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RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF TECHNICITY:  
RETURNING TO KANT ON THE QUESTION OF TECHNICS

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## DEDICATION

To Paul, Bisket, Rudy, and Lohse

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation draws upon Bernard Stiegler's theory of technicity and his arguments regarding the repression of technics in the history of philosophical thought and uses these insights to reread Immanuel Kant's formulation of human subjectivity as it appears in the context of his moral philosophy and theory of religion. The work of this project is directed at two related, but distinct tasks. First, I seek to expose a pattern of thought that I argue hinders our ability to find room to reflect on and defend moral agency. It is a pattern of thought that emerged after the Second World War, notably through the influential writings of Martin Heidegger, and has continued to develop alongside revised accounts of the human-technical relation. Second, I offer a rereading of Kant, through the lens of originary technicity, that unlocks resources for thinking about what it means to be both a moral being as well as a technical being. Together these two concerns are meant to offer a defense of moral freedom against those who, to use Kant's words, "pretend to have seen deeper into the essence of things and therefore boldly declare that freedom is impossible" (*Groundwork* 4:459).†

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. State of the Question

Within the last two decades, there has been an explosion of developments relating to computational devices and information systems. Across the United States, private and public organizations are invested in projects that promise to perfect and expand automation and artificial intelligence. At both the national and international levels, sophisticated media systems and computer programs are being created and adapted for political purposes. Social media companies continue to expand their global networks and promote interconnectivity, even as they increase modes of surveillance and functions as powerhouses for the spread of disinformation. Contemporary technologies are, largely, computational, interactive, immersive, and responsive. Many of the technological objects that we engage with on a regular basis only operate properly if they are linked up with information and communication systems. Human actions are routinely tracked and stored, not because this information is intrinsically valuable or meaningful, but so that data analysts and AI can translate this data into profitable information. Despite the various devices and instruments used to measure everything from weather patterns to the growth of the human embryo, today, there is very little interest in, or discussion of the individual moral agent. In highly industrialized societies, collective and individualized actions are virtually inseparable from technological systems. For some, the shifting power structures that come with technological change are creating new opportunities for rethinking human subjectivity and agency. For others, these shifts mark the beginning of the end of humanity as we know it.<sup>1</sup>

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†Unless otherwise noted, all references to Kant's works translated into English refer to *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1992ff.).

<sup>1</sup> For a helpful study on the origin and development of antihumanism and the debate between humanism and antihumanism, see Kate Soper, *Humanism and Anti-humanism* (London: Hutchinson, 1986). Additionally, see William Schweiker "The Ethics of Responsibility and the Question of Humanism," *Literature and Theology* 18, no. 3 (2004): pp. 251–70. In the latter essay, Schweiker conveys technological power as part of a wider threat of

Though technology has been a subject of scholarly inquiry since at least the mid-twentieth century, very few religious ethicists have attended to the fundamental role that technology plays in human life. Rather than gaining knowledge and competency with respect to how contemporary technologies are built and maintained, the default approach has been to brush new computational technologies aside, as if they are simply more complex tools that can be used for good or ill. In the few cases where more comprehensive approaches have been offered, the trend has been to draw upon the philosophy of technology that developed after the Second World War, especially the late writings of Martin Heidegger, and bring this commentary into conversation with the wisdom and insight of one or more religious traditions. In this context, religion is often drawn upon as a resource that will help us counteract the negative effects of modern technology. Very little has been written on the relationship *between* religiosity and technicity. Instead, religion is often associated with cultural norms and values and is set up in opposition to technological and scientific thinking. Herein lies a problem. In assuming a clear distinction between cultural norms and social values on the one hand, and the “tools” understood to be responsible for the collection and storage of unfathomable amounts of information and the spread of knowledge on the other, scholars of religion miss the opportunity to explore the ways in which religion operates as a machine for cultivation, dissemination, and production.

Meanwhile, theorists in other areas of the academy have proposed innovative approaches to the human-technical relation. New directions in media and literary studies, science and technology studies, and philosophies of information have broadened the scope and range of possibilities for approaching the question of technology. The growing body of literature on new

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overhumanization and describes responsibility ethics and neohumanism as two different responses to the threat of overhumanization and longing for transcendence. Both Soper and Schweiker’s account of overhumanization are useful resources for contextualizing the antihumanist impulses in the philosophy of technology literature.

materialism, object-oriented ontologies, and speculative realism has also opened up new paths. Many of the scholars working in these areas are open to challenging previous ways of thinking and exploring alternative epistemologies. Indeed, it is not uncommon for scholars working in this area to draw freely from religious resources, schemes, and ideas. But there are problems here too. Though much of the work is driven by explicit political concerns or social interests, very few studies explore distinctively moral issues. Normative concerns are frequently rendered as political strategies or aesthetic interventions. “Ethics,” insofar as the term is used, has more to do with practices, performances, and gestures than with the right and the good.

To be sure, very few ethicists today are willing to claim that technology is *simply* the means through which human beings achieve certain ends. Since for most technological determinism is equally inconceivable, the goal is to find a happy medium. This means studies are often directed at determining how much power humans have over technology, and, *vice versa*, how much power technology has over humans.<sup>2</sup> Certain technologies are said to extend our capacities and expand our power while others have the potential to reduce our autonomy, freedom, or whatever else is considered to be normative about human life. Moreover, since it is becoming increasingly clear that we cannot always predict the various ways in which a new technology will positively or negatively affect individuals and societies, ethicists and theologians interested in technology tend to stress how important it is for us to reflect on the ways in which social values, ideas, and political structures promote or hinder technological development.

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<sup>2</sup> The relationship between human autonomy and technological power was especially important for classical theorists of technology such as Lewis Mumford and Jacques Ellul. For a more recent reflection on the relationship between human autonomy and technological power, and a restatement of his own position regarding our need to take responsibility for technology, see Peter-Paul Verbeek, “Subject to Technology: On Autonomic Computing and Human Autonomy, pp. 27–45 in *Law, Human Agency and Autonomic Computing: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology* (United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2011).

Political entities, corporations, computer engineers, technicians, and individual entrepreneurs are frequently called upon to be more transparent and take on a more active role.

Others are far more skeptical about our ability to control and manage technological change and development. Already in the 1980s, with growing attention to technoscience, technics<sup>3</sup> became associated with larger systems, processes, and networks comprised of human and non-human entities.<sup>4</sup> Though some were already growing skeptical of some of the early critiques of technology in which technology was seen as an independent force driving human history, the expansion of information and communication technologies increased concerns that technological systems are capable of taking on a kind of agency all on their own, irrespective of human intentionality and involvement. These concerns continue today. Theorists need only point to the growing research on the displacement of consciousness (sometimes as a result of technical developments, sometimes not) and argue that embodiment expands beyond the skin of the human body. Others shift the attention away from consciousness and the human more generally and instead put their efforts toward developing flat ontologies, evaluating material objects, and finding new avenues to push beyond representational thought more generally. Developments in this direction often coincide with antihumanism and posthumanism sensibilities.<sup>5</sup> In order to reconceptualized the human-technical relation, it is believed, one must begin by deconstructing the “anthropological break” that separates the human from the nonhuman world.

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<sup>3</sup> The term “technics” here refers to the technical objects, their tendencies, and the systems they are part of. As we will see, Stiegler uses the term “technics” more often than he uses the term “technology.” On his account, technics more narrowly defined, refers to the organization of inorganic matter. On the term “technics” and its cognates, see A General Remark about Terminology: *Techne*, Technicity, Technics, Technology, pp. 19–23 below.

<sup>4</sup> See for instance Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (Columbia University Press, 2017); See also N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2017). Hayles, to be sure, is somewhat critical of new materialism. See Hayles, pp. 84–85.

What can ethicists learn from revised accounts of the human-technical relation? And, likewise, how might religious studies scholarship be used to fill out our understanding of the complex ways in which technical objects, forces, and systems reduce or enhance human and nonhuman life? In order to speak to these questions, I am suggesting we approach the topic of technology from a different angle. As I understand it, contemporary discourse on technology continues to be caught up in an indecision about whether or not the human is in a reflexive relationship with technology or if technology is one determining force among many that determines what the human is. Where one stands within the debate is often conveyed in terms of how committed one is to preserving the distinctiveness of human identity.

This dissertation is not concerned with carving out a space somewhere between these two positions in order to make a claim about the scope of moral agency and action. Nor is it an investigation of the ways in which modern technology is alienating us from ourselves or destroying moral freedom. Rather this project is concerned with, on the one hand, diagnosing and deconstructing a pattern of thought that limits what we can and cannot say about the moral experience and, on the other hand, with retrieving resources that can help us think different about moral agency, obligation, and freedom in an age of rapid technical change and development.

## **II. Methodology and Resources**

This dissertation returns to Kant on the question of technics and rereads his writings through the lens of Bernard Stiegler's originary technicity. I will explain more about Stiegler's position on originary technicity below. But first, let me explicate my methodology to help articulate why the return to Kant through Stiegler is warranted.

It has become somewhat customary for theorists of technology to begin with a conceptual investigation of how the term technology is used and then proceed by problematizing those

definitions. Throughout this dissertation I will continually scrutinize a simple definition of technology as a matter of means and ends. Additionally, at the end of this introductory chapter, I will offer some context and clarification about what the terms *techne*, technicity, technics, and technology are meant to signify in the chapters that follow. However, my main objective is not to provide a new or slightly modified definition of technology, but rather to use recent reconfigurations of the human-technical relation to reread a traditional figure who powerfully defended moral freedom. In doing so, I am able to reveal some of the problems with current conceptualizations and demonstrate why the human's relationship with technics does not require us to give up on moral faith.

Moral faith, as I understand it, is the conviction that there is a difference between right and wrong, and our ability to act on that distinction does not depend on identifying and articulating a structure that unifies human determinations toward one particular end. Before another conceived as other, I contend, we are morally free. How we enact that freedom with respect to different degrees of responsibility is something that also needs to be worked out. However, this latter task takes us into the domain of how and why we act given conflicting values and goods. While such concerns are essential for normative thinking, my primary concern in this dissertation is to defend moral freedom and affirm the conditions of its possibility from within the ever changing bounds of technicity.<sup>6</sup>

Stiegler insists that the entire Western philosophical tradition has repressed the question of technics. One major consequence is that though technical objects and systems continue to

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<sup>6</sup> I am returning to Kant to determine what resources he offers for defending moral freedom in light of our technical nature. I should further clarify that I am not advocating for some form of compatibilism, which is to say, I am not suggesting that we can accept both technological determinism and moral freedom insofar as we allow ourselves to view the agent from two different perspectives. On compatibilism, see, especially, Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Retrieved May 25, 2022, from <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/view/10.1093/0199246270.001.0001/acprof-9780199246274>.

shape and condition the various ways in which the human entity exists and evolves, we are improperly situated to identify, articulate, and respond to the forces and powers operating within our current technological epoch. But this does not mean that we should—or indeed can—abandon all previous modes of thought or methods of analysis.

Stiegler's understanding of originary technicity, I insist, presents us with an opportunity to rethink moral freedom in a technological age, but his philosophy, I argue, also exhibits a symptom of a wider problem concerning the way theories of technology support a dubious account of human sociality. Thinking both with and against Stiegler and Kant, this project seeks to better understand the relationship between religiosity, sociality, and technicity and by doing so I am able to use contemporary formulations of the human-technical relation as an *opportunity* to reaffirm the ground and nature of the moral ought.

The philosopher Mary Midgley uses the metaphor of plumbing to explain the function of philosophy when our conceptual schemes and frameworks for understanding the world break down. Her insights help to illustrate why I think it is important to return to Kant. Midgley writes:

Plumbing and philosophy are both activities that arise because elaborate cultures like ours have, beneath their surface, a fairly complex system which is usually unnoticed, but which sometimes goes wrong. In both cases, this can have serious consequences. Each system supplies vital needs for those who live above it. Each is hard to repair when it does go wrong, because neither of them was ever consciously planned as a whole. There have been many ambitious attempts to reshape both of them. But, for both, existing complications are usually too widespread to allow a completely new start.<sup>7</sup>

Midgley's metaphor helps to explain the method used in this study. Our ideas about technology, human action, and agency may be problematic, but we cannot simply begin all over again. We cannot invent a new language. We must work with the concepts we have. The question is where to begin? What resources do we have available to us for making sense of our situation? And

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Midgley, *Utopias, Dolphins and Computers: Problems in Philosophical Plumbing* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.

which concepts prevent us from understanding human subjectivity in light of technological change? What ideas remain unquestioned and yet need to be interrogated?

Depictions of the human being as a product of forces and powers beyond our control (technological or otherwise) quite often inspire those who are interested in normative concerns to offer a counter response. One of the arguments I make in this dissertation is that in recent years, the category of the “social” seems to function in ways that service such a response. Even for those theorists who are otherwise attentive to the constitutive role that technology plays in human life, the category of the “social” (or, alternatively, “human sociality” or “human relationality”) designates a space or realm of existence that sits apart from or over against whatever is determined to be “technological.” Sometimes this sphere functions as a way to secure a particular notion of human identity. But it is also the case that many posthumanists, who are otherwise eager to jettison the autonomous human subject, use the category of the social to designate a field or plain where human exchange informs technological change.

This project problematizes the ontological presuppositions behind the very notion of a social sphere or realm that stands opposite to the human’s technical nature. The attempt to carve out such a sphere or realm that stands above or beyond the technical or technological, I argue, is premised on the notion that it is possible to grasp or perceive an intersubjective reality that somehow transcends our relations to technology. I see no epistemological reason to grant this possibility. Heidegger may have been right when he proposed that we find ourselves already outside of ourselves.<sup>8</sup> However, my claim is that finding of ourselves does not require the *apperception* of ourselves as part of a nation, generation, kingdom, community—not even as a

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<sup>8</sup> I’m alluding here to Heidegger’s conception of being-in-the-world which I discuss at length in Chapter 1.

species.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the constructive stance I maintain throughout this dissertation is that moral actions do not stand or fall with a sense of unity or togetherness. In encountering otherness, the moral agent is always free.

### III. Structure of the Argument

This project has two related but distinct tasks. First, I seek to expose a pattern of thought that has developed *alongside* scholarly discourse on the human-technical relation. This is a pattern of thought that emerges in the European context after Second World War, most notably through the influential writings of Martin Heidegger.<sup>10</sup> Within this pattern of thought, I contend, Kant's epistemology is used as a vehicle for a model of social ontology in which a synthesis determines the relations humans have toward others. Energized by the linguistic turn and concerns to offer a more robust account of human subjectivity, it is a way of thinking that conveys human interaction and exchange as the site for the production of a quasi-metaphysical reality through which our moral capacities are programmed in advance. Consequently, it is believed that whoever or whatever controls the systems of communication and exchange determines the future and sets the limits not only of what *is* the case but what *ought* to be the case. After identifying, exposing, and rejecting a theory of human sociality that tends to accompany various reformulation of the human-technical relation in Chapters 1–3, I turn to the second task of this dissertation.

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<sup>9</sup> I have in mind something like Louis Dumont's understanding of "social apperception." See Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Complete rev. English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), specifically, p. 5. I want to challenge this move on Kantian grounds. I also share some of the concerns expressed by Levinas's in his early critique of Heidegger in "Existence and Existents," and later in *Otherwise Than Being, Or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Though my focus is primarily on Kant and Stiegler's writings, Heidegger's thesis on technology, his critique of classical ontology, and his reading of Kant's are all important for this investigation.

The second task, which begins in Chapter 4, but is primarily taken up in Chapters 5–8, is directed at offering a rereading of Kant, through the lens of originary technicity. Whereas in earlier chapters I demonstrate how technology theorists like Heidegger and Stiegler are able to rework Kant's epistemology to rethink not only human subjectivity but the human-technical relation, beginning with Chapter 5, I make a deliberate attempt to shift the conversation away from Kant's epistemology and instead focus on his moral philosophy and theory of religion. Stiegler, once again, helps me to make this move.

As I already alluded to above, one of Stiegler's main arguments is that philosophical thought has repressed or forgotten to ask the question of technics. Although Stiegler himself continually draws insight from Kant's epistemology and aesthetics, he insists that Kant provides us with few resources for understanding the human-technical relation. I disagree. I argue that because Stiegler is reading Kant through the lens of Heidegger, and more specifically his existential analytic and fundamental ontology, he overlooks the ways in which his theory of technicity mirrors some of the features of Kant's theory of religion.

One of the results of my rereading, to give one important example, is that I am able to show that wherever the line between theoretical and practical reason is being renegotiated in Kant's works, the question of technics is beginning to emerge, but is, for the most part, repressed. It is in Kant's writings on religion where technics begins to surface. This is why I turn directly to Kant's book on religion in Chapters 7 and 8. I argue that because Stiegler ignores Kant's moral philosophy and for the most part his theory of religion, he misses the ways in which Kant's writings on religion treat some of the very same concerns that Stiegler understands himself to be treating with his theory of technics. However, as we will see in Chapter 8, the final resolve for the tension between theoretical and practical reason is not, as many readers of Kant

might expect, the autonomous and rational agent, but rather the adoption of a disposition that is modeled on the figure of Christ.

What does my rereading of Kant through originary technicity contribute to ethical and theological inquiry? Instead of seeing technology as another power or force that the human must resist in order to be a fully rational, autonomous agent, my reading of Kant demonstrates that he offers resources for articulating how certain adoptive mechanisms<sup>11</sup> can be critically assessed in ways that help us better understand how both religion and technology hinder and aid our efforts to envision and bring about a future that is just, beautiful, and good. However, in order for this claim not to be misunderstood, it will be necessary to work through Stiegler's complex understanding of technicity. Therefore, whereas the first part of the dissertation is concerned with summarizing certain features of Stiegler's theory of originary technicity and pushes towards ethics, the second half of the dissertation begins with Kant's ethics and moves toward technics.

#### **IV. Why Kant? Why Now?**

Few thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition have had as much influence as Kant. His epistemology and aesthetics have been commented upon, developed, criticized, and reworked by a multitude of scholars over the centuries. His moral philosophy, though endlessly attacked for being overly rigorous, subjectivist, cold, and impractical, is unmatched when it comes to articulating the power of the moral ought. But Kant is not well known for theorizing technology or technics. More often than not, he is seen as the Enlightenment philosopher par

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<sup>11</sup> Stiegler uses the term "adoption" to indicate a process through which human collectives are differentiated through the adoption of different technics. Adoption, Stiegler insists, is different from adaptation. Adoption is a "projective transformation into a possible future" Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*. Trans. Stephen Barker. (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 173. Henceforth, *TT3*. The unity of human groups—the unity of the "We"—is made possible through the adoption of technics and the shared desire for a common future. I will have more to say about adoption in Chapters 1, 2, and especially 3, where I treat Stiegler's social ontology.

excellence whose extreme rationalism, rigid formalism, and naïve optimism about human agency have helped to establish the technologized and mechanized world that we now find ourselves in. In my judgment, this criticism has prevented us from appreciating what Kant's moral philosophy might yet contribute to philosophical, political, and ethical questions related to technology. Moreover, since he is often the whipping boy for modernist thought more generally, very few studies have been directed at the place of technics in Kant's writings.

What does it mean to suggest that Kant has a theory of technicity? Is it not anachronistic to read Stiegler's theory of technicity back on to Kant? Is this a project of eisegesis? After all, if Stiegler believes that technology constitutes human subjectivity—or that technics forms the horizon of human existence—it is difficult to imagine how his ideas could be brought together with Kant's transcendental idealism and description of freedom as rational agency. Even if it were possible to derive a theory of technicity from Kant, would this not mean turning Kant into some kind of historical materialist? This dissertation will speak directly to these questions, even though it will problematize the presuppositions on which they stand.

To be sure, Kant himself does not claim to be offering a philosophy of technology. But he is not completely silent on all matters relating to *techne* either. As Samuel Weber and Peter Fenves have stressed, Kant was one of the first philosophers to reintroduce *techne* back into philosophical discourse.<sup>12</sup> More precisely, in Kant's first introduction to the *Critique of*

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Weber's and Peter Fenves's arguments are based primarily on the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* devoted to schematism of the categories as well as the first introduction to the third *Critique*. In the original introduction of the *Critique of Judgement* Kant refers to the "Technik" of nature, as well as a *technica speciosa*. Immanuel Kant and Paul Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Henceforth, *CJ* or "third *Critique*." Fenves and Weber both suggest that if we compare the original introduction to the third *Critique* to the published version, it seems as though the term "technics," which was used at numerous points in the original introduction replaced "synthesis" as the name for the original act of brining order to appearances. See Peter Fenves, "*Technica Speciosa: Some Notes on the Ambivalence of Technics in Kant and Weber*," in *Experimenting: Essays with Samuel Weber*, eds. Simon Morgan Wortham and Gary Hall, (Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 85. Samuel Weber,

*Judgment*, he introduces the term *Technik* [*technisch*] into the lexicon of ‘first philosophy.’<sup>13</sup> In fact, according to Weber and Fenves, Kant’s choice of the term *Technik*, which they render as “technics,” along with its proximity to the power of judgment itself, warrants reading the third *Critique* as a critique of *Technics*. Indeed, Kant’s decision to omit all but one occurrence of the term *Technik* in his revised introduction to the text, further demonstrates Kant’s own uncertainty regarding the place of technics in his philosophical system. *Technics* does not belong entirely to theoretical or practical reason, which is why, Fenves explains, it seems to warrant a critique all on its own. Without affirming or denying this position, it nevertheless provokes additional questions about the proper relationship between theoretical and practical reason and Kant’s arguments regarding the importance of prioritizing the latter over the former.

There is another reason the return to Kant is important. I argue that Stiegler reads Kant only through Heidegger and that this is in part why he overlooks the way in which something like technicity is at work within Kantian thought. This also means that though my primary interlocutors are Kant and Stiegler, it will be necessary to focus at times on Heidegger’s reading of Kant as well as his contribution to the philosophy of technology. As I discuss in the Chapter 1, Heidegger’s philosophy of technology continues to influence contemporary discourse on technology. While it not uncommon for summaries of his writings on technology to reference his interest in Kant’s epistemology, very little has been written on how Heidegger’s early engagement with Kant’s moral philosophy influenced his later writings on technology. Chapter

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“Ambivalence, the Humanities and the Study of Literature Author(s),” in *Diacritics*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Fenves writes: “When did a techne-term first become a technical term of philosophical discourse? This question can be easily answered: after the ancient Greek philosophers, how adopted the word techne from everyday speech, techne-terms first entered the lexicon of ‘first philosophy’ in the extensive introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* that Kant carefully prepared and soon discarded in favor of a shorter introduction that largely does without these terms.” See Fenves, “*Technica Speciosa*: Some Notes on the Ambivalence of Technics in Kant and Weber,” in *Experimenting: Essays with Samuel Weber*, eds. Simon Morgan Wortham and Gary Hall, (Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 85.

6, which treats Kant's feeling of respect and Heidegger's reading of it, is especially attentive to this latter task.

In short, it is my contention that Kant's philosophy has been too quickly dismissed by theorists interested in the human-technical relation. Most theorists, Stiegler included, reject Kant's epistemology and presuppose that his entire account of human subjectivity can be gleaned from Kant's first *Critique*. After exploring the problems that arise with Stiegler's attempt to repurpose Kant's theory of schematism, I shift the attention away from Kant's epistemology and instead look for resources to address the human-technical relation in his moral philosophy and theory of religion.

## V. Bernard Stiegler and Originary Technicity

Throughout this dissertation I use the term "originary technicity" to refer to a way of conceiving the human-technical relation and to reference a specific contemporary intellectual current, of which Stiegler is a part.<sup>14</sup> Originary technicity as a way of thinking about the human-technical relation captures two ideas that I think are essential for approaching technology in the twenty-first century. First, human existence is irreducibly technical, which is to say there is no originary point at which the human existed prior to technics. Second, originary technicity presupposes that coherent reflection on technology requires a deeper reflection on temporality and historicity.<sup>15</sup>

As a contemporary intellectual current, originary technicity draws insights from Heidegger's writings on technology, but is more directly associated with Derridean thought and

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<sup>14</sup> Other thinkers associated with originary technicity include Geoffrey Bennington, Simon Critchley, Richard Beardsworth, and Arthur Bradley, to name a few. For a summary and analysis of originary technicity see especially, Also see Richard Beardsworth, "Thinking Technicity," *Cultural Values*, 2:1(1998) pp. 70–86; and Ben Roberts, "Stiegler Reading Derrida: The Prosthesis of Deconstruction in Technics," *Postmodern Culture*, 16:1 (2005).

<sup>15</sup> See Arthur Bradley, *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 86.

the work of other French philosophers, especially Gilbert Simondon and André Leroi-Gourhan. It borrows methods and concepts from media theory, media aesthetics, continental philosophy—especially phenomenology—and certain aspects of Marx’s materialism and Freudian psychoanalysis.<sup>16</sup> For thinkers who accept the thesis of originary technicity, such as myself, it is pointless, even illusionary to speak of a time when humans were non-technical creatures.<sup>17</sup> The human life form is fundamentally a technical life form. This claim is at the center of Stiegler’s account of originary technicity.<sup>18</sup>

Stiegler is an important interlocuter for this project for several reasons. First of all, insofar as one finds his arguments persuasive, Stiegler provides plenty of reasons to return to Kant on the question of technics. Though Stiegler only rarely engages Kant’s writings directly, he frequently incorporates Kantian concepts, terms, and ideas into his writings. Perhaps most importantly, his account of technical objects as temporal objects is built upon Kant’s account of schematism in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Secondly, as I already noted above, Stiegler insists that technics has been repressed in the history of thought. Despite the fact that Stiegler views one of his major works as largely the result of his engagement with Kant, he spends very little time exploring Kant’s writings beyond the first *Critique*.<sup>19</sup> What’s more is that he is highly critical of Kant’s practical philosophy, especially Kant’s conception of the will, and he insists that Kant

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<sup>16</sup> On Stiegler’s contribution to postphenomenology, see Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media,” in *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human–Media–World Relations*, edited by Yoni Van Den Eede, Stacey O’Neal Irwin, and Galit Wellner (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017), pp. 185–206.

<sup>17</sup> See Arthur Bradley, *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida*; Richard Beardsworth, “Thinking Technicity,” *Cultural Values*, 2:1(1998) pp. 70–86; and Ben Roberts, “Stiegler Reading Derrida: The Prosthesis of Deconstruction in Technics,” *Postmodern Culture*, 16:1 (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Stiegler’s most important works to-date are the three volumes that make up his *Technics and Time*. In the first volume, he argues that “technics,” by which he means the process of exteriorization—or sometimes stated as the pursuit of life by means other than life—forms the horizon of human existence. Humans and technics developed simultaneously. In this way, the human is constituted by technics.

<sup>19</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise* (Stanford University Press, 2010) p. XII.

simply cannot think technics beyond applied science. Nevertheless, as I argue in Chapter 4, Stiegler’s misreadings of Kant can be used as a starting place for an alternative reading.

In addition to providing reasons to return to Kant, Stiegler’s innovative and expansive work on technicity is worth careful analysis on its own. Moreover, throughout his many writings, he stages various encounters between different modes of thought, and utilizes a variety of methodologies and conceptual frameworks, all in an effort to better understand the human-technical relation.<sup>20</sup> While his use of various methods and sources can make his work difficult to read, he is also able to show how inquiry into technicity forges new links and stirs up old tensions. Additionally, as I will explain further in Chapter 1, Stiegler writings also encapsulate a collection of trends and currents in the philosophy of technology. Not only is he able to provide a mode of that can be applied to particular technologies, technical objects, and systems (i.e., film, writing, computational technologies), his theorizations also afford ways to tracks technological change over time. He is also not afraid to theorize about “Technology” as such.<sup>21</sup>

Though I accept many of the main claims that define originary technicity as a way of thinking about the human-technical relation, it should be said at the outset that I will not be exploring—at least not in a systematic, sustained way—the direct implications of how the thesis of originary technicity can be applied to concrete ethical issues. Rather, my efforts are directed at finding space to articulate the moral experience and discuss moral freedom within a body of

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Bishop is one exception. See “Technics and Liturgics,” *Christian Bioethics* 26 (1): 12–30. doi:10.1093/cb/cbz016. But by and large, Stiegler’s work has not gained much traction in religious studies, even less so in religious ethics. This is surprising since Stiegler was a student of Derrida and many scholars of religion have found Derrida’s insights to be fruitful. Stiegler was deeply influence by Derrida’s project of grammatology, and yet his ideas have not been explored at length in relation to religion. It therefore remains to be seen what insights Stiegler’s theory of technics might offer for those of us interested in theorizing the relationship between religion and technology or between theology and technology.

<sup>21</sup> Here I’m alluding to an essay by Pieter Lemmens, which I discuss in Chapter 1. Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Technology Big Again. Reconsidering the Question of the Transcendental and ‘Technology with a Capital T’ in the Light of the Anthropocene.” *Found Sci* 27, 171–187 (2022). Online: Retrieved April 8, 2022. p. 172.

literature where originary technicity or the constitutive role of technicity is already accepted as a starting point. Put differently, I am concerned with identifying and deconstructing the conceptual roadblocks and intellectual presuppositions that get in the way of ethical analysis.

## **VI. Contribution**

While there are some religious ethicists who have written on technology in recent years, much of the work that has been done focuses primarily on human power and control and how new technologies are affecting human freedom, agency, and social, moral, and political life more generally. Very few of these studies have taken into account information and communication technologies specifically—and those who have paid attention to this area of development have not kept up with contemporary debates on computation. Too often when religion is discussed alongside new developments in communication and information technologies, the relationship is construed instrumentally. Against this, I am presenting an argument that supports the view that technicity, religion, and ethics must be treated together if we are to sufficiently address contemporary ethical questions related to technology.

Additionally, though this dissertation is not primarily concerned with explicating Stiegler's work and contributions to the philosophy of technology, it provides an introduction to his thought and demonstrates how his ideas might be utilized by theologians, ethicists, and scholars of religion. The return to Kant through Stiegler, I contend, allows us to better understand the relationship between technics and normative thinking and invites reflection on the relationship between technicity and religiosity.

Reading Stiegler and Kant together also creates plenty of friction. Although I suggest that Kant has a more complex understanding of human subjectivity and intersubjectivity than is often recognized, he nonetheless prioritizes the thinking, knowing, and acting agent. He emphasizes

the human's intellectual powers, the unity of reason, and the mind's capacity to bring unity and coherence to an external world. And while I am somewhat critical of Heidegger's reading of Kant's distinctions between persons and things (addressed in Chapter 6), I do not believe Kant's arguments are concerned with lending autonomy to nonhuman entities nor is he concerned with an ontology of things. His philosophical project is centered around the *human* person as a rational agent. His epistemology sets limits on the human's cognitive capacities, but it is through the power of reason that human beings find freedom—freedom, always, under law. Anything else would be an absurdity.

Stiegler, by contrast, is a postmodern thinker who is suspicious of philosophies of human subjectivity. He offers a theory of individuation in which the human is understood not as a manifestation of idea or essence, but a set of relations, tendencies, and processes.<sup>22</sup> There is no moment in time that we can point to that would tell us what the human being truly is. The human's lack of essence—lack of a true origin—is what Stiegler means by the “originary default.” As Arthur Bradley explains: “[W]hat we call the ‘human’ is thus the product of an aporetic relation between interiority and exteriority where each term defines, and contaminates, its other.”<sup>23</sup>

And yet, despite all of these differences between Kant and Stiegler, it is possible to read Stiegler as a constructive thinker. What I mean by this is that Stiegler is concerned with accounting for how it is that we encounter, explain, and represent the process of individuation, and in his more constructive and critical moments, he is *also* interested in articulating the purpose and outcome of such a reflection. He does not claim to be making moral arguments, but

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<sup>22</sup> As I discuss in Chapter 3, individuation in this context refers to an expression of an ongoing process or operation.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Bradley, “Originary Technicity? Technology and Anthropology,” pp. 78–100 in *Technicity*. Louis Armand and Arthur Bradley, eds. (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006).

he appears to be committed to defending certain aspects of human life. His project further calls for a way of reading different technological epochs and for us to anticipate a future still to come. And so, in addition to sharing a philosophical heritage and employing many of the same concepts, Stiegler and Kant describe the human in such a way that what is gained by the inquiry can help us work towards how things “ought” to be.

**\*A General Remark about Terminology: *Techne*, Technicity, Technics, Technology**

Certain intellectual challenges arise when we turn to investigate technology as a part of human life. One challenge is that technology is so ubiquitous that it can be difficult to grasp the scope of what we are dealing with. In attempting to be precise about what it is we are talking about we are already falling into certain metaphysical traps. As Heidegger famously argued, in simply beginning with the question “what *is* technology” we commit ourselves to a set of metaphysical concepts and categories passed down to us from antiquity. Even some of most radical reinterpretations of the human-technical relation can be shown to rely on easy distinctions between subject and object, nature and culture, freedom and necessity, and passivity and activity. As a way to avoid this trap, thinkers will often avoid providing concrete definitions of technology or any of its cognates. Many, including Stiegler, invent new terms or provide multiple definitions within the same text.

Further complications pertain to matters of translation. As I mentioned above, it has become standard practice to open an inquiry into technology with an etymological analysis of how the term was used in ancient Greek texts and compare that analysis with how the term is used today. But even within the writings of Aristotle and Plato we find that the meaning of *techne* [τέχνη (technē)] is anything but straightforward. English translations of German and

French scholarship also introduce some problems.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the German word “*Technik*” is frequently translated as “technology” in English even when the English term “technique” might be more fitting. A similar problem arises with the French “*la technique*.”<sup>25</sup> In English, the term “technique” refers broadly to skills, abilities, methods, or a way of doing something. It is not a term that is immediately associated with “technology” as the term is commonly used in English.

The English word “technology” is frequently used to refer to a domain or system of technical objects, processes, and practices—a domain that is made possible through applied science and advanced through the expansion and innovation associated with instrumental knowledge. In its plural form (“technologies”) the term often indicates a subset of technology. For instance, one can refer to “computer technologies” or “medical technologies.” Much of the criticism of technology that arose in the mid-twentieth century was associated with this definition of technology. In this literature and still today, a critical approach to technology means reevaluating human limits and our trust in modern science and rationality. This definition of technology is still the dominate definition, both in popular culture as well as in scholarly discourse. This is somewhat surprising since this definition of technology fell under scrutiny almost as soon as it was introduced. This is why, at least in part, many early philosophers of technology frequently write on the topic of “*techne*.” “*Techne*,” more often than not, indicates

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<sup>24</sup> More surprising still is that nearly all of the cognates of technique and technology in both French and German can be, and often are, translated into English as technology or technologies. For a detailed historical study of the concept see Eric Schatzberg, *Technology: Critical History of a Concept* (United Kingdom: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Schatzberg notes that the term “technology” was an important concept in German [*Technologie*] before it became commonly used in English. He traces the term back to Johann Beckmann in the later part of the eighteenth century. Beckmann, he suggests, “developed the concept of *Technologie* as a discipline devoted to the systematic description of handicrafts and industrial arts” (p. 77).

<sup>25</sup> In the context of Stiegler’s *Technics and Time* (following the translator’s selections at *TTL*, p. 280–281; n.1); “*une technique*” and “*des techniques*” are translated as “technique” and “techniques” meaning one or more individual, specialized “techniques”; *la technique* is translated as “technics” or “the technical.” These terms refer to the technical domain or technical practices as a whole, as a system or a result. “*La technologie*” and “*technologique*” are translated as “technology” and “technological,” indicating the specific amalgamation of technics and the sciences in the modern period. However, when hyphenated, “*la techno-logie/techno-logique*” is translated as “*technology*” designating the thinking and logic of technics.

that what is being discussed is something broader than what we typically think falls under the category of technology. The term “technicity” functions in a similar way for some scholars. This is worth noting since a particular author’s choice in terminology may be a rhetorical choice rather than an invention or reconstruction of an idea or concept.

Given all of these challenges, approaching the topic of technology by first specifying what *exactly* we are referring to out in the world (a set of actions, objects, or methods) is not an especially useful way to begin. Nonetheless, insofar as I want my argument to be intelligible, I will briefly define how am using the terms below.

The term “technicity” in a broad sense is used in the same way that “religiosity” or “sociality” are used in other contexts. As abstract nouns, these terms express states or conditions (possibly modes) rather than a domain of objects or category of action. While we may be able to lay out a set of related concepts or offer examples to illustrate the meaning of these terms, without the suffix “-ology removed we need not assume that we are dealing with a specific body of knowledge or a set of objects that we can easily call to mind. This is one of the reasons Stiegler and others are drawn to this term: it is meant to mark a departure from other ways of thinking about technology (as simply the study of technics as instruments and tools). For Stiegler, the term technicity is equivalent to “originary prostheticity” and “de-fault of origin.”<sup>26</sup> Heidegger provides the following definition of technicity: “Technicity is producing beings themselves (producing nature and history) unto the calculable makeability; unto the machination that thoroughly empowers the producibility.”<sup>27</sup> For someone like Simondon, whose ideas

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<sup>26</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford University Press, 1998). p. 16. Henceforth *TTI*. Technicity “is a synonym for “originary prostheticity” or “de-fault of origin” (*TTI*, p. 16). He also uses the term to signify the human’s relation to time. “The technicity of technology,” is the “durable fixing of the now (*TTI*, p. 234); quoted by James Ash, p. 59. Ash. “Technology, Technicity, and Emerging Practices of Temporal Sensitivity in Videogames.” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44, no. 1 (January 2012): pp. 187–203.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, p. 151.

Stiegler will also appropriate, all technical objects, like everything else, are in a constant process of individuating. “[T]he technicity of the technical object” is “always immanent to a material event of taking-form.”<sup>28</sup>

Technology, from the Greek *τεχνολογια* [*technologia*] generally refers to the discourse on technics and the study of *techne* (the logos of *techne*). This is a definition that Stiegler uses and the one I am partial to as well. The definition of “technology” as the “means” through which we achieve certain ends will be continually problematized throughout this dissertation. Not only is it problematic for metaphysical and conceptual reasons, it is also extremely vague. Depending on the context, technology can refer to any of the following specifications:

1. Technological objects, systems, and processes that have to do with a designated realm of the “technical” or “technological”
2. The *totality* of technological objects, systems, and processes that expand, mediate, or supplement human capacities and powers
3. The transformation, alteration, or manipulation of matter, energy, and information, as well as the rational processes and techniques associated with these things.
4. The amalgamation of technology and the sciences, i.e. technoscience.
5. The thinking and logic of technics

The term “technical systems” is also sometimes used to the technological process, technological objects, technological knowledge, developers and users of technological objects, as well as the entire worldview (i.e., beliefs, values, and perspectives, experiences) that grows out of all of these things considered together. With respect to “technoscience,” Bruno Latour is typically recognized as the one who either coined the term or popularized it within various academic circles. For Latour, “technoscience” expresses the close relationship between science, technology, and society, and the way in which all three together mobilize the resources that put

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<sup>28</sup> Brian Massumi, “Technical Mentality? Revisited: Brian Massumi on Gilbert Simondon,” *Parrhesia* 7 (2009): pp. 36–45.

science in motion.<sup>29</sup> This is how I use the term. Stiegler, however, uses the term “technoscience” to refer to modern science, which combines science, technology, and industry.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, throughout this dissertation I also use the term “technics.” Depending on the context, technics refers to:

1. A *collection* or *selection* of technical objects
2. A *collection* or *selection* of technical objects + the *operations, techniques, and knowledge* associated with that set of objects

Notably, for Stiegler, technical objects can never simply be inert matter. Instead, they are “organized inorganic matter.” This means they are characterized by a dynamic through which they evolve according to internal and external milieus.<sup>31</sup> The dynamic is given expression through the project of grammatization, which Stiegler defines as the exteriorization of memory in all of its forms. Grammatization, however, is not an act through which one offloads their experiential memories on to a memory machine. Grammatization for Stiegler is the discretization of the flow of memory, as well as the spacing of memory.<sup>32</sup> More on this in what follows.

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<sup>29</sup> See Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*. Trans. Stephen Barker. (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010). Henceforth, *TT3*.

<sup>31</sup> Stiegler, *TT1*, pp. 49, 70, 78.

<sup>32</sup> Bernard Stiegler, *For a New Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Daniel Ross (Polity: Cambridge, 2013). Elsewhere, he writes: “by grammatization, I mean the process whereby the currents and continuities shaping our lives become discrete elements. The history of human memory is the history of this process. Writing, as the breaking into discrete elements of the flux of speech (let us invent the word discretization for this possibility), is an example of a stage in the process of grammatization.” Stiegler, “Memory,” in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*. Edited by W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen (The University of Chicago Press: 2010), p. 69.

CHAPTER 1  
CONCEPTUALIZATION TECHNOLOGY:  
CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES AND TRENDS

**I. Introduction**

In this chapter, I offer a brief sketch of some of the contemporary trends and movements that are part of the general backdrop for philosophical and ethical discourse on technology. My aim is neither to provide an exhaustive summary of the history of scholarship nor a complete overview of all the different ways of approaching the subject. Rather, I have two main objectives. First, to provide context and support for my claim that revised accounts of the human-technical relation in recent years have tended to elide moral agency and overlook the importance of moral experience. Second, to introduce some of the themes and basic presuppositions that stand behind Stiegler's approach to technology. The next two chapters, Chapters 2 and 3, provide a more in-depth look at Stiegler's arguments concerning temporality, transcendence, and individuation.

I begin with a brief examination of Martin Heidegger's contributions to the philosophy of technology. Heidegger is among the first thinkers to stress the fact that the human being is irreducibly technical. Though there are various ways in which his writings continue to influence current discourse, I identify two central themes that emerge out of his work and are especially important for understanding contemporary approaches to the human-technical relation. The first theme grows out of the argument in *Being and Time* concerning *Dasein*'s being as "being-in-the-world." The second theme, which is especially dominant in his later writings, concerns Heidegger's critique of modern technology and its connection to Western metaphysics.

Introducing this latter theme will help to explain why Heidegger is sometimes referred to as an essentialist when it comes to theorizing technology.<sup>1</sup>

In the next section of this chapter, I summarize some of the main impulses behind the so-called empirical turn in the philosophy of technology. Put briefly, the empirical turn in the philosophy of technology marks a shift in scholarship at the start of the twenty-first century away from essentialist theories of technology and toward empirical, concrete technologies (or technics)—that is to say, technologies in the plural.<sup>2</sup> The empirical turn is sometimes viewed as a kind of counter response to the largely pessimistic and reactionary responses to the development of modern technology before the turn of the century. I then discuss the way the phenomenological tradition has aided inquiries into technology in the wake of Heidegger's critique. Though Heidegger's critique of technology can also be characterized as phenomenological in its approach, several theorists have drawn insights from other phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, with different results and points of emphasis. Discussing the influence of phenomenology will additionally set up some of the claims in the next two chapters, where I explain what is significant about Stiegler's attempt to incorporate insights from both Heidegger and Husserl to articulate a conception of technical memory or tertiary retention.

After briefly reviewing some of the ways the phenomenological tradition contributes to contemporary debates, I discuss three additional lines of inquiry that can be understood as iterations of the empirical turn: postphenomenology, science and technology studies (STS), and

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<sup>1</sup> Attending to the former theme will take us closer to a pattern of thought that I critically investigate in Chapter 3.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the empirical turn, an account of its origin, and its aftermath, see Shannon Vallor (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022). See especially, Verbeek's chapter in the same volume.

new materialism.<sup>3</sup> In the final section of the chapter, I introduce originary technicity. I suggest that while his writings incorporate many of the insights from other contemporary approaches to technology, Stiegler is one of the few theorists whose account of technics not only attends to the empirical aspects of technological change and development but also makes use of transcendentalist arguments insofar as they help him to articulate the constitutive role that technology plays in human life.

One feature common to all the various trends and currents I discuss below is a concern with conceptualizing technology in ways that problematize classical binaries between the human and nonhuman, nature and culture, subject and object, passivity and activity, the living and the nonliving. Whether or not we think we ought to or even can do away with our anthropocentric bias, these theories provide alternative ideas about what it means to be an individual living aside others in dynamically complex relations. While there is plenty to celebrate about these shifts, very little has been written about how we might use an inquiry into technics to reaffirm moral freedom or rearticulate the ground and nature of moral obligation. When the topic of moral obligation does arise, it is described as an effect of a more fundamental process or the product of

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<sup>3</sup> I am using “new materialism” as an umbrella concept, covering object-oriented ontologies (OOO), speculative realism, and critical realism. Though there are differences among these theories, all of them can be read as an attempt to develop a more robust account of things, matter, and objects, without relying on classical dualisms between the human and the nonhuman, nature and culture, subject and object, passivity and activity, the living and nonliving. Some examples include: Elizabeth Grosz, *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay On The Necessity Of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (Continuum, 2008); Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). For a broad summary of speculative realism see: Brassier, Ray, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux, ‘Speculative Realism’, *Collapse: Philosophical Research and Development*, vol. III, Falmouth, UK, Urbanomic, 2007. My understanding of OOO has been shaped by Peter Wolfendale’s *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon’s New Clothes* (Mono. Falmouth, England: Urbanomic, 2014). On critical realism see Christian Krijnen, “The Very Idea of Organization: Social Ontology Today: Kantian and Hegelian Reconsiderations” (Brill, 2015). “Against social constructivism, which conceives of structures and mechanisms as the contingent result of “discursive practices, critical realism advocates a reality of mechanisms and structures, which exist ‘absolutely,’ in itself independent of the empirical, observable reality” (Krijnen, p. 21–22).

some mode of intersubjective exchange. This is where I offer my own intervention. I aim to expose the presuppositions behind this position, and, in subsequent chapters, illustrate how Kant's thought, read through the lens of originary technicity, offers other resources—beyond his account of the unity of consciousness—to better understand the human-technical relation.

## II. Heidegger's Fundamental Ontology

As I mentioned in the previous section, various current approaches to the human-technical relation presuppose that to truly understand anything at all about technology, we need to problematize or deconstruct classical binaries between the human and nonhuman, nature and culture, subject and object, passivity and activity, the living and the nonliving. Heidegger's critique of classical ontology and Western metaphysics destabilized certain presuppositions about the human-subject divide and continues to influence the way theorists of technology conceptualize what it means to live together with others in the world.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that we do not find ourselves by isolating ourselves from the world or by turning inward; rather, we find ourselves outside of ourselves, in the midst of others and of things in the world. Dasein, Heidegger tells us, is “thrown” into the world, always already engaged in various relations and concerns. In his words:

Dasein means being-in-the-world—this is our fundamental finding [*Be-fund*]. There is not first of all a subject, which is enclosed in and for itself as in a box, with an object outside. Rather the fundamental finding and first level of reference is: Being-in-a-world. From that there comes the task of ontologically determining this Dasein *qua* Being-in-the-world in as precise a way as the Greeks determined the being of the world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, Theodore J. Kisiel, and Thomas Sheehan. *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 228.

In order to understand the significance of Heidegger's insight and his critique of human subjectivity it will be helpful to consider the methodology of *Being and Time*. This will also help to explain Stiegler's critique of Heideggerian insights in subsequent chapters.

First of all, it should be noted that Heidegger's *Being and Time* is a work of fundamental ontology rather than a work of metaphysics. Broadly speaking, metaphysics is the attempt to understand and account for how the general features of reality hang together. Ontology, on the other hand, is the study of being. Rather than trying to get at the essence of objects, or arrive at an account of what something is, ontology considers "ontic" realities (ek-sistant things). However, Heidegger's approach to ontology is also distinct. When it comes to the question of being, Heidegger is not primarily interested in defining different ways of being or with articulating a region of being. In contrast to his teacher, Edmund Husserl, who developed a *formal* ontology, Heidegger offers a *fundamental* ontology. Whereas Husserl's formal ontology refers, broadly, to the study of the categories that describe objects by means of our judgments and perceptions,<sup>5</sup> Heidegger's fundamental ontology presupposes that our conception of the world and the existence of everything in it depends on an *a priori* ground or structure that unifies and constitutes our sense of what it is to be. What Heidegger calls the "existential analytic" discloses that structure and thus it is central to the argument of *Being and Time*. Hence, according to Heidegger, fundamental ontology must be pursued through the existential analytic of Dasein.<sup>6</sup> What this means is that we must start with "ontic" questions concerning the human in order to think the truth of being as such. Why? Because the being who says "I am" has an

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<sup>5</sup> Husserl's phenomenology prioritizes consciousness and human intentionality. His formal ontology is meant to be an objective inquiry into that which constitutes transcendental consciousness.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger. *Being and Time*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought Edition. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (United Kingdom: HarperCollins, 2008), p. 34. Henceforth *BT*. As we will see, Stiegler's critique of Heidegger's starts with the existential analytic.

implicit understanding of being.<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that the human being intuitively brings an idea of being to consciousness. Instead, it means that we have a relation with being that allows us some insight into how being is *manifesting* itself to us.<sup>8</sup>

What then is accomplished through the existential analytic?<sup>9</sup> The existential analytic provides us with the structural unity of finite transcendence of being-there. There are various steps to Heidegger's argument and we cannot recount all of them here. However, what is important for our purposes is how Heidegger describes the structure of being-in-the-world and how that relates to the structure of care. Heidegger's claim is that Dasein's being is being-in-the-world [*In-der-Welt-sein*]. We do not first exist as subject and then act toward or within a world. We find ourselves already within the world, amidst others and things, engaged in different projects and using things already at hand.<sup>10</sup> The structure of the world is analyzed as a structure of "assignments" (or references).<sup>11</sup> "Being-in-the-world, according to our interpretation hitherto, amounts to a non-thematic circumspective absorption in references or assignments constitutive for the readiness-to-hand of a totality of equipment."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This inquiry allows Heidegger to pull apart the "is" from the "I am," and therefore to get at the question of being without first turning to "what something is."

<sup>8</sup> We do not conjure up being through a particular mode of thinking. The relation we have with being is bestowed upon us by being itself. Or, in Heidegger's words, "...being *enables* thinking." "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> Put differently, the existential analytic exposes the ground of intuitive givenness or rather, it gets at that which is presupposed or preunderstood about Being.

<sup>10</sup> Though I am moving quickly in order to summarize the broader point of Heidegger's insight, it is possible to break down his arguments here even further. Dasein's mode of being-in-the-world is "knowing." Beings (existents) are not in the world in the sense of Dasein's being-in-the-world, beings more generally speaking "belong" to the world (see *BT*, p. 274). In Division II of *BT* the objective is to "exhibit its [care's] concrete temporal constitutions" (*BT*, p. 384). Temporality makes possible the unity of existence, facticity, and falling, and in this way constitutes primordially the totality of the structure of care. The items of care have not been pieced together cumulatively any more than temporality itself has been put together "in the course of time [*mit der Zeit*]" out of the future, the having been, and the present" (*BT*, p. 376). For a more comprehensive account see Einar Øverenget, *Seeing the Self: Heidegger on Subjectivity* (Boston, Springer Netherlands, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 107.

It is important to note here that Heidegger derives his conception of worldhood from the assignment-structure. Worldhood expresses itself in a practical structure. He finds that “The totality of being-in-the-world as a structural whole” reveals itself as “care” [*Sorge*].<sup>13</sup> It is through the phenomenon of care that we can gain insight into the concrete constitutions of existence.<sup>14</sup> As one commentator explains: “The how of being-in-the-world is being-there. Disposedness, understanding, and discourse determine being-there.... Being-there is first and foremost thrownness, and exists in unowned or nonindividualized modes. Heidegger describes the unitary basic structure of being, i.e., its being, as care.”<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger’s structure of care has three dimensions, or rather, it can be described as a threefold “ecstatic” temporality through which Dasein temporalizes itself as a whole (“time is the transcendental horizon of the question of Being.”)<sup>16</sup> The temporality associated with being-in-the-world, and being-ready-at-hand, by contrast, is merely “clock time” or “vulgar” time. The temporality associated with the structure of care is explained through ideas about thrownness, projection, and possibility.<sup>17</sup> Dasein is not only in the world with others, Dasein is *thrown* into a world and projected into the future. As Michael Wheeler aptly explains:

Dasein confronts every concrete situation in which it finds itself (into which it has been thrown) as a range of possibilities for acting (onto which it may project itself). Insofar as some of these possibilities are actualized, others will not be, meaning that there is a sense in which not-Being (a set of unactualized possibilities of Being) is a structural component of Dasein’s Being. Out of this dynamic interplay, Dasein emerges as a delicate balance of determination (thrownness) and freedom (projection).<sup>18</sup>

From this perspective, human interaction with the world and with things becomes fundamental to our very way of being. And yet, according to Heidegger the most concrete constitutions of

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<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 274.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred Denker and Frank Schalow, *Historical Dictionary of Heidegger's Philosophy* (United States: Scarecrow Press, 2010), p. 68.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> This latter point will be important for the discussion in Chapter 2.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Wheeler, “Martin Heidegger,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/>>.

existence do not fully reveal Dasein's own most possibilities.<sup>19</sup> By default, we tend to neglect the "existential aspect of its careful character."<sup>20</sup> Throughout most of our existence we are hidden from ourselves. Because death is Dasein's own most possibility, it is through the contemplation of death that we can come to live authentically. And it is only when we turn to our own most possibility that we can hope for some form of liberation.<sup>21</sup>

There is much more that could be said about Heidegger's position and I will return to his arguments in subsequent chapters. But for the purposes of this chapter, we need to shift away from *Being and Time* and the existential analytic and turn to Heidegger's more direct critique of modern technology, which is inseparable from his critique of the Western metaphysics.

### III. Technology as a Mode of Revealing

Heidegger's retrieval of certain concepts from classical ontology allowed him to reintroduce the term "*techne*" into philosophical discourse as a mode of revealing. In Chapter 6, we will return to Heidegger's destruction of classical ontology in his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. In this section, my goal is to briefly outline the main ideas behind Heidegger's claim that that *techne*, properly understood, is a "mode of revealing."

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<sup>19</sup> He further attests that it is only through deconstructing these interpretations that we can get to something more originary, more authentic. I will return to this point again when I introduce Stiegler's insights. The point here is only to say that for Heidegger, most of the time we live out our lives according to the authority of what Heidegger refers to as "they." Daniel Ross explains as follows: "Dasein, the being that we ourselves are, the being for whom being is a question, and the being constituted essentially in terms of the knowledge and non-knowledge of its own mortality, is a historical and factual being in the sense that it inherits a past it has not lived, which it must then adopt by projecting itself into a future that remains always indeterminate thanks to Dasein's fundamental character of being-toward-death." Daniel Ross, "Care and Carelessness in the Anthropocene: Bernard Stiegler's Three Conversions and Their Accompanying Heideggers," *Cultural Politics* 17, no. 2 (2021): 145–62, especially, p. 148. In this essay, Ross summarizes Heidegger's argument in *Being and Time* in order to explain Stiegler's use and appropriation of Heidegger's insights. Heidegger arguments suggest—or at least he is sometimes read this way—that the disclosure of the being of beings can be brought to language and perhaps only through language. Stiegler disagrees. He thinks that the existential analytic should be interpreted as technical through and through. I will return to this point in Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ross, "Care and Carelessness," p. 148.

<sup>21</sup> I am phrasing this as though it is an active choice, though Heidegger talks about it more as something that happens to us. Heidegger also references the call of the conscience in *Being and Time*. However, it is not completely clear if anything at all can be done about inauthentic existence.

In his now famous essay “Questions Concerning Technology,” Heidegger insists that “[t]he essence of technology is by no means anything technological.”<sup>22</sup> While we tend to think of technology as the tools and instruments that have been invented in order to achieve certain ends, Heidegger holds that the inquiry into the very idea of “instrumentality” exposes the limits of the metaphysical picture of reality that we inherited from Aristotle and Plato. “*Τέχνη*,” Heidegger contends, consists neither “of producing tools and machines, nor of the mere use and application of them within a procedure, nor of this procedure itself, nor of being well versed in such a procedure.”<sup>23</sup>

Heidegger was the first of a long line of thinkers—including Stiegler—to point to the connection between *episteme* and *techne* in ancient Greek thought. Highlighting this connection allows for a broader, though still somewhat ambiguous, understanding of *techne*. “From the earliest times until Plato the word *techne* was linked with the word *episteme*. Both words are terms for knowing in the widest sense.”<sup>24</sup> On Heidegger’s account, the act of making was once construed as a bringing forth (a making something actual, bringing something into existence) through the use of both *poiesis* and reason [*logos*].<sup>25</sup> More importantly, according to Heidegger, *techne* is a concept that was originally bound up with the event of truth, that is, with *alētheia*. However, this meaning of *techne* has been forgotten.

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<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (Harper Perennial edition published in 1982; Reissued in Harper Perennial Modern Thought 2013), p. 4. Henceforth: *QCT*.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), pp. 152, 153; 63. Written around 1939, this text establishes important links between metaphysical thought, violence [*Gewalt*], power [*Macht*], machination [*Machenschaft*], and technics [*Technic*]. It is not as though it is incorrect or false to conceptualize technology anthropologically (i.e. technology is a set of tools or devices that humans wield in the pursuit of certain good). It is simply the condition of our current technological epoch.

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 13 He further explains that *techne* “is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts.”

<sup>25</sup> We will return to this topic in Chapter 4.

Underlying Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics and classical ontology is a concern about the way Being is revealed to us. It is this latter concern that leads Heidegger to shift away from the methodology of *Being and Time* and therefore away from the existential analytic. However, we should be careful not to conflate Heidegger's critique of modern technology with the ready-at-hand structure that we identified above.<sup>26</sup> For Heidegger, the assignments that come with equipment are part of a system of references that help to make up what it means to be in the world. Being-in-the-world is not a problem that needs to be solved. Instead, Heidegger's worry is that the mode of revealing that he associated with modern technology, and therefore Western metaphysics, has come to dominate all other modes of revealing.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger uses the term "*Gestell*" to refer to the mode of revealing (or the mode of concealment and unconcealment) that describes the modern era. It is a mode of revealing in which the real is revealed "in the mode of standing reserve."<sup>28</sup> The human subject in the modern era (which can also be conceived of as an interpretation of Dasein) is always eager to impose his or her will on the world and move from theory to practice. On Heidegger's account, modern technology presents a world in which everyone and everything is part of a "standing-reserve" of energy and resources. All is "revealed" to us insofar as it can be calculated according to the rules

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<sup>26</sup> Lemmens explains as follows: "While the early Heidegger conceives of technical artefacts, or beings ready-to-hand, as constituted by the 'projective-thrown' structure of Dasein, and the middle Heidegger understands them as flowing from *being* as machination [*Machenschaft*] which also 'stamps' Dasein as subjectivity, the late Heidegger develops his most widely known thesis that all use and fabrication of technical artefacts and machines in modernity proceeds from—or is conditioned by—a mode of understanding and revealing of beings that he calls Enframing [*Gestell*] (Heidegger *QCT*, pp. 12, 19). Enframing is explicitly understood as a claim or imperative to which modern humans as productive and manufacturing beings only *respond*, and it is in this imperative, as it were, that the 'transcendental conditions of possibility' for all concrete technologies and technological innovation for Heidegger reside." Lemmens, "Technologizing the Transcendental, Not Discarding It," *Foundations of Science*, April 3, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 27. It is a mode of revealing that "drives out" all other possible modes of revealing. One of the effects of Western metaphysics is that we now only conceive of truth in terms of correspondence, which requires measurements and exactness.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 24.

of utility and efficiency.<sup>29</sup> The problem is not that humans have invented the wrong kinds of technology or that we have let our dependence on technology run amuck. For Heidegger, modern technology coincides with, indeed is the destiny of, Western metaphysics. The metaphysical concepts introduced by Plato and Aristotle continue to dominate our thinking. Unable to think beyond Aristotle's four causes, classical ontology by default attempts to uncover what something "is," and never asks the question of Being.

At times Heidegger seems to suggest that it is possible to embrace other modes of revealing, implying that there are fundamentally different modes of revealing. "Because the essence of technology is nothing technological," he writes, "essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it."<sup>30</sup> The realm of aesthetics, that is, of fine arts, seems to offer some hope. But above all, it is poetry that Heidegger praises for its purity: "The poetical brings the true into the splendor of what Plato in the *Phaedrus* calls to *ekphanestaton*, that which shines forth most purely. The poetical thoroughly pervades every art, every revealing of coming to presence into the beautiful."<sup>31</sup>

#### **IV. After Heidegger**

The primary reason we are recounting Heidegger's arguments is that they have had a massive impact on the philosophy of technology. His insistence that the human is irreducibly technical motivated others to reconsider the role of *techne* in philosophical thought and to

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<sup>29</sup> He writes: "Modern science's way of representing, pursuing, and entrapping, nature as a calculable coherent set of forces." Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 14–15. Heidegger uses the example of coal mining as a modern technology. Coal mining requires the cultivation of the field and the ordering nature. A windmill, by contrast, does not lock up energy from the air in order to store it.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 34. Eventually, Heidegger will call for a certain releasement (a non-willing) toward things [*Gelassenheit*]. For a summary and analysis of Heidegger's notion of *Gelassenheit*, see p. xxv. Bret Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit*. (Evanston, III: Northwestern University Press, 2007).

question the ties between Western science and modern technology. However, the intellectual landscape has changed considerably since Heidegger first published his essay “On the Question Concerning Technology,” some seventy years ago. Heidegger’s critique of the instrumentalism, by which I mean a conception of technology as the mere means through which human beings achieve certain ends, may have seemed radical at the time, but it is now a common point of criticism. Very few theorists embrace a simple means-ends approach to technology. By and large, theorists interested in technology in the twenty-first century insist that the human-technical relation is far more complex than previously thought. Many of the technological objects we interact with on a daily basis are reactive, immersive and integrated into wider systems—systems that are not easily grasped by the human understanding.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, Heidegger’s critique of technology painted a bleak picture with respect to the future possibilities for humanity. “The rule of Enframing [*Gestell*],” Heidegger proclaims, “threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth.”<sup>33</sup> While it is quite common for contemporary scholars to utilize Heideggerian language and draw particular insights from his later writings on the topic, scholars largely reject the essentialism and pessimism that many understand to characterize Heidegger’s critique of technology, as well as many other so-called “classical” theorists of technology.

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<sup>32</sup> Peter-Paul Verbeek, “Don Ihde: The Technological Lifeworld,” in Hans Achterhuis (ed.), *American Philosophy of Technology: The Empirical Turn*.

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 28.

## i. The Empirical Turn

The specific turn away from theorizing technology as an abstract force or power and toward the empirical reality and significance of particular technologies is known in the philosophy of technology as the “empirical turn.” Verbeek describes the turn as follows:

...classical analyses of technology typically followed a ‘transcendentalistic’ approach: they analyzed technology in terms of its *conditions*. Heidegger’s work follows this pattern as well: his approach to technology as a way of understanding the world in fact reduced technical devices and systems to the way of thinking behind them...It is exactly this transcendentalism that is abandoned in the empirical turn. Rather than reducing technological artifacts, systems and practices to the conditions that lie behind them, it started to take them as a *starting point*. Empirical insights in human-technology relations, design and innovation processes, and the social implications of technologies became a central element of philosophical analysis.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of whether or not this is a fair characterization of Heidegger’s critique, Verbeek’s point is that the empirical turn is to be contrasted with an approach to technology in which technology is construed as a fundamental orientation or structure underlying experience.

Pieter Lemmens expresses a similar point:

[T]he two most important claims made by the empirical turn are that concrete technologies are not fully determined by their transcendental conditions and that there is not some kind of inherent logic toward increasing efficiency, domination, performativity or some other uncanny tendency present in technological development, but that it is a principally contingent and unpredictable process.<sup>35</sup>

Instead of accounting a foundation that stands prior to or behind the actualization of particular concrete technologies, theorists who associate themselves with the empirical turn, understand technological change to be conditioned by a variety of forces, logics, and conditions. Emphasis, furthermore, is placed on discrete technologies as they are bound up with human relations, as well as the social implications of particular technologies in particular sociocultural or sociotechnical contexts. Indeed, for some theorists, the empirical turn is, in essence, a pragmatic

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<sup>34</sup> For a detailed discussion of the empirical turn and its aftermath, see Peter-Paul Verbeek, “The Empirical Turn, in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Technology*. Edited by Shannon Vallor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Technology Big Again. Reconsidering the Question of the Transcendental and ‘Technology with a Capital T’ in the Light of the Anthropocene.” *Found Sci* 27, 171–187 (2022). Online: Retrieved April 8, 2022. p. 172.

turn, in the sense that it is a deliberate attempt to focus on the practical implications and consequences of technics. For instance, a “productive pragmatism,” looks for creative solutions to social and technical problems through the operationalization and optimization of the tools and methods that are most effective at creating desired social conditions.<sup>36</sup> As one theorist explains: “Productive pragmatism is not interested in actions for its own sake, but in action that operationalizes outcomes with a view to the production of tools and habits of action.”<sup>37</sup>

## ii. Phenomenological and Postphenomenological Insights

For theorists who embrace the empirical turn, it is not enough to say that human life is irreducibly technical. In order to draw out the implications of this claim, many theorists have found that the phenomenological tradition, more broadly construed, provides methods and resources for unpacking how it is that technologies condition and mediate human life.

For Heidegger, phenomenology is “the *method* of philosophy understood as ontology.”<sup>38</sup> However, Heidegger’s approach to phenomenology is not the only one to influence discourse on technology. Edmund Husserl’s work has also been influential. Since Husserl’s approach to phenomenology is crucial for Stiegler in particular, it will be useful to draw attention to those features of his position that are especially important for understanding Stiegler’s approach to technicity.

Broadly speaking, Husserlian phenomenology focuses on perception and intention and grants epistemological priority to the individual subject. All subjective awareness, which passes

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<sup>36</sup> On productive pragmatism see, Larry Hickman, “Technology and Community life,” in *Technology and Values: Essential Readings*. Edited by Craig Hanks. (United Kingdom: Wiley, 2010), pp. 206–222.

<sup>37</sup> Larry Hickman, “Technology and Community life,” p. 180.

<sup>38</sup> Translator’s Introduction, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, xvii. By comparison, Heidegger’s version of phenomenology is less concerned with consciousness and subjectivity and how things are presented “to us.” The goal is to understand the practical forms of comportment rather than forms of intentionality. See SEP *Phenomenology*. Smith, David Woodruff, “Phenomenology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/phenomenology/>>.

through perception, is directed toward something. Consciousness, in other words, is always consciousness of some-*thing*. This also means that all experience, every act of consciousness (seeing, hearing, remembering) is intentional. What then does phenomenology offer for theorists, such as Stiegler, who want to call the intentional human subject into question? One answer to this question concerns the phenomenological reduction. Husserl's phenomenological reduction brackets "natural experience" and employs concepts and methods that are directed at articulating the essential or invariant features of experienced phenomena.<sup>39</sup> Our everyday, natural attitude toward the world is set aside and we consider what is given to experience, allowing ourselves to be astonished or surprised by what we find. Phenomenological insights carried into inquiries into technology means that technology is never something we encounter as an essence or even as unmediated objects in the world. Technology, or rather specific technologies, are understood in relation to the kind of beings (regional ontology) we are and with respect to the relations we form in a lifeworld.<sup>40</sup>

Don Ihde is well known for developing a phenomenological approach to technology—though he now prefers to associate himself with postphenomenology, which I will also discuss below.<sup>41</sup> Like others who embrace the empirical turn, Ihde rejects Heidegger's essentialism, determinism, and nostalgia for the past. Rather than making sweeping claims about technology as such, Ihde is known for offering a framework for analyzing patterns of our *experience* of technology.<sup>42</sup> Peter-

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<sup>39</sup> Husserl's phenomenology starts with a reduction in which "natural experience" is bracketed. The phenomenological reduction provides us with a kind of transcendence within immanence as well as a new kind of evidence. On this new kind of evidence, see Elena Partene, "On the Naturalization of the Transcendental," *Husserl, Kant and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Iulian Apostolescu and Claudia, eds. (Germany: De Gruyter, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> This approach is also often used to address matters related to social praxis. On this topic, see David M. Kaplan, *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, vol. 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> According to Carl Mitcham, Don Ihde was one of the first philosophers to write a book on the philosophy of technology and the first to produce a corpus on the subject. See Carl Mitcham, *Thinking through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> In *Technology and the Lifeworld*, for instance, Ihde develops a typology of technology-mediated experiences centered on three types of relations: embodied, hermeneutics, and alterity. Verbeek expands Ihde's initial

Paul Verbeek is another example of a theorist who has explored the question of technology through the phenomenological tradition. For him, the phenomenology offers resources for exploring the mediational role of technology, which he thinks is much more valuable than, for instance, explaining the essence of technology or defending human autonomy against the powers of technology.<sup>43</sup>

Though phenomenology has traditionally been centered around the human subject and the subject's experience, we can note here that phenomenological methods are also utilized by thinkers who want to use the question of technics to investigate the nonhuman or rather to problematize the line between the human and the nonhuman. For instance, Gilbert Simondon, a theorist who Stiegler draws from regularly, puts phenomenology to work in his theory of individuation, resulting in what Carl Mitcham describes of as "phenomenology of artifacts."<sup>44</sup> Stated briefly, whereas someone like Merleau-Ponty emphasized the role of perception, Simondon developed a mechnology that looks beyond the living body of an organism and considers the structural possibilities of nonliving objects. This is all to say that the phenomenological tradition, in its various forms, informs and inspires much of the recent scholarship. And this remains the case even for those theorists, like Stiegler, who advocate for a turn to materiality and a turn away from philosophies of subjectivity.

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formulation, and adds background or immersive relations. Verbeek insists that specific technologies are not easily categorized into any one of these relations. Instead, they are typically understood as combining different elements of these relations. This relational approach to technology continues to be popular today in STS. Peter-Paul Verbeek, "Beyond Interaction: A Short Introduction to Mediation Theory," *Interactions* 22, no. 3 (April 27, 2015): 26–31.

<sup>43</sup> Peter-Paul Verbeek, "Beyond Interaction: A Short Introduction to Mediation Theory," *Interactions* 22, no. 3 (April 27, 2015), p. 31. Drawing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). See also Pieter Lemmens, "Thinking Through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media," pp. 185–206 in *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human-Media-World Relations*. Edited by Yoni Van Den Eede, Stacey O'Neal Irwin, and Galit Wellner (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

<sup>44</sup> See Mitcham, *Thinking for Technology*, pp. 181–182.

Despite the fact that pragmatism and phenomenology are typically seen as different philosophical traditions, within the philosophy of technology there has been some efforts to bring them closer together. This is one of the driving impulses behind postphenomenology, which can be construed as another iteration of the empirical turn.<sup>45</sup> Ihde, who describes himself as a postphenomenologist, finds common ground between pragmatism and phenomenology in the sense that they both rely on an interrelational ontology:

In both pragmatism and phenomenology, one can discern what could be called an interrelational ontology. By this I mean that the human experiencer is to be found ontologically related to an environment or a world, but the interrelation is such that both are transformed within this relationality.<sup>46</sup>

Postphenomenology, more broadly speaking, is an approach to technology that steps away from generalization and instead develops a methodology for articulating and analyzing particular technologies within a social setting or context. Or as Ihde puts it, postphenomenology is concerned with the “multidimensionality of technologies as material cultural within a lifeworld.”<sup>47</sup>

It is worth stressing here that while Heidegger’s so-called essentialism is frequently used as a foil by Ihde and others to promote the importance of the empirical turn, Heidegger’s notion of being-in-the-world and his critique of human subjectivity continue to support efforts to articulate the kind of interrelational ontology that Ihde means to support. One of the interesting aspects of Stiegler’s approach to technicity is that he is one of the few theorists who finds it necessary to engage and critique Heidegger at the level of the existential analytic. I return to this

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<sup>45</sup> For more on the relationship between phenomenology and pragmatism, see *Reimagining Philosophy and Technology, Reinventing Ihde*. Edited by Glen Miller and Ashley Shew (Germany: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience: The Peking University Lectures* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience*, p. 22.

below, but briefly, according to Stiegler, Heidegger represses the question of technics precisely at the point where he needs to account for how the “I” relates to a “We.”

### **iii. Science and Technology Studies and New Materialism**

Though most theorists who embrace the empirical turn resist the essentialism that is typically associated with Heidegger’s approach, it is not uncommon for theorists to articulate deeper structures and draw attention to systematic forces and powers that are at work in human societies. At least since the 1980s, with growing interests in the history and philosophy of science, more and more thinkers have explored technology through the lens of technoscience. However, whereas Heidegger construed technology and modern science as the result of Western metaphysics, technoscience as a subject of inquiry tends to capture something more about actual social relations and political powers that operate alongside or as a result or effect of technological change and development. Technology, as technoscience, in other words, is part of larger systems, processes, and networks that are comprised of both human and nonhuman entities and actors.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, this emphasis on the social conditions, structures, and powers that operate prior to or alongside of technological change and development is a trend that cuts across a variety of different approaches to the empirical turn. It is especially pronounced, however, in the scholarship associated with science and technology studies.

Science and technology studies (STS) is an approach to technology that has been especially attentive to the way in which technology works together alongside other social, political, and, in some cases, natural systems. STS also arose in the 1980s alongside growing interests in the history and philosophy of science and has expanded and evolved over the last few decades. In recent years, STS scholars have become increasingly interested in analyzing

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<sup>48</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

sociotechnical system, and exploring methods for understanding and critiquing these systems. Very often this means embracing some form of social constructivism, i.e., the view that technological invention and change can be traced back to social values, interests, or collective choices and actions.<sup>49</sup> For these theorists, speaking generally, technological objects and systems may shape human experience and transform social praxis, but technology is not the only determining form of power. This means that technology can also be interrogated and critiqued in ways similar to the way we critique political structures or religious traditions. A critique of technology, in other words, is simply a way of engaging in social criticism.

Though STS leaves space for human decision-making and actions to have some effect on the course of technological evolution, the moral dimensions of human experience are rarely foregrounded in this context. Indeed, for many of these theorists, moral agency is held with suspicion along with other attributes associated with the liberal human subject: autonomy, self-consciousness, self-determination. Individualistic or humanistic accounts of agency are regarded skeptically. Agency, insofar as the term is used, more commonly applies not only to individual humans, but nonhuman entities and human and nonhuman collectives. In order to deal with matters of injustice or power relations, one does not begin with the responsible individual, but rather by conceptualizing the operating forces, structures, and powers that create the conditions for certain subjects to arise.<sup>50</sup> For instance, one might use various methods from the social

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<sup>49</sup> Social constructivism is typically understood along a scale, ranging from a more analytic, empirically driven account of technology to a more critical account of social powers and relations.

<sup>50</sup> Mark B. N. Hansen, speaking more broadly about tendencies in poststructuralism and contemporary critical theories, make a similar point that I think applies in this context as well. "Poststructuralists and contemporary cultural critics alike tend to involve technology not for its own sake but as an enabling means and a material support for a more pressing account of subject constitution whether on ontogenic or strictly empirical grounds." Mark B. N. Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing*, Studies in Literature and Science (University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 5. Hansen argues that these critiques often do not get at levels beyond the realm of the social phenomenal; prior to the transmission and production of representations. Also see Mark B. N. Hansen, *Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

sciences to evaluate how certain technologies are distributed across the globe and then use theories in economics and critical theory to interpret the results of such a study. Alternatively, one might consider how a particular type of technology, say for instance contemporary automobiles, are valued in one society over another. Social relations, structures of power and economic determinations might all play a part in interpreting a particular sociohistorical context, but technology as such is not conceptualized as an independent structure. Instead, certain technologies, their meaning, use, and the social practices associated with these technologies might tell us something about what a society values or how certain power relations are established and maintained, but technology is primarily seen as the result or the answer to some more fundamental human need, desire, or interest. For theorists who embrace such an approach, it is possible to reject the notion of a morally autonomous human subject, and yet at the same time appeal to the normativity of a “social order.” Though it may shape social practices and relations, relations to the self and intersubjective exchange, technology is not fundamental in the same way that language or *praxis* are fundamental. Quite frequently, rather than trying to account for moral agency or explaining moral obligation or moral experience in a sociotechnical world, individuals are expressing, performing or enacting social structures.

To be sure, some who embrace the empirical turn claim to be avoiding social explanations altogether. For instance, an analytic approach to technology focuses less on the relations between technology and society, and more on tech itself. The primary goal is to provide categories and concepts for clarification. This is closely associated with what Carl Mitcham identified as the “externalist” or engineering approach to technology and technological artifacts.<sup>51</sup> Rather than dealing with the meaning and context of technological change,

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<sup>51</sup> See Carl Mitcham, *Thinking through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

technologies are expected to be assessed according to function. In some cases, normative concerns are said to be left out altogether. In other cases, ethics is brought in as separate “tool” to help technicians make better decisions and take more responsibility for what they design or build.<sup>52</sup>

Others avoid social explanations for different reasons. In recent years, new materialism, critical realism, and object-oriented ontology have all provided with theorists of technology and media studies with ways of conceiving of modes of organization and knowledge formation beyond those associated with social processes and social practices. Some who engage technology through the lens of new materialism continue to find Marxism useful for critically analyzing technology. Others insist that because the sociotechnical systems that operate in the world today create the conditions for new sources of power and sites of control, it is necessary to look for critical tools beyond those associated with labor and production.<sup>53</sup> Others not only want to move past the human privilege, shift away from the focus on objects and systems, and instead offer accounts of actual entities, multiplicities, assemblages, or hybrids. Rather than describing a lifeworld or world, they shift the focus to environments, ecologies, or fields of imminence.<sup>54</sup>

Indeed, a broader perspective on the intellectual landscape reveals that accounts of the human-technical relation in recent years are increasingly non-subjectivist, materialistic, and

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<sup>52</sup> At the time Mitcham was writing, engineering studies was described in relation to the humanistic approach to technology. A trace of this division is also seen in the professional ethics that developed in this direction and the largely expanding computer science (engineering and programing) programs across the United States. In recent years, the global impact and success of information and communication technologies has led to a new form of professional ethics and philosophical interest in information theory and computation. In response to these growing concerns, computer science departments have started to teach professional ethics or at the very least, make sure those who are entering this profession—which is growing at a shocking rate—are familiar with professional and ethical codes of conduct. There are some parallels here with the development of business ethics.

