the common conflation between apperception and inner experience.

¹⁷² *KrV*, A341/B399; A348/B406.

concepts encountered attached to one self-consciousness) and synthetically (in terms of the source for the possibility of their very unifying functions). In other words, and recounting the earlier elucidation of apperception as a logical act, since the possibility of both judgments and concepts are dependent on the possibility of self-consciousness and the categories are themselves pure a priori concepts deduced from the fundamental forms of judgments, then the table of the categories presupposes the possibility of the “I think.”

Furthermore, since the categories gain their significance and purpose as forms of unity of an intuition in general, they depend in their function on the synthetic activity of the “I think.” Now, how does this meaning of “vehicle” relate to that of the *wodurch* or “through which” apperception makes itself into an object? For the purpose of his argument that rational psychology has in fact no substantial object that can be called soul, Kant makes use of the table of categories to analyze the shared “I” in the “I think” and by doing this thus takes it as an object of thought. The result, of course, is that under none of the categorical headings is cognition of this object possible. And yet, as object of thought, it cannot be denied. Once again, the subject knower takes the “I” as object of analysis as it presupposes this very “I think,” in this case, as vehicle of the analysis itself. And, as a result, of Kant’s investigation into the paralogisms of pure reason, the “I” is found to be merely: the subject of the “I think” (i.e., the “I” that is immediately contained in the “I think” according to the principle of identity and that as such cannot be predicated in any judgment), simple (the one I that is contained in the unity of all thought, as apperception; logical identity (the same analytic I in all manifold and changing representations), numerical identity (the same analytic “I” contained in representations

distinguished from this “I”).¹⁷³

These two interpretative schemes of the idea of the “*wodurch*,” however, should be taken here as mere descriptive folds as they add nothing substantial to Kant's main argument for the necessity of a synthetic unity of apperception for representations to be possible, including synthetic *a priori* judgments. This main argument was already accounted for as a “logical act.” Their importance resides instead in that this concept appears used in Kant’s discussion of apperception as both object and means of self-objectification.

There remains, however, a terminological problem when these passages from the *Op* are taken together: the first speaks of the subject making itself into a *Gegenstand* and the others speak instead of the making itself into an *Object*.¹⁷⁴ The significance of this terminological difference is, of course, an old subject of debate in interpretations of Kant’s theoretical philosophy. Eisler’s entry for “object” in his *Kant-Lexicon* claims that, because there is no consistency in Kant’s differing use of these terms, both concepts are interchangeable. Förster’s translation of the *Op* appears to support such an approach, as it does not provide the reader with any editorial apparatus through which to identify which term is being used when. Caygill’s *Kant Dictionary*, on the other hand, takes the distinction to be “crucial to his transcendental philosophy.” A *Gegenstand*, according to Caygill, is an object of experience or appearance that conforms to the *limits* of the understanding and intuition, but *may be* an object of intuition without being related to the functions of the understanding; it only becomes an *Object* when it is cognized by the

¹⁷³ B407-9

¹⁷⁴ In congruence with Kant’s own text, I maintain the spelling of the word as *Object* and not *Objekt*, which is the modern German spelling.

subject. An *Object*, on the other hand, is the result of the unity of intuition under a concept of it; as such it is in a determinate relation to the subject under the unity of apperception and the categories. He does not, however, address to what extent an *Object* can be one of thought only, which, as indicated earlier, is also possible, or if there is any unique characteristic to Kant's frequent characterization of an *Object* as being *überhaupt*. Allison distinguishes between *Object* as going "together with a judgmental or logical conception of an object" and *Gegenstand* goes with the "objective reality that is connected with a 'real' sense of object."¹⁷⁵ Duque's Spanish translation of the *Op* makes a point of distinguishing both terms throughout, under the simple editorial premise that it gives a better vision of the whole of the translated terminology.¹⁷⁶ In fact, most of the time in the fascicles of *Op* under consideration here, Kant appears to be consistently making a differential use of these terms, even if the distinguishing elements are subtle and they don't necessarily follow Caygill's account.

The following passages from the *Op*, which are also representative of the first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing, support a distinction between the two senses of "object;" Kant writes,

The consciousness of myself is a logical act of identity, that is: of the [identity] of apperception, through which the subject makes itself into an Object: a concept that is posited simply in correspondence with a certain

¹⁷⁵ Makreel, R. *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Pure Reason*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, 40. Cf. Allison, H. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983, 135.

¹⁷⁶ Duque, F. "Introducción," in *Trancisión de los principios metafísicos de la ciencia natural a la física (Opus postumum)*. ed. and trans. Felix Pajuelo Duque. Madrid, Anthropos, 1991, 23.

object.¹⁷⁷

The consciousness of myself (*apperceptio*) is an act of the subject to make itself into an Object and merely logical (*Sum*) without determination of the object (*apprehensio simplex*).¹⁷⁸

In both of these passages the terms appear as used distinctly and in parallel fashion. *Object* is being used in relation to pure empty thought (mere concept and/or without determination), whereas *Gegenstand* appears as that which is anticipated as a yet to be defined and determined correlate to the subject made *Object*. Furthermore, the use of *Object* appears always within the first link or outcome in the “logical act” of self-consciousness. We find this very same dual thought in the following passage, even as neither of these concepts is explicitly used:

First, the consciousness of myself (*sum*), which is logical (*cogito*) – not an inference (*ergo sum*), but the rule of identity (*sum cogitans*). In this act of representation (of thought) no synthesis of the manifold of intuition is yet met with; it merely contains an analytic judgment.¹⁷⁹

While introducing new themes that will be treated below, this passage still expresses the

¹⁷⁷ Ak: 22:68. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster’s translation). Original: “*Das Bewustseyn meiner selbst ist ein logischer Act der Identitat[,] nämlich der der Apperception durch den das Subject sich selbst zum Object macht und blos ein Begriff sich irgend einen Gegenstand correspondirend zu setzen.*”

¹⁷⁸ Ak: 22:89. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster’s translation). Original: “*Das Bewustseyn meiner selbst (apperceptio) ist der Act des Subjects sich selbst zum Object zu machen und blos logisch (Sum) ohne Bestimmung des Gegenstandes (apprehensio simplex).*”

¹⁷⁹ Ak: 22:83. Förster, 190. Original: “*Erstlich das Bewustseyn meiner selbst (sum) welches logisch ist (cogito) nicht als ein Schluss (ergo sum) sondern nach der Regel der Identität (sum cogitans) in welchem Act der Vorstellung d.i. des Denkens noch keine Synthesis das Mannifaltigen der Anschauung angetroffen wird sondern der blos ein analytisches Urtheil enthält. -*”

core idea of self-objectification and it does so without use of *Object* or *Gegenstand*: self-consciousness is a logical act that gives itself a representation of itself—makes itself into an object—that is, however, empty of any manifold of intuition or any other determination. It also maintains the juxtaposition of two spheres that at this level still remain separate: thought and intuition.

Keeping in mind both the open debate on the use of these terms in Kant's work as a whole and the overall consistency apparent in the *Op* (whether in the use of the terms or in the core idea of this first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing), there are at least three ways to proceed regarding the question of the congruency among the above quoted passages and, hence, whether or not the interpretation given so far is adequate enough. First, one could claim simply that in the passage in which the term *Gegenstand* appears, despite of the fact that the objectification that is being discussed is merely in thought, what we have are simple slippages in Kant's writing. After all, the text is not a finished one and, while it has been considered a manuscript, the last fascicles that are the subject of the current analysis are the least systematic and the ones written during Kant's most advanced age. Such slippage, thus, can hardly be unexpected. If this is the case, and taking into account the other more consistent passages added to this discussion, then the analysis thus far ought to be sufficient. If, however, this is not to be taken as a slippage, then it is possible to interpret the use of the term *Gegenstand* in the first passage as an indication of the movement or transition that the doctrine of self-positing embodies as a whole: the transition between the logical subject and the concrete or real one. As such this passage can be read as anticipating the entirety of the doctrine or, at the very least, as revealing the tension or struggle in Kant's own thinking as he works out this

doctrine. One finds, in fact, that in those passages in which Kant writes exclusively about self-consciousness, there is no question that we are merely speaking of pure empty thought and the use of *Object* is predominant; but when Kant engages with the idea of self-consciousness in relation to the faculty of representation, then the tension in vocabulary arises. This tension can be seen in the first quoted passage from the *Op*,

The first act of the faculty of representation is that through which the subject makes itself into an object of its representations (*conscientia sui ipsius*) and belongs to logic. [It is a] representation through concepts or the thought of a given Object, and is analytic.¹⁸⁰

Here the topic is self-consciousness in relation to the faculty of representation and Kant not only introduces both terms, but also seems to reverse the function of the two. This can be contrasted to many of the above quoted passages from the *Op* in which self-consciousness is the main subject matter and the used term is *Object*; that is to say in the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, as well as in the explanatory clause that follows “self-consciousness” in the 2nd one. All that is meant by this observation is that the sphere of *Gegenstand*, which if we follow Caygill and Allison is the one associated with intuition and its manifold and, hence, not thought alone, is brought into the discourse when the faculty of representation appears as the main subject matter. This could be taken as support for the idea that the terms appear together and even as exchangeable once Kant appears to be thinking the transition between thought and intuition in the concretization of the subject

¹⁸⁰ Ak: 22:58. Förster, 216. Original: “*Der erste Act des Vorstellungsvermögens ist der da das Subject sich selbst zum Gegenstande seiner Vorstellungen macht (conscientia sui ipsius) und gehört zur Logik. Vorstellung durch Begriffe oder das Denken des gegebenen Objects und ist analytisch.*”

knower through a mediating faculty of representation.¹⁸¹ The final possible approach to this terminological dissonance is to accept that Kant used the terms interchangeably, and thus, attend most to the more general idea that he elucidates in those passages.

While this terminological problem cannot be fully resolved and the second suggested approach can only be evaluated after the exposition of the entirety of the doctrine of self-positing, it can nonetheless be claimed that the above exposition of self-objectification is satisfactory. This is because the act of self-consciousness is, regardless of the term used, always qualified through expressions such as “(merely) logical,” belonging to logic, involving only concepts, without manifold or determination, being analytic only, or only analyzable through the rule of identity. The exposition of the kind of object (“I”) that arises out of the act of self-consciousness is one that does not contradict any of these qualifications, as it is shown to be merely thinking or unifying function and as such empty. This is the case even as self-consciousness is itself recognized as being that “through which” the subject knower’s making itself into an object is possible.

i. c. Apperception and existence

Another aspect of this first analytic level is Kant’s introduction of the proof for the existence of the “I.” The possibility of this proof is already well known from the *KrV* and the position in itself does not change in the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. From Kant’s

¹⁸¹ Perhaps a clarifying note is called for with respect to the “faculty of representation.” I take this faculty to be one that is broader than mere thinking; it appears as he way to address understanding, imagination, and intuition as conditions for the possibility of cognition. In this regard, it can be referred to as the faculty of cognition.

perspective, contained analytically within the “I think” is the knowledge of the existence of an “I.” This existential claim is, however, restricted as to its cognitive connotations. Knowing from the last section that the “I” as an object of consciousness is empty with regards to any intuition, that which is now claimed to exist is also restricted to an existing that is *qua* thinking alone. As a result, such an existence is not yet determined as to its possibility beyond the mere positing of this “I” out of an analysis of the proposition “I think.” From this point of view, the existential claim that “I am” remains ontologically neutral.