<sup>53</sup> One example of a well-known early critique, see Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Cited by William Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (United Kingdom: Duke University Press, 2013).

interrelational. If there is a divide, it is not so much between those who embrace essentialism or instrumentalism and those who do not, but rather between those who want to use inquiries into technology to better understand how certain subjects are formed (or unformed) or whether the question of technics invites new modes of description that can account for human and nonhuman forces that are at work in various kinds of events and in constituting various kinds of entities. Though there are merits to both, the latter approach, in my judgment, is more conducive to an account of moral freedom that can function aside originary technicity. My reason for suggesting this is that the latter approach leaves open the possibility that freedom is its own cause and not the product of some larger social process. Here is where Stiegler's project becomes important for my own intervention into contemporary discourse on the human-technical relation.

In a moment I will introduce Stiegler's theory of originary technicity and situate it within the broader set of trends and currents that we have been discussing in this chapter. However, since the argument of this dissertation is operating on a few different levels, let me be clear about where we are headed before we turning to Stiegler's theorizations.

Though Stiegler's account of technics is interesting and innovative its own right, my explication of his work below and in the next two chapters is in some ways limited by the two main objectives that ground this project: 1) To expose a pattern of thought that I argue hinders our ability to find room to reflect on moral agency and defend moral freedom; and 2) offer a rereading of Kant, through the lens of originary technicity, that unlocks resources for thinking about what it means to be both a moral being as well as a technical being. In order to satisfy these two objectives, my reading of Stiegler intentionally pushes his arguments and ideas in the direction of ethics, just as my reading of Kant intentionally pulls his philosophy in the direction of originary technicity. One effect of this movement, which is important for the argument that

runs through Chapters 2 and 3, is that I am able to trace how Kantian themes and ideas, stripped of their ethical significance, create conceptual problems that Stiegler is at pains to resolve. In Chapters 4 and 5, I utilize these problems to chart a course through Kant's practical philosophy in order to see what additional concepts, structures, and insights we might retrieve from his philosophical works. Having clarified where we are heading, I now turn now to explain Stiegler's way of construing the human-technical relation.

## V. **Original Technicity**

On the one hand, Stiegler's theory of originary technicity incorporates and synthesizes many of the trends and currents referenced above. On the other hand, Stiegler is unique in that he presents a theory of technics that can be used to analyze particular technologies as they develop across time, and additionally conceives of technology as a transcendental or quasi-transcendental condition. This makes Stiegler's approach to technology somewhat difficult to categorize at least with respect to some of the more common approaches in recent years.<sup>55</sup>

More broadly speaking, Stiegler's work can be characterized as an example of a French intellectual current that originated in the 1970s and has only, over the last decade or so, gained popularity in anglophone scholarly communities.<sup>56</sup> Much of this work can be traced in some way to the writings of Gilbert Simondon and André Leroi-Gourhan. To be sure, Heidegger remains influential in this context, but as Stiegler's work demonstrates, Heidegger's influence takes on a different character once it is read through the lens of Derridean deconstruction. Stiegler's ties to the phenomenological tradition are especially apparent. He pulls together various styles and methods from different phenomenological thinkers. In the next chapter, I will discuss his

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<sup>55</sup> Some find within his thought antihumanistic tendencies, while others claim that he risks "re-anthropologizing technics. On this point see, for instance, Arthur Bradley, "Originary Technicity? Technology & Anthropology," pp. 78–100 in Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand, *Technicity* (Syracuse University Press, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> See Ian James, *New French Philosophy*, (Polity Press, 2014).

particular way of blending ideas from Husserl and Heidegger. His use of Simondon, who can also be described as a phenomenologist, will be touched on in Chapter 3. However, Stiegler has also been labeled a postphenomenological thinker.<sup>57</sup> Like Ihde, Stiegler offers a way to analyze the “role of technologies in social, personal, and cultural life that [s/he] undertakes by concrete—empirical—guides of technologies in the plural.”<sup>58</sup> But Stiegler’s arguments are much more radical. Stiegler’s central thesis is that “[T]he tool and the human,” he claims in his first volume of *Technics and Time*, “invent each other” (*TTI* 142, 175). For Stiegler, the human’s very mode of being is made possible through the ever-changing organization of inorganic matter.<sup>59</sup> To use one of his well-known idioms, for Stiegler the “what” invents the “who” just as much as the “who” invents the “what.” “Human and technics compose together a dynamic of mutual becoming.”<sup>60</sup> Or to restate his thesis in more radical terms, for Stiegler, technics operate as a supplement to the living, and the *result* of this “coupling” is the human being (*TTI* 50).

#### **i. Technics and Time**

Perhaps one of the most important features of Stiegler’s account of technics is his claim that all technological objects, even from the earliest human tools, constitute the human being’s relation to time. This argument goes far beyond the claim that our ways of measuring time have changed the way we experience time. Stiegler’s claim is that temporality itself is an effect of the human-technical relation.

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<sup>57</sup> See for instance, John Tinnell, *Actionable Media: Digital Communication Beyond the Desktop* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 100ff.

<sup>58</sup> Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience*, p. 14.

<sup>59</sup> As Lemmens puts it, “For Stiegler all human intentionality is technically constituted through what he calls “tertiary retentions.” Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media,” pp. 185–206. *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human-Media-World Relations*. Edited by Yoni Van Den Eede, Stacey O’Neal Irwin, and Galit Wellner (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> Patrick Crogan, “Bernard Stiegler: Philosophy, Technics, and Activism,” *Cultural Politics* 1 July 2010; 6 (2): 133–156; p. 137.

Stiegler provides three different ways of accounting for the relationship between technics and time. The first way Stiegler accounts for the relation between technics and time involves hominization. It is an explanation of how technics develop *in* time. To make this argument Stiegler draws insight from paleontology, anthropology, and the biological sciences. The second way Stiegler accounts for the relations between technics and time pertains to the *constitutive role* that technics play in the human's relations to time. This approach requires a phenomenological argument regarding the way in which *time is perceived*. The third way in which Stiegler construes the relationship between technics and time is through a reading of the myth of Prometheus and his lesser-known brother, Epimetheus. All three descriptions invite different modes of reflection on what he refers to as the "originary default."<sup>61</sup>

In the next chapter, I will say more about the constitutive role that technics plays in relation to temporality and therefore in relation to transcendence. This will be important not only for understanding Stiegler's appropriation of certain aspects of Kant's thought, but also to zero in on Stiegler's account of memory, anticipation, and what he calls the structures of inheritance. In the remainder of this chapter, I will use Stiegler's way of retelling the myth of Prometheus to further explain what he means about the default of origin or the "originary default."

For Stiegler, humans and technics developed simultaneously, meaning there is no originary point at which the human existed prior to technics. To help explain this claim, Stiegler retells the myth of Prometheus, but notably emphasizes the role of Prometheus's brother Epimetheus. The myth, as it is told in Plato's *Protagoras*, is a creation myth. In the story, Epimetheus, whose name means hindsight, is given the task of handing out qualities or essences

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<sup>61</sup> "Existence" is probably not the right word here. See Stiegler, "Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*. Tom Cohen: Editor. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), see especially, p. 248 and p. 264.

to all the animals. After assigning all of the qualities to other animals, Epimetheus realizes that he forgot to assign one to human beings. Since he had no qualities left to give, the human was not given a main characteristic, trait, or essence that defines them. Prometheus, whose name means forethought, steps in and steals fire and “the gift of skill in the arts” from the gods to give to the humans. Though, according to Stiegler, the history of philosophy has tended to focus on Prometheus and forget the role of Epimetheus, he draws meaning from Epimetheus’s error. For it is only after the fact that Epimetheus learns from his mistakes. Using the myth to emphasize this point, Stiegler explains that it is because human beings lack this essence that they rely on the supplement; the supplement is what allows them to make up for this lack.

The first volume of *Technics and Time* describes what this fundamental lack means for human development both historically and philosophically. In the early sections of the text, Stiegler explains how the divide between *techne* [tēkhne] and *episteme* (knowledge) in the history of thought obscures the human’s reliance on technics. This is especially the case when it comes to the human’s need to rely on external memory supports.

For Stiegler, the genesis of the human corresponds to the genesis of technics and technics constitute our relation to time. As Stiegler’s arguments progress, it becomes clear his theory of originary technicity is meant to be read as a response, even a corrective to Heidegger’s argument in *Being and Time*. Like Heidegger, Stiegler recognizes that Dasein is a temporal being; but for Heidegger, time is the “transcendental horizon for the question of Being.”<sup>62</sup> Temporality, moreover “is what primarily regulates the possible unity of all existential structures.”<sup>63</sup> Stiegler’s

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<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 63.

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 402

intervention is to suggest that technics is the condition for the possibility of temporality and yet it has been repressed in the history of thought.<sup>64</sup>

The first volume of *Technics and Time* elucidates Stiegler's basic understanding of the technological object, the technical tendency, and technological evolution. These three concepts underlie most of Stiegler's arguments and claims. We will use these three terms to introduce some of his ideas below, and then turn to explore his arguments in the two next chapters.

The term "technological object" or "technical object" may call to mind particular material objects—objects we can point to in the material world. But for Stiegler, a technical object can never simply be inert matter. Instead, technical objects are "organized inorganic matter" (*TTI*, 49, 70, 78). What Stiegler means by this is that technical objects have an internal dynamic of their own that distinguishes them from living organisms as well as from non-living matter, and so, they are neither properly organic nor inorganic, but rather something in-between. Technical objects, from eyeglasses, to architecture, to the sharpened flint objects carved by ancient human ancestors, are all understood by Stiegler to be forms of inorganic, organized matter. They are not extensions of humans so much as they are "non-living organs."<sup>65</sup> The word "organ" here is descriptive in the sense that Stiegler insists that technical objects are unthinkable apart from the complex systems they are part of. To use one of his examples, which is now somewhat dated, consider a cassette tape. A cassette tape is almost unthinkable without a machine to play it and the machine that plays it is unthinkable without recording technologies. This might seem relatively straightforward, but Stiegler's claim is not simply a claim about function. Instead he

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<sup>64</sup> He also understands himself to be following Derrida's deconstructive method insofar as he is looking for an aspect in Western philosophical thought that has been repressed and in response offers his own rereading.

<sup>65</sup> When referring to technical objects, their tendencies, and the systems they are part of Stiegler tends to use the term "technics" rather than "technology." One of the clearest expositions of his theory of technics, in his own words, can be found in an interview he offered in 2003. See Peter Hallward and Sean Gaston, "Technics of Decision: An Interview with Bernard Stiegler," *Angelaki*, 8:2 (2003), pp. 51–68. Henceforth: Hallward, Gaston, and Stiegler, "Technics of Decision."

insists that the technical objects and the systems they are part of constitute “a system of references [*renvois*],” much like we saw in the last chapter with Heidegger’s description of being-in-the-world.<sup>66</sup> Recall also that Heidegger derives his conception of worldhood from the assignment-structure. We will return to this in the next chapter, but for now it is enough to say that, for Stiegler, technical objects are always more than the sum of their parts.

To suggest that technical objects have an “internal dynamic” is to suggest that they are arranged and operate according to particular tendencies.<sup>67</sup> The notion of a “technical tendency” is an idea that Stiegler borrows from paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan. In brief, Leroi-Gourhan’s account of human evolution describes “a set of universal or quasi-universal technical tendencies” that manifest as “differentially sediment facts” in the context of different ethnic groups and societies.<sup>68</sup> We might think of these tendencies as universal archetypes, all of which relate back to the universal organizational force behind the originary coupling between humans and inorganic matter. One of the implications that come with Stiegler’s way of theorizing the technical tendency is that though technological evolution involves the human, it is *not* driven by the human. Put more concretely, though technical objects are *realized* by humans, the inventiveness that corresponds to the technical object *comes from the object itself*. As Stiegler

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<sup>66</sup> Hallward, Gaston, and Stiegler, “Technics of Decision,” p. 162.

<sup>67</sup> Hallward, Gaston, and Stiegler, “Technics of Decision,” p. 162.

<sup>68</sup> For Stiegler, studying these tendencies allows us to anticipate the process of technical becoming, even though they cannot be fully counted as technical facts. Technical facts can sometimes contradict or oppose the tendency. On this point he is drawing primarily from Leroi-Gourhan (LG). LG argues that the cortex in the human brain developed when humans started using tools, not before and not after, but at the same time. Once the hand was freed over the course of evolution to build and make tools, evolution proceeded in the human through exteriorization as well as through other means. The human interiorizes prostheses and exteriorizes memory. He refers to a universal technical tendency but this tendency takes on many forms and varies across culture. The technical tendency is itself necessary, but technical facts are accidental. LG *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993). As Yuk Hui, helpfully explains: For LG the wheel is a technical tendency, but the variations on the wheel (the spokes on the wheel, what it is made out of etc.) are all technical facts. Eventually however, the accidents can push evolution in a particular direction. LG’s distinction between technical facts and the technical tendency makes it possible to explain the similarities and differences between technical inventions across different cultures. Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotronics* (Falmouth, United Kingdom: Urbanomic, 2016), p. 8.

explains, “The technical being evolves by convergence and adaptation to itself; it becomes *unified* interiorly according to a principle of internal resonance” (*TT1* 71).<sup>69</sup> It is through the process of organization that matter evolves, and in the *process* becomes an act of potentiality.<sup>70</sup> Stiegler will go as far as to say that the universal tendencies exhibit a kind of teleology. In order to explain this further, we will need to explore Stiegler’s account of individuation. This topic will be addressed in Chapter 3.

## VI. Conclusion

In the Introduction to the dissertation I claimed that Stiegler can be read as a constructive thinker. The summary above, however, raises some important questions. After all, if Stiegler’s claim is that technical evolution is not determined by human intentionality and if we ourselves are constituted by the very conditions that we wish to critique, how then can we speak of moral freedom or responsibility? To be sure, Stiegler is highly suspicious of theories of human subjectivity, especially those that posit the human as a self-conscious and autonomous. But, as I hope will become clear once we investigate his account of the relationship between temporality and technics, Stiegler should not be disregarded as a technical or material determinist. Instead, Stiegler’s arguments challenge us to reconsider the categorizations that have been set up since the mid-twentieth century to investigate the human-technical relation. To make this point, before concluding, I will emphasize the way in which Stiegler’s account of technics problematizes the

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<sup>69</sup> My emphasis. Here Stiegler is quoting from Simondon 1958, p. 20. This implies, to be sure, that there is a kind of development on the side of technical objects that happens without the human. It comes across this way in part because of how Stiegler is appealing to a theory of ontogenesis. I will discuss the technical tendency and what it means for potentiality again in the next chapter.

<sup>70</sup> It is the latter as technical tendency that catalyzes this interaction, “insofar as it is already there, and insofar as it tends spontaneously to differentiate itself in advance from the differentiation of the *who*, since the *who* is always inscribed in a system of *whats* overdetermined by technical tendencies.” Stiegler, *TT2*, p. 7. Original emphasis. See Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media,” 185–206. Pieter Lemmens, “Technologizing the Transcendental, Not Discarding It,” *Foundations of Science*, April 3, 2021. Though we cannot discuss all the details of Stiegler’s argument, in Ch3 we will look at how he adapts Simondon’s understanding of organizational dynamism to make this point.

debates between transcendental and empirical approaches to technology in contemporary scholarship.

Stiegler is known for embracing the empirical turn, and yet he is also known for appealing to transcendentalist arguments to articulate his theory of originary technicity. While some theorists who embrace the empirical turn still resist the transcendentalizing gesture, more and more theorists are beginning to reconsider the value of approaching the topic of technology transcendently. As one theorist explains: “The notion of the transcendental, precisely the one explicitly rejected by philosophers of technology, and in particular postphenomenologists...has rich potential which is still mostly unexplored.”<sup>71</sup> At a very basic level, the suggestion here is simply that technology is not to be understood as the sum of its parts—that it somehow functions as a condition for the possibility of something. As we will see in the next two chapters, for Stiegler, it appears technics is the very condition for the possibility of *Dasein*.<sup>72</sup> However, this does not *simply* mean that that technology is the condition for the possibility of the human. Like Heidegger, Stiegler is working with an ontological understanding of transcendence. This means, as Lemmens explains:

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<sup>71</sup> Alberto Romele, “The Transcendental of Technology Is Said in Many Ways,” *Foundations of Science*, April 3, 2021. Online. Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media,” 185–206. *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human–Media–World Relations*. Edited by Yoni Van Den Eede, Stacey O’Neal Irwin, and Galit Wellner (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017); and John Tinnell, *Actionable Media: Digital Communication Beyond the Desktop* (Oxford University Press, 2018). And Lemmens response essay: Pieter Lemmens, “Technologizing the Transcendental, Not Discarding It,” *Foundations of Science*, April 3, 2021.

<sup>72</sup> As Lemmens explains: “all transcendence of beings toward their being is conditioned by technical artefacts that are indeed empirical but *as* interiorized or implicated in the cognitive or noetic existential structure of *Dasein* function as quasi-transcendental conditions of the possibility of all thinking.” Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Technology Big Again. Reconsidering the Question of the Transcendental and ‘Technology with a Capital T’ in the Light of the Anthropocene.” *Found Sci* 27, 171–187 (2022). Online: Retrieved April 8, 2022.

‘The transcendental’ then pertains to ‘knowledge’ about this dynamic structure of transcendence, which is not a ‘knowledge’ about innerworldly objects or entities and neither about some ‘otherworldly’ or ‘noumenal’ realm of ideal beings but, indeed, about being, which is never *a* being. It is not ontic but ontological ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowledge’ about what Heidegger called the *ontological difference*, which Dasein *as* a transcending being permanently ‘enacts’ or ‘executes’ [*Vollziehen*] or rather, as the later Heidegger realizes, which ‘pervades’ Dasein and first of all allows it to transcend beings and thus constitutes its condition of possibility, i.e., grants it the ability of transcending.

Lemmens’s point here is that Stiegler is drawing on Heidegger’s ontological understanding of transcendence, and Heidegger’s ontological understanding of transcendence is not to be conflated with transcendental idealism.<sup>73</sup> Unlike Kant, whose name is frequently called upon in these more recent debates, Stiegler does not appeal to a priori knowledge; rather, he demonstrates how a priori knowledge is always already contaminated by a posteriori knowledge. While I agree with Lemmens and others who are not ready to throw out a transcendental approach to technology, it remains unclear how such an appeal to Heidegger’s notion of transcendence, moves us beyond the interrelational ontology that Ihde and many others have already outlined. In order to see what is truly unique about Stiegler’s notion of transcendence, we need to look more closely at his conception of temporality and also how his approach to technics differs from Heidegger’s critique of technology. The next chapter will address these topics directly.

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<sup>73</sup> The implication here is that empirical technologies can and should be studied, but they should also be related to a “dynamic of transcendence” such as that articulated by Heidegger. This dynamic, suggests Lemmens, “inheres in our being-human as being-in-the-world, both individually and collectively. Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking Technology Big Again.” Lemmens cites Heidegger 1991, p. 184, in reference to this point.

CHAPTER 2  
TECHNICS, MEMORY, AND CONSCIOUSNESS

*“A tool is, before anything else, memory...” (TTI 254)*

**I. Introduction**

In the last chapter we reviewed a variety of currents and trends in contemporary discourse on the human-technical relation. I explained how those theorists who embrace the empirical turn often use Heidegger’s critique of technology as a foil through which they explain their own approach. I also highlighted the ways in which contemporary theorists of technology, many of which attend to the social dimensions and implications of technology, rarely use the critique of technology to investigate the moral experience. After naming some of the currents and trends, I introduced Stiegler’s theory of originary technicity.<sup>1</sup> We saw that though his approach to technology incorporates many of the impulses found in recent scholarship, his work does not fall easily into any one particular approach. Stiegler is one of the few theorists who has consistently drawn attention to the transcendental aspects of technology. But transcendental in what sense?

This chapter will respond to this question. More specifically, in what follows I explain how Stiegler’s account of technics forges a fundamental link between technics and time. This will require us to identify the ways in which Stiegler is borrowing from while also moving past some of Husserl’s, Heidegger’s, and, most importantly, Kant’s fundamental claims.<sup>2</sup> Though our

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in the Introduction, I understand originary technicity to refer to 1) a way of conceiving the human-technical relation as well as 2) a contemporary intellectual movement that challenges much of the previous discourse on technology. For a more detailed account of originary technicity as a theory and concept, see Arthur Bradley, *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), Richard Beardsworth, “Thinking Technicity.” *Cultural Values*, 2:1 (1998) 70–86; and Ben Roberts, “Stiegler Reading Derrida: The Prosthesis of Deconstruction in Technics.” *Postmodern Culture*, 16:1 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Another layer of complexity is that Husserl and Heidegger are both using concepts that are at least in part developed in ways that allow them to create greater distance between their own philosophy and that of Kant’s. I mention this only to stress the fact that though Stiegler uses Kantian concepts and categories (in the general sense), it is often the case that they bear little resemblance to the meaning that Kant himself attributes to them.

focus will shift to Kant in subsequent chapters, clarifying Stiegler's arguments in relationship to Husserl and Heidegger will help us to understand why Stiegler positions himself against Kant in the way that he does.

Moreover, as we will see, Kant's three syntheses and his account of the unity of consciousness becomes for Stiegler the framework upon which he pieces together insights from Heidegger, Husserl, and Derrida, on the topics of temporality, unity, and projection.<sup>3</sup> The result is a complex account of the way a form of technical memory—what he calls tertiary retention—functions at the level of consciousness, perception, and intentionality. However, Stiegler also argues that Kant's failure to acknowledge the human's reliance on technical supplements led him to miss something crucial about human consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Rather than attending to the complex relationship between imagination and perception, Stiegler argues that Kant effectively, hollows out what should have been described as tertiary retention at the center of human consciousness. What Stiegler overlooks, however, is the possibility that what he calls "tertiary retention" is not something Kant ever thought we could bring to consciousness—at least not without the help of religion construed as historical faith.<sup>5</sup>

I argue that Stiegler misses an opportunity to develop his account of tertiary (or technical) memory by not attending to Kant's practical philosophy and theory of religion. More

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<sup>3</sup> This dissertation is primarily about how we can read Kant and Stiegler together and therefore find a space for the moral experience even from within the framework of originary technicity. Though I will discuss some aspects of Husserl below, I will not spend much time engaging Husserl in his own terms. We will however return to some of Heidegger's arguments again in Chapter 6 especially.

<sup>4</sup> Stiegler argues that it was only because Kant utilized an external memory support, namely writing, that he was able to preserve and order his own primary and secondary retentions. Through the act of writing, one is able to perceive time as passing. Time as inner sense enters in to the subject so to speak through the use of external supplements. This is why Stiegler argues: "Consciousness can only become self-consciousness when it can be externalized, objectivized as traces through which at the same time it becomes accessible to other consciousness." In revising the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant effectively rewrites his own consciousness, "before a public that reads." Stiegler, *TT3*, p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> My argument for the latter claim is presented primarily in Chapter 8.

specifically, my argument is that because Stiegler ignores Kant's practical philosophy and only occasionally makes references to Kant's theory of religion, he overlooks the ways in which Kant's full account of human subjectivity could have helped him work out his notion of tertiary retention in such a way that is not *only* tied to intentionality and consciousness. Indeed, rather than looking at the categories of the understanding, Stiegler, I am suggesting, would have done well to look at what Kant refers to as the "categories of freedom" in the second *Critique*<sup>6</sup> or the complicated relationship between historical religion and the form of pure religious faith in Kant's *Religion*. However, before we can explore these possibilities further, we need to get a better hold on Stiegler's arguments regarding the relationship between technics and time.

## II. Technics and Memory

As we noted in the last chapter, Stiegler provides three different ways of accounting for the relationship between technics and time. The first is concerned with how technics develop *in* time. To make this argument Stiegler draws insight from paleontology, anthropology, and the biological sciences. The second way Stiegler accounts for the relationship between technics and time pertains to the *constitutive role* that technics play in the human's relations to time.<sup>7</sup> This approach requires a phenomenological argument regarding the way in which time is *perceived*. I will return to former relation briefly and use it to open a discussion on the latter.

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<sup>6</sup> As I will stress below, the unity that we need to presuppose in the second *Critique* is not an "I think" but an "I desire" and this unity is not built on the three syntheses of the imagination, but rather is unified "under the form of a pure will" (*CPrR* 5:65).

<sup>7</sup> When Stiegler uses the term "constitutive" he means to appropriate Kant's meaning of the term, and also bring it closer to the "regulative." For Kant regulative principles and ideas govern our theoretical activities but offer no constitutive guarantees about the objects under investigation. Regulative ideas serve a heuristic purpose of regulating our thought and action. Constitutive principles determine the way things must be, and afford insight into nature on behalf of determining judgment (Kant *CJ* 5:404–5:405). Stiegler's term "consistencies" is meant to repeat the concept of the regulative idea, but in a way that incorporates the phenomenological question of pretension and the Freudian question of desire. "Consistencies, which do not exist, overflow existence and in doing so project it beyond subsistence...." Stiegler, "We Have to Become the Quasi-Cause of Nothing – of Nihil": An Interview with Bernard Stiegler." *Theory, Culture & Society* 35, no. 2 (March 2018): 137–56. Article first published online: July 26, 2016; Issue published: March 1, 2018.

With respect to technics *in time*, which is essentially Stiegler's account of hominization, Stiegler describes the human species as the product of three different types or levels of memory: genetic, epigenetic, and epiphylogenetic.<sup>8</sup> We encountered some of this argument when we addressed his way of conceiving the evolution of technics in the previous chapter.<sup>9</sup> The first two levels of memory, genetic and epigenetic, humans share in common with other biological species. This includes the hereditary memory of genetic reproduction (phylogenetic memory) and the neurological memory associated with individual life experiences. However, the third type of memory is embodied in technical systems and artifacts and is what makes possible the "generative bond" or "coupling" between humanity and technics. Whereas epigenetic memory involves the individual carrier of memory and is passed on from generation to generation, epiphylogenetic memory refers to the objective form of memory that is directly tied to material supplements. The latter preserves the events of previous generations and projects humans into the future. As one commentator explains, "The singularity of the human...resides in the type of extra-individual (shared, social) memory deposited in the operational sequences of language and technology."<sup>10</sup>

To clarify, Stiegler discusses "epiphylogenetic memory" he is referring to the objective form of memory, directly tied to material supplement; but when he is describing how this form memory shows up in consciousness, he is referring to "tertiary retention" or "tertiary memory." As I will explain below, tertiary memory is what makes it possible for the human to organize and

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<sup>8</sup> Stiegler borrows these categories from André Leroi-Gourhan. Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1993). See Stiegler, *TTI*, pp. 135–141.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 1, 50–52 above.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Johnson, "The Prehistory of Technology: On the Contribution of Leroi-Gourhan," pp. 259–275 in *Stiegler and Technics*, Christina Howells, editor. (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 39

synthesize experience—equivalent in some ways to how Kant describes the transcendental apperception and therefore is important for consciousness and perceptive awareness.<sup>11</sup>

Crucially, for Stiegler, epiphylogenetic memory is how we *inherit* a past and how we invent the future—a past and a future that are never our own.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, in a fundamental sense, without technics there would be no horizon of possibility beyond immediate experience. Hence there would be no transcendence.

It is important to understand that Stiegler, like Heidegger, construes Dasein as transcendence, and transcendence is understood temporally. Beyond Heidegger, however, Stiegler insists that our relation to time is always mediated through technics. There is no use in appealing to a more authentic or originary temporal structure. Nevertheless, one of Stiegler's primary concerns is to offer an account of how it is that humans remain open to the future, even as they inherit a diversified past. This is one of the reasons I am suggesting that he is a constructive thinker.

In order to fully grasp Stiegler's account of memory, and to see what it has to do with Kant, we need to follow how Stiegler pieces his arguments together through his selective readings of 1) Derrida's reading of Husserl and 2) Heidegger's reading of Kant. Though Stiegler's use of these different thinkers is complex, perhaps unnecessarily so, gaining some perspective on how he works with and against these figures on the topic of temporality, will

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<sup>11</sup> Further evidence for this claim comes when Stiegler states that: "Epiphylogenesis [the other side of tertiary retention, as I understand it] bestows its identity upon the human individual: the accents of his speech, the style of his approach, the force of his gesture, the unity of his world. This concept would be that of an archaeology of reflexivity" (*TTI*, p. 140). He connects this directly to what Heidegger's calls the "historical."

<sup>12</sup> For Stiegler, technical objects are memory objects, but they are not simply *carriers* of memory. External memory supports are constitutive in the sense that they make human experience possible. However, Stiegler can also be read as a kind of cultural memory theorist in the sense that we inherit a past that has not been lived. In this sense, it would be fruitful to compare Stiegler's account of memory to other cultural theorists of memory such as Jan Assmann. See Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

allow us to see what is at stake in Stiegler's claim that the relationship between being and time is to be construed technologically, hence: *Technics and Time*.

Since Kant's theory of consciousness becomes the very structure upon which Stiegler builds his account of tertiary retention, we will begin with a brief overview of that structure, as Kant articulates it. This will also be useful for the argument of the next chapter.

### **III. Kant on the Unity of Consciousness**

One of Kant's most important contributions to the history of thought was his argument that the human mind does not passively receive data from the sensible world, but actively works to formulate that data into sensible intuitions. This does not mean that information from the outside world makes an impression on us and then we represent that impression as an image that has been somehow altered by the work of our minds. For Kant, we do not have access to things-in-themselves. In fact, we do not even have access to the content of intuition that we gain from sensible experience. Kant famously declared that intuitions without concepts are blind and concepts without intuitions are empty.<sup>13</sup> In order to *apprehend* objects of sensible intuition (*apperception*, as we will see in a moment, is different) we need to organize and classify those objects as objects of knowledge. This requires a process Kant calls "schematism."

The general goal of the Transcendental Deduction of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, is to demonstrate that there are a priori categories (i.e. pure concepts of the understanding) that apply to objects of experience. The four categories that Kant deduces are quantity, quality, modality, and causality. These categories are used to synthesize and organize human cognition. Without them we would be left with a manifold of intuitions. Kant defines "synthesis" as "the act

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<sup>13</sup> Immanuel Kant, Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st paperback ed., *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 193, *CPR* A51/B75. Henceforth: *CPR* with page numbers in the original (A) and second (B) editions.

of putting different representations together, and grasping what is manifold in them in one cognition”; it is a process that “gathers the elements for cognition, and unites them to form a certain content.”<sup>14</sup> “Schematism” is the term he uses to describe the process through which concepts and intuitions are combined or synthesized according to a rule. The rule is called a schema.<sup>15</sup> In the first *Critique*, schematism is described as a function of the imagination.<sup>16</sup>

According to Kant, the manifold of intuition must be unified through a *series* of syntheses. Again, a synthesis in this context refers to an act of putting different representations together and grasping what is manifold in them in one cognition (in a moment we will see how this definition closely aligns with Kant’s understanding of apperception which make matters slightly more confusing). Kant defines at least three distinct syntheses. The synthesis of apprehension concerns perceptual input; the synthesis of recognition concerns concepts; and finally, the synthesis of reproduction allows us to reflect on the other two syntheses. The synthesis of reproduction is especially important because Kant will insist that conscious content can have unity only if what is presented to consciousness is first tied together causally. For this to be possible, the synthesis of recognition requires a transcendental ground. It is here where the transcendental

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<sup>14</sup> Kant, *CPR* A77/B103; A78/B103.

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger will make a distinction between schema and schema-image, Stiegler will argue that the relationship between scheme and image is transductive. See *TT3*, pp. 71–72. A transductive relation is “a relation that constitutes its terms, the terms not existing outside the relation. It is a relation that is the vehicle of a process (that of difference)...” Stiegler, “Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith,” in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Tom Cohen. (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 248 and p. 264n.

<sup>16</sup> In the A–Edition of the first *Critique*, Kant describes the threefold synthesis, which is presenting all cognition as follows: “apprehension of representations [*Vorstellungen*], as modifications of the mind in intuition; the reproduction of [these representations] in imagination and their recognition in concepts” (*CPR* A97). There is scholarly disagreement *about* the difference between schema and the categories of the understanding. My reading of Kant on the topics of schematism and hypotyposis has been informed especially by John H. Zammuto, *The Genesis of Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Germany, De Gruyter, 2016); Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson, *Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant’s Critical Works* (Diss. Manchester Metropolitan University, 2015); Frank Schalow, *Departures: At the Crossroads between Heidegger and Kant* (Walter de Gruyter, 2013); Eckart Förster, *Kant’s final synthesis: an essay on the Opus postumum* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000.) I am also indebted to Andrew Brook’s and Julian Wuert’s summary of Kant’s conception of mind and self-consciousness in SEP (full citation below).

apperception—in one sense—comes into play. Kant famously declared that the “I think” must accompany all our representations. This positing of the “I think” is necessary for human perception.<sup>17</sup> As I will explain further in the next chapter, despite the Cartesian presuppositions that underlie this claim, thinkers for centuries have been confounded as well as intrigued by this argument.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, Kant will insist that the categories (or pure concepts of the understanding) are the condition for the possibility of unified experience and for all thinking a priori. And yet, in order to synthesize the manifold and have a unified experience, we need the “I think,” which in itself seems to require some kind of prior synthesis, a synthesis that we do not actively initiate or take part in—a passive synthesis; something we find “already there,” already in consciousness.<sup>19</sup> Why does this help us understand Stiegler’s arguments regarding technics and time? Because it is precisely here where Stiegler inscribes his notion of tertiary retention.<sup>20</sup>

Stiegler’s argument is that the three syntheses of the transcendental imagination presuppose tertiary memory (the other side, so to speak, of epiphylogenetic memory). To make this argument, Stiegler relies on both Heidegger and Husserl, but with at least two important qualifications. First, Stiegler argues that what Husserl called secondary memory is actually

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<sup>17</sup> It seems to describe as an act, a judgment, and a faculty all at once. As Brooke explains, the passage between *CPR* A106 and A111 is “blindingly difficult.” It takes up transcendental apperception, the unity and identity of the mind, and the mind’s consciousness of itself as the subject of all its representation.” Andrew Brook and Julian Wuerth, “Kant’s View of the Mind and Consciousness of Self,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/kant-mind/>>.

<sup>18</sup> In the Chapter 3, Stiegler and Social Ontology, we will see how Stiegler is one of many thinkers to appeal to Kant’s Transcendental Deduction and, more particularly, the transcendental apperception to rethink human sociality and intersubjectivity. Here our concern is to further explain how Kant’s epistemology becomes a vehicle for Stiegler to explicate the important connection between time and technics.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Ricoeur will speak of this more in terms of an “I will,” or the “I act.” Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (United Kingdom, University of Chicago Press, 1994). Stiegler, as we will see, relates this to a past that we have not lived and a past that has never been present.

<sup>20</sup> In later works, he expands this claim: “To say that the Kantian schema presupposes tertiary retention means in more general terms that we must think the *faculties* – of knowledge, desire and judgment – in terms of technical evolution.” Stiegler, *The Neganthropocen* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018).

constituted by tertiary memory (or external memory supports).<sup>21</sup> Second, unlike Heidegger, who Stiegler argues presupposes a primordial or authentic experience of time, Stiegler insists upon the “*technological* rooting of all relation to time” (*TTI* 135).

Before we explore this argument further, we need to make another point of clarification regarding Kant’s conception of apperception—something that is often overlooked by theorists who are quick to dismiss Kant as a transcendental idealist. Kant uses the term “apperception” to refer to a unifying function, that is, “a function of synthesizing represented objects into a single unified experience of them.”<sup>22</sup> However, as the Kantian scholar Andrew Brook, explains, we can distinguish at least two different ways that Kant uses the term “apperception.” First, as a function or process; and second, as an object of consciousness—something we presuppose or find already in consciousness.

As a function or process, apperception synthesizes represented objects into a single unified experience. Apperception as a function has an empirical aspect and a transcendental aspect. Both aspects are associated with bringing unity to experience. “Kant thinks that we can do so in many different ways – this is empirical apperception. However, he also thinks that to have experience, our [human] kind of experience at any rate, we must do it and we must use a priori forms and concepts (forms and concepts not acquired from experience) to do it. His name for these elements of necessity is ‘transcendental’ or ‘pure.’”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For Husserl this is *Bildbewusstsein* or “image consciousness.” Edmund Husserl, *Phantasie, Bildbewusstsein, Erinnerung. Zur Phänomenologie der anschaulichen Vergegenwärtigungen. Texte aus dem Nachlass*. E. Marbach, ed. 1980. Hua XXIV. According to Stiegler, Husserl came close to developing a theory of technicity when he turns to describe the way in which we perceive a temporal object, such as a melody. Unfortunately, a full account of Husserl’s philosophical achievements exceeds the scope of this project. For a conversation about the place of perception in Stiegler’s appropriation of Husserl’s notion of time-consciousness, see Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2004), pp. 255–260.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Brook, “Apperception,” in *The Kantian Cambridge Lexicon*, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Brook, *Kantian Cambridge Lexicon*, p. 43.

In other words, when it comes to the a priori forms and concepts, that is to say, forms and concepts not acquired from experience, we must rely on transcendental apperception. All other ways of synthesizing represented objects into a single unified experience involves empirical apperception.

The second way that Kant uses the term “apperception” is to refer to a particular object of consciousness, namely, the ego, represented necessarily. This is of course what we referred to earlier when we referenced the “I think.” The “I think” here is equivalent to “transcendental apperception.” But once again there is a distinction between the empirical and the transcendental ego. There is self consciousness awareness of the self as the empirical ego and a self consciousness of the self as the transcendental or pure ego. Why is this important? First of all, because when an author dismisses Kant on the grounds of the “transcendental subject,” this has an effect of flattening out Kant’s entire account of human subjectivity. Throughout this dissertation we will find that Kant’s full account is much more complex. Secondly, whereas Kant insisted that we can gain some knowledge of the self as the self is empirically constituted, he was adamant that we *cannot* gain knowledge of the self as a transcendental ego. The apperceptive consciousness, he insists, “yields a consciousness of self in which ‘nothing manifold is given.’”<sup>24</sup>

Below I will refer to Husserl’s notion of time-consciousness. Time-consciousness, for Husserl, is what underlies all forms of intentionality, but it is not an *active* intending. Instead it functions as a *form of receptivity*. It is the “original seat of the unity of identity in general.”<sup>25</sup> As we will see in a moment, it has three aspects. In some ways this concept is very close to Kant’s

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<sup>24</sup> Brook, *Kantian Cambridge Lexicon*, p. 45, citing Kant, *CPR* B135/CECPR: 248.

<sup>25</sup> Edmund Husserl, *On The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (trans. John Barnet Brough). (Dordrecht, Boston and London: Kluwer, 1993), p. 73. Quoted in Harvie Ferguson, “Phenomenology and Social,” pp. 232–249 in *Handbook of Social Theory*. Edited by George Ritzer & Barry Smart (United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, 2001).

transcendental ego, i.e. the “I think.” However, if this concept also comes with the presupposition that we can gain some sort of knowledge about it through the phenomenological reduction, then we have moved away from Kant’s position.

Paul Ricoeur has a helpful way of explaining why it is that Kant’s epistemological limits prevent us from gaining knowledge on the transcendental ego. In the context of explaining why Kant rejects the very notion of a transcendental experience, Ricoeur writes: “The very idea of an ‘experience’ of the *Cogito*—is it not, for a Kantian, a sort of monster? To regard and describe the *Cogito* – is it not to treat it as a phenomenon, therefore as an object in nature and not at all as the condition of the possibility of phenomena?”<sup>26</sup> Because Kant defines the “I think” and the “phenomenal self” (i.e. the empirical ego) in terms of objective knowledge, whenever we try to interpret the ego of apperception, we are faced with a dilemma. “Either I am conscious of the I think, but this is not knowledge or I know the self but it is a phenomenon of nature.”<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, even if Kant’s “I think” is rendered as time-consciousness or pure intentionality or something like it, the question of whether or not this is a process or a function (the first definition of apperception above), remains a question. Stiegler’s complex formulation, which relies on both Husserl, Heidegger, *and* Kant, seems to conflate the different ways Kant uses the term apperception. This is unfortunate because gaining knowledge about a process or a function of unity seems to be different from something we find “already in consciousness.” In

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<sup>26</sup> Ricoeur, “Kant and Husserl,” p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> Ricoeur, “Kant and Husserl,” p. 151. Ricoeur himself thinks the first *Critique* offers a way out of this difficulty. “Kant in fact escapes this dilemma whenever he proceeds to a direct inspection of *Gemüt*. The very term *Gemüt*, so enigmatic, designates the field ‘of transcendental experience’ that Husserl thematizes. It is not at all the ‘I think’ guaranteeing epistemologically the unity of experience but what Husserl calls *Ego Cogito Cogitata* begins to their appearance in *Gemüt*.” Ricoeur here will say that with the guide of the transcendental experience of the *Gemüt*, it is possible to recapture the features of a Kantian phenomenology.

other words, the difference is between how we gain knowledge about a movement and how we gain knowledge about an object.<sup>28</sup>

#### **IV. Mapping Stiegler's Reformulations**

With Kant's theory of consciousness and the three syntheses of the imagination (apprehension, recognition, and reproduction) explained, we can turn to Stiegler's way of revising Kant's theorizations for his own account of tertiary retention. In brief, Stiegler maps Husserl's three types of intentional awareness (three aspects of time-consciousness), onto Kant's three syntheses: "the three syntheses are translations of the three retentive forms and what necessarily links them."<sup>29</sup> More specifically, Stiegler maps them onto *Heidegger's* reformulation of Kant's three syntheses of the imagination. I turn now to explain both aspects of this argument.

##### **i. Phenomenology and Temporality**

Stiegler's reading of Kant is deeply influenced by the way Heidegger and Husserl read Kant. One result of this reading is that the Transcendental Deduction has a fundamentally temporal structure, and temporality as such is understood phenomenologically. This is crucial for understanding Stiegler's notion of tertiary retention. We noted in the last chapter that phenomenology, as formulated by Husserl, claims that all awareness, all perception, is directed toward objects in the world. Every experience, every act of consciousness is intentional, it is always an "experience of" or "consciousness of" something. Moreover, consciousness, for

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<sup>28</sup> As we will see in the next chapter, Stiegler's attempt to bring together Heidegger's ontological understanding of transcendence together with Simondon's theory of ontogenesis (an image, or schema-image and a process). It seems to me that Stiegler utilizes Kant's notion of schema to make an ontological claim about how the flux of consciousness is organized *and* how ontic relations are organized around a schema. This means that the schema, for Stiegler, is at once both representational and procedural, suggesting also that it is both temporal and spatial.

<sup>29</sup> He further explains: "But why affirm the necessity of what I have called tertiary retention *here*? Because recognition is a hyper-reproducibility, a law of re-production that phenomenally manifests not only a production but in some sense a re-production; that is, a production (recognition) presupposing the materiality of a reproduction (from the *synthesis* of reproduction), which then calls for the synthetic apprehension of the manifold of sensibility" (*TT3*, p. 45).

Husserl and other phenomenologists, is always extended, so to speak. That which has just passed and that which is about to enter the now are both present. Husserl argues that the problem of how we perceive continual duration can only be resolved by recognizing that the “instant” of perception must contain within it the *retained* perception of the instant just past. As one commentator on Husserl explains:

My momentary retention sinks—such is the originary form of the continuous ‘flowing’ of time—into the least distant past, and the now which was just actually taking place becomes a new retention. In these new, immediately actualized retention, however, the prior retention also remains immediately co-present, and so on. This interlocking of retentions into one another goes on continually, so that a ‘comet’s tail of retentions’ arises. This chain of retentions is thus preserved beyond the limit of present consciousness, like something that has sunk down beneath the surface and this makes it possible for me to rediscover what took place in the past through re-presentation.<sup>30</sup>

Stiegler maintains a similar perspective. We experience time always as a combination of the preservation of a memory (retention) and anticipation of what is to come (protention).<sup>31</sup> We can now unpack this last point further. Whereas Kant claimed that “time was the form of inner sense,”<sup>32</sup> Husserl’s notion of time-consciousness has a threefold structure; or put differently, time consciousness is defined by three modes of intentional awareness: primal impression (primary memory), retention (secondary memory), and protention. Stiegler borrows these same categories, but he thinks Husserl mistakenly draws a sharp line between primary and secondary memory. (I will return to protention below when I discuss anticipation and projection.) Put simply, for Husserl, primary retention (or primary memory), is in some sense preconscious; secondary memory, however has to do with active recalling. The former, is associated with perception and the latter with the imagination. But Stiegler insists that we never experienced anything like pure

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<sup>30</sup> Klaus Held, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of the Life-World,” pp. 32–64 in *The New Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 45–46 (Husserl 1991: 37). Also see *Stiegler and Technics*, p. 250. A longer discussion would draw out similarities and differences between Stiegler’s account of temporality and that of Paul Ricoeur’s. I mention them here only to stress the fact that Stiegler is borrowing from while also making adjustments to a pattern of thought that can be traced as far back as Augustine.

<sup>31</sup> Stiegler’s way of recounting the myth involving Prometheus and Epimetheus is relevant here as well.

<sup>32</sup> I realize I am not speaking directly to Kant’s claim regarding the form of inner sense. However, since Stiegler does not often reference this part of Kant’s argument it would require another detour through Heidegger and others.

perception. Secondary memory is always part of our perceptive awareness.<sup>33</sup> Stiegler, following Derrida, insists that there is no living present, no “fixed presence.”<sup>34</sup> Time is always “*differed* time.”<sup>35</sup> What we perceive as the “now” or present moment is in fact a synthesis or composite of memory and expectation (retention and protention). Building on what he thinks was already implicated in Derrida’s reading of Husserl, Stiegler suggests that our experience of the present is always mediated by technics, that is to say, whatever we take to be the present moment, or the “now” of perception is made possible in and through our relationship to technics. To make this argument Stiegler introduces a form of technical memory into the structure of consciousness.

## ii. Tertiary Memory and the Technical Synthesis

Now as if matters were not already complex, as mentioned above, Stiegler maps Husserl’s three types of intentional awareness, onto Kant’s three syntheses.<sup>36</sup> Here his reading of Kant is heavily influenced by Heidegger’s. Heidegger argues that Kant’s first *Critique* can be read as an attempt to articulate the ontological knowledge (knowledge of being) that is presupposed in all ontic knowledge (knowledge of particular entities or ek-sistant things).<sup>37</sup> Notably, for Heidegger,

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<sup>33</sup> See Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. Trans. John Barnett (Brough, London: Kluwer Academic Press, 1991;1928). Cited by Daniel Ross, “Pharmacology and Critique after Deconstruction,” pp. 243–258 in *Stiegler and Technics*. Husserl’s full account of time-consciousness is incredibly complex. A full account cannot be offered here. For a helpful overview, see Klaus Held, “Husserl’s Phenomenology of the Life-World,” pp. 32–64 in *The New Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> According to Derrida, Husserl passes through the “transcendental reduction in order to grasp the difference in what is closest to it—which cannot mean grasping it in its identity, its purity, or its origin, for it has none. We come closest to it in the movement of *différance*” Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, p. 82; *Derrida Reader*, p. 24. For Derrida the living present is always already a ‘trace.’ Since the trace is “the intimate relation of the living present with its outside” there can “no longer be any absolute inside” (p. 27). Unfortunately, I will not be able to explain Derrida’s treatment of Husserl or trace the various ways in which Stiegler uses and departs from Derrida. For a closer look at Derrida’s account of Husserl see the last few pages of *Voice and Phenomenon* and the *Origin of Geometry*. For a helpful summary of Derrida’s reading of Husserl see Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Ukraine, Indiana University Press, 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Stiegler, *TTI*, p. 231. He notes further: “Dasein is the being who differs and defers [*l’étant qui diffère*].”

<sup>36</sup> Again, notice that the distinction between apperception and apprehension are not clearly distinguished in Stiegler’s formulation.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. 5th ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Heidegger will talk about the productive, spontaneous imagination as the “ground of the intrinsic possibility of the ontological synthesis;” §27. The “laying of the ground for ontological knowledge must become an unveiling of the

Kant's categories of the understanding provide *ontological knowledge*, they are "the representations in thought of an original *ontological synthesis*."<sup>38</sup> The understanding "gives conceptual form to pure synthesis, and thus makes possible a phenomenological interpretation of the basic structures of knowledge."<sup>39</sup> Stiegler accepts Heidegger's reading of Kant, but takes the "original ontological synthesis" to be a technical synthesis. The categories of the understanding then would be the representation in thought of the technical synthesis.

To break this down: Stiegler maps primary retention (primary memory) on to Kant's synthesis of *apprehension*, where it is responsible for unifying the flux of intuitions that we experience through *perception*. It provides the most basic experience of the passage of time: the "just nows passing by."<sup>40</sup> Recollection, which Stiegler calls secondary retention, is read onto the synthesis of reproduction.<sup>41</sup> This leaves us with the third synthesis, which for Kant was the synthesis of recognition. This becomes for Stiegler, effectively, tertiary retention. The last of the three is especially important for our purposes because it is where, I would like to suggest, Stiegler cashes out on his use of both Husserl and Heidegger. It is also where I think he misses an opportunity to further develop his account of tertiary retention by appealing to Kant's broader understanding of human subjectivity.

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origin of pure synthesis, i.e. why it must come to be unveiled as such in a synthesis in its being-allowed-to-spring-forth" (§14, p. 46). "The knowing of Being... is the unity of pure intuition and pure thinking..." (§14, p. 46).

<sup>38</sup> On this point see Martin Weatherston's reading in *Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant: Categories, Imagination and Temporality* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002), see especially, p. 93f. I will look closer at one of Heidegger's works in Chapter 6, but summarizing his engagement with Kant more broadly is beyond the scope of this project.

<sup>39</sup> Weatherston, pp. 93–94.

<sup>40</sup> Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. Trans. John Barnett (Brough, London: Kluwer Academic Press, 1991;1928). Cited by Daniel Ross, "Pharmacology and Critique after Deconstruction," p. 250.

<sup>41</sup> For Kant, this second synthesis is the capacity of the faculty of the imagination to recall a representation even when the object is no longer present. Husserl likewise describes secondary retention in terms of recalling.

### iii. Recognition, Imagination, and Perception

One of the crucial insights that Stiegler takes away from Heidegger's reading of Kant concerns Kant's decisions to mark a distinction between apprehension and reproduction. Stiegler insists that this opens up a space for thinking the relationship between imagination and perception (*TT3* 42–44).<sup>42</sup> Stiegler thinks Kant himself acknowledges this when he notes that “[I]magination is a necessary ingredient of perception itself.”<sup>43</sup> However, it is Heidegger rather than Kant that first capitalizes on this distinction. Heidegger argues that the third synthesis, the synthesis of recognition, precedes the others. On his reading, the unity of apperception is a product of the imagination, which is independent of the categories. Beyond Heidegger, Stiegler adds that the link between imagination and perception is conditioned by external memory supports and therefore it is conditioned by the evolution of technics. This also means that the link between perception and imagination is continually transformed. This transformation happens not through an act of consciousness or as a mode of intentional awareness. It is through an external synthesis, which is at the same time a technical synthesis (*TT3* 43). Stiegler, in other words, argues that imagination and perceptions depend upon tertiary retention.

As Stiegler's arguments develop through the three volumes of technics and time, it becomes increasingly clear that he associated the unity of human consciousness with an external synthesis. But that's not all. The technical synthesis is said to organize thought *and* it is somehow connected to the flow of human desire. Though Stiegler will also incorporate unconscious desire into the mix, his arguments nevertheless indicate that the flow of desire is

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<sup>42</sup> Stiegler admits that Kant never came to these conclusions, and this is partly because, according to Stiegler, he confuses perception with the imagination.

<sup>43</sup> Kant, *CPR* A120n. This, we could further note, is precisely why Kant insists that happiness is an ideal of the imagination. Perception is conditional. Happiness therefore is not the supreme principle of morality. It should also be noted that Kant defines at least three kinds of *imagination* in the third *Critique*: *reproductive*, *productive*, and *reflective*, or free play (*CJ*, §71).

always the result of the organization of consciousness. Because he continues to associate tertiary retention with structures of consciousness, his understanding of tertiary memory is stuck at the level of consciousness.<sup>44</sup> For all of Stiegler's efforts to make the so-called "empirical turn" and focus on materiality, in the end, it is always a certain *form of consciousness* that shapes the relationship between perception and imagination—it is consciousness that is continually shaped and reshaped according to the movement of technical evolution.<sup>45</sup>

In the first volume of *Technics and Time*, Stiegler connects his account of the synthesis of recognition to the "opening" of the history of being. More specifically it is a form of writing that "gives the opening.

[W]riting constitutes the first case of what we will define later as what stems from the *principle of a deferring and differing identity*. This first case is achieved by what we will call, to designate the completed form of alphabetic writing (phonological writing), *literal synthesis*. A temporality that is deferred belongs in principle to literal synthesis. In the second volume of this work we will develop the notions of *analogical and numerical synthesis*, which dominate contemporary technology, oriented, inversely, by an asymptotic tendency toward real, live temporality, temporality without detour, that is, toward a *particular atemporality*—one that does not exclude the work of *différance* but conceals it in an essential manner. In tracing these distinctions our project of apprehending temporal synthesis—that is, synthesis as such — in terms of *tekhne qua* synthesis becomes more sharply delineated. (*TTI* 23)

There is one additional step to Stiegler's argument that we have not discussed. Stiegler associates the synthesis of recognition with both unity and projection. Drawing insights from Heidegger's reading of Kant, Stiegler's insists that the mind presents the past and through this diversified past it "*abstracts a unity that is still to come*" (*TT3* 45). This notion of a "unity still to come" will be crucial for understanding why I argue that Kant's theory of religion operates according to a logic similar to that of ordinary technicity.

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<sup>44</sup> Though to be fair, for Stiegler, the knowledge that is gained is not an object, it is a transcendental apperception of a process, namely grammatization. The history of the supplement is the history of grammatization. Nevertheless, it would seem that consciousness internalizes this process and therefore we expose it through the existential analytic.

<sup>45</sup> For a closer look at how Stiegler works with and against Husserl's categories, see Patrick Crogan, "Experience of the Industrial Technical Object," pp. 102–118 in *Stiegler and Technics*.

Recall that for Kant, the synthesis of recognition has to do with sensible data being apprehended by perception, then reproduced by the imagination, and finally subsumed under a *concept* of understanding.<sup>46</sup> But as Heidegger points out, and Stiegler agrees, the only way to arrive at a concept is to have a kind of abstraction or a *consciousness* of a unity in advance. This is necessary for the synthesis of reproduction (the second syntheses). As Stiegler writes: “The unification of flux, as the synthesis of recognition, overdetermines the unification of the synthesis of apprehension and reproduction...”<sup>47</sup> “Heidegger tells us that...the third synthesis is of the future and that therefore the synthesis of recognition is also and at the same time the synthesis of ‘precognition’—that is, of projection” (*TT3* 56).<sup>48</sup>

As a preview into my reading of Kant—the unity to come for Kant is not only associated with consciousness. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 8, where I turn to Kant’s theory of religion, I will argue that in adopting what Kant calls the “disposition” of the archetype, Kant determines that the theoretical *need* to comprehend the unity of a whole is replaced with an image of sacrifice. However, before moving on, there is one more aspect of Stiegler’s argument that we need to consider, and that his way of reworking the existential analytic. It is here where we see the payoff of Stiegler prioritizing hypomnesis over anamnesis.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Stiegler describes as follows: “After the synthesis of apprehension grasps the manifold and the synthesis of reproduction retains it, the third synthesis unifies it and brings it to a concept” (*TT3*, p. 44).

<sup>47</sup> Stiegler, *TT3*, p. 44. edition of the first *Critique*, Kant effectively rewrites his own consciousness, “before a public that reads.”

<sup>48</sup> For Heidegger, historicity is the context out of which concrete existence is interpreted. This is the hermeneutical move that puts distance between Husserl and Heidegger. It would seem that Stiegler grants this but for him history is the history of supplements. On this point, see Elliott p. 86ff. Brian Elliott, *Phenomenology and Imagination in Husserl and Heidegger*. 8th Edition; Modern Language Assoc. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> The term hypomnesis in Stiegler’s lexicon refers to external memory or the making-technical of memory; the term is sometimes applied to specific memory supports such as writing or sound recording mechanisms. However, he also uses the term mnemotechnics to refer to technologies that are specifically designed to record secondary memory. These technologies offer us a way or a mode of access to the past. For example, in *TT2*, Stiegler discusses the emergence of *orthographic* writing, whose exact recording makes possible a new modality of access to the past. Anamnesis, by contrast, refers to internal memory, and it involves the process of recollection or retrieval. It is a concept Stiegler traces back to Plato. In the history of philosophical thought anamnesis is closely associated with ideas about eternal knowledge or a priori knowledge.

## V. Revising the Existential Analytic: Structures of Inheritance

Stiegler's account of transcendence, though similar to Heidegger's, is qualified in two main ways. First, Stiegler revises Heidegger's existential analytic in such a way that all relations to time are constituted in and through technics. Secondly, Stiegler attempts to bring together Heidegger's fundamental ontology with Simondon's theory of ontogenesis. We are now in a position to look more specifically at how Stiegler revises the existential analytic. In the next chapter I will explain how this relates to Stiegler's attempt to bring Heidegger's fundamental ontology together with Simondon's theory of ontogenesis.

As noted in the previous chapter, the existential analytic reveals care to be the fundamental structure of the being of Dasein. The structure of care has three dimensions, or rather, can be described as a threefold "ecstatic" temporality through which Dasein temporalizes itself a whole: these are thrownness, projection, and possibility. By contrast, the temporality associated with the being-there structure is defined by disposedness, understanding, and discourse (discursiveness).<sup>50</sup>

For Heidegger, Dasein's temporalizing coincides with worldhood or the worlding of the world.<sup>51</sup> Stiegler is one of many thinkers to draw out some of the problematic political implications of this move.<sup>52</sup> However, his way of framing the problem, is quite distinct. He argues that Heidegger represses the question of technics precisely at the point where he needs to account for how the "I" relates to a "We."

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<sup>50</sup> In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes three equiprimordial modes of "being-in" and "being-there" disclosive of the human situation: disposedness, understanding, discursivity. "Dasein is its disclosedness." *BT*, p. 171.

<sup>51</sup> Stiegler, *TTI*, p. 231.

<sup>52</sup> This concerns how individuals relate to others in the here and now and how the individual relates to others in the form of *Gemeinschaft* (social relations between individuals, based on close personal family ties, community, nation) as a *Volk*. For a different interpretation of Heidegger's social ontology, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000). Nancy's project shares some common ground with Stiegler. But whereas Nancy focuses on the body, Stiegler focuses on material technics.

In an interview Stiegler explains his position quite clearly:

I inherit the world (the world of objects) precisely as a *history*. As *Dasein*, I am someone whose past has *always already gone ahead* of me...the past does not follow *Dasein*, but on the contrary it “always already goes ahead of it.” This means that I am an heir, that fundamentally my past is not *my* past: it is the past of a culture that I inherit, the past of those spirits I mentioned a moment ago, the past of the dead. I am always already haunted by the dead, through the objects that they leave to me, mostly anonymously. This is what I found most interesting in Heidegger, but it is also the most dangerous aspect of his thought...

I believe that this terrifying political outcome is made possible *precisely* because Heidegger does not raise the question *here* of the actual conditions of this inheritance, inasmuch as they are already inscribed in its original technicity. It is on this point, in sections 76, 77, 80 and 81 of *Being and Time*, that Heidegger is faced with a dilemma, hesitates, and comes down on the wrong side of the question.<sup>53</sup>

Stiegler’s criticism of Heidegger is that he does not raise the question of technics precisely when the question needs to be raised, that is, when he comes up against the question of inheritance.

What Heidegger failed to see, according to Stiegler, is that without technics we would have no “structure of inheritance.” There would be no “already there.” The “actual conditions of this inheritance” are “inscribed in its originary technicity.”<sup>54</sup> Whatever interpretations we might offer with respect to *Dasein*’s fundamental way of being-in-the-world will only come to us through material supplements. *Dasein* can only begin “from the analysis of the world as the world of objects [and] which forms, at the heart of the system of referring, what he calls the already-there of historicity, of *Geschichtlichkeit*.”<sup>55</sup> Put differently, for Stiegler, both historicity (the-already-there) and the projective anticipation (the not yet) are made possible only through the human’s relation to technics, technics rendered in terms of external memory. Against a long tradition of thinkers, Stiegler denies the priority of anamnesis and, instead, highlights the significance of hypomnesis.<sup>56</sup> *Dasein* projects itself into the future in accordance with the

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<sup>53</sup> Stiegler, “Technics of Decision,” p. 157–158.

<sup>54</sup> Stiegler, “Technics of Decision,” p. 158.

<sup>54</sup> Stiegler, “Technics of Decision,” p. 157.

<sup>55</sup> *Dasein* can only begin “from the analysis of the world as the world of objects [and] which forms, at the heart of the system of referring, what he calls the already-there of historicity, of *Geschichtlichkeit*.” Stiegler, “Technics of Decision” pp. 157–158.

<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the relation that marks the ontological difference is one of hypomnesis. When Stiegler asks: how future possibilities are received? His question is not “who gets to decide the future image of man,” which is a question that early philosophy of technology theorist Hans Jonas asked. It is an ontological question of becoming, of

possibilities received and these possibilities are inherited in and through technics. They are not locked away in the soul, waiting to be recollected.

For Stiegler, the human inherits a past through technics—and this past is not one’s own past.<sup>57</sup> This comes with two additional claims that puts further distance between Stiegler and Heidegger. First, whereas Heidegger maintains that speech bears the originary temporality of time and technicity obscures it, Stiegler in contrast argues that: *tekhne*, *logos*, and *hermeneia* together form “the horizon of all anticipation.”<sup>58</sup> Second, which is a consequence of the first, Stiegler insists that the possibilities are inherited in and through the human’s ongoing evolution alongside technics. This comes with its own risks, but these risks cannot be explained away as the unfolding of Western metaphysics. As we will see in Chapter 4, according to Stiegler, with the rise of technoscience comes the industrialization of consciousness through the industrialization of tertiary retention and retention mechanisms (mnemotechnics).<sup>59</sup> What is at stake for Stiegler is not the future of humanity—or so he claims—but the possibility of an open future. For Stiegler, there is no interiority prior to technicity. “What we call ‘human,’ the technical, is but suspensions— deriving from...the default of origin” (*TT2* 160). With respect to the human subject, he will insist that the “I” is at once a “We.

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transformation and of individuation. See Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

<sup>57</sup> There is no future if we cannot access to an already there that has never been present.

<sup>58</sup> Stiegler, *TT1*, p. 236. Stiegler, *TT1*, p. 230, commenting on Heidegger’s “The Concept of Time.” The individual is not a subject, so much as an “instantiated idiomatic difference” “seized...in a logos, that is firstly, in a relation...” Stiegler accounts for individuation differently. We will discuss his understanding of ontogenesis and collective individuation in the next chapter. There we will talk about how a projective synthesis, an external one, allows for a unification of the We. For Heidegger, we should clarify here, anticipation is already constitutive of the care structure. Being is ahead of itself, already in the world as being-alongside entities encountered within the world. The care structure maps on to the facticity of Dasein.

<sup>59</sup> In *TT3*, he articulates a fourth synthesis: “...the schematization that allows the understanding to meet up with intuition presupposes a fourth, techno-logical synthesis. As substrata synthesizing the flow of internal and external sense and of the orientation of associations corresponding to the flux of external sense, these mechanisms underpin the three syntheses through which the diversity of spatial and temporal forms is unified in apperception-as-concept, projected as schema” (*TT3*, p. 140).

The *who*—*Dasein*—is not the *I*. The *I* is a historical figure of a comprehension that *Dasein* has of its existence, linked to a programmatic state of the *what*. The *I*'s alterity, which is more profoundly that of a *we* that the *I* always already is itself, is still more profoundly the play of programmatic suspensions organized by the organizing of the inorganic through the technical tendency and the repetition liberating it while redoubling it. (*TT2* 160)

Recall what was said in the last chapter with respect to Heidegger and finitude. *Dasein*'s temporal finitude, “derives from the potentiality-of-being, as it determines the end toward which it sees its existence in the future” (*TTI* 231).<sup>60</sup> Finitude is also crucial for Stiegler's account of temporality and therefore for his account of transcendence. It is connected to our own most possibility. He also stresses anticipation as *Dasein*'s fundamental mode of being in the world. Stiegler describes anticipation as the “realization of a possibility that is not determined by a biological program” (*TTI* 151). In other words, anticipation comes through our involvement with external supplements. We experience suspension in technics as *anticipation* and ultimately *desire*.<sup>61</sup> We will return to this topic in the next chapter.

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter explored Stiegler's theory of technics, especially as it relates to his account of memory, consciousness, and perception. I explained how he builds his arguments by stitching together key insights from Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger. We found that Kant's Transcendental Deduction and his account of the three syntheses of the imagination become for Stiegler the framework within which he develops his account of tertiary memory. As ambitious as Stiegler's thesis may be, I suggested that Stiegler's account of tertiary retention is circumscribed by a conception of human consciousness, or more specifically the unity of consciousness, and this limits its explanatory power.

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<sup>60</sup> See David Scott, *Gilbert Simondon's Psychic and Collective Individuation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 84.

<sup>61</sup> ‘The being who defers [*diffère*] by putting off until later anticipates: to anticipate always means to differ and defer [*différer*].’ *TTI*, p. 231.

Stiegler's skewed reading of Kant, I am suggesting, prevents him from finding within Kant's writings additional resources for further explaining the implications of his own account of tertiary retention. Indeed, as we will see in Chapter 6, even Heidegger recognizes that for Kant neither the transcendental ego nor the empirical ego fully discloses the ontological structure of Dasein. Though for Kant spontaneity is important for moral freedom, the unity and orientation of the moral person, as we will see, is not solely defined by the "I think."

Indeed, as I will further explain in Chapters 5 and 6, the unity that is important in the second *Critique* is not built on the three syntheses of the imagination, but rather is unified "under the form of a pure will" (*CPrR* 5:65).<sup>62</sup> Likewise, when it comes to the unity of the "We" (the unity of a group or community), Kant accounts not only for the unity of consciousness, but the unity of desire and feeling.<sup>63</sup> As we will see in Chapters 7 and 8, when we turn to Kant's theory of religion, he is also concerned with how humans cultivate and share a sense of hope in the face of despair and uncertainty. What brings all of these various determinations together, I will argue, is, again, not the "I think" or a passive synthesis that stands in its place. In the end, it is what Kant calls the "true religious disposition" that brings unity to the individuals' life and the life of the community. This disposition corresponds to the pure form of religious faith and this faith, has a material history. Here is where Stiegler's arguments intersect with Kant's. *My* concern is to

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<sup>62</sup> I'm referring to the passage in the second *Critique* right before Kant introduces the categories of freedom: "[S]ince actions *on the one side* indeed belong under a law which is no law of nature but a law of freedom, and consequently belong to the conduct of intelligible beings, but *on the other side* as also events in the sensible world yet belong to appearances, the determinations of a practical reason can take place only with reference to the latter and therefore, indeed, conformably with the categories of the understanding, but not with a view to a theoretical use of the understanding, in order to bring a priori the manifold of (sensible) *intuition* under one consciousness, but only in order to subject a priori the manifold of *desires* to the unity of consciousness of a practical reason commanding in the moral law, or of a pure will" (*CPrR* 5:65).

<sup>63</sup> *Gefühl*, meaning feeling. For Kant, *Gefühl* is a faculty of the mind alongside of cognition and desire. Feeling does not simply refer to something we experience as a response to an object. Instead, for Kant, feeling refers to how the subject is affected. It does not express something about an object, but conveys a relation. Kant will also sometimes talk about the effects of feelings. On this topic see Julian Wuert, *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2014). I discuss Kant's account of desire at length in Chapter 5; Chapters 7 and 8, which treat Kant's theory of religion will take us further into what he means by feeling.

reconstruct their arguments in such a way that we do not lose sight of the significance of the moral ought.

Recall that one of the main objectives of this dissertation is to offer a rereading of Kant through the lens of originary technicity in order to unlock resources for thinking about what it means to be both a moral being as well as a technical being. In order to satisfy these two objectives, my reading of Stiegler intentionally pushes his arguments and ideas in the direction of ethics, just as my reading of Kant intentionally pulls his philosophy in the direction of originary technicity. Now that we have a better conception of how Stiegler connects technics to time, we can ask: what does Stiegler's theory of tertiary memory offer for the moralist?

As we mentioned above, for Heidegger, our own most possibilities come to an end with death, but in contemplating death we can break free from the decisions of the "they" and recognize our own most possibility. But for Stiegler, since human beings depend on technics and technics is the extension of life through means other than life, our possibilities can never really be our own. The human being inherits a past, a past that we have ourselves not lived. This inheritance is what opens a future, but there is no inheritance—no "already there"—without material supplements.

There is something quite novel about Stiegler's claim here. Why? Because unlike so many descriptions of freedom since the linguistic turn, our possibilities—including what is possible for us as moral beings—are not, on Stiegler's account, predetermined by what has been produced by social or cultural exchange. But unfortunately, because Stiegler presupposes that moral obligation can only be construed as an intellectual, spontaneous choice, he ends up sounding very similar to numerous other neoKantians (i.e. Kantians who reject universal

rationalism but still wants to leaves space to recognize human dignity—or something like it), who have made similar claims.

The next chapter will explore Stiegler’s ideas further. As I noted above, one of the tasks of this dissertation is to identify and deconstruct conceptual roadblocks and intellectual presuppositions that get in the way of ethical analysis. In order to explain how Stiegler’s project both contribute to as well as disrupt a way of thinking about human sociality, in the next chapter, I put his work into conversation with a set of thinkers who have used Kant’s epistemology in similar ways. To be clear about where my argument is headed, I suggest that though Stiegler’s account of technics offers opportunities for thinking about human freedom from within the boundaries of technicity, the model of social ontology that he comes to support sets limits on what can and cannot be said about moral freedom and the ethical dimensions of human volition. After critically evaluating Stiegler’s arguments in the next two chapters, I turn to Kant’s writings in Chapters 5–8.

CHAPTER 3  
STIEGLER'S SOCIAL ONTOLOGY  
AND THE APPEAL OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL SYNTHESIS

**I. Introduction**

In the last chapter I explained how Kant's three syntheses and his account of the unity of consciousness becomes for Stiegler the framework upon which he pieces together insights from Heidegger, Husserl, and Derrida, on the topics of temporality, unity, and projection. The result is a complex account of how technical memory, or tertiary retention, functions at the level of consciousness, perception, and intentionality. However, I also argued that because Stiegler ignores Kant's practical philosophy and only occasionally makes references to Kant's theory of religion, he overlooks the ways in which Kant's full account of human subjectivity could have helped him develop his notion of tertiary retention in such a way that is not *only* tied to intentionality and consciousness.

Recall that one of the central tasks of this dissertation is to expose a pattern of thought that has developed *alongside* scholarly discourse on the human-technical relation. This chapter takes up this task directly. The constructive thread of this dissertation argues that it is possible to accept the constitutive role that technology plays in human life (the claim of originary technicity), but this does not mean that we have to give up on moral faith.<sup>1</sup> This chapter advances that claim by arguing against the notion that our relations to others are, or could ever be fully determined by any one social system or default program. With Stiegler we can accept that there is no escaping the "originary de-fault," but since the de-fault is itself without origin, it does not imply a social ontology. On the contrary, as I show in this chapter, what Stiegler refers to as the "logic of the supplement" allows us to question foundational claims about "sociality" and what it

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, p. 6.

means to be together with others.<sup>2</sup> In a moment I will link this claim to my critical reading of Stiegler, but let me first clarify why I think it is necessary to deconstruct a certain model of human sociality before I can make a claim about moral freedom in light of more recent arguments about the human-technical relation.

As I suggested in the Introduction to this dissertation, contemporary discourse on technology continues to be caught up in an indecision about whether or not the human is in a reflexive relationship with technology or if technology is one determining force among many that determine what the human is. Where one stands within the debate is often conveyed in terms of how committed one is to preserving the distinctiveness of human identity. In some ways I want to call this entire approach into question. Not only does it distract us from investigating the forms of power and control that organize contemporary life, it limits in advance what we can say about moral agency and obligation. Sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers have long noted that there are forces that operate at levels beyond the individual that shape human subjectivity. And in a certain sense, Stiegler is simply insisting that these forces are driven primarily by technological evolution. After all, the space for moral agency and action is no more reduced by technological determinism than by any other form of determinism. What Stiegler eliminates, however, is the possibility that we can somehow secure human freedom by finding that part of human life that is removed from that which is technical. Traditionally, this has meant appealing to our linguistic, communicative, or symbolic capacities—all of which are said to be more properly aligned with the imagination and the realm of meaning. Stiegler’s work exposes

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<sup>2</sup> In the sense of Heidegger’s *Mitsein* (being-with). Jean-Luc Nancy is known for reading Heidegger’s ontological project as a “social ontology.” I have found that Nancy’s project shares some common ground with Stiegler. But whereas Nancy focuses on the body, Stiegler focuses on material technics. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

how this way of thinking has become incoherent at a time when information, communication, and technology are so closely bound together.

Depictions of the human being as a product of forces and powers beyond our control (technological or otherwise) always seems to invite a counter response. In recent years, the category of the “social” seems to function in ways that service such a response. Even for those theorists who are otherwise attentive to the constitutive role that technology plays in human life, the category of the “social” (or, alternatively, “human sociality” or “human relationality”) designates a space or realm of existence that sits apart from or over against whatever is determined to be “technological.” Sometimes this sphere functions as a way to secure a particular notion of human identity. But it is also the case that many posthumanists, who are otherwise eager to jettison the autonomous human subject, use the category of the social to designate a field or plain where human exchange informs technological change.<sup>3</sup>

The problem with this approach is that human interaction or intersubjective exchange becomes the privileged site for the production of a quasi-metaphysical reality through which our moral capacities are programmed in advance. Consequently, it is believed that whoever or whatever controls the systems of communication and exchange determines the future and sets the limits not only of what *is* the case but what *ought* to be the case.

One of the aims of this chapter is to demonstrate why this kind of response to technological determinism is no longer sufficient. The attempt to carve out a separate sphere or realm that stands above or beyond the technical or technological is premised on the notion that it is possible to grasp or perceive an intersubjective reality that somehow transcends our relations to technology. I see no reason to grant this possibility. Heidegger may have been right when he

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<sup>3</sup> This issue was discussed in Chapter 2, especially in reference to the empirical turn in the philosophy of technology.

proposed that we find ourselves already outside of ourselves. However, my claim is that the finding of ourselves does not require the *apperception* of ourselves as part of a nation, generation, kingdom, community—not even as a species. Therefore, the constructive position that I introduce in this chapter—only to return to it again in the conclusion of the dissertation—is that moral actions do not stand or fall with a sense of unity or togetherness.

It has become somewhat of a truism to say that human individuals are social beings. I want to be clear that my concern in this chapter is not to make a psychological or anthropological point about what we know to be empirically true about human species. Though Stiegler himself will draw freely from anthropology, paleontology, psychoanalysis, and biology, my efforts here are to provide a conceptual analysis that focuses on the presuppositions underlying certain models of social ontology that works to undermine moral obligation, action, and agency through reductive understandings of human relationality and sociality.

I am using the phrase “social ontology” as a way to explore how a particular thinker accounts for social reality and the emergence of social entities.<sup>4</sup> There are various approaches to social ontology and people disagree about which categories are the most important. John Searle, for instance, argues for the importance of collective intentionality for the constitution of *social* and *institutional facts*.<sup>5</sup> Émile Durkheim and Alfred North Whitehead will offer different configurations. After determining which categories for analysis are most important, it is common for different thinkers to next consider how these categories change over time and what methods

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Epstein provides the following definition: “Social ontology is the study of the nature and properties of the social world. It is concerned with analyzing the various entities in the world that arise from social interaction.” “Social Ontology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/social-ontology/>>.

<sup>5</sup> John Searle connects institutions and social fact to deontic powers (obligations and duties). See Searle, “Social Ontology: Some Basic Principles,” *Anthropological Theory*. 2006; 6 (1):12–29. Searle insists that “symbolization has to carry the deontic powers, because there is nothing in the sheer physical facts that carries the deontology by itself.” This is an example of the kind of claim that Stiegler’s account of technology problematizes.

are best for registering and tracking those changes. A common approach—one adopted by a range of contemporary scholars—is to articulate how such categories are established discursively, over time, and in response to, for instance, our interactions with the natural environment or to changes happening in the political or economic realms. In contrast to this approach, some scholars argue that the social is conditioned and, in some cases, entirely constituted by events, forces, and operations that are ontologically or metaphysically prior to the coming to be of social entities and categories.<sup>6</sup>

With social ontology introduced, we can now ask a question that will take us back to the significance of Stiegler’s project: is technology the product of the social world? Is it a social fact? Does it arise out of social interactions or from a combination of social and non-social (if such a category exists) needs and desires? Indeed, it is often suggested that our values, political interests, and biases get woven into technology. But is it not also possible that technical tendencies, habits, and the practices *actually produce the social*, and therefore determine how we relate to each other and the world?