In the doctrine of self-positing the claim “I am” remains within the bounds of Kant’s critical work in that the “I” is still considered a mere fact and its truth value follows from the principle of identity and the nature of analytic judgments: the *Cogito* contains analytically *sum*. Here is a representative fragment from the *Op*,

In the proposition: I am thinking, because it is completely identical, no progress, no synthetic judgment is given to me; for it is tautological and the alleged inference: I think, *therefore* I am, is no inference.¹⁸²

Kant is quite explicit that one finds the existence of one’s “I” (*es wird mir*) already embedded in the assertion that “I am thinking” (*ich bin denkend*). In the *KrV* he had already claimed that there is no distinction between the propositions “I think,” “I am thinking” and “I exist thinking;” as a result of this equivalency it becomes more apparent that “I am” or *sum* is contained therein.¹⁸³ In addition to this analytic containment, any

¹⁸² Ak: 22:79. Förster, 187. Original: “*Es wird mir also in dem Satz ich bin denkend[,] weil er gantz identisch ist[,] gar kein Fortschritt kein synthetisches Urtheil gegeben[,] denn er ist tautologisch und der vermeynte Schluß: Ich dencke darum bin ich ist kein Schluß.*”

¹⁸³ Allison, H. *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New

inferential relationship among these propositions is tautological for Kant, that it to say that their identity is self-evident and the judgment that expresses this relationship is empty.¹⁸⁴

The same idea appears in the following passage, but here it does so in explicit relationship to what has been discussed thus far about apperception as the first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing. He writes,

First the consciousness of myself (*sum*), which is logical (*cogito*) – not an inference (*ergo sum*), but by the rule of identity (*sum cogitans*). In this act of representation (of thought) no synthesis of the manifold of intuition is yet met with; it merely contains an analytic judgment.¹⁸⁵

Apperception is here understood as the consciousness of the existence of oneself (*sum*); this self-consciousness is merely logical because it is immediately present within a proposition that in turn expresses an act of thinking in which this same existing “I” participates. In the next passage, Kant ties the “I” about which the existential claim is being made with the idea of apperception as an act through which the subject knower makes itself into an “object;” he writes,

All cognition begins with the consciousness of myself, that I think: the subject, at the same time as object of thought, as Object. This act of apperception (*sum cogitans*) is not yet a judgment (*iudicium*) about an Object, that is to say: it does not yet constitute any relationship between predicate and subject – by means of which cognition is grounded – instead I am only a general object for myself (*comprehensio simplex*), much less

Haven, Yale University Press, Revised Edition 2004, 353.

¹⁸⁴ Ak: 24: 935.

¹⁸⁵ Ak: 22:83. Förster, 190. Original: “*Erstlich das Bewustseyn meiner selbst (sum) welches logisch ist (cogito) nicht als ein Schlus (ergo sum) sondern nach der Regel der Identität (sum cogitans) in welchem Act der Vorstellung d.i. des Denkens noch keine Synthesis das Mannigfaltigen der Anschauung angetroffen wird sondern der blos ein analytisches Urtheil enthält.*”

an inference: [...] ¹⁸⁶

The first sentence ties the idea of self-consciousness as a kind of self-objectification with the explicit claim that the object that results from this logical act is not just merely logical, but also exists in that very condition. It confirms also that in the generality of the object that is now claimed to exist, is nonetheless empty of determinations or manifold. It nonetheless leaves open the possibility of this existing object's potential determinability

Kant's discussion of apperception in relationship to the existential "I am" brings into play all of the different elements that have been addressed so far in this discussion of the first analytic level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. A unified picture begins to arise of this first positing. However, before concluding the discussion on apperception, what follows is a short detour on Kant's critique of Descartes *Cogito* syllogism – a reference that, as some of the passages have already shown, can be found innumerable times in the doctrine.

i. d. The Locus of Kant's Critique of Descartes

In the *KrV*, Kant's main criticisms against Descartes are three: first, that the subject knower's inner sense cannot provide the basis for an argument for the existence of things outside the subject; second, that the metaphysical nature of the "I" cannot be

¹⁸⁶ Ak: 22:89-90. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster's translation). Original: "Alle Erkenntnis hebt von dem Bewusstseyn meiner selbst an, d.i. mich selbst der ich denke das Subject zugleich als Gegenstand des Denkens als Object vorzustellen. Dieser Act der Apperception (sum cogitans) ist noch kein Urtheil (iudicium) über ein Object d.i. noch kein Verhältniß eines Prädicats zum Subject wodurch ein Erkenntnis begründet wird sondern ich bin mir selbst überhaupt ein Gegenstand (apprehensio simplex) noch weniger ein Schluß: [...]"

known through an analysis of the “I think;” and third, that the discovery of the existence of the “I” cannot be inferred from the “I think” by means of a syllogism. It is this third criticism that all of the passages from the *Op* that were quoted in the last section make indirect references; this is the case, for instance, when Kant clarifies that the consciousness of myself as existent, *sum*, is to be understood logically (*cogito*) and not *als ein Schluss (ergo sum)*.¹⁸⁷

For Kant the use of a syllogism to get at the existence of the “I” leads the thinker to assume that the major premise that “everything that thinks exists.” This major premise was for him absurd because it would mean that every being that thinks is a necessary being.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, resuming the discussion from the last section, Kant thought that this inference was a tautology because of the logical identity between “I think” and “I am.”¹⁸⁹

It is commonly accepted, however, that Kant’s understanding of Descartes method for this proof is incorrect. Descartes explicitly denies that he deduced the conclusion through a syllogism with an assumed major premise.¹⁹⁰ That he would not think of doing

¹⁸⁷ Ak: 22:83.

¹⁸⁸ *KrV*, B42. According to Bernard Williams, the argument behind Kant’s claim of absurdity assumes the following: 1) that Kant understood the needed major premise to be a necessary proposition; 2) that necessary beings are those that have their existence contained in their definitions; and 3) that “thinking” is a description or characteristic mark of a possible being. As a result, any entity with the property of thought would have to be a necessary being. Cf., Williams, Bernard. “The Certainty of the Cogito,” in *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1978.

¹⁸⁹ *KrV*, A355.

¹⁹⁰ Descartes makes one of these denials in a reply in Objections II, 38: “But when we become aware that we are thinking beings, this is a primitive act of knowledge derived from no syllogistic reasoning.” Despite Descartes assertion of his methodological intentions, however, scholars have pointed out that he appears at times to contradict himself. Cf., Steven Priest’s “Descartes, Kant, and Self-Consciousness,” where the

this follows from the fact that for him the method by which it is possible to find truths is one that starts from particular notions in order to arrive at general ones, which could only then serve to deduce further truths.¹⁹¹ If, based on his methodological assumptions, Descartes would not have moved from universals to particulars, then the question as to the way in which he arrives to the existence of the “I” must lie in his understanding of thinking itself. What about one’s ability to recognize through all forms of mental awareness the constant presence of the *cogito* (e.g., even in a state of radical doubt) allows one to posit that one exists? It is by answering this question that one is then able to elucidate the more relevant differences and/or similarities between the positions of Kant and Descartes; these are those that are brought to the fore when the doctrine of self-positing is included in the interpretative fold. One approach to this question is to note that Descartes considered two kinds of reasoning as means to reach scientific knowledge: deductive and intuitive.¹⁹² Since he rejects the former on methodological grounds, it follows that the latter is the best candidate for consideration.¹⁹³

author argues that Kant’s interpretation is legitimate on textual grounds, despite Descartes methodological precaution. The fact that for Descartes intuition and deduction can in some instances be operative in the same exercise of thought—with a difference in perspective only— as when propositions are immediately deduced from first principles or when the entirety of the deductive chain can be thought at once, could indeed lend itself to Priest’s observations. However, Descartes is clear in that this is not the methodologically correct way for arriving at the first principles themselves (i.e., “I think, I exist”), since they can be known only by means of the light of our intuitive reason. Rule IV. Pg 15-20 *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Vol. 1* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch

¹⁹¹ Descartes’ response to Clerselier, 127; Reply to Objections II, 38. Vol.2

¹⁹² Rule III in Part one of *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, pg 7-8, Vol. 1. Also Rule IV pg 10. And also Rule IX, pg 28.

¹⁹³ In what follows, the discussion assumes that Descartes has already been convinced that thinking is the one thing that cannot be put into doubt.

From a methodological point of view, there are two basic characteristics to Descartes' notion of intuition: immediacy and simultaneity. They are basic because there are other traits that can belong to it, like clarity and distinctness, but these do not appear to be necessary for it—which is one of the things the example of the wax contributes to *Meditation II*.¹⁹⁴ Intuition must be immediate in that the evidence is wholly present to the mind, without any successive movement of thought from, say, one proposition to another if one were instead reasoning by deduction. It is simultaneous in the sense that the evidence is present at once, without, for instance, any intervention of memory of the past chain of propositions from which the later one has arisen. It is also possible to describe both of these in terms of intuition having “evidence and certitude.”¹⁹⁵ In other words, the evidence has immediate presence in the present moment of thinking, and, when the moment of thinking is thus present, there is no need to seek elsewhere for the source of its truth. What is being thought or intuited is in itself certain.

Intuition as a valid form of reasoning has thus far been discussed as containing two elements that provide methodological tools or aspects that must be fulfilled in order to discover truth. When Descartes describes thinking in general, however, intuition appears to be related also to what he calls “feeling.” The possible association between both lies in that thinking for him includes aspects that would normally (or at least certainly for Kant) be excluded from it. The following passage from *The Principles of Philosophy* is helpful to elucidate this relationship by first accounting for the way a

¹⁹⁴ In *Meditation II* Descartes makes reference to the possibility of intuition of the mind being “imperfect and confused as it was formerly, or clear and distinct as it is at present” (155).

¹⁹⁵ See Rule III from *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, pg 7.

feeling can be said to be a form of thinking; he writes,

By the term 'thought', I understand all that of which we are conscious as operating in us. And that is why not alone understanding, willing, imagining, but also feeling, are here the same thing as thought. For if I say I see, or I walk, I therefore am, [...], my conclusion is not absolutely certain; because it may be that, as often happens in sleep, I think I see or I walk, although I never open my eyes [...]. But if I mean only to talk of my sensation[*sensu*], or my consciously seeming to see or to walk, it becomes quite true because my assertion now refers only to my mind, which alone is concerned with my feeling or thinking that I see or walk.¹⁹⁶

The distinct idea in this passage is that the author brings in walking or seeing as examples of feeling. Understood here as mere awareness or consciousness of these without any reference to a reality outside of itself, it is possible to attribute them to thinking, under the qualification of “feeling.” Since thinking is all that of which one is conscious in us, then the latter qualifies as such. In the *Meditations*, moreover, Descartes brings in the same types of examples, but this time associates them with having “an intuition,” which invites the reader to think that feeling, which is a kind of thinking, instantiates what he thinks pertains to what it means to intuit; he writes,

But what is this piece of wax which cannot be understood excepting by the mind? It is certainly the same that I see, touch, imagine, and finally it is the same which I have always believed it to be from the beginning. But what must particularly be observed is that its perception is neither an act of vision, nor of touch, nor of imagination, and has never been such although it may have appeared formerly to be so, but only an intuition of the mind, which may be imperfect and confused as it was formerly, or clear or distinct as it is at present, according as my attention is more or less

¹⁹⁶ First Part of *The Principles of Philosophy*, principle 9, on p. 222 of Vol I. Here is another passage from the *Meditations* that introduces feeling as a kind of thinking: “[...] Let it be so; still it is at least quite certain that it seems to me that I see light, that I hear noise and that I feel heat. That cannot be false; properly speaking it is what is in me called feeling [*sentire*]; and used in this precise sense that is no other than thinking” (153).

directed to the elements which are found in it, and of which it is composed.¹⁹⁷

Like in the former passage, there are activities of the mind normally associated with bodily functions—acts of vision or touch—that are here “only an intuition of the mind.” Thus the feeling of seeing, touching, and walking is a form of thinking that instantiates intuition. The use of the present participle in both of these passages indicates that what one feels or of which one is intuitively conscious is simultaneous to the state of the mind. This is different from it being for instance a recollection of a past event; in the latter, the consciousness representation of an event that has already taken place is removed from a case of undergoing a feeling of an event at a present moment. It appears also to be immediate; it is one and the same with its experience and, as such, there is for instance no need for the use of propositional form, which would be necessary if the understanding were at play. In this way, feelings also appear to fulfill the two basic characteristics of intuition.

After this elucidation of intuition in terms of both its methodological character and an instantiation of what it may be like as an activity of the mind—feeling—it is important to return to the question that initiated this discussion: “What about one’s ability to recognize through all forms of mental awareness the constant presence of the *cogito* (e.g., even in a state of radical doubt) allows one to posit that one exists?” Another look at the first passage quoted in this section will introduce the resources necessary to answer this question. In the first passage there are three overarching aspects or moments to what Descartes is here describing as thinking. First, by thinking he understands “all

¹⁹⁷ Descartes, 155. Vol. 2

that of which we are conscious as operating in us.” In other words, it is all events or activities that are internal to the subject and of which this subject is aware. The second pertains to the role of the mind itself, to which all awareness is attributed; in reference to feelings, he writes: “But if I mean only to talk of my sensation [*sensu*], or my consciously seeming to see or to walk, it becomes quite true [“I walk, therefore I exist”] because my assertion now refers only to my mind, which alone is concerned with my feeling or thinking that I see or walk.” In this passage, Descartes’ reference to the mind’s concern with thought and its qualification as “my mind” entails that all thinking or awareness is “mine.” The third element is nothing more than the recognition of both of these: the thought that all consciousness or awareness, as mine, is always in the presence of a self or “I.” In other words, the latter is a form of self-consciousness. This recognition is precisely what Descartes exemplifying as he takes thought as its subject matter in the *Meditations*.

The elements in thought that allow for the introduction of self-consciousness are useful for understanding in what way Descartes’ “I think, I am” can result from an intuition. Thinking, which as my awareness or consciousness of what is in me, is always already in the company of the mind or self of the subject thinker. As the “I” actually “thinks,” the possibility of recognizing simultaneously and immediately the existence of a “self” or “I” is co-existent. In this way, the two conditions for the intuition of the existence of the “I” become apparent. That the recognition is simultaneous is evident in that in the moment of thinking the self must be concurrently present, most importantly, it is so even as that of which the thinking is conscious is its own thinking, i.e., the “I think.” Moreover, the idea that there must be a simultaneity involved in this proof is supported

by Descartes description that any time my thinking ceases so does any possibility of knowing if the “I” exists. The recognition is also immediate because the evidence of my thinking, which assumes an “I” to which all awareness is attributed, is one and the same as my awareness of this evidence. In other words, this awareness of the “I think,” which is an awareness of all this “I” is conscious, is also the recognition of something that belongs to it and with which it cannot be parted.

Without entering the greater debate of the success or failure of this proof on its own terms, here is one suggestion as to how this proof may be legitimate. The key would reside in the first person character of “I am.” Because the result of this intuitive reasoning is in the first person, there is no need to verify outside itself if it is in fact the case. In other words, that “I am” cannot be falsified in light of my thinking the intuition of “I am” is both evident and certain.¹⁹⁸ This first person relation is what would make the *cogito* the ideal candidate for arriving at a necessary truth.

The reason for introducing feeling as a form of instantiation of intuition here is to be able to make the thinking activity through which the proof takes place somewhat concrete. Appealing to the absence of a referent—the actual movement of the body as one walks—for the possibility of asserting the truth of these feelings as conceived here as thought exemplifies in what way one’s thinking in general is itself self-referential. This self-referentiality together with the idea that all thought or awareness is possible only as mine is what allows for the intuition of the existence of myself. There are no other representational, conceptual, creative tools at play in this form of thinking. Once Descartes takes away the referent in his explanation of the way in which “I walk” can be

¹⁹⁸ This is an idea taken from a much more complex argument in Bernard Williams’ “The Certainty of the *Cogito*.” The discussion here is not meant to represent that complexity.

true, the nature of intuition concretely reveals itself. The appeal to feeling as an instantiation of intuition also allows one to enter into the present and immediate phenomenal experience of what is otherwise a private event of the mind. Even if one is not engaging in walking or seeing in the outer world, that is to say, even if it is an illusion, one can identify what the appearance of this “feels like.” As such, the analogy between both intuitive events draws one closer to its lived experience, that is to say, to the “what it is like” to think thought and intuitively discover that “I am.” Here there is no longer space for illusion.

Although not immediately relevant in this context, it is of significance to note briefly that in Descartes’ proof, he concludes that the “I” is a “thinking thing.” However, the ontological status of this “I” is open to interpretation, at least within the bounds of the second Meditation. Is there anything other than the identification of the “I” with “thinking”? In his lectures on the second *Meditation* David Allison claims that at this level the “I’s” ontological status remains undefined. If it is not defined, however, then when Descartes asserts that all we know is that the “I” is a thinking thing, the “thing” in this statement connotes the existence of a substance with thought as an attribute. As seen already in sections two and three, in Kant’s account of apperception as an act through which the subject knower can be proven to be an existent “I” limited to thought alone. If, contrary to Allison, Descartes’ proof alone assumes a substance, then there remains here a fundamental difference.

However, regardless of the answer to this question, which would affect the degree to which Descartes holds that the cognition of the soul or mind is possible, a Kantian critique of it is still in order with respect to the concept of thought itself. As just shown,

Descartes' notion of thinking includes "feeling" and "intuition." When it comes to feeling, Descartes includes within the nature of thought itself what for Kant would be in part relegated to the faculty of sensibility. In other words, since within the Cartesian paradigm the feeling of walking both has content and takes place in time, it already implies elements other than pure thought.

Moreover, when it comes to intuition, which for Descartes is both immediate and simultaneous, this too cannot be included as a form of thinking within Kant's critical stance. Like feeling, in Descartes account the act of intuition that is the foundation of any propositional expression of the truth that "I am," takes place in time—even if not successive in nature. In addition, while for Kant thinking is spontaneous, this activity of the mind is limited to a synthetic function of unity that is always already mediated by concepts and judgments as its tools. There is no possibility in Kant critical philosophy for immediacy in pure thought. Thus, regardless of the ontological status of the "I," their proofs are thus far irreconcilable from within this first level of the structure of the doctrine of self-positing. Descartes notion of thinking contains elements excluded from the level of apperception alone.

i. e. "I am" is a *Verbum*

"I am" is the logical act which precedes all representation of the Object; it is a *verbum* by which I posit myself.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Ak: 22:85. Förster, 191. Original: "Ich bin is der logischer Act der vor aller Vorstellung des Objects vorhergeht. (Das sum) ist ein Verbum wodurch ich mich selbst setze."

This formulation of the “I am” or *Sum* is one of the most striking moments in the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. One of the immediate observations is that such a new formulation, which appears several times as well as implied within other formulations, indicates a shift in Kant’s attention: from the “I think” to the “I am.” If one goes back to all the quoted passages in this chapter, it is possible to note that the latter expression is hardly used; the preference is to comment upon the self of self-consciousness, either as act, Object, existence (*qua* thinking). Within the context of a doctrine of *self*-positing, moreover, it is not surprising that the theoretical interest would lie in the “subject” of all possible judgment rather than the proposition by which its identification is made possible. Nonetheless, what matters the most is that with the perspectival shift, Kant identifies *sum* explicitly with a word the meaning of which is the medium by which action is designated in the structure of almost any sentence.

The question, of course, is whether the emphasis on the “I” and its identification with *Verbum*, is the symptom of some fundamental changes between his earlier work and the *Selbstsetzungslehre*. The change is not in Kant’s philosophical position, but rather the perspective from which that position is being presented and thought. The shift away from the use of a propositional structure to what can be described as “apperceptive act”²⁰⁰ or, (anticipating the following chapters) the shift away from references to “faculties” of the subject to a discourse of actions (e.g., spontaneity, receptivity, affecting, making) or “events” (e.g., affection, sight) indicates a shift in the modality of that of which he is accounting. The doctrine is grounded on modality. The doctrine begins from actuality,

²⁰⁰ “*Ein apperzeptiver Akt der Selbstobjectivierung.*” Rescher, Nicholas. In *Sixth International Kant Congress* at the Pennsylvania State University, 1985. ed. G. Funke and Th. M. Seebohm. University Press of America, 1991, 97.

and from there one abstracts the different components and conditions at play in the making of experience. The doctrine begins with an analytic proposition, but one that expresses simultaneously in fact (*Tat*) the existence of the “I,” which Kant describes explicitly as “the autonomy of *a priori* synthetic knowledge to determine myself according to principles and develop into experience as a system (physics).”²⁰¹ With the *Selbstsetzungslehre* Kant moves from conditions for the possibility of experience to conditions of actual experience.²⁰²

In the next chapter, the *Act der Spontaneität* is to get at the heart of this activity and its role from the perspective of constructing experience through the composition of the empirical subject, that is, in its relationship to the content of the “I.” Thus, in many ways, what has just been said is shared between the analytical and ontological levels. What changes is the orientation, the *Act der Spontaneität* is thinking oriented outside itself, developing thus what was left incomplete in the account of apperception as “logical act.” Thought is in search for a material element that resides outside its concept of itself as Object, or at least that would have been the formulation from the perspectives of both *BDG* and *KrV* with respect to absolute position or empirical position, accordingly.

²⁰¹ Ak: 21:102-3.

²⁰² Despite Kant’s constant critique of Descartes, there is a sense in now their accounts are in harmony: both start from actuality (i.e., meditation) and move towards *a priori* truths or conditions.

Chapter Four: The Ontological Level

i.

The representation of apperception[,] which makes itself into an object of intuition[,] contains a twofold act: first, that of positing itself (of spontaneity)[;] and [second], that of being affected by objects and combining [*zusammen zu fassen*] *a priori* the manifold in the representation to [reach] unity (of receptivity).²⁰³

Pure *a priori* intuition contains the acts of spontaneity and receptivity and by the combination of both to unity the act of reciprocity...²⁰⁴

The second conceptual level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* will be identified here as the “ontological level,” which contains three important moments: *Actus der Spontaneität*, *Receptivität*, and *Reciprocität*. Each one of these moments depicts a constitutive aspect of the manner in which the subject posits itself as real, that is to say, in how it does so over and beyond a mere logical, empty thought of the possibility of such *positio*. A movement is effectuated from the merely logical identical judgment of apperception (*cogito, sum*) to a notion of apperception conceived from the perspective of its being an expression of an *Act der Spontaneität* as now the effective vehicle for the possibility of an empirical apperception. This is the case, even if at first still undetermined as to the *modi* (sensible mode) of its real *positio*. As a proposition that expresses an act of spontaneity, *ich bin existierend* is to be understood as an empirical proposition that exhibits the

²⁰³ Ak: 22:31. Förster, 173 (translation modified). Original: “Die Vorstellung der Apperception die sich zum Gegenstand der Anschauung macht enthält einem zwiefachen Act: erstlich den sich selbst zu setzen (der Spontaneität) und den von Gegenständen afficirt zu werden und das Manigfaltige in der Vorstellung zur Einheit *a priori* zusammen zu fassen (den der Receptivität).”

²⁰⁴ Ak: 22:32. Förster, 172 (translation modified). “Die reine Anschauung *a priori* enthält die actus der Spontaneität und Receptivität und durch verbindung derselben zur Einheit der Act der Reciprocität.”

synthetic potential for objective cognition.