In first part of this chapter, we will briefly consider how four prominent twentieth-century thinkers answer such questions—or at least set limits on how we can answer them. These four thinkers, namely, George Herbert Mead, Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, and Charles Taylor, have not been selected arbitrarily. On the one hand, I am using these thinkers as foils to explain how Stiegler’s way of conveying the human-technical relation disrupts many of the common ways in which we have come to think about how the “I” relates to a “We”—which I am closely associating with his social ontology. On the other hand, I argue that Stiegler inherits the

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<sup>6</sup> I am drawing on Brian Epstein’s categorizations. He associates this approach to social ontology with Hegel and the British Idealist, Francis Herbert Bradley. See Epstein, “Social Ontology,” §3.3.2

very same problematic that arises in numerous attempts to rework Kant's epistemology in service of a social ontology. In this sense, Stiegler is important for our purposes not because he offers a more adequate account of human sociality, but because his work brings into focus a symptom of a deeper problem.<sup>7</sup>

There is an additional reason we are proceeding this way. As we saw in the last chapter, Stiegler's project is built on his rereading of prominent figures in continental philosophy. For this reason, it can be challenging to work through his arguments without a comprehensive understanding of each of those figures. This is one of the reasons, in my judgment, his work has not been widely received either in religious ethics or religious studies more generally. In the last chapter I worked through some of the complex ways in which he revises Husserl, Heidegger, and Kant. In this chapter, by putting Stiegler into conversation with thinkers like Habermas and Mead, I am able to demonstrate how Stiegler's ideas can be brought into conversation with ideas that are already familiar within the field of religious ethics.

### *Reviewing Kant's Three Syntheses and the Unity of Consciousness*

Before moving on to explain how this works in a few particular thinkers, it will be useful to take a moment to offer a brief summary of Kant's epistemology and highlight some of the features that have generated the most attention.<sup>8</sup>

As we already touched on in the last chapter, one of Kant's most important contributions to the history of thought was his argument that the human mind does not passively receive data

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<sup>7</sup> In Chapter 6, I argue that Heidegger's early engagement with Kant's epistemology and moral philosophy inaugurates a way of thinking about technology that binds it to human sociality only by erasing the experience of the moral ought

<sup>8</sup> I am generalizing somewhat here but the claim that Kant's epistemology and more specifically the Transcendental Deduction and the unity of apperception have been used for thinking or rethinking or completely abolishing a particular model of the human subject (rooted in Cartesian dualism) is not a new claim. Numerous scholars have made this argument. See, for instance, Helmut Peukert, *Science, Action, and Fundamental Theology: Toward a Theology of Communicative Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984).

from the sensible world, but actively works to formulate that data into sensible intuitions. More specifically, according to Kant, the manifold of intuition must be unified through a *series* of syntheses. Kant defines at least three distinct syntheses. The synthesis of apprehension concerns perceptual input; the synthesis of recognition concerns concepts; and finally, the synthesis of reproduction allows us to reflect on the other two syntheses. The synthesis of reproduction is especially important because Kant will insist that conscious content can have unity *only if what is presented to consciousness* is first tied together *causally*. For this to be possible, the synthesis of *recognition* requires a transcendental ground. It is here where the *transcendental apperception* comes into play. Kant famously declared that the “I think” must accompany all our representations; the transcendental apperception is necessary for all perceiving.<sup>9</sup> Thinkers for centuries have been confounded as well as intrigued by this argument. On the one hand, Kant will insist that the categories (or pure concepts of the understanding) are the condition for the possibility of unified experience and for all thinking a priori. And yet, in order to synthesize the manifold and have a unified experience, we need the “I think,” which in itself seems to require some kind of prior synthesis, a synthesis that we do not actively initiate or take part in—a passive synthesis; something we find “already there.”

Thinkers from Hegel, to Husserl, to Heidegger, to Deleuze have found great inspiration in interpreting how Kant’s syntheses function, to what extent they are passive or active, and whether they work in service of the understanding or the imagination. This way of reading Kant has generated a lot of interest in new formulations of human subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Brook and Julian Wuerth, “Kant’s View of the Mind and Consciousness of Self,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/kant-mind/>>.

These formulations all come with presuppositions about what we can and cannot say about moral freedom and agency.

Recall that Kant uses the term “apperception” to refer to a particular object of consciousness, namely, the self, represented necessarily. Kant is quite clear that the apperceptive consciousness, “yields a consciousness of self in which ‘nothing manifold is given.’”<sup>10</sup> And yet again and again, Kant’s understanding of transcendental apperception has been utilized to gain insight into what constitutes a “We” that is, what constitutes a community or a society. Stiegler, as we will see, makes a similar move.

## **II. The Intersubjective Constitution of the Self and World**

A well-known criticism of Kantian thought is that Kant does not focus enough on intersubjectivity. His conception of the autonomous, self-determined subject is considered by many to be nothing more than a myth—a myth tied to sovereignty, repression, and violence. Ironically, many of the very same thinkers who have criticized Kant for the way in which he described the human subject, have found it necessary to go back to the Transcendental Deduction in order to rethink the relationship between the “I” and the “We.” For Hegel, for instance, the transcendental unity of apperception was a way to link social and individual consciousness. Rather than accepting Kant’s claim that the categories of the human mind are universal, the unity of apperception became a way for Hegel to open up the possibility that what we find “already there” in consciousness is actually a product of intersubjective relations, the result of *Sittlichkeit*.

Similar gestures are found in numerous post-Kantian thinkers. Consider, for instance, Karl-Otto Apel’s claim made centuries after Kant:

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<sup>10</sup> Kant, *CPR*, B135.

[I]n order to conceptualize this synthesis of understanding as an a priori mediation between empirical subjects of knowledge and forms of life in the synchronic and diachronic dimension, we must radically transform the classic concept of the transcendental subject. It can no longer be grounded in the prelingual and precommunicative synthetic unity of the consciousness of objects and self consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

Apel, in other words, thinks it is necessary to rethink transcendental ego, the ego of apperception, on the basis of intersubjectivity. George Herbert Mead and Jürgen Habermas make similar arguments. Whereas Apel, Mead, and Habermas use Kant to rethink the subject at the level of communication and collective action, Heidegger and Husserl attempt to rethink subjectivity on the level of consciousness and through a complex account of temporality. For the former, the notion of “self” becomes central; for the latter, the emphasis is on “world” or “lifeworld.”

While I cannot provide a comprehensive account of all of the different ways Kant’s epistemology has been reworked in various ways, in the next section I briefly sketch how this pattern of thought operates in the writings of Mead, Habermas, Arendt, and Taylor. As we will see, each of these thinkers use certain features of Kant’s epistemology function to support a social ontology that foregrounds the intersubjective constitution of self and world. Whereas Habermas and Mead privilege communication and as the primary sites of transcendence, Arendt and Taylor emphasize the role of the imagination—and they do so by pitching the imagination against the human’s rational capacities.

### **i. Mead’s Social Interactionism**

George Herbert Mead, one of the most important figures in the pragmatic tradition, is well-known for articulating a socially constituted self. Mead’s early engagement with Kant provided a way for him to merge a transcendental epistemology with a more genetic account of

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<sup>11</sup> Karl-Otto Apel, and Thomas McCarthy and Suhrkamp Verlag, *Understanding and Explanation: A Transcendental-Pragmatic Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1984), p. 238.

the self that takes into account human embodiment, natural processes, and, most importantly, intersubjective action and communication.<sup>12</sup> Mead is particularly interesting for our purposes because he is similar to Stiegler in that he grounds his account of human sociality in a theory of ontogenesis—one in which exchange and interaction explain the coming to be of individuals as well as communities.<sup>13</sup>

For Mead, the mind develops in and through our interaction with others, and the self develops in tandem with the mind. More specifically, the self comes about in and through intersubjective communication and is composed of an “I” and a “me.” To put it in Kantian terms, for Mead, the “I” of the transcendental apperception is never accessible to us, it is instead “forever immanent in our conversation with others and ourselves, the sum total of our social experience.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, what would be the transcendental ego is always differed. We develop our sense of a self by perceiving how others respond to us. We see ourselves as objects and as agents of actions, and learn how to anticipate certain responses. When we interact with others we use language to convey shared meaning. Over time, as we use language and take on particular roles, we learn to internalize the attitude of others through our interpretation of what we come to know as “me.” Eventually, we acquire a sense of the “generalized other” which is “a collective attitude of our community.”<sup>15</sup> The self in other words, is never complete. It is an ongoing social process. The following passage makes this point clear:

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<sup>12</sup> See Hans Joas, *G.H. Mead: A Contemporary Re-Examination of His Thought* (MIT Press, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> By contrast, Stiegler describes a process of “collective individuation,” in which groups form around centers of organization also known as “metastabilities.” Metastability is a term borrowed from thermodynamic where it refers to the tendencies and forces within a system that remain in tension (rather than harmony).

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Feffer, *The Chicago Pragmatists and American Progressivism* (United Kingdom, Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 242.

<sup>15</sup> George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 90; George Herbert Mead, *The Individual and the Social Self: Unpublished Work of George Herbert Mead* (University of Chicago Press, 1982). Berit O. Brogaard, “Mead’s Temporal Realism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35, no. 3 (1999): pp. 563–93.

The self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still apart of the current. It is a process in which the individual is continually adjusting himself in advance to the situation to which he belongs, and reacting back to it. So that the 'I' and the 'me,' this thinking this conscious adjustment, becomes then a part of the whole social process.<sup>16</sup>

Though the individual is always responding and adapting to the ever-changing social process, a certain amount of stability can be achieved through patterns that develop around significant symbols, which can only be produced intersubjectively. As a pragmatist, Mead conceived of the social in terms of a sedimentation of objective claims that build up over time as humans solve problems that arise in their interaction with the material world.<sup>17</sup> Society in this sense forms an objective unity, which in turn forms the basis for symbolic interaction. While society does not fully determine our existence, social environments create the conditions out of which the individual acts freely and spontaneously in the present.

Mead relies on a theory of ontogenesis to describe how individuals, or rather selves, come into existence.<sup>18</sup> In fact, Habermas, who was drawn to Mead's understanding of symbolic interactionism, was critical of Mead on this point. Habermas was influenced by Mead's approach to human relations and intersubjectivity, but he was not convinced by Mead's attempt to ground his theory in natural processes and human evolution. On the contrary, Habermas believed that modern society is too quick to accept descriptions and definitions of the human and of the self that are provided by the natural sciences. And so, while he was willing to grant that reflective knowledge arises from *symbolic interaction* between societal subjects, he also stressed the

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<sup>16</sup> George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 182.

<sup>17</sup> On sedimentation, compare with Husserl's *Niederschläge* and *Sedimentierung* in his later works, particularly in his *Lectures on Passive Synthesis*, in which he claims that knowledge must be reactivated through language. Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures On Transcendental Logic* (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001); Joseph Cohen and Dermot Moran, *The Husserl Dictionary* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), p. 288–289.

<sup>18</sup> As far as I know, a comparative study between Mead and Stiegler has not yet been taken up. As will be explained below, Stiegler is relying on Gilbert Simondon's theory of ontogenesis. The relationship between Mead (1863–1932) and Simondon (1924–1989) is also not clear.

importance of reciprocal recognition between human individuals.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, rather than relying on the natural sciences, Habermas's reconceptualization of the human subject incorporates ideas from Durkheim and Marx. Despite these important points of difference, Mead and Habermas both utilize the framework of the Transcendental Deduction and appeal to the notion of synthesis to rethink human subjectivity.

## ii. Habermas on Knowledge and Human Interests

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas uses Kant's notion of synthesis to investigate the status of knowledge since the modern period, with a particular emphasis on the presuppositions inherent to positive objectivism and German idealism. In this section, I will focus on how Habermas's engagement with Marx in this text allows him to move away from Mead's genetic theory of the self, and instead articulate a conception of the self that is conditioned, but not fully determined, by external forces of power and oppression. Turning to this early text will also provide an opportunity to see how Kant's theory of synthesis aids Habermas as he considers how to construe the relationship between the "I" and the "We." What is particularly noteworthy in his discussion is how materialists and idealists *both* repurpose Kant's notion of schematism and synthesis to advance their own theories.<sup>20</sup>

In the first two chapters of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas follows the arguments of Hegel and Marx, and brings them together through their critical positions on Kant. To be brief, Habermas argues that Hegel essentially replaces the entire enterprise of

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<sup>19</sup> For a comparative analysis of Mead and Habermas, see Filipe Carreira da Silva, *Mead and Modernity: Science, Selfhood, and Democratic Politics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 151–164. Habermas is also known for presenting a theory of communication that stands in contrast to Niklas Luhmann's sociological systems theory. For a recent volume on the details of their debate, see Gorm Harste, *The Habermas-Luhmann Debate* (United Kingdom, Columbia University Press, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Though it is a topic that we cannot address here, it might be fruitful to consider the implications here for the arguments for and against transcendentalism in the philosophy of technology in the wake of the empirical turn. See above, Chapter 1, pp. 36, and 48–54.

epistemology with phenomenology, and so replaces it with self-reflection on the mind.<sup>21</sup> What this means is that the relation between the subject and object itself becomes the source of all knowledge. External objects are rendered as externalities of the mind, and as a result we lose the separation between our minds and the things-in-themselves. In contrast to Hegel, Habermas emphasizes the way in which Marx maintains a clear distinction between nature (conceived here in terms of the “thing-in-itself) and the mind (our knowledge of the world). But perhaps more to the point, on Habermas’s reading, Marx makes it possible to see the synthesis not as the product of consciousness or thought, but of *human praxis*. That is to say, knowledge consists not in abstract thought but is *produced* in and through the *transformation* of the natural world.<sup>22</sup> Synthesis is produced through operations conceived of as *praxis*, as humans transform the world through labor.<sup>23</sup> “Social labor,” Habermas insists, is conceived by Marx as a synthesis of man and nature. “Real knowledge” pertains to the objective processes that precede all representations. “The system of objective activities creates the factual conditions of the possible reproduction of social life and at the same time the transcendental conditions of the possible objectivity of the objects of experience.”<sup>24</sup> For Marx, labor involves a material process of appropriation or synthesis, in which human beings develop their species powers through the scientific understanding of nature and mastery through technological development.

Marx, as Habermas further contends, acknowledges the social and historical implications of labor relations. In fact, he accounts not only for the forces of production, but also the wider *frameworks* that make production possible (material tools, machines, etc. as well as the

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<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 7. His argument is much more elaborate but my treatment of Hegel here must be brief.

<sup>22</sup> Recall that this is one of the ways “technology” is commonly defined, see General Remark in the Introduction.

<sup>23</sup> Habermas, p. 28. For a more detailed discussion see *Paul Ricoeur in the Age of Hermeneutical Reason: Poetics, Praxis, and Critique* (Lexington Books, 2015); and Andrew Feenberg, *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács And The Frankfurt School* (United Kingdom, Verso Books, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 28.

corresponding logic, techniques, and practices). In fact, one of the things that Habermas thinks Marx brings into focus is the way in which knowledge generated within the framework of instrumental action and through technological progress takes on external existence as a productive force. In accounting for the ways in which objectified structures become “hyostatized” over time, Marx leaves room for a certain amount of reflexivity.<sup>25</sup> Technological progress reveals the inequality of labor relations and without this revelation, revolution would never be possible. “The actual stage of development of the productive forces defines the level at which each generation must bring about anew the unity of subject and object.”<sup>26</sup>

While Marx’s innovative reworking of the Kantian synthesis helps us to better understand the human’s reflective capacities with respect to our relations with nature, Habermas points out that Marx has very little to say about how individuals relate to each other, to society, and to history. Marx’s social ontology, in other words, is understood only in terms of labor relations and therefore all reflection is understood “on the model of production.”<sup>27</sup> Against Marx, Habermas insists that our actions and relations to nature are not the same as our relations to cultural conditions. In ways that are informed by but also stand against Kantian rationalism, Habermas insists that the critical power of reason derives from the self-constitution of the human species under contingent natural conditions. *Hence, reason inheres in interests*. Put differently, human interests constitute knowledge. Reason is put in service of human interests. Some of our interests overlap and some do not.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For Kant “hyostatization” refers to the displacement of inner representations outside of oneself and taking them to be objects of experience (CPR A392). In his words, we “dialectically transform the distributive unity of the use of the understanding in experience into the collective unity of all experience” (CPR A580/B508). Or stated somewhat differently, we mistakenly represent what is regulative as constitutive (CPR A619/B647).

<sup>26</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> Habermas articulates three different kinds of interests with respect to knowledge. Humans are interested in 1) “information that expands our power of technical control”; 2) “interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions”; and 3) “analyses that free consciousness from its dependence on hyostatized

Habermas's claim that reason inheres in interests also helps him to explain the place of technology in human life. Habermas maintains that knowledge associated with technical control over objectified natural processes is driven by necessity.<sup>29</sup> "Technological development," he writes in a later text, "follows a logic that corresponds to the structure of purposive-rational action regulated by its own results, which is in fact the structure of work."<sup>30</sup> But for Habermas, human action cannot be explained through purposive-rational action alone. Beyond Marx, Habermas insists that humans are uniquely capable of self-generative acts and these acts must be distinguished from actions associated with labor. Moreover, human communication can also be construed as action—action that, incidentally, is directed by inherent norms. The aims of communicative action are therefore different from the aims of purposive-rational action.<sup>31</sup> According to Habermas, the former aims at nothing other than "getting the hearer to accept the validity claim of any utterance."<sup>32</sup> It has its end in another language user—in the "one that hears." It follows then that the knowledge that is produced overtime through our interactions with nature should not be conflated with the knowledge that is associated with communicative action. In both cases, we have knowledge production—a production of objective reality—but the *form* of knowledge produced corresponds to different human interests.

In ways similar to Mead, Habermas describes a kind of sedimentation that build up over time as humans communicate and interact. It is because of this sedimentation that we are able to gain reflexive capacities. Habermas, however, is not as optimistic as Mead. For him, it is important that we are able to communicate reasonably in the public sphere and for this to be

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powers." Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 313. In short, humans are universally interested in knowledge as interpretation of existing traditions, and knowledge associated with liberation.

<sup>29</sup> Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 87.

<sup>30</sup> Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society: Student Protest, Science, and Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987).

<sup>31</sup> In Chapter 5, I will discuss an important distinction that Kant makes between incentives and interests.

<sup>32</sup> Brian Milstein, *Commercium: Critical Theory from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), p. 167.

possible we need political institutions to create the conditions for communicative action—stated otherwise, we need rules for engagement. Traditions and institutions provide a framework or space out of which we can gain the kind of “know how” necessary for interpersonal exchange. But notably Habermas separates the “know-how” that is made possible through institutions and cultural traditions from productive knowledge. It is precisely at this junction that Stiegler’s arguments about technics and temporality become important. For Stiegler, human individuals, collectives, institutions and traditions are all dependent on technical supports (rendered as tertiary memory) out of which humans temporalize themselves.

To summarize what we have found so far, the picture that Habermas, and in some ways Mead before him, presents, speaking broadly, is one where humans are mutually engaged with one another as they collectively act to secure what is necessary to live and communicate about what makes life meaningful. Human communities are held together and differentiated according to a language tradition,<sup>33</sup> through ongoing communication, practice, habits, and customs (i.e. language *and* praxis).

Both Mead and Habermas are willing to accept a conception of the self that is, at least in part, determined by forces that are beyond one’s control. But they still leave room for reflexivity. To restate it in Kantian terms, as they themselves are inclined to do, the sphere for reflection is *not* grounded in self-consciousness—in an “I think,” but rather in dialogue and communication. The knowledge that is generated overtime and through ongoing communication and interaction is held within institutions and traditions. Material technical supports may be necessary for the

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<sup>33</sup> In fact, he thinks our very sense of identity and self-understanding (identity of the self, member of a social community, and recognition of self as unique and morally non-exchangeable) mirrors the structure of linguistic communication. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), p. 35.

transmission of knowledge and the sharing of ideas, but technology remains in the background and not fundamentally part of the co-constitution of self and world.

### *Communication as Action and Technics*

We should pause here to consider how problematic Habermas's conception of communicative action has become in a world increasingly bound up with technological systems. Consider for instance his claim that the human person is achieved through the "socializing medium of thick linguistic communication."<sup>34</sup> If we accept Habermas's claim that the self emerges in the context of a linguistic community, then surely the advanced communication and information technologies that we routinely use today expand the sphere of emergence far beyond the interpersonal or intersubjective realms of human exchange.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, if we agree with Habermas that traditions and institutions preserve human knowledge and yet fail to account for the technological supports that in many ways made these traditions and institutions possible, then how can we expect to evaluate the ways in which social media, for instance, corresponds to democratic ideals like free speech?

But there is a much deeper issue here—one that Stiegler alludes to when he himself analyzes Habermas's theory of communicative action in the first volume of *Technics and Time*. According to Stiegler, Habermas—and in some ways Heidegger—is committed to the idea that it is possible to "liberate communication from technicization."<sup>36</sup> Like countless others before him, Habermas places technics under the category of "means." If we reject this notion—as Stiegler thinks we should—then, he adds: "it can no longer be a question of having simply a debate on

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<sup>34</sup> Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, p. 54.

<sup>35</sup> Consider, for instance, is Alexa part of the "linguistic community"? What about bots on social media that "participate" in online discussions? How are we to conceptualize the effects of these contemporary realities when we allow language is somehow set apart from the evolution of technics?

<sup>36</sup> Stiegler writes, "Habermas and Heidegger appear to agree in considering the technicization of language as a perversion." *TTI*, p. 13.

technics—through a ‘liberated’ form of communication—nor, therefore, of ensuring for oneself a ‘minimum of subjectivity...required for democratic thought to fix limits.’<sup>37</sup> And so, for Stiegler, what is needed today is to “forge another relationship to technics, one that rethinks the bond originarily formed by, and between, humanity, technics, and language.”<sup>38</sup>

One of Stiegler’s concerns is that in thinking of technics only in terms of means and ends we are blinded to the ways in which it operates in ways analogous to language. This point is sharpened when he discusses the representative role of language in the second volume of *Technics and Time*. In this context—which we will have more to say about below—Stiegler explains that the shift from language as description to language as action is the foundation for speech act theory, which emphasizes the act of language rather than its representational role. Instead of seeing language as something that transmits information, language is seen as a form of social action, directed toward ‘mutual orientation.’<sup>39</sup> This orientation is not grounded in the correspondence between language and the world, but rather in consent—consent as an interlinked pattern of activity. ‘In revealing commitment as the basis for language’ it becomes possible to situate the structure in the social realm rather than in the mental activities of individual minds.<sup>40</sup> This last point is crucial for the pattern of thought we are tracing in this chapter.

Speech act theory, following Stiegler’s assessment, stands opposed to the representational account of language typically associated with rationalism and the correspondence notion of

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<sup>37</sup> Stiegler, *TT1*, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Stiegler, *TT1*, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Stiegler here is quoting from Winograd and Flores’s reading of *Being and Time*. Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores, *Understanding Computers and Cognition: A New Foundation for Design* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1987 [1986]). For the most part, Stiegler is critical of their reading of Heidegger. He thinks that they conflate “thrownness” with “interest.” Stiegler thinks is a mistake. See *TT2*, p.173.

<sup>40</sup> Stiegler, *TT2*, p. 173.

truth.<sup>41</sup> Rather than starting from the standpoint of the subject and the subject's ability to know and re-present the world, speech act theorists emphasize the way in which language constitutes a world. Seen from this perspective, it is not the case that speakers use language to make a commitment. Rather, the speech act itself *creates* a commitment. It is the performance that matters, and what that performance reveals is not the subject, but that which is "already there." Stiegler has in mind here Heidegger's understanding of being-in-the-world, which he references explicitly. "Speech within being-in-the-world" is constituted through thrownness, and this is what forms the "structural coupling" of world and "speaking."<sup>42</sup> Stiegler's own contribution to this discussion—which is to say, his step past Heidegger—comes when he suggests that once we have exposed technics as that which has been left unthought, we will have no reason to believe that language is the *only* transmitter of this "already there"—nor that this "already there" would ever be accessible without the *what* of technical memory.<sup>43</sup>

Before we unpack Stiegler's argument further, I want draw attention, briefly, to two additional thinkers who paint a similar picture of self and world, namely, Hannah Arendt and Charles Taylor. Recall that we are tracing an intellectual current in which Kant's epistemology is reworked in ways that service a social ontology. Stiegler, I am suggesting, is both participating in and disrupting this pattern of thought. A brief detour through Arendt and Taylor allows us to trace this pattern further. Like Habermas and Mead, Taylor and Arendt accept that human subjectivity is shaped by social forces, institutions, and traditions, and yet, they, too, insist that the human's linguistic and communicative capacities open up possibilities for reflexivity,

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<sup>41</sup> Stiegler is speaking in general terms, both about speech act theory and the representational understanding of language. When he links rationalism to the representational understanding of language he no-doubt has Kant and Plato mind. He references them both in the sections of the text leading up to this discussion. *TT2*, pp. 129, 136, 171, 172, 174. See also p. 174.

<sup>42</sup> Stiegler, *TT2*, p. 173.

<sup>43</sup> He is rejecting the idea that, "Language is a singular case of the *what*, and its performative dynamic is a singularization of the *what's* general performativity" (*TT2*, p. 173).

creativity, and freedom. But unlike Habermas and Mead, who privilege communication and as the primary sites of transcendence, Arendt and Taylor emphasize the role of the imagination—and they do so by pitching the imagination against the human’s rational capacities. Once again, I will compare their arguments to that of Stiegler’s.

### iii. Political Freedom and Moral Space

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that human freedom is only possible through the separation of activities relating to natural life processes from those relating to politics. This point is sharpened through her criticism of Marx, who she argues conceives of human existence only in terms of necessity. “From the viewpoint of the life of the species, all activities indeed find their common denominator in laboring, and the only distinguishing criterion left is the abundance or scarcity of the goods to be fed into the life process.”<sup>44</sup> In the modern era, Arendt explains, everything the human creates and produces is seen as an object of consumption. Even the political realm is conceived of in terms of what it makes and produces. But this was not always the case. The political realm was once understood as the space where humans transcend the realm of necessity and labor and truly act, where “the uniqueness of man” could be “manifested through speech and action.”<sup>45</sup>

Arendt’s conception of the political realm is supported by her theory of action and conception of freedom.<sup>46</sup> For Arendt, freedom is not the rational autonomy of the human subject, but rather a de-subjectivized force or power that is made possible through principles that are performed in a particular space and always in presence of others.<sup>47</sup> She explains this point

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<sup>44</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 108.

<sup>45</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 176.

<sup>46</sup> On Arendt’s conception of freedom, see Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>47</sup> To be sure, Arendt is interested primarily in political freedom. To articulate this, she draws upon Montesquieu’s claims in *The Spirit of The Laws*, in which he articulates his notion of the principles that guide and animate actions

through an analogy with the performing arts. Unlike the creative (or fine) arts, the art of performance is contained in the action itself, rather than in what is produced. Moreover, performing artists need an audience and an organized space to demonstrate what can only be construed as virtuosity. Indeed, for Arendt, freedom is a “*mode of being*” with its own kind of “virtuosity.”<sup>48</sup> It is generated not from the will or the intellect, but from *principle of actions* “for unlike the judgment of the intellect which precedes action, and unlike the command of the will which initiates it, the inspiring principle becomes fully manifest only in the performing act itself.”<sup>49</sup> Arendt further distinguishes a principle of action from a goal: a principle of action, she explains: “can be repeated time and again, it is inexhaustible, and in distinction from its motive, the validity of a principle is universal, it is not bound to any particular person nor to any particular group.”<sup>50</sup> According to Arendt, freedom appears in the world whenever such principles are actualized; the appearance of freedom coincides with the performing act. “Men *are* free—as distinguished from their possessing the gift for freedom—as long as they act, neither before or after; for to *be* free and to act are the same.”<sup>51</sup> To act in this way requires the presence of others as well as a public space where free persons are able to assert themselves through word and deed.<sup>52</sup> The public space, in fact, signifies the world itself.

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in a political realm. For a discussion on how this appears in several of Arendt’s works see Lucy Cane, “Arendt, Montesquieu, and the Spirits of Politics,” pp. 44–50, *The Bloomsbury Companion to Arendt* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 167.

<sup>49</sup> Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 151.

<sup>50</sup> This of course is not the only place Arendt discusses freedom and action. One of the reasons I am drawing on this text and this passage specifically is because I see a certain affinity here with Kant’s claim that the maxim for action cannot be generated from history. One of the points I want to stress is that Kant appeals to religion and to the figure of Christ, whom he describes as the “principle of the good.” See note below.

<sup>51</sup> Arendt, “What is Freedom?” *Between Past and Future*, p. 153. Original emphasis.

<sup>52</sup> Arendt, “*The Human Condition*,” p. 148. See Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger*, especially 54–68.

The term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. The world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time.<sup>53</sup>

For Arendt, “Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity.”<sup>54</sup> The “[c]ommon world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die.”<sup>55</sup>

More so than Habermas, Arendt recognizes that without tools and instruments humans would be unable to intersubjectively create a world. But she also makes it clear that technological objects and artifacts should be associated with necessity, and the realm of necessity can, indeed must, be distinguished from the political realm.<sup>56</sup> In fact, these two kinds of activity are *temporally* distinct. Human fabrication always has a definite beginning and end. The end is something we can anticipate, even predict. Political action, by contrast, is never complete; human speech is never fully predictable.<sup>57</sup> True action, Arendt maintains, discloses the unique and distinct identity of the agent: “Action without a name, a ‘who’ attached to it, is meaningless...”<sup>58</sup>

Though Arendt is critical of the way in which the “social” has come to stand for the political in the modern-era, her conceptualization of the political realm functions in a similar way to how I am suggesting the realm of communication and exchange functions within Mead and Habermas’s thought. However, rather than appealing to the normative force of communicate

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<sup>53</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 136.

<sup>55</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 53. “Tools and instruments are so intensely worldly objects that we can classify whole civilizations using them as criteria.”

<sup>56</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 144.

<sup>57</sup> The theme of natality is also central for Arendt, but I cannot attend to that here.

<sup>58</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 180–181. In contrast, Stiegler insists that a “who” is always constituted by a what. The what (technics broadly conceived) has a tendency—a dynamic—of its own.

action, Arendt appeals to the power of the imagination and aesthetic judgment in order to develop a conception of social ontology that nevertheless makes room for reflexivity. For her, the imagination is what frees the mind from immediate experience. It is what allows us to expand our mentality so that we may learn to think from the standpoint of others.<sup>59</sup> Political judgments, she further attests, are not the result of communicative action, nor is the political sphere the sphere of rational consensus. For her, political judgments are judgments of representations. Or to put it in Kantian terms, as Arendt herself is inclined to do, political judgments are judgments of *appearances*.<sup>60</sup>

Arendt is one of many thinkers who, writing in the wake of the Second World War, prioritizes the human's imaginative capacities over against human rationality. The power of reason once praised by Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers, was scrutinized for the way in which it seemed to support boundless expansion of human power—not only with respect to the natural world, but within the political realm where it was associated with the totalizing logic of authoritarian political regimes.

The turn to the imagination is also prominent in the work of Charles Taylor. Taylor uses the term “social imaginaries” to refer to a circumscribed set of shared practices and common sense of legitimacy.<sup>61</sup> It is a term used to describe how people imagine their social surroundings, how they envision their relations with others, and the stories and symbols that underlie those relations. This vision is shared with others, organizes shared practices, and is the basis of the sense of “togetherness” among humans.” The social imaginary includes “a sense of normal

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<sup>59</sup> Arendt, “Truth and Politics,” in *Between Past and Future*, p. 237.

<sup>60</sup> Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 2014.). Unfortunately, Arendt's well-known appropriation of Kant's notion of reflective judgment cannot be discussed here.

<sup>61</sup> Charles Taylor, “Modern Social Imaginaries.” *Public Culture* 1 January 2002; 14 (1): pp. 91–124. My reading of Taylor for this brief summary was influenced by the account offered by Tania Zittoun and Vlad Petre Glăveanu in *Handbook of Imagination and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2018), see especially, pp. 320–321.

expectations” that humans have of one another, which in turn enables them to carry out their collective practices. According to Taylor, modern society is characterized by three primary social imaginaries which together form the “modern moral order,” these are: “1) the economy, 2) the public sphere, and 3) the practice and outlooks of democratic self rule.”<sup>62</sup> The common space where we collectively engage in acts of communication and public sphere is outside the sphere of political power, even as it has the potential to inform it. For Taylor, the space between the individual and the social imaginary is taken to be a kind of “moral space.” Moral space, in other words, is *not* conceived of in terms of the space that exists between acting agents, but is rather the *result* of acts of communication.

Despite their differences, Habermas, Mead, Arendt, and Taylor all recognize the power of language and communication in the construction of the human subject, but because what is produced through this intersubjective exchange becomes, over time, a fabric or sedimentation out of which the self and world are formed, reflexivity and therefore freedom, transformation, and liberation are all within the horizon of possibilities. However, these possibilities do not originate with the individual subject. Instead, human identity, reflexivity, and normativity are bound up with the very essence of language. Language, it is said, has its own structure, temporality, and even seeks its own ends. But for all of this to make sense, language can, indeed must, be separated from the realm of necessity, that is to say, the realm of technicity as instrumentality.

All of the thinkers discussed above rework Kant in ways that allow them to present an alternative account of human sociality and intersubjectivity. But ironically all of them present us with a model of social ontology in which social or intersubjective interaction *precedes* the moral relation. The individual is constituted in and through what is produced by the social, and what is

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<sup>62</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age* (United Kingdom, Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 176.

produced by the social is the product of some kind of exchange.<sup>63</sup> In this context, the distinction between what is interior, and exterior becomes crucial. The individual is constituted through the *mediation* of the interior and the exterior, and communication, more specifically, language, is the only medium for negotiating that boundary.

But what happens when the lines between the “exterior” and the “interior” are blurred? What happens when we can no longer rely on the distinction between the “public and private”? What if the distinction between language and technics is not so obvious? This is what Stiegler’s account of technicity pushes us to consider. His way of articulating the problem is as follows:

What becomes of the interior milieu with the advent of modern technics, when the equipment of ethnic groups, the ‘membrane’ within which they form their unity, acquires performances such that each group finds itself in constant communication with the quasi-totality of the others without delay or limits in distance? What happens when there is no longer any exterior milieu as such, so called ‘physical’ geography being saturated with human penetrations, that is, technical ones, and the principle of interior to exterior milieus being mediated by an ethnic system having no ‘natural’ remainder at wake. (*TTI*, pp. 64–65)

Stiegler’s way of framing the problem may seem obscure and detached. But having gone through this brief detour through Arendt and Taylor, we are now in position to understand the significance of his intervention. For the thinkers discussed in preceding sections (Arendt, Taylor, Mead, and Habermas) technology is in many ways the category that *must* be rejected so that intersubjectivity and reflexivity can be embraced. But what I have also tried to show through my analysis is that the space for moral agency and action is reduced by this very same gesture. As such, it is precisely here where Stiegler’s account of technics can be used to disrupt this way of thinking. Rather than trying to figure out how to separate *logos* from *techne*, I am suggesting we use inquiry into the human-technical relation and the critique of instrumentality to rethink what it means to live with various kinds of others without presupposing that a realm of communicative

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<sup>63</sup> To be fair, Arendt expresses similar concerns about social exchange. See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 28–35.

action, *praxis*, or some other quasi-metaphysical realm determines the scope and range of moral action and obligation.

Though I think Stiegler leaves room within his arguments to push his theory of technics toward moral inquiry, the social ontology that he maintains is also based on exchange. In the final section of this chapter, I will explain what his understanding of individuation contributes to the discussion and also point toward some limitations.

### **III. Stiegler's Account of Individuation and Transindividuation**

One of Stiegler's most important claims is that technology is just as fundamental if not more fundamental to human life than our intellectual and linguistic capacities. Stated differently, for Stiegler, the common structure of being is not communication. Building upon André Leroi-Gourhan's notion of technical tendencies, Stiegler insists that tools and language are neurologically linked, evolve together, and therefore "cannot be dissociated within the social structure of mankind."<sup>64</sup>

For Stiegler, what primarily binds the community together is neither language nor temporality, but rather, the trace of the living on the nonliving.<sup>65</sup> As we saw in the last chapter, against a long tradition of thought that prioritizes *anamnesis* over *hypomnesis*, Stiegler argues that external memory supports create the conditions for both individualized and social existence. Technical objects, techniques, and systems, establish the nowness of existence by configuring us to different durations of temporality.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 113–114.

<sup>65</sup> To be sure, as we saw in Chapter 2, temporality is crucial for Stiegler, but his account of temporality is bound up with how technics come into play with respect to anticipation and desire.

<sup>66</sup> Recall that for Stiegler all technological objects are related to memory, however, there are specific technological objects that are designed to supplement secondary memory, namely, mnemotechnics. This is important for his argument regarding the industrialization of consciousness.

## i. **Ontology and Ontogenesis**

As was noted above, Stiegler like Mead, is interested in genesis—or more specifically, ontogenesis: the coming to be of entities, individuals, or beings. But whereas Mead understood the human individual to be an event within nature, a unitary structure, and a temporal reference,<sup>67</sup> Stiegler’s models his account of human becoming on Gilbert Simondon’s theory of ontogenesis. More specifically, he models it on Simondon’s description of *technogenesis*: the coming to be of technical objects. We already touched on this at the end of Chapter 1. However, in what follows I want to explain how Stiegler brings Heidegger’s transcendental ontology together with Simondon’s theory of ontogenesis. This is crucial for understanding his social ontology, which is at the same time an “interrelational” ontology.<sup>68</sup>

Ontogenesis (from the Greek *ōn*, onto- (being) + genesis (‘origin,’ ‘source,’ ‘birth’ “origin) is a term borrowed from biology, where it is often contrasted with *phylogenesis* (from (from Greek *phulon*, *phulē*, commonly translated as ‘race,’ ‘tribe,’ or ‘species’ + genesis).<sup>69</sup> However, once the term (ontogenesis) is transposed into philosophical discourse, as it is with both Simondon and Stiegler, it is used more broadly to describe the process of becoming of entities rendered as individuals. In this context, the human being, the organism, and technical object can all be described from the standpoint of genesis.

Simondon introduced his theory of ontogenesis as a challenge to classical ontology and, more specifically, to the doctrine ofhylomorphism i.e. the doctrine that conceives of being as the

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<sup>67</sup> Joas, p. 191.

<sup>68</sup> I am here alluding to a point I made in Chapter 1. I noted that Don Ihde finds that pragmatism and phenomenology share an “interrelational” ontology, but I questioned whether or not a revised understanding of Heidegger’s “transcendental ontology” is all that different from the former. See p. 40.

<sup>69</sup> *Oxford University Press*. Lexico.com. Accessed, 3 January, 2021.

unification of form and matter.<sup>70</sup> In classical ontology, descriptions of ontic realities are understood on analogy with substance and the interrelationship between form and matter. Matter is what individuates and instantiates a particular form, and yet is considered to be passive, while form is active.<sup>71</sup> In order to bring something into being, an intelligible given as intelligible form, must be pressed onto matter, which is considered to be passive and awaiting form. In Chapter 6, we will see how Heidegger appeals to a similar kind of logic in order to critique the distinction Kant makes (or fails to make, on Heidegger's reading) between persons and things. Kant, Heidegger insists, thinks being on the model of production.<sup>72</sup>

As it is well-known, Kant's epistemology, and more specifically, the way he conceives of space, was informed by his commitments to Newtonian physics and Euclidean geometry. Simondon criticizes these theories for being overly concerned with already individuated structures and for overlooking "the constantly individuating, processual and operational nature of reality."<sup>73</sup> Simondon criticizes cybernetics and atomism on similar grounds. For Simondon, these theories fail to provide an adequate account of the genesis of individualized entities and systems. His philosophical project, by contrast, aims at explaining the individual through *individuation*, rather than explaining individuation through the *individual*.<sup>74</sup> The individual is a process, a being

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<sup>70</sup> Hylomorphism presupposes that being is a composite of matter (*hilo*) and form (*morphe*). Gilbert Simondon, "The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis," *Parrhesia* 7:4-16. Gilbert Simondon, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. Cecile Malaspina and John Rogove (Univocal, 2016). My purpose in this section (and the one that follows) is not to present an original reading of Simondon, but rather explain how his ideas are mobilized by Stiegler. My own reading of Simondon has been filtered through and Stiegler's own reading and secondary literature. I am especially indebted to Simon Mill's volume: *Gilbert Simondon: Information, Technology, and Media* (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), p. 24.

<sup>71</sup> To elaborate, we can have the idea of cup without it being instantiated in the form of cup, and yet still talk about the constitutive relationship between its form and its material instantiation.

<sup>72</sup> Stiegler makes a similar argument. He argues that the doctrine of hylomorphism was made possible through a technical tendency related to the production of material objects with the use of molds.

<sup>73</sup> Simon Mills, *Gilbert Simondon: Information, Technology, and Media*, p. 24.

<sup>74</sup> Gilbert Simondon, "The Position of the Problem of Ontogenesis," *Parrhesia* 7:4-16. p. 4.

that is always a becoming. In a moment I will explain how this relates to his notion of the preindividual and potentiality.

Though Stiegler brings together Heidegger's fundamental ontology with Simondon's ontogenesis, we can and should make a distinction between ontology and ontogenesis. Ontology, as we previously noted, is generally speaking the study of being or an analysis of the structure of being. Rather than trying to get at the essence of objects, as is often the case with metaphysical inquiry, ontology is concerned with describing "ontic" realities (ek-sistant things) and their meaning.<sup>75</sup> In *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes an important distinction between the "ontic," which signifies concrete reality, and the "ontological," which refers to deeper underlying *structures* of reality.<sup>76</sup> It seems to me that if Stiegler at times seems to conflate the ontic with the ontological it has to do with his proximity to Simondon's pre-critical ontology.<sup>77</sup>

Simondon's theory of ontogenesis focuses not on concrete realities, finished entities or products, but rather on *operations* and *functions* that allow certain kinds of entities, events, or subjects to come into existence.<sup>78</sup> We unfortunately cannot dive too deeply into Simondon's arguments. For our purposes here, it is enough to say that Simondon's hylomorphism allows for

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<sup>75</sup> In classical ontology, these general features were understood in terms of substance, accidents, matter and form (according to Simondon and Stiegler: it presupposes hylomorphism). Simondon thinks Kant's adherence to hylomorphism prevents him from properly understanding time and space.

<sup>76</sup> Heidegger also contrasts historical-ontical with historical-ontic. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Harper and Row 2008), p. 399–400.

<sup>77</sup> Simondon himself describes his ontology in this way. By pre-critical he means a return to ontology and a way of grasping the coming-to-be of the event. On this point, see Scott, *Gilbert Simondon's Psychic and Collective Individuation*, p. 170, p. 170.

<sup>78</sup> Stiegler writes: "The Simondonian way of thinking *overcomes* the oppositions between types of individuation on the basis of traits common to all types of individuation processes [...] as *affiliations* and *relations* in what Simondon calls an ontogenesis, and which I prefer to call a genealogy." Bernard Stiegler, *États de choc: Bêtise et savoir au XXIe siècle* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2012), pp. 95–96. Quoted and translated by Stephen Barker, "Techno-pharmaco-genealogy," pp. 259–275 in *Stiegler and Technics*.

a description of what is given (ontic realities) as well as what is “pre-given.” That which is “pre-given” in individuals, can be construed ontologically, but not ontically.<sup>79</sup>

Heidegger, recall, argues that Kant’s first *Critique* can be read as an attempt to articulate the ontological knowledge (knowledge of being) that is presupposed in all ontic knowledge (knowledge of particular entities or ek-sistant things).<sup>80</sup> He further insists that Kant’s categories of the understanding provide *ontological knowledge*, they are “the representations in thought of an original *ontological synthesis*.”<sup>81</sup> The understanding “gives conceptual form to pure synthesis, and thus makes possible a phenomenological interpretation of the basic structures of knowledge.”<sup>82</sup> As we saw in Chapter 2, Stiegler accepts Heidegger’s reading of Kant, but takes the “original ontological synthesis” to be a technical synthesis. The categories of the understanding then would be the representation in thought of the technical synthesis.

There is one final piece of Stiegler’s argument that we need to clarify because it concerns how it is that he is able to account for both ontic and ontological relations. Though this will take us slightly off course, the previous discussion provides an opportunity to explain another feature of Stiegler’s argument that will be important for understanding why I am suggesting that

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<sup>79</sup> The pre-individual is anterior to the process of individuation. What complicates things further is that Simondon distinguishes the process of *individuation* from *individualization*. As Scott explains: “On the one hand, *individuation* is ‘genesis or ontogenesis.’ It describes at *all times* the genesis of the determined or individuated from undetermined and pre-individual being to individuated being. It is being as the operation by which it becomes; it is the being of becoming and, therefore, ontologically distinct from what Simondon calls individualization, which is the individuation of an already individuated being.” David Scott, *Gilbert Simondon’s Psychic and Collective Individuation*, p. 138

<sup>80</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. 5th ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Heidegger will talk about the productive, spontaneous imagination as the “ground of the intrinsic possibility of the ontological synthesis;” §27. The “laying of the ground for ontological knowledge must become an unveiling of the origin of pure synthesis, i.e. why it must come to be unveiled as such in a synthesis in its being-allowed-to-spring-forth” (§14, p. 46). “The knowing of Being... is the unity of pure intuition and pure thinking,” (§14, p. 46).

<sup>81</sup> I am relying here on Weatherston’s reading in *Heidegger’s Interpretation of Kant: Categories, Imagination and Temporality* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002). See especially, p. 93ff.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Weatherston, *Heidegger’s Interpretation of Kant*, p. 93.

Stiegler's theory of originary technicity speaks to some of the same problems that Kant is attempting to address in *Religion*.

Stiegler, I would like to suggest, utilizes Kant's notion of schema to make an ontological claim about how the flux of consciousness is organized *and* how ontic relations are organized around a schema. What this means is that Stiegler uses the term schema in a representational and procedural senses, it thus has a temporal and a spatial aspect.

"Schematism," recall, is the term Kant uses in the first *Critique* to describe the process through which concepts and intuitions are combined or synthesized according to a rule. The rule is called a schema. In Kant's words: "The representation of a general procedure of the power of imagination in providing an image for a concept."<sup>83</sup> Put differently, concepts contain a rule which determines every manifold.<sup>84</sup>

As I understand him, Stiegler appears to be working with two different types of schema. One concerns ontological relations, and corresponds to the schemas of the pure concepts of understanding. The other concerns the way ontic relations are organized around a schema.<sup>85</sup> Schematism, as Stiegler understands it, is always already both technical and temporal, empirical and transcendental.<sup>86</sup> Here again Stiegler's reliance on Heidegger's reading of Kant is important.

Kant assigns a schema to empirical concepts as well as the pure concepts (or categories) of the understanding. The schema of the pure concepts of the understanding, Kant insists, can never be "brought into any image." This is in part why Kant refers to *schematism* as a 'hidden art

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<sup>83</sup> The definition comes as he is describing the schematism of mathematical concept; no image of a triangle would ever be adequate to the concept of it...(*CPR* A141/B140). On this topic, see Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson's argument in "Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant's Critical Works," p. 168ff.

<sup>84</sup> Stiegler locks in on this point. The unity of the manifold for him equals the unity of the flux—the flux that we experience through sensibility. If we know more about the concept, which contains the rule, we can learn more about how the flux is organized. Or, conversely, if we can articulate how the flux is organized we might be able to formulate a conception of the rule that determines every manifold.

<sup>85</sup> This is essentially how Heidegger retrieves the existential ground of Dasein's temporality.

<sup>86</sup> Stiegler, *TT3*, p. 55.

in the depths of the human soul.<sup>87</sup> However it is also the case that Kant associate a “pure image” with the two forms of intuition: space and time. In his words: “The pure image of all magnitude for outer sense is space; for all objects of the senses in general, it is time.”<sup>88</sup>

On Heidegger’s reading of Kant, the schema is a procedure for making a concept sensible. However, Heidegger also introduces the term “schema-image” to capture the *image-producing nature* of a schema. The schema-image, he insists, provides the “look of something in general.”<sup>89</sup> Stiegler has a similar reading, however he further specifies that the schema and image arise *transductively* with the evolution of technics.<sup>90</sup> Our recognition of the rule that relates concepts to objects arises with the image. For Stiegler, there is no mental image without a material object, and this means “no thought is possible without figurations that are themselves traces...they are the understanding crutches, not just those of hope and of faith” (*TT3* 55).

But Stiegler at times uses the term “schema” in reference to something like a bodily schema, not unlike Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of a schema. What I mean by this is that the schema in this case is not generated by an act of cognition. Instead, the schema is constituted by the very motility and movement of the body. The body, as a schema, receives something from outside of itself, but this taking-on of something from outside does not necessarily get processed through consciousness. Instead, the body, as a schema, provides the basis for a form of intentionality that is not tied exclusively to cognitive processes.<sup>91</sup> It comes about through the

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<sup>87</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A141/B180–1. He further writes: “A schema that is not projected in accordance with an idea, but rather one that draws from the empirical, “in accordance with accident aims and purposes (the number of which cannot be predetermined), can give us nothing more than technical unity” (A833/B861). However, a schema which originates from “an idea (in which case reason presents us with aims a priori, and does not look for them to experience), forms the basis of architectonic unity.”

<sup>88</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A142–3/B182.

<sup>89</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. 5th ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 68ff. The schema nonetheless has an “image-character” [*Bildcharakter*] p. 52.

<sup>90</sup> Stiegler, *TT3*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>91</sup> In a sense it switches out a cognitive intentionality for a spatialized kind of intentionality.

movements and actions of the physical body. In this sense it is operational rather than spontaneous, and spatial rather than temporal. For Merleau-Ponty, for instance, the body schema “contains the configuration and expression of one’s own individuation and guarantees the unity and structure of one’s identity.”<sup>92</sup>

How might this conceptual argument contribute to our understanding of moral freedom and what it means to be an ethical being? On the one hand, Stiegler’s theory of individuation allows us to conceive of the individual not as a close system but as a combination of interactions, tensions, and relations that form the background for a form of intentionality that stretches beyond one’s conscious intentions (knowing, thinking, acting). Together, this set of relations, intentions, and operations makes up one’s ontological disposition. In subsequent chapters I will relate this to Kant’s notion of the *Gesinnung*.

On the other hand, Stiegler finds himself locked into a problem—a theological problem. His notion of body schema combined with the way he is using Heidegger’s notion of schema-image leaves him continually looking for a way to account for the relationship, communication, or exchange, between the two types of schema. And therefore even though Stiegler continually emphasizes that technicity is the process of exteriority, the unity of the body, soul, and spirit continue to arise as a problem that Stiegler needs to resolve.<sup>93</sup>

In the last chapter of this dissertation, I will argue that the figure of Christ in Kant’s *Religion*, should be read as a kind of schema and a symbol. This is one of the reasons I suggest

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<sup>92</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2012). For a helpful discussion schema in the context of phenomenology, see Harvie Ferguson, “Phenomenology and Social Theory,” pp. 232–249 in *Handbook of Social Theory*, George Ritzer and Barry Smart eds. (London: Sage Publications: Ltd. 2003).

<sup>93</sup> Curiously, grammatology, and more specifically the gramma becomes the key to unlock the relationship between body and soul. For a useful summary of Stiegler’s account of grammatization and gramma, see John Tinnell, *Actionable Media: Digital Communication Beyond the Desktop* (Oxford University Press, 2018), see pp. 19–20, 90, 94, 101–102 especially.

that there are parallels between Kant's argument and Stiegler's own way of bringing together two ways of construing a "schema."

We can now return to Stiegler's account of transindividuation, which is crucial for understanding his social ontology.

## ii. Transindividuation

In *Technics and Time 1*, Stiegler describes the process of individuation in terms of the relationship between interior and exterior milieus. The technical object becomes concretized by closely conforming to an exterior milieu but also by moving beyond it. In order for there to be anything like an internal coherence, the exterior needs to remain somewhat separate from the interior. This is why Stiegler speaks of an organizational dynamism. He additionally draws a certain correlation between the dynamic organization of technical objects to that of social groups and traditions.

Characteristic of the technical object *qua* individual, which can be apprehended in its essence only from the standpoint of its genesis, this process is here again a quasi-biological dynamic. It is, however not a biological dynamic: whereas the living being *maintains* its unity, the technical object *tends* toward unity—just as does the ethnic group caught up in a unifying becoming operating from within a history crystallized into a "body of traditions." (*TTI* 71)

Stiegler's point here is that the technical object tends toward a unity, just as an ethnic group tends toward a unity growing out of the body of traditions. How is this unity achieved? Through anticipation and desire.

Stiegler uses Simondon's understanding of psycho-social or "transindividual" individuation to explain the plurality and coherence of human collectives, i.e. social groups. He introduces the term in the second volume of *Technics and Time*. The main argument of this volume is that the human-technical relationship has been transformed under industrial capitalism. Human beings, he explains, are losing their capacity to collectively individuate and thus the capacity to be individuals. In this context, transindividuation is described as a gathering together

of something. “All ‘consciousness’ is itself temporal” and “caught up in a whirling flux,” but this “whirling flux” is not given to us through our experience of reality, but rather through an “already-there,” which is made possible through prosthetic supports and is “synthesized.” In this context Stiegler stresses that he is *not* concerned with “intersubjectivity,” but rather with “transindividuation” (*TT2* 243).<sup>94</sup>

For Stiegler, as for Simondon, the *transindividual* is not a person’s identity, it is rather something that is “with the individual according to a more *primitive relation* than membership, inherence, or the relation of exteriority. . . .”<sup>95</sup> The individuated being is said to pass through forces and tensions that are at play beyond that individual entity. Those very same forces and tensions are constituted by both “natural” and “social” dimensions.

According to Simondon’s configuration, we can draw distinctions between biological relations, biological-social relations, and inter-individual relations. Inter-individual relations correspond to a group’s interior dynamic. This interior dynamic is not constituted through symbolic or linguistic mediation, but rather through transindividual action. Transindividual action can be defined as action that “causes individuals to exist together like elements of a system comprising potentials and metastability, expectation and tension. . . .”<sup>96</sup>

Transindividuation, on Stiegler’s account, refers to the process through which psychic and collective identities pass through the “technical and mnemotechnical archive which constitutes the permanent substrate of its accumulated ‘preindividual reality.’”<sup>97</sup> Collective and

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<sup>94</sup> Stiegler’s own account of intersubjectivity is informed by Derrida’s reading of Husserl. See *TT2* pp. 240–243 especially.

<sup>95</sup> Simondon, quoted by David Scott, *Gilbert Simondon’s Psychic and Collective Individuation* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 193

<sup>96</sup> Simondon, quoted by Scott, p. 138.

<sup>97</sup> Crogan, “Experience of the Industrial Temporal Object,” in *Stiegler and Technics*, p. 114. This happens through a complex unfolding of being that incorporates biology, geography, culture, and technics. See also John Tinnell’s discussion of grammatization in *Actionable Media: Digital Communication Beyond the Desktop* (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 82–103.

individual individuation are both mediated through technical objects, processes of adoption, and retentional systems. What this means is that the individual is always a set of interactions, tensions, and relations that build the background for a form of intentionality that stretches beyond one's conscious intentions (knowing, thinking, acting). This combination becomes for Stiegler a kind of "ontological disposition," though Stiegler himself would likely reject this label. Instead he might call it a "structure or operation." Nevertheless, insofar as he is articulating something like a disposition this disposition could never be something we "invent" or that arises spontaneously out of consciousness, nor would it point to an originary structure. Recall, technical supports are a condition for what we find "already there."

According to Stiegler, social groups are defined and differentiated by the sharing and projecting of this desire (*TT3* 88).<sup>98</sup> The preindividual is the "condition of the projection of an identity that is always imagined rather than assured."<sup>99</sup> To relate this discussion to the pattern of thought we outlined in earlier parts of this chapter, for Stiegler, the "I think" that must accompany all representations is in fact a "projected I" that gathers and selects from the temporal flux of consciousness.<sup>100</sup> Stiegler explains this process of gathering and selection by appealing to both anticipation and adoptive mechanisms.

### **iii. Principles of Adoption and Anticipation**

After introducing transindividuation in the second volume of *Technics and Time*, Stiegler will go on to dedicate a good portion of his next volume, *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*, to a rereading of central passages in Kant's first *Critique* on

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<sup>98</sup> Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise (TT3)*.

<sup>99</sup> Crogan, "Experience of the Industrial Temporal Object," in *Stiegler and Technics*, p. 104.

<sup>100</sup> Put differently, in order to construct an identity, individuals require an archive of phantasmas and a mechanism for unifying them. Cinema is "the *technical* adoption of unifying representations and phantasms" (*TT3* 103).

schematism (*TT3* 4). The main argument of this text is based on Stiegler claim that consciousness should be understood analogously to cinema rather than a mechanism for representing objects in the mind (*TT3* 103). Whereas Stiegler relies on Heidegger's arguments in *Technics and Time 1*, it seems in *Technics and Time 3*, he needs to once again return to Kant and do so on Kant's own terms. In this last section, I will briefly recount the thrust of his argument regarding adoption and explain what this means for Stiegler's use of Kant.

Recall what was said in Chapter 1 about the technical tendency: it is universal, though its instantiations are not. In order to account for the differences between social groups, i.e. human collectives, Stiegler stresses the importance of adoption over adaptation.<sup>101</sup> Human groups differentiate (transindividuate) through the adoption of different technics, which include the material supports as well as the procedures and processes that surround them. "However, *adoption is not a simple adaptation to becoming...but precisely its projective transformation into a possible future .... (TT3 175)* The unity of the "We," in other words, is made possible through adoption and the desire for a common future. Mnemotechnics, i.e. external memory supports, like all other technical objects, put us in contact with a past that we have not lived, and it is through this inherited past that the future becomes possible. As he writes in the first volume: "Every epoch is characterized by the technical conditions of actual access to the already-there that constitute it as an epoch, as both suspension and continuation, and harbor its particular possibilities of differentiation and individuation" (*TT3* 236). According to Stiegler, we experience this suspension in technics as anticipation and desire.

Because there is a disjunction between technical evolution and human anticipation, technical evolution always brings with it unpredictable effects on human desire. These

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<sup>101</sup> He writes further: "Connection to a future, which does found groups, obviously requires them to share a common past, but this past can only be common through adoption, concretized only through projection." Stiegler, *TT3*, p. 89.

unpredictable effects of desire open up new possibilities. But this also means that our sense of being in the world is imbued with both a sense of fear and hope—a sense of promise as well as crisis. These tensions, Stiegler suggests, are played out in the polis.<sup>102</sup> Communities are unified through the shared anticipation they gain through adoptive mechanisms. The technics that we adopt defer the prospect of pleasure, and in the process create anticipation through the projection of long-term horizons of expectation.<sup>103</sup>

Adoption, which is necessary given the originary default, always comes with risks. The “technical organs” of a society are always displaceable—they can be exchanged and adopted by other societies (*TT3* 91).<sup>104</sup> Unfortunately, as a result of its mutability, “adoption” can be “subjected to logistic calculations hegemonically controlled by marketing systems and media forces” (*TT3* 91).<sup>105</sup> This brings us to our current technological epoch. Stiegler insists, that whereas in previous times, adoption was “largely determined through politico-religious rituals,” in contemporary times, cinematic technologies, which mirror the functions of human consciousness, have the capacity to “hyper-synchronize” consciousness and exploit human desires, attentions, and interests.<sup>106</sup> Cinema manufactures experience at such rapid speeds that it is easily uprooting all other mnemotechnical determinations. Here we find similarities between Stiegler’s description here and Heidegger’s notion of *Gestell*. In other words, just as for Heidegger, modern technology corresponds to a mode of revealing that dominates all other modes of revealing, Stiegler’s argument is that cinema is replacing all other modes of adoption.

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<sup>102</sup> See *TT1* pp. 201 and p. 236; see also Ross Abbinnett’s treatment of this topic in *The Thought of Bernard Stiegler: Capitalism, Technology and the Politics of Spirit* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), pp. 2–3. Notably, Stiegler also argues that politics is the organization of desire.

<sup>103</sup> Stiegler, *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals: Disbelief & Discredit*, vol. 2, trans. Daniel Ross (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), pp. 56–7; quoted in *Stiegler and Technics*, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Stiegler says the question of adoption is indissociable from that of commerce (*TT3* 90–91). But this is an assertion, not an argument and thus there is room for debate.

<sup>105</sup> Original emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> Crogan, “Experience of the Industrial Temporal Object,” p. 116.

Though Stiegler insists that the *I* and the *We* do not fully coincide, nevertheless, through the shared adoption of technological supplements, the industrialization of the “*We*” is at once the industrialization of the “*I*.” Stiegler, however, does leave us with some hope, if not for the individual human subject, at least for the possible transformation or liberation of the *We*. In other words, he leaves room for reflexivity. In ways that set him apart from many of the other thinkers we have analyzed in this chapter, Stiegler appeals neither to a de-technologized form of communication nor to a realm or space that stands outside the realm of necessity. And yet, strangely, the way he builds reflexivity back into his system requires a similar logic.<sup>107</sup> For Stiegler, if there is a solution to the exploitation of consciousness in contemporary times, it is to build upon and aesthetic practices that work against the totalizing practices that have come to define today’s consumerist-driven societies.<sup>108</sup> Christian liturgy, for instance, provides one model for how art might be used to construct a new “social organism.”<sup>109</sup>

Politics for Stiegler is “above all the motivation and organization of a psychic and collective individuation process...” and is directly tied to aesthetics.<sup>110</sup> As he begins volume 1 of *Symbolic Misery*: “The question of politics is a question of aesthetics and, vice versa, the

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<sup>107</sup> In some ways, tertiary memory becomes for Stiegler a way to refer to what someone like Habermas or Taylor would refer to as the “horizon” or “realm of meaning.” On this point, see Mark Hansen, in his intro to Stiegler’s “Memory,” in *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (University of Chicago Press, 2010). On his reading, Stiegler turns tertiary memory into a way to reflect on the coming to be of the subject. For Hansen, this is a common gesture shared among many contemporary thinkers. As he writes in his introduction to *Embodying Technesis*: “Despite a constructive effort to (re)ascribe the cause of the subject’s deconstruction directly to the domain of social and material reality, contemporary cultural critics ultimately undermine their transformative programs by retaining any analytic methodology (focus on language and critical commitments to traditionally humanist political agendas, hermeneutical goals, etc.) that are themselves deconstructed in the same process.” Hansen, *Embodying Technesis: Technology Beyond Writing* (University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>108</sup> Stiegler also seems to suggest, at least on occasion, that real transformation happens at the level of education or *Bildung*. See Roffoff and Stiegler, “Transindividuation.” *e-flux* 14 (2010).

<sup>109</sup> See Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery, Vol 2: The Catastrophe of the Sensible* (United Kingdom: Wiley, 2015), p. 137. For a discussion of Stiegler’s interest in an aestheticized form of Christianity in constructing a new *otium* for the people, see, Johan Rossouw, “Bernard Stiegler’s Politics of the Soul and His New *Otium* of the People,” In *The Resounding Soul: Reflections on the Metaphysics and Vivacity of the Human Person*, edited by Lee Eric Austin and Kimbriel Samuel, 40–59 (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Lutterworth Press, 2015). Accessed January 1, 2021.

<sup>110</sup> See *Decadence of Industrial Democracies: Disbelief and Discredit* V. 1, p. 17.

question of aesthetics is a question of politics.”<sup>111</sup> However the relationship between art and technics remains ambiguous in Stiegler’s works, just as it remains ambiguous in Heidegger’s writings.<sup>112</sup> After all, if *techne* and *physis* are co-originary—and if both are forms of *poiesis*—why not prioritize technics? Why not celebrate the evolution of technics regardless of how it is unfolding? Though, as we will see in the next chapter, Stiegler insists that we need to find ways of orienting ourselves as the speed of technological evolution increases, he offers few resources for helping us decide where we should look to find this orientation.

#### IV. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have traced a pattern of thought in which Kant’s epistemology becomes a way for different thinkers to articulate a model of social ontology in which social entities are produced through intersubjective exchange, action, and communication. It was also stressed that within this pattern of thought, language plays a primary role, but only insofar as it is separated from necessity, instrumentality, and in some cases rationality. Stiegler’s arguments, I suggested, require us to rethink the presuppositions that underlie these theories. And yet, like countless thinkers before him, Stiegler cannot seem to resist the appeal of the Kantian synthesis. Rather than describing a synthesis through which the human subject comes to know and organize objects of experience, Stiegler comes to articulate a *technical synthesis*. This synthesis is not grounded in an “I think,” but instead in the material supports that make it possible to externalize and *organize* memory.

In the end, Stiegler’s theory of human sociality does not take us very far past many others who have tried to rework Kant’s transcendental subject, that is, that which lies “already there” in

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<sup>111</sup> Stiegler, *Symbolic Misery, Volume 1: The Hyperindustrial Epoch* (United Kingdom: Wiley, 2014), p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Physis* is associated with growth as well as the falling away and destruction of meaning, while aesthetics becomes the realm for unity and meaning.

conciseness. Stiegler argues that our relationship to time is always a matter of inheritance, but this inheritance is only a passive result of biological evolution and social exchange. And somehow, some way, we need to bring it to consciousness so that we can reorient our thinking. This allows Stiegler to make a claim about human sociality, but his account of originary technicity stops short of saying much, if anything at all, about the space that exists between you and me—the space between individuals. Without this space there is no ethical relation; no sense of ought.

What I would like to suggest, by way of my conclusion—and to indicate where we are headed next—is that Stiegler’s need to account for a principle of individuation that can explain both the unity and multiplicity of social groups, alongside his concerns regarding our current technological epoch, leads him down a path that was already charted by Kant in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In fact, in a chapter titled, “*I*” and “*We*,” Stiegler explicitly mentions “in passing” that, for Kant, the ‘predisposition for humanity’ is the unity of the necessary defaults...emergent from our predisposition for grafting; that is, for adoption. This predisposition is also the condition of possibility for both the symbolic and the diabolic” (*TT3* 106). Additionally, Stiegler refers to a unification process by which an *exemplary* projection animates *all consciousness*, through its capacity to structure the “*We*.” He notes that Leroi-Gourhan calls this projection the “unifier-to-come of human groupings.” However, he also suggests that for Kant this unifier-to-come of human groupings is the “ideal of all consciousness” (*TT3* 88).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Stiegler’s precise meaning here is not clear. But for reasons that will become clear in subsequent chapters, Stiegler could have sharpened this point by noting that for Kant, the unifier to come is already an “archetype” in human reason.

In Chapter 8, I use Stiegler's theory of technicity to reread Kant's *Religion*. One of the results of this reading is that the figure of Christ plays a much larger role in Kant's philosophical system than is typically recognized.<sup>114</sup> After sorting through the ambiguity surrounding the so-called "schematism of analogy," I argue that religion is for Kant the originary supplement and Christ is the schema-image that determines time and brings unity to humanity.

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<sup>114</sup> Kant refers to Christ as the personified "good principle." Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6:79; 6:83; 6:119.

CHAPTER 4  
ORIENTATION IN THE TIME OF TECHNOSCIENCE

**I. Introduction**

Let us recount where this inquiry has taken us thus far. This dissertation reopens the question of technics within Kant's thought, and it does so by turning explicitly to his theory of religion and moral philosophy. I argue that it is possible to accept the fundamental and diverse ways in which technology is part of human life, but that this does not mean that we have to give up on moral faith. In the first chapter, we considered how various thinkers have conceptualized the human-technical relation after Heidegger's famous critique. In Chapters 2 and 3, we explored Stiegler's theory of originary technicity. We looked specifically at how Stiegler uses the phenomenological insights of both Heidegger and Husserl to restate the relationship between technics and time. We also saw how his own philosophical construction, much like his predecessors, is modeled on the same structure that Kant laid out in his first *Critique*. Oddly, even though Stiegler finds it necessary to continually return to Kant to develop his theory of technics, he nevertheless insists that Kant, like others before him, forgets—or rather, represses—the question of technics. Western philosophy, Stiegler attests, instantiates a hierarchy in which knowledge is held above technics, and where technicity can only ever arise as a matter of means or as the result of *episteme*.

In this chapter, we approach Stiegler's engagement with Kant from a different angle. More specifically, we look at why Stiegler insists that Kant, in ways similar to Aristotle, perpetuates an "old metaphysical doxa" that leaves us ill equipped to think critically about our current technological epoch, the age of technoscience, in which the "real" is understood to be only a provisional perspective on what is "possible" (*TT3* 204). Technoscience, as the

conjunction between science, technology, and industry, turns ancient and modern philosophical discourse on *techne* on its head.<sup>1</sup>

My concern in this chapter is not to correct Stiegler's readings of either Aristotle or Kant. In my judgment, it is quite obvious, at least in the context of his *Technics and Time* volumes, that Stiegler spends very little time reading these two moral thinkers or understanding them on their own terms. Rather, this chapter, much like Chapter 6, which addresses Heidegger's reading of Kant on the feeling of respect, uses what I take to be Stiegler's *misreading* of Kant to open up a new inquiry into Kant on the question of technicity. Though I am primarily interested in explaining what Stiegler takes to be the oversights on Kant's part, we will first briefly look at his treatment of Aristotle.

Stiegler's engagement with Aristotle is important for a few reasons. First of all, one of the general points I want to make in this chapter is that Stiegler's readings of both Kant and Aristotle dismisses the significance that they place on the moral life and, as a result, he misconstrues the way in which they distinguish between the real, the possible, and the actual. I will say more about this in a moment. Another reason we are turning briefly to Aristotle is that I want to clarify what is at stake when Stiegler claims that we need to deconstruct the classical distinction between *techne* and *physis*. Notably, Stiegler understands *physis* to be a form of *poiesis*, and *poiesis* is, for him, a form of "bringing-forth."<sup>2</sup> This, of course, is also Heidegger's interpretation of *physis*, however, it is open for debate whether or not it properly captures the meaning Aristotle attaches to it.<sup>3</sup> This relates to a third reason we are briefly looking at Stiegler's

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<sup>1</sup> On the term "technoscience" and its relation to technology, see General Remark in the Introduction pp. 19–23.

<sup>2</sup> Heidegger, *QT*, p. 10. As we saw in Chapter 1, Heidegger's critique of classical ontology includes a critique of Aristotle's four causes.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle identifies the activity of *poiesis* with *techne* rendered as art, craft, or skill. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a1–23.

engagement with Aristotle. Stiegler completely dismisses Aristotle's attention to *praxis* and *phronesis*. While I am not so much interested in defending Aristotle—and Stiegler, to be sure, leaves plenty of room to do so—reviewing the distinction Aristotle makes between *praxis* and *poiesis* will allow us to gain a better understanding of what is at stake when Stiegler claims that the distinction between *physis* and *techne* is to be deconstructed. The latter distinction especially has implications for how we understand imitation, invention, spontaneity, and, most importantly, at least for our purpose, moral freedom.<sup>4</sup> A third reason we are looking at Stiegler's treatment of Aristotle is to emphasize the differences between Aristotle and Kant with respect to the practical good and what this means for human happiness. I will use this last point of contrast to further explain why the turn to Kant on the question of technics is warranted—indeed why it is necessary.

As we have seen, Stiegler thinks the human is fundamentally constituted through its relation with technics. There is no escaping this originary de-fault.<sup>5</sup> And yet, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, Stiegler finds a way to bring reflexivity back in. He insists the coupling between human and technics has a history and this history is something we can trace and critically analyze. However, this does not mean we can evaluate technological evolution, make judgements about its current course, and then decide whether or not we want to intentionally turn the tides in a different direction. Things are not so simple. On the one hand, his description of the project of grammatization implies that we can “read,” so to speak, the history of supplements and analyze the trajectory of technological evolution.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Stiegler argues that our

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<sup>4</sup> Heidegger claims that Kant thinks differently about spontaneity and receptivity than his predecessors, even though he falls into similar traps. I discuss this in Chapter 6. On my reading, Kant needs a way to talk about receptivity that is not only by way of sensibility and he does this when he references the *Gesinnung*.

<sup>5</sup> See the end of Chapter 1 for a summary of what Stiegler means by the “originary de-fault.”

<sup>6</sup> Here we should note Stiegler's break with Derrida. For Stiegler, grammatization is what Derrida's project of grammatology should have been all along: the history of supplements. For Stiegler, history is the history of supplements in which each period is defined by and disguised by processes of grammatization. It has been suggested

previous ways of making decisions about what is good and true are based on problematic preconceptions about the nature of reality and our ability to manipulate and change that reality. But Stiegler is not calling for only an adjustment to our ways of thinking. He also thinks we need to intervene at the level of *praxis*—though it is a limited understanding of *praxis*. This has implications for what was said in the previous chapter about his social ontology as well. *Praxis*, as I suggest below, with or without a reference to the good, is a concept that is incredibly useful for explaining how human motivation can be applied to human beings without reference to immediate desires and ends. In other words, it becomes a powerful way to talk about *intentionality*—intentionality that comes *not* from our biological inclinations and instincts, but rather from inclinations that arise in the context of a social system or social process.

As this chapter unfolds, we will gain a better sense of what Stiegler thinks we can and should do in response to the negative consequences of technoscience. Negative in what sense? On my reading, what is at stake for Stiegler—what for him functions as kind of highest good—concerns the preservation of the conditions that make it possible for us to have an *open* future—a future that is not closed to the possibilities disclosed in our past.<sup>7</sup> Read in this way, Stiegler’s critique of technoscience reveals his concern to protect human freedom. However, as I indicate

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that in diverging from Derrida with respect to the status of arche-writing, Stiegler is able to account for and describe different epochs of the ordering and structuring of *différance*. See Ian James, “Bernard Stiegler and the Time of Technics,” *Cultural Politics*, 6:2 (2010) pp. 207–228.

<sup>7</sup> I am not suggesting that this is his only concern, but rather that it is a sort of unstated “given” behind most of his claims. As we saw in Chapter 3, Stiegler thinks that human individuation at both the individual and collective levels is unthinkable without technology; nevertheless, especially in later works, he makes it clear that meaning is generated through symbolic exchange and mediation. See *Symbolic Misery, Volume 1: The Hyper-Industrial Epoch* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014). Stiegler’s turn toward symbolic production and participation makes his thought compatible with thinkers like Paul Ricoeur. However, my concern is not with developing this side of his argument. Instead, I aim to use Stiegler’s theory of originary technicity to draw out those aspects of Kant’s practical philosophy and theory that might be transposed in productive ways to better understand the human-technical relation, as well as reflect upon what this means for the nature of moral freedom and obligation.

near the end of the chapter, Stiegler's turn to aesthetics as a kind of therapeutic or remedy cannot provide us with the kind of orientation he thinks we so desperately need in contemporary times.

## II. Tracking the Movement of Technological Evolution

Stiegler, like various other philosophers of technology, sees the Industrial Revolution as a sort of turning point that set modern technology off into a particular direction. As he explains, the Industrial Revolution "introduced a conjoining of mobile capital and enterprise, between science and technics, between industry and technics-becoming-technology, that has resulted in the initiating of a permanent, and perpetually accelerating, *process* of innovation" (TT3 91). He refers to the "universalization," "deterritorialization," and "globalization" of technics and the constant development of more complex systems. More to the point, what we are seeing in contemporary times is in essence what Heidegger described in terms of *Gestell*: "the systematic and global exploitation of resources, which implies a worldwide economic, political, cultural, social, and military interdependence" (TT1 3). Nietzsche foresaw this when he described the nihilistic aspect of the will to power; Husserl when he referred to the "crisis of science," and Heidegger when he wrote of the "age of the World Picture" (TT3 204).

Stiegler is especially attentive to the way in which technology, science, and political and economic activity work together as a system. Technoscience, he explains, is the "*composition* of science and technology, meaning that science submits to the constraints involved in becoming the technology that formulates the systematic conditions of its evolution" (TT3 202–203). As science becomes technoscience it describes the real less and less, and is instead what increasingly destabilizes it. The "real" is now provisional, corresponding to whatever current perspective on the possible happens to be at play. Science, in other words, is performative. Stiegler elucidates this point by appealing to the example of genetic programming. Genetic

programming, he explains, has become “a domain whose possibilities can be technologically explored through a combination of gene-sequencing techniques and genetic surgery, specifically through restriction enzymes” (*TT3* 190). Investors determine which possibilities are pursued and, as long as it brings more profit, they have no hesitation promoting the systematic explorations of all “possibles.”

On the one hand, Stiegler’s concerns regarding technoscience are similar to numerous other thinkers writing at the end of the twentieth-century. That is to say, like various other social critics and critics of technology, Stiegler is simply challenging the objectivity of science and the way in which modern scientific research exploits the natural world and operates with no constraints. Whereas in previous times the natural world needed to be tamed and controlled by rational minds, we now have the power to change the very fabric of reality. We can now manipulate everything from DNA structures to weather patterns. Our instruments allow us to see the world in certain ways, and when we do not like what we see, we invent new instruments. We presuppose that science is objective and that it gives us a clear picture of reality, but in actuality we invent technologies that allow us to impress our ideas about ourselves and others onto the world in just and unjust ways. While Stiegler might share these concerns, it should be clear by now that he does not think that we can simply step outside of ourselves or our involvement with technics and determine an alternative course. We are fundamentally technical beings and we are continually evolving alongside technics.

The real issue for Stiegler with respect to technoscience is the ways in which technological innovation itself is being totalized and controlled by industry and the tendencies of global capitalism. In the next section, I will explain how Stiegler’s critique of Aristotle and Kant figure into his concerns regarding technoscience.

### III. Destabilizing an Old Metaphysical Doxa

In *Technics and Time 1*, Stiegler insists that we find no dynamic proper to technics in the writings of Aristotle. In *Technics and Time 3*, he makes a similar argument against Kant. Both of these practical thinkers, he insists, perpetuate an “old metaphysical doxa” in which technics can only be construed as a matter of means. Aristotle, who represents classical ontology, and Kant, who represents modernity, both present philosophical frameworks that are incapable of registering anything like technical evolution. Aristotle’s notions of *praxis* and *phronesis* are “completely inapplicable” in the face of technoscience. Kant’s conception of the will is equally problematic (*TT3* 67).