As such, furthermore, it simultaneously assumes analytically the fulfillment of all transcendental conditions under which the existence of the thinking and sensible subject is brought forth as actual. Through its act of spontaneity, the subject becomes conscious of its real existence and is capable of unfolding the formal and material modes of its objective reality. Thus, with the *a priori* knowledge of the latter necessary modes, it is capable of positing itself as an *Object* that is no longer conceived either as an empty determining of thought (analytic self-position) nor as a mere manifold of intuition, but instead as containing particular fields of its own potential determination in intuition. The conditions, under which those fields of determinability are capable of being given (*dabile*), reside in the subject's *Act der Receptivität*. In the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, the possibility for the latter fields of time, space, sensible space, *empeiria*, and the transcendental Object is grounded upon Kant's introduction of a sensing I. The subject constructs *a priori* the conditions to enable itself to be open to encounter the datum, exhibiting thus its finitude within the world. In the reciprocity of these *Acts* (*Spontaneität and Receptivität*), the subject can be said to cognize itself – as Object/object – and in this way *eine Erfahrung machen* [to make experience].

The previous section dedicated to the analytic level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* showed the way the Object “I” can be both methodologically arrived at and conceived within a logical notion of apperception. And while in that exposition a synthetic unity of apperception was identified as a necessary condition for the possibility of an “analytic apperception,” at the logical level it remained reduced to its necessary function of unity in the possibility for judgments and concept formations alone. According to the principle

of identity, the analytic containment of the “I am” in the “I think” points to the necessary function of this “I” as the vehicle of all thought, as the copula of all possible judgments, as the unity of concepts to their possible characteristic marks, in other words, as a *Verbum* (the unifying *Verbum*). Understood as that subject (logical, not substantial) that can never be predicated of something else, the “I” is thus nothing other than a logical point of reference common to all representations in thought. The question now, in this section, is how it is possible to *transition* between a merely logical level of apperception to an ontological one.

That this transition is an element in Kant’s doctrine is not in question. We find this idea clearly expressed in the following passage, for example:

Logical consciousness leads [*führt*] to the real and progresses [*schreitet*] from apperception to apprehension and its synthesis of the manifold. [...] The whole of objects of intuition—the world is only [*bloß*] in me (transcendental idealism).²⁰⁵

In the first and last sentences of this passage, one finds Kant emphasizing the aforementioned two distinct levels as well as the idea of a transition between them. This is not the transition that is the characteristically identified problem of the *Op* as a whole (the transition between metaphysics of nature and physics), but one between the broader domains of logic and ontology, each describing a different way the subject posits itself. As shown in “Chapter One” of this dissertation, the predominant meaning of the concept of *setzen*, *Setzung*, or *Positio* that runs through Kant’s pre- and critical works has a dual

²⁰⁵ Ak: 22: 96-7. Förster, 195 (translation modified). Original: “*Das logische Bewußtsein führt zum Realen und schreitet von der Apperception zur Apperception und deren synthesis des Mannifaltigen. Ich kann nicht sagen: Ich denke darum ich bin sondern ein solches Urtheil (der Apprehencio simplex) wäre tautologische – Das Ganze der Objecte der Anschauung – die Welt ist blos in mir (transcendentalen Idealism).*”

sense. While the concept refers to *Sein* in the most general way, for Kant something can be said to *be* in two senses, logical and real. In the first, it refers to nothing other than the copula of a problematic judgment or of a possible concept and its predicates, and says nothing as to whether the problematic judgment or possible concept exists outside the thought that they convey; in the second sense, it refers to the judgment understood now as a proposition (i.e., *Satz* or assertoric judgment) or to the concept as being determined with regard to real existence – without this determination being understood as an added predicate or characteristic mark. In the passage just quoted these two senses of being correspond to what is said of apperception: logical and real, progressing in turn to the function of apprehension. Here the two senses of *Sein* that otherwise transverses Kant's oeuvre as a whole is delimited by his subjectivist paradigm, introduced with the *KrV*. While for the reader the last sentence of the above passage is likely to be in and of itself problematic in a way that will be addressed at a later point (i.e., in what way can it be said that the subject contains within itself the world, without overstepping the boundaries characteristic of Kant's critical thought?), the allusion to the sum total of objects of intuition being within the subject reinforces the difference between the logical and the real spheres of apperception as introduced in the first sentence.

None of what has been said, however, explains what Kant means by *führt* in the above passage. With regards to the possibility for one level of apperception to lead to the other remains unclear. If one returns to a passage of the *Handschrift* referenced earlier in our introduction to the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, the perspectival interpretation appears again. Without investigating the conditions for the possibility of the logical or objective self-consciousness, but instead assuming them in the context of the study of anthropology,

there Kant nevertheless asks: “And why does it not present a double I, but nevertheless a doubled consciousness of this I, first that of mere *thinking* but then also that of inner *perception* (rational and empirical); that is, discursive and intuitive apperception, of which the first belongs to logic and the second to anthropology (as physiology)? The former is without content (matter of cognition), while the latter is provided with a content by inner sense.”²⁰⁶ The distinction made here between a presence of a “double I” versus a “doubled consciousness of this I” shrinks the distance between the two different forms of apperception by what appears to be a mere centering of a difference originally contained in a singular consciousness of a subject capable of both thought and intuition; once again, the same “I” can be said to be conscious of itself or take itself as an Object in a twofold manner (*qua* logic and *qua* perception). The latter supports the perspectival reading of the meaning of the movement between the two levels in the doctrine. And yet, the answer he provides here to the question as to why this is the case, falls back into a separation between the logical and the source of the material for perception – of the real. Their distinct philosophical and epistemological domains are again separate, the grounds for which had been established in the *KrV*.

Without yet solving the problem of what Kant means in the doctrine when he asserting that the logical apperception *leads* to the real, it is nonetheless worth remembering that this is precisely the problem identified in chapter two entitled “Historical and Facultative Tensions” section of the dissertation. There is yet no clear indication as to whether or not in the end the *Selbstsetzungslehre* provides what would have constituted a satisfactory answer to Kant’s contemporary critics and students. In

²⁰⁶ Ak: 7:141. Louden 253n.

particular, this pertains to Reinhold's purported solution to it, where the two levels are ultimately united through a principle of consciousness – "I think" – that leads to affirming the necessity of a single *Vorstellungsvermögen* from which two concepts of representation arise, a simple, empty and *a priori* necessary one, and a fully determined concept that specifies differences in kind within it. If transposed to Kant's doctrine, Reinhold could be said to add, as it were, a unifying level that would be located above the two logical and ontological levels of self-consciousness that compose the structure of his *Selbstsetzungslehre*, and most importantly, a further formalization of Kant's position.²⁰⁷ As per Kant's possible solution, it is still unclear.

ii. First Ontological Moment: *Act der Spontaneität*

The I, the subject, am an object to myself, that is, [the] object of my self. The manifold of representations by which I determine myself stands under an *a priori* principle of self-determination, which is a principle not of apprehension but of apperception, for the purpose of the synthetic unity of space and time. The consciousness of myself is logical merely and leads to no object; it is, rather, a mere determination of the subject in accordance with the rule of identity.²⁰⁸

There are two moments from the first logical level of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* that are most dominant in the *Act der Spontaneität*; these are: apperception as self-

²⁰⁷ Purported solution because it can be argued that Reinhold falls into the same problem he attempted to solve. Even as he presents a same faculty of representation shared by both levels, there is no account of the key function of the synthetic unity of apperception. Instead it introduces a further level of formality (vs. level of material for thought). Duque, F. *Experiencia y sistema. Una investigación sobre el "Opus postumum" de Kant*. PhD Dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1976, 535-6.

²⁰⁸ Ak: 22:82. Förster, 188.

objectification and “I am” as *Verbum*. This is because the latter are transposed into this first moment of the ontological level, itself understood as a) the subject’s positing of itself as an Object – projected as the unity of the multiple of given intuition, formal and material; and b) the potentiality of such projection – the action that brings the projection forth and enables the affirmation of the actuality of the subject as Object. At the ontological level, the logical I as *Verbum* or copula is now directed beyond its mere discursive function and character of unity in thought alone and towards a field of intuition that gives content to the empty notion of Object of pure apperception. It will thus endow the “I” with the potential for serving as copula of an assertoric judgment, or proposition with synthetic content. This self-position is encapsulated by the expression: *Ich bin [as Verbum] existierend*. Thus, unlike the purely logical self-objectification and *Verbum*, spontaneity is now conceived in it’s a *priori* effective function with respect to the subject’s self-representation with intuitive content, and from a larger perspective, in *behuf der Erfahrung*.

While the *Act der Spontaneität* runs through the other two ontological moments (receptivity and reciprocity), when discussed on its own terms, its particularity comes to the fore. One way to see this is to give order to differentiated forms of apperception in terms of the level and nature of the subject’s determination or determinability in thought and/or intuition: “I am thinking” and “I am existing” as well as “I am (in) space and time” and “I am (in) the world” (the latter two will be subject to analysis later on). Here is a passage from the doctrine where anticipating the shortcomings of the first of these expressions, Kant anticipates the meaning of the second:

(*Sum*)[:] copula of a possible judgment; not yet a judgment, since for this a predicate would be necessary (*apprehension*)

simplex). The judgment I am thinking is not synthetic[,] that is to say not such that would go beyond the concept of the representation of itself and beyond a determination of the subject...²⁰⁹

The logical “I” found in pure apperception as the mark of the cause and bearer of thoughts alone is insufficient to posit itself as also instantiated outside the concept of itself. The logical act of taking itself as Object of its own thinking, says nothing of the subject’s existence in reality. In order for the latter to be possible, an entire field of determinability must be given to it. Only as and upon it can the “I” in its function of *Verbum* posit itself: “I am existing.”

The following passages from the *Selbstsetzungslehre* exhibit a conceptual unfolding between “I am thinking” and “I am existing:”

I am: is the logical act which precedes all representations of the Object[;] it is the *verbum* by which I posit myself.²¹⁰

The logical consciousness of myself (*sum*) contains no determination but the real consciousness of intuition (*apperceptio*) [does].²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Ak: 22:91. My translation (the passage is absent from Förster’s translation). Original: “*Sum [ist] die Copula zu einem möglichen Urtheil und noch kein Urtheil selbst, als wozu noch ein Prädicat erforderlich wird (apprehensio simplex). Das Urtheil ich bin denkend ist kein synthetisches, d.i. nich ein solches was über den Begriff der Vorstellung meiner selbst hinausgeht und [also] über eine Bestimmung des Subject hinausgeht, und ich kann nicht sagen Ich denke darum bin ich (cogito ergo sum), welches schon einen Vernunftschluß enthalten würde: Wer da denkt der Existiert, nun denke ich, also existiere ich. Ich bin das denkende Subject aber nicht Object der Anschauung als noch nicht mich selbst erkennend.*”

²¹⁰ Ak: 22:85. Förster, 191 (punctuation modified). Original: “*Ich bin: ist der logische Act der vor aller Vorstellung des Objects vorhergeht ist ein Verbum wodurch ich mich selbst setze.*”

²¹¹ Ak: 22:85. Förster, 191. Original: “*Das logische Bewustseyn meiner selbst Sum enthält keine Bestimmung aber das reale Bewustseyn der Anschauung (apperceptio).*”

The first synthetic act of consciousness is that through which the subject makes itself into an object [*Gegenstand*] of intuition; not logically (analytically) according to the rule of identity[,] but metaphysically (synthetically).²¹²

The first passage corresponds to the by now familiar logical level of the doctrine and its expression “I am thinking.” And as seen in the last chapter, it can be said to precede *a priori* all conscious *representations* because it functions as their necessary ground. The second passage corresponds to the ontological level, where it is possible to express apperception as “I am existing.”²¹³ The introduction of intuition appears to function as the reason – or ground – for affirming the reality of the consciousness that perceives it, while nothing particular is said of this intuition. The mode of the existence of this real consciousness, or, which is the same, the kind of intuition it is capable of being conscious of as its own is still undetermined. Finally, the third passage clarifies that the first act in the ontological level of the doctrine is that of the synthetic unity of apperception over intuition; in view of this, the “real consciousness of intuition” from the second passage contains the synthetic potential to “make itself” into an object [*Gegenstand*] of intuition according to certain yet unspecified conditions.