According to Stiegler, from ancient times (Aristotle) through modernity (Kant), philosophers relied on a division between theoretical and practical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge was said to pertain to descriptions of the real or descriptions of nature—or in Kant’s case, the way the real appear to us through our limited faculties—while practical knowledge was said to be concerned with that which was changeable, contingent. Rational beings act in the world and have an effect on only those things that can be changed. Since the realm of “the possible” is already contained in what is real, human freedom is bound to a system of limited ends and means. Science, seen from this metaphysical perspective, can only ever be the “science of being, and it is that *constatively*” (*TT3* 193).<sup>8</sup> It is constitutive, in other words, because it is that which “announces and formalizes the real as what cannot be otherwise” (*TT3* 193). The problem, however, is that science no longer operates according to the “ideality of being” (*TT3* 204). As he explains:

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 57, n. 7.. Stiegler’s term “consistences” is meant to repeat the concept of the regulative idea, but in a way that incorporates the phenomenological question of pretension and the Freudian question of desire.

The traditional opposition between science and technics rests on an ontological postulate by which science describes the real in its stability (i.e., the being), called *phusis* and then *natura*. Science describes nature as the stable soil of the real, or as the ideal identity of the real-as *essence*. For this reason, its goal is *discovery*, constituting an ideal of pure constativity, pure description of the real. Descartes defines this essential describability as ‘objectivity’ (*TT3* 203).

To be sure, Stiegler is painting in broad strokes, but the narrative he is presenting is clear enough: in the time of technoscience our quest for certainty, and for exploring what is most “real” and “true,” has led to the opposite situation where we can no longer gain any perspective on what is “real.” Technical science does not investigate or modify reality, it “*creates a new reality...*” (*TT1* 191). The problem is that our methods of critique also operate according to the logic of “classical science.” Classical science, according to Stiegler, effaces the novelty of technical evolution. Because we continue to work within this framework, which Stiegler identifies as distinctively Kantian, discourse on being continues to operate as if we can determine the essential from the accidental. Anything possible is already contained in that which is real (*TT3* 204).<sup>9</sup>

Stiegler’s claims regarding the real<sup>10</sup> and the possible presuppose that his reader is familiar with Heideggerian thought and modes of argumentation. Indeed, recall that Stiegler’s multivolume work *Technics and Time* is written as a kind of response to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. As we noted in Chapter 1, Stiegler agrees with the general thrust of Heidegger’s argument that we are “thrown in to the world.” Furthermore, for him, as for Heidegger, the human subject

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<sup>9</sup> Stiegler’s point here is that Aristotle renders accidents as matters of contingency, for him, all matters of contingency can be reduced to *episteme* (*TT3*, p. 203).

<sup>10</sup> Stiegler in this context tends to conflate science with the theoretical sciences, but Kant would have understood science in a broader sense of *Wissenschaft*. Indeed, Stiegler’s use of Kantian terminology is often evasive. He does not, for instance, clarify the distinction between objective validity and objective reality or actuality. While it is generally true that with respect to empirical judgments, validity and objective reality (actuality) coincide, there are instances where they do not coincide. For instance, in general logic validity is possible without actuality; additionally, Kant describes certain subjective states that are not fully conceptual. This is important because in the third *Critique*, Kant eventually wants to account for a kind of subjective judgment with its own references to validity and rules. See Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant’s Third Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), see especially p. 64ff. In the next chapter, I will briefly discuss how Kant’s postulates of pure practical reason gain a sense of objectivity that is not fully explainable through theoretical reason.

is not first enclosed within itself and then relies on certain capacities and faculties to reach out into a world. We are always already in the world, with beings and things. We find ourselves bound up with projects, engaged in actions and behavior, and using and interacting with things already at hand. Stiegler's way of describing this is to say that the "who" is always constituted by the "what" (*TTI* 134ff). But we should note that the "what" of existence does not signify exactly what Aristotle and Kant meant when they referred to the "real." As Stiegler frames this: "The possibilities of the what are constitutive of the very possibility of the who—in other words, the possibility of the what (and the same is no less true for the who) is neither that of the Kantian substance nor of [Aristotle's] 'categories' of reality" (*TTI* 254).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, when Stiegler turns to critique Aristotle and Kant in his third volume of *Technics and Time*, he is not always clear about what he means by the "real" and the "possible," nor does he make it a point to distinguish between objective *reality* and objective *validity*.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Stiegler argues that the relationship between imagination and perception is constituted in and through our relationship to technics. This has important implications for what we can say about what is objectively true. It therefore makes sense that he would question the objectivity of science. But this is not his main concern. Stiegler's argument is about future possibilities and future possibilities are only accessible—they can only be "unlocked" as it were—if we have access to a past, and we only have access to the past through external memory supports. In this sense, his understanding of "reality" [*Realitat; Wirklichkeit; la réalité*] is closer to Kant's than it is to Aristotle's.

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<sup>11</sup> It is clear that he is referring to Aristotle when he refers us back to *TTI* §43.

Heidegger has an important gloss on this point that will serve us well here. In the context of discussing Kant's claim that existence is not a predicate,<sup>12</sup> Heidegger notes that Kant's definition of reality [*Realität; realitas, res*] differs from what we may commonly think of when we refer to the "real." He explains: "The concept of reality and the real in Kant does not have the meaning most often intended nowadays when we speak of the reality of the external world or of epistemological realism. Reality is not equivalent to actuality, existence, or extantness. It is not identical with existence, although Kant indeed uses the concept 'objective reality' identically with existence."<sup>13</sup> Instead, Heidegger insists that Kant's distinctive use of the term "real" is that of "thingness" [*Sachheit*]. Reality refers to the "determination of a thing."<sup>14</sup> Thus when Kant refers to the totality of all realities [*omnitudo realitatis*] he means not the whole of all beings actually extant but, just the reverse: the whole of all possible thing-determinations or "all thing-contents." Accordingly, *realitas* is synonymous with what Leibniz's refers to as "*possibilitas*." Realities are the what-contents of possible things in general without regard to whether or not they are actual, or "real" in our modern sense."<sup>15</sup> Put differently, reality does not refer to ontic properties, but to the "what-contents" of possible things. The point of emphasis here, at least for our purposes, is the distinction between actuality and reality. It is not the case that what is actual changes the what-content of that which is possible (for instance, the what-content of 100 actual dollars is the same as the what content of 100 possible dollars).<sup>16</sup> In Western metaphysics—if I

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<sup>12</sup> As he writes: "Thus when I think a thing, through whichever and however many predicates I like (even in its thoroughgoing determination), not the least bit gets added to the thing when I posit in addition that this thing is. For otherwise what would exist would not be the same as what I had thought in my concept, but more than that, and I could not say that the very object of my concept exists" (Kant, *CPR* A600/B628).

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> He continues: "The concept of reality is equivalent to the concept of the Platonic idea as that pertaining to a being which is understood when I ask: *Ti esti, what* is the being? The what-content of the thing, which Scholasticism calls the *res*, then gives me the answer." Heidegger *BPP*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Kant famously argued that existence is not a predicate (*CPR*, A598/B626).

too am allowed to paint in broad strokes—it was common to distinguish between the actual and the possible. Aristotle uses the terms *dynamis* (potentiality, power to change) and *energeia* (actuality) to describe the process through which change is a transition from latency to presence.<sup>17</sup> In Aristotelian thought, the tension between *dynamis* and *energeia* is understood with a reference to a *telos* (end) and often to *ergon* (work). But of course, as we have already explained, Heidegger’s critique of technology is directed, at least in part, at Aristotle’s theory of causality. Hence his interest in how Kant distinguishes between actuality and this so-called “what-content.” But what about Stiegler?

On my reading, when Stiegler claims that science “invents the real” he means science invents the possible. But at times he seems to conflate the possible with the “actual,” meaning that which lies ready at hand. Despite all of this ambiguity, which is only heightened when we bring in problems relating to translation, Stiegler most certainly relies on a distinction—a Kantian one—between “that which appears to us” and the “things in themselves.” He may continually find reasons to go beyond Kant’s critical philosophy, but without maintaining

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<sup>17</sup> This brief conceptual history offers some insight into the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of the “virtual” or “virtuality.” In Latin *energeia* is translated as *actus*, and *dynamis* translates as virtue or potential. In the medieval period, *virtus* became *virtualis* and meant something like the power to produce an effect. In using the term to mean the embodiment of a certain power it became possible to describe someone as morally virtuous, implying that a person’s actions reflected a higher ideal. In the context of Christian theology, Aquinas introduced the technical term “*virtus*” to characterize a kind of operative power, primarily divine power, but human and angelic power as well. (In Greek, of course, virtue is rendered as *aretê*). Dun Scotus in the fourteenth century also used the term to mean something like the ‘essential nature or being.’ Though Scotus and Aquinas differ when it comes to how we can talk about the attributes of God, for both of them, the virtual and the actual are distinguished from each other, they are not set apart from the real. In fact, it could be said that in their view, the virtual and the actual constitute reality. In the *Summa* (Ia q.75 a.3.), Aquinas writes: “It must be said that the first act (of God) is the universal principle of all acts, because it is infinite, virtually (*virtualiter*), “prepossessing all things in itself...” This means God has the power to produce and maintain the actual existence of every creature and its characteristics. This power can also be exercised by angelic beings and humans. There is a lot to unpack here but it simply expands beyond the scope of my project. For a helpful and brief discussion, see Gary Zabel, “Through the Looking Glass: Philosophical Reflections on the Art of Virtual Worlds,” pp. 407–419, in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtuality* (United Kingdom: Oxford University press, 2014).

something of this distinction he really has no grounds for critiquing or reflecting on technical evolution.

Stiegler's point is that previous philosophical frameworks can only comprehend technological change as the result of human intentionality. Technics has no "being" of its own, no dynamic proper to it that would help us grasp technological evolution. And so even while various thinkers have warned of the negative consequences of Western science and modern technology, the situation is not getting better, it is only getting worse. "Whereas, on the one hand, the understanding of technics is now, as it has been since the industrial revolution and the profound social changes that accompanied it, largely determined by the categories of ends and means, on the other hand, technics has itself achieved a new opacity, which will be more and more difficult to explicate" (*TTI* 14). In other words, technics remains in the background. When the topic does arise, the impulse is to assert the human's power over technology or to appeal to another aspect of human life that is taken to stand outside of the human-technical relation.

While Stiegler acknowledges that Kant and Aristotle differ with respect to matters of necessity and contingency, he points out that both situate the question of technics somewhere in the space between theory and practice, that is, between knowledge and the application of knowledge. Stiegler is especially critical of Kant on this point. On his reading, Kant can only conceive of technics as applied science, as the application of technical practical principles. The theoretical sciences and the application of technical practical principles, no matter how they change over time, cannot affect moral freedom, at least not as far as Kant is concerned. As Stiegler understands him, wherever technological evolution may lead us, the moral will (i.e. the good will) remains pure.

#### IV. Aristotle, Physis and Poiesis

A main concern that Stiegler raises about the trajectory of technological evolution concerns the influence of industrialized capitalism.<sup>18</sup> He remarks that since the early twenty-first century, with the rise of capitalism and big industry, technical evolution has accelerated quickly. The technical object in the time of the industrial revolution made human operators more and more obsolete. The situation today, however, is different. According to Stiegler, with the rapid and expansive growth of capitalism the technical tendency itself has taken on a genetic or quasi-genetic logic, a logic that “that belongs to itself alone” (*TTI* 68). As one commentator explains:

The industrial revolution brought on a conjugated development of technical and economic systems, with innovation increasingly likely to become a political imperative of the state. Today, “development” means perpetual modernisation and innovation, a global process that incites and programs invention. Anticipation falls under the command of the calculation of investment: a constant organisation and re-organisation.<sup>19</sup>

The technical tendency, which develops out of the result of the human’s coupling with technics, has taken on a genetic logic of its own, irrespective of human intention.<sup>20</sup> This is one of the reasons Stiegler thinks it is important to deconstruct the distinction between *techne* and *physis*.<sup>21</sup> It is no longer possible to presuppose that the unfolding of the natural world is categorically different from the development of technological evolution. Here is where Stiegler’s critique of Aristotle becomes significant.

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<sup>18</sup> Pieter Lemmens, “Thinking through Media: Stieglerian Remarks on a Possible Postphenomenology of Media.” Pages 185–206 in *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human–Media–World Relations*. Edited by Yoni van den Eede, Stacey O’Neal Irwin, Galit P. Wellner, and Don Ihde (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Ross’s summary of *TTI*, p. 4, drawing from Stiegler, *TTI*, pp. 26–27.

<sup>20</sup> Stiegler, *TTI*, p. 77. “The difference between *physis* and *tekhne* thus fades, as if the industrial technical object has engendered a *third milieu* in which it ‘becomes more and more like a natural object.’” Contemporary technologies are increasingly characterized by their tendency to become *naturalized*. Naturalization happens when an entity replaces its exterior milieu with an artificially composed milieu of its own making.

<sup>21</sup> Stiegler argues against the notion of self-production as a line of demarcation (*TTI*, p. 26). His way of critiquing Aristotle on these points draws from Heidegger’s critique, but he also thinks that we need to rethink instrumentality alongside the logic of the supplement.

In *TTI*, Stiegler points out that in the context of classical ontology (from Aristotle onwards) technical entities are different from living entities in that they are not derived from *physis*. *Physis* (or *phusis*, φύσις) for Aristotle, in its most basic sense, refers to nature. It is associated with growth, movement, and sometimes order.<sup>22</sup> Stiegler is especially concerned with *physis* as that which contains the principles for its own movement and for its own actualization, and the way this definition stands in contrast (in ancient thought) with *techné*. “Unlike the products of human hands, which must be realized step by step and for which the fabrication process is entirely distinct from the existence of the fabricated thing itself, the natural thing’s existence is not separate but is somehow identical with the process through which it comes into being: the seed contains and, in a certain sense, already *is* the tree...”<sup>23</sup> Stiegler further explains *physis* in relation to the soul:

[In classical ontology] [t]he soul is what possesses in itself the principle of its movement, the soul is its own principle, and technics, as we have seen in Aristotle’s *Physics*, is fundamentally what does not have the principle of its movement in itself. The soul is also that which can know: there is a fall of the soul at the origin, at the origin of our world, of the world of becoming, into this world, from the sphere of eternal beings, from the stars. A fall into the body, into passion and particular, diverse interests, into the sensible, the only place where a conflict between the true and the false can take place. Platonic philosophy is constituted on the basis of an opposition between the intelligible and the sensible... (*TTI* 96)

Stiegler’s all too brief account of the soul in this passage is not especially informative. But what is striking is how he is able to sustain a critique of *physis* on the basis of “self-generation,”<sup>24</sup> all while completely dismissing certain parallels between *physis* and practical action. For Aristotle, practical action, in a sense, contains its own end.<sup>25</sup> This is important because with respect to both

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<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.4, 1014b16–1015a19. *Physis* is also used to refer to the nature or character of something, e.g. man is, by nature, a political animal (*Politics*, 1253a 2–3).

<sup>23</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1998, p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> Stiegler is pointing out that for Aristotle, the soul is distinct from the body and it is within the soul that we find the principle of movement as well as that of the understanding. Oddly, though Stiegler increasingly concerns himself with human desire, he does not incorporate desire into his discussion of *physis*.

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle explains in his *Metaphysics* that *praxis* (practical action) is an action which, instead of having an end outside of itself, includes its end in itself. Because of this inclusion of the end within action, there is no clear distinction between the past and present. Aristotle, *Metaphysics IX*. On this point also see Jacques Taminiaux,

*physis* and *praxis* as ends in themselves, we can imagine a realm of becoming where there is no need to reference anything outside of itself.<sup>26</sup> But Stiegler does not attend directly to the way Aristotle defines *phronesis* and *praxis* and what that means in relation to *physis*. As he sees it, *phronesis* and *praxis* are simply irrelevant in the time of technoscience. The reason he is dismissive on these points, it seems to me, is because he has already determined, following Heidegger, that *physis* is a form of *poiesis*.<sup>27</sup> Though Stiegler does not dwell on this point, Heidegger famously argued that *physis*, as the bringing-forth that is of itself, is the highest form of *poiesis*.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, both *poiesis* and *physis* are processes of revealing, and so of “bringing-forth,” and because *techne* is linked with knowing in the broadest sense, it too is form of revealing, and thus a form of *poiesis*.<sup>29</sup>

In suggesting that *techne* is a form of *poiesis*, and also that *physis* is the highest form of *poiesis*, a distinction is lost—or can be easily missed—between *praxis* and *poiesis*, between acting and making—a distinction that was crucial for Aristotle.<sup>30</sup> This distinction is worth

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“Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology.” *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 137–69. Accessed April 6, 2020; p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> The Greek word *physis* (φύσις) comes from *phyein*, meaning “to grow out of” or “to appear by itself.” The term is typically used in reference to natural objects, where the becoming of that object, a tree for instance, is immanent to it. Aristotle differentiates human artifacts from natural objects. When human beings make an object, that object always has an end outside of itself. So even though both *physis* and *techne* in a sense concern bringing something into being, they do so through different processes. They also produce different results or different objects. The forms become intelligible insofar as reason grasps the *eidōs*. For a longer discussion see Istvan Bodnar, “Aristotle’s Natural Philosophy”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/aristotle-natphil/>>.

Since this topic is related to our discussion of Kant’s conception of the archetype (Christ as archetype), we might also note that there is some disagreement between Plato and Aristotle on the topic of whether or not *poiesis* generates copies or true forms. For Aristotle, it would seem that only *physis* generates paradigms. *Poiesis*, in contrast, relies on the *eternal* forms. Some commentators argue that both have the power to produce originals rather than mere copies of the true forms. In a sense, humans invent and so does nature. For a longer discussion see Martha Husain, *Ontology and the Art of Tragedy: An Approach to Aristotle’s Poetics* (United States: State University of New York Press, 2012), especially pp. 22ff.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, 1993, p. 318–19.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 10. *Poiesis*, for Heidegger, should be expanded beyond the realm of making and producing.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *QCT*, p. 27. Modern technology is only a “challenging forth” of all there is. It conceals itself as revealing, and conceals “revealing itself.”

<sup>30</sup> Agamben explains this distinction as well, but references the will: “The Greeks . . . made a clear distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* (*poiein* ‘to produce’ in the sense of bringing into being) and *praxis* (*prattein*, ‘to do’ in

retrieving for the sake of our purposes, because though Stiegler appears to be dismissive of *praxis*, he nonetheless articulates a set of ontological conditions that seem to require something like *praxis*. Explaining what is at stake here will allow us to better understand what is distinctive about Kant's account of practical reason, which is inseparable from his conception of the will and desire. This discussion will additionally help us understand why Kant continually felt the need to affirm the importance of practical reason over theoretical reason and expand his theory of judgment.

### **i. Praxis, Knowledge, and the Good**

Stiegler is right to point out that for Aristotle, we can make a distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge. But, as it is well-known, Aristotle articulates three different types of knowledge in *Nicomachean Ethics*: theoretical knowledge [*episteme*], practical knowledge [*phronesis*], and practical productive knowledge [*techne*].<sup>31</sup> On his account, *episteme* deals with necessary truths (those things which remain unchanged) and is more properly associated with theoretical knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Practical knowledge, by contrast, concerns the *application* of knowledge to different human activities and in different situations. It concerns those things that change—as Stiegler points out, the realm of contingency. But Aristotle also differentiates between two types of practical knowledge: *techne* and *phronesis*. Though they are

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the sense of acting). Central to *praxis* was the idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act, while, by contrast, central to *poiesis* was the experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from non-being to being, from concealment into the full light of the work.” Giorgio Agamben, “Poiesis and Praxis”, *The Man Without Content* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). (Agamben: 68–69) I call this passage to attention because it seems to imply that though nothing is produced by acts of the will, something is “expressed” in the act.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b; 1140a.

<sup>32</sup> As Richard Parry explains: In *Metaphysics* II, Aristotle seems to imply that we can apply *episteme* in relation to nature. At the end of Book II, he makes a distinction between the accuracy found in mathematics and the accuracy found in all other disciplines. Mathematical accuracy, he says, cannot be expected in all things but only in those which do not contain matter. Hence geometry ends up being his favorite example of *episteme*. Richard Parry, “*Episteme* and *Techne*”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/episteme-techne/>.

both forms of practical knowledge, their range of application pertains to different domains. *Techné* as craft or art relies on *both* *logos* (deliberating, reasoning) and *poiesis* (making and producing).<sup>33</sup> *Phronesis* applies to action, which is the domain of *praxis*. Acting, in other words, is different from making.<sup>34</sup> Although, it is also the case that in a sense we make ourselves (through vices and virtues). Whereas making (*poiesis*) is guided by *techné* and the outcome is a product or artifact, deliberation (*phronesis*) guides practical *action* and the outcome is virtuous action or the achievement of some good. Virtuous action corresponds to a virtuous disposition (or a good character).<sup>35</sup> Put differently, making requires an end outside of itself, but action is about living well. In this way, it is self-referential. Why? Aristotle can make this claim because human *praxis* is not guided by *physis*, but by *phronesis*. The end of *phronesis* is said to be *internal*; it involves the person who deliberates and has a *good* character. Does this mean that *phronesis* is similar to *physis* in that it includes its end? It is different in at least a couple of ways.

One notable difference has to do with the fact that Aristotle and Plato would have also made recourse to *nomos*, that is, to law. The debate then would be about how *nomos* relates to *physis*—unfortunately we cannot address the complexities involved with these debates. The second reason they would be differentiated, at least for Aristotle, is that *phronesis* and *physis* both have to do with movement, and interestingly, pleasure and desire.<sup>36</sup> For Aristotle, motion does not include its end; movement always has its end elsewhere. Motion is, in a sense,

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<sup>33</sup> Plato also uses these terms but Aristotle is clearer about their specifications, though there is still ambiguity even within Aristotle's categorizations.

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 140a 1–5; “Action and making are different kinds of things.” 140b 3–4.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger's word for resoluteness is *Entschlossenheit*, which means something like “disclosure” or a way of seeing. It presupposes a disposition. Jacques Taminiaux, “Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology.” *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 137–69. p. 150. Accessed April 6, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Otherwise known as passions and attitudes. It seems as though anticipation (for Stiegler) is transformed into something that does not have to do with the body or movement, but with openings and possibilities for new modes of individuation and transformation. Also compare with Heidegger's: *vorlaufen*—anticipating, or running-ahead-to death.

incomplete.<sup>37</sup> When it comes to *physis* everything is already within itself because it can move itself.<sup>38</sup> Human action cannot be *physis*. *Why?* Because human action involves, or at least has the potential to involve, desire. For Aristotle at least, the intellect, or thought, alone does not move us to act. Kant of course will agree that we are moved by desire, but he will also insist that we are free to act from duty.

To be sure, human desire is complex for Aristotle as well. While animals act only with respect to sensible or bodily pleasure and pain, human beings know a higher form of pleasure. This pleasure is associated with our moral nature in that it arises when we respond to that which is good or when we recognize virtue. It is not immediately associated with the body, but rather the soul, and further with ethical action. Ethical action is action that is done for the right reason at the right time, i.e. *praxis*. *Phronesis* is not directed at an object per se, but with becoming what is good. In a sense, becoming “good” or at least “living the good life” is the highest possibility. It is not our death that defines us. The “virtuous man” holds that title long after death.<sup>39</sup>

Stiegler is willing to grant that humans have the capacity to act apart from mere impulse, and his primary way of accounting for motivation, the springs of action, is through his account of desire. I understand him to mean that desire and anticipation (as a kind of mood or disposition) are both associated with pleasure—which helps to explain why aesthetics becomes so important for him—but not with the will or with the *practical* good. To say something is “good,” in other words, is a judgment of taste.

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<sup>37</sup> Hence the need for an unmoved mover.

<sup>38</sup> “In the properly practical process, the past, instead of being over, is still included in the present” we see and have seen, understand and have understood, think and have thought. Jacques Taminiaux, “Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology.” *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 137–69. Accessed April 6, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Taminiaux, “Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology.” *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 137–69. Accessed April 6, 2020.

As noted above, for Aristotle, *praxis*, insofar as it is directed at an end, it is directed at that which is “good.” The good is understood with reference to its essence and its *telos*. Aristotle also contextualizes *praxis* with a robust theory of virtue [*areté*]. There are various kinds of virtues and yet we have the power to deliberate about what is most important. This is a matter of *sophia*, of wisdom. Stiegler, it would seem, is far more cautious about our capacity to make these kinds of judgments.

Stiegler, as we noted in the previous chapter, additionally draw from Gilbert Simondon’s theory of individuation to account for various kinds of tensions and inclinations. Nevertheless, his of human action nevertheless relies on a conceptual apparatus that functions very similarly to the way *praxis* functions in Aristotle, but some important qualifications. On the one hand, as an ontological condition, *praxis* is not an orientation toward the practical good but an orientation toward future possibilities.<sup>40</sup> While it is true that for Aristotle virtue is a power to act, he never describes it as corresponding to a horizon of possibilities (ends taken as good). We should here recall the discussion above about Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s conception of reality. For Aristotle, virtue is not a spontaneous production or a projection into the future. It is always contained in some way by the world, the cosmos, and the kind of beings we are; our own most possibility is shaped by potentiality and by actuality (*dynamis* and *energeia*). But what about the totality of possibility? More precisely, what about the totality of possibility outside of the human *telos*?

To repeat what I stated at the outset of this chapter, *praxis*, with or without a reference to the good, is a concept that is incredibly useful for explaining how human motivation can be applied to human beings without reference to immediate desires and ends. In other words, it

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<sup>40</sup> In the Chapter 6, I argue that when Heidegger reads Kant on the feeling of respect, he actually bases the structure of care only on *moral feeling*, which I distinguish from the feeling of respect.

becomes a powerful way to talk about *intentionality*, intentionality that comes *not* from our biological inclinations and instincts, but rather from inclinations that arise in the context of a social system or social process. But is this enough to explain human motivation? Aristotle and Kant would most certainly answer “no.” This is why we are taking the time to consider their arguments in their own terms.

However, we can also relate this discussion to the argument in the previous chapter regarding social exchange. Stiegler’s theory of technics pushes us to ask how technical objects, tendencies, and systems not only influence perception and shape desire, but condition our most fundamental way in which we orient ourselves in the world. Technics, “apprehended as the horizon of possibility to come and of all possibility of a future” (*TT1 ix*), determines our situation. But if this all becomes simply another part of the human socialization process or a way of organizing the goals and efforts of a human community, then it would seem technics is simply another way of explaining how the human is determined by social exchange. But why should we assume that *social* inheritance offers us the horizon of all possibility?

On the one hand, *praxis* for Stiegler can only be a matter of inheritance. This seems to me to be one of his most interesting insights. On the other hand, Stiegler’s theory of technicity does not presuppose that the human as an individual is *only* the result of a social process, the enactment of social structures or the manifestation of a social program. The polis alone does not determine what is good. Put differently, our orientation toward the future and the past is not inherited—at least not entirely—as *doxa*. As we saw in the previous chapter, individuation happens on various levels, and according to different durations. It is through tertiary retention that we inherit a past and invent a future, and gain transcendence. Since excess possibilities are introduced as the effect of tertiary retention (*TT3 59*), as long as our relations to technical

supplements are not completely totalized through a particular program or political order, there is hope for new possibilities in the future.<sup>41</sup>

There are, of course, still many risks. For Stiegler, the human being is the being without a true essence, but there is also drive—a desire—to make up for this lack. We may not be oriented toward the good, but we endlessly try to “make good” on our originary de-fault.<sup>42</sup> This takes us to a tension at the heart of Stiegler’s arguments between humanism and antihumanism.<sup>43</sup>

There is no escaping this originary de-fault. But, as noted above, Stiegler finds a way to interject and question the trajectory of technological evolution. He worries that the speed and growth of technological change in recent times, the opening of possibility, at least as far as the human is concerned, is closing in even as technological systems continue to grow and get more and more complex. To be sure, Stiegler insists that his concern is not for humanity as such, but rather with an undetermined future and unforeseen ends.

[I]f there is something profoundly *necessary* in man it is precisely his fundamental anxiety, in so far as this *opens up possibilities* – and in the end, perhaps this is what accounts for the fact that the question of his possible end always remains, from the beginning and throughout the course of his life, an open question. If I do not in fact wish for the disappearance of man, it is because I do not wish for the disappearance of this opening of possibilities that results from this always open experience of the possible end.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> It would seem that the unintended effects of desire that result from technological changes are what keeps the future open in the sense of being unpredictable and uncontrolled. Stiegler, *Technics of Decision*, p. 158. Whereas Heidegger thought inadequation was the consequence of the diversity and the facticity of the possibilities already there, a past that has been inherited, Stiegler insists that inadequation is the effect of tertiary retention (*TT3*, 59). See also “Dead Memories: Heidegger, Stiegler, and the Technics of Books and Libraries,” *Tkach*. Inheriting and adopting a tool means inheriting or adopting an experience.

<sup>42</sup> Stiegler, *Technics of Decision*, p. 156.

<sup>43</sup> Stiegler is accused by some for being a humanist and by others for being an antihumanist. For instance, Ross Abbinnett suggests that there is a “clear determination to identify Stiegler’s work as a humanist response to the tendency of technical systems...” See Abbinnett, *The Thought of Bernard Stiegler: Capitalism, Technology and the Politics of Spirit* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), pp. 2–3. On the other hand, Arthur Bradley, critiques him for his anthropocentric tendencies, Arthur Bradley, *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011). Margherita Parati, for instance, suggests he offers an “unorthodox anti-humanist reading of Marx.” “Margherita Parati, “Performance in the Museum Space,” 99-110 in *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*. Edited by Celeste Ianniciello, Mariangela Orabona, Alessandra De. Angelis, Iain Chambers (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2016), p. 96. Additionally, Mark B.N. Hansen suggests that Stiegler remains committed to the “integrity of human agency...” Mark B. N. Hansen, “Technics Beyond the Temporal Object.” Article. *New Formations*, no. 77 (Spring 2013): 44–62.

<sup>44</sup> Stiegler, *Technics of Decision*, p. 158.

According to Stiegler, if we want to have an open future, one not controlled by a technical tendency that increasingly negates human interests, then we need a new framework for orientation, one that does not close us off from “our own most possibilities.”<sup>45</sup> It will not be enough to simply “think differently” or look for ways to limit human power. Instead, we need methods for critically analyzing projective mechanisms and the conditions of retention and the transformative modes of that which is produced (*TT3* 216). In addition to rereading and rethinking the tradition—the tradition of Western metaphysics, essentially—Stiegler suggests that we develop strategies that exploit the possibilities of technical evolution, while also adopting practices that orient us toward those things that make life worth living.

In the passage above, Stiegler makes it clear that he does not “wish” for the disappearance of the opening of possibilities, which he clearly associates with the human being, but he does not want to associate the future and this openness with the human as a species. Stiegler is hesitant to describe what ought to be because he is skeptical about our ability to make such judgments. But he also seems to suggest that if we do not make any decision about what ought to be, then we will have no way to judge the quality of technoscientific fictions (*TT3* 206). He admits that this criterion cannot be drawn from what is ultimately real and true, even as it will require a certain mode of judgment. But for all of this, Stiegler insist that Kant cannot be our guide. In fact, Kantian thought stands in the way of a new method for critique.

Unlike Aristotle, for Kant, in fact, knowledge is divided into two domains (whose commingling—confusion—preceded metaphysics, and which the three *Critiques* re-secure for reason): the theoretical domain and the practical domain. This *a priori* division, which is the substructure for critique and always at risk of being challenged, obstructs any rethinking of technics in an age of technology and technosciences: it is an obstacle to the very possibility of a *political economy of adoption*. (*TT3* 194)

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<sup>45</sup> On Stiegler’s use of art for political purposes see *Activating Aesthetic*, edited by Elizabeth M. Grierson (United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis, 2018).

Stiegler, it seems to me, misses an opportunity here. He does so in two respects. First, because he refuses to investigate Kant's practical philosophy further, he overlooks the ways in which Kant's theory of religion can actually be read as an attempt to institute a universal political economy of adoption. The second reason Stiegler is too quick to dismiss Kant is on the point of inheritance. Kant's concern is to defend moral freedom. As such he emphasizes spontaneity and the break with contingency that is possible with the moral act. Nevertheless, he has various ways of explaining human motivation and action that do not lock us in to simply accepting that all of our ways of being are fully programmed by a social agenda. We will now turn more directly to Stiegler's criticism of Kant.

## V. Stiegler's Criticism of Kant

Stiegler appropriates many ideas and concepts from Kant's philosophy. However, as I have already noted, he insists that Kant's most critical moment comes in the first *Critique* when Kant is working through the Transcendental Deduction (*TT3* 5–6). Ultimately, as we saw above, he thinks Kant does not “understand the question of retention” (*TT3* 81); he insists that technics for Kant is nothing more than a “correlative of theoretical philosophy” (*TT3* 67).

Stiegler finds Kantian thought to be limited in at least two main ways. The first concerns the way in which he, much like Aristotle, separates theory from practice. However, unlike Aristotle, who would have to register technical evolution as a matter of contingency, Kant's account of causality requires us to postulate a generative ground for all possibilities, i.e. God. What this means is that new possibilities cannot be added to what is “real.” Quoting Kant, Stiegler writes that it is...

a need for reason ‘to posit the existence of a being who is sovereignly real (supreme) as the ground of all possibility’ or else to posit as ‘unique possibility... that of unlimited Being, as originary principle, and to consider all other things as derivative (TT3 182).<sup>46</sup>

God is for Kant “a generative standard,” “that which precedes all possibilities.” Though only a necessary idea to satisfy reason’s need, the idea of God coincides with Kant’s understanding of actuality, reality, and possibility.

On Stiegler’s reading, Kant will not allow “technical practice” to expand the realm of possibilities, because technical practice is only the “*consequence* of theory.” “Practical reason is at play only when *freedom* is enacted through a *will*.<sup>47</sup> The will is the “middle term” between theory and practice. The payoff of this reading, which is problematic in various ways, is that Stiegler thinks that Kant’s conception of the will and his account of human freedom only works to support the endless expansion of human power over nature. The moral realm is separated from technical practical reason and the effects of the human’s pursuit of freely chosen ends only need to be harmonized with other autonomous subjects. Stated differently, Kant sees the world and everything in it as a matter of means for humans as they pursue their free ends. He does not consider how free acts might themselves amount over time to a system that largely determines human choice. Technological development is the result of man<sup>48</sup> perfecting his talents and his ability to manipulate nature through the natural sciences and mechanics.<sup>49</sup> If we were to remain within Kantian thought we would have to accept that technological change can never truly influence the aims of man, since those aims are “inscribed onto one’s heart.” Those aims,

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<sup>46</sup> Stiegler is here quoting Kant, *AP*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> Stiegler, p. 67, n. 30. He references Pierre Aubenque’s assessment of Kant: “In the Introduction of the *Critique of Judgement* [Kant] divides his philosophical system into two parts: theoretical and practical.” Stiegler also suggests that for Kant all practical matters are understood by reference to the Kingdom of Ends.

<sup>48</sup> The gendered term “man” is appropriate here.

<sup>49</sup> See Kant, 1991: 41–3, cited in Abbinnett p. 40, Stiegler *TT3*, p. 198.

Stiegler further suggests, are understood only with respect to inclinations and the moral will—a will that is free, and whose freedom is ensured by the spontaneity of the intellect.

Whereas Kant would have related technical reason to humanity’s “enduring happiness,”<sup>50</sup> Stiegler’s point is that we can no longer presuppose that technology is evolving in ways that merely serves human desire or perfection. In fact, Stiegler thinks that our desire to live is itself beginning to wane. But the problem is not technicity itself. The appropriate response is not simply to slow down the speed of technological change or put more limits on technological investment. Instead, as I understand him, our hope—*human* hope, though he is known to resist the human bias—lies primarily in recognizing the role of tertiary retention so that we resist the totalizing powers of industrialized capitalism in hypermediated societies and environments.<sup>51</sup> But on this point too, Stiegler thinks Kant’s account of causality presents “obstacles to the very possibility of an economy of adoption” (*TT3* 194).

And yet in spite of all of this criticism, throughout his many writings, Stiegler finds himself continually returning to Kantian categories, ideas, and concepts. Indeed, as I stated above, part of Stiegler’s efforts are directed at “rereading the tradition.” He argues that if we want to believe that the invention of what is possible<sup>52</sup> is not limited to what is currently “real” or what is already “given” in advance of any explication of the process of individuation, then we need to “re-interrogate the distribution of roles between the two sources of knowledge, intuition and understanding” (*TT3* 195).<sup>53</sup> In other words, if Kantian thought is to be of any use, we need

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<sup>50</sup> This phrase is reminiscent of Kant’s claim in the *Groundwork* about prudence and the importance of looking after one’s “own enduring advantage” *G*, 4:416n.

<sup>51</sup> Stiegler’s notion of tertiary retention was discussed at length in Chapter 2.

<sup>52</sup> Recall that our access to the past through technical memory supports (tertiary memory) provides us with our access to future possibilities. Stiegler thinks we need a politics of memory (*TT1*, p. 276) as well as criteria for evaluating fictions (*TT3*, p. 206).

<sup>53</sup> His language is especially confusing here. He writes: “What *is* happening between understanding, intuition, imagination, and the ideas of reason when, for example, such chimaeras can become serial technical productions, and thus reproducible (even reproducers), put on the market, and introduced into the process of adoption by

to once again turn to and rework his understanding of schematism as it is presented in the first *Critique*. He also thinks we need to reconsider the role of the imagination, especially in its relation to perception.<sup>54</sup>

Why is Stiegler dismissive of Kant's practical philosophy? One reason, it would seem, has to do with the way he interprets Kant's understanding of the will. On Stiegler's reading, the will is the means through which we apply propositions about the natural world to the natural world through practical or technical action. Mistakes are possible but they are always the result of our lack of knowledge or the result of human finitude. What I take Stiegler to be suggesting is that practical reason, when applied in a technical sense, is in fact what Kant understands as instrumental reason. If I am reading him correctly, he is not completely wrong, but his portrayal of Kant's position is at best incomplete; at worst, it is misleading or confused. In the next chapter we will explore Kant's understanding of the will and the determination of will in some detail. But first I want to draw attention to two themes that Stiegler isolates in Kantian thought that *do* in fact support a different reading of Kant on the question of technics. These two themes concern reason's interests and practical ideas. After expanding upon these themes, I will point to some of the ways in which Stiegler's attempt to find orientation in the time of technoscience fall short.

#### **i. Reason's Needs**

Though Stiegler primarily reads Kant through Heidegger and he rarely cites passages outside the first *Critique*, he does make a point to discuss at length Kant's text "What Does It

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industries of biotechnology, or by the lifelong process of agribusiness, stretching from procreation through the industrial production of biological prostheses, as transgenetic graftings?"

<sup>54</sup> Specifically, he limits his reading of Kant to the sections relating to the Transcendental Deduction and the sections immediately leading up to it. This means he is working only with the a priori categories in the mind, and the link between synthetic representations and objects (A137–A147/B176–187).

Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking” in *Technics and Time 3*.<sup>55</sup> Stiegler, as I noted above, suggests that we need new criteria for judging the quality of technoscientific possibilities and for orientating ourselves in thought at a time when we can no longer rely on the “ideality of being.” After revising Heidegger’s existential analytic (as we discuss in Chapter 2), Stiegler returns to this text because he thinks it may yet help us “discern motifs” that are important for orienting ourselves in the time of technoscience (*TT3* 180).

In “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking,” Kant articulates a mode of judgment that does not rely on determinate judgments, instead articulating what he calls a “subjective principle of differentiation.” In brief, what this means is that rather than working within the boundaries of theoretical reason, Kant describes a way to orient our thinking when our usual ways of grounding ourselves are out of the question. In this context transcendental illusions themselves become regulative principles. As Stiegler explains:

This is a case in which supersensible things constituting a ‘space’ of ‘darkness’ must be judged, a space at whose core it must nonetheless be possible to be oriented simply and precisely because there is a constitutive need for it. (*TT3* 181)

In other words, reason at times is confronted with the inadequacy of objective knowledge. When this happens, reason must find a way to orient itself. On Stiegler’s reading, Kant makes reason’s need itself the main criterion. I will quote Stiegler at length below since this is one place where he begins to trace out some of the technical substructures of Kant’s theory of religion in its relation to moral feeling.

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<sup>55</sup> *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking*, in *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 1996). This text lays out the demands of reason and reason’s need to postulate a supreme ground of possibility. Kant references a capacity to orient oneself in space according to a “feeling of difference in my own subject.” This does not allow us to make determinate judgments and yet we must make a judgment.

Reason can judge here, by the very fact that it needs to do so. This need, which is only a criterion insofar as it is reason's criterion and not that of the inclinations of feeling, is a feeling exactly because reason does not feel: 'Reason does not feel: reason knows its insufficiency and as a result produces, through the propensity to consciousness, the feeling of a need' (*AP*, 71). This feeling is that of insufficiency, of the inductive default of a "tendency to consciousness," if not of a curiosity about fictions. This non-sensible feeling is an affect, a *love* of knowledge or a *desire* for reason--that cannot be posited as a principle but as a good regulator, conforming to the vocation of reason in general; therefore we can have confidence in it. (*TT3* 182)

Stiegler renders this "need of reason" as the originary de-fault. "This default is necessary, we need it, it *is*, as limit, an ability to reason, and at the same time we must have confidence in it: it gives us desire and love" (*TT3*, 182). In short, Stiegler equates what Kant calls the "needs of reason" with reason itself. Reason "*is made of* default, of originary lack; it is never self-sufficient....It is only *an interminable projection of its nonexistent unity*" (*TT3* 201). He describes this need in terms of a desire, a desire for the unity of the *We*. At another point he equates this desire for unity with the desire for perfection, and "*the default required for aspiring to it*" (*TT3* 201). Stiegler does not elaborate on these points, but he is clearly drawing on Kantian themes—themes that are especially important for Kant's practical philosophy. In the next chapter we will explore Kant's argument regarding reason's need, but we will do so alongside a discussion of Kant's account of the faculty of desire and the determination of the will.

## **ii.     Practical Technical Ideas**

Stiegler is especially critical of Kant's account of causality and how it works to support the divide between theoretical and practical reason. He goes so far as to say that Kant's way of thinking about theory and practice (as well as invention) negates the process of technical individuation (*TT3* 194). He further attests that Kant's "interrogation of causality neutralizes what in the theoretical domain results from all phenomena of the will" (*TT3* 194). On Stiegler's reading, Kant fails to consider the possibility that the will could causally produce "its objects as 'capable of existing.'" In other words, he fails to consider the efficient causality of reason

outside of the moral domain. Free action can never have the combined effect of becoming a system of nature. Kant distinguishes between an ontology of nature and an ontology of freedom, but he overlooks the possibility of a “technical realm.” He emphasizes the importance of “practical ideas” but neglects the very notion of “technical ideas.”<sup>56</sup>

What Stiegler means to signify by the term “technical ideas” is far from clear. He loosely refers to “technical ideas” as ideas that project “into the future a becoming that is agent” and are “generated ‘as if’ from the will, but would point beyond to future possibilities” (*TT3* 198–199). Staying within Kant’s language, he also claims nothing would be more “reprehensible” than to derive technical ideas from examples. While his language remains abstract and his references to Kant elusive, in this same context, Stiegler also raises the topic of rational faith. He promises to return to the topic more directly, alongside that of fidelity, belief, and “understanding’s crutches” in what was to be the next volume of *Technics and Time* (*TT3* 200). In a note he adds: “Crutches of faith do indeed exist; I will investigate them further in *Symbols and Diablos; or the War of Spirits*” (*TT3* 231n).” He then quotes from Kant’s *Religion*: “Without any doubt, hope requires crutches, if we dare to speak of crutches in a religious context.”” But unfortunately, Stiegler never wrote a fourth volume of *Technics and Time* and he leaves it up to his readers to decide what to make of this provocative use of Kantian language.<sup>57</sup>

While Kant might not reference “technical ideas” he does have an array of other ideas, most notably, transcendental ideas, ideas of reason, practical ideas, and aesthetic ideas. Numerous debates within Kantian scholarship indicate that Kant’s understanding of ideas, their

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<sup>56</sup> On my reading, this surfaces only when Kant develops his theory of religion.

<sup>57</sup> As far as I know, he never returns to the “crutches of faith” he alludes to in *Technics and Time 3*. His most direct engagement with Kant on the topic of faith and fidelity can be found in his essay “Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith.” In *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Tom Cohen. (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

relation to each other, and how they can and cannot be executed and/or represented are anything but clear.<sup>58</sup> But as I read him, Kant does leave some room here for exploring the relationship between practical ideas and technical ideas, but the place to read him on these points is not the first *Critique*, but rather those places within his practical philosophy where he addresses the postulate of practical reason, the highest good, and practical or moral faith. While various scholars have written on how the aesthetic ideas relate to transcendental objects, and have carried out this discussion in order to explain the role of practical faith or belief,<sup>59</sup> there is still plenty of ambiguity surrounding the practical ideas and their realization.<sup>60</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed Stiegler's arguments regarding what he describes as a "metaphysical doxa" that prevents us from properly attending to technological evolution in the time of technoscience. We considered Stiegler's criticism of Aristotle and Kant, which largely centered on the distinction both thinkers make between theoretical and practical knowledge. I drew out some of the implications of Stiegler's arguments and considered how his criticism in many ways rests on Heidegger's interpretation of the Western philosophical tradition. I made a

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<sup>58</sup> For a brief overview see Michael Rohlf, "Ideas (Idee)" in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*. Edited by Julian Wuerth (Cambridge University Press, 2021). For a discussion of debates about the difference between aesthetic ideas and practical ideas see Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason": Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016). Also see Nicola Crosby-Grayson, "Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant's Critical Works." Dissertation. Manchester Metropolitan University (United Kingdom), 2015. For a different perspective on the aesthetic ideas, see Alison Ross, *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy: Presentation in Kant, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy* (Cultural Memory in the Present) (United Kingdom: Stanford University Press, 2007); for debates about the realizability of practical ideas, see Marcus Willaschek, 'Must We Believe in the Realizability of Our Ends? On a Premise of Kant's Argument for the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason,' in *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*. Edited by Thomas Höwing. (De Gruyter, 2016). For a discussion of some of the difficulties involved with the transcendental ideas, see Eckart Förster, *The Twenty-five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> For instance, Dennis Vanden Auweele notes that "[P]ractical faith gives credibility to certain transcendental objects beyond the scope of possible experience." Dennis Vanden Auweele, *Pessimism in Kant's Ethics and Rational Religion* (United States: Lexington Books, 2018).

<sup>60</sup> On this point as well, my reading has been informed by Adam Westra's *The Typic in Kant's "Critique of Practical Reason"* and Crosby-Grayson, "Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant's Critical Works."

point to show that though Stiegler makes the claim that neither *phronesis* nor *praxis* are inconceivable in the face of technoscience (*TT3* 67), his arguments about how we are to properly respond to contemporary problems relies on a certain mode of practical action, and arguably, an account of a highest good, namely, a future open to possibilities unforeseen.

In the final section, we turned to Stiegler's criticism of Kant. I pointed to some of the difficulties with Stiegler's interpretation of Kant's understanding of the will and recounted Stiegler's critique of Kant with respect to the "ideality of being." I further suggested that though Stiegler insists that Kant's theory of causality works against a "political economy of adoption" he nonetheless continually relies on Kantian concepts in order to articulate his account of originary technicity. This finally led us to Stiegler's provocative reference to the needs of reason as equal to the originary default, and to "an interminable projection" of reason's "nonexistent unity," and to his allusion to "technical ideas" and "crutches of faith." While Stiegler himself does not explore these ideas in depth, they provoke additional questions regarding the practical and technical dimensions of Kant's philosophical system. For instance, if technical ideas regulate and organize the real (understood here either as the sum total of possibilities or as the actual), what would this mean for the way practical ideas operate? For instance, do practical ideas refer to what is possible or do they invent a new possible? Are the postulates of practical reason "crutches of faith" and, if so, how do they relate to the originary de-fault? And finally, Kant at times seems to suggest that Christianity is a system that organizes rational ideas, does this also imply that it is a technical system? Is it possible that Christianity inaugurates a political economy of adoption? These are precisely the kind of questions that my reading of Kant through the lens of originary technicity is meant to address. And to that task we now turn.

CHAPTER 5  
KANT AND TECHNICS

**I. Introduction**

As we saw in the last chapter, according to Stiegler, Kant cannot think the evolution of technics. His philosophical system simply makes no room for technics outside of applied science. However, as we also observed, Stiegler's reading of Kant is almost completely derived from select passages from the first *Critique* and his treatment of that material is highly influenced by Heidegger's reading of Kant. Apart from a few select essays, Stiegler spends very little time engaging Kant's other writings, and this is especially the case with respect to Kant's practical philosophy. This chapter reopens the question of technics within Kant's writings. My concern is not to correct Stiegler's reading of Kant. Instead, I use Stiegler's points of criticism of Kant in *Technics and Time 3* to chart a course through Kant's works which, in turn, will allow me to provide an alternative reading of Kant on the question of technics. In contrast to Stiegler, my reading begins not with Kant's theoretical philosophy, but rather his practical philosophy. More specifically, I concentrate on Kant's faculty of desire, the determination of the will, and the way in which principles and ends guide human judgment. In the next chapter, I zero in on Kant's understanding of the feeling of respect, which I argue always has a moral ground and *ought* to be understood with respect to persons. Finally, Chapters 7 and 8 deal with Kant's theory of religion.

In each of these chapters, my concern is to retrieve insights from Kant's writings that I think can help us reaffirm the ground and nature of the moral ought even as we grant the human's technical nature. Reading Kant in this way will also allow me to identify those places where the repression of technics potentially hinders Kant's ability to defend the dignity of the moral person. In other words, my reading of Kant in this chapter and the chapters that remain will be evaluative as well as reconstructive.

It will be useful at this point to restate the methodology of this dissertation and explain how it serves the broader aims of this chapter. The purpose of this dissertation is not to somehow demonstrate that Kant provides a fully worked out theory of technology. Nor am I arguing that he foresaw how fast technology would develop in the centuries after his death and therefore wrote an ethics that was directed at setting limits on technological development. Rather this project provides a critical look at why Kant's moral philosophy is frequently excluded from revised accounts of the human-technical relation and in response offers a counter reading of his work through the lens of ordinary technicity. This rereading is important for several reasons. First of all, Kant's practical philosophy is frequently dismissed in the philosophy of technology literature, even as certain elements of his epistemology and aesthetics continue to be used in various ways. Ironically, though Kant insisted upon the prioritization of practical reason over theoretical reason, it is his theoretical works that are most often cited and appealed to in contemporary discourse on technology.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, as I discussed at the end of Chapter 2, even scholars who embrace a transcendentalist approach to technology tend to presuppose that Kant's philosophy and way of construing human subjectivity are examples of what is to be avoided.

To be sure, part of the reason Kant is frequently dismissed when it comes to thinking about technology has to do with the fact that Enlightenment thought more generally speaking is often criticized for presenting a picture of the human that stands over against the natural world and manipulates that world with the power of reason. Kantian thought in particular is often called out explicitly for creating a rift between the intelligible world and the sensible world. And, as I explained in Chapter 1, much of the philosophy of technology since Heidegger has been directed

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<sup>1</sup> This is addressed near the end of Chapter 2. Chapter 3 also attends to this issue.

at repairing this rift, as well as rethinking the subject-object divide. Mindful of this criticism, one of the main aims of this chapter and the chapters that follow is to break down some of the presuppositions or expectations about what Kant can and cannot help us understand about the human-technical relation.

This chapter identifies four areas within Kant's moral philosophy where I believe there is room for an alternative interpretation of Kant on the topic of technics. Using Stiegler's criticism as a guide, I target 1) Kant's account of the will, more specifically the complex set of concepts that Kant uses to explain the determination of the will (i.e. inclinations, interests, incentives, ends and purposes); 2) the typology of practical principles as first explicated in the *Groundwork*; 3) Kant's account of the postulates of pure practical reason (freedom, immortality, and God); and 4) Kant's understanding of the highest good and how it relates to the needs and interests of reason. Why focus on these four areas in particular? I argue that each of these topics raises questions regarding where *techne* fits in human life and in trying to address this issue, Kant is required to renegotiate the relationship between theoretical and practical reason, and eventually, expand his theory of judgment. The proper relationship between theory and practice, Kant ultimately argues, is to be decided by reason as the faculty for determining ends. However, as we will see, reason also has interests and needs, and these interests and needs can only be explicated and analyzed through a critique of religion. This latter part of my argument continues into the next three chapters.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that one of the first places where the question of technicity arises within Kant's thought is when he lays out a typology of practical principles in the *Groundwork*. To be sure, Kant eventually revises this typology, preferring in his latter works to distinguish between "moral practical principles" and "technical practical principles."

Nevertheless, by tracking these changes and recounting Kant's own reasons for revising this initial typology, I am able to show how Kant's uncertainty regarding *techne* (in the broader sense of skill or craft) led him to expand his theory of judgment and, eventually, appeal to religion in order to account for the ways in which human interest is inherited, shared, and cultivated within a society.

## II. On Determination of the Will

It is well known that Kant makes a distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. He maintains that as rational beings, humans act for the sake of ends and make choices about what kind of ends to pursue. The setting of ends requires the use of perception, reason, and imagination. Humans imagine the possible result or effect of an action and reason about how to achieve that desired result or effect. Principles of actions that are required to obtain these ends function as *hypothetical imperatives*. However, Kant famously argued that the human is capable of acting on reason alone, which is to say, rational principles motivate action. As living beings we are never entirely free of inclinations and desires, but we can nonetheless thwart our inclinations and respond to the binding necessity of moral obligation.<sup>2</sup>

Now if we begin from this very general understanding of Kant's moral philosophy, and add to it Kant's well-known distinction between persons and things (*G* 4:428, *CPrR* 5:76), it becomes rather easy to arrive at a position where we can agree with Stiegler, and others, who believe that for Kant the question of technics can only ever be about means and ends. Such a position can be characterized as follows: Kant thinks that we begin as rational beings situated in a world of things and persons. We bring our rational capacities to the world and make judgments about how to achieve the objects of our desire. We also act for the sake of ends—ends that are

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<sup>2</sup> As I will stress below, the moral ought is inseparable from the demand that other persons make on us and must be interpreted alongside what it means to live in a just society.

chosen because we consider them to be good. There are better and worse ways of achieving certain ends and there are better and worse ways to act for the sake of the common good. The question of *techne*, we can thus infer, can only arise when we apply what we know about the empirical world to reach whatever ends we should so choose. Morality, which is concerned solely with persons acting in accord with pure laws, must by necessity exclude anything technical.

While this topical treatment of Kant's moral philosophy is not completely false, indeed much of it is correct, it hardly captures the complexities of Kant's account of the will nor his way of describing the practical good.<sup>3</sup> To get at these matters, we need to start not with the faculty of cognition nor that of feeling, but rather with the faculty of desire.

#### **i. Faculty of Desire**

Notably, for Kant, human beings are not the only beings with a faculty of desire. Desire is a characteristic of life itself. More precisely, the faculty of desire is a form of causality in the sense that it is a determination of action based on representations. The "faculty of desire," he writes in the second *Critique*, is "a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations" (*CPrR* 5:9n). This also implies that desire is not mechanical. The faculty of desire operates according to feelings of pleasure and pain, and feelings of pleasure and pain are linked to the representation of *possible* objects, ends or states of affairs. Though all living things perceive and interact with mental images, Kant thinks that one of the things that differentiates human beings from other animals is that humans *internalize* the causes of things and their effects. In other words, humans are guided preconceptions of possible

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<sup>3</sup> Although I will make suggestions about how his arguments in his practical philosophy lead him to expand his understanding of human judgment and discernment, a full account of Kant's treatment of the will would need to attend to his complex theory of judgment as it develops across the three critiques. Such a comprehensive task cannot be taken up in this chapter.

effects.<sup>4</sup> Or, to use Stiegler's language, human beings have the power of foresight. We act not on mere impulse, but rather *anticipate* how we will feel (pleasure or pain). We also have the power of hindsight: we learn to expect certain results from particular actions and associate effects. As

Kant explains in the first *Critique*:

[W]e have a capacity to overcome impressions on our sensory faculty of desire by representations of that which is useful or injurious even in a more remote way; but these considerations about that which in regard to our whole condition is desirable, i.e., good and useful, depend on reason. Hence this also yields laws that are imperatives, i.e., objective laws of freedom, and that say what ought to happen, even though perhaps it never does happen.... (CPR A802 / B830)

Kant will essentially elaborate and extend what is stated above throughout his many writings.

His overall point is relatively straightforward: humans do not act on mere impulse or mechanical necessity. They use decisions about which objects and ends to pursue and they do so through a complex network of laws, principles, rules, and imperatives. Reason is the faculty behind this complex network. But reason is not, to be clear, simply the making use of appearances presented to consciousness. Still, given Kant's claim that humans can act on reason alone, one of the most important questions that Kant needs to answer is how it is that the *will* can be determined by a *representation of reason*. Put differently, how can a sensibly affected will be moved to act simply because of a judgement made by the understanding? This question is raised in the *Groundwork*, but he addresses it more directly in the second *Critique*. Below, I will discuss how this problem is addressed in both texts and emphasize some of the points of difference between them. But first we need to attend to a related set of concepts that, once introduced, allows Kant to slightly modify his argument from one text to the next.

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<sup>4</sup> Kant specifies that animal action is guided primarily if not solely by physical impulses. See Sebastian Raedler, *Kant and the Interests of Reason* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), p. 102. Raedler references: KU, V, 172; see also: *MS*, 6:21.

## ii. Interests, Inclinations, and Incentives

Kant's account of the faculty of desire is mobilized by a cluster of concepts having to do with human motivation or the springs of action.<sup>5</sup> There are four concepts in particular that we need to isolate in order to understand how the faculty of desire relates to the determination of the will, namely: interest, inclinations, incentives, and ends. I will treat the topic of ends directly in subsequent sections. The first three concepts are especially important for understanding key points of difference between the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*. I will therefore attend to them first.

The distinction between interests and inclinations is especially important for the argument of the *Groundwork*. In this context, Kant writes: "Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, that is, in accordance with principles, or has a *will* (G 4:412)."<sup>6</sup> Human beings, as both rational and desiring beings, have the capacity to use practical principles of reason to act for the sake of inclination.<sup>7</sup> Inclinations always indicate a need (G 4:414n). They are pathological. Human beings also have the capacity to use practical principles to act for the sake of or out of interest. "The dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason," Kant tells us, "is called an *interest*" (G 4:414n). Only a being with a "*contingently*

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<sup>5</sup> Kant uses the Latin "*elater animi* [spring of the soul]" to reference what in English can be rendered as "incentives" or in German, "*Triebfeder*." We return to this below. For a concise summary of how Kant uses the term "*Triebfeder*," including how it changes over time, see Colin Marshall's entry in *The Cambridge Kant Lexicon*, edited by Julian Wuerth (Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 244–155

<sup>6</sup> ["*Ein jedes Ding der Natur wirkt nach Gesetzen. Nur ein vernünftiges Wesen hat das Vermögen, nach der Vorstellung der Gesetze d.i. nach Prinzipien zu handeln, oder einen Willen.*"] References to Kant's works are given in the German Academy edition: *Gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 29 vols. (Berlin: 1902-83; 2d ed., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, vols. I-IX). I use the German Academy edition for German references, however, for merely practical reason, I used the following German edition of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: Die Religion Innerhalb Der Grenzen Der Blossen Vernunft*. Edited by Karl Vorländer and Noack Hermann. Philosophische Bibliothek; Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Typically, Kantian translators render *Begehren* as "desire" and *Interesse* as "interest."

determinable will”<sup>8</sup> acts for the sake of or from interest. A divine will, i.e. a holy will, in contrast, would always already conform to reason (G 4:414).<sup>9</sup> Imperatives do not hold for a divine will since volition is of itself *necessarily* in accord with the law. In the following passage, Kant qualifies this point and clarifies what it means to *take interest* in something versus *acting from interest*.<sup>10</sup>

... even the human will can *take an interest* in something without therefore *acting from interest*. The first [taking an interest] signifies *practical* interest in the action, the second [acting from interest], *pathological* interest in the object of the action. The former indicates only dependence of the will upon principles of reason *in themselves*; the second, dependence upon principles of reason for the sake of inclination, namely where reason supplies only the practical rule as to how to remedy the need of inclination. In the first case the action interests me; in the second, the object of the action (insofar as it is agreeable to me). ... in the case of an action from duty we must look not to interest in the object but merely to that in the action itself and its principle in reason (the law). (G 4:414n)

In sum, whenever we are guided by principles that help us to satisfy a need we are “interested” in an object. In contrast, when we act from duty we are not interested in an object, but rather a form of action as well as the principle in reason that corresponds to that action.

The distinction Kant makes here is not insignificant. By shifting the focus from interest *in an object* to interest *in an action* he is able to secure some ground for his claim, especially important for his argument in the second *Critique*, that a form of action can itself become an *incentive*. Crucially, in the second *Critique*, he argues that the feeling of respect is the “sole and also the undoubted moral *incentive* [*Triebfeder*]” (CPrR 5:78).<sup>11</sup> Incentives are motivating

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<sup>8</sup> My emphasis. Toward the end of the *Groundwork*, Kant will raise questions and offer some speculative comments about our interest in the moral law. He thinks it is important for the moral life but we should not expect to ever learn the cause of this interest. See the section titled “Of the Interest attaching to the Ideas of Morality,” which begins at 4:454.

<sup>9</sup> “A will whose maxims necessarily harmonize with the laws of autonomy is a *holy*, absolutely good will” (G 4:439). I return to this point in Chapter 8, where I discuss Kant’s claims regarding the Holy one of the Gospels.

<sup>10</sup> Put somewhat differently, if interest is aroused by some object, it is a pathological interest. When interest is aroused by a particular action it is a moral feeling. Stated in this way, the distinction works well with the argument of the second *Critique*, where Kant attends more directly to the “moral feeling” that comes with the determination of the will when determined by an unconditional law.

<sup>11</sup> *Achtung* in German means respect, but also “attention,” “esteem,” and “regard.” In the *Groundwork*: respect is the “effect of the law on the subject, and not...the cause of the law (G 4:401n). I will discuss the feeling of respect at length in the next chapter.

(springs of action, springs of the soul), but they are motivating only for the “will of a being whose reason does not by its nature necessarily conform with the objective law” (*CPrR* 5:7).<sup>12</sup> I will have more to say about incentives below, but for now it is important simply stress the fact that whether we are talking about taking interest in something or incentives, there remains a link to sensibility. Only a will that can be affected by the sensible world can be said to have interest.<sup>13</sup> As he explains in the following passage from the second *Critique*.

All three concepts, however – that of an *incentive*, of an *interest* and of a *maxim* — can be applied only to finite beings. For they all presuppose a limitation of the nature of a being, in that the subjective constitution of its choice does not of itself accord with the objective law of a practical reason; they presuppose a need to be impelled to activity by something because an internal obstacle is opposed to it. Thus they cannot be applied to the divine will. (*CPrR* 5:79)

Now that we have some sense of what Kant means by interest, inclination, and incentives—the latter of which we will return to below—we can turn to describe Kant’s account of the practical good and the rules for action that correspond to the practical good. As I noted above, Kant insists that human beings have the capacity to act on objective principles. “The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an imperative” (*G* 4:413). When the will is determined by representations of what we judge to be good and what we know through reason to be valid for every rational being, we are speaking of the *practical good*. A subjective good, in contrast, is that which determines the will by means of a representation of an idea produced by the imagination (*G* 4:413).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In other words, human beings do not, by necessity, act according to reason. For a longer discussion on this topic, see Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Conception of Freedom: A Developmental and Critical Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), see p. 385 in particular.

<sup>13</sup> In *MS* he writes: “a friend of human beings” as such (i.e., of the whole race) is one who takes an effective [*ästhetisch*] interest in the well-being of all human beings (rejoices with them) and will never disturb it without heartfelt regret” (*MS*, 6:472).

<sup>14</sup> As we will see in Chapter 6, Heidegger, drawing on passages from *CPrR* claims that “respect for the law, as motive, first really constitutes the possibility of the action. It is the way in which the law first becomes accessible to me as law.” Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 135. However, on my reading, in the second *Critique*, Kant associates respect for the law with the feeling associated with a form of action *represented* as an incentive. This is a way of describing

We should clarify here that Kant does not think that humans perceive the good and then act on it.<sup>15</sup> Why? First of all, we do not always know the good. Second, Kant denies that we have a moral sense, at least in the traditional sense, i.e. we do not *perceive* the good. We relate our feelings to ends and decide what is good based on those feelings. Third, our maxims are often opposed to the objective principles of a practical reason (*G* 4:414). In other words, the objective principles of action can be, and often are, at odds with our subjective maxims.

It was noted above that Kant does not think that we perceive the good.<sup>16</sup> While this is true, this statement should be qualified, at least in part, by drawing attention to his conception of the conscience [*Gewissen*]. In the both the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*, Kant at times refers to the conscience as capacity for exercising impartial judgement (e.g. *G* 4:404, *G* 4:422; *CPrR* 5:98). In *Religion*, the conscience is a capacity that itself becomes a duty (*R* 6:185). It is not about the judgment of actions, but about reason judging itself (*R* 6:186). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the conscience is described as one of the subjective conditions of receptiveness to the concept of duty, along with “moral feeling,” “love of one’s neighbor,” and “respect for oneself (self-esteem)” (*MS* 6:399).

However, even if we allow Kant’s conception of the conscience to qualify his claim that we do not perceive the good, his argument against the notion that we perceive the good is

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respect and putting it to work so to speak, but it is not Kant’s full account of respect, which elsewhere he says must be applied to persons.

<sup>15</sup> In other words, the imperative says which possible action is good and represents a practical rule with respect to that good. But the will does not act immediately on the good. See *G*, 4:414.

<sup>16</sup> I will qualify this statement further in Chapter 8 when I discuss the figure of Christ in *Religion*. In short, Kant at times seems to suggest that Christ, insofar as he exhibits the “good principle,” may establish a sort of perception of goodness. In this case, not goodness with respect to moral action, but the goodness of humanity in its perfection. Meredith Trexler Drees, for instance, makes an interesting argument that connects Iris Murdoch’s arguments about perceiving the good to Kant’s conception of Christ as archetype. “The archetype is demythologized in the sense that it does not include the stories of history that are necessarily tied to the historical Jesus... the archetype itself is a rational space, which is open to historical religion, and historical religion can fill the form with content. In this way, Jesus occupies that space, and the symbol—the prototype—is the Good (the archetype), embodied.” See Meredith Trexler Drees, *Aesthetic Experience and Moral Vision in Plato, Kant, and Murdoch: Looking Good/Being Good* (Springer International Publishing, 2021).

important for understanding his account of the practical good. As we noted in the previous section, human beings can take *interest* in an action (i.e. are not only concerned with satisfying inclinations). When we make the judgment that an action is good, we can mean either that that action is good for the sake of some other end, or that it is good for its own sake. If an action is good merely because it is the means *to something else*, the imperative is *hypothetical*; if the action is represented as *in itself good*, hence as necessary in a will in itself conforming to reason, as its principle, *then it is categorical....*” (G 4:414)

Having worked through some of the fundamental concepts that underlie Kant’s account of the faculty of desire, we next turn to the typology of imperatives he lays out in the *Groundwork*.

### III. The Groundwork’s Typology of Imperatives

In this section I describe and analyze the typology of practical principles that Kant first lays out in the *Groundwork*. This typology is important for two main reasons. First of all, Kant makes an interesting distinction between possible and actual ends, which he further connects with problematic and assertoric modes of judgement. Kant eventually decides that the very notion of “problematic imperatives” “harbors a contradiction.”<sup>17</sup> One result of this decision is that the distinction between problematic and assertoric principles in the context of his practical philosophy is lost. Nevertheless, he finds it useful to appeal to “assertoric faith” in his book on

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<sup>17</sup> In the third *Critique*, Kant explains: “This is the place to correct an error which I committed\* in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. For after asserting that the imperatives of skill command only conditionally, under the condition of ends that are merely possible, i.e. *problematic*, I described such practical precepts as ‘problematical imperatives’, an expression which obviously harbors a contradiction. I should have called them *technical* imperatives, i.e. imperatives of art. The *pragmatic* imperatives, or rules of prudence, which command under the condition of an *actual* and thus even subjectively necessary end, are now also included under the technical imperatives (for what is prudence other than the skill of being able to use free human beings, and even one’s own natural dispositions and inclinations, for one’s own intentions?)” (CJ 20:201n).

*Religion*.<sup>18</sup> By retrieving this distinction and bringing it to bear on Kant's theory of religion we can further ask: what would it mean to have a problematic faith?

The second reason I want to focus on this typology is because I see it as a way to pursue the question of technics in Kant's practical philosophy. As Stiegler points out, Kant makes a distinction between *morally* practical principles and technical practical principles. The former set of principles correspond to freedom, the moral law, and to the will, while the latter relate to theoretical sciences and are based on empirical judgments. While this appears to be Kant's position in the third *Critique* and other texts written around this time, if we consider why it is that Kant changes his mind on these points it becomes clear that this is one place where the question of technics arises and is repressed. In order to demonstrate this, we will need to follow his reasons for revising and clarifying this initial typology as he explains them in the second and third *Critiques*.

Imperatives are formula for the determination of action. As noted above, if an action is represented as in itself good then it is categorical (*G* 4:414). If an action is good merely because it is the means *to something else*, the imperative is *hypothetical*. Hypothetical imperatives, Kant further explains in the *Groundwork*, apply to both *possible* or *actual* purposes or ends [*Zwecke*]. Possible purposes, yield problematic practical principles, while actual purposes yield assertoric practical principals. By comparison, categorical imperatives declare "the action to be of itself objectively necessary without reference to some purpose" (or to some further end) and thus is held as an apodictic practical principle" (*G* 4:415).

Assertoric, problematic, and apodictic propositions are first introduced in the Dialectic section of the first *Critique*, where Kant describes them as three modes of judgment. These

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<sup>18</sup> In the second *Critique*, Kant claims that God and immortality are necessary hypotheses. In *Religion*, he claims that practical faith requires faith that it is possible for God to exist, though we cannot *know* God exists (*R* 6:154).

propositions are sometimes associated with three types of *attitudes*: judging, believing, and knowing.<sup>19</sup> Assertoric *practical principles* involve assertions as well as judgments that are “actually” true, and not merely possible. Categorical imperatives declare an action itself to be objectively necessary without reference to any purpose or end. This makes them apodictic. Apodictic judgements are logically necessary. What matters is not the result of the action, but the form and principle from which the action follows.<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to categorical imperatives, Kant describes hypothetical imperatives as analytic propositions (*G* 4:419). His general claim regarding hypothetical imperatives is that “whoever wills the end also wills (in so far as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the indispensably necessary means to it that is in his control” (*G* 4:417). This is an analytic proposition in the sense that in this case, the willing of the means (the predicate) is already contained in the willing of the ends (the subject). Categorical imperatives, by contrast, are not analytic, i.e. they are not relative to specific desires or ends. Commentators disagree about why Kant calls problematic and assertoric principle analytic.<sup>21</sup> Some, frankly, think it was a mistake. After all, if there is a logical relationship between ends and means, then why describe these rules

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<sup>19</sup> Taking-for-true, in turn, has three basic kinds: “opining” (*Meinen*), “scientific knowing”, and “believing” [*Glauben*] (*CPR* A820–831/B848–859). Scholars disagree about how exactly they are related. For a more well-known account, see G.J. Mattey, “Kant’s Theory of Propositional Attitudes, vol. 77, no. 1–4, 1986, pp. 423–440. For a broader look at the debates, see Robert Hanna, “Kant’s Theory of Judgment”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/kant-judgment/>] See also “Supplement to ‘Kant’s Theory of Judgement,’” SEP. Retrieved Jan 2022. Within Kant’s theory of judgment, both assertoric and apodictic judgments involve assertions.

<sup>20</sup> Kant also says that what is “good” in the action “consists in the disposition [*Gesinnung*]” (*G* 4:416).

<sup>21</sup> In other words, is he suggesting “if we will the ends, we ought to will the means?” Or is he suggesting that “if we will the ends we, by necessity, will the means?” If Kant meant only to provide a descriptive account of what happens when we desire and seek ends, as some scholars argue, then this would make the judgment apodictic in the sense that it would be logically necessary. This however leaves open the question as to why Kant felt the need to categorize these principles as imperatives at all. For a longer discussion see Thomas E. Hill “The Hypothetical Imperative.” *The Philosophical Review* 82, no. 4 (1973). For a different perspective, see John Sallis and R. Rojcewicz. *Kant and the Spirit of Critique* (Indiana University Press, 2020). See pp. 126–130 in particular.

as imperatives as at all? Underlying this issue is an important claim about necessity that needs to be further unpacked.

As noted above, hypothetical imperatives determine the will according to some *possible* or *actual* purpose. Possible purposes yield problematic practical principles. Kant associates problematic practical principles with imperatives of skill. These concern purposes or ends [*Zwecke*] that only need to be *possible*, not actual. Kant eventually decides that the very notion of possible practical imperatives is contradictory (*CJ* 20:201n.)<sup>22</sup> But there is something worth retrieving here. Specifically, as I understand him, the problematic practical principals are a way for Kant to talk about how human interest is passed on in different contexts through different generations. What I mean by this is that Kant, at least this stage in his writing, sees that our interest in certain ends are in part shaped by the kinds of problems and solutions we have available to us.<sup>23</sup> This is clear when we look closer at his explanation of problematic practical principals.

In the context of explaining problematic practical principles, Kant suggests that it is not the case that all human beings have the same ends or that they use the same means to achieve those ends. This is in part because human beings do not desire the same objects, but also because they do not have the same talents and skills. Additionally, Kant indicates that there are various types of ends and various kinds of means and methods for achieving those ends. In fact, that the possibilities are “innumerable” (*G* 4:415). Humans are taught a variety of skills and techniques and over the course of their life learn about various types of possible ends. Notably, they do not act toward *all* ends nor do they utilize *all* means. Since not all of the possibilities will necessarily

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<sup>22</sup> See n. 17 above.

<sup>23</sup> Recall that Habermas contrasts purposive-rational action with self-generative acts that should be distinguished from labor. See Chapter 3, p. 94.

be executed, we might even say that humanity as a whole is left with a remainder of possibilities.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, in the context of describing problematic practical principles, Kant suggests that all of the sciences have a practical element in this sense that they all consist of “problems [which suppose] that some end is possible for us,” as well as imperatives that direct us on how this end can be achieved (*G* 4:415). It is for this reason that Kant refers to these hypothetical imperatives as “imperatives of skill.” This is notable because Kant in this context is using the term “imperative” in a situation where we are not making a judgment about the absolute truth or goodness of a proposition. Instead, what we have here is a *logical* judgement about a matter of necessity. In Kant’s words: “Whether the end is rational and good is not at all the question here, but only what one must do in order to attain it” (*G* 4:415). With the presupposition of ends there are presuppositions of means, imperatives in other words, for how the ends should be achieved. The possibilities generated within the different sciences are done so according to problems outline by the sciences. There can be rules of skill based on these ends in the sense that some work better than others, but here—at least at this point in Kant’s philosophical project—he provides no real criteria for determining how these rules would be judged or whether this judgment would work in service of virtue, happiness, or both.

One point he *is* clear on, however, is that imperatives of skill, though they can be better and worse, cannot be “good” or “evil.” Thus, the precepts for a physician can be “well-

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<sup>24</sup> This sentiment is repeated later in his *Lectures on Pedagogy*. “Because of the multitude of purposes, skillfulness becomes, as it were, infinite” (9:450). In this context, Kant suggests that proper education consists of discipline, cultivation of skill, prudence, good manners in matters of social intercourse, and finally moralization. From here one might additionally conclude that reason is *excessive*. This is one place where we can bring Stiegler’s criticism of Kant is worth considering more closely. How can we be so sure that these possibilities are innumerable? additionally, recall that one of Stiegler’s concern is that our ways of life, in the sense of *praxis*, is being limited by the industrialization of consciousness and the loss of desire. It might be fruitful to explore what Kant’s notion of problematic practical principles means for the human-technical relation with respect to technoscience, but we cannot attend to this topic adequately here.

grounded” but not good or evil. In a similar way, a skilled murderer can follow well established precepts, but the precepts themselves are neutral (*G* 4:415). Additionally—and in some ways more surprising—Kant further insists that these principles can be neither “true” nor “false.”<sup>25</sup>

*Why emphasize these qualifications?* For one thing, it is a rather strange position for Kant to hold. After all, what he seems to be suggesting is that though certain practices, in medicine for instance, may be well-grounded, these practices cannot be labeled “good” or “evil” nor “true” or “false.” This claim is especially strange if we consider Kant’s claims regarding the three predispositions toward the *good* in *Religion*.<sup>26</sup> But more importantly, at issue here is not simply how Kant is defining the “practical good” but the gap that is beginning to open up between theoretical and practical reason. As I understand him, Kant needs to provide answers to the following questions: *Where do the technical practical principles belong? Where do those possibilities that are not actual in the sense of assertoric fit into human life? How are they organized, and most importantly, what form of judgment is used in evaluating their principles?* To answer these questions Kant will need to expand his theory of judgment. The work of the third *Critique*, as well as his writings on religion and anthropology all contribute to Kant’s more expansive theory of judgment. As we will see later, this is especially important for understanding Kant’s argument in *Religion*.

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<sup>25</sup> Kant explains: “The modality of judgments is a quite peculiar function. Its distinguishing characteristic is that it contributes nothing to the content of the judgment (for, besides quantity, quality, and relation, there is nothing that constitutes the content of a judgment), but concerns only the value of the copula in relation to thought in general. Problematic judgments are those in which affirmation or negation is taken as merely possible (optional). In assertoric judgments affirmation or negation is viewed as real (true), and in apodictic judgments as necessary (*CPR* A74–5 / B99–100).

<sup>26</sup> In fact, in certain respects, the three predispositions toward the good (*R* 6:26f) end up doing the same kind of work. It is possible that they were meant to be Kant’s way of restating these three practical imperatives or rather it was his way to establish their own domain in relation to the Good. If this is so, then it is also notable that he specifies two determinations that constitute godliness [*Gottseligkeit*]. “*Divine blessedness* comprises two determinations of the moral disposition in relation to God. The *fear* of God is this disposition in obedience to his commands from *imposed* duty (the duty of a subject), i.e. from respect for the law” (*R*, 6:182). This is a topic I treat at length especially in Chapter 7.

We have not yet adequately addressed assertoric practical principles. Assertoric practical principles, Kant explains, arise when we begin from the understanding that there is an a priori purpose or end [*Zweck*] that belongs to all human beings, a purpose that belongs to them *in their essence*. In order to specify what this is we need to ask: what do we know about human beings? What end do they all equally share? Kant answer is that we all desire happiness. Happiness is an *actual* [*wirklich*] end. It is by natural necessity that human beings desire happiness (*G* 4:415). “The hypothetical imperative that represents the practical necessity of an action as a means to the promotion of happiness is assertoric” (*G* 4:415).

As was previously stated, Kant insists that if we will the ends to something we necessarily will the means as well. Does this imply that because we will happiness we necessarily will the means to that happiness? Not exactly. Though it is an actual end, Kant thinks it is a mistake to think that because we all desire happiness we can simply determine the best means for achieving happiness. There are several reasons for this. First of all, happiness is not an *object* that we can pursue directly. It is not a definite concept, nor is it an “ideal of reason” (*G* 4:418). Happiness is rather an “ideal of the imagination” (*G* 4:418).<sup>27</sup> Happiness is not the only ideal of the imagination. In the third *Critique*, Kant specifies that the idea of beauty is an ideal of the imagination. In this same context he clarifies that ideals of the imagination are not within our possession. They always remain a goal, something we strive toward. “While not having this ideal in our possession, we still strive to *produce it within us*” (*CJ* 20:232). This is why it is associated with the imagination. Crucially, for Kant “Ideals of the imagination do not rest on concepts but

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<sup>27</sup> In “*Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion*,” Kant writes: “How does an idea of reason differ from an ideal of imagination? An idea is a universal rule in *abstracto*, whereas an ideal is an individual case which I bring under this rule” (28:994).

on presentation [*Darstellung*], and the power of exhibition is the imagination” (*CJ* 20:232).<sup>28</sup> So when Kant says that we actually have happiness as an end, he does not mean that it is something we possess here and now—as a state of mind or feeling. Rather, he is suggesting that happiness is an end we possess by natural necessity. It is a “presentation” in our mind. Since it is universal, it is a *shared* presentation.<sup>29</sup> Are there other ends (or purposes) that we have by necessity? We will return to this below, where we discuss happiness as an end in relation to other ends.

The point to stress here, however, is that for Kant happiness always rests on empirical grounds (*G* 4:418–4:419). Humans are able to make choices regarding how they achieve “one’s greatest well-being.” This is in short, the very essence of prudence. The principles that guide the choice of means to achieve general welfare (not just one’s own private pursuit of happiness) are “pragmatic principles.”<sup>30</sup> But Kant—somewhat surprisingly—suggests that problematic practical principles, those he associates with matters of skill and art, do not match up with pragmatic principles (choices about the general welfare). This means skill can be used to aid in one’s pursuit of happiness, but the principles in this case are not commands. They can only ever be matters of council. Similarly, in the second *Critique*, Kant explains that “The maxim of self-love (prudence) merely *advises*; the law of morality *commands*. But there is a great difference between that which we are *advised* to do and that to which we are *obligated*” (*CPrR* 5:37).” It is interesting to raise the question of religion at this point. We saw above that Kant made a point to

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<sup>28</sup> In Chapter 8, I discuss the way Kant strategically uses the terms *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*. I translate Kant’s term “*Vorstellung*” as “representation” and *Darstellung* as “presentation.” For a summary of some of the debates and why the distinction is important see Martha B. Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* (State University of New York Press, 1996); and Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> This is another place where a closer read of Kant’s practical philosophy might complicate some of Stiegler’s critical remarks regarding Kant’s treatment of technics.

<sup>30</sup> Kant explains: “A history is composed pragmatically when it makes us prudent, that is, instructs the world how it can look after its advantage better than, or at least as well as, the world of earlier times” (*G* 4:417n).

suggest that all the sciences have a practical aspect. Is it the case that religion has a practical aspect?

Religion, Kant argues, grows out of morality. As shown in the next chapters, it also seems as though certain forms of historical religion are to be preferred over others. There are better and worse ways to promote the victory of the good principle over the evil principle, and better ways to establish an ethical community dedicated to that task. Is this a matter of prudence? Or is it a matter of necessity? Or perhaps it comes down to logic?

Kant claims that prudence itself has a public aspect and a private aspect.

\*The word ‘prudence’ is taken in two senses: in the one it may bear the name of ‘knowledge of the world’ [*Weltklugheit*] in the other that of ‘private prudence.’ The first is a human being’s skill [*die Geschicklichkeit eines Menschen*] in influencing others so as to use them for his own purposes. The second is the insight [*die Einsicht*] to unite all these purposes to his own enduring advantage. The latter is properly that to which the worth even of the former is reduced, and if someone is prudent in the first sense but not in the second, we might better say of him that he is clever and cunning but, on the whole, nevertheless imprudent. (G 4:416n)

In this passage we learn that public prudence is about “knowledge of the world” or “sophistication.” This knowledge can be used to influence others for the sake of one’s own purposes. Private prudence, however, is an “insight” [*Einsicht*] into how to properly unite all purposes to one’s own “enduring advantage.” *Einsicht*, which can also be translated as “discernment” is a word that Kant uses sparingly in the *Groundwork*.<sup>31</sup> However, there is at least one more notable occurrence of the term near the end of the text. It occurs in a passage where Kant is insisting that we cannot make “comprehensible” our interest in moral laws, though the human being “really does take an interest in them” (G 4:460). The foundation [*Grundlage*] of this interest, he proposes, is what we call “moral feeling.” Moral feeling however is only the “subjective effect” that the law exercise on the will. The objective grounds must be provided by reason alone.

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<sup>31</sup> Specifically, at G, 4:395; G, 409–410, and the passages discussed above G, 4:416n and G, 4:460n.

In *Religion*, Kant refers to the subjective effect of the law as a disposition [*Gesinnung*], a disposition, which is at once in conformity with the law.<sup>32</sup> But in the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that “an interest is that by which reason becomes practical, i.e., becomes a cause determining the will” (G 4:460).<sup>33</sup> In the following passage he further explains the relationship between reason and interest and references a “pure interests.”

Reason takes an immediate interest in an action only when the universal validity of the maxim of the action is a sufficient determining ground of the will. Only such an interest is pure. But if it can determine the will only by means of another object of desire or on the presupposition of a special feeling of the subject, then reason takes only a mediate interest in the action, and since reason all by itself, without experience, can discover neither objects of the will nor a special feeling lying at its basis, this latter interest would be only empirical and not a pure rational interest. The logical interest of reason (to further its insights [*Einsichten*]) is never immediate but presupposes purposes [*Absichten*] for its use. (G 4:460)

It is notable that Kant uses the term “*Einsichten*” in this context because it is also where we learn about what he deems to be the *logical interest of reason*. In the second *Critique* Kant will contrast the interests of practical reason with the interests of speculative reason. But in the *Groundwork*, we learn that the logical use of reason requires or presuppose purposes [*Absichten*].<sup>34</sup> The logical use of reason requires or presuppose purposes [*Absichten*], but an action has unconditional moral worth only if it depends on the “principle of volition in accordance with an action done without regard for any object of the faculty of desire” (G 4:399–4:400). So it would seem we have the principle of volition on the one side, and purposes, ends, and incentives on the other. “That the purposes [*Absichten*] we may have for our actions, and their effects as ends [*Zwecke*] and incentives [*Triebfedern*] of the will, can give actions no

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<sup>32</sup> The term *Gesinnung*, has been translated by Kant’s commentators in various ways. Some examples include: “mode of thinking”, “convictions”, “virtuousness”, “sentiments”, “inclinations”, “aspirations”, “disposition”, “attitude”, “compartment of mind.” For a comprehensive overview, see Stephen Palmquist and Immanuel Kant, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant’s Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016). See especially, pp. 54, 61, 519.

In the second *Critique*, the *Gesinnung* is linked to moral feeling. In *Religion*, Kant describes it in terms of a “subjective principle of maxims” (R 6:37). I will discuss Kant’s conception of the *Gesinnung* at length below.

<sup>33</sup> Recall that desire is also a form of causality, as explained above.

<sup>34</sup> *Absichten* can also be translated as “intentions” or “aims.”

unconditional and moral worth. ...(*G* 4:400). Kant also seems to suggest that practical reason, which here is equated with the will, administers interests (*G* 4:441). If the will, in going beyond itself, seeks a law in a “property” of an object, Kant says heteronomy always results. The law, therefore, cannot be given through the object. The only way out of this is to say that we will to act in such a way that we will nothing else. This is the only way to ensure that practical reason does not administer an interest not belonging to it (*G* 4:441).

Recall that Stiegler associates the originary de-fault with what Kant refers to as the “needs of reason.” Notably, in the second *Critique*, Kant insists that we attribute an interest to every faculty of mind. In this sense, interest is the principle that contains the “condition under which alone its exercise is promoted” (*CPrR* 5:120). He also attributes the “true origin” of reason’s needs to “prior necessary problems.” “Without such prior necessary problems there are no *needs*...the rest are needs of inclination” (*CPrR* 5:143n). The full passage reads:

But even here we could not allege a need *of reason* if we had not before our eyes a problematic but yet unavoidable concept of reason, namely that of an absolutely necessary being. This concept now wants to be determined, and this, when the drive toward extension is added, is the objective ground of a need of speculative reason, namely, to determine more closely the concept of a necessary being that is to serve as the original ground of others and so to make this recognizable by some means. Without such prior necessary problems there are no *needs*, at least *not of pure reason*; the rest are needs of inclination. (*CPrR* 5:143n)

Here is one place where Kant’s understanding of problematic practical principles might have helped us understand the needs of reason. But this is not where Kant leads us. Instead, it seems we have stumbled upon the *origin* of reason’s needs. We will return to this at the end of the chapter, but looking ahead, I think Kant is here already alluding to the figure of Christ as the means through which we make a necessary concept of a necessary being (God) recognizable in a human form. However, this part of my argument will have to wait.

**i. Practical and Technical Imperatives in the *Critique of Practical Reason***

Thus far we have reviewed Kant's account of the imperatives in the *Groundwork*. Next, we will see how Kant adjusts this typology in the second *Critique*. I argue that the main reason he needs to adjust the typology he first introduces in the *Groundwork* is that he wants to make it very clear that the practical postulates do not function in the same way as theoretical postulates. Since Kant's objectives in the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* are not identical, it will be useful to start by recounting some of the key differences between these two texts.

In the *Groundwork*, Kant begins with the presupposition that human beings all experience duty, and from this we postulate the condition of the possibility of duty. In the second *Critique* his main goal is to demonstrate how pure reason can be practical. He offers an account of practical reason, but now with a particular emphasis on the subjective determination of the will and the subjective necessity this determination implies. Additionally, he emphasizes the need to distinguish subjective maxims from imperatives.<sup>35</sup> As he explains: "*Practical principles* are propositions that contain a general determination of the will, having under it several practical rules. They are subjective when the condition is regarded by the subject as holding only for his will; but they are objective, or practical *laws*, when the condition is cognized as objective, that is, as holding for the will of every rational being" (*CPrR* 5:19). For "a rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without the contingent, subjective conditions that distinguish one rational being from another" (5:21).<sup>36</sup> He also adds that moral interest is a "pure sense-free interest of practical reason alone" (5:79). This allows him to make a further claim about a morally "genuine" maxim: Since in a morally good will the law itself must be the incentive, the *moral interest* is a pure sense-free interest of practical reason alone. On the concept of an interest

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<sup>35</sup> Maxims are subjective principles, rather than *imperatives* (*CPrR* 5:20); cf. *G* 4:449.

<sup>36</sup> As noted above, in the *Groundwork*, a "contingently determinable will" relies on the principles of reason.

is based that of a *maxim*. A maxim is therefore morally genuine only if it rests solely on the interest one takes in compliance with the law (*CPrR* 5:78).

Another point of difference between the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* is the emphasis on the relationship between the faculty of desire and that of self-love. In the latter text, Kant associates the principles of self-love with the faculty of desire and contrasts them with moral principles. The “determining ground of the faculty of desire” he explains, “is based on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which can never be assumed to be universally directed to the same objects” (*CPrR* 5:26). An action performed out of self-love is contingent, not only because we have different desires and interests, but because the *feelings* we have toward particular objects are always conditional.

Though feelings of pleasure and displeasure are not always directed at the same objects, Kant admits that the principles of self-love can contain universal rules of skill.<sup>37</sup> However Kant now associates these rules of skill with “theoretical principles.” Skill, in this context, means “finding means to one’s purposes [*Absichten*]” (*CPrR* 5:26). He provides an example. If someone is inclined to eat bread they should construct a mill. The rules for constructing a mill are derived from empirical knowledge, and hence requires theoretical reasoning. And yet a practical element remains. The principles that are derived from universal rules of skill can, Kant explains, never be *morally* universal. Instead they are “technical practical principles.” In a note, which anticipates something he will clarify in the third *Critique*, he explains that:

Propositions that in mathematics or physics are called *practical* should properly be called *technical*. For in these teachings it is not at all a question of the determination of the will; they only point out the manifold of the possible action that is sufficient to produce a certain effect, and are thus as theoretical as any proposition that asserts the connection of a cause with an effect. Whoever approves the effect must also be willing to approve the cause. (*CPrR* 5:26n)

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<sup>37</sup> On this topic, see, James DiCenso, *Kant, Religion, and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 166f.

The above passage is particularly illuminating since Kant seems to be adding something new here, at least when read against the *Groundwork*. Technical propositions do not concern the determination of the will. Instead, they point only to “the manifold of possible action” sufficient to produce certain effects. This is a logical connection: if one wills the effect, one wills the cause. This sounds very similar to his definition of hypothetical imperatives noted above. But rather than parse out the differences between assertoric, apodictic, and problematic principles, Kant draws a distinction between those that are technical and those that are not. Those that are technical rely on theoretical reason.

Kant’s objective in the second *Critique*, of course, is to make a case for pure *practical* reason. Technical practical imperatives do not have a place in Kant’s pure practical philosophy. Incidentally, neither does religion—at least not religion applied to a history that has been handed down to us.<sup>38</sup> We are now in a position to review the distinction Kant makes between theoretical and practical postulates.

The distinction between technical practical imperatives and moral principles, I would like to suggest, should be read alongside Kant’s discussion of practical and theoretical postulates. In the second *Critique*, Kant makes it clear that the practical postulates do not function in the same way as theoretical postulates. Once again, at the heart of the matter is how to account for different types of necessity. Indeed, one of the things that all the practical principles have in common, whether they are connected with matters of skill, prudence, or the moral law, is that the relationship between the action and the principle described as a form of necessitation.

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<sup>38</sup> As he later explains in the *MS*: “We can speak of a ‘Religion *with the Boundaries* of Mere Reason’ which is not...derived *from* reason alone but is also based on the teachings of history and revelation, and considers only the *harmony* of pure practical reason with these (shows that there is no conflict between them). But in that case as well religion is not *pure*; it is rather *religion applied* to a history handed down to us, and there is no place for it in an ethics that is pure practical philosophy” (*MS*, 6:488).

As we saw above, in the *Groundwork*, Kant related the three types of practice principles to the modes of judgment in the first *Critique*. But in the context of the second *Critique*, he introduces the postulates of God and immortality as *possibilities* that are not based on theoretical reason. These postulates relate to a different domain of necessity—namely, the realm of subjective necessity, and they are grounded not by theoretical judgment but rather on an actual idea, namely, freedom. This is an important claim that we will consider more closely in the next two sections where I also further unpack the difference between theoretical and practical postulates. But let's first look ahead at what eventually becomes of these so-called technical practical *principles*.

In his first introduction to the third *Critique*, Kant admits he made a mistake when he described matters of skill and prudence as problematic imperatives. He states that he should have called matters of skill *and* prudence “*technical imperatives*,” (so at this point we have technical propositions, technical principles, and now technical imperatives) noting that the notion of “problematic principles” “harbors a contradiction” (*CJ* 20:201n). He further explains, that pragmatic imperatives and imperatives of prudence “command under a condition of what is actual,” and he adds: “For what is prudence other than the skill of being able to use for one’s intentions free human beings and among these even the *natural dispositions and inclinations in oneself*”? (*CJ* 20:201n.)

Though we cannot discuss the argument of the third *Critique* with any real depth, we should emphasize the fact that it is only when Kant introduces the “*technic of nature*,” and the kind of judgment associated with it, that he admits that he made a mistake when describing problematic practical imperatives in the *Groundwork*. The full passage reads as follows:

But in what follows we shall also employ the term ‘technic’\* where the objects of nature are merely *judged as if* their possibility depended upon art. In such cases the judgements are neither theoretical nor practical (in the sense just described) since they determine nothing with regard to the character of the object or to the way in which we produce the latter; rather nature itself is thereby judged, though merely in analogy with art, and indeed in a subjective relation to our faculty of cognition rather than in an objective relation to the objects. Here we shall not indeed describe the judgements themselves as technical, but rather the power of judgement upon whose laws these judgements are grounded, and in conformity with this nature itself will also be called ‘technical’. Since this technic includes no propositions of an objectively determining character, it does not constitute a part of doctrinal philosophy, but only part of the critique of our cognitive faculties.<sup>39</sup>

Previously we saw that for Kant matters of skill, skills of art, are oriented toward ends, ends that only need to be possible. But now what is possible (through action) in the technical realm is really a matter for the theoretical reason. Nonetheless, clearly Kant was uncertain about where to situate the “technical” within his philosophical system. It is no wonder then why some commentators have suggested that the third *Critique*, a critique of the *power of judgment*, should actually be understood as a critique of technics.<sup>40</sup> The principles of judgment, Kant explains, “cannot, in a system of pure philosophy, form a separate constituent part intermediate between the theoretical and practical divisions, but may when needful be annexed to one or other as occasion requires” (*CJ* 20:169).

#### **IV. Postulates and Possibilities**

Above I suggested that the reason Kant needs to revise the typology he introduces in the *Groundwork* has to do with his need to differentiate between practical postulates and theoretical postulates. More specifically, he needed to be able to distinguish the postulates of practical reason, God, freedom, and immortality from the postulates he identifies in mathematics and geometry. In this section I will demonstrate how this argument requires Kant to renegotiate the

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<sup>39</sup> Kant, *CJ*, 20:200.

<sup>40</sup> See Peter Fenves, “*Technica Speciosa*: Some Notes on the Ambivalence of Technics in Kant and Weber,” in *Experimenting: Essays with Samuel Weber*, eds. Simon Morgan Wortham and Gary Hall, (Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 85. Also Samuel Weber, “Ambivalence, the Humanities and the Study of Literature Author(s),” in *Diacritics*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Summer, 1985), p. 18.

boundary between theoretical and practical reason. The stakes here concern matters of necessity as well as the ground of possibility.<sup>41</sup>

Recall that Stiegler criticizes Kant for suggesting that the domain of the practical is really about the application of theoretical propositions to the external world. In its theoretical domain, reason has the need to postulate the ground of all possibilities. Stiegler's worry is that in the time of technoscience all possibilities are explored in the sciences. Whatever is driving this exploration appears to have very little to do with human desire or the pursuit of knowledge.

Stiegler's emphasizes the distinction Kant makes between theoretical and practical reason, even while he sidesteps a direct engagement with Kant's practical philosophy. As a result, Stiegler overlooks the ways in which Kant's notion of the highest good expands the realm of the "possible" (the possibilities of *Dasein*). To further explain what this entails, we need review Kant's discussion on postulates in the second *Critique*. It begins with an important statement on freedom.

In the preface to the second *Critique* Kant declares that freedom is a "real" [*wirklich*] idea. It is a "real" or "actual" idea because it is an idea that "reveals itself through the moral law" (*CPrR* 5:3–5:4). The key passage is provided below:

Now, the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality [*Realität*] is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason; and all other concepts (those of God and immortality), which as mere ideas remain without support in the latter, now attach themselves to this concept and with it and by means of it get stability and objective reality, that is, their *possibility* is *proved* by this: that freedom is real [*daß Freiheit wirklich ist*], for this idea reveals itself through the moral law. (*CPrR* 5:3–5:4)<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> However, this can all be easily overlooked if one does not also attend to the role of the highest good play in Kant's philosophy. This is why the sections in the Analytic section of the second *Critique* that deal with the object of pure practical reason and incentives of pure practical reason are both crucial for understanding Kant's argument in the second *Critique*.

<sup>42</sup> [*Der Begriff der Freiheit, so fern dessen Realität durch ein apodiktisches Gesetz der praktischen Vernunft bewiesen ist, macht nun den Schlußstein von dem ganzen Gebäude eines Systems der reinen, selbst der spekulativen, Vernunft aus, und alle andere Begriffe (die von Gott und Unsterblichkeit), welche, als bloße Ideen, in dieser ohne Haltung bleiben, schließen sich nun an ihn an, und bekommen mit ihm und durch ihn Bestand und objektive Realität, d.i. die Möglichkeit derselben wird dadurch bewiesen, daß Freiheit wirklich ist; denn diese Idee offenbaret sich durchs moralische Gesetz.*]

As an actual or real idea, freedom make the postulates of God and immortality not only possible but necessary.<sup>43</sup> In a moment I will explain how this links up to Kant's conception of the highest good. But first, let me clarify why I am suggesting that Kant's account of the postulates of practical reason requires him to reassess the typology of imperatives in the *Groundwork*.

In short, Kant needs to explain a mode of judgment that is not based on the kind of propositions he first defined in the first *Critique*. Instead, he must deal with a mode of judgment proper to subjective necessity as it concerns morality. In the first *Critique*, Kant suggests that God, as the ground of all possibilities is a "subjectively necessary hypothesis" for theoretical reason.<sup>44</sup> In the second *Critique*, God is a postulate of practical reason. A practical postulate in the context of practical reason, Kant is careful to point out, should not be confused with theoretical postulates, such as those in mathematics and geometry. Theoretical postulates postulate a *possibility* of an action "the object of which has been previously theoretically cognized a priori with complete certitude as possible" (*CPrR* 5:12n). Practical postulates postulate "a possibility of an *object* itself," namely, God and the immortality of the soul. These objects have not been "previously theoretically cognized a priori" (*CPrR* 5:12n). Practical postulates are necessary assumptions. They are necessary for the subject's "observance of its objective but practical laws, hence merely a necessary hypothesis" (*CPrR* 5:12n).

The argument, as I understand it runs as follows. The ideas of God and immortality are not conditions of the moral law, they are only "conditions of applying the morally determined will to its object given to it a priori (the highest good)" (*CPrR* 5:4). These postulates are

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<sup>43</sup> These gain a certain kind of practical objectivity through the concept of freedom and the "subjective effect" of the moral law. See Stephan Zimmermann, in *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A581–2/B609–10.

described as “needs of pure reason,” which are derived from “subjective necessity.”<sup>45</sup> When we consider the postulates in their practical relation to the highest good, their possibility must be assumed. But Kant insists that the “ground of assent” is different from speculative reason, where reason searches for *completion*. The ground of assent in the domain of practical reason is subjective but also “*objectively* valid for a reason equally pure but practical” (*CPrR* 5:4–5:5). Thusly, the possibility of the postulates, which in speculative reason is a problem, becomes an assertion. This is how the practical use of reason is connected with “elements of the theoretical.” In the practical domain, a *need* takes on the force of law (*CPrR* 5:5).<sup>46</sup> It is a rational necessity grounded in the “*subject’s observance of its objective but practical laws*” (*CPrR* 5:12n).

The certainty that comes with practical postulates is not about a “previously cognized object” but rather the certainty of a *disposition* [*Gesinnung*]*—*a disposition which is in accord with moral law. This is absolutely crucial. Kant further suggest that this certainty of a disposition is the “first condition of any worth of a person” (*CPrR* 5:73). This is the one place where *interest* (recall the discussion above about interest, inclinations, and incentives) is allowed to determine judgment. It is also one place where the question of technics should have been raised but was not—at least not directly.

When Kant declares that freedom has been revealed [*offenbaret*] by the moral law, and the moral law is “encountered in ourselves,” it raises questions about the faculty that makes such

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<sup>45</sup> It would seem that *subjective necessity* requires something quite similar to a judgment of taste in the sense that it is something we can presuppose everyone to have but it cannot be proven through rational argument (*CJ* 20:200). A key passage in *Metaphysics of Morals* explains: “In all lawgiving (whether it prescribes internal or external actions, and whether it prescribes them a priori by reason alone or by the choice of another) there are two elements: first, a law, which represents an action that is to be done as objectively necessary, that is, which makes the action a duty; and second, an incentive, which connects a ground for determining choice to this action subjectively with the representation of the law. Hence the second element is this: that the law makes duty the incentive” (*MS* 6:218).

<sup>46</sup> My emphasis.

a “revelation” [*offenbarung*] possible.<sup>47</sup> Recall what was said about happiness above. Happiness, as Kant explains in the *Groundwork*, is an end that all human beings have by natural necessity. It is not something we possess in the here and now. It is rather something we strive for. It is an “ideal of the imagination” (*G* 4:418).

In the second *Critique* Kant distinguishes between the intelligible world and the sensible world. The sensible world operates through natural necessity, but freedom itself is its own causality. To claim that practical reason is possible is to make the further claim that we are conscious of ourselves as free beings belonging to a sensible world and therefore subject to the laws of natural necessity and, at the same time, conscious of our “existence [*Daseins*].”<sup>48</sup> Kant insists that we do not become conscious of our existence as a determinable being in an intelligible order of things through some special intuition; but rather “according to certain dynamic laws that can determine its causality in the sensible world” (*CPrR* 5:42). What are these dynamic laws exactly?

Kant is not particularly clear on this point and so various interpretive possibilities present themselves. Perhaps, for instance, these laws are to be understood alongside technic of nature. Or perhaps they correspond to the laws of virtue that he mentions in *Religion* (*R* 6:94). Or perhaps they are determined by a set of ontological relations that constitute the ontological structure of *Dasein*. Whatever the case, when Kant makes this crucial claim about freedom at the beginning of the second *Critique*—that freedom is a real [*daß Freiheit wirklich ist*] (*CPrR* 5:3–5:4)—he makes it all too easy to overlook the importance of his additional claim that human persons are

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<sup>47</sup> Kant’s claim is that freedom, as an idea, reveals itself through the moral law. But he also seems to suggest that the moral law and freedom arise together. “For, had not the moral law *already* been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves justified in *assuming* such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves” (*CPrR* 5:4n).

<sup>48</sup> [...*ämlich als Wesen an sich selbst, seines in einer intelligibelen Ordnung der Dinge bestimmbaren Daseins bewußt ist, zwar nicht einer besondern Anschauung seiner selbst, sondern gewissen dynamischen Gesetzen gemäß...*]

examples of the moral law and we encounter persons in experience.<sup>49</sup> To be more concrete, one of the implications of Kant's argument is that if freedom is attributed to us (human beings) we are "transferred into an intelligible order of things." Hence existence [*Dasein*] becomes the ground of possibility for moral action. Despite the fact that Kant continues to insist upon the freedom of the individual moral agent, he nonetheless provides a window of opportunity for other thinkers who de-subjectivize freedom and render it as the result or product of a larger process or system.

But recall that the argument in the *Groundwork* is different. In that context, Kant suggests that it is the good will that is encountered when we are transferred into the intelligible world, and it is the "moral ought" that becomes necessary for the being who is member of *both* a sensible world and intelligible world (*G* 4:55). We will return to my concerns here again in the next chapter when we look more directly at what Heidegger makes of Kant's explanation of the feeling of respect. In the next section I will explain how Kant's account of freedom in the early passages of the second *Critique* supports his claims regarding the "presentation [*Darstellung*] of an object as an effect possible through freedom" (*CPPrR* 5:58).<sup>50</sup>

#### **i. An Object of Pure Practical Reason**

Chapters 1–3 of the *Analytic of Pure Practical Reason* in the second *Critique* deal with two important problems. The first concerns how our awareness of the moral law brings forth feeling based on a mere thought. The second problem concerns how it is that the moral law can function as an incentive (not interest, not inclination, but *Triebfeder*, a spring of the soul).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *G*, 4:455.

<sup>50</sup> This argument comes right before the chapter on "Incentive of Practical Reason," as well as the section that outline the Categories of Freedom.

<sup>51</sup> *Triebfeder* can also be translated as motive. In the *Groundwork*, Kant contrasts *Triebfeder* (incentive) with *Bemegungsgriinde* (motive). However, as Pluhar and Gregor point out, Kant does not maintain this distinction in the second *Critique*. Derrida draws attention to this section of Kant's second *Critique* in his *On The Name*, p. 23, n. 10. I

Chapters 2, “On the Concept of an Object of Pure Practical Reason” (*CPrR* 5:57–5:67), and Chapter 3 “On the Incentives of Pure Practical reason” are especially important for our purposes. I will deal with them each in turn.

The main purpose of the chapter on the Object of Pure Practical Reason is to determine how we are to apply the concepts “good” and “evil” (practical concepts) to human actions, which are perceived and observed empirically. Given the epistemology that is laid out in the first *Critique*, this becomes a hurdle that Kant has to overcome before he can convincingly argue that reason can be practical. Practical reason requires us to comprehend actions in experience and make determinations about whether those actions are good or evil. The concept “good” or “evil” must be universally applicable, and yet it is not clear how we can apply these concepts to an object—or in this case an action—in experience.

In the first *Critique*, Kant argues that the two forms of sensibility with respect to theoretical reason are space and time. In the second *Critique* he further explains that the practical elementary concepts, by contrast, are based on a pure will as given in reason and thus in the power of thought itself. The a priori concepts do not wait for “intuitions in order to acquire signification,” instead they “give rise to the actuality of that to which they refer,” which is to say,

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mention it here because it provoked me to explore this matter further. “It remains that the discourse and the action (the passion) of Christ demonstrates in an exemplary way, singularly, par excellence, the inadequacy of the example, the secrete of divine invisibility and the sovereignty of reason; and the encouragement, the stimulation, the exhortation, the instruction [*Aufmunterung*] is indispensable for all finite, that is to say, sensory beings, and for all intuitive singularity. The example is the only visibility of the invisible. There is no legislator that can be figured [*figurable*] outside reason. Put another way, there are only ‘figures’ of the legislator, never any legislator *prioprio sensu*, in particular any legislator to sacrifice (Moses, Christ, etc.). But no finite being will every provide an economy of these figures, nor of mimesis in general nor of anything that iterability contaminates. And passion is always a matter of example.” “On the motives which act in secret [*insgeheim*], duty, sacrifice, example, and respect, it is necessary above all to return, of course, to the third chapter of Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason* (‘The Motives of Pure Practical Reason’).”

the “attitude of the will” (*CPrR* 5:66). Since these passages are important for my argument, I will quote Kant at length:

Now, since the concepts of good and evil, as consequences of the a priori determination of the will, presuppose also a pure practical principle and hence a causality of pure reason, they do not refer originally to objects (as, say, determinations of the synthetic unity of the manifold of given intuitions in one consciousness), as do the pure concepts of the understanding or categories of reason used theoretically; instead, they presuppose these objects as given; they are rather, without exception, *modi* of a single category, namely that of causality, insofar as the determining ground of causality consists in reason's representation of a law of causality which, as the law of freedom, reason gives to itself and thereby proves itself a priori to be practical.

However, since actions on the one side indeed belong under a law which is no law of nature but a law of freedom, and consequently belong to the conduct of intelligible beings, but on the other side as also events in the sensible world yet belong to appearances, the determinations of a practical reason can take place only with reference to the latter [events in the sensible world that belong to appearances] and therefore, indeed, *conformably with the categories of the understanding*, but not with a view to a theoretical use of the understanding, in order to bring a priori the manifold of (sensible) intuition under one consciousness, but only in order to subject a priori the manifold of desires to the unity of consciousness of a practical reason commanding in the moral law, or of a pure will. (*CPrR* 5:65)

The problem that Kant is dealing with, as indicated in the passages above, mirrors a problem in the first *Critique* regarding how we unify representations under one consciousness. But here, in the second *Critique*, Kant is describing a procedure, rule, or act—a schema that is not quite a schema—that subjects the manifold of *desires* to the unity of consciousness. And instead of working with the categories of the understanding, which are concerned with object determination, Kant provides four categories of freedom.

These categories of freedom—for this is what we are going to call them contrast to those theoretical concepts which are categories of nature—have an obvious advantage over the latter inasmuch as the latter are only forms of thought which, by means of universal concepts, designate only indeterminately objects in general for every intuition possible for us; the former, on the contrary, are directed to the determination of a free choice\* (to which indeed no fully corresponding intuition can be given but which - as does not happen in the case of any concepts of the theoretical use of our cognitive faculty - has as its basis a pure practical law a priori); hence, instead of the form of intuition (space and time), which does not lie in reason itself but must be drawn from elsewhere, namely from sensibility, these, as practical elementary concepts, have as their basis the *form of a pure will* as given within reason and therefore within the thinking faculty itself; by this it happens that, since all precepts of pure practical reason have to do only with the *determination of the will*, not with the natural conditions (of practical ability) for *carrying out its purpose*, the practical a priori concepts in relation to the supreme principle of freedom at once become cognitions and do not have to wait for intuitions in order to receive meaning; and this happens for the noteworthy reason that they themselves produce the reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will), which is not the business of theoretical concepts. [...das oberste Prinzip der Freiheit sogleich Erkenntnisse werden und nicht auf Anschauungen warten dürfen, um Bedeutung zu bekommen, und zwar aus diesem merkwürdigen Grunde, weil sie die Wirklichkeit dessen, worauf sie sich beziehen (die Willensgesinnung) selbst hervorbringen, welches gar nicht die Sache theoretischer Begriffe ist.] (*CPrR* 5:66)

What should be emphasized in this passage is Kant's claim that the practical a priori concepts are cognitions that do not need intuitions in order to receive meaning. Instead, they "produce the reality [*Wirklichkeit*] of that to which they refer" (the disposition of the will).<sup>52</sup> Put differently, the practical a priori concepts generate or produces a "reality." And, notably, what is produced is neither a feeling nor an action, but an "attitude" or "disposition" of the will [*die Willensgesinnung*]. Is this production an act of spontaneity? I think not. Kant insists that the practical a priori concepts have as their basis the "form of a pure will." And he further states that this form is given in reason, within the *thinking* faculty itself.

What exactly is the *Gesinnung*?<sup>53</sup> Or, in this case, the *die Willensgesinnung*? Since this is a concept that is important for my argument in this chapter and the chapters that remain, it will be useful to define it here and provide my interpretation of how the concept functions in Kant's arguments in the second *Critique* and others texts. The *Gesinnung*, I argue, is a concept that is important for unifying efforts to work toward bringing about the "highest good in the world [*unterworfen*]" (*G* 4:412; *CPrR* 5:122, 5:125).

In the *Groundwork* Kant refers to the *Gesinnung* in order to explain the moral worth of actions. What is "Skill and diligence in work have market price; wit, lively imagination, and humor have a fancy price; but fidelity to promises and kindness based on principles (not on instinct) have an intrinsic worth" (*G* 4:435). It is not the *effects* that result from moral principles nor on what is gained by them that has moral worth. Instead the "attitude of mind" has intrinsic

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<sup>52</sup> Alternatively, we can translate as: "they themselves give rise to the actuality of that to which they refer (the attitude of the will)" (*CPrR* 5:66).

<sup>53</sup> The *Gesinnung* is described as the "subjective principle of maxims" in *Religion* (*R* 6:37). The term has been translated in various ways. Some other examples include: "mode of thinking", "convictions", "virtuousness," "sentiments," "inclinations," "aspirations," "disposition," "attitude," "comportment of mind." On this topic, see Palmquist's commentary. Stephen Palmquist and Immanuel Kant, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), see especially, pp. 54, 61, 519.

worth. He further claims that this attitude [*Gesinnungen*] of the mind is constituted by *maxims of the will*, which are immediately manifested, revealed, exhibited [*zu offenbaren*] in action.<sup>54</sup>

Kant uses the term in the first *Critique* as well. As James DiCenso explains:

In the first *Critique*, *Gesinnung* is used to express the disposition, cast of mind, or fundamental attitude specific to every person. The rich valences of *Gesinnung*, only partially captured by the term “disposition,” indicate inner ethical states actively cultivated through choices made over a lifespan. This is a crucial concept, because it makes the locus of ethical endeavor synonymous with the entirety of one’s life path, rather than reducing ethics to discrete dilemmas faced only occasionally.<sup>55</sup>

If we step back from Kant’s technical use of the term and consider how the term is used throughout his many writings, the *Gesinnung* refers to an underlying set of tendencies or intentions, beliefs and interests that collectively constitute that agent’s disposition or character.<sup>56</sup> Scholars such as DiCenso, for instance, explain the *Gesinnung* as Kant’s way of referring to a person’s moral character or to a set of goals that govern or guide a person’s life.

If it is the case that the *Gesinnung* is another way of referring to something like the moral character or moral self, we should note that Kant is not unique in calling attention to it. However, what is unique about Kant’s position is that he insists that it is at once “innate” and yet freely chosen. I will have more to say about the freely chosen aspect of this when we turn to Kant’s *Religion*. In that context, Kant defines the *Gesinnung* as the first subjective basis for the adoption of maxims.

According to the Kantian scholar Steven Palmquist, the term *Gesinnung* is used not only to indicate a “noumenal component of human nature,” but rather “a form of human volition with a phenomenal grounding.”<sup>57</sup> Palmquist has written extensively on this subject and I will return to

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<sup>54</sup> “What is it then that entitles a morally good attitude of mind—or virtue—to make claims so high? It is nothing less than the share which it affords to a rational being in the making of universal law, and which therefore fits him to be a member in a possible kingdom of ends” (*G* 4:435).

<sup>55</sup> James DiCenso, *Kant, Religion, and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 177.

<sup>56</sup> See Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p. 136.

<sup>57</sup> Palmquist, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion*, p. 54 n. 70

his insights on Kant's theory of religion in the proceeding chapters. However, Palmquist understands the *Gesinnung* to be primarily about conviction, where as I agree with other commentators who argue that it has an ontological basis.<sup>58</sup> On my reading, it is a term that points to a set of ontological coordinates that orient us in the world. If such a reading is convincing, then I further suggest that we use Stiegler's notion of tertiary retention to further develop this concept beyond Kant's own formulation.

We will return to *Gesinnung* in Chapter 6, where I explain the role of moral feeling in the second *Critique* and again in Chapter 7, when I explain the significance of the religious disposition. Having introduced the concept, we can next consider how it functions in relation to Kant's notion of the highest good. As a product of the subjective effect of the law, the *Gesinnung*, is what allows us to ground the claim that the highest good is possible (*G* 4:460).<sup>59</sup>

## V. Highest Good, a Practical Idea with Consequences

Near the end of the Analytic portion of the second *Critique* Kant describes the antinomy between virtue and happiness. Virtue, he explains, is related to our moral nature and our commitment to becoming worthy of happiness; happiness is related to the faculty of desire. "Virtue and happiness together constitute possession of the highest good in a *person* (*CPrR* 5:111), and "happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality constitutes the *highest good* of a possible *world*." The latter means the "whole, complete good" (*CPrR* 5:111). It seems to me

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<sup>58</sup> Alison argues that it is more like a regulative ideal that provides orientation for the moral life viewed as a whole. See Alison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p. 140–141. Richard Bernstein makes a similar point in *Radical Evil*, p. 24–25. Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*. (United Kingdom, Wiley, 2002); see also, Joel Madore, *Difficult Freedom and Radical Evil in Kant: Deceiving Reason* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), p. 74.

<sup>59</sup> In the *Groundwork*, Kant also seems to claim that moral feeling is the "subjective effect that the law exercises on the will, for which reason alone supplies the objective ground" (*G* 4:460). This corresponds well to what he says in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where he defines feeling as the "capacity for having pleasure or pain in a representation." The representations that relate to the subject in such a way that they bring feelings of pleasure and pain are labeled "aesthetic" (*MS* 6:373). Only the feeling of respect is cognized a priori.

that if we want to understand the relationship between the unity of virtue and happiness in the person we need to look at the *Gesinnung*; to understand the unity of virtue and happiness in the world we need to consider the link between theoretical and practical reason. If we want to consider how to unify them both we need to look at Kant's theory of *Religion*.

In the Dialectic portion of the second *Critique*, Kant defines the highest good as the “unconditioned totality of the object of pure practical reason” (*CPrR* 5:108). Kant explains how the concept of the highest good holds both happiness and virtue together. It is not as though the two are brought together in such a way that one is prioritized over the other. Instead the two must be brought together through a synthesis. As he explains near the beginning of the Dialectic:

The Analytic has...shown what it is that makes the problem difficult to solve, namely that happiness and morality are two specifically quite *different elements* of the highest good and that, accordingly, their combination cannot be cognized *analytically*....<sup>60</sup> it must instead be a *synthesis* of concepts. But because this combination is cognized as a priori - thus as practically necessary and not as derived from experience - and because the possibility of the highest good therefore does not rest on any empirical principles, it follows that the *deduction* of this concept must be *transcendental*. It is a priori (morally) necessary *to produce the highest good through the freedom of the will*: the condition of its possibility must therefore rest solely on a priori grounds of cognition. (*CPrR* 5:113)

What does Kant mean when he says that it is “a priori morally necessary to produce the highest good through the freedom of the will?”<sup>61</sup>

The highest good is an idea that, though it does not rest on empirical principles, nonetheless can and should have an effect on the sensible world. However, Kantian scholars debate the extent to which Kant thinks that we can actually work towards the highest good.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Kant further explains: “Now, it is clear from the Analytic that the maxims of virtue and those of one's own happiness are quite heterogeneous with respect to their supreme practical principle; and, even though they belong to one highest good, so as to make it possible, yet they are so far from coinciding that they greatly restrict and infringe upon each other in the same subject. Thus the question, *how is the highest good practically possible?* still remains an unsolved problem despite all the *attempts at coalition* that have hitherto been made” (*CPrR* 5:113).

<sup>61</sup> Here perhaps the productive imagination is at work, not in the syntheses that allow us to unify *experience* but those that allow us to synthesize human interests.

<sup>62</sup> For a fairly recent set of essays on the topic, see *The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy*. Edited by Thomas Höwing. (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016). For an account of the highest good as playing a constitutive role rather than a regulative role see Frederick C. Beiser, “Moral faith and the Highest Good,” pp. 588–629 in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Whatever the case, Kant firmly states that we have a duty to work toward the highest good. As I understand him, in claiming that the highest good is a duty, Kant means to work *with* rather than *against* human interest. In other words, the highest good is not an image or a blueprint for what we are to bring about, but rather a concept that holds together various ends, ends that are only ends in themselves insofar as they are they can be promoted as ends of humanity.<sup>63</sup>

### **i. Theory, Practice, and the Universal Concept of Duty**

Throughout this chapter I have been working through basic concepts in Kant's practical philosophy. In the first major section of this chapter, I discussed Kant's conception of the will. We found that there are two main ways that the will is determined: either through inclination or through the moral law. In one of his lesser known essays, "On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But it is of No Use in Practice" (also known as "Theory and Practice")<sup>64</sup> Kant identifies a third way in which the will can be determined.

In this essay Kant once again refers to technical and moral practical principles and describes them as he had previously explained them in the third *Critique*. But what is particularly interesting about this text is how he accounts for a specific "determination of the will." Its principles are not derived from self-love nor are they unconditional. Instead, its principles are

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<sup>63</sup> In the first *Critique*, Kant says that the concept of duty involves the overcoming of obstacles, subjective incentives, and a priori principles (CPR A15/B29).

<sup>64</sup> "On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But it is of No Use in Practice," *Practical Philosophy*, translated by Mary Gregor (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Henceforth "Theory and Practice." This essay is particularly notable for at least a couple of reasons. First, Stiegler points to this essay at a few key moments in the third volume of *Technics and Time*, though he finds it only supports his claim that Kant sees technics only in terms of applied science. A second reason this essay is notable is that it was offered in place of the first of four essays that were to make up Kant's *Religion with the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. After the second essay was not accepted by the publisher, the publisher suggested that the first essay (which deals primarily with radical evil and the principle of the good), be published on its own. Kant, however, stated that he did not want this essay to stand on its own and instead offered the essay on theory and practice as an alternative. Kant eventually found a way to publish all the essays of *Religion* together and the essay on theory and practice was published in a different collection, but this contextual point helps to establish somewhat of a connection between the two texts.

derived from a particular *representation* of duty. In this context, a *concept* is represented in a certain way and it has an effect on the will.

One of Kant's main concern in this essay is to defend himself against the claim that his moral theory promotes the view that human beings are to renounce their natural end, that is to say, that they are to renounce happiness. Kant denies this accusation. He has no problem with happiness as long as it does not interfere with the command of duty. Happiness, as our natural end, is not the condition of our compliance with the moral law. And he adds:

Indeed he must, as far as it is possible for him, strive to become aware that no incentive derived from that get mixed, unnoticed, into the determination of duty, and this is effected by his representing duty as connected with the sacrifices its observance (virtue) costs us rather than with the advantages it yields us, so as to represent the command of duty in all its authority, as requiring unconditional obedience, sufficient in itself and in need of no other influences. (8:279)

On the surface, Kant appears to be repeating a point he makes elsewhere, namely, that the moral law is the only acceptable incentive for the power of choice. And yet Kant also appears to be introducing a new duty. This duty is the duty to strive to *become aware* that no incentives get mixed up with the command of duty. It is "effected by his representing duty as connected to sacrifices...." (8:279). When duty is represented in this way, the command of duty is rendered sufficient in itself and in no need of any other outside influence.<sup>65</sup>

Curiously, the duty that Kant refers to in the above passage is not a duty associated with some given end; it rather *introduces* a new end for the human being's will.

I remarked further that this concept of duty does not have to be grounded on any particular end but rather *introduces* another end for the human being's will, namely to work to the best of one's ability toward the *highest good possible* in the world (universal happiness combined with and in conformity with the purest morality throughout the world), which, since it is within our control from one quarter but not from both taken together, exacts from reason belief, *for practical purposes*, in a moral ruler of the world and in a future life. (8:279)

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<sup>65</sup> In *Religion* Kant describes the predisposition to personality as "the susceptibility to respect for the moral law *as of itself a sufficient incentive for the power of choice*" (R, 6:27, original emphasis).

Recall that in the *Groundwork*, Kant described the will's determination with respect to possible and actual purposes, and he contrasts them with the categorical imperative. Here Kant is referring to what it means to work toward bringing the highest amount of good in the *world*. He clarifies that the universal concept of duty does not provide "support and stability" from the strength of an incentive. Instead, it is through the ideal of pure reason that the universal concept of duty gets "an object."

For, in itself duty is nothing other than the *limitations* of the will to the condition of a giving of universal law possible through a maxim adopted, whatever the object of the will or the end may be (thus happiness as well), from which, as well as from every end one may have, we here abstract altogether. In the question of the *principle* of morals the doctrine of the *highest good*, as the final end of a will determined by this doctrine and conformed with its laws, can be completely passed over and set aside (as episodic); and it will also become apparent in what follows, when it comes to the real point of controversy, that this is not taken into consideration at all but only morals in general.

What he says in the note marked by an \* is equally important:

\*The *need* [my emphasis] to assume, as the final end of all things, a good that is the *highest good in the world* and also possible through our cooperation is a need [arising] not from a deficiency in moral incentives but from a deficiency in the external relations within which alone an object as end in itself (as *moral final end*) can be produced in conformity with these incentives. For without some end there can be no *will*, although, if it is a question only of lawful necessitation of actions, one must abstract from any end and the law alone constitutes its determining ground.

The first thing to notice about the passage stated above is Kant's reference to external relations.

This is a clue that we are not dealing with the determination of the will that comes with the moral law, nor are we talking about happiness. Typically, when Kant writes about external relations he is referring to the sphere of rights, which though rooted in respect for persons, requires a civil society in which freedom is restricted in some way. Here however external relations are connected directly to what it means to bring about the highest possible good in the world. The determination of the will, in this case, is conditioned by how we stand in relation to others, *as we stand in relation to things*. In fact, we might even think of this as a sort of "being-together-with" others. After all, Kant is *not* referring to one's individual will nor to what an individual can bring about through his or her actions (an individual's practical reason). Instead he is considering what

can be brought about collectively, as we strive toward a final end. This becomes even more clear as we continue to follow his argument.

We should emphasize the fact that for Kant, human beings do not will aimlessly, as someone like Schopenhauer will later argue. All willing has an end, though not all ends are moral. Happiness, for instance, is not a moral end (it is nonmoral). The end that Kant is referring to in this context, however, is described as an “unselfish” end.

... this must rather be an unselfish one; and the need for a final end assigned by pure reason and comprehending the whole of all ends under one principle (a world as the highest good and possible through our cooperation) is a need of an unselfish will *extending* itself beyond observance of the formal law to production of an object (the highest good). (8:280n)

It is now clear that Kant’s concern in this context is with the “production of the highest good.”<sup>66</sup>

The object that is to be produced is *not* a moral object. It is rather “the highest good.” It is at once an object and an end. Just as happiness, too, is an end, but one that relates only to natural necessity. The end in this context, however, is not based on natural necessity, and yet it is not selfish. It is not grounded in self-love. Rather it is based on a *subjective need*. Kant identifies it as a distinctly “moral need.” Additionally, we should note that Kant is careful to point out that the object that is produced here is not an “object of pure practical reason.” As we saw above, the object of pure practical reason is the “attitude of the will” [*Gesinnung*]. Nevertheless, without the argument Kant makes in the second *Critique* the significance of his claim that the highest good is an object and an end can easily be lost.

Through the idea of the whole of all ends we have a “special kind of determination of the will.” The basis of the idea of the whole of all ends is that “if we stand in certain moral relations to things in the world” then we must everywhere obey the moral law. Beyond this, there is an

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<sup>66</sup> Kant says that the highest good is the “ultimate object of practical reason” in the Dialectic of second *Critique*. See, specifically, *CPrR* 6:110–11. Stephen Palmquist points out, and I agree, that Kant, in the context of *Religion*, relates holy mysteries (the subjective side of holy mysteries particular) to the notion of the highest good.

added duty to “bring it about,” that such a relation exists (8:280n).<sup>67</sup> A world in keeping with the moral highest ends is not already in existence. We do not, in other words, already stand in moral relations to things in the world. Perhaps this in part because we are always already constituted by those things in the world. This is different than Kant’s claims regarding the Kingdom of Ends. In the Kingdom of Ends, we stand in relations to others as ends in themselves. Moreover, in this context he is not discussing self-legislation; he is discussing self-sufficiency. This is what constitutes our relation to each other—the way we stand in relation to things. The duty that Kant is referring to here has more in common with the duty to come together to form the ethical community in *Religion*.<sup>68</sup> As Kant further explains:

In this [a world in keeping with the moral highest ends] the human being thinks of himself by analogy with the Deity who, although subjectively in need of no external thing, still cannot be thought to shut himself up within himself but rather to be determined to produce the highest good beyond himself just by his consciousness of his complete self-sufficiency,<sup>69</sup> and this necessity in the supreme being (which in the human being is a duty) can be represented *by us* only as a moral need. (8:281n, original emphasis).

The human being here is understood by analogy to a self-sufficient Deity. Such a Deity, though self-sufficient, is not shut up inside himself, but rather “produces the highest good beyond himself.” How does this production happen? Through the consciousness of his complete *self-*

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<sup>67</sup> The full quote reads: “This is a special kind of determination of the will, namely through the idea of the whole of all ends, the basis of which is that *if* we stand in certain moral relations to things in the world we must everywhere obey the moral law, and beyond this there is added the duty to bring it about as far as we can *that* such a relation (a world in keeping with the moral highest ends) exists” (8:280n).

<sup>68</sup> Compare to one of the statements he makes in *Religion*: “Inasmuch as we can see, therefore, the dominion of the good principle is not otherwise attainable, so far as human beings can work toward it, then through the setting up and the diffusion of a society in accordance with, and for the sake of, the laws of virtues - a society which reason makes it a task and a duty of the entire human race to establish in its full scope. - For only in this way can we hope for a victory of the good principle over the evil one. *In addition to prescribing laws to each individual human being, morally legislative reason* also unfurls a banner of virtue as rallying point for all those who love the good, that they may congregate under it and thus at the very start gain the upper hand over evil and its untiring attacks” (R 6:94). My emphasis.

<sup>69</sup> This calls to mind Heidegger’s reference to Leibniz’s claim that the monad has no windows. In contrast, for Heidegger claims has no windows because Dasein is always already outside of itself. “Due to the original transcendence, a window would be superfluous for Dasein” (*BPP*, p. 301).

*sufficiency*. It is by analogy that this necessity to go beyond oneself can be represented “by us” only as a moral need.

Who does Kant have in mind when he refers to “us”? Surprisingly, he is not referring to all of humanity. The next line makes this clear when he writes:

With the human being too, accordingly, the incentive which is present in the idea of the highest good possible in the world by his cooperation is not his own happiness thereby intended but only this idea as end in itself, and hence compliance with it as duty. For it contains no prospect of happiness absolutely, but only of a proportion between it and the worthiness of a subject, whatever that may be. But a determination of will which limits itself and its aim of belonging to such a whole to this condition is *not selfish* (8:280).

This highest good that we can collectively bring about in the world cannot be happiness. Instead it is the incentive, which is present in the idea of the highest good possible in the world through cooperation. Kant seems to be suggesting that this idea can work as an end in itself. This idea, as end in itself—Kant assures us—is complies with duty. It checks out. However, Kant does *not* say it would be a moral final end, he only says it is “not selfish.” And yet he interprets the need itself as a “moral need.” But how can he be so certain?

Recall what was said earlier about the highest good in a person and the highest good in the world: “virtue and happiness together constitute possession of the highest good in a person while “happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality constitutes the *highest good* of a possible world” (*CPrR* 5:111). The highest possible good in the world means the “whole and complete good.” The argument presented here in “Theory and Practice” is that it is through the idea of the contemplation of the whole of all ends *under one principle*, that we have a kind of determination of the will—a determination not determined by natural necessity. This principle orients us toward an end that transcends the world as we know it. It is not an object of experience, but a presentation in the imagination which corresponds to a form of necessity that is “unselfish.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Recall that Kant maintains that the power of exhibition is the imagination (*CJ* 20:232).

Kant's concern in this context is not with the feeling associated with the will when it is determined by an unconditional law. Instead, as I understand him, this is Kant's way of explaining how a collective will of the people gets organized around a final end—an end that must be represented as a kind of order or organization. It is not an object of experience, but something we present in our imagination.<sup>71</sup>

In the passages quoted above, Kant says that the necessity to go beyond oneself can be represented “by us” only as a moral need. How can Kant be so sure that this is a moral need? The implications of Kant's theory of religion, read alongside Stiegler's theory of technics, is that religion offers a way of articulating and setting limits on how we understand ourselves producing worlds and belonging to wholes. To be sure, I think Kant finds a way to draw upon the Christian tradition to further explain what it means to going beyond one's sense of self-sufficiency. In short, it becomes a moral need and it establishes an *intellectual* relationship between persons. This at least appears to be Kant's interpretation of what it means to go beyond oneself. But what if we construed our necessity to go beyond ourselves not in terms of natural necessity or a reaching beyond ourselves in analogy with a divine creator? What if instead we construed this reaching beyond as a technical tendency and allowed moral freedom to operate alongside this tendency?<sup>72</sup> Hence the relationship between God and moral freedom, and God and the technical tendency need *not* be settled here.

## **ii. Happiness and Other Ends**

As I suggested above, happiness is an actual end, something we all present in our minds as we actively strive for it. This is a matter of natural necessity. In the second *Critique*, Kant

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<sup>71</sup> In fact, this organization around an end is not all that different from the kind of organization of the end that Kant will describe in relation to the problems in the science or in terms of the interests of reason.

<sup>72</sup> This would mean heeding Kant's own warnings and advice about why we should not try to determine the cause of our interest in morality. I return to this in the Conclusion.

indicates that happiness is “the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence *everything goes according to his wish and will*, and rests, therefore, on the harmony of nature with his whole end as well as with the essential determining ground of his will” (*CPrR* 5:124). Kantian scholar, H.J. Paton argues that Kant has two ways of conceiving of happiness. One is the sum total of one’s inclinations as the greatest possible amount of pleasure; the other is idea of an ordered and harmonious set of ends.<sup>73</sup> The first sounds much more like a utilitarian understanding of happiness: happiness is the greatest pleasure for the greatest number. The second is about the “integration of all inclinations into a harmonious end.”<sup>74</sup> In both cases happiness is an indefinite concept. It corresponds to no sensible object. Theoretical reason, therefore cannot determine it. The latter conception of happiness seems to be what Kant has in mind when, in *Religion*, he explains that happiness is about harmonizing our natural inclinations into a whole.<sup>75</sup> Here he is quite clear that prudence is responsible for bringing together inclinations into a whole (*R* 6:58). But Kant also refers to “moral happiness” in *Religion* and contrasts it with physical happiness. The former he associates with “the assurance of the reality and *constancy* of a disposition that always advances in goodness...” (*R* 6:68).

Happiness may be a unique kind of end, but it is not the only end. In *Metaphysics of Moral*, Kant defines two ends which are also duties: the happiness of others and the perfection of oneself (*MS* 6:385–388). By perfection Kant means one is “able to set his end in accordance with his own concepts of duty...” (*MS* 6:386) What this means more concretely speaking is that we have a duty to cultivate our own natural powers “as a means to all sorts of *possible* ends”.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See Paton, “The Pursuit of Happiness,” in the *Categorical Imperative*, pp. 85–87.

<sup>74</sup> See Paton, “The Pursuit of Happiness,” in the *Categorical Imperative*, pp. 85–87.

<sup>75</sup> Natural inclinations in the *Religion* are said to be good. It is only when we prioritize them over the moral law that we run into problems.

<sup>76</sup> My emphasis. Kant alludes to this as early as the *Groundwork*. While he certainly thinks it is important to cultivate the human’s capacities for greater perfection (*G* 4:430–4:437), it is not entirely clear, at least in the context of the *Groundwork*, that he makes it an end.

Kant outlines three different categories of powers: powers of spirit, soul, and body.

*Powers of spirit* are those whose exercise is possible only through reason. They are creative to the extent that their use is not drawn from experience but rather derived a priori from principles, of the sort to be found in mathematics, logic, and the metaphysics of nature. The latter two are also included in philosophy, namely theoretical philosophy, which does not then mean wisdom, as the word itself would suggest, but only science. However, theoretical philosophy can help to promote the end of wisdom. (MS 6:445)

*Powers of the soul* are those which are at the disposal of understanding and the rule it uses to fulfill whatever purposes one might have, and because of this experience is their guide. They include memory, imagination and the like, on which can be built learning, taste (internal and external embellishment) and so forth, which furnish instruments for a variety of purposes. (MS 6:445)

Finally, cultivating the *powers of the body* (gymnastics in the strict sense) is looking after the basic stuff (the matter) in a human being, without which he could not realize his ends. Hence the continuing and purposive invigoration of the animal in him is an end of a human being that is a duty to himself.” (MS 6:445)

Though Kant suggests that we cultivate all of our powers, he insists that the scope, unity, and limits should be set by freedom (MS 6:445). These powers do not come from natural instinct alone, and yet he calls them “natural powers.” Indeed, it is not clear if human perfection is a matter of developing our “natural” capacities or our “moral capacities.” In the third *Critique*, Kant ties the natural perfection of human powers to the highest good:

We are determined a priori through reason to promote with all of our powers the best for the world... which consists in the combination of the greatest welfare of the rational beings in the world with the highest condition of the good for them, i.e., the combination of universal happiness with the most lawful morality. (CJ 5:453)

However, it seems that the union of the human’s moral capacities, natural perfections, *and* happiness requires a higher synthesis, which is somehow connected with historical religion. This leads us to Kant’s account of final ends.

Kant describes final ends as ends that go beyond our duties in the world. Morality cannot remain indifferent to final ends. And thus, in *Religion*, he suggests that morality fashions for itself a final end, by which he means a unification of ends (R 6:5). In order to represent this end impartially, it is necessary to represent it as if it came from someone else and can be adopted as our own. Kant also makes it clear in this context that every human being “ought to make the highest possible good in the world” their final end. It is a “a synthetic practical proposition a

priori, that is, an objective-practical proposition given through pure reason since it is a proposition that exceeds the concept of the duties in this world, and adds a consequence (an effect) of these duties that is not contained in the moral laws and cannot, therefore, be evolved out of them analytically” (R 6:7). We will pick up on these themes in the remaining chapters. I will conclude now by returning to the needs and interests of reason.

## VI. Conclusion

In the third *Critique*, in the same passage where Kant clarifies that he should have called problematic imperatives technical imperatives, he explains something that is unique about happiness as an end:

The *pragmatic* imperatives, or rules of prudence, which command under the condition of an *actual* and thus even subjectively necessary end, are now also included under the technical imperatives (for what is prudence other than the skill of being able to use free human beings, and even one’s own natural dispositions and inclinations, for one’s own intentions?). It is only because the end which we ascribe to ourselves and to other human beings, namely that of one’s own happiness, cannot be counted amongst the merely arbitrary ends, that we are justified in designating these technical imperatives in a special way. For the task requires not merely that we specify the means of executing an end, as in technical imperatives, but that we also determine what constitutes the end itself (happiness), whereas in the case of general technical imperatives this is presupposed as already known. (CJ 20:201n.)

When it comes to technical imperatives we already cognize an end. Hence the link with theoretical reason.<sup>77</sup> In the passage above, Kant is suggesting that when it comes to happiness we execute ends but in executing this end we are determining what constitutes the end.

What is the faculty that determines ends? It is neither theoretical reason nor practical reason but reason itself.<sup>78</sup> Reason determines its own ends, though reason also has needs and interests.<sup>79</sup> Recall what was said above. Kant associates the “true origin” of reason’s needs to

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<sup>77</sup> However, in the *Groundwork*, recall, Kant noted that all the sciences have practical elements in the sense that they all put forward problems that presupposed certain solutions. Recall also his point about how we educate the young by teaching a broad range of skills, even though not all of them will be executed. He eventually decides that when it comes to technical imperatives we already presuppose an end. In theoretical reason thought pursues an end by achieving cognition of God, world, and soul.

<sup>78</sup> Theoretical reason determines objects through a synthesis and judgment.

<sup>79</sup> Kant insists that human reason is only satisfied when it finds a complete systematic unity of cognition and complete systematic unity of cognition is possible only by deriving all cognitions from a single principle. Reason

“prior necessary problems.” Without such prior problems, there would be no needs of pure reason (*CPrR* 5:143n). The following passage indicates that if we want to learn something about reason’s interests we need to look to reason’s extension.

To every faculty of the mind one can attribute an *interest*, that is, a principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted. Reason, as the faculty of principles, determines the interest of all the powers of the mind but itself determines its own. The interest of its speculative use consists in the *cognition* of the object up to the highest a priori principles; that of its practical use consists in the determination of the *will* with respect to the final and complete end. That which is required for the possibility of any use of reason as such, namely, that its principles and affirmations must not contradict one another, constitutes no part of its interest but is instead the condition of having reason at all; only its extension, not mere consistency with itself, is reckoned as its interest” (*CPrR* 5:120n).

In suggesting that the highest a priori principles should not contradict affirmations, I understand Kant to be suggesting that faith should not contradict knowledge. However, when it comes to the unity of faith and knowledge, the unity is not made possible through the concept of the highest good. Instead, on my reading, it is a system of religion and the type of community that religion makes possible. What this means is that reason’s interests have a traceable history. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that Kant here comes close to discovering something like epiphylogenetic memory.

This chapter is the first of four chapters dedicated to offering a reconstructive reading of Kant on the question of technics. I argued that one of the first places where the question of technicity arises is when he lays out his typology of practical principles in the *Groundwork*. Though Kant eventually revises this typology, by tracking these changes and recounting Kant’s own reasons for revising this initial typology, I was able to show how Kant’s uncertainty regarding *techne* (in the broader sense of skill or craft) led him to expand his theory of judgment and, eventually, appeal to religion in order to account for the ways in which human interest is inherited, shared, and cultivated within a society.

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not only seeks an end in all that is given, but also the totality of the conditions and the unconditioned. Cognition of the unconditioned is where reason ends. See *CPrR*, 5:91.

In following this typology from the *Groundwork* to the second *Critique* I was also able to note some key differences between Kant's argument in these two texts. In particular, I explained the significance of Kant's claim in the Preface to the second *Critique* that freedom is an actual idea. I suggested that Kant provides a window of opportunity for later thinkers to replace the moral law (as that which reveals freedom) with some other mechanism or faculty.

In the last part of the chapter, I drew attention to Kant's argument in an essay on the relationship between theory and practice. In this context, I argued, Kant describes an additional determination of the will. I insisted that it is an "additional" determination because the principles associated with this determination are neither unconditional nor are they derived from self-love. Instead, Kant suggests that they are derived from a *particular representation of duty*. At the end of this section, I raised some questions about how Kant arrives at his claim that the need to go beyond ourselves for reasons other than self-love should be translated as a moral need.

In the last two chapters I will have more to say about how principles can be derived from a representation of duty. However, first we look more closely at Kant's account of the feeling of respect. The latter is crucial for understanding how Kant's practical philosophy relates to his theory of religion. Treating this topic will also allow us to return to some of the issues I raised in Chapter 3 regarding Stiegler's social ontology.

CHAPTER 6  
RESPECT AS PHENOMENOLOGICAL FEELING  
AND SUBJECTIVE GROUND

**I. Introduction**

This chapter continues my rereading of Kant on the question of technics, but it does so through a close reading of his account of the feeling of respect. This chapter also picks up on a pattern of thought that I exposed and critiqued in Chapter 3. I suggested that Stiegler’s ontogenetic account of human becoming both contributes to as well interrupts a model of social ontology that reduces or eliminates the space for moral action. In this way Stiegler’s account of the human-technical relation allows us to diagnose a much deeper problem—a problem that I think Kant can help us sort out. The problem, to state it explicitly, is that the intersubjective constitution of self and world that is meant to replace the “I think” of the Transcendental Deduction, significantly reduces what can and cannot be said about moral action and agency. This chapter investigates this pattern of thought further but now with a more direct engagement with Kant’s moral philosophy, and more specifically his understanding of moral personhood and the feeling of respect [*Achtung*].<sup>1</sup>

In ways similar to how I used Stiegler’s criticism of Kant to chart a course through Kant’s moral philosophy in the previous two chapters, this chapter uses Martin Heidegger’s insights and his criticism to parse out Kant’s complex account of human subjectivity. But more

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<sup>1</sup> *Achtung* in German means respect, but also “attention,” “regard,” and “esteem.” In the second *Critique* Kant refers to respect as “boundless esteem” (*CPrR* 5:79). Additionally, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant draws an important distinction between respect as *reverentia* and respect as *observantia*. An ethical duty of respect, for oneself or for another, he claims, is a duty to have certain ends or maxims. Hence the duty of respect is not *reverentia* (a feeling of respect), but rather *observantia*. Respect as *observantia* refers to the “*maxim* of limiting our self-esteem by the dignity of humanity in another person” (*MS* 6:449). Respect as *observantia* should, ideally, give rise to the feeling of respect (*reverential*), but we cannot have a duty to feel in a specific way. *Reverentia* is “merely subjective, a feeling of a special kind, not a judgment about an object that it would be a duty to bring about or promote.” (*MS* 6:402). For a longer discussion of this topic, see Stephen Darwall, “Kant on Respect, Dignity, and the Duty of Respect,” in *Kant’s Ethics of Virtue*. Edited by Monika Betzler (Walter de Gruyter, 2008), p. 193.

importantly, I argue that the effacement of the moral law that we find behind Stiegler's social ontology finds its roots in Heidegger's early engagement with Kant on the topic of respect. After closely reviewing Heidegger's treatment of these topics in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, I present an alternative reading that underscores and prioritizes Kant's claim that the feeling of respect can only ever have a moral ground—and therefore it cannot and should not be reduced to the religious, the technical, nor the aesthetic.

## II. The Significance of Heidegger's Reading of Kant

Much has been written about Kant's feeling of respect over the centuries and numerous studies have been directed at reworking and restating Kant's conception of moral personhood. Rather than attempting to summarize these various iterations or sort through the interpretive issues that continue to feed the debates, I use Heidegger's reading of Kant's characterization of human subjectivity as a way into the topic. Heidegger's reading of Kant is important for this dissertation for several reasons. First of all, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Heidegger's philosophy of technology continues to influence contemporary discourse on technology and while it is not uncommon for summaries of his writings on technology to reference his interest in Kant's epistemology, very little has been written on how Heidegger's early engagement with Kant's moral philosophy influenced his later writings on technology and aesthetics. Heidegger's engagement with Kant, specifically on the topics of respect and moral personhood, was essential not only for the development of his fundamental ontology but his later ideas about technology. As Frank Schalow points out, it was sometime before 1930 that Heidegger started to consider the possibility that a prior orientation to temporality governs all of our attempts to understand being.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Frank Schalow, "Freedom, Finitude, and the Practical Self: The Other Side of Heidegger's Appropriation of Kant," pp. 29–41 in *Heidegger and practical philosophy*. Edited by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press).

In order to develop the argument of *Being and Time*, Heidegger appeals to Kant's examination of our knowing capacities, more specifically, to the schematism of the categories and their root in the transcendental imagination. But Heidegger also found it necessary to engage Kant's practical philosophy. Heidegger's engagement with Kant's epistemology *and* moral philosophy, I argue, inaugurates a way of thinking about technology that binds it to human sociality only by erasing the experience of the moral ought.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it is only after Heidegger strips away the distinctively moral features of Kant's account of moral personhood that he is able to force a much greater role for the productive imagination and clear the ground for his own account of transcendental temporality.

Second, although there are reasons to be critical of Heidegger's reading of Kant, at the time he was writing, his interpretation of Kant's account of respect stood in contrast to critics who found Kant's moral philosophy to be overly subjectivist and formalistic.<sup>4</sup> Against these claims, Heidegger's phenomenological reading of Kant provided an opportunity to reexamine Kant's understanding of human sociality and intersubjectivity.<sup>5</sup> Heidegger persuasively argues, that the feeling of respect discloses something about human subjectivity that cannot be reduced to the transcendental ego or Cartesian "I think." In his own words: "Kant's interpretation of the phenomenon of respect is probably the most brilliant phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon of morality that we have from him."<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, the feeling of respect is about

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<sup>3</sup> "[B]ecause Dasein's Being is Being-with, its understanding of Being already implies the understanding of Others." Heidegger, *Being and Time (BT)*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Notoriously such charges came from Hegel, but also from later critics like Fichte. See James D. Reid, *Heidegger's Moral Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Reid's book is an excellent resource for understanding how Heidegger utilizes Kant's moral philosophy.

<sup>5</sup> See Paul Ricoeur Kant and Husserl, *Philosophy Today*, 10 (1966), pp. 145–68.

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology [Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie]* (Indiana University Press, 1988), p 133. Henceforth, *BPP*. Heidegger also writes that "The basic structure of respect and its significance for Kantian interpretation of morality has been overlooked in phenomenology. . . ." He specifically mentions Scheler's criticism of Kantian ethics. Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 136.

revealing the self.<sup>7</sup> “Respect reveals the dignity before which and for which the self knows itself to be responsible. Only in responsibility does the self first reveal itself—the self not in general sense of knowledge of an ego in general but as in each case, mine...the individual factual ego.”<sup>8</sup>

My reading of Kant differs from Heidegger’s in three respects. First, although Heidegger is right to go beyond the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* and look to the *Religion* to find Kant’s full account of human subjectivity, his engagement with this text focuses exclusively on the three “elements of the determination of the human being” (*R* 6:26). Heidegger ascribes no significance to the fact that the three elements together constitute the “original predisposition to the Good” (*R* 6:26), nor does he attend to the two determinations of divine blessedness (*R* 6:182). Instead, he finds that the ontological structure of the ego drawn from Kant’s practical philosophy lacks unity and orientation.

Third, Heidegger exegetical work neglects Kant’s account of the determination of the will, and hence his understanding of human motivation with respect to ends and objects. This further prevents him from acknowledging the fact that for Kant the feeling of respect is directed at persons. In the last chapter, where we reviewed Kant’s account of the determination of the will, I argued that when Kant suggests that freedom is an actual idea, he provides a window of opportunity for later thinkers to replace the moral law (as that which reveals freedom) with some other mechanism or faculty. To claim that practical reason is possible is to make the further claim that we are conscious of ourselves as free beings belonging to a sensible world and, at the same time, conscious of our “existence” [*Daseins*].<sup>9</sup> Notably, Heidegger draws on this distinction

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<sup>7</sup> Essentially, the “isness” of Dasein. Dasein understands itself as being-in-the-world.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 136. Passages drawn from Heidegger’s *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* are from *Immanuel Kant’s Werke*, ed. Ernst Cassirer.

<sup>9</sup> I specifically referenced the passage where Kant writes: “We do not become conscious of our existence as a determinable being in an intelligible order of things through some special intuition; but rather “according to certain dynamic laws that can determine its causality in the sensible world” (*CPrR* 5:42). [*...ämlich als Wesen an sich*]

and construes Kant's Kingdom of Ends as the being-together-with persons in a realm separate from nature.

Fourth, and finally, Heidegger never considers the possibility that Kant modeled the *personalitas transcendentalis* on the *personalitas moralis*. Instead he insists that the latter is modeled on the former. I link this last point to Heidegger's omission of Kant's attention to the use of examples, which I argue problematizes Heidegger's emphasis on self-consciousness and self-postulation.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of moving through these points of criticism is to demonstrate that for Kant the feeling of respect can only ever have a *moral ground*—and therefore it cannot and should not be reduced to the religious, the technical, nor the aesthetic. This reading, I contend, stands in contrast to interpretations of Kant that tend to conflate or cover over his practical philosophy with his aesthetics, as we saw in Stiegler and others.

My own reading of Kant on the topic of respect, as we will see in the latter part of the chapter, highlights the fact that the feeling of respect that Kant first defines in the *Groundwork* should not be conflated with what he means by *moral feeling*. The latter should be understood as that which arises with the observation of the overriding force of the moral law in a rational being's morally motivated actions and the *disposition* that corresponds to it. As I already indicated in the last chapter, when Kant turns to describe moral feeling in the second *Critique*, it is closely connected to the *Gesinnung*.<sup>11</sup>

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*selbst, seines in einer intelligibelen Ordnung der Dinge bestimmbaren Daseins bewußt ist, zwar nicht einer besondern Anschauung seiner selbst, sondern gewissen dynamischen Gesetzen gemäß...]*

<sup>10</sup> As we will see, one of the results of this move is that Heidegger does not explain how the categories of freedom that Kant outlines in the second *Critique* relate to the ontological structure of Dasein. The use of examples, I argue in Chapter 8, becomes a problem that Kant only resolves in *Religion*.

<sup>11</sup> I touched on this briefly when I explained it in relation to the duty to bring about the highest good in the world. A crucial passage for my argument comes from *CPrR* 5:117, where Kant writes "It is something very sublime in human nature to be determined to actions directly by a pure rational law, and even the illusion that takes the subjective side of this intellectual determinability of the will as something aesthetic and the effect of a special

In this chapter, I use Heidegger's reading of Kant to understand what Kant means when he says that the thwarting of all inclinations for the sake of duty produces a unique *interest* which makes it possible to gain a certain amount of insight [*Einsicht*] into reason's *need*. To be sure, Kantian scholars continue to debate the relationship between the feeling of respect and what in the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant calls "moral feeling."<sup>12</sup> But, as I will demonstrate, there is sufficient textual support to make a case for why they can and should be distinguished. By retrieving and emphasizing this difference I am able to add further evidence to my claim that the structure of personality is for Kant the *Gesinnung*.<sup>13</sup> The *Gesinnung*, I further attest, can be read as a kind of ontological disposition that has its own mode of receptivity. This argument is further developed in the next two chapters, where I engage Kant's arguments in his book *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout this chapter I will draw attention to places in Kant's practical philosophy where the necessity of moral obligation can be distinguished from the subjective ground. For Kant, the worth of moral actions "does not consist in the effects arising from them or the advantages they provide," but rather "in dispositions," or "maxims of the will," which are "ready to manifest themselves through actions, even if success does not favor them" (*G* 4:435). Put concretely, the intervention I understand myself to be making is this: the feeling of respect,

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sensible feeling (for an intellectual feeling would be a contradiction) is sublime. It is also of great importance to take notice of this property of our personality and to cultivate as much as possible the effect of reason on this feeling." It is with the move to moral cultivation that we take interest in the aesthetic effect and sensible feeling.