All three of these subtle distinctions contained within the *Selbstsetzungslehre* are encapsulated in the following passage, introducing more

²¹² Ak: 22:85. Förster, 191. Original: “*Der erste synthetische Act des Bewusstseyns ist der durch welchen das Subject sich selbst zum Gegenstande der Anschauung macht, nicht logisch (analytisch) nach der Regel der Identität sondern metaphysisch (synthetisch).*”

²¹³ This is an expression Kant uses in the passage that is quoted next.

clearly the *Act der Spontaneität* function in apprehension:

The I am is not yet a proposition (*propositio*)[,] but merely the copula to a proposition; not yet a judgment. I am existing contains apprehension, that is, it is not merely a subjective judgment but makes myself into an Object of intuition in space and time...²¹⁴

iii. Second Ontological Moment: Act der Receptivität

The second moment of the ontological level of Kant's *Selbstsetzungslehre* is at the heart of any genuine attempt to interpret the doctrine, not only in so far as it contains the most original ideas – if not the most important aspect – of the *Op*, but also in so far as it lends the reader a wealth of new references to concepts that remained problematic or underdeveloped in Kant's earlier works.²¹⁵ It is the most difficult part of the doctrine as well. The main reasons for this is precisely because the content is not fully developed elsewhere – so there is a shortage of resources – and there are multiple pieces to it that Kant does not always discuss together. Considering the nature of the *Op* to begin with, there are thus two layers of reconstruction: one of the text itself and the other of puzzle that make up the topic of this chapter. As a result, each segment is treated briefly, with the hope of creating a cohesive picture when brought together.

Moreover, here are very many layers that make up this *Act der Receptivität*—each

²¹⁴ Ak: 22: 96-7. Förster, 195. Original: “*Das Ich bin ist noch nicht ein Satz (propositio) sondern blos copula zu einem Satze; noch kein Urtheil. Ich bin existierend enthält die Apprehension, d.i., ist nicht blos ein subjectives Urtheil sondern macht mich selbst zum Object der Anschauung im Raume und der Zeit.*”

²¹⁵ Duque's estimation of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is that it is indeed the most important section of the entire *Op*.

introducing a different field of determinability upon which the spontaneity of the intellectual “I” may extend its synthetic activity. In this way what was only in potentiality within the act of thinking alone can now unfold into experience. Ultimately, this section thus shows how the very material (perception, space and time, sensible space, *empeiria*, *x*, the world) with which the subject and experience are constructed have themselves gone through a process of preparation.

iii. a. Original Attribution²¹⁶

This section introduces both a question as well as the potential key to opening up the folds of receptivity and the doctrine. The question arises from the apparent absence of what in the *KrV* is a layer of perception that is expressed together with the “I think” – here too an empirical proposition that expresses an *a priori* act (the *sum* as verb, in the language of the *Op*).²¹⁷ According to Kant, this perception or “indeterminate empirical

²¹⁶ This is a concept that J. S. Beck developed in his interpretation of Kant’s critical philosophy. The choice to use it here does not necessarily imply that the meaning given in this context corresponds with the original, but simply that it captures the meaning of idea discussed here.

²¹⁷ *KrV*: B423n. A portion of the referenced footnote is: “An indeterminate perception here signifies only something real, which was given, and indeed only to thinking in general, thus not as appearance, and also not as thing in itself (a noumenon), but rather something that in fact exists and is indicated as an existing thing in the proposition ‘I think.’ For it is to be noted that if I called the proposition ‘I think’ and empirical proposition, I would not say by this that the I in this proposition is an empirical representation; for it is rather purely intellectual, because it belongs to thinking in general.” Original: “*Eine unbestimmte Wahrnehmung bedeutet hier nur etwas Reales, das gegeben worden und zwar nur zum Denken überhaupt, also nicht als Erscheinung, auch nicht als Sache an sich selbst (Noumenon), sondern als Etwas, was in der That existirt und in dem Satze: Ich denke, als ein solches bezeichnet wird. Denn es ist zu merken, daß, wenn ich den Satz: Ich denke, einen empirischen Satz genannt habe, ich*

intuition” is prior to any categorical determination of it, which means that it has no status as a substance within the cognitive domain. It is also not an appearance, which means that it does not yet concern the *modi* or manner in which what is given is; space and time are not yet said to be forms of all intuition. Neither is it a *noumenon*. Instead it concerns what he calls the real, what exists in fact, a kind of given empirical representation.

In relation to thinking, this indeterminate empirical intuition is presented as condition for there to be any “I think” at all. However, as empirical intuition, it is clearly not the intellectual “I.” Taking all of these characteristic marks into account, it appears to be what is given to consciousness prior to any self-consciousness, but a condition for its possibility. In other words, it is what must be in place for there to be any “original attribution” at all.

Although he provides no direct citation from which his particular interpretation arises, in his essay “Subjekt und Person bei Kant” Baum gives an account of a moment in Kant’s position that he refers to an “act of *prima occupatio*.”²¹⁸ It designates the first act by which the “sensing I” is attributed or incorporated into the intellectual “I” as belonging to it. According to Baum’s reading, the process by which this takes place is one of self-affection: the act of attention and attachment by and to the “I think.” From what has been discussed thus far concerning the doctrine of self-positing, it is not entirely clear if or where this first act would belong in the schema. It is equally unclear thus far

*dadurch nicht sagen will, das **Ich** in diesem Satze sei empirische Vorstellung; vielmehr ist sie rein intellektuell, weil sie zum Denken überhaupt gehört.”*

²¹⁸ Baum, M. “Subjekt und Person bei Kant,” in *Transzendenz und Existenz. Idealistische Grundlagen und modern Perspektiven des transzendentalen Gedankens. Wolfgang Janke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Baum and Klaus Hammacher. Amnsterdam/Atlanta, GA 2001, 6.

where the earlier indeterminate empirical intuition belongs. It is as if the logical act discussed in the first moment of the “analytic” level of the doctrine assumes always already a relationship between the sensible I (the “indeterminate empirical intuition”) and the intellectual I (thinking). The “I think,” in this account, is the representation of that first unity out of which it is possible for the subject to be conscious of itself. And, due to the fact that the intuitive manifold of this “sensing I” is indeterminate – for no *modi* nor category are yet at play – the result of this original attribution is a self-consciousness as an Object, but only to the extent in which it is unified under a single “I think.” From the perspective of this passage from the *KrV* – the most similar to the *Selbstsetzungslehre* – the “I think” is thus considered as an empirical expression of both the intellectual I and the sensible I, where the latter is already attributed to the former, but where they are both still “in general.” The “I think” expresses these analytically.

In so far as the “I think” represents an act and is analyzed propositionally, then the only content that can be contained analytically within it, is an “intellectual I” that is nothing but thinking. This is Kant’s dominant approach or orientation in the *KrV* and Descartes critique. On the other hand, from a synthetic or ontological perspective, the “I think” stands for an “act of spontaneity” out of which the “passive sensing I,” with all of the indeterminate representations that it is, is attributed in a unity by the “intellectual I” to the “intellectual I” itself.

From the referenced passage in the *KrV* together with Baum’s insights and the resources thus far provided by the analysis of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, there is a first approximation to what “*führt*” between the logical and the ontological levels of the doctrine mean. Moreover, the meaning of the analytic level’s understanding of

apperception as a making itself into an Object can now to be understood as going beyond a mere empty representation or signifier for thinking itself. Self-objectification is grounded not only by the sensible – as condition for the “I think” – but also by a first or original attribution. Here is a passage found in the doctrine that gets closest to the meaning of this moment; Kant writes,

In the cognition of an object there are two modes of representation: 1. of the object in itself; 2. of the object in appearance. The first is that through which the subject posits itself primordially in intuition (*cognitio primaria*) [...].²¹⁹

In this passage the orientation is towards the cognition of an object, and not of the subject, as in the *KrV* reference. Nonetheless, the question still arises as to whether what Kant here calls a “*cognitio primaria*” is not congruent with Baum’s use of the expression of “act of *prima occupatio*.”²²⁰ In all three cases, *KrV* (indeterminate empirical intuition), Baum’s sensing I, and the doctrine’s identification of a mode of representation that concerns an “object [*Gegenstand*] in itself,” there is a field of determinability that is prior, undetermined, and yet manifold, either explicitly said to be “real” or implying some kind of domain that is at the very least not merely formal.

iii. b. Spatio-temporal Field of Determinability

²¹⁹ Ak: 22:20. My translation (passage is absent from Förster’s translation). Original: “*In dem Erkenntnis eines Gegenstandes liegt zweyerley Vorstellungsart 1. des Gegenstandes an sich 2 dem in der Erscheinung. Die erstere ist diejenige wodurch das Subject sich selbst uranfänglich in der Anschauung setzt (cognitio primaria) [...].*”

²²⁰ Baum, M. “Subjekt und Person bei Kant,” in *Transzendenz und Existenz. Idealistische Grundlagen und modern Perspektiven des transzendentalen Gedankens. Wolfgang Janke zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manfred Baum and Klaus Hammacher. Amnsterdam/Atlanta, GA 2001, 6.

What is given first to the power of representation is space and time, and the existence of things in space and in time as the complex (*complex*) of a manifold of intuition, infinitely extended in two directions [...] they [space and time] are only subjectively given in the subject's representation.²²¹

Space and time are forms of the receptivity of our representation²²²

The *Selbstsetzungslehre* contains a field of determinability that is thought spatio-temporally that will necessarily differ in nature from the first field identified above. This is because that possible field of determinability is identified as a real sensible ground for the empirical proposition “I think,” the source of space and time remains the subject itself – as in the *KrV*. The subject knower stands as the source and generator of three outcomes in intuition: a) it defines the *modi* of its existence; b) it determines a spatial and temporal location for itself; and c) in so far as these conditions for the possibility of experience originate in the subject itself, it is the manner in which it posits itself as a whole of space. In this way, the “I” thinks its relationship to its *a priori* forms of intuition as what determines the reach of its domain – unbounded – and simultaneously exhibits the condition for its finitude.

The analysis that follows from this section is primarily centered around space instead of time, since the *Selbstsetzungslehre* privileges the former over the latter. This is so even if the concept of time is very much present as Kant names the basic conditions at

²²¹ Ak: 22: 186.

²²² Ak: 22:79.

play in the doctrine.²²³ As a result, it will be discussed only when it both appears in the referenced passages and those references exhibit particularly distinct formulations of time, or is essential for understanding the status and ramifications of the thinking subject's self-positing as space.

When conceived as empty from any content, the concepts of these forms of intuition do not exhibit any change in nature from the *KrV* to the *Op*. One does however, find that certain of its characteristics are emphasized most. While the first introductory quote's reference to the material simultaneity of space and time and thus appears to put into question the role of space and time as it was presented in the *KrV*, there are also signs that this is not so clearly the case. The first passage affirms the subjective nature of their representations and the second introductory quote states that space and time are forms of receptivity. What distinguishes both passages is that the first speaks of representation and the second of form. In the *KrV*, Kant allows for both of these possibilities. As shown in chapter one, *qua* pure form of intuition, space and time were mere forms of relations; *qua* representation, they required the activity of the imagination. The latter was seen when the imagination posited the point of intersection of the representation of three dimensional space. It was this activity that "gave " space to the consciousness of the subject. In addition, as Baum shows in "Kant on Pure Intuition" is also the case that in the "Aesthetic" Kant starts the exhibition of the concept or object that is space as a kind of representation. The exhibition was then shown to lead to the fact that it was a kind of representation that is unique to intuition alone. Indeed, it is an immediate form of

²²³ Unfortunately, this means that despite the scarcity of commentary on the status of time in the *Op*, what appear as promising lines of inquiry on the subject will have to be excluded. Some such moments that draw the reader in occur as one reads for example: "Seeing needs time" (Ak: 21:71).

representation that was given prior to experience and functioned as the formal condition for the possibility of all synthetic thought. As concept or object, the representation “space” was then shown in the “Analytic” to already display a unity that, originating in the synthetic unity of apperception, enables the application of the categories of the understanding. The synthetic unity of apperception, just as the categories, however, are only rules for synthesis, so it follows that the imagination is the faculty out of which space can be synthesized and become an object to the conscious subject. This is nothing but an act of self-affection, as seen in chapter one. Thus, space in both the *KrV* and the doctrine of self-positing does not yet exhibit any theoretical change.