<sup>12</sup> I am especially indebted to Adam Westra's argument in *The Typic in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation*. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016). "As for the subjective source of motivation for performing good actions and avoiding evil ones, in the chapter immediately following the Typic Kant introduces Kant introduces moral feeling (respect) to play the role of an incentive [*Triebfeder*] – and again, reason produces this feeling entirely on its own (KpV 5: 75–76). See Westra, pp. 92–93.

<sup>13</sup> Recall, as I stated in the Introduction, I am pushing Stiegler's arguments regarding technics in the direction of ethics, and I am pulling Kant's ethics in the direction of technics.

<sup>14</sup> Stiegler in fact seems to be pointing to something similar which becomes clear when we explore how moral feeling relates to both the faculty of desire and what some have called the faculty of feeling. For an insightful description of this faculty and its link to Kant's phenomenology of subjective consciousness see Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), see pp. 45, 61–88, and 238.

properly understood, should not be equated with a disposition [*Gesinnung*].<sup>15</sup> The ground of moral obligation is not a ground at all, but the possibility of receiving the other as other. The action associated with the possibility is the very essence of moral faith. In contrast, the subjective ground for the determination of *choice* [*Willkür*] is associated with “moral feeling.”<sup>16</sup> This feeling is in some way bound up with historical religion, and therefore with social or cultural inheritance.<sup>17</sup>

### III. Heidegger’s Fundamental Ontology and *Destruktion* of Classical Ontology

As it is well known, Heidegger was critical of modern philosophy for its preoccupation with human subjectivity and for failing to ask the question of Being. At the same time, Heidegger credits Kant for reopening the question of Being and Being’s relation to time.<sup>18</sup> Within the first few pages of *Being and Time* he writes: “The first and only person who has gone any stretch of the way toward investigating the dimension of temporality or has even let himself be drawn hither by the coercion of the phenomena themselves is Kant.”<sup>19</sup> But in the end, Heidegger thinks Kant shrinks back from his discovery. He was never fully able to address the problem of temporality, in part, because he failed to provide an ontology of Dasein. Still, he came close, and it is in this coming close that Heidegger finds a new point of departure.

Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant with respect to the power of imagination and temporality is well known and was already discussed in Chapter 2. Still, a brief review of some of his main claims will be sufficient for contextualizing the reflections below. On Heidegger’s

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<sup>15</sup> See above, Chapter 5, pp. 186–188.

<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking, *Willkür* has more to do with free choice, while *Wille* is directed at the law itself. The latter is not directed at actions, but “immediately to giving laws for the maxims of actions (and is, therefore practical reason itself.)” See Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* 6:226. I return to this in Chapter 7.

<sup>17</sup> Also see Kant’s *Conflict of the Faculties*, 7:51. The question of inheritance of a feeling will be our concern in Chapter 8, where we look at Kant’s account of historical religion in relation to “pure religious faith” (*R* 6:182).

<sup>18</sup> See James D. Reid, *Heidegger’s Moral Ontology* (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Martin Heidegger, *BT*, p. 45.

reading of the Transcendental Deduction, the productive powers of the imagination play a crucial role.<sup>20</sup> In the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant claims there are “two stems of human knowledge, namely, sensibility and understanding, which perhaps springs from a common, but to us unknown source.”<sup>21</sup> Although Kant will maintain a rather strict dichotomy between sensibility (and so receptivity) and understanding (and so spontaneity), Heidegger will come to identify this common root as the transcendental imagination. The power of the imagination is for Heidegger in essence “originary time” or “primordial time” [*Ursprüngliche Zeit*] and is basis for both theoretical and practical reason. What this means is that originary temporality is the fundamental condition for the objective and subjective experience of Dasein as a finite being.<sup>22</sup>

Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s theory of schematism and his conception of time is worked out in *Being and Time* and *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*. Our concern, however, is with his reading of Kant in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. The latter text is based on Heidegger’s lecture notes from around the time that he was writing *Being and Time*—and prior to the *Kantbuch*. We are limiting ourselves to this text in particular because the exegetical work Heidegger performs in this context is crucial for understanding how he converts Kant’s metaphysics of morals into a fundamental ontology.<sup>23</sup> Heidegger main concern in this work is with identifying the theoretical and conceptual roadblocks that have prevented previous thinkers from articulating the significance of temporality and Dasein’s relationship to time. The

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<sup>20</sup> Namely, apprehension, reproduction, recognition. As we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the Transcendental Deduction explains how the manifold of intuition is unified through a series of syntheses. According to Heidegger, the transcendental aspect conditions reproducibility in general.

<sup>21</sup> Kant, *CPR* A50/B74. Quoted in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Notably, Ernst Cassirer in 1929. Of course, as many other have pointed out, Heidegger does not claim to be offering a commentary that explicates Kant’s position perfectly. Instead, in *Kant in the Problem of Metaphysics* he describes his engagement with Kant as one of “retrieval” [*Wiederholung*]; “to aid the ground-laying through a retrieval [*Wiederholung*] of its own, more originary possibility.” *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* §35, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 122–137.

argument progresses through a destructive examination of the ontological tradition of which Kant plays a primary role. Heidegger finds Kant's criticism of the proofs for God's existence as well as his three perspectives on the ego to be particularly illuminating. Both are treated at length over the course of the study. However, it is only the latter that concerns us here since it is in investigating Kant's conception of moral personhood that Heidegger finds that Kant failed to determine the subject's ontological constitution.

The question that Heidegger poses to Kant is this: *what is the "true and central characterization of the ego, of subjectivity?"*<sup>24</sup> According to Heidegger, Kant's answer to this question is illuminating in certain respects.<sup>25</sup> The logic of the argument can be summarized as follows. On the one hand, Kant follows Descartes and several other thinkers who have equated the self, the ego, and the subject with an account of what the human subject *is*—and what the subject *is*, according to this same tradition, is determined by means of subjectification, that is, self-knowing. For Kant, Heidegger explains, the ego is first and foremost a subject in the sense of self-consciousness. Kant defines the ego as *subjectum*, in the sense of the *hupokeimenon*, meaning "that which lies present there for determinations."<sup>26</sup> In order to intellectually grasp whatever it is that "lies present" it is necessary to employ a particular form of self-consciousness.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Kant also claims that the basic determination of the being of beings are the categories of the understanding and this, Heidegger's maintains, leads him to conclusions that set him apart from others within the ontological tradition. For Kant the

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 131.

<sup>25</sup> It may be tempting at this point to separate conceptually subjectivity, egohood, and self-consciousness and specify different definitions for each of these terms. However, Heidegger's point in some ways is to show that for Kant each concept implies all the others. Forcing definitions here where none are given requires us to make decisions for Heidegger—decisions that are not apparent from the text we are reading.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> When self-consciousness is understood as the actuality of the subject, Heidegger explains, we have idealism. For Hegel, for instance: "spirit is essentially consciousness the self-knowing is a basic determination of its actuality." Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 128, quoting from Hegel, preface to the second edition of the *Logik*.

categories are the possible forms of unity, of the possible modes of the thinking “I combine.” However, the ego itself is not a category.<sup>28</sup> The ego is rather, “the condition of the possibility of the categories in general”—the “vehicle of all concepts of the understanding.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, the ego for Kant is not a representation, but the “grounding of the possibility of all representing”<sup>30</sup>—just as it is the ground of all perceiving, hoping, striving, etc. This also means that the unity of self-consciousness *transcends* the manifestations attributed to it. With this move, Heidegger insists, the ego, “as the original synthetic unity of apperception,” is for Kant, the “fundamental ontological condition of all being.”<sup>31</sup> However, Heidegger insists that because Kant cannot think outside of classical ontology, he fails to associate this original unity with temporality. Instead, he equates Being with “perceivedness,” as a form of “making present.” He is thus unable to think Being outside the terms of production.

What does it mean to say that the ground of representing is the ego? Recall Kant’s claim in the second *Critique* that freedom is first revealed in the moral law and that our experience of the moral law only comes with moral obligation. Recall also that persons are examples of the moral law. Given this additional context, there are reasons to doubt the claim that the moral law is grounded in the ego. Still, we will follow Heidegger’s arguments further to locate other points where an alternative reading is possible.

### **i. Three Perspectives on the Ego**

According to Heidegger, as we saw above, for Kant the ego is “the condition of the possibility of the categories in general,” “the vehicle of all concepts of the understanding,” and

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<sup>28</sup> It seems there is a similar kind of unity behind the *Gesinnung*, but it is the form of a pure will.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> The ego, Heidegger states, “is not a represented object, not a being in the sense of an object, but the ground of the possibility of all representing, all perceiving” (*BPP*, p. 128).

<sup>31</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 128.

the “possibility of all grounding of representing.”<sup>32</sup> However, we have only scratched the surface of Kant’s account of human subjectivity. While Kant may model the human *subject* formally on the transcendental ego (i.e. the subject-ego, the logical ego), as Heidegger points out, Kant’s full account of human subjectivity demonstrates that the transcendental ego does not fully coincide with the complete concept of personality. The thought “I am conscious of myself,” Heidegger explains, presupposes a twofold ego: an ego of *apperception* and an ego of *apprehension*. The empirical ego *apprehends* that which is extant. Its functioning requires perception, experience, sensibility. The pure ego, the ego of self-consciousness, however, is not a fact of experience. It is not something we can fully grasp with our cognitive faculties, nor—for reasons that will be clarified below—something we can interpret using the same categories that we would use to interpret the empirical ego. The *personalitas psychologica*, which presupposes the *personalitas transcendentalis*, is a “factual faculty” that allows one to become conscious of empirical states and psychical processes, by way of inner apprehensions of feelings within the body.<sup>33</sup>

Even with the transcendental ego and the empirical ego (i.e. the subject-ego and the object-ego) explained, we still do not have what the “true and central characterization of the ego,” Kant understood it.<sup>34</sup> Instead, the central characterization of the ego lies in the concept of *personalitas moralis*. Personality for Kant, “the constitution of his being a person,”<sup>35</sup> has a double meaning: a formal meaning and a narrow meaning. The formal meaning includes the mode of self-consciousness proper to the transcendental ego and the empirical ego.<sup>36</sup> The narrow

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<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 128.

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 129.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 131.

<sup>36</sup> The two together constitute egohood in general.

meaning corresponds to what Heidegger refers to as a “peculiar” mode of self-consciousness that applies to the human being as a responsible being.

Here once again we can supplement Heidegger’s reading with the definitions of persons and moral personality that Kant provides in *The Metaphysics of Morals*.” “A person is a subject whose actions can be imputed to him. Moral personality is therefore nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the ability to be conscious of one’s identity in different conditions of one’s existence).”<sup>37</sup> When formulate in this way, the distinction between persons and moral personality is hardly discernable. In any case, we will continue to follow Heidegger’s reading.

To demonstrate the significance of the *personalitas moralis* within Kant’s conception of human subjectivity, Heidegger expands his reading of Kant beyond the *Groundwork* and second *Critique*, and links Kant’s position to a crucial passage in Kant’s *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. At the beginning of a section titled “Concerning the Original Predisposition to Good in Human Nature” Kant lists and defines “three elements of man’s determination” (*R* 6:26). These three elements are also referred to as the “three predispositions toward the Good.” In Kant’s words, they are: “1.) The predisposition to the animality [*Tierheit*], of the human being, as a living being; 2) To the humanity [*Menschheit*] in him, as a living and at the same time rational being; 3) To his personality [*Persönlichkeit*], as a rational and at the same time responsible being.”

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<sup>37</sup> Kant, *MS*, 6:223. Kant does not always define the person as a subject. In a pre-critical essay, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, he refers to one subject but two persons. *Dreams of a Spirit-See* (2:338) in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*. Translated and edited by David Walford and Ralf Meerbote. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. (Cambridge University Press, 1992). Also see *MS* where he notes that we have to consider a person with consciousness as having a dual personality. On the one hand the human being as a sensible rational being and the other hand, the human being as a subject to the law also as law-giver (*MS* 6:438n).

Heidegger does not spend much time summarizing these three predispositions, nor does he attribute any significance to the fact that Kant describes them as orientations toward the *Good*. Instead, Heidegger's primary reason for engaging this passage in particular is to show that Kant, at least in this context, is careful to distinguish personality from humanity.<sup>38</sup> "[A]pparently personality is meant here in a narrower sense [and is] contrasted with *personalitas transcendentalis*, which is identical with humanity."<sup>39</sup> "Humanity," he further explains, is also what characterizes man as a rational being. This leaves the *personalitas psychologica* (the empirical ego) to be associated with animality, which, if it is conceived of theoretically, coincides with the concept of the soul "as the ground of animality" or "of animateness, of life in general."<sup>40</sup> In other words, on Heidegger's reading, this passage in *Religion* is important for establishing that the conception of *personalitas* is "exhausted neither by the *personalitas psychologica*, which is the ground of animality, nor by the *personalitas transcendentalis*...."<sup>41</sup>

The complete concept of *personalitas* includes not only rationality, but also responsibility. Heidegger explains that it is with the *personalitas moralis*, only in responsibility, does the self first reveal itself as "mine."<sup>42</sup> The "formal structure of personality," according to Heidegger's reading of Kant, lies in "self-consciousness." What this means, is that the person as responsible must represent a *specific kind of self-consciousness*. And this specific mode of self-consciousness is made possible through reflection on the feeling of respect.

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<sup>38</sup> Kant, in a note, adds: "We cannot consider this predisposition [the predisposition to personality] as already included in the concept of the preceding one [humanity], but must necessarily treat it as a special predisposition" (*R* 6:26n).

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 131.

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 129.

<sup>41</sup> Für die *Tierheit*; für die *Menschheit*; für die *Persönlichkeit*, respectively (*R* 6:26).

<sup>42</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137.

...this feeling of respect is the true mode in which man's existence becomes manifest, not in the sense of pure ascertaining or taking cognizance of, it is rather in the sense that in respect, 'I myself—am *acting*. Respect for the law means *eo ipso* action. The manner of the self-consciousness in the sense of respect already make manifest a mode of the type of being of the person proper.<sup>43</sup>

Whereas the *personalitas transcendentalis* is about knowing ourselves as thinking and knowing beings, the *personalitas moralis* is about knowing ourselves as acting beings.

Heidegger makes an interpretive choice here that is worth calling into question. As I understand Kant's argument in the second *Critique*, Kant never suggests that the feeling of respect discloses anything at all. Instead Kant claims that when the will is determined by the moral law we experience an effect that is a sensible feeling. As he writes: "It is something very sublime in human nature to be determined to actions directly by a pure rational law, and even the illusion that takes the subjective side of this intellectual determinability of the will as something aesthetic and the effect of a special sensible feeling (for an intellectual feeling would be a contradiction) is sublime. It is also of great importance to take notice of this property of our personality and to cultivate as much as possible the effect of reason on this feeling" (*CPrR* 5:117). What Heidegger has discovered—or at least what *interests* him—is that the feeling of respect is a particular way of revealing the ego, it expresses a "peculiar mode of revelation of the ego," as we saw above. Even though there seems to be a close relationship between the *personalitas transcendentalis* and the *personalitas moralis*, there is nonetheless something unique about the *personalitas moralis*. As he explains: "Respect reveals the dignity before which and for which the self knows itself to be responsible."<sup>44</sup> To be sure, Heidegger admits that Kant himself does not formulate his own analysis in these terms, but he nonetheless thinks Kant stumbled upon something, perhaps for the first time, that points to an ontological revelation of the self that stands apart from the mode of self-consciousness traditionally associated with the

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137.

thinking or theoretical self. The feeling of respect provides, according to Heidegger, “ontical access to itself of the factually existent ego proper.”<sup>45</sup> In the revelation of itself, the “possibility *must* be given for determining the constitution of the being of the entity itself thus manifest.”<sup>46</sup>

It is not clear why Heidegger thinks that the feeling of respect provides access to the ego. As we saw in the last chapter, in the preface to the second *Critique* Kant makes it clear that he takes freedom to be an “actual” or “real” [*wirklich*] idea. Why? Because it is an idea that “reveals itself through the moral law” (*CPrR* 5:3). But as my reading indicates, if the moral feeling reveals anything at all, it would reveal the “attitude” or “disposition” of the will. And it certainly would not provide us with any insight into the transcendental subject, which of course, is not Heidegger’s claim.<sup>47</sup>

Even while admitting that his formulation departs from Kant’s in certain ways, Heidegger is able to use the three determinations (the three predispositions toward the Good) in the *Religion* to unpack Kant’s “phenomenological” account of the feeling of respect and specify a peculiar mode of self-consciousness that is distinct from the empirical and transcendental modes of self-consciousness. The feeling of respect as a unique mode of self-consciousness, on Heidegger’s reading, is the closest Kant comes to articulating the ontological structure of *Dasein*. Since Heidegger ignores the context in which Kant introduces the three elements of the human being’s

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<sup>45</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 137. Recall, in the last chapter it was noted that Heidegger makes a distinction in *Being and Time* between the “ontical,” which signifies concrete reality (facts about entities, about beings), and the “ontological,” which refers to deeper underlying *structures* of reality and the *meaning* of Being. Heidegger also contrasts historical-ontical with historical-ontic. See *BT*, p. 399–400. In *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger further clarifies that “an ontic knowledge can never alone direct itself ‘to’ the objects, because without the ontological... it can have no possible Whereto.” See Overgaard, “Heidegger’s Concept of Truth Revisited,” *Nordic Journal of Philosophy*, 3(2): 2002; pp. 73–90, specifically, p. 76, n. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137

<sup>47</sup> The apperceptive consciousness, Kant insists, “yields a consciousness of self in which ‘nothing manifold is given.’” Cited in Brook, *Kantian Cambridge Lexicon*, p. 45. Kant *CPR* B135/*CECPR*: 248).

determination, he is able to reinscribe “the predisposition toward personality” as “personality proper.”<sup>48</sup>

## ii. On the Phenomenology of Respect

In reviewing Heidegger’s reading of Kant, we are able to trace the ways in which Kant’s distinctively moral concepts are transformed in ways that serve Heidegger’s philosophical agenda. We will now walk through Heidegger’s reading of Kant on the feeling of respect to see how he pushes it in the direction of his existential analytic, “from which alone all other ontologies can take rise.”<sup>49</sup> If the feeling of respect is to provide some kind of ontical access to the *existent* ego then the next step is to clarify what the feeling of respect is, exactly.

As Heidegger explains, the feeling of respect cannot be a feeling like all other feelings. If it was like all other feelings it would be a mere sentiment, which would further connect it to the empirical realm. It would therefore be something contingent and conditional. But this cannot be. The feeling of respect cannot be based on any kind of knowledge of some *factual* state nor is it mediated by inner or outer sense (the forms of intuition). To articulate this feeling, Heidegger explains, Kant will need to expand his understanding of sensibility, and therefore further develop his position on receptivity. What Heidegger thinks is phenomenologically decisive in Kant’s account of this feeling, “is that it directly uncovers and makes accessible that which is felt, and it does this not, to be sure, in the manner of intuition but in the sense of direct *having-of-oneself*.”<sup>50</sup> The feeling of respect [*Achtung*] discloses the “feeler” in a particular way—though not in

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<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 132.

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, p. 34.

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 133. My emphasis.

thought. “In having a feeling for something there is always present at the same time a self-feeling, and in this self-feeling, a mode of becoming revealed to oneself.”<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, Heidegger explains that though the feeling of respect is “intrinsically unitary,” it has two key aspects, both of which need to be kept in mind.<sup>52</sup> It is both 1) a *revelation* of a feeling for something and 2) a feeling for one’s self having a “feeling for.”<sup>53</sup> It is a feeling that consists of a turning to oneself in a particular way and in doing so experiencing oneself as turning to oneself. But what is most crucial, at least as far as Heidegger is concerned, is that this “feeling for” is not interpreted as a feeling for something *outside* of oneself, but, more appropriately, rendered as a concern and care for one’s own dignity. It is, in short, the self-consciousness of a “self-affecting being.”<sup>54</sup> This is not self-reflection, it is a “*feeling of self-having a feeling for something*.”<sup>55</sup>

In order to dig deeper into what this feeling of respect entails, Heidegger turns to Kant’s analysis in Book 1, Part 1, Chapter 3 of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, to a section called “On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason.” In this context, Kant specifically describes the thwarting of all inclinations (our feeling for things, our self-love) and the determining ground of the will. Heidegger explains that the breaking off of inclinations is a negative effect and a sensible feeling. Quoting Kant, to elaborate this point he writes:

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<sup>51</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 132. We are moving closer and closer to what Heidegger will describe as the care structure. As we discussed in Chapter 2, the existential analytic reveals that the ontical structure of Dasein is “care” (*Sorge*). But beyond the care structure, it is time that forms the transcendental ontological horizon through which the projection of care becomes possible. Stated differently, temporality bears the unity and totality of the manifold within the structure of care. On this point see Daniel O. Dahlstrom “Heidegger’s Concept of Temporality: Reflections of a Recent Criticism,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 49, no. 1 (1995): 95–115.

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 132.

<sup>53</sup> See Reid, *Heidegger’s Moral Ontology*, p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> See Reid, *Heidegger’s Moral Ontology*, p. 135.

<sup>55</sup> Heidegger italicizes *self* and *for*.

But, after all, this law is intrinsically positive, namely, the form of an intellectual [not sensible] causality, the causality of freedom; therefore, in *weakening* self-concept by acting against subjective opposition, namely the inclination in us, it is at the same time an object of *respect*; and since it even *strikes down* self-conceit, humiliates it, it is an object of the greatest respect and moreover the ground of a positive feeling which does not have an empirical origin and can be known a priori. Respect for the moral law is therefore a feeling that is produced by an intellectual ground, and this feeling is the only one we can know completely a priori and whose necessity we can comprehend.<sup>56</sup>

The above passage implies that a mere thought of something can produce a feeling. Similarly, in the *Groundwork* Kant claims that the moral law is valid because it springs “from our own will as intelligence.”<sup>57</sup> But this creates a problem. How is it that a thought could inspire a feeling? In the *Groundwork* Kant admits that we simply cannot comprehend how a thought could itself produce a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. It is a special kind of causality that we cannot know a priori. We must instead account for it in experience alone (*G* 4:460). Human beings are sensible beings. To will something that reason alone prescribes requires that reason alone induces a feeling of pleasure or delight in the fulfilment of duty. Kant will speak of this in terms of interests and inclinations. Recall, what was said in the last chapter: human beings can take an interest *in* something without acting *from* interest. This also means that there is a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with reason’s principles (*G* 4:460).

In the second *Critique* this same issue is framed somewhat differently. As we saw in the last chapter, Kant’s main concern in this context is to explain how it is that pure reason can be practical. The feeling of respect remains important in this context, but it is rendered as a “moral feeling” and it is used to explain how a particular form of action—an action we consider to be good—is itself enough to motivate action.<sup>58</sup> Kant explains as follows: “respect for the moral law

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<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 134, quoting Kant, *Werke*; *CPrR* 5:73.

<sup>57</sup> There are places where he appears to reject this claim. For instance, he also says that respect is the “subjective effect that the law exercises on the will, for which reason alone supplies the objective ground” (*G* 4:460).

<sup>58</sup> In fact, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, “moral feeling” is described as one of several “moral endowments.” Other moral endowments include “the *conscience*, *love of one's neighbor*, and *respect for oneself (self-esteem)*” (*MS* 6:399).

must be regarded” as “a positive but indirect effect of the law on feeling insofar as the law weakens the hindering influence of the inclination by humiliating self-conceit, and must therefore be regarded as a subjective ground of activity—that is, as the incentive for compliance with the law (*CPrR* 5:79, 5:75).

Heidegger, though certainly cognizant of the details of Kant’s argument in the second *Critique*, stresses the way in which the law first becomes “accessible” as law. “[R]espect for the law as motive first really constitutes the possibility of moral action. It is the way in which the law first becomes accessible to me as law.”<sup>59</sup> Insofar as the will can determine choice it is practical reason.<sup>60</sup> This emphasis on the power of choice is important. When Kant refers to the “determination of the free power of choice” he is referring to the two different types of incentives that can be incorporated into our maxims. Heidegger’s emphasis is on the thwarting and weakening of inclinations that happens when the will is determined by the moral law. This weakening is itself an object of respect; it is what strikes down self-conceit, humiliates, and this becomes the ground of a particular feeling that does not have an empirical origin and can be known a priori.<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, once again quoting Kant, writes: “It is a feeling produced entirely by reason. It doesn’t allow us to judge actions, nor does it represent the object of ethical law itself, but merely the motive in order to make the moral law itself into a maxim within itself....”<sup>62</sup> Heidegger uses this passage to support the claim that the feeling of respect is *produced* by reason itself; this is how it can be differentiated from a pathological feeling. Furthermore, on Heidegger’s reading, the law is not what it is because I have respect for it.

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<sup>59</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 135.

<sup>60</sup> In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, he explains: “The will itself, strictly speaking, has no determining ground; insofar as it can determine choice, it is instead practical reason itself.” *MS*, 6:213.

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 135. Heidegger’s clarification, not Kant’s exact words.

<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 134, here quoting Kant, *Werke*, vol. 5 p. 80 p. 84; *CPrR*, 5:76.

Rather “my having a feeling of respect for the law and with it this *specific mode of revelation of the law* is the only way in which the moral law as such is able to approach me.”<sup>63</sup> This last point is especially important. Heidegger here is combining the feeling of respect with a “*specific mode of revelation of the law*.”<sup>64</sup> What is this specific mode of revelation? He answers as follows:

This feeling (under the title of the moral) is produced solely by reason [not by sensibility]. It serves not for actions nor even for substantiating the objective ethical law itself but as a motive in order to make the ethical law itself into a maxim within [into the subjective determining ground of the will].<sup>65</sup>

The feelings associated with the thwarting of all inclinations, that is, all “sensible feelings” can in turn be “made visible a priori and positively known.”<sup>66</sup> The negative repulsion also makes something visible. “From the negative phenomenon of repulsion, the *force* that performs and grounds the repelling must become *visible a priori*.”<sup>67</sup> Heidegger then make the even bolder claim that this must mean that the will too is determined by this visible knowable force.

Though Heidegger is steering Kant’s argument in a particular way, he does make an interesting point here that is worth considering further. He says that the will is determined in a particular way and it is determined somehow by *feeling* rather than through reason alone. But if we consider Kant’s arguments closely, it appears as though he is suggesting that the will is determined by an *effect* of reason. And yet at the same time—and this is something Heidegger underplays—the will is determined by an end that is *good*. Heidegger however goes in a different direction. He links the determination of the will to self-affection, that is to say, a feeling of pleasure in turning to oneself with pleasure. It is described as a feeling of joy. In subjecting ourselves to the law, that is, to pure reason, we raise ourselves up and see ourselves as free, self-

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<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 135. My emphasis.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 135. My emphasis.

<sup>65</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 134. My emphasis. Quote from Kant. *Werke* (Cassirer), vol. 5. p. 80 and next 81.

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 134.

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 134. [*Aus dem negativen Phänomen der Abweisung muß apriori positiv das Abweisende und Abweisung Begründende sichtbar werden.*]

determining being. “This submissive self-elevation of myself to myself reveals, discloses as such, me to myself in my dignity.”<sup>68</sup> In being responsible to itself and for itself, Heidegger asserts, “the ego understands itself *directly*.”<sup>69</sup>

While I agree that self-determination is an important element behind Kant’s discussion of the moral feeling in the second *Critique*, it is hardly Kant’s main focus. Heidegger’s discussion and reading of Kant is phenomenological in a classical sense. What I mean by this is that he is reading Kant as though he is describing the appearance of something in consciousness. Moral feeling as Kant articulates it in the second *Critique* does seem to have a phenomenological valence. But that is because for Kant, pure reason can be practical. This is something that we can know through our *experience* as *moral beings*. Recall that at the outset of the second *Critique* Kant states that freedom is a “real” [*wirklich*] idea. It is a “real” or “actual” idea because is an idea that “reveals itself through the moral law” (*CPrR* 5:3–5:4).

Kant also addresses what it means to suggest that the will is immediately determined by the moral law (the objective determination of the will) as well as the subjective feeling that arises with practical necessitation.<sup>70</sup> As is well known, he will not allow practical necessitation to be rooted in inclinations because inclinations are always conditional. And yet, when one becomes

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<sup>68</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 135. “Respect is respect for the law as determining ground of moral action.” It is a becoming self-manifest in one’s own most dignity. It is a kind of being with oneself that “does not disparage the hero in the soul.”

<sup>69</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 136. My emphasis.

<sup>70</sup> There is an ongoing debate between Kantian scholars on the subject of whether or not the moral law is the subjective or objective determinate ground of the will. It seems there is evidence that support either position. See, for instance, Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016; and Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

*conscious* of practical necessitation a certain feeling arises.<sup>71</sup> This feeling helps him to articulate the only acceptable subjective principle for action.<sup>72</sup> As he explains:

The moral law is, in other words, for the will of a perfect being a law of *holiness*, but for the will of every finite rational being a law of *duty*, of moral necessitation and of the determination of his actions through *respect* for this law and *reverence* for his duty. No other subjective principle must be assumed as incentive, for then the action can indeed turn out as the law prescribes, but since, though in conformity with duty it was not done from duty, the disposition to the action is not moral; and in this lawgiving it is really the disposition that matters.” (CPrR 5:82)

In this passage, Kant associates the respect for the law and reverence to duty with the moral disposition [*Gesinnung*]. Heidegger’s reading, however, does not take the *Gesinnung* into account. He is not concerned with practical necessitation. But for Kant, the capacity to act by means of rules, maxims, and laws is part of what it means to be rational being. It is possible to thwart all inclinations, and act against self-love, but as living creatures, we are never completely free of inclinations. The only proper incentive when it comes to moral action is the moral law itself.

#### IV. Defining the Ego Within Kantian Limits

Again, the reason we are reading Heidegger in this way is to determine how Kant’s distinctively moral concepts are transformed through Heidegger’s reading. Recall what was said above with respect to Heidegger’s description of the three egos. We saw that it is only with the *personalitas moralis* that the self first reveal itself as “mine.”<sup>73</sup> Heidegger says that the “feeling of respect is the true mode in which man’s existence becomes manifest, not in the sense of pure ascertain or taking cognizance of, it is rather in the sense that in respect, ‘I myself—am *acting*.”

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<sup>71</sup> It is also perhaps relevant here to point out that the causality of practical reason cannot be the same kind of causality that we associate with the unfolding of time.

<sup>72</sup> See Kant, CPrR 5:80. He says it is not necessitation that is pathological. But also note in the *Groundwork*: “[T]here is one imperative that...commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is categorical. It has to do not with matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle form which the action itself follows; and the essentially good in the action consist in the disposition, let the result be what it may” (G 4:416).

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137.

Respect for the law means *eo ipso* action. The manner of the self-consciousness in the sense of respect already make manifest a mode of the type of being of the person proper.”<sup>74</sup> The formal structure of personality<sup>75</sup> lies in self-consciousness but the feeling of respect is the true mode in which man’s existence becomes manifest. What then is manifested? What exactly is revealed in the feeling of respect? Heidegger suggest that the answer—insofar as Kant provides one—is to be found in Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals*.<sup>76</sup> This is where Heidegger will start to find problems with Kant’s account of human subjectivity.

In Heidegger’s view, the *Metaphysics of Morals* presents us with an ontology of human existence in the sense that it is primarily written as a response to the question: what *is* man. This question, he insists, is inseparable from the meaning of the person.<sup>77</sup> In order to explain how it is that Heidegger arrives at these conclusions, we need to move very slowly through a few key passages. The first passage, incidentally, comes from the *Groundwork* rather than the *Metaphysics of Morals*.

Heidegger asks: “What is the *ontological meaning of the person thus made* manifest in respect?”<sup>78</sup> The following quote by Kant is offered as a start of an answer:

‘Now I maintain that man and every rational being in general exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be used arbitrarily by this or that will; instead in all his actions, whether they are addressed to himself or to other rational beings, he must always be considered at the same time as an end.’<sup>79</sup>

Heidegger’s interpretation of this passage is as follows:

Man exists as an end in himself; never a means, not even a means for God; before God, too, he is his end. From this, from the ontological characterization of the being that is not only viewed by others as an end and taken as an end but exists objectively—as an end, the proper ontological meaning of the moral becomes clear.

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<sup>74</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 137.

<sup>75</sup> As I mentioned above, p. 210, above, on my reading, the structure of personality is the *Gesinnung*.

<sup>76</sup> Most of his other quotes come from the second *Critique* and the *Groundwork*.

<sup>77</sup> It might be better to say that the *MS* offers an account of man’s ethical and moral duties that works both with how the human *appears* and with the dignity of the human person.

<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 138. Original emphasis.

<sup>79</sup> Heidegger, quoting Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:428/65; Cassirer p. 286.

To explain, Heidegger is suggesting that according to Kant, the human being exists *objectively*. One of the main arguments of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* concerns Heidegger's criticism of phenomenology as an objective science. As we noted in Chapters 4 and 5, Heidegger explains that Kant's conception of "reality" is equivalent to "thingness" or better to "thing-determinateness."<sup>80</sup> "Realities are the what-contents of possible things in general without regard to whether or not they are actual, or "real" in our modern sense."<sup>81</sup> When Kant says that the person exists as an end, he means that they exist objectively as an end. On Heidegger's reading, it is only on this basis that the subject and object—those things with egos and those things without egos—can be distinguished.

If we consider this passage within the broader context of the *Groundwork*, which is where the quote comes from, we know that Kant is concerned with making a distinction between price and worth, between objects that have value in terms of intrinsic worth versus those that have conditional value. However, what is important for Heidegger is what this reveals about objective existence. Quoting Kant once more, he writes:

"The beings whose existence rests indeed not on our will but on nature [on nature in the sense of physical organization] nevertheless, if they are beings lacking reason, only a relative value as means and are therefore called *things* [*Sachen*]; in contrast, rational beings are called *persons* because their nature [nature here is synonymous with *phusis* as *essentia*] singles them out already as ends in themselves, as something which may not be used merely as a means, and hence to this degree limits all arbitrary choice (and is an object of respect)."<sup>82</sup>

Heidegger's response to this passage is as follows:

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<sup>80</sup> "When Kant talks about the *omnitudo realitatis*, the totality of all realities, he means not the whole of all beings actually extant but, just the reverse, the whole of all possible thing-determinations, the whole of all thing-contents or real-contents, essences, possible things. Accordingly, *realitas* is synonymous with Leibniz' term *possibilitas*, possibility. Realities are the what-contents of possible things in general without regard to whether or not they are actual, or "real" in our modern sense. The concept of reality is equivalent to the concept of the Platonic idea as that pertaining to a being which is understood when I ask: *Ti esti*, what is the being? The what content of the thing, which Scholasticism calls the *res*, then gives me the answer." Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 34.

<sup>81</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 138, quoting Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:428, Cassirer, p. 286–287.

What constitutes the nature of the person, its *essentia*, and limits all choice, which means that it is determined as freedom, is an object of respect. Conversely, that which is objective in respect, what is revealed in it, makes manifest the personality of the person. The ontological concept of the person is briefly this: persons are objective ends, that is, things [*Dinge*] [*res* in the broadest sense] whose existence is an end in itself.<sup>83</sup>

In other words, whatever it is that constitutes the nature of persons, that something is an *object* of respect. And we saw above that that which thwarts all inclinations becomes an object of respect. What then is revealed in respect? The answer is that which “makes manifest the personality of the person.” What makes manifest the personality of the person? According to Heidegger, for Kant it is the rigorous concept of ‘*Menschheit*,’ that is, humanity.<sup>84</sup> Following this logic, we can say that humanity makes manifest the personality of the person, and respect is a *way* of revealing *that which makes manifest* the personality of the person.<sup>85</sup>

Now Heidegger is well aware that the passages selected from the *Groundwork* are concerned with establishing absolute worth, and from there deriving the supreme practical principle, an objective principle of will, which Kant thinks is the only principle that can properly serve as a universal practical law. But this is not Heidegger’s concern. Instead he draws attention to the distinction he says Kant makes between two different ontologies, the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals. This move is crucial for his claim that: “Precisely where he touches on the structure proper to the *personalitas moralis*, that of being autotelic, [Kant] assigns to this being the ontological mode of extantness.”<sup>86</sup> This is where Heidegger is able to find space to develop Kant’s arguments in a different direction. Against what he takes to be Kant’s position, he will insist that “Dasein’s existence is not the extantness (presence, at-

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<sup>83</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 138, quoting Kant, *Groundwork*, 4:428, Cassirer, p. 287.

<sup>84</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 138. “This interpretation of the *personalitas moralis* first makes clear what man is and defines his quidditas, man’s essential nature, the rigorous concept of *Menschheit*, humanity. Kant does not use this last expression to denote sum of all humans; it is instead an ontological concept and means *ontological constitution of man*” (original emphasis).

<sup>85</sup> We should also make sure to take note of the fact that Heidegger insists that when Kant uses the term “nature” in the passage above, it is synonymous with *physis* as *essentia*. I discussed *physis* briefly in Chapter 4, pp. 134–136.

<sup>86</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 147.

handness) of the traditional ontology.”<sup>87</sup> In what follows, I explain how Heidegger reaches this conclusion before I offer an alternative reading.

### **i. Kingdom of Ends as Being-Together-With**

As noted above, Heidegger construes Kant’s Kingdom of Ends as the being-together-with persons in a realm separate from nature.<sup>88</sup> In this section I further discuss how and why Heidegger strips the Kingdom of Ends of its practical, that is to say its moral, significance and instead reads it as “being-together-with.” To be sure, Heidegger *does* make use of the distinction Kant makes between the categorical and hypothetical imperatives, noting: “The principle of ethical action does not say: *If* you want to attain this or that, this specific end or that one, then you must behave thus and so. There is no *if* and no hypothesis here because the acting subject, which is the only topic under discussion, if it is of its own nature itself an end, the end of and for its own self, not conditioned by or subordinated to another.”<sup>89</sup> But Heidegger’s point here is only to further show how the moral agent is rendered as an “existent end of his own self” existing within the “Kingdom of Ends.” The next few lines are crucial:

End, purpose, must be understood here always in the objective sense as existent end, person. The *realm of ends* is the *being-with-one-another*, the *commercium of persons* as such, and therefore the realm of freedom. It is the realm of existing persons among themselves and not, say, some system of values to which any active ego relates and in which, as something human, ends are founded in their interconnection as gradients of intentions toward something. ‘Realm of ends’ must be taken in an ontical sense. An end is an existing person; the realm of ends is the with-one-another of the existing persons themselves.<sup>90</sup>

On Heidegger’s reading, Kant distinguishes between two different ontologies, the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals. The *realm of ends*, Heidegger will insist, “is not a system

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<sup>87</sup> Albert Hofstadter, Translator’s Introduction, *BPP*, p. xix

<sup>88</sup> Heidegger does not consider Kant’s specifications regarding the ideal ethical community. In *Religion*, Kant offers four categories, which seem to correspond to the categories of understanding and the categories of freedom, that allow us to envision what he refers as the “enduring unity of hearts” (*R* 6:102).

<sup>89</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 139.

<sup>90</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 139. Below we will look more closely at what Heidegger has in mind when he refers to the “*commercium* of persons.”

of values.” The realm of ends is “the with-one-another of the existing persons themselves.”<sup>91</sup>

One way to explain this is to suggest that as end seeking beings, we pursue ends and in pursuing those ends we find a realm of ends that is beyond our own individual pursuits. But this cannot be Kant’s position.

As I noted in Chapter 5, for Kant, practical principles can be divided up into practically possible and practically actual. Only the latter concern the human being’s natural existence, an actual end. The variations we find within the practically possible are innumerable. The Kingdom of Ends cannot be a “being-together-with” because it is not the product of the human being pursuing various ends. It is that which makes *possible* the pursuing of ends in such a way that one’s will would not conflict with that of another’s.<sup>92</sup>

Happiness, as we saw in the previous chapter, is an end we possess by natural necessity. If we make happiness our final end, all of the pragmatic and prudential principles associated with the pursuit of ends would become for us subjective maxims. And yet Kant’s argument is unique in that he does not maintain, as he thinks the stoics maintain, that we use our intellect to choose against happiness. Instead, we *choose* to make the moral law itself an incentive. As he explains in his “Theory and Practice” essay: “The incentive which the human being can have before a goal (end) is set for him can obviously be nothing other than the law itself *through the respect that it inspires* (without its being determined what end one may have and may attain by complying with it).<sup>93</sup> Here Kant makes it clear that the feeling of respect makes it possible for the law to be itself the only incentive for moral actions.

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<sup>91</sup> Essentially Heidegger will render this in terms of the structure of care.

<sup>92</sup> For Kant, of course, this is an important condition for a peaceful political existence.

<sup>93</sup> Kant, “Theory and Practice,” 8:282n. My emphasis.

Heidegger emphasizes the distinction that Kant makes between the realm of ends and the realm of nature. He thinks this is how Kant will arrive at two different ontologies. But this does not account for the fact that Kant also delineates an intelligible world, moral world and a world of understanding.<sup>94</sup> The emphasis on two separate ontologies obscures these other specifications. For instance, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant refers to the idea of a moral world as “a *corpus mysticum*” (a mystical body) of rational beings, wherein the free will of each is under moral laws in systematic unity with itself and with the freedom of every other.”<sup>95</sup> In this context, the “moral world” is only an idea, but one that “can and ought really to exercise its influence on the sensible world in order to bring it as far as possible into conformity with the idea.”<sup>96</sup>

The distinction between the realm of nature and the realm of ends gets much more attention in the second *Critique* than in the *Groundwork*. Near the end of the *Groundwork*, Kant appeals to the “intelligible world” and a “world of understanding” (*G* 4:458). Practical reason is what makes it possible for us to think ourselves into a world of understanding. “The concept of a world of understanding is only a standpoint that reason sees itself constrained to take outside appearances in order to think of itself as practical...” (*G* 4:458). We do not cognize the intelligible world, though Kant says *he has an idea of it*. (*G* 4:402). He states further that:

It would be unwise to search about the world of sense for the supreme motive, that is of reason... a space that is empty for the transcendent concepts called the intelligible world, do not lose yourself among the phantoms. The idea of a pure world of understanding as a whole of all intelligences to which we belong, remains a useful and permitted idea for the sake of rational belief. It may stir in us a lively interest in the moral law by means of a noble idea of a universal Kingdom of Ends in themselves. (*G* 4:402).

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<sup>94</sup> For a longer discussion on the potential differences between them, see Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 63–75.

<sup>95</sup> Kant, *CPR* A808/B836. On this point, see Allen Wood’s “General Introduction” in *Kant’s Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press), p. xvi and xxiv.

<sup>96</sup> It is possible that this becomes the ideal kingdom in the *Religion*. In the first *Critique*, Kant explains that in the ideal kingdom, “rational beings “would themselves be the authors both of their own enduring welfare and of that of others” (Kant, *CPR*, A809/B837).

In the *Groundwork*, Kant refers to Kingdom of Ends as “a systematic union of several rational beings through common laws” (*G* 4:402). While this is “only an ideal,” Kant insists that morality “consists in referring all actions to the legislation by which alone a Kingdom of Ends *is possible*” (*G* 4:434). The categorical imperative can thus be formulated as follows: “act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have as their object themselves as universal laws of nature” (*G* 4:437). He further adds:

Teleology considers nature as a Kingdom of Ends, morals considers a *possible* Kingdom of Ends as a kingdom of nature [nature in the sense of organization]. In the former the Kingdom of Ends is a theoretical idea for explaining what exists. In the latter, it is a practical idea for the sake of bringing about, in conformity with the very idea, that which does not exist but which can become real by means of our conduct. (*G* 4:437)<sup>97</sup>

Note that in this passage Kant refers to what is possible, existent, and real. He is suggesting that is through our conduct that an idea comes into existence. Once we have this idea we can work toward a possible Kingdom of Ends.

Here is not the place to offer an exhaustive account of Kant’s Kingdom of Ends. Nevertheless, what the passage above indicate is that the distinction between two separate ontologies loses much of its explanatory power when we consider how it might be working outside of the second *Critique*.

## **ii. Persons and Things**

Thus far we have learned, from Heidegger’s reading of Kant, that the transcendental ego and the psychological ego do not fully constitute personality. The two together, Heidegger tells us, find their center in the *personalitas moralis*.<sup>98</sup> We have also learned something about why Heidegger is interested in Kant’s phenomenology of respect: it provides an alternative path toward uncovering the ontological structure of *Dasein*.

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<sup>97</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>98</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 132.

It was also noted that Heidegger construes Kant's Kingdom of Ends as the being-together-with persons in a realm separate from nature. In the last section, I presented some reasons why we should doubt this latter claim. Next, we will consider why Heidegger finds Kant's description of persons as "end in themselves" to be rooted in classical ontology and therefore inadequate for helping us understand the subject's ontological constitution. This is important for understanding why Heidegger thinks Kant's account of human subjectivity undermines the distinction Kant intends to uphold between persons and things.

Heidegger asks: "What does the human being know himself to be insofar as he understands himself morally, as an acting being?"<sup>99</sup> He recognizes that insofar as Kant answers this question, he needs to work within the confines of his own epistemology. Namely, for Kant all appearances have a necessary relation to the understanding and all knowledge divides into intuitive content or conceptual form. Only in this way, can "experience [*Erfahrung*] become possible."<sup>100</sup> "That in the *appearance* which corresponds to sensation I term its *matter*; but that which so determines the manifold of appearance that it allows of being ordered in certain relations, I term the *form of the appearance*."<sup>101</sup> Despite Kant's illuminating account of the feeling of respect, these epistemological commitments set limits on what Heidegger can have Kant say about the ego.

The thrust of Heidegger's argument is this: the ancient interpretive horizon for beings, which is modeled on production, sets the standard for Kant's interpretation of persons. More specifically, Kant does not explicitly explain how the concept of [*Existenz* or *Dasein*] could be applied to man in a way different from things. The closest Kant comes to clarifying the

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<sup>99</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 132.

<sup>100</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A93/B126.

<sup>101</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A20/B34; my emphasis.

distinction is when he asserts that the person is “a being that exists as its own end has itself in the way of respect.” However, according to Heidegger, “Respect means responsibility toward oneself and this in turn means being free” but “[b]eing free is not a *property* of man but is synonymous with behaving ethically.”<sup>102</sup>

Heidegger’s reading here is problematic for several reasons. For Kant, freedom is freedom only under the moral law. Moreover, as I will argue below, respect for Kant cannot be condensed into respect for oneself. Respect for oneself<sup>103</sup> is only one dimension of what Kant calls moral feeling. Heidegger, uses this reading (the reading that suggests that being free is synonymous with behaving ethically) to make the point that behaving is a form of acting.<sup>104</sup> What this implies is that the specific mode of being of the moral person lies in free action. But what is free action? Free action for Kant, according to Heidegger, is equivalent with “intelligence.” Intelligence is not a mode of behavior or a property of the subject, but the subject itself, the subject as intelligence *is* a finite mental substance.<sup>105</sup>

If persons are intelligences, that is, if they are mental substances, then Kant cannot tell us how to interpret the being who exists as intelligence.<sup>106</sup> The only thing that would be left to do is define the subject, the finite being, in contrast to the infinite being. And according to Heidegger, this is where Kant leaves us.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 141.

<sup>103</sup> Respect for oneself is inseparable from respect for humanity.

<sup>104</sup> Recall that for Kant, as we saw in the last chapter, the “I act” is only comprehensible in a creature that is not only rational, but desires, and is affected by the sensible world.

<sup>105</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 147. This statement seems to be supported by a statement made in *Religion* where personality is defined as or rather is equated with “the idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually” (*R* 6:28).

<sup>106</sup> Heidegger explains: “Intelligence is not a mode of behavior or property of the subject, but the subject itself, which is intelligence” (*BPP*, p. 141). Mental substances are distinguished from natural things, which is to say, objects in experience. Heidegger sees this as a way of affirming Descartes’ two substances: mind and matter.

<sup>107</sup> One might argue here that Kant’s attempt to interpret the being who exists as intelligence is exactly what he takes up in his anthropology. But I will leave this point aside.

Since above we saw that Heidegger thinks that Kant models moral personhood on the structure of the transcendental ego, we should not be surprised by this argument. What becomes problematic, at least as far as Heidegger is concerned, is that whatever it is that the feeling of respect reveals, we will not be able to determine it. *Why?* Because, at least within the confines of Kant's epistemology, the ego is inaccessible. As Heidegger rightly points out, the categories of the understanding cannot be applied to the ego "I act." The only thing that can be said about the ego is "I am acting." The "I act" is purely mental (i.e. thinking is acting, a particular kind of act). This is why, according to Heidegger, Kant will sometimes call the ego "intelligence." The human person is a being that has intelligence, that *exists* as intelligence. Furthermore, because moral personhood is what makes humanity unique among other beings, we now know what is unique about the human species: each person is an end in itself, never *merely* a means.<sup>108</sup> According to Heidegger, this is as far as Kant can take us with respect to the ontological conclusions of the human subject.

Kant may have had other reasons for locking up the ontological specifications of the *personalitas moralis*,<sup>109</sup> but from Heidegger's perspective, Kant missed an opportunity to draw more from his own analysis of the human subject. The only plausible explanation, Heidegger attests, lies in the fact that Kant could not think beyond the tradition that had been passed down to him. "Does he not after all back again into conceiving this active ego as an end which *is* in the sense of one extant being among other extant beings?"<sup>110</sup> With this Heidegger reaches a decision: "*The interpretation of the ego as a moral person provides us with no really informative*

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<sup>108</sup> According to Ricoeur, the determination of the 'in-itself' never is theoretical or speculative," for Kant it is "only practical and ethical." We have access to the intelligible world through the passage of respect. See Paul Ricoeur, "Kant and Husserl," *Philosophy Today*, 10 (1966), pp. 145–68.

<sup>109</sup> He locks up the noumenal self as well because it avoids the need for receptivity in cognition and claims to know too much about an intelligible object.

<sup>110</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 142.

*disclosure about mode of being of the ego.*"<sup>111</sup> Although admirable for several reasons, Kant's elucidation of the feeling of respect is "but one attempt to shake off unconsciously the burden of the traditional ontology."<sup>112</sup>

As we reviewed in Chapter 2, Kant insists that we cannot gain knowledge of the transcendental ego. Because he defines the "I think" and the "phenomenal self" (i.e. the empirical ego) in terms of objective knowledge, whenever we try to interpret the ego of apperception, we are faced with a dilemma. "Either I am conscious of the I think, but this is not knowledge or I know the self but it is a phenomenon of nature."<sup>113</sup> According to the argument of the first *Critique*, the categories of nature (quantity, quality, relation, and modality) cannot be used to interpret the "I think" that *we must presuppose* accompanies all representations. In reference to Kant's doctrine of the paralogisms of pure reason, Heidegger writes: "It is a characteristic of *psychologica rationalis* that with the aid of purely ontological concepts which it applies to the ego as 'I think' it tries to achieve some knowledge about the ego as a being, as a soul."<sup>114</sup> However, Kant insists that the conclusions drawn from the application of ontological concepts can only be fallacious. "Kant flatly calls the object-ego, the ego of apprehension of empirical self-consciousness, a thing and thus expressly assigns to it the mode of being of nature, of the extant."<sup>115</sup> Heidegger, however, wonders if this move, which is only necessary if all forms

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<sup>111</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 142. Heidegger's emphasis.

<sup>112</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 147.

<sup>113</sup> Ricoeur, "Kant and Husserl," p. 151. Ricoeur himself thinks the first *Critique* offers a way out of this difficulty. "Kant in fact escapes this dilemma whenever he proceeds to a direct inspection of *Gemüt*. The very term *Gemüt*, so enigmatic, designates the field 'of transcendental experience' that Husserl thematizes. It is not at all the 'I think' guaranteeing epistemologically the unity of experience but what Husserl calls *Ego Cogito Cogitata* begins to their appearance in *Gemüt*." Ricoeur here will say that with the guide of the transcendental experience of the *Gemüt*, it is possible to recapture the features of a Kantian phenomenology.

<sup>114</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 143. Here Heidegger is referring to *CPR* A341/B399, where Kant is describing what happens when we try to apply the methods of "rational psychology" to determine which predicates can be applied to the "I think." Kant will insist that the "I" as representation is empty of content. According to Heidegger: "Viewed historically, Kant's doctrine of the paralogisms of pure reason is a critique of *psychologia rationalis*, the traditional metaphysics of the soul as a dogmatic metaphysics, for which he substitutes in fact the metaphysics of moral."

<sup>115</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 142.

of intuition move within the forms of space and time, was correct.<sup>116</sup> Therefore, if Kant's arguments are to be of any use there must be another way to articulate the ontological structure of the human.

It is important to note here that Heidegger admits that Kant does carry out a *certain* ontological interpretation of the ego, but only with respect to the practical ego.<sup>117</sup> More specifically, he admits that a “practical dogmatic metaphysics”—one which can determine ontologically the human self and its relationship to immortality and God by way of “practical self-consciousness.”<sup>118</sup> A practical interpretation of the ego would be carried out through an analysis of the ideas of reason. But it comes with limits. The postulates of pure practical reason cannot be proven theoretically. They can only ever be supplements to practical reason.<sup>119</sup> What this means is that Heidegger never addresses the fact that Kant presents a table of the categories of freedom in the second *Critique*. Why not allow these to provide an interpretation of the ego? Would they not provide some evidence that the human mode of being is *not* merely the “I act” as “pure spontaneity” but rather, free action in accord with law? Freedom without law, as we well know, for Kant is an absurdity. Though he mentions the metaphysics of morals and practical dogmatic metaphysics, Heidegger does not discuss how Kant outlines the categories of freedom or principles that are at work in practical reason, nor does he explain how they are to be distinguished from the categories of the understanding. This also means that he completely passes over the topic of the *Gesinnung*, which is crucial not only to the second *Critique* but to Kant's *Religion*.

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<sup>116</sup> For Kant, all forms of intuition, even self-intuition, move within the forms of space and time. And in line with “the tradition” Kant will hold that time is the form of sensibility. Heidegger will come to suggest that there is a kind of transcendence that is the characteristic of Dasein. We are thrown into existence.

<sup>117</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146.

<sup>118</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146.

<sup>119</sup> If Heidegger would have pursued Kant here he would have found that practical reason, its postulates, and the claim that pure reason can be practical all pertain to the *Gesinnung*.

In sum, Heidegger is disappointed by the epistemological limits Kant sets for himself when he turns to investigate the ego. And even though Kant's phenomenological account of the feeling of respect allows us to identify a unique mode of "self-knowing" the ontical determinations remain underdetermined and the reason for this, Heidegger concludes, lies in Kant's proximity to classical ontology. Though Kant's articulation of the feeling of respect seems to offer some insight into what mode of self-consciousness is best suited for determining the ontological constitution of the subject, the only conclusions we can derive from Kant's analysis of the feeling of respect, Heidegger maintains, is that persons are ends in themselves. Heidegger will insist that Kant's thesis regarding human persons is wedded to a conception of finitude that can only be understood from within a horizon of production and creation.<sup>120</sup> This means the ontological distinction between persons and things is modeled on production.<sup>121</sup> But not all is lost. Heidegger maintains that Kant is nonetheless the first to demonstrate that "The primary and direct reference to the *being of beings* lies in the production of it. And this implies that the being of being means nothing but producedness."<sup>122</sup>

Heidegger's point here is behind some of the criticism Stiegler's leverages against Kant. It should also call to mind our brief look at the critique of hylomorphism that Stiegler adopts from Simondon. Since the distinction between things and persons is a crucial feature of Kant's moral philosophy, we need to take a little closer look at what it is, exactly, Heidegger is suggesting.

Heidegger explains that within the horizon of classical ontology, all production is assumed to take place in conformity with an original and prototypical image as model. In

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<sup>120</sup> "The finitude of things and persons is due to the producedness of things in general" (*BPP*, p. 151).

<sup>121</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 150. Original emphasis.

<sup>122</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 150.

imagining a product to be, we are already grasping what “the product-to-be really is.” What constitutes the being of being is already *anticipated in the eidos*.

That which says how the thing will look or, as we also say, how it will turn out—if and when, of course, it *has* turned out—is already anticipated and circumscribed in the eidos. The anticipation of the prototypical pattern which takes place in production is the true knowledge of what the product is. It is for this reason that only the producer of something, its originator, perceives a being in the light of what it is. Because the creator and producer imagine the model beforehand, he is therefore also the one who really knows the product. As self-producer (uncreated), he is also the authentic being.<sup>123</sup>

In order for something like self-production or self-creation to be possible, the intellect must be spontaneous. It cannot be based on some previous configuration. From ancient to medieval times, God is said to be the divine prototype for all being and the human is a finite copy of the divine. God is pure act, absolute spontaneity, the only true substance. Everything else is extant, which is to say, finite. Heidegger insists that all of this remains true for Kant. God is the “transcendental prototype,” an “ontological model,” conformity with which the determination of all beings are “normalized.” These ontological commitments, Heidegger contends, influence Kant’s epistemology. In accord with classical ontology, Kant insists that we cannot know the true being of another mental substance. Human beings as finite beings can know only what they make and we do not completely make ourselves. This also means we cannot gain full knowledge of ourselves. Classical ontology presupposes that we know “everything in the world” only as that which has the capacity to operate as a cause. We do not know the substance of a thing—we do not know the things in themselves. Only the effects can be known. A being shows itself only in its effects.

The effects that are thus manifested by one substance for another must be able to be received by the second substance if it is at all to be able to come to know something about a being that it itself is not and knowingly comport itself toward this being, that is, if any *commercium* at all is to come about between substance.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 151.

<sup>124</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 139.

The interaction of substances became a central problem in metaphysics after Descartes. But Heidegger insists that Kant's way of presenting the problem, as well as his solution, stands out from all previous solutions (mechanism, occasionalism, *harmonia praestabilita*).

This too is instructive. Recall earlier Heidegger's claim that Kant presents us with two ontologies: a metaphysics of morals and a metaphysics of nature. Ends and purposes form the community of free beings. Heidegger's description of a problem in Western metaphysics regarding the interaction of substances helps to explain why he describes the Kingdom of Ends as a "commercium" of persons or a being-with-one-another." Between the members of the free community there must be "an *influxus realis*" "a reciprocal influence on one another of their reality, of their predicates, their accidents."<sup>125</sup>

The distinction between spontaneity and reciprocity is crucial in this context. That which is finite is that which is open to the outside, which is to say, receptive. Reciprocal action is based on causality, which Kant takes to be the faculty of producing effects. "The finite substance cannot be only spontaneity, but must be determined in equally original fashion as receptivity, as a capacity of being susceptible to effects and receptive of the effects of other substances."<sup>126</sup> A direct commercium of substance is impossible. This applies to finite mental substances as well.<sup>127</sup> Finite substances apprehend of another being only what that being turns as its own effects toward the perceiver."<sup>128</sup> Only the outside is accessible, never the inside. Heidegger relates this discussion back to the epistemological limits that prevent us from gaining knowledge of the transcendental ego. "The categories grounded in the ego and its unity, as forms of unity for

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<sup>125</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 149. He also notes that: "Something is advanced only by means of affection by being approached and acted on by something other than our own self." Affections are the "effects of other substances so far as they relate to the susceptibility [openness, vulnerability] of a substance.

<sup>126</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 149.

<sup>127</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 149. Intelligence, therefore is not only a substance or act, it must also have something to do with affection.

<sup>128</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 149.

a synthesis, are applicable only where a combinable is given. Every combining, every judgment determinable of combinable, requires something which is advanced for combination, for synthesis.”<sup>129</sup> In other words, from Kant’s perspective, in order for the human subject to have something combinable for judging, that subject must be determined in some way by the faculty of receptivity.

However, if we wish to assert something about Dasein in particular (or humanity in Kant’s case) then it must be given from Dasein itself. It cannot be determined completely from outside. What is given from outside must come through receptivity and given on the basis of the forms of receptivity, space and time. In a moment I will explain what I find illuminating about this perspective. Heidegger, however, finds Kant’s position on this matter curious. He wonders what it was that prevented Kant from suggesting that time itself is the a priori of the ego. Not time as we know it from everyday experience, of course, not clock time, but time in a more “original sense.”<sup>130</sup> This is where Heidegger makes his key move, effectively renounce’s Kant’s philosophy of limits:

Kant is wholly right when he declares the categories, as fundamental concepts of nature, unsuitable for determining the ego. But in that way he has only shown negatively that the categories, which were tailored to fit other beings, nature, break down here. He has not shown that the ‘I act’ itself cannot be interpreted in the way in which it gives itself, in this self-manifesting ontological constitution. Perhaps it is precisely time which is the a priori of the ego—time, to be sure, in a more original sense than Kant was able to conceive it. He assigned it to sensibility and consequently from the beginning, conforming with tradition, he had in view natural time alone.<sup>131</sup>

Kant’s claim regarding time as the form of inner sense becomes crucial for Heidegger. It becomes a way to “perform” an ontical interpretation of the ego in a way that is “free from the entire tradition.”<sup>132</sup> As he will go on to write “As pure self-affection, time is not an acting

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<sup>129</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 144.

<sup>130</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 145. Stiegler’s theory of technicity repeats the same move. However, instead of presupposing that the organizing principle comes from inside, Stiegler will insist that the organizing principle comes from outside, from the inorganic organization of matter.

<sup>131</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 145.

<sup>132</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146.

affection that strikes a self which is at hand. Instead, as pure it forms the essence of something self-activating. However, if it belongs to the essence of the finite subject to be able to be activated as a self, then time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity.”<sup>133</sup>

It is precisely on this point where an intervention is needed. First of all, Kant does not locate self-affection in the subject, it is only with his claim that reason itself postulates its own ends that he makes a claim along these grounds. As we have seen, Kant’s stress on reason’s interests presupposes purposes, it presupposes former problems, and it presupposes a being that is at once rational and desiring. But most importantly, for Kant the moral experience involves other persons.

## **V. Summarizing Heidegger’s Position**

Heidegger’s pass through Kant’s practical philosophy leaves him with a set of concepts that he will repurpose for his own inquiry. We followed Heidegger’s reading to gain insight into Kant’s complex account of human subjectivity, but also to show how the concepts that Heidegger retrieves from Kant are stripped of their distinctively moral aspects. Evaluating Stiegler’s arguments in the previous chapters have allowed us to see how these concepts have found their way into the discourse on technology.

Through Heidegger’s reading of Kant, the predisposition toward the personality becomes personality proper. The realm of ends becomes the realm of being-together-with others as they concern themselves in their worldly pursuits. Respect, the feeling that accompanies the moral law and corresponds to our sense of duty, becomes a mode of revealing, and Kant’s account of persons as “ends in themselves” is simply another effect of his inability to think beyond classical

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<sup>133</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146.

ontology. What Heidegger eventually comes to call the “structure of care” ends up being ontologically prior to rationality and self-determination. Rather than relying on Kant’s categories of the understanding, or the categories of freedom, Heidegger insists upon three existential categories that reflect the unity of facticity and the transcendence of being in the world: authenticity, resoluteness, and conscience.<sup>134</sup>

Whereas Kant insists that the human subject determines itself by determining its relation to things, Heidegger—reading Kant through the lens of phenomenology—makes the more radical claim that Dasein first finds itself in things.<sup>135</sup> “The Dasein does not need a special kind of observation, nor does it need to conduct a sort of espionage on the ego in order to have the self; rather, as Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world itself, its own self is reflected to it from things.”<sup>136</sup> The world is not “extant,” nor is it the sum total of extant entities. The world “has” Dasein’s mode of being. In place of Kant’s claim that “persons are ends in themselves,” Heidegger proposes that Dasein exists for the sake of its own capacity to-be-in the world. The being that has a self and recognizes the self as “mine” is an authentic self. When we forget ourselves and get lost in the “they” we exist inauthentically.<sup>137</sup>

## **VI. An Alternative Reading: Moral Feeling and Persons**

Kant’s account of the feeling of respect, I would like to suggest, has more to teach us about the ground and nature of moral obligation. A closer reading of Kant reveals that the necessity to act, which is crucial for his conception of the moral ought, is always related to

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<sup>134</sup> See Steven Galt Crowell, “Kantianism and Phenomenology,” in *Phenomenological Approaches to Moral Philosophy: A Handbook*. Lester Embree and J.J. Drummond. (Springer Netherlands, 2013), p. 60.

<sup>135</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 153. According to Heidegger, the subject-object relation obstructs us from seeing the subject who does not become an object. “For the Dasein, with its existence, there is always a being and an interconnection with a being already somehow unveiled, without its being expressly made into an object. To exist then means, among other things, to be as comporting [according with] with beings....It belongs to the nature of the Dasein to exist in such a way that it is always already with other beings” (*BPP*, p. 153).

<sup>136</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 159.

<sup>137</sup> Heidegger *BPP*, p. 171.

respect for persons. “Respect always applies only to persons, never to things” (*CPrR* 5:77). “Any respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of integrity and so forth) of which he gives us an example” (*G* 4:402n.) It is not that respect for persons is generated out of our respect for the law. Persons are rather examples of the moral law. The feeling of respect is bound up with the necessity that comes with duty, and the human person puts before us an example of duty. In fact, Kant also claim that the “representation only takes place in a rational being [*Vorstellung des Gesetzes an sich selbst*]” (*G* 4:409, translation modified).<sup>138</sup> Because Heidegger is dismissive of this claim made by Kant, it would seem that for Kant there is no encounter with alterity, no encounter with persons. Instead, he construes the feeling of respect as auto-affection.

Heidegger maintains that the feeling of respect is a feeling that comes from the self and is for the self. But this interpretation is incomplete. As we saw above, he draws attention to Kant’s claim that respect for the moral law is “produced” by an intellectual ground and that the self only “has itself” insofar as it is cognizant of the *force* that repels all inclination. The claim that the moral law is “produced” by an intellectual ground at first seems to be supported by the following passage in the *Groundwork*—though it is a passage that Heidegger himself does not quote.

But though respect is a feeling, it is not one *received* means of influence; it is, instead, a feeling *self-wrought* [*selbstgewirktes*] by means of a rational concept and therefore specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can be reduced to inclination or fear. What I cognize immediately as a law for me I cognize with respect, which signifies merely consciousness of the *subordination* of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences on my sense. Immediate determination of the will by means of the law and consciousness of this is called *respect*, so that this is regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject, and not as the *cause* of the law. (*G* 4:401n.)

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<sup>138</sup> Patton translates *Vorstellung* here as “presentation.” See his translation, p. 69. I agree with other translators who think *Vorstellung* should be translated as representation “*Darstellung*” should be translated as “presentation.” In Chapter 8, I will discuss how these two terms are used strategically in the *Religion*. For a longer discussion, see Helfer, Martha B. Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse* (United States: State University of New York Press, 1996); Adam Westra, *The Typic in Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: Moral Judgment and Symbolic Representation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

Respect is a specific kind of feeling which is not received from outside. It is rather self-wrought or “self-produced” [*selbstgewirktes*] by a rational concept.

For Kant, the necessity to act out of reverence or respect, is not “self-determination” but rather, duty. It is only through the feeling that duty produces in us that it becomes about self-determination. For instance, in the *Groundwork*, Kant discusses the duty to develop our own talents. “Because we also regard enlarging our talents as a duty, we represent a person of talents also as, so to speak, an *example of the law* (to become like him in this by practice), and this is what constitutes our respect. All so-called moral *interest* consists simply in *respect* for the law” (*G* 4:402n.). In the section titled “On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason” in the Analytic portion of the second *Critique*, which we also looked at in the last chapter, Kant explains that while humans may have various sensible feelings toward other human beings—love, fear, admiration—there is something specific about the feeling of “inner respect” that human beings have toward one another.

What allows Kant to make this claim? Kant, beginning with someone else’s words, writes: ‘Before a prominent man I bow, but my spirit does not.’ And to this Kant adds:

[B]efore a humble ‘common man’ in whom I perceive uprightness of character in a higher degree than I am aware of in myself *my spirit bows*, whether I want it or whether I do not and hold my head ever so high, that he may not overlook my superior position. Why is this." His example holds before me a law that strikes down my self-conceit when I compare it with my conduct, and I see observance of that law and hence *its practicability* is proved before me in fact. Now, I may even be aware of a like degree of uprightness in myself, and yet the respect remains. For, since in human beings all good is defective, the law made intuitive by an example still strikes down my pride, the standard being furnished by the man I see before me whose impurity, such as it may be, is not so well known to me as is my own who therefore appears to me in a purer light. *Respect* is a *tribute* that we cannot refuse to pay to merit, whether we want to or not; we may indeed withhold it outwardly but we still cannot help feeling it inwardly. (*CPrR* 5:77)<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Some interpreters read this as a kind of proof for the moral law’s “practicability.” See for instance Stephen Darwall, “Kant on Respect, Dignity, and the Duty of Respect,” in *Kant’s Ethics of Virtue*. Edited by Monika Betzler (Walter de Gruyter, 2008).

Of interest here is Kant's claims that the law can be made intuitive by example. The humiliation that is only possible when we compare our own conduct with a law is directed at our own unworthiness, and the example itself appears in a "purer light." Hence, once we have shed off self-conceit, we cannot take our eyes of the splendor of the law, and the "soul *believes* that it elevates itself to the extent that it sees the holy law elevated above itself and its frail nature" (CPrR 5:78). Another way of describing this, is to say that the law gains transcendence only with the example of a human person. Through an encounter with another person, the "soul believes."<sup>140</sup>

That the feeling of respect is associated with action and persons is further illustrated by Kant's point that when we witness another person exercising skill or demonstrating their talent we often feel a sense of respect. Skill comes through work and demands cultivation and practice. Because we cannot be certain what share innate talent and cultivation play in one's skill, it is presented to us as the fruit of cultivation, which strikes down self-conceit and instructs us to follow an example in a way that is appropriate for us.

Kant further states that though many see the opposite of merit when observing human action, "the true scholar" will continue to feel respect "because he is involved in a business and a calling that to a certain extent *makes imitation of the man a law for him*" (CPrR 5:78).<sup>141</sup> Shortly after this comment, in a note, Kant explains:

If one examines accurately the concept of respect for persons, as it has already been set forth, one becomes aware that it [respect for persons] always rests on consciousness of a duty which an example holds before us, and that accordingly, respect can never have any but a moral ground; and it is very good and even, from a psychological point of view, very useful for knowledge of human beings that whenever we use this expression we should attend to the *hidden and wonderful*, yet often recurring, regard which the human being in his appraisals has for the moral law. (CPrR 5:81n.)

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<sup>140</sup> This is important for the argument I am making in Chapter 8 with respect to the figure of Christ.

<sup>141</sup> [*Achtung gegen ihn aufgibt, der wahre Gelehrte aber sie noch immer wenigstens im Gesichtspunkte seiner Talente fühlt, weil er selbst in einem Geschäfte und Berufe verwickelt ist, welches die Nachahmung desselben ihm gewissermaßen zum Gesetze macht.*]

In other words, concrete human examples help us render the feeling of respect intelligible. But we should also take notice of the regard that human beings have for the moral law, which is hidden, wonderful, and recurring.

What all these passages seem to show is that respect cannot be only about self-consciousness or self-activation. For Kant, respect rests on duty and duty always comes by way of example. If this is true, then is it not possible that the ontological structure of the *personalitas moralis* actually lies outside of the self? Or at the very least, does the importance that Kant places on human persons require some kind of detour outside of the self? Self-consciousness is at play, certainly, but Kant seems also to hold that the feeling of respect is inseparable from our encounter with others, and the effect this encounter has on us.

Without attending to Kant's claims regarding persons as examples of the moral law, it may be tempting to think that the feeling of respect can be described as something that has a nonmoral or immoral ground. But Kant is quite clear: "respect can never have any but a moral ground." Heidegger, however, seems to push in the opposite direction. Whatever it is about the feeling of respect that interests Heidegger, it is associated with something a-moral, with that which is beyond good and evil.

#### **i. Unity**

Another place where Heidegger's reading of Kant leaves space for an alternative reading relates to his claim that the structure of the ego, though complex, is "intrinsically unitary."<sup>142</sup> Heidegger criticizes Kant for failing to explain how the three perspectives on the ego are to be unified. This is, at least in part, what inspires the move toward transcendental temporality. But as

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<sup>142</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 32. As I already noted, Heidegger claims that the ontological structure of Dasein is intrinsically linked with temporality. Stiegler in as sense pluralizes this claim when he states that technics constitute our relation to time.

far as I can tell, Kant's arguments do not indicate that the *personalitas moralis* is intrinsically unitary. This seems likely only insofar as the structure of moral personhood is based on the model of the transcendental ego.<sup>143</sup> But there are reasons to doubt this claim. In fact, if we attend to Kant's conception of the *Gesinnung*, as I suggest, Kant's notion of the *personalitas moralis* modeled not on the "I think" nor an "I act" but a pure form of a will.

As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, Heidegger's fundamental ontology stands in contrast to classical ontology (such as Aristotle's) and formal ontology (such as Husserl's), and also from "regional ontology" (particular domains of being). Fundamental ontology is examination of that which *unifies* and makes possible our various ways of understanding what it means to be. This is important because the rules of the game are set up in advance: the ontological core that Heidegger is after, must be a unifying structure. Heidegger in effect wonders how the being of the ego is to be conceived of as a whole. On his reading, "the ontological structure of this whole ego of the theoretical-practical person is indeterminate not merely in its wholeness; even less determinate is the relation of the theoretical-practical person to the empirical ego, to the soul, and beyond that the relation of the soul to the body: "the mode of being of their original *wholeness*, remains ontologically in the dark."<sup>144</sup> And so Heidegger concludes: "Given this divergent position of Kant's on the ontology of the ego, it is not surprising that neither the ontological interconnection between the *personalitas moralis* and the *personalitas transcendentalis* nor that between these two in their unity on the one hand and the *personalitas psychologica* on the other,

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<sup>144</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146. My emphasis. Ricoeur appears to find Kant disappointing on this point as well. "The Transcendental Aesthetic nevertheless remains very disappointing not only because of its embryonic but also because of its static character. Space and time are not considered in the movement of total experience but as a preliminary stratum achieved and inert." However, he also thinks that once Kant relates space to the possibility of being affected by something, he reveals the very movement of a dynamic constitution of experience and of thingness. "The phenomenon of spatiality is implied at the moment that space is related to the subjective constitution of our mind" [*subjektiven Beschaffenheit unseres Gemüts* (A 23)]. Kant describes space as the way in which a subject disposes itself to receive something in experience. See Ricoeur, "Kant and Husserl," pp.151–152.

not to say the original wholeness of these three person-determinations, is made an ontological problem.”<sup>145</sup> However, there is evidence that supports an alternative reading. On my reading, this was, in fact, a problem for Kant and the solution to this problem is presented in the *Religion*. In that context, he argues that we cannot gain access to the whole of our actions by presupposing an “I think.” Instead, the good disposition [*Gesinnung*] “takes the place of this deficiency” (*R* 6:76).

As we saw, Heidegger admits that Kant does carry out a *certain* ontological interpretation of the ego, but only in respect to the practical ego.<sup>146</sup> But Heidegger never addresses the fact that Kant presents a table of the categories of freedom in the second *Critique*. Why not, as I asked above, allow these to provide an interpretation of the ontical cognitions of the ego? Would they not provide some evidence that the human mode of being is *not* merely the “I act” as “pure spontaneity” but rather, free action in accord with law? Though he mentions the metaphysics of morals and practical dogmatic metaphysics, Heidegger does not discuss how Kant outlines the categories of freedom or principles that are at work in practical reason, nor does he explain how they are to be distinguished from the categories of the understanding. This also means that he completely passes over the topic of the *Gesinnung*, which plays an essential role in both the second *Critique* and in *Religion*. Here is an additional place where we can highlight one of the implications of reading Kant through the lens of originary technicity.

If, as I have suggested elsewhere, we read Kant’s conception of the *Gesinnung* alongside Stiegler’s understanding of tertiary retention, and more specifically, Stiegler’s arguments regarding external memory supports, this would allow us to think about how the binding necessity of the moral law is never owned but is inherited and therefore exists inside and outside

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<sup>145</sup> Heidegger wonders, “[i]s the unity and wholeness of the two subsequent or is it original, prior to both? Do the two belong together originally or are they combined externally afterward?” (*BPP*, p. 146) Heidegger doesn’t think Kant gives us a direct answer. *BPP*, pp. 146–147.

<sup>146</sup> Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 146.

of us and stirs up in us feelings that we nevertheless are free to respond to. Moreover, as I noted above, “moral feeling” as it is articulated in the second *Critique* is an effect of freedom. Effects of freedom are not held within the individual human memory—at least not necessarily so. Instead, we might instead interpret them as affective structures that are inherited. In the *Religion* Kant will insist that it is necessary for us to adopt a good disposition. But he finds that to make this argument he needs a structure of inheritance, which is at the same time a structure of anticipation.<sup>147</sup> Historical religion ends up playing a crucial role in cultivating the religious disposition of the ethical community.

## ii. Moral Feeling and Sensibility

The feeling of respect is discussed at length in the second *Critique*, though at times Kant’s references to moral feeling seem to indicate that he is also speaking about the feeling of respect, “moral feeling” is a term that has a broader meaning in Kant’s other writings. Perhaps most notably, in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, “moral feeling” is described as one of several “moral endowments.” Other moral endowments include “the *conscience*, *love of one’s neighbor*, and *respect for oneself (self-esteem)*” (MS 6:399).<sup>148</sup>

In the second *Critique*, Kant explains that pure practical reason has a different relation to sensibility than theoretical pure reason. Pure practical reason influences sensibility in such a way that it can be cognized a priori (CPrR 5:90). Here too we gain a better sense of what Kant means

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<sup>147</sup> As I will discuss in the next two chapters, Kant’s *Religion*, one of Kant’s main concerns is to convey the relationship between the individual’s moral disposition and the disposition of a moral community (the unity of hearts rather than a unity in a collective will). The figure of Christ as the archetype is essential for one’s individual transformation, and historical religion is essential for bringing about a change of heart for the community. There are certain parallels between Kant and Schleiermacher that could be noted here. In particular, Kant’s account of how feeling [*Gefühl*] is exchanged and shared within a community could be read alongside Schleiermacher’s account of the rationalization of nature or the institutional or social spheres that he articulates in his *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics*. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Lectures on Philosophical Ethics* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See especially those sections where he discusses the highest good as a “complete expression of the unity of reason and nature as a whole” (e.g. p. 163).

<sup>148</sup> Original emphasis.

by the moral feeling. It is not the feeling of respect that brings about feelings of joy and intellectual pleasure but rather consciousness of the direct necessitation of the will by the law. Although this feeling relates to the power of desire in the same way as an aesthetic feeling of pleasure, it appears to come from a different source (*CPrR* 5:118). The following passage supports this reading.

The Analytic of theoretical pure reason was divided into transcendental Aesthetic and transcendental Logic; that of practical reason, reversely, into Logic and Aesthetic of pure practical reason (if I may be allowed, merely by an analogy, to use these terms, which are not altogether suitable); the Logic in turn was there divided into Analytic of concepts and Analytic of principles, here into that of principles and concepts. The Aesthetic there had two parts, because of the twofold kind of sensible intuition; here sensibility is not regarded as a capacity for intuition at all but only as feeling (which can be a subjective ground of desire), and with respect to it pure practical reason admits no further division. (*CPrR* 5:90)

It is significant that feeling becomes the subjective ground of desire. It means that what is received in intuition does not need to go through the forms of sensibility, that is to say, it does not need to go through space and time. The subjective ground of desire is replaced by a feeling, a feeling that is at the same time an effect that comes about when one denies all inclinations. This is how Kant can refer to a *subjective need*.

Kant is quite clear that the feeling of respect is not the *cause* of the moral act. The immediate determination of the will by the law together with *consciousness of this determination* is called respect or reverence [*Achtung*]. It is an awareness of worth that demolishes self-love. But the determination of the will does not come from this feeling. Rather, the feeling of respect is the “sole and also the undoubted moral *incentive* [*Triebfeder*]” (*CPrR* 5:78).<sup>149</sup> Ultimately I think the moral incentive is more important for securing unity between and “I” and the “We” than typically realized. That is why, near the end of the last chapter I tried to explain it with

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<sup>149</sup> It would seem that the feeling of respect has a different relation to judgment. Our inclinations are the ground for determining which things are good or bad. The feeling of respect is produced by an intellectual ground (*CPrR* 5:73). Respect, however, is a consequence of recognizing the unconditioned good represented in the moral law. In the *Groundwork*: respect is the “effect of the law on the subject, and not...the cause of the law (*G* 4:401 n.). See Jennifer K. Uleman, *An Introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy* (United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2010), see especially pages 88–91.

respect to the highest good. The thwarting of all inclinations for the sake of duty produces a feeling and this feeling corresponds to the good disposition. This disposition orients us in such a way that we can gain insight not into something deep within us, but into reason's need.

### iii. On the Predisposition Toward the Good

As we saw above, Heidegger's main reason for turning to Kant's *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* was to retrieve the distinction Kant makes between personality and humanity. The passage that Heidegger draws on to make this point reads as follows:

The idea of the moral law alone, together with the respect [*Achtung*] that is inseparable from it, cannot be properly called a predisposition to personality; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually). The subjective ground, however, of our incorporating this incentive into our maxims seems to be an addition to personality, and hence seems to deserve the name of a predisposition on behalf of it. (R 6:28)

Notice that in this passage Kant appears to be assigning three aspects to the *personalitas moralis*, that is, to moral personhood. It involves 1) the idea of the moral law, 2) the feeling of respect, and 3) the predisposition toward the personality. Kant is clear that only the first and second, the idea of the moral law together with the feeling of respect, constitute personality which here is equated with the "idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually." Heidegger however, draws out the implications only of the first two. This means that his reading does not attend to Kant's claim that the subjective ground is something added on to personality. Why is this supplement necessary?<sup>150</sup> According to Kant's argument in *Religion*, the predisposition to personality is the uniquely moral *motive or incentive* "to respect for the moral law *as of itself a sufficient incentive*

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<sup>150</sup> There are various ways that scholars have tried to make sense of this. One explanation is to suggest that the subjective ground is the *capacity* to both become aware of the moral law and be receptive to the feeling of respect. Another way to interpret it is to say that the subjective ground is a capacity to incorporate the feeling of respect for into one's maxims; another is that the subjective ground is itself a particular kind of disposition or way of interpreting the feeling of respect; another interpretation is that the feeling of respect is somehow infused into the formation of maxims; still another is that it is about applying the feeling of respect to moral action. For a concise overview, see Yaron Senderowicz, "The Banality of Radical evil," pp. 17–32 in *Talking about Evil, Psychoanalytic, Social, and Cultural Perspectives*. Edited by Rina Lazar. (United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2016).

for the power of choice.”<sup>151</sup> The claim here is not that we cannot act on an incentive, but that the predisposition to personality is a uniquely moral *motive* [*Triebfeder*].<sup>152</sup>

As we know from various other places in Kant’s writings, the moral law and the feeling of respect are available to all human beings. But in the context of the *Religion* Kant refers to a way of being susceptible to (i.e. likely to be influenced by) respect for the moral law as itself a sufficient incentive for the power of choice. The power of choice concerns the choice between self-love and unconditioned maxims. If we consider the broader context of the argument, the reason for this emphasis has to do with 1) virtue and happiness together and also 2) cultivating a kind of receptivity that, as noted, is referred to as “moral feeling” in the *Metaphysics of Morals*.

On my reading, a distinction can and should be made between the attitudes or dispositions of the will and the feeling of respect associated with the respect for persons. In the next two chapters, I will explain how the *Gesinnung* becomes a space where practical and theoretical reason come together, and how the *Gesinnung* applies not only to an individual but to a community. It is here, I argue, that the question of technics needs to be raised, but it needs to be raised in such a way that it is not limited only to the unity or structure of consciousness.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed Kant’s conception of the feeling of respect. I investigated a particular moment in Heidegger’s early work that has been largely neglected in much of the philosophy of technology literature. This allowed me to identify certain elements of Kant’s account of subjectivity that might otherwise be read through the lens of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. Against Heidegger’s reading, I insisted that the feeling of respect for Kant is always associated with persons.

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<sup>151</sup> Kant, *Religion* 6:27, original emphasis. Reid’s See *Heidegger’s Moral Ontology*, especially p. 136.

<sup>152</sup> To be sure, Heidegger acknowledges this point about motive as well.

Furthermore, the feeling of respect, as it is described in the second *Critique*, is deeply connected to the notion of the highest good and how the highest good is possible. It involves how it is that we can work together toward an actual and merely possible end. Kant continues to take up this concern in the *Religion*. But he will begin to ask how we might be justified in making the claim about a “good disposition.” Previously he had said that it was rooted in a pure will. But he now decides to account for how the will is divided. How can a shared disposition be used to work toward the good without destroying the dignity of persons? This is a concern Kant takes up in *Religion*. He finds that for certain *effects* to endure, human beings need to rely on practices, external objects, forces and powers—such *effects* do not have their origin in any singular human subject.

CHAPTER 7  
KANT'S *RELIGION*: A PROGRAM AND A PROMISE  
PART I: MORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

**I. Introduction**

In his book, *Kant and Religion*, Allen Wood writes that “the right way to describe the relation between morality and religion for Kant is to say that religion goes beyond morality adding something to it that enriches the moral life.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter is one of two chapters in which I consider what this “something more” might disclose about originary technicity and, vice versa, what originary technicity helps us understand about the relationship between morality and religion. Both chapters follow the methodology used in Chapter 5. Recall in that chapter I used Stiegler’s criticism of Kant to reopen the question of technics within Kant’s writings. More specifically, I investigated certain aspects of Kant’s moral philosophy to gain a different perspective on what Kant has to say about the human-technical relation. In this chapter and the next, I continue this investigation, but now with a more direct engagement with Kant’s theory of religion.<sup>2</sup>

Though I draw from a select number of Kant’s writings, my primary concern is to offer a critical reconstructive reading of Kant’s *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. There are two main reasons we are turning to Kant’s theory of religion, and this text in particular. The

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<sup>1</sup> Allen Wood, *Kant and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the translation of *Religion* I use throughout the dissertation is from Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni translation in *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. 55–215 (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Henceforth I will only cite the paragraph numbers, i.e. 6:104. Occasional references will be made to Stephen Palmquist’s translation and Jonathan Francis Bennett’s translation, which will be marked accordingly. Though I will focus primarily on the argument of *Religion*, I will additionally draw from Kant’s *Metaphysics of Morals*, which he wrote less than five years (1797) after he wrote the *Religion* (1792/1793).

References to Kant’s works are given in the German Academy edition: *Gesammelte Schriften, herausgegeben von der Koniglich PreuBischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 29 vols. (Berlin: 1902–83; 2d ed., Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, for vols. I–IX). I additionally use the following German edition of Kant’s *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: Die Religion Innerhalb Der Grenzen Der Blossen Vernunft*. Edited by Karl Vorländer and Noack Hermann (Philosophische Bibliothek Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1978).

first reason, as I have said in previous chapters, is that the repression of technics in Kant's thought reaches a sort of climax in Kant's book on religion. This becomes especially clear in the next chapter when we encounter Kant's arguments about historical religion. The second reason we are looking more closely at Kant's theory of religion is because it is only after we turn to the topic of religion that we gain his full account of human subjectivity.

I argue that Kant's *Religion*, presents us with an account of human subjectivity that can accommodate—or at least can be adjusted to accommodate—many of the presuppositions behind Stiegler's theory of technicity: namely, that the human subject is constituted in and through their relationship with technics; that our very conception of time and therefore our orientation toward the future and the past is in some sense determined by the nature of our thrown existence; and, that human consciousness itself develops alongside technological evolution. The exegetical work presented in this chapter and the next is offered in support of such claims.

Though the two chapters are closely related, this chapter focuses on Kant's conception of moral anthropology, whereas the next focuses more directly on the role of Christ in Kant's *Religion*. The figure of Christ plays a crucial role in this text, and not only with respect to the individual's moral perfection. Kant's arguments suggest that Christ, construed as the personification of the good principle, has important theoretical implications as well.<sup>3</sup> Evidence for this claim can be found already in the *Groundwork*. Toward the end of that text, Kant suggests that if a critique of pure practical reason is to be carried out completely, it would need to “present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle, since there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application” (*G* 4:391). The task Kant outlines here is taken up in part in the second *Critique*.

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<sup>3</sup> Recall my claim in Chapter 5 that whenever Kant is led to renegotiate the line between theoretical and practical reason, we should expect the question of technicity to either arise or be repressed.

However, it is not complete until he introduces the figure of Christ as the “principle of the good.” Building on this claim, I argue that the figure of Christ functions as a supplement to human judgment as such (theoretical, practical, and aesthetic).

As I have suggested in previous chapters, my reading of Kant is critical and reconstructive. And so, in this chapter and the next I track the moral gains and losses that come with Kant’s theory of religion. The argument that ties the two chapters together can be stated as follows. On the one hand, Kant is able to offer crucial insight into how it is that we come to recognize other human beings as examples of the moral law and manifestations of the divine will. This insight reveals the depths of Kant’s humanism. On the other hand, Kant claims that Christ, as the archetype of human perfection founds a community, more precisely, a church. This church is the manifestation [*Darstellung*]<sup>4</sup> of the Kingdom of God. For all of Kant’s efforts to keep the political separate from the moral, in *Religion*, we learn that the good principle, personified in the figure of Christ, belongs to all of humanity as a matter of right. It is at this point where the individual and society converge, or, to use Stiegler’s terminology, where the “I” becomes a “We.” Since Kant also claims that Christianity is a “complete” religion, both natural and revealed, his argument in *Religion* raises important questions about the forces and powers that drive history.<sup>5</sup>

Since I will be referencing Kant’s *Religion* and discussing key passages in both this chapter and the next, I will use the first few pages of this chapter to introduce the text, provide

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<sup>4</sup> I translate Kant’s term “*Vorstellung*” as “representation” and *Darstellung* as “presentation.” I will have more to say about these two terms and Kant’s use of them in *Religion* in the next chapter.

<sup>5</sup> Kant thinks that the human being is determined by two conflicting impulses: to socialize and to be unsociable (i.e. individualize). In his lectures on anthropology, he explains this as a “propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society” (8:21). Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner, Robert B. Loudon (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

some context, and explain how I am using the lens of originary technicity to approach Kant's complex arguments.

**i. Reading Kant's *Religion***

Several commentaries now exist on Kant's *Religion*. While my reading of Kant has been informed by these various commentaries, it will not be our concern to review all of the various readings and interpretations of the text.<sup>6</sup> Instead, my reading focuses primarily on those sections, arguments, and ideas that help us see how Kant's theory of religion operates in similar ways to what Stiegler calls "originary technicity." However, I am not the first to push the question of technics onto Kant's *Religion*. This effort was already taken up by Jacques Derrida in his well-known essay "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone."<sup>7</sup> Since my reading of this text is inflected with Derridean insights, and since I will reference Stiegler's critical engagement with Derrida's reading of Kant, I will briefly clarify how I see my contribution both responding to and working against Derrida's reading.

Derrida's "Faith and Knowledge" transposes various ideas and arguments from Kant's *Religion* to address the so-called "return of religion" and presents a reading of Kant that supports his own claim that religion and science share a common origin. In fact, Derrida argues that the so-called return of religion cannot be understood today apart from the rise of modern technoscience. Why? Because contemporary religion, Derrida suggests, is allied with tele-

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<sup>6</sup> My reading of Kant was especially informed by Palmquist's thorough commentary. Many of my arguments and claims below are responding directly to Palmquist's interpretation of Kant's *Religion*. Stephen Palmquist and Immanuel Kant, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016). Unless otherwise noted, all references to Palmquist will be to this particular volume. Additional interlocutors include: James DiCenso, Adam Westra, H. J. Paton, Jonathan Francis Bennett, and Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson's argument in "Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant's Critical Works."

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002).

technoscience and all of its forces.<sup>8</sup> Derrida draws upon Kant's conception of radical evil to explain the paradoxical relationship between religion and technology. Put briefly, religion tends to both reject as well as embrace new forms of technology.

Derrida also draws on Kant's *Religion* to make a point about the relationship between religion and reason, which is a theme that Stiegler takes up as well. Religion and reason, Derrida insists, "develop in tandem" and draw from a "common resource." This common resource is described as an "elementary act of faith," "a testimonial pledge," and a structure of productive "performativity."<sup>9</sup> Without the performative experience of this "elementary act of faith" there would be "neither social bond nor address of the other, nor any performativity."<sup>10</sup>

Derrida's critical reading of Kant's *Religion* provoked Stiegler to address some of these themes in his own writings.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, Stiegler uses Derrida's reading of *Religion*, to clarify how tertiary retention presupposes an absolute past and an absolute future. I want to take a moment to explain Stiegler's position on this matter because it helps to explicate my own thesis regarding Kant's *Religion*. I will first state Stiegler's position using his terminology. I then explain what I think is at stake for him and how his concerns map onto Kant's.

First of all, Stiegler agrees with Derrida that technics will always be the condition for both science and religion, however, he situates himself against Derrida on one important point. He argues that the structure of faith that Derrida refers to in "Faith and Knowledge" depends on a more originary trust in an absolute past, a past that has "never been present." Indeed, for Stiegler, "No trust, no belief, however secular they are, are possible as effects...without a

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<sup>8</sup> Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," §37.

<sup>9</sup> Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," §29, §37.

<sup>10</sup> Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge," §37.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Stiegler, "Derrida and Technology: Fidelity at the Limits of Deconstruction and the Prosthesis of Faith," trans. by Richard Beardsworth, in *Jacques Derrida and the Future of the Humanities* ed. by Tom Conley (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 238–70.

program that is also a promise.”<sup>12</sup> Tertiary retention, according to Stiegler, requires a double synthesis: 1) trust in the “power to synthesize effectively what has happened” in the past and 2) trust in “what has been lived on from out of...this absolute past that has never been present, lived or effective.”<sup>13</sup> This double synthesis is passive on both sides in the sense that it was handed down by the “effectivity of an already-there...” (history of the exteriorization of memory) as well as an “*ineffective* already there (the absolute past).”<sup>14</sup> Though Stiegler’s language may be somewhat elusive, the point he is making is a relatively simple one. In his view, the desire to live is not an innate, instinctual drive that we can trust will always be there. Our desire to live, our desire to work toward a life “worth living,” is closely related to our faith in mediation, our faith in “non-immediacy” (i.e. trust in what lies already there).<sup>15</sup> As he writes: “The living is what *wants* to live...” the human, however, believes in life, only insofar as it “is haunted by the dead” and this haunting is only possible as a “technicity of life.”<sup>16</sup>

We have already explored Stiegler’s arguments regarding the problems and possibilities of technoscience. But, on my reading, the concern that Stiegler speaks to when he engages the topic of faith and knowledge, *vis-à-vis* Kant and Derrida, is a concern for the unconditioned.<sup>17</sup> It is not only our trust in the past that he is worried about, but our collective trust in the promise of an absolute future. With this last concern, in particular, Stiegler moves quite close to Kant, and without explicitly acknowledging it (or knowing it) his theory of technicity treats some of the same concerns that Kant attempts to treat in *Religion*.

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<sup>12</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 256.

<sup>13</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 256.

<sup>14</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 256.

<sup>15</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 257. I’m also alluding here to his text: *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology* (Germany: Polity Press, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 256.

<sup>17</sup> Stiegler recognizes that Derrida never thought the notion of technics could ever fully clarify the notion of writing, certainly not arch-writing. But in Stiegler’s view, it can clarify the notion of writing if our notion of technics is revised. For him, arch-writing is, effectively, quasi-transcendental technicity. See “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 255.

For instance, Kant, like Stiegler, recognizes that belief in the absolute future requires *trust* in history.<sup>18</sup> This is why scripture, and the scholarship that supports scripture, is crucial to the argument he makes in the *Religion*. Christianity requires that we trust what has been sent, through messages, by others (*R* 6:128–6:129). This functions as a kind of structure of faith that is by no means pure.<sup>19</sup> It too comes with risks. And yet Kant will also insist that we should be grateful for the gift of scripture (*R* 6:107). In fact, he goes as far as to say that it is an object worthy of our respect (*R* 6:107). Given the fact that the feeling of respect is typically associated with the moral law, this is not an insignificant claim.

Before moving on to explain the structure of my argument in this chapter, I want to draw attention to another place where Kant and Stiegler share common ground since this too will be important in my argument. In the following passage Stiegler explains what it means to say that faith has a history, and in the same context relates the “absolute of any faith” to universal reason.

To speak of prostheses of faith is in fact to speak of the *graft* and *adoption*. What Derrida thinks through the supplement is the originary graft. Not a supplementarity which could be produced in any conditions whatsoever, as if nothing was to be found under the name of the “proper.” On the contrary, the question is that of accounting for *attachment to the supplement*.<sup>20</sup> Everything is supplementary, and yet no supplement can stand in general for what is supplemented and what supplements. . . . This is the reason why faith has a history: the alphabetic support does not give access to the same regime of belief as hieroglyphic writing, or indeed any other form of trace. Every trace calls for a witness, supports a belief, but all traces do not make possible the same beliefs, *even if every belief calls upon the absolute past*: which is why universalizing reason is required and promised as the absolute of any faith.

When Stiegler suggests that faith has a history what he means is that mnemotechnics, technologies specifically designed to support and organize memory, have changed over time, and yet there is a principle of selection that helps to explain our attachment to certain types of technological objects and systems. Stiegler is also insisting, in the passage above, that the

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<sup>18</sup> Recall what Kant says about pragmatic history: “A history is composed pragmatically when it makes us prudent, that is, instructs the world how it can look after its advantage better than, or at least as well as, the world of earlier times” (*G* 4:417n).

<sup>19</sup> I’m referring here to a statement he makes in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (6:489). I discuss the full passage and reference it again below.

<sup>20</sup> My emphasis.

structure of faith—also known as the prosthesis of faith—is constituted through both adoption and grafting. By adoption he means a selection (which, as we saw in Chapter 4, depends on technological change and has important implications for human sociality); and his reference to a “graft” or “grafting” in this context signifies a process through which one inserts something alien (something one considers to be outside of oneself) into a preexisting structure.

My reading of Kant will make use of this Stiegler’s adoption-graft coupling. This is quite easy to do since Kant himself refers to both a process of adoption [*Annehmungen*] (of a disposition) and to that of grafting (e.g. vices are grafted [*gepfropft*] onto the predisposition toward the good).<sup>21</sup> Kant also thinks faith has a history. He abstracts a form of “pure religious faith” (*R* 6:124) from an evaluation of a history of faiths (plural).<sup>22</sup> But whereas Stiegler suggests that “no supplement can stand in general for what is supplemented,” Kant’s position is such that the figure of Christ can be understood as that which stands in general for that which is supplemented.

## II. Kant’s *Religion*: Summary and Overview of Important Themes

Kant is treating a number of topics in *Religion* and his argument is operating at various levels. It will not be necessary to provide a detailed summary nor unpack everything that is at stake in the text. Nevertheless, since many of my claims in what follows depend on close readings of key passages, it will be beneficial to begin with a brief overview of Kant’s argument as it appears across the four essays that make up *Religion*. After providing this summary, I isolate and unpack four main themes that I have selected to guide the rest of this study.

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<sup>21</sup> As I will expound upon below, Kant suggests that it is our duty to “adopt the good disposition”; he also refers to a “moral disposition” and a “religious disposition.”

<sup>22</sup> Historical faith functions as a vehicle for “pure faith of religion” (*R* 6:119).

## i. Two Experiments

In the preface to the second edition, Kant notes that *Religion* runs two “experiments,” which can be represented with two concentric circles (*R* 6:12). The first experiment, represented by the inner circle, is designed to “abstract...from all experience” by attempting to construct the “pure *rational system* of religion.” The second, represented by the outer circle, shows how a “*historical system*,” given by some revealed religion already at hand, points back to the same rational (inner) core of religious truth. Kant’s description of the two circles seems to suggest that there is some overlap between the two experiments and their possible unification, however, commentators disagree about how exactly they relate and where they appear in the text (*R* 6:12).<sup>23</sup> While the details of these debates are not especially important for our purposes, the relationship between the two experiments does raise some questions about Kant’s methodology and how his relationship to the Christian tradition relates to his arguments in the text. For instance, some readers think Kant’s positive treatment of the Christian tradition at least compared to other religions, indicates that Kant is attempting to show how his philosophy can be brought into harmony with the Christian tradition.<sup>24</sup> Read in this way, the first experiment lays out Kant’s moral theory as he had already articulated it in the second *Critique* and the *Groundwork* and the second experiment is an attempt to translate Christian teachings as teaching

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<sup>23</sup> Roughly, the first experiment is concerned with explaining how it is possible for the human to be torn between good and evil principles and how it is possible to work toward moral perfection. Since the majority of this argument happens in the first essay, the second experiment seems to happen in three chapters/essays that follow.

Commentators generally agree that the second experiment is more pronounced. Briefly: it compares a historical faith, namely, Christianity, to what Kant describes as a “pure system of religion.” See Lawrence R Pasternack, *Philosophy Guidebook to Kant on Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (Taylor & Francis, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Kant treats various religious topics and references a few different religious traditions, but his primary engagement with religion is Christianity. Some commentators use the issue of censorship to argue that Kant is insincere about his claims regarding the value of Christianity. Others insist that Kant’s use of Christian symbols suggests that he thought it was necessary to adopt the Christian account of the archetype as the “literal Son of God.” For an overview of some of the various positions on this topic, see Palmquist, pp. 27–30. As I read him, the issue of censorship is clearly a concern for Kant, but it hardly explains Kant’s use of Christian resources in particular. Indeed, it is quite possible that Kant found Christianity to be a necessary supplement for a variety of reasons: practical, theoretical, and I would add technical.

that correspond to his practical philosophy.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, one could add to this that Kant is merely attempting to make use of Christian teachings to make his practical philosophy more communicable. Others explain the two experiments by appealing to Kant's theory of aesthetics. Stephen Palmquist's reading is informative on this point. He suggests that whereas the first experiment describes the essence of religion in terms of "an a priori rational concept," establishing the necessary conditions for its possibility, the second attempts "to discern the extent to which Christianity exhibits this a priori concept (i.e., fulfills the necessary conditions for 'actual religion')." <sup>26</sup> The problem then is to explain how such a claim can be read alongside the argument of the first *Critique*. More specifically, one must explain how this corresponds to Kant's claim that no intuition can be given that would be adequate to the ideas (i.e. rational concepts).<sup>27</sup> In other words, how can a historical religious tradition exhibit an a priori concept?<sup>28</sup> We will deal more directly with issues concerning presentation and representation [*Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*] in the next chapter.

It has also been suggested that Kant makes concessions for Christianity in the *Religion* only so that he could get his essays past censorship.<sup>29</sup> The first essay, which deals more with Kant's account of human nature, passed through censorship in 1792. However, the second essay,

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<sup>25</sup> This is sometimes referred to as the "Religion as translation Thesis." See Chris L. Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant's Religion* (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Palmquist argues that the distinction between the two experiments can be regarded as an early application of the duty versus right distinction (duty for internal freedom, right for external freedom), which forms the basis of the argument in Kant's *MS*. See Palmquist, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> Kant maintains that to establish the reality of concepts, we need to rely on intuitions. "If the concepts are empirical, the intuitions are called examples. If they are pure concepts of the understanding, the intuitions are called schemata" (*CJ* 5:351).

<sup>28</sup> In the first *Critique*, Kant suggests that whenever we find ourselves holding to an opinion we should "make an experiment" [*Versuch machen*] by sharing our opinion with others, inquiring whether the evidence that persuaded us has "the same effect on the reason of others that [it had] on ours" (*CPR*, A821/B849).

<sup>29</sup> After the second essay was rejected, it was suggested that the first essay be published on its own. Kant, however, declined this offer. He said that the essay, on its own, would present an "odd figure." Instead, he offered an entirely different essay, namely, the same essay I referenced and discussed in Chapter 5 ("Theory and Practice"). I raise the issue here because it suggests that Kant found the first essay to be fundamental for understanding the argument in the other three essays. For a longer discussion, see Palmquist pp. 3–4.

which considers theological themes and Christian doctrines more directly, was initially rejected. The first essay is considered to be more “philosophical” though he draws upon biblical passages and presents theological themes to articulate what he thinks is anthropologically true about human nature: that we are originally good but corrupted by evil. In fact, Kant’s appeal to anthropology is another point of debate. Since it concerns the relationship between theoretical and practical reason, I will briefly summarize what is at stake in these debates.

If it is the case that Kant arrives at an a priori claim about human nature based on empirical observation or research, this would stand against the rules of his own epistemology. The following passage is often cited by those who question Kant’s methodology with respect to the two experiments, and his appeal to anthropology.

Hence, since we cannot derive this disposition, or rather its highest ground, from a first act of the power of choice in time, we call it a characteristic of the power of choice that pertains to it by nature (even though the disposition is in fact grounded in freedom). However, that by the ‘human being’ of whom we say that he is good or evil by nature we are entitled to understand not individuals (for otherwise one human being could be assumed to be good, and another evil, by nature) but the whole species, this can only be demonstrated later on, if it transpires from anthropological research that the grounds that justify us in attributing one of these two characters to a human being as innate are of such a nature that there is no cause for exempting anyone from it, and that the character therefore applies to the species. (*R* 6:26)

In other words, it would require *anthropological research* to determine if the evil propensity belongs innately to all members of the human species.<sup>30</sup> Why does Kant find it necessary to ground his argument about the good and evil nature of the human being upon anthropology, which, for Kant, is an empirical science? Allen Wood, for one, argues that Kant’s reference to the origin of evil should be related to what Kant takes to be an “empirical fact” about our “social unsociability.”<sup>31</sup> In his “Idea for a Universal History,” Kant describes the “unsocial sociality” of

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<sup>30</sup> On why Kant does not provide a formal proof in *Religion*, see Allen W. Wood, “The Evil in Human Nature,” pp. 31–57 in *Kant’s Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gordan E. Michalson (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> See Allen Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1999). Wood comments that Palmquist’s argument is “highly inventive.” To this Palmquist retorts: “...surely Wood’s own theory—that Kant grounds the very origin of evil in the empirical fact of our ‘social unsociability’—is not so much as hinted by Kant,” Palmquist, p. 62 n. 124.

man as “a tendency to enter the social state, combined with a perpetual resistance to that tendency which is continually threatening to dissolve it.”<sup>32</sup> However, if it is the case that Kant is making an empirical point to address a transcendental problem this pushes against the methodology he employs throughout this critical project.<sup>33</sup>

In order to defend his claim that the first experiment describes the essence of religion in terms of an a priori rational concept, Palmquist insists that we read the two experiments according to two different perspectives: one practical, the other theoretical. Whereas the first essay is concerned with questioning the source of evil, the second and third essays demonstrate how and why the only appropriate response to evil is to build a community. It is therefore only when we shift to the perspective of the community and the work that the community is to perform that we need to shift toward objectivity and thus to theoretical reason. Though I am not entirely convinced that this perspectival difference completely explains the relationship between the two experiments or Kant’s appeal to anthropology in the first essay, I agree that the shift from the individual to the community is important for understanding the argument of *Religion*. Indeed, it is my contention that it is one of Kant’s main concerns in the text to convey the relationship between the individual’s moral disposition and the disposition of an ethical community (which requires a unity of hearts rather than a unity in a collective will). And as we will see, the figure of Christ as archetype is essential for one’s individual transformation and historical religion is essential for bringing about a change of heart for the community.

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<sup>32</sup> Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, p. 286. Also see, again, Palmquist’s commentary, p. 62 n. 124.

<sup>33</sup> For instance, Peter Fenves interprets this appeal to anthropology as a direct (though unconscious) contradiction of Kant’s claim to be following a strictly a priori method in *Religion*. See Peter Fenves, *Late Kant: Towards Another Law of the Earth* (New York: Routledge), cited by Palmquist, p. 62 n. 124.

## ii. Summary of Kant's Argument

In the first essay of the *Religion*, Kant declares that human is originally good, but nevertheless has a propensity for evil. Good and evil are represented as “two equally self-subsisting transient causes affecting the human being” (*R* 6:11). In spite of the fact that the very ground for the adoption of maxims is corrupted by evil, Kant continues to insist that the human is free and responsible. This creates various tensions that Kant articulates and works through in each of the four essays.<sup>34</sup>

The second essay picks up on this struggle between what Kant refers to as good and evil principles (see especially *R* 6:79ff). “To become a morally good human being is not enough simply to let the germ of the good which lies in our species develop unhindered; there is in us an active and opposing cause of evil which is also to be combatted” (*R* 6:57). Kant argues that it is possible for us to restore our originally good disposition, but we cannot do this on our own. Support must come from outside of ourselves, and yet it this going beyond ourselves also produces negative effects—evil effects, in fact. It is in this context that Kant first identifies the figure of Christ as the “personified idea of the good principle” [*Personifiziert Idee des guten Prinzips*] (*R* 6:61). Christ, he suggests, is the “ideal of moral perfection,” the “archetype of the moral disposition,” and the “figure who represents humanity in its perfection” (*R* 6:61). Though the figure of Christ is associated with a historical example, Kant insists that the archetype does not come from an example we find in experience. It is already, miraculously, lodged in human reason.<sup>35</sup> The archetype serves not only as a motivating force against evil he also brings unity and harmony to what I think can best be described as the human spirit. It is only “through the

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<sup>34</sup> Some tensions, however are not resolved. Instead Kant explains what is necessary to hold certain tensions together.

<sup>35</sup> See Palmquist and Immanuel Kant, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016).

adoption of his disposition can we hope ‘to become children of God’” [“*durch Annehmung seiner Gesinnungen können wir hoffen ‘Kinder Gottes zu werden’*”] (R 6:61).

The third essay of *Religion* shifts somewhat away from the figure of Christ and focuses more on the work that must be accomplished through the “ethical community.” It is through the ethical community that each person becomes a member of the kingdom of God. Nonetheless, after introducing the antinomy between the two principles of sanctifying faith (i.e. justification and sanctification),<sup>36</sup> Kant appeals once again to the archetype in order to explain how this “remarkable antinomy” can be resolved.

The third and fourth essays both concerns how it is that Christianity, a historical faith, was/is able to successfully disseminate true religion without allowing historical religion to gain the upper hand. The last essay—notably—features a discussion on the proper role of religion in moral education as well as the proper (and improper) forms of divine service.

Having laid out this brief summary, I turn now to the four main themes that are important for my reading of Kant through the lens of originary technicity.

### **iii. Four Guiding Themes**

In this section I will unpack the following four themes: 1) Kant’s definition of religion and its role in relation to the moral life and human perfection; 2) Kant’s understanding of human nature or moral anthropology. More specifically, I will sketch out Kant’s claims regarding the subjective ground for the adoption of maxims, i.e. the moral disposition [*Gesinnung*]; 3) The figure of Christ as archetype and personified principle of the good; 4) The history and form of pure religious faith and the nature and purpose of the ethical community. These are, admittedly,

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<sup>36</sup> Though we will not be able to treat the topic at length, here we can note that Kant insists that saving faith holds two conditions for its hope of blessedness: “one with respect to what it itself cannot bring about, namely the lawful undoing (before a judge) of actions done; the other with respect to what it can and should bring about, namely the conversion to a new life conformable to its duty” (R 6:117).

broad themes and due to the systematic nature of Kant's arguments, none of them can be treated in complete isolation from the others. Nevertheless, they take us into the very heart of Kant's argument in *Religion*.

1. *Kant's conception of religion in relation to the moral life*

One of Kant's main concerns in the *Religion* is to determine how religion fits broadly into other aspects of human life. For instance, he considers the role that religious representation, practice, ritual, and tradition can and ought to play in moral education. He addresses the relationship between religion and political institutions and considers the way religion works to bring human beings together in a community and the ways in which it divides them. But perhaps most importantly he needs to determine what religion can add to human life such that it does not interfere with the human's moral vocation. In the first Preface, he writes: "Morality thus inevitably leads to religion, and through religion it extends itself" (*R* 6:6).

It has become fairly common to read the *Religion* alongside the third *Critique*.<sup>37</sup> But I think it is just important, if not more so, to read the *Religion* as a companion to his *Metaphysics of Morals*. My argument in this chapter will make use of what Kant refers to as a "duty of religion."<sup>38</sup> In this chapter and the next, I will also draw upon the distinction he makes between the formal and material aspects of religion and the method of abstraction that he applies to historical religion to determine the form of "pure religious faith."

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<sup>37</sup> DiCenso and Palmquist for instance both stress the relationship between these two texts in their extensive commentaries. Kant contrasts the symbolic with the schematic in the third *Critique* when he introduces two different types of hypotyposis. A crucial aspect of Kant's theory of symbolism is that it is rooted in analogy. I discuss Kant's theory of symbolism in the next chapter.

<sup>38</sup> See my discussion on ends in Chapter 5, especially pp. 196–199 for additional context.

## 2. *Kant's moral anthropology and its relation to his full account of human subjectivity*

In the first essay, Kant presents an account of human nature in which the human is said to be divided between three predispositions toward the good and a propensity to evil. Kant's description of the human in this essay, and throughout, is important for grasping Kant's full account of human subjectivity.<sup>39</sup> Kant's notion of the *Gesinnung* is especially important in this context. On this point, I agree with Allen Wood who claims that Kant's *Religion* is the "natural byproduct of the practical need to unpack the nature of the moral disposition and its relationship to the ideas of God and immortality as transcendental objects."<sup>40</sup> However, beyond Wood, I further emphasize the importance of what Kant refers to as the "religious disposition." Whereas the moral disposition is "produced" with an act of the will, the religious disposition is the product of a wish. In one notable, though rarely cited passage, Kant claims that "the religious disposition," "accompanies all of our actions done in conformity to duty" (*R* 6:154n). He says explicitly that this is not to be interpreted as an "act of religion" and yet we are responsible for its production (in a community). I argue that is one place in particular where Stiegler's understanding of a "synthesis of faith" can be used to further articulate what Kant's notion of a universal religious disposition means for human subjectivity and morality.

## 3. *The Figure of Christ*

The figure of Christ plays a crucial role in the *Religion*. Though I will discuss the role of Christ in the next chapter extensively, it is important for nearly all of the arguments and claims that Kant advances in the text. To state my argument briefly, though I agree that the figure of Christ plays a symbolic role in moral education and what Kant refers to as practical faith, this

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<sup>39</sup> For Kant, the determination of the *Gesinnung* cannot determine the action of an individual person.

<sup>40</sup> I'm quoting here from Firestone and Jacobs's, *In Defense of Kant's Religion* (Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 40. Here Firestone and Jacobs are summarizing Wood's position.

part of Kant's argument has been exaggerated in the scholarship, especially by those who are sympathetic to Kant's position.<sup>41</sup> I argue that this emphasis is part of a wider attempt to read *Religion* as though religious narratives and religious language represent the ideas of reason in ways that other modes of exhibition [*Darstellung*] cannot. While I do not doubt that Kant's theory of symbolism is behind some of his arguments in the *Religion*, this reading does not allow us to grasp all of the features of Kant's argument. More to the point, the symbolic reading obscures Kant's strategic use of *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung* and, subsequently, makes it easy to pass over his specifications regarding how concepts, ideas, and ideals can and cannot be presented and represented. The question of technicity exposes the limits of the symbolic reading.

Kant will indeed make the claim that scripture presents us with a mode of revealing [*Darstellung*] of which we cannot dispense. But by assuming that all of Kant's claims about religion can be described as supports for the moral life or that religion helps us make sense of the world and our place in it, we take it for granted that religion, as Kant understands it, only operates and affects our thinking. We therefore remain blind to the ways in which religion operates not only as a system, but becomes through principles a force that affects the spirit, soul, and human vitality (i.e. natural perfection).<sup>42</sup> Hence the need to attend to matters of natural and moral perfection. This leads us to a fourth theme.

#### 4. *This history and form of pure religious faith and the nature and purpose of the ethical community*

The final theme, which will be taken up in part in this chapter but will continue into the next, concerns Kant's treatment of ecclesiastical or historical faith. Religion, for Kant, is not

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<sup>41</sup> For an important recent collection of essays on *Religion*, see Firestone and Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant's Religion*.

<sup>42</sup> I am here referencing the natural perfections as Kant treats them in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. See *MS* 6:445ff. Kant of course refers to moral perfection throughout the text, but it also appears that Christianity in particular has a way of affecting and ordering natural perfections.

simply a carrier of meaning or a way to support the moral life. As we will see, religion for Kant appears to have a tendency and a dynamic all on its own. Much like Stiegler's theory of technicity, religion for Kant exists somewhere in-between the living and the nonliving. And also like Stiegler, Kant thinks that religion plays a crucial role in the binding together of a community toward a future becoming. To make this argument, I will need to attend to Kant's conception of the ethical community and his arguments regarding the history and form of pure religious faith.

### **III. Religion and Human Subjectivity**

Now that I have laid out a summary and defined the four themes that will concern us in this chapter and the next, I can return to the thesis for this chapter and explain how the rest of the chapter is organized. I begin with a brief discussion of Kant's definition of religion, which is complex and multilayered. To make sense of what appears to be conflicting claims, I draw upon a few key passages in the *Metaphysics of Moral* to explain Kant's theory of religion. Next, we turn to Kant's moral anthropology. I argue that the *Gesinnung*, i.e. the subjective ground, becomes for Kant a sort of mediating space where the intelligible realm meets the sensible realm. Additionally, in order to offer a complete account of Kant's understanding of human subjectivity, I attend not only to the predispositions toward the good (i.e. the three determinations of the human being I referenced in the last chapter) and the propensity toward evil, but to the two determinations of "divine blessedness" and the "religious disposition."

Again, the reason we are working through these concepts is to present a more complete picture of Kant's account of human subjectivity. Once this has been achieved, it becomes possible to revise Stiegler's arguments in ways that make them more conducive to ethical reflection and, vice versa, identify ways in which Kant's theory and critique of religion might be pushed in the direction of a critique of technics. I can make this point more concrete.

In previous chapters, I suggested that we read Stiegler's account of tertiary retention alongside Kant's *Gesinnung*. I further suggested that we interpret the *Gesinnung* as a complex set of ontological coordinates that function in various ways to open possibilities for the human. Given Kant's insistence on human freedom it follows that we are responsible for this disposition, no matter how complex. Moreover, we can add that the organization of the various determinations that constitute the *Gesinnung* are not the result of a synthesis or an "I think" but depends on moral freedom. In fact, it is possible to interpret the *personalitas moralis* as the guide that determines how theoretical and practical reason are to relate. However, things get much more complicated when Kant attempts to articulate the history of pure religious faith. As we will see in the next chapter, when Kant turns to describing the ethical community and the first "true church," he introduces additional determinations in order to account for the unity and orientation of the community. This raises additional concerns about moral freedom, which I critically assess.

#### **i. Kant's Definition of Religion**

Kant is working with various definitions of religion. The definition he uses most frequently, and the one that is perhaps the most straightforward, is that religion is the recognition or observance of all of our duties as divine commands (*R* 6:153). He also makes an important distinction between religion and faith. He insists that while there are a variety of faiths, there is only one true religion (*R* 6:108). Hence religion is singular, faith is plural. Religion grows out of morality and "hides inside him and depends on moral dispositions" (*R* 6:108). Faith, however, is contingent and manifests differently in different religious communities. As one commentator explains: faith "refers to the external (sensible) manifestation of religion in the form of various myths, rituals, and symbols, whereas religion proper is a philosophical concept that appeals to a

person's hidden inward convictions."<sup>43</sup> The plurality of historical faiths, according to Kant, are the result of disagreements over doctrines and other contingent features of a particular faith.

Kant's account of religion and his definition of faith can be broken down further. He additionally refers to "ecclesiastical faith," "historical faith," "pure religious faith," and "statutory faith." He also distinguishes between revealed and natural religion, learned and natural religion (*R* 6:155), and statutory and true religion (*R* 6:104). And he further specifies that religion has a formal aspect and a material aspect. Kant makes use of all of these distinctions in *Religion*, adding further complexities to his argument.

Though we cannot parse out these various definitions and distinctions, I allude to some of them here to emphasize the fact that Kant's theory of religion is riddled with tensions—tensions that if not sorted out properly look very much like contradictions. On my reading, behind all these various definitions and the problems that Kant is wrestling with are two tensions in particular that emerge when we are reading Kant through the lens of ordinary technicity. The first is the tension between theoretical and practical reason, which I have already mentioned above. The second is a tension between natural and moral perfection. Since the latter tension leads us more directly to Kant's moral anthropology we will begin here.

Perhaps one of the most striking claims that Kant makes in the *Religion* comes in the first essay when he declares that we have "universal human duty to *elevate* ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, i.e. to the archetype of the moral disposition in its entire purity, and for this the very idea, which is presented to us by reason for emulation, can give us force" (*R* 6:61).<sup>44</sup> *How can we have a duty to elevate ourselves to moral perfection if it is not within our power?* The

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<sup>43</sup> See Palmquist, p. 284. Though I generally agree with this, this description does not completely account for how dissemination and propagation function in ways that benefit both the evil and good principles.

<sup>44</sup> Late in the essay he writes: "The highest goal of the moral perfection of finite creatures, never completely attainable by human beings, is, however, the love of the Law" (*R* 6:146).

answer to this question is crucial for understanding how religion fits within Kant's wider conception of human subjectivity. Before moving on to discuss Kant's moral anthropology, however, I want to add a point of clarification that will help us interpret Kant's arguments as I reconstruct them below.

Above I mentioned that Kant makes a distinction between the material and formal aspects of religion. This distinction is closely related to what he refers to as the "duty of religion." Though he utilizes this distinction in the *Religion* he explains it more explicitly in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. After treating religion as a general part of the doctrine of duties, he finds it necessary to determine religion's limits with respect to the boundaries of science. He explains that religion has a formal aspect and a material aspect: its formal aspect is the "sum of all duties as divine commands" and belongs to philosophic morals. The formal aspect also expresses the idea of God, which "reason makes for itself" (*MS* 6:487). Kant renders this in terms of a duty that humanity has to itself.

Recall the discussion in Chapter 5 regarding final ends. Kant thinks we choose ends freely, and that the faculty that chooses ends is the faculty of reason itself. We choose ends, and we need to believe that those ends are actually *possible* even if they cannot be achieved in this life. Final ends correspond to the duties that we have that transcend the world.<sup>45</sup> In setting ends, the human being wills the means to those ends. However, only certain ends establish laws for the maxim of actions (*MS* 6:389). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant tells us that there are two ends that are also our duties: the happiness of others and our own perfection.<sup>46</sup> The same scheme will

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<sup>45</sup> On the duties that transcend our duties in the world, see Chapter 5, pp. 193–198.

<sup>46</sup> Kant also provides a "supreme principle for the doctrine of virtue: 'act in accordance with a maxim of *ends* that it can be a universal law for everyone to have'" (*MS* 6:395). He grounds the duties of virtue in the ends of our own perfection and the happiness of others.

function to set up the argument of *Religion* and it is behind Kant's claims regarding our so-called "duty of religion."<sup>47</sup>

A duty of religion is a duty that we have with respect to that which lies entirely beyond the limits of our experience, but "whose possibility is met with in our ideas" (*MS* 6:444; 6:487). In its singular form, it is the recognition of all duties as divine commands. Kant adds that the idea that "presents" itself (here he uses *darbietende*, to offer or present, exhibit) to reason (i.e. the "idea of God") ought to be applied to the moral law within us, where it becomes "most fruitful" (*MS* 6:444). Kant says it is a "duty of the human being to himself" to apply this idea (*MS* 6:444).<sup>48</sup> He makes this point in the passage below:

The ground on which a human being is to think of all his duties in keeping with this *formal aspect* of religion (their relation to a divine will given a priori) is only subjectively logical. That is to say, we cannot very well make obligation (moral constraint) intuitive for ourselves without thereby thinking of *another's* will, namely God's (of which reason in giving universal laws is only the spokesman).—But this duty *with regard to God* (properly speaking, with regard to the idea we ourselves make of such a being) is a duty of a human being to himself, that is, it is not objective, an obligation to perform certain services for another, but only subjective, for the sake of strengthening the moral incentive in our own lawgiving reason. (*MS* 6:487)

Having sketched out some of the main features of Kant's definition of religion, we can now turn directly how Kant's complex understanding of religion fits into his broader conception of human subjectivity.

## ii. Religion and Human Perfection, a Higher Highest Good

As I indicated above, one of Kant's concerns in *Religion* is to determine the proper role of religion, not only with respect to the moral life, but in relation to human society, politics, and education more broadly. However, it is important to see that Kant is not *primarily* concerned with how religion factors into our efforts to bring about the highest good—at least not the highest

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<sup>47</sup> This is especially clear in the preface to the first edition (*R*, 6:4–6:6).

<sup>48</sup> This claim should be read alongside the second *Critique* 5:140–5:142, where Kant describes why it is that the concept of God grows out of morality rather than physics.

good that is articulated in the second *Critique*.<sup>49</sup> *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, I argue, is a book about striving toward a *higher*, highest good. The higher highest good is another way of referring to the “highest good in the world” (R 6:173).

In the very first note to the first preface, Kant repeats his claim that the formal determining ground in the concept of duty is lawfulness itself. But now he admits that this alone may not be enough. To be sure, morality does not *need* religion. The *formal* determining ground of free action is lawfulness; the *material* determining ground of the free power of choice needs no end. Thus, morality does not need a reference to an end that would precede the determination of the will. And yet, “it may well be that it has a necessary reference to such an end, not as the ground of its maxims, but as a necessary consequence accepted in conformity to them” (R 6:4). Why does morality need a reference to an end? What sort of consequence is both necessary and in conformity with duty? Kant’s answer to the first question is that without a reference to an end, no determination of the will can take place at all, since “no such determination can occur without an effect, and its representation...” (R 6:4). There is nothing wrong with presuming that with the determination of the will comes effects, and these effects can be related to a final end. But notice that Kant’s point is not simply that it is acceptable to imagine that our good deeds will be rewarded or that there is a higher power at work that will join virtue with happiness. He insists

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<sup>49</sup> I am not the first to claim that Kant is working with a different notion of the highest good in the *Religion*. Though many commentators agree that Kant’s notion of the highest good is implied by many of his claims in the *Religion*, there are debates about the way in which Kant’s conception of the highest good changes over time. In the *CPrR* the highest good is that of the “unconditioned totality of objects of pure practical reason” (5:108). Palmquist (p. 15) points out that Kant references the “highest good” only a few times in the *Religion*, and only four times after the *Preface*. Eckart Förster argues that in the *Opus Postumum*, and even before that in the *Religion*, Kant views the *highest good* not as an objective relation among the totality of beings but a subjective state of a particular being. As a result, the highest good becomes something that is within our reach. For a critical discussion of Förster’s interpretation, see Guyer, “Beauty, Systematicity, and the *Highest Good*: Eckart Förster’s Kant’s Final Synthesis,” *Inquiry* 46, (2003): 195–214. Lawrence Pasternack claims that Kant relies on his previous formulation of the highest good and introduces a new account in *Religion*, one that “strikes a remarkable compromise between the positions of the second and third *Critiques*.” Pasternack, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Immanuel Kant’s Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: An Interpretation and Defense* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 54, quoted by Palmquist p. 15.

that we *need* a reference to an end. It is a need “effected in him by morality” (6:6). This need is also described as a lack. “[I]t is the human being’s own fault if such a need is found in him; but in this case too the need could not be relieved through anything else: for whatever does not originate from himself and his own freedom provides no remedy for a lack in his morality” (R 6:4). In other words, we cannot make up for our own lack by appealing to something that does not have its origins in freedom. However, in order to represent this end *impartially*, it must be represented as *if it came from someone else* and yet could also be adopted as our own (R 6:98). It must be an end that we can make our own and in presupposing we can make it our own, it already includes ethical principles. The appropriate term here is neither autonomy or heteronomy but rather auto-heteronomy. Kant’s point is that reason *cannot* remain indifferent to the end result of our good conduct (R 6:5). Morality must fashion for itself the “concept” of a final end, that is, a reference to the *unification* of ends. And he adds here: “For only in this way can an objective practical reality be given to the combination, which we simply cannot do without, of the purposiveness [deriving] from freedom and the purposiveness of nature” (R 6:6). Kant here is alluding to the argument he made in the third *Critique*. In that context, he argues that the harmony can be achieved from an independent standpoint, from which we do not judge how nature is constituted objectively (that is the job of understanding) or how the world ought to be (the job of reason), but from which we merely regulate or reflect on our cognition in a way that enables us to regard it as systematically unified. This is the task of reflective judgement, whose a priori principle is to regard nature as purposive or teleological, “but only as a regulative principle of the faculty of cognition.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Kant, *CJ* 5:197. The Kingdom of Ends is a regulative idea in this sense.

However, in the *Religion* Kant's main concern is not about harmonizing the purposiveness of both nature and freedom. Instead, Kant is concerned with explaining how we can use our *need* to reference an end to organize human communities and unify hearts. The unification of ends will not be found in the "I think" nor is it achieved through reflective judgment. It happens through a synthesis of faith. This synthesis requires that the subjective side of religion becomes public.

It may be helpful here to refer back to Kant's conception of prudence. Kant claims that prudence itself has a public aspect and a private aspect.

The word 'prudence' is taken in two senses: in the one it may bear the name of 'knowledge of the world' [*Weltklugheit*] in the other that of 'private prudence.' The first is a human being's skill [*die Geschicklichkeit eines Menschen*] in influencing others so as to use them for his own purposes. The second is the insight [*die Einsicht*] to unite all these purposes to his own enduring advantage. The latter is properly that to which the worth even of the former is reduced, and if someone is prudent in the first sense but not in the second, we might better say of him that he is clever and cunning but, on the whole, nevertheless imprudent. (G 4:416n)

In this passage, we learn that public prudence is about "knowledge of the world" or "sophistication." This knowledge can be used to influence others for the sake of one's own purposes. Private prudence, however, is an "insight" [*Einsicht*] into how to properly unite all purposes to one's own "enduring advantage."<sup>51</sup>

Shifting back to the *Religion*, Kant explains in a footnote, that for those who maintain that the formal determining ground as such (i.e. lawfulness) is not alone sufficient as the determining ground in the concept of duty, and yet still recognize that it cannot be self-love, two options remain. The determining ground for the concept of duty can either be 1) one's own perfection, which is rational or 2) happiness of others, which is empirical (*R* 6:4n). Kant makes it clear that neither are sufficient.

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<sup>51</sup> *Einsicht*, which can also be translated as "discernment." See Chapter 5, pp. 171–172

With regard to the first option, if by “perfection” one means moral perfection (i.e. a will unconditionally obedient to the law), then one is “defining in a circle” (*R* 6:4n). Alternatively, if one has in mind natural perfection (i.e. human enhancement, the perfection of skills in the arts, sciences, tastes, physical agility, etc.) this also leads to a problem. Natural perfections can only be *conditionally* good that is to say, they are only “good on the condition that their use does not conflict with the moral law (which alone commands unconditionally); hence natural perfection cannot be, when made into an end, the principle of the concepts of duty” (*R* 6:4n). The same also applies to the second option. Happiness, even when it is directed at the happiness of others, can only be *conditionally* good. Morality, as Kant frequently reminds us, is about the *worthiness* to be happy.

However, this does not quite settle the issue. Once again, the *Metaphysics of Morals* is instructive on these points. After putting forward the claim that we have a duty (to humanity) to make human perfection our end, he further explains that this duty consists of the cultivation of faculties and the cultivation of the will. The former he associates with “natural predispositions.” The human being has a duty to raise himself up above his animality. “[I]t is not merely that *technically practical reason* counsels him to do this as a means to his further purposes (of art); *morally practical reason commands* it absolutely and makes this end his duty, so that he may be worthy of the humanity that dwells within him” (*MS* 6:387). The cultivation of the will requires that we strive for the purest virtuous disposition, and this means making the law the incentive of one’s actions that conform to duty. “This disposition is inner morally practical perfection. Since it is a feeling of the effect that the lawgiving will within the human being exercises on his capacity to act in accordance with his will, it is called moral feeling, a special sense (*sensus*

*moralis*)...” (MS 6:387).<sup>52</sup> If I am reading him correctly, Kant thinks there are two sides to human perfection. One has to do with human enhancements, and the other has to do with moral perfection. In *Religion*, both types of perfection need to be organized and guided by the principle of the good.

We can fill out Kant’s conception of human perfection if we attend to his conception of virtue. In the second *Critique*, Kant insists that “Any moral perfection that a human being can reach is always only virtue” (CPrR 128). A virtue is “a consciousness of a continual propensity to transgression...” together with “progress *ad infinitum*” to the goal of holiness.<sup>53</sup> What is holiness? Holiness is “complete conformity of the will with the moral law.” It is a “perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment’ of his existence. Since it is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can only be found in an *endless progress*...” (CPrR 5:122, original emphasis).<sup>54</sup>

In the *Religion*, Kant defines virtue as “the firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one’s duty strictly” (R 6:23n). “The true strength of virtue is a *tranquil mind* with a considered and firm resolution to put the law of virtue into practice.”<sup>55</sup> Virtue, then, is the ongoing choice and the resolute decision to continue to improve ourselves.<sup>56</sup> Moral perfection, true virtue, may not

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<sup>52</sup> The rest of the passage reads: “It is true that moral sense is often misused in a visionary way, as if (like Socrates’ *daimon*) it could precede reason or even dispense with reason’s judgment. Yet, it is moral perfection by which one makes one’s object every particular end that is also a duty” (MS 6:387).

<sup>53</sup> See also MS 6:409. The judgment we are looking for is always the “quality” of the “man” that he is “continually putting off.” For Kant, virtue cannot be about habituation or imitation. If the moral life was about either of these things it would mean the loss of freedom. On this see Palmquist, p. 164, n. 55.

<sup>54</sup> In his lectures on ethics, Kant defines holiness as “that state of mind from which and evil desire never arises” (29:604). In the *Religion*, however, Christ as the prototype must have had all the same temptations. See Eddis Miller, Kant’s ‘*Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*’: *A Reader’s Guide* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), p. 70 This is one place where Kant’s argument for the postulate of immortality is especially important. Unfortunately, since this would take us too far off course, I cannot attend to this topic here.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, MS 6:409, which says this “constant approximation” must never become a *habit*.

<sup>56</sup> Elsewhere Kant suggests that if we will something that is not within our power this is irrational, so we must believe it is within our power, if it is not then it would be a mere wish. See, for instance, G 4:417–418 and 4:394.

be within our power, but there are *consequences*—positive effects—that come with striving to achieve virtue.

[*V*]irtue, i.e. the firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one's duty strictly is also *beneficent* in its consequences, more so than anything that nature or art might afford in the world. Hence the glorious picture of humanity, as portrayed in the figure of virtue, does allow the attendance of the *graces*, who, however, maintain a respectful distance when duty alone is at issue. And if we consider the gracious consequences that virtue would spread throughout the world, should it gain entry everywhere, then the morally oriented reason (through the imagination) calls sensibility into play.” (R 6:23n)

This passage is central to my argument. Here Kant is not simply talking about virtue, he is talking about the *graces* that come with virtue.<sup>57</sup> As Palmquist aptly puts it: “Only as beneficent does virtue appear as humanity’s ‘figure,’ ‘drawn up’ by nature and art.”<sup>58</sup> True virtue, in other words, reflects the human image—not an image of humanity but rather an image of an individual, moral person. This individual person reflects humanity in its perfection.

I will discuss this argument at length in the next chapter. The point to emphasize here is that although Kant is not suggesting that the *graces* that come with virtue are the ground for duty, it appears that he is suggesting that the virtuous disposition, when taken up, produces certain effects. And when we consider these effects collectively, they produce a force strong enough to fight evil.

Recall what was said above, religion is an extension of morality. It grows out of morality. This is why I am suggesting that *Religion* is about striving toward a *higher*, highest good. It is only humanity in its moral perfection that can be made into an object of divine decree. To become worthy of the humanity that dwells within us, we need to become worthy of holiness. Does this make holiness something we strive for as an actual end or does this make holiness part of our very essence? Recall what was said about happiness in Chapter 5. Happiness is an actual end, a unique kind of end. It is not an exact concept. It is rather an ideal of the imagination.

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<sup>57</sup> Kant is not suggesting, to be sure, that these *graces* replace or form the ground for duty.

<sup>58</sup> Palmquist, p. 57 n. 94.

Holiness, Kant tells us, in the second *Critique*, is a practical idea.<sup>59</sup> It requires a mediating figure. This mediating figure, as we will see, establishes the first true church.

In previous chapters I suggested that Kant's *Gesinnung* can be interpreted as complex set of ontological coordinates that serves as the *influxus realis* between members of the ethical community. But this leaves Kant with a technical problem. On the one hand, he will argue that the form of pure religious faith can be abstracted from historical religion (ecclesiastical faith), and therefore historical religion can be rendered as a mere means for fighting against the evil principle. On the other hand, the very means for abstraction are closely bound up with what Kant refers to as the "evil principle."<sup>60</sup>

#### **IV. Kant's Moral Anthropology**

In this section I focus more directly on Kant's moral anthropology, which I am suggesting is crucial for understanding his full account of human subjectivity. The way in to this topic begins with a discussion of good and evil. After explaining his account of radical evil, I discuss six factors that should be incorporated into Kant's full account of human subjectivity.

##### **i. Radical Evil**

Though the topic of evil is prominent throughout all four essays of the *Religion*, it is especially important for the argument of the first essay. After setting up an argument for how it is that the human can be oriented toward the good and yet have a propensity toward evil, Kant articulates various conditions that allow us to reasonably believe that we can transform ourselves and work together to overcome the dominion of the evil principle. We can summarize the transformation as follows. To work toward moral perfection, we need to incorporate the good

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<sup>59</sup> "This holiness of will [my emphasis] is nevertheless a practical *idea*, which must necessarily serve as a *model* to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end" (*CPrR* 5:33).

<sup>60</sup> "Evil principle" is a term Kant uses throughout the *Religion*. See, for instance, 6:18, 6:57, 6:73; 6:118; 6:151.

principle into our maxims and make our dispositions align with that of the archetype's. While, as we will see, historical religion (i.e. ecclesiastical faith) supports us in certain ways, the transformation that Kant describes is about reclaiming the goodness that is our very nature. At the same time, humans have a natural propensity toward evil, and the battle against evil cannot be won or lost alone. As Kant writes at the beginning of the second essay, "To become a morally good human being it is not enough simply to let the germ of the good which lies in our species develop unhindered; there is in us an active and opposing cause of evil which is also to be combatted" (*R* 6:57). In order to combat this "active and opposing cause" we have a duty to join together and establish an ethical community and actively fight against the dominion of the evil.

In order to deal more comprehensively with the topic of radical evil, it will be helpful here to review the distinction Kant makes between *Wille* ("the will") and *Willkür* ("choice" or "the power of choice"). While both terms concern human volition, the distinction operates in important ways in both the second *Critique* and in *Religion*.<sup>61</sup> Generally speaking, *Willkür* has more to do with free choice, while *Wille* is directed at the law itself. The latter is not directed at actions, but "immediately to giving laws for the maxims of actions (and is, therefore practical reason itself)" (*MS* 6:226). However, though the *Willkür* refers to the "power of choice," the choice here is never an arbitrary choice. The *Willkür* pertains to the rational choice between the demands of the moral law or the inclination to self-love.<sup>62</sup> Kant explains further that it is the implementation of power that stands either with, alongside, or in place of, the faculty of desire.<sup>63</sup> In the *Religion*, Kant states that freedom of the power of choice [*Willkür*] has "a characteristic,

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<sup>61</sup> In the first *Critique*, Kant describes freedom in terms of human *Willkür*, but in the *Groundwork* and much of the *CPrR* he focuses more on freedom as *Wille*. *Wille* is free in the sense that it is not subject to necessitation.

<sup>62</sup> Palmquist offers a helpful discussion of the distinction in his definition section of his commentary, p. 535.

<sup>63</sup> Kant, *MS* 6:213.

entirely peculiar to it,” namely, that it “cannot be determined to action through any incentive except so far as the human being has incorporated that incentive into his maxim” (*R* 6:24).

**ii. Subjective Ground for the Adoption of Maxims: *Gesinnung***

Though Kant speaks of good and evil in the *Religion*, his objective is not to make judgements about what kind of actions or people should be labeled “good” or “evil.” His concern is rather with what he calls the “subjective ground of the adoption of maxims” (*R* 6:25). The “subjective ground” is said to be antecedent to every deed.<sup>64</sup> It is also hidden from us. Kant refers to this subjective ground for the adoption of maxims, as a “disposition” [*Gesinnung*].<sup>65</sup> We have already discussed the meaning of *Gesinnung* in the context of the second *Critique*. I will now explain what this term signifies in the context of *Religion*.

Kant maintains that humans choose between acting on inclinations or on the moral law. Though we are aware of the moral law, we have a tendency to choose to prioritize self-love—nonmoral inclinations—over the moral law. In the *Religion*, Kant suggests that the maxims that we choose constitute the subjective ground. The subjective ground however is found to be corrupt. This is the basis for his argument regarding radical evil. We have a propensity to evil, which explains why we incorporate lower incentives into our maxims and makes them supreme. This introduces a disharmony within our power of choice.

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<sup>64</sup> In the fourth essay, Kant makes a distinction between nature and grace. Nature in this context refers to that which we have within our control, while grace is that which we must be receptive to but cannot rely upon.

<sup>65</sup> Kant’s first use of the term *Gesinnung* in the *Religion* comes at *R* 6:24, where he writes: “Now, if the law fails nevertheless to determine somebody’s free power of choice with respect to an action relating to it, an incentive opposed to it must have influence on the power of choice of the human being in question; and since, by hypothesis, this can only happen because this human being incorporates the incentive (and consequently also the deviation from the moral law) into his maxim (in which case he is an evil human being), it follows that his disposition as regards the moral law is never indifferent (never neither good nor bad).” Also, at *R* 6:25, he writes: “The disposition, i.e. the first subjective ground of the adoption of the maxims, can only be a single one, and it applies to the entire use of freedom universally. This disposition too, however, must be adopted through the free power of choice, for otherwise it could not be imputed” (*R* 6:25–6:26).

The rational origin...of this disharmony in our power of choice with respect to the way it incorporates lower incentives in its maxims and makes them supreme, i.e. this propensity to evil, remains inexplicable to us, for, since it must itself be imputed to us, this supreme ground of all maxims must in turn require the adoption of an evil maxim. (*R* 6:43)

In the first General Remark to the text, Kant discusses how the good and evil characters must be “an *effect* of his free power of choice.”<sup>66</sup> Human being become evil or they fulfill their originary predisposition by properly ordering their maxims. Again, this is not a claim about particular kinds of actions. It is about working to become morally perfect, and this means a complete transformation of one’s disposition, a sort of revolution of our inner self.<sup>67</sup>

As I suggested in Chapter 5, the *Gesinnung* refers to an underlying set of tendencies and intentions, beliefs and interests that collectively constitute that agent’s disposition, character, or attitude of the will.<sup>68</sup> In the *Religion*, the *Gesinnung* becomes a kind of middle ground between the intellect and therefore the understanding on the one hand, and the sensible, perceptive empirical ego on the other. It is a space for interaction or communication from one realm to the other. It complicates the divide set up between the noumenal and phenomenal realms and it complicates what Kant states in his epistemology about receptivity (passivity) and activity. This is especially clear when we consider Kant’s argument’s about divine service. I will return to this below when we discuss the religious disposition.

In previous chapters I suggested that Kant’s *Gesinnung* can be interpreted as a complex set of ontological coordinates that serves as the *influxus realis* between members of the ethical community. But this leaves Kant with a technical problem. On the one hand, he will argue that

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<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, one of the topics I cannot treat directly concerns the function of the general remarks or *parergon* in the *Religion*. Derrida discusses this topic at length in “Faith and Knowledge.” He describes the four general remarks as the “fringe” of Kant’s text, in which his (Derrida’s) own reflections on religion will be inscribed (§16). For further commentary and context see Michael Naas, *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science, and the Media*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> To be sure, the objects of our inclinations are not “evil.” It is the turning of the will, which is also to say, the inversion of maxims, that Kant associates with evil.

<sup>68</sup> See Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p. 136.

the form of pure religious faith can be abstracted from historical religion (ecclesiastical faith), and therefore historical religion can be rendered as a mere means for fighting against the evil principle. On the other hand, the very means for abstraction are closely bound up with what Kant refers to as the “evil principle.”<sup>69</sup>

### iii. Predispositions and Propensities

In the early parts of the first essay of the *Religion*, Kant moves from a discussion of the good disposition to a conversation about predispositions—predispositions toward the good (*R* 6:26–6:28). All three predispositions are connected to our ability to do the good and in this sense hang or fall together. We have already touched on these three determinations in the last chapter, but we can review them here briefly. The predisposition toward animality includes our natural inclinations and desires: desire for survival, procreation, etc. The predisposition toward humanity—has to do with our desire to win the favor of others and be respected and valued in their eyes. The predisposition to personality, Kant insists, has to do with our moral nature. As he states: “The predisposition to personality is the susceptibility to respect for the moral law as of itself a sufficient incentive to the power of choice” (*R* 6:28).<sup>70</sup> Kant claims that all three predispositions are original in the sense that they belong to human nature. Of the three, Kant

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<sup>69</sup> “Evil principle” is a term Kant uses throughout the *Religion*. See, for instance, 6:18, 6:57, 6:73; 6:118; 6:151.

<sup>70</sup> It is not completely clear why he shifts to the language of “predisposition” rather than disposition. He does however distinguish between propensities and predispositions at 6:29n. additionally, in a note that comes with his introduction to the predisposition to personality, he says the predisposition to personality cannot be included in the predisposition to humanity, it must instead be added on. It does not follow, Kant surprisingly says, that for a being that has reason, we can presuppose that because its maxims are represented (here, *Vorstellung*) as suited for universal legislation, “this reason” “contains a faculty of determining the power of choice unconditionally.” “The moral law which announces to be itself an incentive” is indeed “the highest incentive.” (6:26n) And he further adds: “Were this law not given to us from within, no amount of subtle reasoning on our part would produce it or win our power of choice over to it.” And yet, he also insists that “this law is the only law that makes us conscious of the independence of our power of choice from determination by all other incentives (of our freedom) and thereby also of the accountability of all our actions” (6:26n). This is where the idea of holiness matches up to the archetype; where the antinomy of faith is resolved; and where theoretical reason meets practical reason. All signs, quite literally, point to the figure of Christ.

suggests only the third is rooted in “reason practical of itself, i.e. in reason legislating unconditionally” (R 6:28). The first two can be misused, though never eradicated. While he does not explicitly state that the predisposition toward personality can be eradicated or misused, he denies that human beings can ever become fully evil. In order for it to be possible for us to acquire a good character, Kant insists that there must remain in us a “predisposition onto which nothing evil can be grafted on” (R 6:28). Without the possibility of a good character, human beings might legislate for themselves resistance to the moral law (R 6:35). They could become, in other words, diabolically evil.

The definition of personality that Kant provides in this context is crucial: “The idea of the moral law alone, together with the respect that is inseparable from it, cannot be properly called a predisposition to personality; it is personality itself (the idea of humanity considered wholly intellectually)” (R 6:28). What this means for Kant, to state it all too briefly, is that one’s ability to be moral is bound up with the very character of humanity, considered as a whole (past, present, and future).<sup>71</sup> This was something hinted at in his definition of radical evil. “‘He is evil *by nature*,’ simply means that being evil applies to him considered in his species; not that this quality may be inferred from the concept of his species ([i.e.] from the concept of a human being in general, for then the quality would be necessary), but rather that, according to the cognition we have of the human being through experience, he cannot be judged otherwise, in other words, we may presuppose evil as subjectively necessary in every human being, even the best” (R 6:32). Why is it the case that man’s evil nature cannot be inferred from the concept of the species? It is because humanity—considered purely intellectually—must be good. In fact, very good. Purely good. According to Kant, it is only when we turn to experience—that is, knowledge gained from

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<sup>71</sup> To clarify, I am not suggesting that we equate the predisposition to humanity (one of the three predispositions toward the good) with the idea of humanity considered purely intellectually.

*outside*—that we arrive at the position that human beings are evil by nature, “he cannot be judged otherwise” (R 6:32). Conceptually speaking, radical evil relies on a *passage* from outside to inside. From the knowledge we gain from experience, we must infer that radical evil is at the bottom of our hearts, as well as in the hearts of every human. This judgment, I would like to further suggest, is meant to mediate how we conceptualize the human as well as our experience of other human individuals.

Kant states that a propensity is “actually only the *predisposition* to desire an enjoyment which, when the subject has experienced it, arouses *inclination* to it” (R 6:29n). The propensity is “the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire, *concupiscentia*), insofar as this possibility is contingent for humanity in general” (R 6:29). With respect to this last point, about the possibility of an inclination, recall what was said in Chapter 4 about interests and inclinations. Interests grow out of practical reason, and come with principles. Inclinations however, are always rooted in the faculty of desire.<sup>72</sup> The propensity to evil is associated with inclinations, but the three predispositions are referred to as determinations.

Despite incorporating evil incentives into our maxims, Kant claims that we never lose our incentive for the good or our original good disposition. We do not *become* purely good, we retrieve an original pure origin. It is only ever the “purity of the law as the supreme ground of our maxims” that needs to be restored (R 6:46). How are we to retrieve the good disposition? By conforming our disposition to that of the archetype’s. In doing so, as I understand Kant, we transform the way the subject brings itself to another in a relation. The other is posited not in the relationship of cognition, not as a thing at hand, but rather received through the relation we must

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<sup>72</sup> Kant makes it quite clear that it is a “moral interest” that defines our interest in the “objective unity of the religion of reason” (R 6:124n). He asserts this, but I do not think he defends his position adequately. I return to this in the next chapter.

presuppose God has to humanity.<sup>73</sup> This means God's relation to us should be used as a standard for how we should relate to others. I return to this at the end of the chapter where I discuss prayer.

#### iv. Infinite Guilt as a Personal Liability

In the previous section it was noted that Kant insists that the disposition can be conformable to the "archetype's disposition" (*R* 6:75). But, as we will learn, the archetype is not manifested in or through action. Only God has cognition of our improved disposition (*R* 6:75). This causes a certain amount of uncertainty and anxiety and can eventually lead to despair. Since our inferences are drawn from perception, they only reveal appearances, and therefore cannot reveal the full strength of our disposition.<sup>74</sup> Ought implies can (*R* 6:45), but the goodness of our actions can never be fully known.<sup>75</sup> What is more is that whatever state our disposition is in now, we know that we start from evil. Kant goes as far as to insist that this is a "debt that is impossible to wipe out" (*R* 6:72). It is a debt that precedes whatever good one can do, and it cannot be erased by someone else. It is not transmissible. In fact, he says it is the most "personal of all liabilities." It carries the weight of an "infinity of guilt" (*R* 6:72).

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<sup>73</sup> I'm intentionally mirroring Heidegger's language in *BPP* where he is arguing that for Kant, existence "expresses a relationship of the object to the cognitive faculty." He writes: "[B]y this crude talk of adding my cognitive capacity, perception, to the thing, Kant means something else, even though his interpretation of existence provides no further explicit information about it. What does he basically mean and what alone can he mean? Plainly, only one thing. To say that the perception that belongs to the subject as its manner of comportment is added to the thing means the following: The subject brings itself perceptively to the thing in a relation that is aware of and takes up this thing 'in and for itself.' The thing is posited in the relationship of cognition. In this perception the existent, the extant thing at hand, gives itself in its own self. The real exhibits itself as an actual entity" (Heidegger, *BPP*, p. 47). Perhaps this explains Kant's need to explain the predisposition of personality as "added on" (6:26n) to the predisposition to humanity (which is essentially the predisposition toward socialization).

<sup>74</sup> We cannot assess the motives behind our actions. Inferences about our own dispositions can only be drawn "from perceptions that are only appearances of a good or bad disposition" (*R* 6:72).

<sup>75</sup> When law is taken as a divine command, transgressions are known as sins.

We cannot know if our disposition is fundamentally bad or good. We are always at once deserving of punishment as well as always on our way to greater goodness.<sup>76</sup> This means that the human can only be on the path toward moral perfection. This works well with what was said above about virtue. As finite rational beings, we can only strive for moral perfection. In striving for perfection, we experience feelings of dread as well as feelings of pleasure and pain. Kant refers to pleasure in this sense as a “moral pleasure” and it is closely connected to the overcoming of obstacles. The negative feelings however, he associates with our failure to achieve the highest good. In striving toward the highest good, we come to the realization that we do not have the power to bring about the whole and complete good. Complete transformation, recall is not possible on our own. *We need to enter a community to produce enough force to resist the evil principle.* But even when we make this our task, we still need to postulate the one who knows the true inner disposition of every individual person.

The dread associated with failing to live up to the highest good, leads to the problem of evil on a massive scale. Evil is indeed radical, as Kant describes it. We carry this infinity of guilt with us as our own fault. Fortunately, there is a positive feeling that counterbalances the feeling that comes with guilt. This feeling is what Kant refers to as “moral happiness.” Moral happiness, which is not the same as moral pleasure, is an effect that comes with becoming conscious of the “reality and constancy of a disposition that always advances in goodness” (R 6:67; see also 6:75).<sup>77</sup> “For [take] a human being who, from the time of his adoption of the principles of the good and throughout a sufficiently long life henceforth, has perceived the efficacy of these principles on what he does, i.e. on the conduct of his life as it steadily improves, and from that

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<sup>76</sup> If we believe it is bad, we might become hopeless; if we assume it is good, then we likely deceive ourselves.” Incidentally, the uncertainty can lead to “wild despair” (R 6:71).

<sup>77</sup> On this point, see Eddis Miller’s commentary, p. 72.

has cause to infer, but only by way of conjecture, a fundamental improvement in his disposition” (R 6:68). Kant maintains that we can build on this sense of moral happiness, an affective state, to nourish moral faith. This leads us to two additional determinations, namely, the two determinations of divine blessedness [*Gottseligkeit*].<sup>78</sup>

#### v. Two Determinations of Divine Blessedness

In this section I summarize Kant’s conception of the religious disposition and present his formulation of the two determinations of divine blessedness. Notably, both are important for a kind of transformation, not only at the individual level, but at the level of the community as well. I argue that when Kant introduces the notion of the religious disposition, he also introduces a different mode of receptivity.

Kant defines the religious disposition as the unity of virtue and divine blessedness [*Gottseligkeit*].<sup>79</sup> Whereas virtue involves striving, as we saw above, divine blessedness is associated with encountering holiness. Above I drew attention to the three predispositions to the *Good*. The two determinations of divine blessedness, by contrast, comprise the “two determinations of the *moral disposition* in relation to God” (R 6:182).<sup>80</sup> The two determinations of the moral disposition in relation to God are: 1) fear of God and 2) love of God. “Both contain, therefore, over and above morality, the concept of a supersensible being endowed with the properties required for the attainment of the highest good which is aimed at through morality but transcends our faculties” (R 6:182). Kant explains that the “doctrine of divine blessedness contains the concept of an object which we represent [*Vorstellen*] to ourselves, with reference to

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<sup>78</sup> Heidegger leaves out these two determinations when he describes Kant’s conception of human subjectivity and the feeling of respect in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*.