And yet there are nonetheless some differences at play in the doctrine. One is space’s relation to its material content – which will be treated in the following section. The other two are the development of Kant’s theory of outer affection as well as the idea that the subject is space. In the first, the question arises as to whether or not space’s involvement in outer affection entails that it exists independently outside the subject “Space and time are sense-objects in appearance.” If it is not, then the question also arises as to whether the subject is itself space in so far as it is said to contain everything – an everything that is the product of the subject itself: “That there is something outside me is my own product.”²²⁴ In other words, in what way can the subject be said to be in space – a condition for being affected by material content without thinking that in fact the subject is the creator of even material reality. The latter contradicts, of course, the idea that the material reality can only be given to the subject, due to the passivity of its faculty of sensibility.

²²⁴ AK: 22:38; Ak: 22: 37.

From the perspective of space alone, Kant describes this possibility in a refutation of idealism that is known as the Leningrad Reflection. There, Kant argues that not only is space a form of outer intuition as shown in the *KrV*, but also that it cannot be the mere result of a representation created in the mind – that is to say, a temporal one. For if that were the case, then one could argue that there is no such thing as an outer sense to begin with. It could all be just a fantasy, or creation of the imagination, or dream. According to Kant, this cannot be the case because given that one of the distinct characteristics of space is that it is three dimensional, this idea of three dimensionality could never itself originate in time – the form of inner sense. For time not only depends on spatial representations or outer objects for its determination (i.e., representation), but it is also only pure succession, which forecloses the possibility of it being the source or field of determinability for the very idea of a three dimensional figure or entity.

As a result, the subject is shown to not only be the source of space as the form of all possible outer intuition inheres in it, but also that it must always already have an outer sense, that is, exteriority. This exteriority, which must be a representation for it to be something to a conscious subject is what can be called an “object” – as in the “Aesthetic,” as mentioned above. All of this implies that the subject has space as an *a priori* form of outer sense, can represent space as an object exterior to it that is nothing other than the extension of the whole of outer experience, and is always already located in space as well. Hence, the subject can be said to “be” space and be “in” space at once. There is a field of determinability that is the subject itself and upon which the subject can determine itself in spatial community with all other material bodies. By positing itself as formal space, then, the subject makes it possible for material to be given to it from

outside itself, which it can then determine as objects of cognition. Space and its content is now “capable of being given” (*dabile*) to the subject for its determination (*cognitio*).

iii. c. Material Field of Determinability

The subject posits itself by means of the imagination and simultaneously inserts itself into the very field of determinability that they open for the subject knower. As already seen in the discussion of the subject’s positing itself through space, with this particular instance of self-affection there arises a tension as to the role that the body plays as condition for its possibility. Once the subject is recognized as both the genetic origin as well as that which must necessarily have a location in that object of intuition, the question of the materiality of the subject as a source of a real limitation in that space arises.

In the *Op*’s original concern with the possibility of giving a metaphysical foundation to physics in order to secure its status as a science – one whose cognition is empirical –, Kant turns his philosophical interests towards the material dimension of actual experience. As a result, he turns also towards his conception of the subject’s outer sense as the field in which this material of cognition “takes place.” This material – a dynamic field of forces – is simultaneously also conceived as physical matter as the *Sache an sich selbst* (of immediate concern to the physicist). While in this dissertation the complete transition between this early part of the project represented in the *Op* and the late *Selbstsetzungslehre* has not been treated in itself, it is still possible to infer, from the content of the latter, that Kant returns to the basic elements of his transcendental philosophy and as he does this he situates the problematic of the material of experience in

the embodied nature of this subject.²²⁵

The material forces in space he is concerned, which he terms *Stoff* as a material in general, are instantiated such objects as ether, caloric, or light. This automatically brings forth for Kant the relation between the space in which the subject is located, its sensory system of the subject, and a transition between a mind whose passive faculty is sensibility and a body that belongs to the subject and the field of forces. The body is now conceivable either in terms of a passive receptivity alone, in the form of a channel, conduit, or entrance way for sensibility or as an interacting physical body that in its capacity to respond back into the greater world of outer sense, displays an activity in the receptivity of the manifold for intuition.

Given the dynamic characteristics that Kant gives to the material world, one finds that he begins to attribute the body of the subject with dynamic forces and the function of serving as the original place out of which this dynamic conception of matter finds its reference. In simple terms, whether an ether or field of forces is proven to exist as a condition for the possibility of experience –a condition that is originally understood as independent from the subject – appears less relevant. From an initial outward approach, very much in tune with a scientific method that keeps separate the observer and the observed, Kant returns back to his original conception of the subject as the source for a

²²⁵ Due to the nature of the text, any strong claim as to Kant's intentionality has only speculative value. It is also worth noting here, that while the previous chapters permitted a closer textual interpretation, in this chapter, especially in this section of the ontological level, the presentation is a small step removed, pointing out what philosophical and systematic functions may be identified in certain passages in order to bring to light the *Selbstsetzungslehre an sich selbst* instead. One of the reasons for this is simply the fact that some of the developments are new and thus cannot be textually unpacked by reference to an earlier text, which in this project was primarily limited to the *KrV* (and to a lesser extent, Kant's *Anthro*).

ground that can accommodate the experiential component of physics. Because of this, the meaning of the subject's self-positing itself is problematized. As the active body of the subject becomes the original reference, the material self-positing is nothing but the positing of an embodied subject. This brings to mind an insulated idea of a subject that need not have relations at all with anything other than itself. To borrow from the terminology of the second axiom of intuition, it would be pure intensive forces. Or, which is a macro picture of this idea, it would be all there is – which could be translated into an absolute necessary existence similar to that from *BDG*, or as an entity not unlike a single Leibnizian monad.

The window out is the fact that Kant still maintains the *a priori* form of space as the form that conditions the relations among the mutually determining forces of matter. If the position attributed to Kant in the above section on the “I” positing itself as space is correct, then it shows that any positing of the subject as a material or sensible space retains a subject that stands necessarily upon as a border between the whole of sensible space and the particular embodied subject within it. What is particularly interesting about this rift is that it is the moment when the subject is exhibited *qua* subject as the mere outcome of the interactions of the elemental functions that make it possible for there to be experience. The acts of spontaneity and receptivity can finally act in reciprocity with one another and posit an “I” that *is*.

iii. a. Sensible Space

To speak of sensible space is to speak of a space that, filled by relations of

material forces, it is capable of being sensed by the subject knower. Based on the Leningrad Reflection, the subject is capable of receiving outer intuition because of its outer sense and location. However, being located in space requires more than just showing that the subject has an outer sense that is distinct from its inner sense. A subject must be able to have a location vis-à-vis other bodies in a material sphere; it must be in community. In other words, it requires also to be embodied.

There are a number of passages that express Kant's move towards this idea of embodiment, not only in the doctrine of self-positing, but already and more frequently in fascicles x and xi. This in fact supports the idea that as their appendix, the doctrine is an attempt at grounding the latter, which are still more concretely concerned with the problem of the science of experimental physics – for which the interaction of bodies is fundamental condition. As to the sensible nature of space, Kant writes:

Space and time are intuitions with the dynamic function of positing a manifold of intuition as appearance (*dabile*); thus also an *aspectabile*, as appearance, as appearance, which precedes all apprehensive representation (perception as empirical representation with consciousness) and is thought synthetically *a priori*, according to a principle as thoroughly determining (*intuitus quem sequitur conceptus*) in which the subject posits itself in the collective unity of the manifold.

Within the interest of fascicles x and xi, he writes:

Physics is an empirical science of the complex of the moving forces of matter. These forces also affect the subject – man – and his organs, since man is also a corporeal being. The inner alterations thereby produced in him, with consciousness, are perceptions; his reaction on, and outer alteration of, matter is motion.²²⁶

²²⁶ Ak: 22:44; 22: 299. Förster, 179; 103. Original: “*Raum u. Zeit sind Anschauungen mit der dynamischen Function ein Mannifaltiges der Anschauung als Erscheinung zu setzen (dabile) also auch ein aspectabile als Erscheinung welches vor aller Apprehensionsvorstellung (Warnehmung als empirischer Vorstellung mit Bewustseyn) vorherget un a priori synthetisch nach einem Princip als durchgängige bestimmend*

These passages by no means say the same thing; instead, the first one is an attempt at addressing the possibility of the second one. The first passage is also the one that, in the language of transcendental philosophy, is in need of clarification. In fact, it expresses the crux of the doctrine of self-positing. Space and time are now not only formal functions, but dynamical ones; it is through them that the subject is capable of giving itself – in the sense of self-affection – the appearance for cognition. In other words, it “posits” this appearance. From the perspective of the *KrV* this sounds like a dogmatic position. In what sense could the subject posit a dynamic content of space and time? Positing after all does imply, according to *BDG*, being in general and not an object of cognition.

The possible solution to this apparently uncritical position is to return to the concept of “original attribution” that was discussed earlier. There were two fundamental elements contained under the empirical proposition “I think:” undetermined empirical intuition and the intellectual “I.” And, it was a primordial or original act of attribution that first moved the intellectual “I” to recognize that intuition as its own (although neither as cognition, thing in itself, nor appearance). With this in mind, the second part of this first passage begins to unfold. The manifold that is posited by the dynamical function of space and time is described as the *aspectabile* which is itself prior to any apprehension. In this regard, it stands parallel to the undetermined empirical intuition from the original attribution. Its description as an appearance prior to apprehension indicates that the manifold that is now being posited is spatio-temporal. Thus, in a certain sense, Kant is theorizing a return to that footnote in the “paralogisms” and rethinking that undetermined manifold that was described as the condition for the possibility of any act of thought.

gedacht wird (intuitus quem sequitur conceptus) in welchen das Subject in der collectivern Einheit des Mannifaltigen der Anschauung sich selbst setzt.”

The difference is that, with the results of the *KrV*, it is possible to think – and think only (*cogitabile*) – that given undetermined manifold as always already spatio-temporal. The subject can posit this in thought for the purpose of the making of experience, knowing that, in so far as that undetermined manifold is and must be given to the subject for there to be any thought at all, it must also be necessarily spatio-temporal. After all, they are the formal conditions of all intuition.

The passage also refers to a “synthesis;” the footnote only referred to an “act of spontaneity,” with no further characterization. On the basis of Baum’s discussion of the act of *prima occupatio* in addition to knowing that the “Aesthetics” assumed a synthetic unity grounded at the most general level on the synthetic unity of apperception, one can conclude that the synthesis of the passage refers to both of these types of acts of spontaneity.

Because the main form under consideration is space and the *KrV* focuses on time, there are not many resources there on the kind of synthesis this may entail for the spatial manifold. What is clear is that the imagination is involved and that, since it is a structure of anticipation – the positing can only be thought – then something like the schemas of the analogies may be assumed in this part of the doctrine. Kant, however, does not provide much with regards to this. What is known is that because sensibility is on its own completely passive *qua* its ability for self-determination. And, even as we incorporate the body as a sentient borderland between the outer and inner sensible spheres – which entails an active relationship of the forces constitutive of the living body with the thoroughgoing community of material forces – still at the at the representational it does not appear to have resources for itself. Thus, in both cases the “being of the

sensible” (as Deleuze would phrase it) “can only be thought.”

In light of this unique character of the sensible the question arises as to how it is that this spatio-temporal filled whole of forces that are related in a thoroughgoing determination can be posited *a priori* at all. The anticipated activity cannot lie in sensibility. Nor can it lie in the understanding, since its capacity for cognition relies on discursive concepts that can only go from parts to wholes, which is opposite the nature of spatio-temporal wholes. And, contrary to the literature on this subject, reason also appears to have its shortcomings with regard to its ability to posit such an “object.” While it is certainly the faculty of the unconditioned, and thus seeks the thoroughgoing determination of that with which it concerns itself, especially if, as seen in chapter one, it goes beyond its critical boundaries, it is also the case that its inherent form of determination is logical and not that of sensible forms of intuition. And, when Kant addresses reason’s proper “object,” the description is that it is based upon the what is made available through the understanding itself. Furthermore, while it is certainly known to come into relation with the imagination when the latter is confronted with the sublime, what is being addressed here with the positing of sensible space is precisely a prefiguration in order to be capable of receiving the datum without being susceptible to a disruptive encounter such as it is the case with the sublime.

With this in mind, there is an intriguing passage where, although not stated explicitly, what is being described as an act of the imagination does invite the consideration that it is the faculty involved in this positing. Kant writes:

Someone said that the most beautiful statues are already present in the block of marble; it is only necessary to remove parts of it, etc. – that is, one can represent through the imagination the statue within and the sculptor [really] inserts it. It is only the appearance of a

body. Space and time are products (but primitive products) of our own imagination, hence self-created intuitions, inasmuch as the subject affects itself and is thereby appearance, not thing [*Sache*] in itself. The material element – the thing [*Ding*] in itself – is = x, the mere representation of one's own activity.²²⁷

The relationship between space and time and the imagination's productivity was already developed in the *KrV*, as both forms of sensibility depended on the imagination's "original attribution" to the unity of apperception in order for them to be Objects that could be analyzed in the "Aesthetic." In that sense, they were products of the imagination. The same could be said about the *a priori* determination of them through the subjective movement that was involved in the earlier discussed "positing" of the three dimensionality of space.

The productive role in the passage is being discussed at the same time as the "bringing out" of a statue from marmol. One possible concept that may be of use to think through the nature of positing a sensible space is that of the "monogram." According to Makkreel, a monogram is on the one hand similar to a schema of the imagination in that they both involve rules of organization or construction, except that for the most part Kant restricts the use of the former to talk about constructions in space and the latter for those in time. In the *KrV*, where time was the dominant concern as to its determination with regard to the categories and self-consciousness, the reference used was schema. But as Förster points out, there is a gap in the *KrV* in so far as space was never treated *qua*

²²⁷ Ak: 22:37. Förster, 176. Original: "*Es sagt jemand die schönste Bildsäulen liegen schon im Marmorblock man hat nur nothig theile davon wegzuschaffen etc d.i. Man kann die Statue darin durch Einbildungskraft vorstellen und der Bildhauer legt sie auch hinein. Es ist nur die Erscheinung eines Körpers. Raum und Zeit sind Producte (aber primitive Producte) unsere eigenen Einbildungskraft mithin selbst geschaffene Anschauungen indem das Subject sich selbst afficirt und dadurch Erscheinung nicht Sache an sich ist. Das Materiale –das Ding an sich – ist =x ist die bloße Vorstellung seiner eigenen Thätigkeit.*"

schematization. What that is like was left blank, so Makkreel's position is not negated on the basis of the *KrV*. The monogram's rule, furthermore, is described as one that cannot be reducible to any one empirical object. And, finally, it is associated with the application of mathematical structures on nature – they allow for the generation of a priori figures in this regard. Ultimately, they are a kind of rule for organization that as ideals of sensibility are “models ... of possible empirical intuitions, and yet furnish no rules that allow of being explained and examined” the way it may be possible on the basis of other faculties of thought.²²⁸ These are some of the reasons why the passage above and the function of the imagination as the one that posits this sensible space by means of a kind of monogram appears likely.

None of what has been said, however, denies all involvement of the function of reason. In the context of the larger project of the *Op* – in search for the possibility of a system of empirical cognitions – it appears impossible that this be the case. The proposal here is merely that there are two moments to the subject's self-construction and construction of experience. Reason is finally authorized to systematize within the field of empirical cognition for the purpose of experience, since individual composites and their arrangement under universals by judgment are now based on the positing of this material whole of dynamic relations of force. The source of this base, however, arises out of the imagination's production of the monogram by means of which the form and content of outer sense are generally organized *qua* real relations. What is posited is the field of determinability upon the subject's acts of apprehension in experience are anticipated.

It is in this sense that in chapter two the *Selbstsetzungslehre* was introduced as

²²⁸ Makkreel, R. *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Pure Reason*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, 116.

providing a framework in which both reason and the imagination are the contours to the apparatus by which the subject constructs itself and its fields of determinability. The understanding and judgment remain conspicuously absent in that their function in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* do not change. Sensibility is brought into an active domain of its own, in which the imagination finally reveals in a much more robust way the extent to which it can be conceived as a faculty of sensibility in the construction of experience.

Ultimately, Kant's position according to the doctrine is that, on the one hand, the subject affects itself in anticipation of experience for the purpose of being able to be affected by the given. On the other hand, this self-affection is only that, a self-affection that still requires that what is now capable of being given to the subject actually be given. It is only through the arousal produced by that which comes to the encounter of the subject that the act of spontaneity takes place at all. As in the *KrV*, its ground is the sensible.

Thus, taking a step back to look at the doctrine of self-positing, one finds the following:

-The "I" together with space and time, and the "real" all remain incapable of being known directly. They are, paraphrasing Duque, the ungrounded unlocalizable ground.

-The "I" had already been described by Kant as virtual; it has no particular location *qua* soul, nor can it be experienced.

-Space and time as pure intuitions cannot be intuited or represented on from within sensibility itself.

-From the perspective of the "I think" as an empirical proposition, the acts by

from which the “I think” gains its analytic content as both sensible and intellectual I. This reinforces the precarious stability of the Kantian subject – one that relies on the repetition of a constant activity of positing to reinforce its already relative existence, even as the subject is itself the source of that very possibility

-It is precisely there, in the difference between the positing and the source of the tools for the construction of experience that the difference between positing oneself and making oneself and experience lies. Looking back upon the selected passages, one notices that the work *machen* is used always in relation to the subject and the Object or the subject and experience. What is posited, is the modality of the I, with each repetition of the same acts.

With the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, Kant finally provides an elementary figuration of the human being, the individual that instantiates the subject. The human being begins to appear theoretically as Kant introduces the subject into the concrete and material conditions of the empirical field of determinability – which arises out of the interaction of all other fields. Within the interests of the *Op*, this introduction focuses upon the embodied relation that the subject has to the whole of a sensible dynamical space. The human being’s physiological nature comes to the fore and is given a ground through the doctrine. And he presents him or her as in need to prepare before the envelopment of the material forces encountered within what is now a shared place. The subject is a human being inserted into a world together with other bodies. The subject and the world of the sensible domain is to be both originally prefigured and openly embraced.

Concluding Remarks: *Nosce te ipsum. Sapere Aude!*

To come full circle in this analysis of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, it is time to return to the first passage from the doctrine that was quoted at the very beginning of our analysis. In that first articulation of the idea that was to become the doctrine of self-positing, Kant frames the elements at play within the age old imperative in Western philosophy: “*Nosce te ipsum.*” On the basis of the above exposition of the doctrine of self-positing, and highlighting the role the subject's finitude plays within it, the question now arises: Where to look in order to know oneself as a finite being?

In critical philosophy there is a clear reciprocity between our construction (not creation) of the world and the subject's facultative functions. Kant's critical approach to always already start in experience and abstract from it, in order to then reflect upon those conditions that are immanent to cognition or any other empirical encounter in its proper domain, is pointing to exactly this relationship between the human being and the world. Indeed, it is on that basis that he thinks (or shall we say “invents”) the concept of a subject that is capable of accounting for the formal conditions for the possibility of *a priori* synthetic knowledge and, in light of the *Op*, the material ones for the possibility of a system of empirical phenomena. Above, in the analysis of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, the finitude of the actual subject was brought to the fore in its subjection to the envelopment by sensible space. The system as a whole was shown to exhibit precarious moments, such as a conception of a subject that sustains itself out of acts, for whom there is an essential virtuality of what is otherwise the key to the unity of its identity; it has as its grounds spheres that although subjective remain always inaccessible in themselves (I, space, time, real).

The path taken to arrive at a basic figuration of the character of the human being – an approximation made possible once the subject is theoretically understood as part of the concrete physical world – was one that started with the concept and function of god. In the analysis of the concept of *Setzung* or *positio*, the meaning was found to be at the heart of a philosophical project to ground a notion of inner possibility that did not reduce existence to a predicate. Within it, god played the role of the necessary source of the data for thought. Without such data, there could be no content for predicates, which in turn disallowed any possibility for judgments, concepts and the application of the principle of contradiction. In a proof that was constructed around the notion of a material element of possibility, an absolute existence was necessary for the possibility of any thinking at all. Moving onto the analysis of the concept of positing or *Setzen* in the *KrV*, the role of source, although not origin, of the data for all thinking was taken up by space and time as forms of intuition. Without these *a priori* forms, the relationship between the given and thinking could not be secured, and without the assurance of such synthesis, the necessity of possibility – now grounded on the subject – would not be established. The notion of positing, however, disappeared in the strong sense of the word. In the *KrV*, absolute position could no longer be accounted for despite reason's orientation towards the unconditional. The meaning of the concept was transferred onto the object of cognition; in this way the necessity of the possibility of the actual became relative to the subject. The function of the concept, moreover, appeared within the context of the relationship between thinking, synthesis, and intuition. In the cases of both space and time, positing appeared as an act through which a self-affection of the subject was signified. This was an affection that took place upon these necessary *a priori* forms of intuition, becoming

thus fields capable of determination by thought, or its agent of synthesis, the imagination. From the perspective of this particular function, the concept brings out the fact that a “determination” of any kind, however, is external to the source of the data of thought. Unlike god, space and time are not self-determining.

In this way, the *KrV* opened up a new theoretical space where the concept of *Setzen* became operative; it indicated a function of the mind that affected itself. Nonetheless, its use in this context was still ambiguous. As a concept it was neither thematized nor recurrent enough in the *KrV*, making it hard to establish whether or not its use outside the discussion of absolute position was significant at all. Ultimately, what was clear is that what was meant by “absolute” was now in the *KrV* empirical only.

Looking back from the perspective of the analysis of the *Selbstsetzungslehre*, however, one is able to identify a recurrent set of conceptual relations and functions. First and foremost, the necessity of the possibility that data be capable of being given to thinking in order to establish inner or real possibility appears in all three periods. The turn to a transcendental idealism in the *KrV* positions space and time as the formal conditions under which sensibility is capable of providing the intellectual “I” content that can be synthesized in thought. This is the reason why what is revolutionary in Kant’s thought – his kind of idealism – rests on precisely the introduction of the concept of a “pure form of intuition.” While the establishment of the necessary synthetic possibility for cognition is the aim of his critical thought, the critical character of his thought lies in the move from the function of god to that of space and time. The question of the origin of the given, of course, was no longer of metaphysical interest, since the answer could only be speculative.

As seen in chapter four, the relationship between space and time and the subject's capability of receptivity is at the heart of what is new in the doctrine of self-positing. A basic duality between thought and intuition remains, but the complexity of their relationship is underscored. This occurs especially with regards to receptivity, the locus of Kant's transcendental idealism and empirical realism. In the interest of establishing a relationship between the subject and a ground for a system of empirical cognition (which would respond to his skeptic critics), the reflections in the *Op* end with a different image of the Kantian subject. An added fold is found within the subject's capacity for receptivity, one that involves within it a necessary "act of positing." The meaning of positing here accords with the self-affective function that the concept was shown to have in the *KrV* while at the same time approximating the existential significance it possessed in the *BDG* and *NM*.

Within Kant's subjectivism, the making of experience is made possible through a facultative assemblage that enables this subject to receive the given or data for all thought. In the doctrine of self-positing, this assemblage involves the capacity for the subject to posit the whole of filled space; this is a whole where dynamical forces are thought of as arranged according to the very relations that are singular to space *qua* pure form of intuition. Thus, while what is posited is the concept or object of such a whole, the internal relations of its content correspond still to the subjective forms of intuition.

The fact that this positing is *a priori* does not affect Kant's critical position. This is the case because, starting from the position of actuality – with the I think as an empirical proposition – an analysis of the conditions for the possibility of that actual experience shows the necessity of the position of such a filled space. It does this not

because in actuality the subject is always already situated in this material space – which it nonetheless must be – but because the conditions for the possibility of the “I think” assumes an undetermined empirical intuition that elicits the act of thought called “original attribution.” Knowing that space and time are *a priori* forms of intuition, the possibility of this original attribution assumes already the necessity that its content be a spatio-temporally conditioned material manifold. Otherwise, it would never be able to be given in the first place. Kant’s Leningrad reflection, moreover, explains the way in which it is possible to account for this complex function of space: a necessary form of outer sense that allows for the possibility of outer affection, yet posited *a priori* through a self-affection that constitutes it into an object that can be given to the subject knower in experience. This same necessary possibility of outer affection, moreover, gives the subject a spatial location and opens the question as to the necessity of the embodiment of this subject.

Due to this analysis of the conditions of the “I think,” Kant elaborates upon the relationship between the sensible “I” and the thinking “I” that had been left underdeveloped in his earlier work. The key to this development resides in the acknowledgment of the role of a “sensing I.” Just as the spatio-temporal form of the undetermined empirical intuition becomes necessary, so does the interactive nature of the faculty of sensibility as capable of receptivity. This means that the subject’s embodied and living nature is also brought into the fold of receptivity. The body is both passive channel and in active relationship to the whole of the posited manifold. In fact, it must be so. Without the latter possibility, no arousal of the other facultative acts would be possible at all. The content is not just a field of dynamic forces, but “sensible space.

In so far as the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is interpreted as a source for the elucidation of the nature of empirical consciousness and its relationship to the universal concept of the subject, then it is indeed a first answer to the imperative to “know thyself.” It is indeed an answer that provides the resources from which to continue the path of self-knowledge. This, of course, is not new to Kant’s project. The entire *KrV* is an investigation that results in knowledge of the character of the subject in so far as its *a priori* transcendental conditions for the possibility of experience are revealed. There, “self-knowledge” is thematized in at least two distinct ways.

The first is when he shows that the “I” as it is “in itself” cannot be cognized, due to the discursive nature of our mode of thought and the temporal form of all intuition. In other words, this is because we can know ourselves only as and in appearance. As a consequence of his position, the metaphysical project of “rational psychology” could no longer give reasons for the legitimacy of its claims. This is in itself already a kind of self-knowledge; a knowledge of what cannot be theoretically known. The second is when in the Refutation of Idealism he argues that self-consciousness is itself first made possible only because there is a real entity in outer sense that is cognized by the subject; the cognition of an object not only assumes that something real be given to the subject in intuition, but also that the latter grasp what is given through its forms of thought—most importantly here is the category of substance. It is the determination of the content of intuition for the cognition of this substance that results simultaneously in the determination of the subject’s inner sense. The successive relations of all given intuitive contents in the fluidity of time as *a priori* form in inner sense are determined as the subject grasps the temporal persistence of the appearance of the object, and thinks it as

substance; in that very act of grasping in thought, the subject or “I” makes the state of having such representation its own. As discussed above, this simply means attaching the “I think” to such a state and thus making the latter a conscious perception of its own. It is only because of that action that the subject is led to a perception of its own existence. In this way, the cognition of the existence of the subject is here accounted for as dependent on conditions of outer sense—namely that something be given through it, filling time and capable of eliciting the determination of the objectivity of the appearance as substance (relative to the subject, of course).

Unlike the Cartesian model of subjectivity then, where thought has an immediate relationship to its intuition (discussed in chapter 3), in the Kantian model thought can only perceive its existence (empirical self-consciousness) through the determination of something given in outer sense; in self-perception there is an intermediary at play between the subject's thinking and inner sense which is what is given to it – the real – by means of outer sense. Both of these points about the possibility of knowledge of oneself in terms of inner sense show the difficulties at hand in this endeavor. First and foremost, the only cognition we may have of our inner self is restricted to appearance as time is always already the sensible form of intuition. And, following this, since the expression of pure *a priori* time's singular relational content as succession and its orderability in thought are dependent on the subject's ability to receive the content of outer sense, its capacity for self-perception in inner sense is susceptible to something that is out of its own control.

Moreover, because of the precarious position for self-knowledge that follows from Kant's concept of the subject in the *KrV*, he points out in the introduction to the

MAN that, indeed, no science understood in the strong sense of the term can result from the investigation of inner sense. Not only can there be no “rational psychology,” but there can also be no doctrine that starting from an empirical concept, can lead to an apodictic kind of *a priori* cognition, which is indeed the case for outer sense. According to the *MAN*, an empirical concept such as matter can be analyzed according to the table of categories (thus synthetically) and, on the basis of this, its *a priori* necessary rules of schematization can be shown to apply to this concept's pure part. The foundations of a metaphysics of nature are thus laid. But, in contrast to this, any attempt at developing a science of empirical psychology will (*qua* legitimacy) qualify merely as natural description of the soul, where mathematics is not applicable, for inner sense as one dimensional and successive have no spatial reference from which it can be determinate.

Not only can any science of inner sense never attain synthetic *a priori* knowledge, but psychology as a practice of observation is incredibly hard – inner sense is incredibly susceptible to the environment and bodily influences, introspection can lead to revisionism and, for Kant, engaging with it for too long can be damaging. Indeed, the difficulty is such that Kant goes as far as to explain in the *Metaphysik der Sitten* (henceforth *MS*) that when it comes to our own evaluation of the moral worth of an action – according to the individual's real reasons for having chosen one action over another – a person can never truly be sure whether he or she has acted morally. Thus, even if we as rational beings may be certain as to the truth of a metaphysics of morals, our ability to judge ourselves is always susceptible to a condition of not truly knowing. Thus, despite the fact that Kant leaves the door open for an empirical psychology (as opposed to a rational one), the kind and value of the knowledge that it would provide towards

contributing to the imperative to know oneself remains wanting.

The only other alternative is to develop a science of anthropology, which as in the case of psychology, is empirical. The difference with psychology lies in the fact that what is learned and concluded is based on exterior behavior, which although still susceptible to many difficulties, does allow for multiple evaluations and a deciphering, translating, and describing of different meanings and reasons behind certain cultural behaviors – a study that is to be performed locally upon one’s own cultural specificity as well as upon other groups around the world. The aim of anthropology is thus directed mostly towards the whole human being as well as human nature.

Kant’s political and anthropological cosmopolitan perspectives are well established by now – as well as his darker prejudices towards, for instance, women and peoples of other races or cultural/ethnic backgrounds.²²⁹ Thus, setting aside what can be qualified as the content and perspective of these, there are one thing worth noting, which follow from the dissertation and are promising areas for further consideration in philosophy. It touches upon an epistemological concern. Beyond Kant’s lectures on anthropology, it is in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* that one finds the epistemological entrance point into the field, defining its specific concerns as well as conditions and reach of its conclusions. In his case, the entrance point is both material or physiological and pragmatic. Indeed, It is the material, embodied, and physiological grounds out of which the field is born. As a result, the epistemological field is to be inhabited by philosophers,

²²⁹ Cf. Makkreel, Rudolf A. “Kant on the Scientific Status of Psychology, Anthropology, and History,” in *Kant and the Sciences*, ed. by Eric Watkins, pp. 185-205. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001. Or: Wilson, Holly L. *Pragmatic Anthropology: Its Origin, Meaning, and Critical Significance*. New York, State University of New York Press, 2006.

medical doctors, educators, and physicists alike (among many others).

While not explicitly addressing the question of anthropology as a field of study, in his essay on the topic of Kant's "cosmological apperception," Baum provides an excellent description for this kind of epistemological opening. When referring to a section of Kant's "Leningrad Fragment," he writes:

[... it] deals instead with the dependence of empirical self-consciousness on the self's being an entity in the world, having some duration. The term *Weltwesen* is intentionally ambiguous, for though it means an entity in the world, it also means an entity that has a world within itself – it represents the universe in which it is. It is obvious that the self in this twofold meaning of *Weltwesen* must in one sense mean the human mind or soul, and in another sense the human body.²³⁰

This passage is a true condensation of the key elements that are at issue in the *Selbstsetzungslehre* and that, thus, serve as the coordinates from which to think anthropology. First and foremost, the subject of concern is the empirical subject, the human being. It is the domain of the embodied individual vis-à-vis the "subject" (not always clear from the perspectives of the three main critical works). Second, as source and bearer of the conditions under which it encounters that which is differentiated from it, the human being not only "contains" the world *qua* knower (Kant's main concern in theoretical philosophy), but also creates original domains out of its very worldliness. Posited within the world, the human being is merely a part of a whole. And able to think its relationship to it, is capable of uncovering the degree of its formal and material "subjection" to its epistemological limitations, but also to the domains it has created and continues to create out of its world residence. There is indeed a tension in Kant between

²³⁰ Cf. "Kant on Cosmological Apperception," in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 29, (September 1989), 281-289.

nature or world and freedom or morality, one that he reflects upon in fascicle i of the *Op*, and has been a key concern to interpreters and philosophers. But from an anthropological perspective, which does not require assuming a “transcendent” sphere, the human being is the tension between the transcendental and the material. Kant’s cosmopolitanism is thus deeper than what this word echoes today.

Another thing to take from the introduction of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* is that the theoretical appearance of the empirical subject – the human being – takes place at the heart of a long running investigation into the possibility of a science of the natural world. This does not mean, however, that it is the only place the appearance of the human being cannot take place during an inquiry concerning another field of study; the question is whether any field of knowledge can dispense with the necessity of an account of the *Weltwesen*. If it cannot dispense with this essentially material, embodied, and sentient aspect through which it connects dynamically to the whole that makes up its world, then it is necessary that, as the epigraph taken from Barad’s work says, matter begin to matter again – although, of course, it has effectively never stopped mattering at all.

Whether or not a ground such as the one introduced by Kant’s *Selbstsetzungslehre* entails falling back into the “anthropological slumber” that Foucault identified, cannot be answered here, or yet. What is apparent, however, is that to assume the certainty of such an outcome will not be easy. In *Contra el Humanismo* [*Against Humanism*], Duque positions Kant very clearly outside “humanism.” Even Foucault acknowledges in the *MC* the difficulty in situating Kant’s thought with respect to the *episteme* that was to be dominated by the science of “man.” And, without claiming the necessary expertise on his work for stating this with certainty, it does seem like Cassirer’s functionalist approach to

the grounding of the human sciences – based to a large extent on a Kantian model of subjectivity and its relationship to science – might provide the necessary counter-example to that assumption.²³¹ As with the *Selbstsetzungslehre* itself, however, the resources for any future new conceptions for getting at something like a *Weltwesen* will likely reside in the functions found in parts of Kant’s system as well as in its methodology, which has been shown to be able to morph to the needs of other historical moments.²³²

²³¹ All three of these authors have crossed paths with the *Op*.

²³² Is it not precisely the logical remainder of the “Ding an Sich” that, together with a diachronistic perspective on our forms of intuition and arrangements of the “multitude” of the being of the sensible, that allows for the adaptability of a “critical” approach?

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