<sup>79</sup> Virtue combined with divine blessedness (or piety) is what constitutes a “truly religious disposition” (R 6:201). “The *doctrine of divine blessedness* [*Gottseligkeitslehre*], perhaps best expresses the meaning of the word *religio*...in an objective sense” (R, 6:183). Kant also offers a subjective definition of religion (R, 6:153–4).

<sup>80</sup> My emphasis.

our morality, as a cause supplementing our incapacity with respect to the final moral end” (*R* 6:183). In other words, the very notion of divine blessedness presupposes a fundamental lack. To explain what is going on here, it will be useful here to recall a distinction Kant makes in the *Metaphysics of Morals* with respect to the formal and material aspects of religion.

The formal aspect of religion is the “sum of all duties as divine commands” (*MS* 6:488). The material aspect refers essentially to religious service, that is, to services performed for God. The material aspect is cognized empirically and belongs to revealed religion. God’s existence is here assumed not for practical purposes but “set forth as given directly (or indirectly) in experience” (*MS* 6:488). It would seem divine blessedness relates to the material aspect of religion, and yet in the *Religion* Kant associates divine blessedness, with God as an idea *and* as a relation. There is a particular reason for this. Kant insists that whenever we go beyond “the moral relation of his idea to us” we are always in danger of anthropomorphizing. The moral relation of “his idea to us” cannot “stand on its own in speculative reason” but rather must base its very origin, and even more so its force, on its “reference to our self-subsistent determination to duty” (*R* 6:182).

What I understand Kant to be suggesting is that any ideas we should have about the moral disposition in relation to God, we should attach or bind to the self-subsistent determination to duty. Recall Kant’s description of the duty of religion. The duty of religion is a duty that we have with respect to that which lies entirely beyond the limits of our experience, but “whose possibility is met with in our ideas” (*MS* 6:444). In its singular form, it is the recognition of all duties as divine commands. He adds that the idea that “presents” [*darbietende*, to offer or present, exhibit] itself to reason ought to be applied to the moral law within, “where it becomes most *fruitful*” (*MS* 6:444).

As I noted above, the religious disposition is the unity of virtue and divine blessedness. According to Kant, divine blessedness is about encountering something holy and virtue is about striving. Since *Gottseligkeit* and virtue “are not *the same*,” yet are necessarily associated, Kant insists that one must be the means to achieving the other as its end or purpose.<sup>81</sup> This leads to a problem which can also be construed as a question about whether virtue or *Gottseligkeit* should be taught first?<sup>82</sup> While it would seem that the only way to achieve virtue is to supplement morality with religion by striving for the higher goal of *Gottseligkeit*, *Gottseligkeit* seems to presuppose virtue.

Kant ultimately concludes that the right way to advance is not from divine blessedness to virtue but from virtue to divine blessedness. Why virtue first? Because through the concept of virtue there arises the possibility of “an awakening to consciousness of a capacity otherwise never surmised by us, of being able to become master over the greatest obstacles within us” (*R* 6:183). Furthermore, Kant insists that it would be impossible to teach divine blessedness as “the final purpose of moral striving” *without* first teaching a virtuous disposition as “that which in itself constitutes a better human being” (*R* 6:183).

Kant makes another remark about virtue that should recall the important claim he makes about freedom in the early parts of the second *Critique*. He says that the disposition of virtue is not mere play acting, it is something *actual* [*Wirklich*] (*R* 6:173). “The disposition of virtue has to do with something *actual*, which is in itself well-pleasing to God and conforms to what is best for the world.”<sup>83</sup> While “it is true that a delusionary sense of superiority may attach itself to it –

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<sup>81</sup> I’m in agreement with Palmquist’s reading on this point. See Palmquist, p. 403.

<sup>82</sup> Hence for Kant it is not a question of whether or not virtue can be taught, but whether it should be taught before or after godliness (or piety).

<sup>83</sup> [*Nein, die Tugendgesinnung be schäftigt Bich mit etwas Wirklichem, was für sich selbst Gott wohlgefällig ist und zum Weltbesten zusammen stimmt.*]

the delusion of regarding oneself adequate to the idea of one's holy duty – this is only accidental.” After all, “place the highest value in that disposition is not a delusion, as it is, for instance, to place it in the ecclesiastical exercises of devotion, but an absolutely efficacious contribution to the world's highest good” (*R* 6:173). The doctrine of virtue, Kant further attests, “stands on its own.” It does not *need* the concept of God because it is “derived from the soul of the human being.” Virtue is already within him. This leads to a question, which I pose only to leave unanswered. If the concept of God is *not* to be derived from the soul, how do we arrive at that concept?<sup>84</sup>

#### vi. Schemata for Duties

The fourth essay of the religion returns to Christ and to the community, and weaves together the first and second experiment. It addresses proper service (divine service vs. counterfeit service), moral education, virtue, grace, and the kind of disposition fit for the people of God. In this section we will briefly look at the function of religious practices for the cultivation of the religious disposition.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> This last point is related to my argument about the higher highest good. On my reading, Kant's conception of the highest good in the *Religion* is not exactly the same as it is in the *CPrR* and therefore Kant's references to the idea of God do not automatically map on to the postulate of God in the *CPrR*. Unfortunately, since this argument, would require extensive interpretive work and numerous references to secondary scholarship, I cannot discuss it further here. Additionally, a longer discussion would relate this back to Stiegler's arguments about the prioritization of anamnesis over hypomnesis in the history of Western thought. See above, p. 73 n. 49 and p. 105.

<sup>85</sup> The topic of counterfeit services also raises important questions about the relationship between theoretical and practical reason, the intelligible and sensible worlds, and the body and the spirit. Kant insists that striving to restore the good principle and living a good life is all that the divine lawgiver requires. And yet, he will admit that it is logically possible that certain nonmoral types of service might also please God. He also suggests that it is acceptable to believe that acts of religious service that are nonmoral, may *indirectly* influence our moral disposition by either empowering or disengaging the (empirical) motivating factors relating to our choice to implement either the good or evil principle. Religious acts of worship might also have a direct impact on our *physical strength* to act in one way or another. On “physical strength” see Palmquist, p. 426. “Kant's claim is that sometimes nonmoral deeds *indirectly* influence our moral conviction by either empowering or disengaging the (empirical) motivating factors relating to our choice to implement either good or evil.” Palmquist however, downplays the way in which Kant appeals to the “physical” at various points throughout the religion. Though I cannot discuss this issue at length, I will mention some of the more interesting places where he appeals to the “physical” to contrast it with the moral. Kant claims that “every propensity is either physical, i.e. it pertains to a human's power of choice as natural being; or moral, i.e. it pertains to a human's power of choice as moral being. - In the first sense, there is no propensity to moral evil, for the latter must originate from freedom; a physical propensity (one based on sensory inducements) to whatever use of

In the last General Remark of the *Religion*, Kant outlines four “genuine” religious duties or formalities [*Förmlichkeiten*]<sup>86</sup> that are acceptable but not required for the change of the heart at both individual and collective levels. Kant’s justification for this move is captured in the following passage:

[I]f, in addition to what makes him the object of divine favor directly (through the active disposition to a good life-conduct), a human being seeks also by means of certain formalities to make himself *worthy* of a supplement to his impotence through supernatural assistance, and to this purpose his only intention is to make himself *receptive* to the attainment of the object of his morally good wish through observances which have indeed no unmediated value yet serve as means to the furtherance of that moral disposition, then, to be sure, he is counting on something *supernatural* to supplement his natural impotence, yet not something which is an *effect* of the *human being* (through influence upon the divine will) but something *received*, which he can hope for but not produce himself (R 6:178).

If human beings utilize religious practices, formalities or practices in ways that serve to promote the development of the moral disposition, this is acceptable so long as what is hoped for is something that is received rather than something that they attempt to produce themselves. The emphasis should be on making ourselves worthy to receive a supplement for what it is we lack and our intentions should be directed at making ourselves receptive to “attainment” of a “morally good wish” (6:178).

According to Kant, all public kinds of faith” devise rituals to serve as “*means of grace.*” Means of grace are those intermediate causes that the human being has under his control for bringing about a certain aim. They are actions performed by human beings that are meant to influence God.<sup>87</sup> Of course, as Kant explains, it is only an “active disposition to a good life-

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freedom, be it for good or evil, is a contradiction” (R, 6:31). He also contrasts physical happiness with moral happiness (R, 6:68; 6:75n); and most curiously, he seems to think that a certain physical predisposition is at work in freeing the pure faith of religion from all forms of ecclesiastical faith: “It is therefore a necessary consequence of the physical and, at the same time, the moral predisposition in us - the latter being the foundation and at the same time the interpreter of all religion - that in the end religion will gradually be freed of all empirical grounds of determination, of all statutes that rest on history and unite human beings provisionally for the promotion of the good through the intermediary of an ecclesiastical faith” (R 6:121).

<sup>86</sup> *Förmlichkeiten* also has the general sense of “conventions.”

<sup>87</sup> In contrast, effects of grace, are concerned with “supernatural moral influences,” where God’s grace acts upon us and we remain passive. According to Palmquist’s reading, the last parergon portrays “godliness” as a practical reality that we human beings cannot possibly control through our own action. “The moral laws” that govern our use

conduct” that can make the human being an object worthy of divine pleasure. And yet, somewhat surprisingly, Kant will here suggest that these means of grace can be used to support the development of a truly religious disposition. Furthermore, when it comes to establishing the “ethical body” of a community, it is necessary to introduce the notion of a shared disposition.

To be sure, Kant is not insisting that all religious practices support the furtherance of the development of the moral disposition. Instead he identifies four “traditional formalities” that have served over time as “schemata for duties” (*R* 6:193). I will return to this point about schemata in a moment. But first we should note here that Kant’s claims about religious practices seem to have an effect on both the individual and the community. Kant will even allow that it is theoretically possible that they have an effect on God. In brief, Kant describes prayer as an internal ritual that supports one’s own disposition, while communion is an internal ritual that enables the community to view itself as an “ethical body.” Churchgoing (or communal worship services) and baptism are both described as external rituals. Whereas the former, baptism enhances the individual’s sense of belonging. Together, all four practices broaden our horizons so that we love of humanity under moral laws applicable to all.

Prayer, attending church, baptism, and communion, Kant insists, have served as *schemata* for the moral life. In what sense? In the sense that they provide the *rule* for applying acts of divine service to our actions and they do so in a way that Kant thinks is universal. Each of these *Förmlichkeiten*, as Palmquist explains, are a “sensible means” of aiming at “furthering what is moral—good.”<sup>88</sup> Significantly, Kant identifies here the “spirit and true significance” of serving

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of freedom are always available to us, but we cannot know whether our “moral strength” comes from a divine source. We do not have no access to these laws. See Palmquist, pp. 478–479.

<sup>88</sup> Palmquist, pp. 480.

God as a *dual* conviction, aimed at furthering the divine kingdom both “inside us and outside us.”<sup>89</sup> However, Kant admits that each of these formalities come with the risk of fetishism.

Prayer is particularly noteworthy in this context and it relates back to something I suggested earlier about interpreting God’s relation to us. Kant suggests that the true spirit of prayer “gives life” to (or enlivens) one’s disposition by means of the “idea of God.” (*R* 6:195n) “For there is a special purpose here, namely, all the more to excite the moral incentives of each individual through an external solemnity which portrays the *union of all human beings* in the shared desire for the Kingdom of God.” Prayer is especially effective in children. It is a wish to live a life that is pleasing to God; it is also an instrument of the imagination (*R* 6:198). In fact, in connecting it to the imagination, it became productive, or creative. Prayer is a “wish that, if it is earnest (efficacious), itself produces its object (becoming a human being satisfactory to God)” (*R* 6:195).

Palmquist’s reading of Kant on the topic of prayer is illuminating, though I will qualify it in a moment. Palmquist suggests that Kant sees prayers as the closest the human comes to experiencing what Kant elsewhere calls “intellectual intuition.” In aligning one’s will with God’s, an “earnest” prayer—that is, one that succeeds in activating the resolve to be good—produces its object.<sup>90</sup> Kant argues elsewhere that intellection intuition is only possible for God, but through the power of prayer, we come close to having the power to *create* an object in the very act of thinking it. Praying in the right spirit enables human beings to participate in divine creativity, though without justifying any claim to *know* what—if anything—is actually happening.

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<sup>89</sup> Palmquist argues that the four observances function in a similar way to the way the categories of the understanding work in the first *Critique*. “The fourfold (categorical) ‘schema’: combines internal–external means of enhancing goodness with individual–communal means.” Palmquist, p. 481.

<sup>90</sup> Palmquist, p. 481.

Palmquist further insists that when Kant refers to the spirit of prayer, the “spirit” just *is* what Kant calls *religious conviction* [*Gesinnung*]: “the *hypothetical* perspective whereby we view all our actions *as if* we can serve God by doing our moral duty....” This and other formalities are a means for “repeated animation of our inner conviction.”<sup>91</sup>

I agree that there is a kind of spontaneity at work here but it is not modeled on the “I think” but rather on the categories of freedom that Kant outlines in the second *Critique*. Palmquist however, is basing his reading on a passage from the first *Critique* where Kant defines faith. There, faith is defined in terms of subjective certainty.<sup>92</sup> But recall, as I discussed at length in Chapter 5, that the precepts of pure practical reason give rise to the actuality of that to which they refer (the attitude of the will). To review:

...all precepts of pure practical reason have to do only with the determination of the will, not with the natural conditions (of practical ability) for carrying out its purpose, the practical a priori concepts in relation to the supreme principle of freedom at once become cognitions and do not have to wait for intuitions in order to receive meaning; and this happens for the noteworthy reason that they themselves produce the reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will), which is not the business of theoretical concepts. But one must note well that these categories concern only practical reason in general and so proceed in their order from those which are as yet morally undetermined and sensibly conditioned to those which, being sensibly unconditioned, are determined only by the moral law (*CPrR* 5:66).

The “precepts (or principles) of pure practical reason “produce the reality of that to which they refer” (the disposition of the will).

However, prayer in the religion is not a “willing” it is a “wishing”—a wish to align ourselves with the whole of existence. Nevertheless, it cannot be disconnected from the good will since, significantly, for Kant, the will must *transform* our wish for moral happiness. It is a wish that can actively produce its object: becoming a human being satisfactory to God. Viewed in this way, divine blessedness is not a way of being, it is a way of becoming that transcends the

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<sup>91</sup> Palmquist, p. 485. My emphasis.

<sup>92</sup> Palmquist reads these as propositional attitudes. He points to first *Critique* (A822/B850) where Kant is referring to *subjective* certainty to make this point. See Palmquist, p. 481.

world; it transcends finitude. Indeed, it points to another realm of causality, one that is not properly situated in the realm of freedom nor in the realm of natural causality. Because prayer “produces its object” it would appear that it is self-activating. Kant declares that *such* a prayer is the only kind that “can alone be made in *faith*”—that is, can generate faith *necessarily*.

While there are benefits to private prayer, Kant claims that it lacks the “enthusiasm for morals” that comes with public, communal acts. Therefore, communal prayer is also important. “For there is a special purpose here, namely, all the more to excite the moral incentives of each individual through an external solemnity which portrays the *union of all human beings* in the shared desire for the Kingdom of God” (R 6:197). A wish that is *shared*, needs representation. The festivities generating such enthusiasm provide “a more rational basis ... for clothing the moral wish” (i.e. “the spirit of prayer”), for in place of a literal assumption of “the presence of the highest being” they adopt the perspective, whereby participants address the heavenly king “*as if* he were present” (R 6:197).

However, the fact that Kant refers to these *Förmlichkeiten* as “schemata for duties” suggests that Kant is not only concerned with specifying which modes of representation [*Vorstellung*] are most appropriate for representing duties. Rather he also seems to be suggesting that what is represented must be “accompanied by the visible for the sake of praxis.”<sup>93</sup> Scripture, for instance, might help us represent to ourselves what moral action rooted in the good disposition looks like, but in order to bring life to this disposition it needs the support of actual religious practices. In other words, symbols alone will not suffice. The human body itself

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. In his lecture on anthropology, he writes: “from the receptivity of the subject to be determined by certain ideas for the preservation or rejection of the condition of these ideas, which one could call *interior sense (sensus interior)*.” *Anthropology, History, Education* 7:153–7:154.

becomes a site of expression. This is how we animate the good disposition or bring it to life, so to speak.<sup>94</sup> The symbol needs to be set in motion, quite literally.<sup>95</sup>

In the second *Critique* the determinations of a practical reason “take place only with reference...to events in the sensible world” and therefore with reference to the categories of the understanding. However, they do so not for the purpose of theoretical use but “in order to subject a priori the manifold of *desires* to the unity of consciousness of a practical reason commanding in the moral law, or of a pure will” (*CPrR* 5:64). In the *Religion*, the three determinations of the human beings and the two determinations of divine blessedness take place with reference to events in the sensible world, but also with reference to that which is supersensible. The unity of hearts is not subject to a priori the manifold of desires of a pure will, but the manifold of wishes of a pure heart.<sup>96</sup> This indeed is a synthesis but it does not correspond to an “I think” or to an “I act” or “I desire” but rather to an “I believe” or better “we believe.” It comes about not through an *act* of religion. Rather it is simply the religious disposition that “universally accompanies all our actions done in conformity to duty” (*R* 6:154n). This is how a *subjective effect* becomes public. As we will see in the next chapter, scripture, the church visible, and the figure of Christ all play a role in cultivating the “truly religious disposition.”

## V. Conclusion

This chapter summarized and described the main aims, objectives, key terms, and arguments that form the basis for Kant’s theory of religion. I outlined some of the ways in which

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<sup>94</sup> “Only the kind of prayer made in moral disposition (animated only through the idea of God), since as the spirit of prayer it itself brings about its object (to be well-pleasing to God), can be made in *faith*, by which we mean no more than the assurance in us that the prayer *can be answered*; but nothing in us except morality is of this kind” (*R* 6:196n). Scripture too animates as well as instructs (*R*, 6:112).

<sup>95</sup> Kant explains in the third *Critique* that an aesthetic idea serves the “idea of reason instead of logical presentation, although really only to animate the mind by opening up for it the prospect of an immeasurable field of related representations” (*CJ*, 5:315).

<sup>96</sup> Or put differently, what is important is not the unification of a collective will, but a unification of hearts under laws of virtue (*R* 6:102).

religiosity plays a role in the formation and orientation of the human subject but not only with respect to how religion influences thought. The next chapter looks more closely at the important role that the figure of Christ plays both at the individual and community level. I argue that Christ functions as both a schema and a symbol. Moreover, as the founder of the first “true church” Christ reveals a system of religion. This system of religion organizes human relations in a particular way, and it does so by taking account of the human’s social unsociability.

CHAPTER 8  
KANT'S *RELIGION*: A PROGRAM AND A PROMISE  
PART II: THE FIGURE OF CHRIST AND THE ETHICAL COMMUNITY

**I. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed Kant's definition of religion, which I insisted is complex and multilayered. We considered the relationship between religion and morality and Kant's ideas about natural and moral perfection. After summarizing some of the main aims and arguments of Kant's book on religion, I laid out his conception of moral anthropology and explained how it adds depth and complexity to his conception of human subjectivity. As in previous chapters, my reading of Kant drew attention to his conception of the *Gesinnung*, which gains even more importance in *Religion*. The *Gesinnung*, I argued, becomes the concept that allows Kant to explain how there can be communication or exchange between the intelligible and sensible realms. In the final part of the chapter, I turned to Kant's conception of the religious disposition [*Religionsgesinnung*] which Kant claims: "universally accompanies all our actions done in conformity to duty" (*R* 6:154n).

This chapter continues to investigate the place of technics in Kant's writing. The methodology I employ is similar to previous chapters. The argument is advanced through a close reading of select passages. Given the complexities of Kant's arguments, much of the work of this chapter will be concerned with clarifying crucial concepts and explaining how they work together—or against—Kant's arguments elsewhere.

Throughout the chapter, I demonstrate how rereading Kant through the lens of originary technicity allows us to grasp important features of Kant's theory of religion. More specifically, I utilize Stiegler's arguments, as I reconstructed them in Chapters 1–4, to articulate how the figure of Christ functions conceptually in Kant's *Religion*.

As we saw in the last chapter, Kant's definition of religion is riddled with tensions, but two in particular stand out when we read Kant through the lens of ordinary technicity. The first is the tension between moral and natural perfection. The second tension is between theoretical and practical reason. Whereas in the last chapter I focused on the former tension, in this chapter I focus on the latter. I argue that the figure of Christ functions as a principle of unification and should be understood not only as a symbol for the moral life, but as a schema of recognition as well. Steven Palmquist's commentary on Kant's *Religion* provides insight that allows me to further articulate this claim.

Palmquist argues that religion for Kant, "establishes an objective reference point for the grand synthesis between nature and freedom, which is also to say between the theoretical and practical standpoint."<sup>1</sup> In other words, religion is what makes it possible for Kant to bring architectonic coherence to his philosophical system as a whole.<sup>2</sup> In directing or leading us to religion, morality "expands" or grows into something new and this something new cannot be reducible to morality. According to Palmquist, this leaves Kant with important epistemological problems which Kant is at pains to work out in the text.

I agree that Kant is establishing a point of reference for a kind of synthesis in the *Religion*. I also agree that the synthesis is between theoretical and practical reason. However, unlike Palmquist I do not think the epistemological issues that arise in *Religion* can be solved by appealing to two different standpoints (the theoretical and practical). In harmonizing morality with a final end, Kant hopes to synthesize the subjective and objective sides of religion, and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Palmquist and Immanuel Kant, *Comprehensive Commentary on Kant's Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), p. 15–16.

<sup>2</sup> Palmquist, p. 16. "[A] culture's moral precepts will *give rise to* a philosophical basis for religion, in such a way that religion completes what ethics alone leaves undetermined." I mention this here because Stiegler's arguments at times seem to harmonize well with various theories of culture. Nevertheless, Stiegler's appeal to ontogenesis adds a different dimension to his understanding of material reality.

mediate between the claims of theoretical and practical reason. Kant assures us that in harmonizing (morality) with this end, we do not “increase the number of morality’s duties” but rather gain a “special point of reference for the unification of all ends” (*R* 6:5). The special point of reference, I argue is the figure of Christ. In this way, Christ becomes for Kant a necessary supplement to human judgment.<sup>3</sup>

The figure of Christ comes up at every important turn in the *Religion* and Kant offers several suggestions regarding his philosophical, historical, symbolic, and moral significance. He is also given various labels. He is referred to as the “archetype” [*Urbild*] lodged in human reason and the “prototype” [*Vorbild*] of humanity (*R* 6:62);<sup>4</sup> he the Son of God, the word of God, the manifestation of the good principle, and the idea of goodness (*R* 6:65); he is conveyed a teacher, an exegete, and a savior. He is also described as establishing the first “true church,” where all are invited to work together toward a shared end, namely, the Kingdom of God on earth (*R* 6:197). With all of these different descriptions, it is not easy to lock down on one particular label or description.

For reasons that I will discuss below, several commentators interpret the figure of Christ in the *Religion* as a symbol for the moral life. In contrast to this more popular reading, I argue that Christ functions as both a symbol *and* schema in the *Religion*. This has important

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<sup>3</sup> Once again, we can make use of Stiegler’s formulation of the adoption-graft coupling that I referenced in the last chapter and use it to explain where Kant and Stiegler differ. Kant refers to both a process of adoption [*Annehmungen*] (of a disposition) and to that of grafting (e.g. vices are grafted [*gepfropft*] onto the predisposition toward the good). However, whereas Stiegler suggests that “no supplement can stand in general for what is supplemented,” Kant, on my reading, is suggesting that Christ as archetype can in fact stand in general for what is supplemented.

<sup>4</sup> Translators disagree about how these two terms should be translated. *Bild* in German means “image.” *Ur* generally refers to something “primal” or “original.” Hence *Urbild* means something like “primal” or “original” image. *Vorbild* similarly can be rendered as “before image” or an “image that stands in front of.” But the exact meaning is a matter of debate. Some translators translate *Vorbild* as “model” rather than prototype. Some use “prefiguration.” Palmquist’s understanding is that *Urbild* is the original/primal idea that makes something what it is, while a “prototype” [*Vorbild*] is the first model a person makes of that idea (the model that comes “before” all others). See Palmquist and DiCenso on this topic. Kant in the *CPR* distinguishes the *Bild* from schema (*CPR* A140–B179). The point I think we need to stress here is that Kant uses the terms differently, rather than interchangeably.

implications for the individual's moral transformation. Indeed, one of the problems that Kant is working through in *Religion* concerns how an individual's pursuit of moral perfection relates to the orientation and ends of the community. I use this problem to further unpack Kant's account of human sociality. As we will see, the figure of Christ is essential for one's individual transformation, while historical religion is essential for bringing about a change of heart in the community. The question, then, is what is the relation of Christ to the community?

In the last chapter I noted that one of my concerns is to track the moral gains and the losses that come with Kant's theory of religion. After working through Kant's arguments, I offer an evaluation that can be summarized as follows. On the one hand, as I understand him, Kant offers crucial insight into how it is that we come to recognize other human beings as, not only examples of the moral law, but as manifestations of the divine will. What's more, human being should be received in a way that mirrors God's relation to us—this relation is described in terms of an Idea of Reason. These insights reveal the true depths of Kant's humanism.

On the other hand, this argument reveals that behind Kant's theory of religion is a conception of human sociality in which the collective good is construed as the result or product of intersubjective exchange. This conception of human sociality, I argue, is linked to the repression of technics in Kant's theory of religion. This is particularly problematic when we consider Kant's claims regarding natural religion. Christ is important for individuals as they strive for moral perfection. But Christ is also the founder of an ethical community and this community is the visible manifestation or presentation [*Darstellung*] of the Kingdom of God. I argue that because Kant represses technicity he ends up naturalizing a political order such that the lines between the ethical community and the political community are difficult to discern.

In distinguishing between the predisposition toward humanity and personality, Kant acknowledges that our level of happiness and sense of self-worth is conditioned by our social environments. Human dignity therefore cannot be based on some empirical fact about human nature nor on a socially constructed symbol that we all come to agree on by consent.<sup>5</sup> However, his claims regarding natural and revealed history, I contend, cause him to blur the boundary between individualized human action and the movement of human history through forces and powers that are not our own. Here is precisely where Stiegler account of originary technicity, and in particular his account of temporality and memory, overlaps with Kant's theory of religion.

Recall that for Kant, there are various types of faith, but only one true religion. Kant also makes a point to abstract from his evaluation of faiths throughout history an unchangeable form of pure religious faith. As we will see, the story of pure religious faith is a story of slow, steady progress toward the establishment of “the exclusive dominion of pure religious faith in the coming of the Kingdom of God” (*R* 6:115; 6:124). But it also so happens that pure religious faith has a history—a material history—and that history is inseparable, at least for now, from statutory laws, a holy book, a church, and even certain religious practices. Read alongside Stiegler's account of technics, we can construe the material history that Kant associates with pure religious faith as the epiphylogenetic development of the needs of reason. We turn now to the first part of my argument, which concentrates more specifically on the figure of Christ.

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<sup>5</sup> In section VI below, I point to one place where he seems to argue the opposite. His arguments suggest that it is possible for us to eventually achieve consensus about the form of ecclesiastical faith that is commensurate to the dignity of a moral religion (*R* 6:123).

## II. Interpreting the Figure of Christ in Kant's *Religion*

There is already a fair amount of scholarship on the role of Christ in relation to the broader argument of *Religion*.<sup>6</sup> We need not consider all of the various different interpretations. Nevertheless, it will be constructive to briefly outline two of the most common interpretation to help contextualize my arguments and demonstrate where my reading differs.

As I stressed in the last chapter, Kant insists that it is a “universal human duty to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, i.e. to the archetype [*Urbild*] of moral disposition in its entire purity...” (*R* 6:61)<sup>7</sup> And yet at the same time, Kant gives us plenty of reasons to doubt that we can ever achieve moral perfection. Moral evil brings with it an “infinity of violation of the law” and an “infinity of guilt” (*R* 6:73). Not only do we have a propensity to incorporate non-moral incentives into our maxims, we can never fully know whether or not we have resorted our original good disposition. In response to this rather bleak situation, some readers of Kant take Christ to be a postulate of practical reason. In other words, despite our “fallen nature” we must presuppose, as a matter of practical reason, that there is one who came before us who was able to achieve moral perfection.

Another common interpretation suggests that Christ symbolizes what is possible with respect to moral edification (*R* 6:52).<sup>8</sup> As noted in the last chapter, in the *Religion*, Kant is not concerned with explaining *how* we are to be moral. Instead, one of his primary concerns is to

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<sup>6</sup> I am indebted especially to Palmquist's thorough commentary, but also James DiCenso's two volumes: *Kant, Religion, and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2011) and *Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). Additional interlocutors include: Adam Westra, H. J. Paton, Jonathan Francis Bennett, and Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson, Allen Wood. For a collection of essays on Kant's religion, many of which treat the topic of Christ see Chris L. Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, *In Defense of Kant's Religion* (Indiana University Press, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Translation modified. The Cambridge edition has prototype for *Urbild* in this passage. However, I agree with I Palmquist who translates all occurrences of “*Urbild*” as “archetype.” And “*Vorbild*” as prototype or after image.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Palmquist argues that Christ's teaching, life, and sacrifice all together represent [*Vorstellung*], in the form of a narrative, the ideal of moral perfection. See pp. 218–222 especially.

describe a kind of fundamental orientation, attitude or disposition, which we need to develop if we want establish a particular kind of community. This community should, however, support the moral life. Indeed, for Kant virtue is the “firmly grounded disposition to fulfill one’s duty strictly...” (*R* 6:23n). To remain firmly grounded, we need support. In a sense, this is what he means by moral or practical faith.<sup>9</sup> The figure of Christ plays a crucial role not only for making it possible to recognize ourselves as worthy of happiness, but as beings determined for divine blessedness. Practical faith in the son of God—“so far as he is represented as having taken up human nature” (*R* 6:62)—entails believing that we can follow the archetype. Only in this way does the human being become an object worthy of divine pleasure.<sup>10</sup>

Before moving on to explain these claims, it is important to clarify why it is that Christ cannot function as a *mere* example or exemplar for the moral life. For Kant, few things are more dangerous in morality than the use of examples. Moral action must be free action and must be grounded in respect for the moral law. We may admire the good person or find merit in a virtuous life but the act of imitation is not worthy of moral praise.<sup>11</sup> The problem with examples is that they are always taken from experience, i.e. the empirical realm.<sup>12</sup> In determining whether a particular example matches up with our idea of moral perfection, Kant insists that we look not to other examples but rather to the “*idea* (of humanity), as he ought to be” (*MS* 480).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Though I use the term “moral faith” throughout this dissertation, I am not suggesting that we adopt Kant’s specific formulation of moral faith as it is presented in *Religion*.

<sup>10</sup> See Palmquist, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> In the *Groundwork* Kant notes: “Imitation has no place at all in matters of morality, and examples serve only for encouragement, that is, they put beyond doubt the practicability of what the law commands and make intuitive what the practical rule expresses more generally, but they can never justify setting aside their true original, which lies in reason, and guiding oneself by examples” (*G* 4:409).

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, even if a human being with “truly divine disposition” (6:63) appeared to us as if he had fallen from heaven and through his teachings, way of life, and through suffering “brought about incalculably great moral good in the world” we would still have to accept this man as an example taken from experience.

<sup>13</sup> On this point also see Kant’s arguments near the end of the Doctrine on Method in the *CPrR*. See especially, 5:163.

And yet, Kant also suggest that religious narratives can be used for moral education, so long as they are not taught as guidebooks for how to be moral. The narratives of Jesus’s life, as they are recounted in the gospels, are especially valuable in this respect.<sup>14</sup> In the third *Critique*, Kant says that examples can provide “vivid” exhibition of concepts in educational contexts or other context where rhetoric comes into play (*CJ* 327). Additionally, in the second *Critique*, he encourages moral educators to draw attention to the purity of the will through the “lively presentation of the moral disposition [*Gesinnung*] in examples” (*CPrR* 5:161).

Clearly the figure of Christ is meant to be a symbol of hope and encouragement for the moral life. However, this interpretation does not explain all of the different roles that Christ plays in the text and in Kant’s philosophy as a whole. From my perspective, both the Christ as symbol reading and the Christ as postulate readings are incomplete. With respect to the latter reading, though it may seem to harmonizes well with the argument presented in the second *Critique*, Kant, notably, never once refers to Christ as a postulate. Instead, as we saw above, he is given various other labels. What’s more is that neither of the two interpretations mentioned above fully explain why Kant insists that we work to conform our disposition [*Gesinnung*] to that of the archetype’s. Kant tells us that the holy one of the Gospels makes the *Gesinnung* a rule of his actions. The *Gesinnung* itself is not revealed but Christ “put before their [his disciples’] eyes,” through his teaching and actions, a visible, external example (*R* 6:67).<sup>15</sup> We are to “adopt” this *Gesinnung* as though it proceeds from God’s being (*R* 6:61).

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<sup>14</sup> As rational beings, humans already have everything they need to be moral. Notably, Kant never once uses the name “Jesus” in reference to the archetype—nor anywhere in the *Religion*. He does however reference biblical passages where the name “Jesus” is used.

<sup>15</sup> [*Denn er würde alsdann nur von der Gesinnung sprechen, die er sich selbst zur Regel seiner Handlungen macht, die er aber, da er sie als Beispiel für andere, nicht für sich selbst sichtbar machen kann, nur durch seine Lehren und Handlungen äußerlich vor Augen stellt.*]

But there is more at stake in these readings than determining the specific role that Christ plays in Kant's text. The Christ as symbol reading rests on certain presuppositions that can and should be called into question. In my judgment, the emphasis on religious symbolism more broadly speaking has overshadowed the way in which the question of technicity is operating within Kant's arguments.

As I demonstrated in the last chapter, Kant's investigation into religion allows him to present a complex, multidimensional account of human subjectivity. Symbolization is not the only way to make sense of how human subjectivity is informed or conditioned by religion. Scripture, the church, historical religion, statutory laws, and certain religious practices all contribute something to Kant's theory of human subjectivity. If all of these aspects of religion are construed as symbolic supports for the moral life, then it is easy to overlook the way religion construed more broadly operates somewhere between the intelligible world and the sensible world and how religion factors in to the relationship between theoretical and practical reason. Similarly, if we presuppose that all the various tensions in the *Religion* can be settled by making an appeal to aesthetic judgment, then it becomes impossible to see how religiosity, much like technicity, works upon the human subject in various ways.

Another reason I want to call the symbolic reading into question concerns Kant's views regarding presentation and representation [*Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*]. In order to claim that the figure of Christ represents or makes more intelligible the ideas of reason, one needs to make certain presupposition about how ideas are presented or exhibited in empirical reality.<sup>16</sup> Kant's views regarding how ideas can be exhibited in reality is a matter of some debate within Kantian

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<sup>16</sup> On this topic, see Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson, "Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant's Critical Works."

scholarship.<sup>17</sup> Complicating matters further is the fact that Kant refers to various kinds of ideas (e.g. ideas of reason, transcendental ideas, practical ideas, aesthetic ideas) in *Religion* and there is no reason to presuppose that he holds that they can all be exhibited in the same way.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, if it take for granted that practical ideas can be exhibited in the same way as aesthetic ideas this has important implications for how aesthetic judgment operates with respect to the moral life. And what then might we further suggest how technical ideas<sup>19</sup>—to borrow from Stiegler lexicon—function in relation to the moral life?

This last point is important since there remains a certain amount of ambiguity and disagreement about the relationship between *techne* and aesthetics in contemporary theories of technology.<sup>20</sup> As I suggested in Chapter 1, since Heidegger, various thinkers have appealed to the aesthetic mode of revealing to interrupt or challenge various forms of technological determinism. Modern technology, some suggest, takes us away from ourselves and alienates us from our true nature and artistic performance, poetic invention or the fine arts provide the only alternatives to the instrumental or cognitive paradigm that frequently gets associate with

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<sup>17</sup> For a brief overview Kant's description of various types of ideas, see the entry "Idea" in the *Kantian Lexicon*, by Michael Rohlf. He helpfully explains that "An aesthetic idea "sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion" and "serves that idea of reason instead of logical presentation" (*CPJ*, 5:315/CECPJ: 193). So aesthetic ideas in some sense aim at approximating or presenting ideas of reason: "Beauty (whether it be beauty of nature or of art) can in general be called the expression of aesthetic ideas" (*CPJ*, 5:320/CECPJ: 197); and Kant characterizes the sublime more directly in terms of ideas of reason (e.g., *CPJ*, 5:245/CECPJ: 129)."

<sup>18</sup> This is, of course, a major concern in much post-Kantian thought. Alison Ross reads the Kantian concept of aesthetic "presentation" [*Darstellung*] as the key to understanding the post-Kantian tradition. This tradition can be understood as attempting to find aesthetic ways of "addressing the problem of presentation as framed by and inherited from Kant's *Critique of Judgment*" (p. 4). See Alison Ross, *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy: Presentation in Kant, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy* (Cultural Memory in the Present) (United Kingdom: Stanford University Press, 2007). In the third *Critique*, Kant explores and emphasize the analogical presentation of ideas—the idea of freedom in particular. Some scholars have argued that with this emphasis on analogical modes of representation, a window of opportunity is left open for accounting for the way in which ideas can be presented or exhibited in the material and sensible-world. On this point see Martha B. Helfer's, *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse*, (State University of New York Press, 1996). I reference and discuss Helfer's and Ross's arguments briefly below.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 5, p. 148 above.

<sup>20</sup> On this topic, see Keith Tilford, *Diagramming Horizons Between Art, Techne, and the Artifactual Elaboration of Mind*. Glass Bead Research Platform Dec 2017. Accessed online March 2021.

technology. Meanwhile the moral experience is written off as a myth or is qualified according to the presuppositions that stand behind one's theory of aesthetics.<sup>21</sup>

Again, I am not suggesting that Christ does not function as a symbol for the moral life. Nevertheless, it is important to be clear about the presuppositions that underlie this reading. After demonstrating why the symbolic reading is insignificant on its own, I present evidence to support my claim that Christ functions as both a symbol and a schema in Kant's *Religion*.<sup>22</sup> With respect to the first part of this argument, it will be necessary to consider Kant's theory of symbolism in more detail, as well as his strategic use of the terms *Vorstellung*, which I translate as "representation" and *Darstellung*, which I translate as "exhibition" or "presentation." Though we cannot deal at length with these topics, we need to consider what is morally at stake in suggesting that religion represents, exhibits or presents moral and ethical ideas.

### III. Religious Symbolization, Limits and Problems

Kant's theory of symbolism is primarily worked out in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where he differentiates between two different ways of demonstrating the reality of concepts. He uses the term "hypotyposis" to refer to this process. The word *hypotyposis* comes from Greek *hypo*, meaning "under, below, beneath," and *typosis*, meaning "a figure, sketch or outline." It is a term that has its origins in rhetoric, but is more commonly (or was at least in Kant's time) defined as a vivid, picturesque description of scenes or events. However, in the context of the third *Critique*, Kant uses the term to refer to the "process through which concepts are subjected to inspection, illustrated, and thereby granted reality schematically (directly) or

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<sup>21</sup> I touched on this matter in Chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>22</sup> There are indeed places where the symbolic reading comes through quite clear. For instance, when he writes: "Now the Kingdom of Heaven can be interpreted as a symbolic representation aimed merely at stimulating greater hope and courage and effort in achieving it, if to this narrative there is attached a prophecy..." (*R* 6:134). I reference additional passage below in support of this reading.

are subjected to inspection, illustrated, and thereby granted reality schematically (directly) or symbolically (indirectly)” (*CJ* 5:351).<sup>23</sup>

As I discussed in previous chapters, schematism is the term Kant use to explain the mediation between concepts and intuitions (*CPR* A138/B177). In first *Critique*, Kant argues that any cognition of an object requires a synthesis of some concept with an intuition. The schema, recall, is a rule applied when bringing a concept and intuition together. In the third *Critique*, Kant defines *schematic* hypotyposis in contrast to *symbolic* hypotyposis. Kant frames the distinction as follows:

All hypotyposis...consists in making [a concept] sensible, and is either schematic or symbolic. In schematic hypotyposis there is a concept that the understanding has formed, and the intuition corresponding to it is given a priori. In symbolic hypotyposis there is a concept which only reason can think and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, and this concept is supplied with an intuition that judgement treats in a way merely analogous to the procedure it follows in schematising; i.e., the treatment agrees with this procedure merely in the rule followed rather than in terms of the intuition itself, and hence merely in terms of the form of the reflection rather than its content. (*CJ* 5:351)

Both symbolic and schematic hypotyposis are further distinguished from the kind of presentation that is used in mathematics or certain sciences. The latter, Kant explains, are associated with empirical concepts and empirical concepts are demonstrated (or exhibited) through examples. The a priori concepts of pure reason, however, are not demonstrated in the same way. The concepts that the understanding has formed, along with the intuition that corresponds to those concepts, are given a priori. All intuitions supplied for a priori concepts are either schemata or symbols. Symbols provide us with a sensible representation of that which could not otherwise be represented and perceived by us and they do so by means of analogy (*CJ* 5:352).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> On this passage, see Nicola Jane Crosby-Grayson, “Schematic and Symbolic Hypotyposis in Kant’s Critical Works,” p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> On this point, James DiCenso, *Kant’s Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Kant wrote the third *Critique* before he wrote the *Religion* and given the fact that he references symbolic representation at various points, some readers insist that we should apply Kant's theory of symbolism to understand the argument of the *Religion*. Consider for instance, Steven Palmquist's position on the matter. He refers to his position as the "Faith-as-symbol" thesis. On his reading, *Religion* supports the view that historical faith provides various symbols that can help us work toward the highest good. Christ as is one such symbol. On his account, the archetype of humanity *symbolically* represents the actualization of the moral law through the course of human life.<sup>25</sup> But Palmquist himself finds it necessary to qualify this claim. He does so in two ways. First, he notes that though Kant insists that we cannot rely on a particular example from history to guide us in all matters relating to the moral life, he also seems to defend the opposite claim that "a genuine example of a morally perfect human being must be *possible*."<sup>26</sup> Secondly, in addition to interpreting Christ as a symbol, Palmquist also thinks Christ represents a "rational idea." He relates this point back to the two experiments of the *Religion*. Whereas the first experiment is concerned with describing "the archetype as a rational idea, the second experiment is concerned with testing whether the historical Jesus (functioning as a prototype for all who believe) as a symbol "can empower those who believe in his atoning sacrifice..."<sup>27</sup>

These two points of qualification, however, are quickly dismissed by Palmquist. On his reading, the "archetype is real first and foremost because it *resides in practical reason*."<sup>28</sup> But what does it mean to suggest that the archetype resides in practical reason? Is Christ an

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<sup>25</sup> To make this point, Palmquist draws on Kant's claim in *CPrR* 5:131: "the humanity in our person must be holy to ourselves."

<sup>26</sup> Kant writes: "Just for this reason an experience must be possible in which the example [*Beispiel*] of such a human being is given (to the extent that one can at all expect and ask for evidence of inner moral disposition from an external experience). For, according to the law, each and every human being should furnish in his own self an example of this idea" (*R* 6:63). See Palmquist, p. 169.

<sup>27</sup> Palmquist, p. 204 n. 134.

<sup>28</sup> Palmquist, p. 167. Original emphasis.

actualized possibility? Or does Christ represent something that we cannot grasp through reason? Palmquist's interpretation, in my judgment, leaves these questions unanswered. Instead, the archetype is equated with an aesthetic idea and this aesthetic idea is at once a practical idea.

James DiCenso also defends the symbolic role of Christ. Speaking more broadly, in his view, Kant's *Religion* offers a "philosophical hermeneutic of inherited representational forms."<sup>29</sup> Christianity, as a historical faith, is a supplement to the moral life.<sup>30</sup> Historically transmitted narratives concerning the life and teachings of Jesus provide us with an example of a lifestyle that we can voluntarily choose to follow, even if imperfectly. And at the same time, the archetype, "manifests an a priori idea not derived from contingent experience or conditioned by subjective and cultural factors."<sup>31</sup> Just as God is to represent the moral law (God as the divine legislator), Jesus is to represent the actualization of a good person who chooses his maxim as the moral law.

But in response to DiCenso's reading we can ask: is Kant suggesting that the good person, which is to say a moral person, is the manifestation of an idea? Kant's claims elsewhere in the text seem to support this reading. For instance, he claims that the immaculate conception symbolically represents the idea of a person free from the innate propensity of evil (*R* 6:80n). He also makes references to the symbolic meaning of certain biblical passages and refers to the symbolic representation of divine beings (*R* 6:110n). He claims that the "Kingdom of Heaven," as a symbolic representation [*symbolische Vorstellung*], can provide hope and courage (*R* 6:134) and suggests that through symbolic representation [*symbolische Vorstellung*] we might learn the practical import of the idea of God's grace and redemption (*R* 6:172).

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<sup>29</sup> James DiCenso, *Kant's Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: A Commentary*, p. 94.

<sup>30</sup> DiCenso, p. 94.

<sup>31</sup> DiCenso, p. 97.

Kant reference to the “schematism of analogy” in a note early on in the second essay, is often used to support a reading of the *Religion* that emphasizes symbolic representation. As Palmquist explains: “The schematism of analogy is reason’s only way of linking the sensible and the supersensible in an intelligible way. It does so by citing an example....”<sup>32</sup> The example becomes a supplement to judgment. Though I think judgment is the key term here, it is not clear that Kant means to conflate the schematism of analogy with symbolic hypotyposis. After all, if Kant wanted to indicate that he was drawing upon the definition of symbolism he lays out in the third *Critique*, why did he not simply use the technical term “symbolic hypotyposis”? Instead he simply distinguishes the “schematism of analogy” from the schematism he writes about in the first *Critique*.<sup>33</sup>

In short, though I do not disagree that Kant is grounding some of his claims in the *Religion* on his theory of symbolism as it is presented in the third *Critique*. My argument is only that this reading is not sufficient to explain many of the key arguments in the text. Moreover, even if it is the case that Kant is suggesting that we can appeal to religious resources to symbolically represent something that has practical import, this does not mean that he is

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<sup>32</sup> Palmquist, p. 174.

<sup>33</sup> Kant uses the term “symbolic hypotyposis” in a footnote in the second essay, under a section on the “Objective Idea of the Reality of an Idea” (*R* 6:65n). He writes: The Scriptures too (like the philosophical poets), adapt themselves to this manner of representation [*Darstellung*], by attributing to God the highest sacrifice a living being can ever perform in order to make even the unworthy happy...although through reason we cannot form any concept of how a self-sufficient being could sacrifice something that belongs to his blessedness, thus robbing himself of a perfection. We have here (as means of elucidation) a schematism of analogy, with which we *cannot* dispense” (*R* 6:65n, my emphasis).

Kant’s remarks at *R* 6:65n, on my reading, can be interpreted as follows. We already have the idea of moral perfection in reason, but scripture presents us with a narrative of how, through an act of love, God sacrifices his only son. In order for this analogy to make sense, it would have to presuppose that God can experience the feeling of “giving up” something in the way we experience giving up something when we sacrifice something. But we cannot read this back onto a supersensible concept like God. We do not have any insight into God’s character. Fortunately, we have a “means of representation” that allows us to represent this feeling in an appropriate way. Again, this feeling is a feeling that arises when we consider what it means to represent our duty as a sacrifice. This feeling, on my reading, is the same feeling that forms the basis of the two determinations of divine blessedness: fear and love of God. I discussed these two determinations at length in the previous chapter.

suggesting that this demonstrates the *reality* of our concepts. At the heart of the matter concerns Kant's position on whether or not ideas of reason can be exhibited or presented in material reality and, in turn, what that means for the role of aesthetics in his critical philosophy.

In the first *Critique*, Kant explains how concepts of the understanding can be exhibited in sensible intuition through examples (empirical concepts) or schemata (in the case of pure concepts).<sup>34</sup> However, in that context the ideas of reason are said to be further removed from objective reality. They are not found in appearances: "for no appearance can be found in which they may be represented in *concreto*."<sup>35</sup> While Kant will insist that we do not have access to rational ideas, it has been argued that a path is opened for something like this through his theory of aesthetics, and in particular his understanding of aesthetic ideas. Some have seized this opportunity and many have done so in ways that impact how we conceptualize technology.

Kant refers to both presentation and representation in the *Religion* [*Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*]. On my reading, these two terms are used strategically. In her writings on the topic, Martha B. Helfer argues that the distinction between *Darstellung* and *Vorstellung* exposes something about the way in which Kant's notion of sensibility changed over time.<sup>36</sup> I will briefly recount Helfer's helpful summary of Kant's position and her understanding of the problem.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant uses *Vorstellung* to "to designate the operation by which the different faculties that constitute the mind bring their respective objects before themselves."<sup>37</sup> As Helfer explains: "Whereas *Vorstellung* represents a priori perceptions (intuitions, concepts, and ideas) already present in the mind, *Darstellung* renders a concept

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<sup>34</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A146 / B185; Kant, *CPR*, A567/B595,

<sup>35</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A566/B595, quoted by Ross. See also Westra, p. 41. Notably, Westra argues that symbolic anthropomorphism does *not* produce a sensible symbol in the image of a human being. Supersensible representations are presented through *Vorstellung*, they transcend our finite capacity for giving them direct sensible presentations [*Darstellungen*].

<sup>36</sup> Helfer, p. 23.

<sup>37</sup> Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation*, p. 46.

sensibly present or actual to the mind.”<sup>38</sup> The representation through which an object is thought is its concept. The concept, however, must be presented immediately in intuition.<sup>39</sup> Helfer uses the following example to explain: When we see a table, how do we know that it is a table that we see? For Kant, the table itself as an object is unknowable (we cannot know the things in themselves) and the concept “table” by itself is an empty representation (concepts without intuitions are blind).<sup>40</sup> But then how do we mediate between the sensible knowledge we receive from our perception and the conceptual representation [*Vorstellung*] “table” present in our minds? According to Kant, what happens when we see a table is that the imagination takes the sensible information it receives from the body (e.g., brown, square, four legs, etc.) and uses the concept “table” that is given to the mind to create a sensible presentation or *Darstellung* of the table. There are two crucial moments to consider here. First, the imagination needs to mediate between concept and intuition to create a sensible presentation, and secondly, the faculty of judgment needs to determine whether or not the intuition corresponds to the concept. For Kant, this twofold process is crucial for all cognition.

Kant also uses the term *Darstellung* to refer to the rhetorical presentation or style of his argument. This definition of *Darstellung*, as Helfer explains, brings us closer to its most common meaning: the rhetorical presentation of his philosophical system. According to Kant, these two types of *Darstellung* are related to each other, but in philosophy they cannot be identical. Nonetheless, Kant often fails to clarify which definition he is using and therefore it is easy to blend them together. In fact, on Helfer’s reading, “in the course of the *Critiques*, *Darstellung*

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<sup>38</sup> Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation*, p. 25. “In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the critical definition of *Darstellung* corresponds more precisely to the everyday German usage...to render sensibly present or actual.” Helfer, p. 23.

<sup>39</sup> [*unmittelbar in der Anschauung darstellen*]

<sup>40</sup> Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation*, p. 24.

develops from a rhetorical, to a critical, and ultimately to an aesthetic figure.”<sup>41</sup> One of the first key moves, she argues, comes in the second *Critique*. In practical reason “the idea can, and indeed must, achieve partial presentation or concretization.”<sup>42</sup> This becomes clear in the section titled “On the Typic of Pure Practical Judgment.” The fact that ideas can only be partially presented concretization is only partial is limiting to cognition, but according to Helfer, Kant overcomes this limitation via the aesthetic idea in the *Critique of Judgment*. “The aesthetic idea achieves full concretization, albeit indirect or negative, in the judgments of the beautiful and the sublime and therefore forms a bridge between pure and practical reason, a bridge between nature and freedom.”<sup>43</sup>

Is it the case that Kant’s *Religion* is an attempt to bring his theory of aesthetics to his understanding of religion? Is it the case that Christianity discloses something that even pure reason is unable to reach? I think the answer to this question is both yes and no. But if we presuppose that for Kant religion offer a particular way of conveying ideas that cannot be cognized any other way, then it becomes difficult to discern the variety of ways in which religion operates in Kant’s writings. For instance, Kant seems to think that religion has a way of organizing a community or the way in which the actions of a community come together for a common effect—an effect that has power.<sup>44</sup> This is an effect that is understood according to

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<sup>41</sup> Alison Ross makes a similar point in *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy: Presentation in Kant, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> “In the Preface to this second *Critique* he argues that the idea of freedom forms the cornerstone of the whole system of pure, and even speculative, reason, and that the other transcendental ideas (God and immortality) are in fact subsumed under this one idea.” Helfer, p. 26, referencing Kant, *CPR*, A4.

<sup>43</sup> The matter of “partial” presentation comes up in the *Religion* when Kant is talking about the visible/invisible church. But not when he is talking about the archetype. See, for instance, *R*, 6:96.

<sup>44</sup> Here I am alluding to what Kant describes as the “powers of the spirit” in the *MS*. “Powers of spirit are those whose exercise is possible only through reason. They are creative to the extent that their use is not drawn from experience but rather derived a priori from principles, of the sort to be found in mathematics, logic, and the metaphysics of nature. .... (*MS* 6:445)

“morally efficient causes” (6:116). And, as we will see below, Kant’s account of the “good principle,” personified in Christ, also generates an effect that has power.

In what follows I offer an alternative way to account for the role of the figure of Christ in Kant’s *Religion*. My reading makes a point to distinguish three ideas that are at play in Kant’s formulation: the idea of holiness, the archetype, and the principle of the good. Each of these labels, all applied to Christ, serve different conceptual roles in Kant’s argument. The symbolic reading, I insist, does not account for the differences. After explicating how the archetype and the idea of holiness fit into the wider project of *Religion*, I articulate what it means to suggest that Christ is functioning as a schema. This latter topic will take us into the role of the ethical community and Kant’s arguments regarding the use of scripture.

#### **IV. The Figure of Christ: an Alternative Reading**

##### **i. Christ as Archetype and the Idea of Holiness**

As we have seen, one of Kant’s main claims in the *Religion* is that we have a “universal human duty to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, i.e. to the archetype [*Urbild*] of moral disposition in its entire purity, and for this the very idea, which is presented to us by reason for emulation, can give us force” (*R* 6:61). Kant’s claim is that humanity in its perfection (moral perfection) is an idea of reason that is personified and instantiated in a particular individual: the Christ.<sup>45</sup> In this section I unpack what this means with respect to Kant’s understanding of both the archetype and the idea of holiness.

The only object worthy of divine affection, recall, is the individual human being in its moral perfection. The ideal of moral perfection, Kant insists, can only ever be represented as a human being. However, in suggesting that Christ serves as the “archetype” of moral perfection,

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<sup>45</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A567–568/B595–596.

Kant is not suggesting that we model our actions or orient our maxims according to the example of the historical Jesus nor the example presented to us in a religious narrative. Rather it is our disposition that conforms to the archetype's disposition (*R* 6:75n). We adopt this disposition [*Gesinnung*] and in doing so we can hope that our minds and hearts will be transformed (*R* 6:63). Kant writes: "The *archetype* that we associate with this *appearance*—[i.e. with this empirically given man]—is located in natural men, in *us*." We are not the "author" of the archetype. In fact, it is not clear how we ever became receptive to it.<sup>46</sup> "[T]he presence of this archetype in the human soul is in itself incomprehensible..." (*R* 6:63).<sup>47</sup>

Kant refers to Christ as the archetype of moral perfection in other writings as well. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, for instance, he suggests that any "model of virtue" that a person finds in experience can be adequately assessed *only* by comparing it to the archetype that exists "solely in his own mind."<sup>48</sup> He makes a similar point in the *Groundwork*, but links the archetype more directly with the "Holy One of the Gospel":

Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is cognized as such....But whence have we the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the *idea* of moral perfection that reason frames a priori and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will. Imitation has no place at all in matters of morality, and examples serve only for encouragement, that is, they put beyond doubt the practicability of what the law commands and make intuitive what the practical rule expresses more generally, but they can never justify setting aside their true original, which lies in reason, and guiding oneself by examples. (*G* 4:408-409)

In the above passage, Kant insists that in order to cognize the holy one, we first need an "idea of moral perfection." This claim is repeated in the *Religion*.

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<sup>46</sup> In the General Remark of the third essay, he writes: "Although we have good practical reasons to place our hope in "a means of making up" for our inevitable deficiency—one that does not contradict but issues directly from God's holiness—we should conceive of such atonement as arising out of our own spontaneity otherwise we cannot talk of a conversion from evil to good." On this see Palmquist, p. 366.

<sup>47</sup> "...so the master's very death (the last extreme of a human being's suffering) was the manifestation of the good principle, that is, of humanity in its moral perfection, as example for everyone to follow" (*R* 6:82). Historical religion, as we will see, is necessary to make it comprehensible.

<sup>48</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A315/B371–2.

Similarly, in his *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Kant writes: “An *archetype* is an object of intuition, insofar as it is the ground of imitation. “*Thus Christ is the archetype of all morality [So ist Christus das Urbild aller Moralität].*” “In order to regard something as an archetype, we *must first have an idea according to which we can cognize the archetype...*”<sup>49</sup> However, if we have the idea of the “highest morality” and someone is represented to us as corresponding with this idea, then we can say: “this is the archetype, follow it!”<sup>50</sup> By contrast, a model is “a ground for imitation,” and we can “realize actions and objects according to a model...without an idea.”<sup>51</sup> Agreement between the model and the idea would be a mere chance. Thus “in morality we must assume no model, but rather follow the archetype which is equal to the idea of holiness.”<sup>52</sup>

It is important to clarify here that the idea of holiness is not an idea of reason that leads reason in a regulative way. Holiness, more specifically the holiness of a will, in the second *Critique*, is said to be a practical idea that requires a mediating figure.<sup>53</sup> As Kant explains:

This holiness of *will* [my emphasis] is nevertheless a practical *idea*, which must necessarily serve as a *model* to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end and which the pure moral law, itself called holy because of this, constantly and rightly holds before their eyes; the utmost that finite practical reason can effect is to make sure of this unending progress of one's maxims toward this model and of their constancy in continual progress, that is, virtue; and virtue itself, in turn, at least as a naturally acquired ability, can never be completed, because assurance in such a case never becomes apodictic certainty and, as persuasion, is very dangerous. (*CPrR* 5:33)

In this passage, Kant is clear that the holiness of will is a practical idea that can serve as a model. In *Religion*, Kant specifies that it is only through a mediating figure that we can speak of ourselves as conforming to the idea of holiness. The ideal of holiness, he explains, must be

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<sup>49</sup> Original emphasis. Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 28:577; Quoted by DiCenso. p. 96 n. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 28:577. DiCenso Ibid. DiCenso also cites *LM*, IX: 92.

<sup>51</sup> Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 28:577.

<sup>52</sup> Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, 28:577.

<sup>53</sup> “This holiness of will [my emphasis] is nevertheless a practical *idea*, which must necessarily serve as a *model* to which all finite rational beings can only approximate without end” (*CPrR* 5:33). Recall the discussion at the end of Chapter 4 on practical and technical ideas (pp. 149–151). A longer discussion would further unpack what it would mean to read the idea of holiness as a technical idea. Here however, I am working toward explaining what this means with respect to “the good principle” and the powers associated with this principle.

“adopted in our disposition before it can stand in place of a deed” and it can only be brought into our disposition through a principle. Once we accept the “good principle” into our maxims as a germ, we can imagine it emerging and growing toward holiness. “By adopting the disposition of Christ,” we hope ‘to become children of God’ (*R* 6:61).

## ii. The Good Principle

To be sure, the figure of Christ seems to bring together several different ideas at once. As the personification of the good principle, I argue, Christ epitomizes and finally is meant to resolve the tension between theoretical and practical reason. Support for this claim can be found in the *Groundwork*. Near the end of the text, Kant claims that if a critique of pure practical reason is to be carried out completely, it would need to “present the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle, since there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application” (*G* 4:391). Though Kant takes up this task in the second *Critique*, it is only after he introduces the figure of Christ as the “principle of the good” in the *Religion* that he comes to a resolution.

Whereas in the second *Critique* examples make intuitive what a practical rule expresses, in the *Religion*, Christ personifies not a practical principle or rule but *the principle of the good*.<sup>54</sup> This is a different kind of claim.

In first section of the second essay, Kant writes that humanity, in its full perfection can alone “make the object of divine decree the end of creation” (*R* 6:61). Kant further argues that it is an inevitable fact that reason can comprehend “supersensible qualities” only by representing them in human form. He also insists that we cannot “think the ideal of humanity pleasing to

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<sup>54</sup> In the second *Critique*, Kant notes that examples serve only to put “beyond doubt” the practicality of what the law commands, meaning they function as a supplement, provide us with hope and encouragement, they also “make intuitive what the practical rule expresses” (*G* 4:409).

God,” “except in the idea of a human being willing not only to execute in person all human duties, and at the same time to spread goodness about him as far wide as possible through teaching and example, but also, though tempted by the greatest temptation, to take upon himself all sufferings, up to the most ignominious death, for the good of the world and even for his enemies” (*R* 6:61). To die a dishonorable death rather than to give in to such temptations, especially to do so for one’s enemies as much as for one’s friends, is the ultimate expression of humanity in its perfection. However, the story of Jesus’s life, teaching, and death does not represent, display, or exhibit the archetype.<sup>55</sup> It is the *appearance* of the good principle that functions as an example for others to follow. To this we can add that Christ does not simply *express* a practical principle. He personifies the ideal of moral perfection, and the ideal of moral perfection is a “pure concept of reason, to which no experience is adequate.”<sup>56</sup>

In the first section of the second essay of *Religion*, Kant explains what he means by the good principle. “That which alone can make a world the object of divine decree and the end of creation is Humanity...in its full perfection...” (*R* 6:61). Humanity, understood here as a “rational being in general as pertaining to the world” has it within their power to make a world the object of divine decree and end of creation. On the one hand, Kant seems to be drawing on what he has said elsewhere about the highest good, the unity of virtue and happiness. Hence if the highest good were to become the end of creation and the object of divine decree it would only happen through the individual rational being in their actions in the world. And yet, if we refer back to the preface of the first edition of the *Religion* it becomes clear that Kant is also suggesting that nature itself is now directed to this ultimate aim (6:6). To make this point Kant is clearly drawing from the teleological arguments he makes in the third *Critique*.

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<sup>55</sup> Palmquist, p. 225; Kant, *R*, 6:82.

<sup>56</sup> See Allen Wood, *Kant and Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 116.

The reason I am adding this additional context, is to emphasize the significance of Kant's claims regarding the personification of the good principle. Kant further explains that "the good principle did not descend among humans from heaven at one particular time but from the very beginning of the human race, in some invisible way" (R 6:82). The principle appeared in an actual human being as example for all others. The full passage reads:

However, the good principle did not descend among humans from heaven at one particular time but from the very beginning of the human race, in some invisible way (as anyone must grant who attentively considers the holiness of the principle, and the incomprehensibility as well of the union of this holiness with human sensible nature in the moral disposition) and has precedence of domicile in humankind by right." (R 6:82).

Here Kant is union of "the holiness of the principle" with the human's sensible nature. The union is located in the moral disposition (or happens by means of).

Again, we "follow" the archetype not through imitation, but rather draw upon the *power* of a principle. Principles have power, that is to say they have a certain force and that force comes with effects. As Kant's explains in *Metaphysics of Morals*:

*Powers of spirit* are those whose exercise is possible only through reason. They are creative to the extent that their use is not drawn from experience but rather derived a priori from principles, of the sort to be found in mathematics, logic, and the metaphysics of nature. .... (MS 6:445)

The power and force that comes with the good principle and the ethical community that follows from it, is one a power of the spirit. But the power of spirit is only one of the natural perfections.<sup>57</sup>

To be sure, what Kant means by a "principle" [*Prinzip, Principium*] is not easy to discern since he does not use the term consistently across his many works.<sup>58</sup> While he makes a distinction

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<sup>57</sup> At this point there is some ambiguity regarding whether Christ, as the personification of the good principle, is important for natural perfection, moral perfection, or both.

<sup>58</sup> On some occasions he uses the term to refer to laws; on other occasions he uses it to refer to maxims. He also sometimes uses the term to refer to a "systematic ordering of data." See Vilem Mudroch and Helmut Holzhey, *Historical Dictionary of Kant and Kantianism* (United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), p. 270. See also Beck's commentary pp. 76ff. Palmquist translates *Grundsätz(e)* as "precept" and insists that it is translated differently from *Prinzip(s)*. The payoff, from his perspective, is that it means that he can use *Grundsätz* to refer to a propositional principle; he also says the term is used more often when referring to principles of faith. Beck often

between principles [*Prinzipien*] and *Grundsatz* (i.e. foundational principle), there are also times when he uses the two terms interchangeably.<sup>59</sup>

To understand how Kant is using the term in the *Religion*, we should consider what Kant has suggested elsewhere about reason's interests. In the first *Critique*, Kant refers to the understanding as the "faculty of principles" [*Prinzipien*].<sup>60</sup> However, as I noted in Chapter 5, Kant says that each faculty of the mind has its own interest. Interest in the second *Critique* is defined a "principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted" (*CPrR* 5:236). Hence, the interests of reason in the theoretical domain are not the same as the interests of reason in the practical domain. However, reason itself has its own interests. What my reading above suggests is that the good principle, personified in Christ—a singular human being who makes the *Gesinnung* the "rule" for his actions (*R* 6:66)—is the principle that governs reason itself.

### iii. Christ as Schema

After introducing Christ as the principle of the good in the *Religion*, Kant immediately turns to the objective reality of this idea, which will lead further to a discussion on scripture.<sup>61</sup> The section on the objective reality of the idea deals explicitly with intuitions and concepts. The conclusion of this section seems to be that since the idea already lies in our reason, we have no need for examples from experience to make the idea of a human being morally pleasing to God

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translates *Grundsatz* as fundamental principle, though he admits that Kant seems to use the two terms interchangeably. In the first *Critique* especially, Kant makes it clear that there are no higher principles or propositions than the categories of the understanding.

<sup>59</sup> Heidegger in Kant and the *Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 84, refers to the "grounding proposition [*Grundsatz*] at a crucial point in his reading of Kant. He says it is not a *Principle* [*prinzip*] that is "arrived at in the drawing of a conclusion that we must put forth as valid if experience is to hold true. Rather, it is "the expression of the most original phenomenological knowledge of the innermost, unified structure of transcendence, laboriously extracted in the stages of the essential projection of ontological synthesis that have already been presented."

<sup>60</sup> Kant, *CPR*, A299/B355–56.

<sup>61</sup> This in some ways mirrors the objective idea of pure practical reason in the second *Critique*. See my discussion in Chapter 6, pp. 183–188.

comprehensible to us. But Kant makes another important move here: he links the *effects* of the good principle to the good disposition. He suggests that it is faith in the practical validity of the idea that lies in our reason that has moral worth. Only this faith can validate miracles, if need be, rendering them as effects which originate with the good principle.

Just for this reason an experience must be possible in which the example of such a human being is given (to the extent that one can at all expect and ask for evidence of inner moral disposition from an external experience). For, according to the law, each and every human being should furnish in his own self an example of this idea. (*R* 6:63)

Kant maintains that the disposition can only be inferred from our actions. Since we are still referring to something apprehended though he senses, it is somewhat perplexing how Kant can claim that we can infer a disposition behind our actions or the actions of others. This once again raises questions regarding representation and presentation [*Darstellung* and *Vorstellung*].

As we learned in the last chapter, even in adopting the good disposition, we can never be certain that we have achieved a complete transformation (*R* 6:77). Only God has cognition of our improved disposition (*R* 6:75). We can derive no definite concept of this disposition through immediate consciousness. Our own “inner experience” does not allow us to see deeply enough into our hearts to gain certainty regarding our maxims. And yet somehow it is to be inferred from one’s life conduct. What this means is that whatever knowledge we gain of the disposition it can only be knowledge gained through experience and hence only an appearance. Human beings relate appearances temporally. This means that when we consider what our disposition is made up of, we see it in terms of deeds that we attribute to ourselves.

We are bound to consider the good as it appears in us, i.e. according to the *deed*, as *at each instant* inadequate to a holy law. But because of the *disposition* from which it derives and which transcends the senses, we can think of the infinite progression of the good toward conformity to the law as being judged by him who scrutinizes the heart (through his pure intellectual intuition) to be a perfected whole even with respect to the deed (the life conduct). And so notwithstanding his permanent deficiency, a human being can still expect to be *generally* well-pleasing to God, at whatever point in time his existence be cut short (6:67).

Since we will only ever evaluate our disposition according to deeds done, we need to infer that we have a disposition that we offer up for judgment.

[A]s an intellectual unity of the whole, the disposition takes *the place of* perfected *action*, since it contains the ground of its own steady progress in remedying its deficiency. But now it can be asked: Can he ‘in whom there is no condemnation, [whom there] must be [none], believe himself justified and, at the same time, count *as punishment* the sufferings that befall him on the way to an ever greater goodness, thus professing to deserve punishment and, by the same token, also to have a disposition displeasing to God? Yes indeed, but always in his quality as the "man" he is continually putting off. Whatever is due to him as punishment in that quality, i.e. as "the old man" (and this includes all the sufferings and ills of life in general) he gladly takes upon himself in his quality as "the new man," solely for the sake of the good (6:75n).

An intellectual unity of the whole can never be achieved. And yet, in bringing the good principle into our maxims, and conforming our disposition to that of the archetype’s, we replace the need for intellectual unity of the whole with a proper orientation. The disposition takes the place of perfected action, and perfected action (through Christ) contains the ground of its own steady progress toward remedying its own deficiency. The disposition, Kant further explains, can be expressed in thought as an ideal of humanity.

Now, when expressed in thought as the ideal of humankind, such a disposition, in conjunction with all the sufferings undertaken for the sake of the world's highest good, is perfectly valid for all human beings, at all times, and in all worlds, before the highest righteousness, whenever a human being makes his own like unto it, as he ought. (R 6:63)

The righteousness that is gained is never our own, but we make the disposition [*Gesinnung*] our own by adopting it. Our disposition will only ever be an appropriation but the appropriation must be possible. Kant then turns to addressing several problems that stand in the way of the idea. The first concerns the matter of holiness.

Kant insists that the human being’s moral constitution ought to conform to holiness. The holiness “must be assumed in his disposition [*Gesinnung*],” which “proceeds from a holy principle that has been adopted by the human being into his supreme maxim” (6:66).<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>62</sup> Why must the holiness be assumed in the disposition? Because the disposition, as I have suggested, allows for some kind of exchange between the sensible and the intelligible realms. Somehow it is possible to combine our sensible nature with holiness (i.e. it must be possible to bring together the idea of holiness together with the archetype that is in reason).

historical figure of Christ helps explain how this is possible. “The teacher of the Gospel has himself put into our hands these external evidences of external experience as a touchstone by which we can recognize human beings, and each of them can recognize himself, by their fruits” (*R* 6:201). Christ, in other words, puts something at hand, namely, he makes it possible, indeed common, to cognize the human being through their works, and their works are their full lives.<sup>63</sup> The human’s life is morally conceived. Our merit must be in harmony with other human beings. We experience the actions of others and ourselves through the laws of causality, the laws of nature, and yet at the same time we are expected to recognize these actions as stemming from freedom.

But there is a problem. Though human beings are said to be examples of the moral law, we also *know*—and this is at least in part an anthropological claim—that human beings are evil. “They cannot be judged otherwise” (*R* 6:32). One can take this to mean, simply that human freedom is always divided between good and evil. We must choose. We can choose to use human freedom for good or we can choose otherwise. And so, it would seem Kant is repeating a common theological trope. But given the rules that Kant has set up for himself this ends up being a difficult claim to make. How do we come to know, that is judge, the human being as a being that is partially laden with good predisposition and evil propensities?

Christ as schema provides a solution to this problem as well. However, if we think about the schema as an image we immediately gravitate toward an imagistic way of representing form—and thus as a complete and unified form. But recall that in mathematical and empirical concepts are grounded in schemata rather than images. We can use the image of a triangle as an example. No image of a triangle can ever be adequate to the exemplification of the concept in

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<sup>63</sup> Here too is a mode of revealing [*Darstellung*].

thought. A schema can never exist anywhere except in thought.<sup>64</sup> A schema is “a rule of the synthesis of the imagination with regard to a pure shape in space.”<sup>65</sup>

The “idea of a human being morally pleasing to God” is a model already present to us in our reason (*R* 6:62). And yet no image of the human from experience is adequate to the exemplification of this concept in thought.

Kant’s claim is that the human’s corrupt nature cannot be overcome except through “the idea of the morally good in its absolute purity, combined with the consciousness that this idea belongs to our original predisposition” (*R* 6:83). The figure of Christ provides us with *hope* that the good principle can gain dominion over evil. This remains the case even though we cannot comprehend it theoretically. In order to validate what we must believe is true, we will need to look elsewhere. Does validation come through practical reason? Not exactly. Though Kant makes use of the practical perspective at various points in the *Religion* (e.g. 6:62), his overall goal is *not* to put forward an argument that finds its ground in pure practical reason. Recall: “Religion *within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*” is not dealing with pure religion, but rather *religion applied* to a history handed down to us / and there is no place for it in an *ethics* that is pure practical philosophy” (*MS* 6:488).

The ideal of moral perfection, which is presented to us by reason for emulation, “can give us force” (*R* 6:61). This force is necessary to fight the dominion of evil. But the force of this principle (its effects) can be cognized if we consider the history of natural religion. This is why for Kant, Christianity is both a program and a promise. It contains the ground for its own steady progress and at the same time promises that salvation is *possible*, though not guaranteed. We are

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<sup>64</sup> Kant *CPR*, A141/B180.

<sup>65</sup> Kant *CPR*, A141/B180.

finally at the point where we can once again return to how Stiegler's account of technicity helps us understand Kant's argument in the *Religion*.

## V. Christianity's Program and Promise: Putting the Good Principle to Work

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that one of the main problems that Kant is working through in *Religion* concerns how the individual's pursuit of moral perfection relates to the orientation and ends of the community. We now turn to consider how the figure of Christ operates in relation to the Kant's vision for the ethical community. Above I argued that the archetype is not to be conflated with the idea of holiness nor should the archetype be revealed through appearances. But there is one place where the archetype *is* revealed. However, in this case, it is not the idea of holiness that is revealed, nor the principle of the good. Rather it is a *system* of religion. With this move, Kant effectively puts the good principle to work in the building of an ethical community. Kant's claim, in brief, is that the figure of Christ, as archetype, provides us with a "vivid" or an "intuitive" [*anschaulich*] grasp of a complete religion."<sup>66</sup> Here it is clear that Kant means to invoke his theory of symbolism. It is also here where the question of technics arises and is repressed.

As we will see, Kant insists that the ethical community is organized by a principle of purpose. This principle, Kant assures us, corresponds to an idea of reason *and* can be made public. But whether this organization is itself good or bad remains a question that I do not think Kant can answer. Recall in Chapter 5 that Kant eventually makes a distinction between practical and technical principles. In the *Religion*, Kant is not determining the moral quality of actions nor is he defining practical reason. Instead he is considering what the effects are of our striving

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<sup>66</sup> Palmquist, p. 407. Palmquist claims that religion in this context refers to the ideas of reason: God, freedom, and immortality.

toward certain ends, and at the same time he establishes a methodology for reading those effects through history. To make this argument, I need to attend to Kant's conception of the ethical community and his arguments regarding the history and form of pure religious faith.

**i. The Purpose and Structure of the Ethical Community**

As I stated in the last chapter, Kant claims that it is our *duty* to enter into an ethical community in order to fight the dominion of evil. The "highest moral good" will not be brought about through our own individual striving toward perfection. Instead it "requires rather a union of such persons into a whole toward that very end..." (*R* 6:98). This duty to join together also demands that we work toward the idea of a whole of something we ourselves cannot bring about.

Kant's vision for an ethical community, as I understand him, is related to, but also distinguished from, our efforts to bring about the highest good in the world. The moral law is within our power, a universal republic based on laws of virtue is not—at least not entirely. This duty to form an ethical community requires cooperation and a certain amount of faith, faith that the ethical community can reach its goal. To this I would add that it requires a faith in an absolute past and an absolute future. Here again we can rely on Stiegler's argument as I have reconstructed it.

Recall what was said at the beginning of the last chapter. For Stiegler, "No trust, no belief, however secular they are, are possible as effects...without a program that is also a promise."<sup>67</sup> Tertiary retention, according to Stiegler, requires a trust in the "power to synthesize effectively what has happened and what has been lived on from out of...this absolute past that has never been present, lived or effective."<sup>68</sup> For Stiegler, a passive synthesis, handed down by

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<sup>67</sup> Stiegler, "Fidelity at the Limits", p. 256.

<sup>68</sup> Stiegler, "Fidelity at the Limits", p. 256.

the “effectivity of an already-there...” is further depended on an “ineffective already there (the absolute past).”<sup>69</sup>

With Stiegler’s arguments in mind, we can read Kant as suggesting that in adopting the good disposition we are trusting the power to synthesize effectively what has happened and what has been lived on from out of the absolute past, a past that has never been effective or present. Our evidence? The attachment to a holy book. Though we cannot know that we have achieved moral perfection, one thing is certain: we cannot do it alone. For Kant, I suggest, scripture becomes an external testament to an internal disposition of the ethical community. The ethical community then becomes the necessary supplement for even the individual striving for moral perfection. The scripture becomes a way to externally validate the possibility of moral transformation and share this good news with others. This is why the public element of the Christian religion is so important.

He... requires of these pure dispositions that they should also be demonstrated in *deeds*.... And he wants these works to be performed also in public, as an example for imitation... [*Werken will er, daß sie um des Beispiels willen zur Nachfolge auch öffentlich geschehen sollen*] in an attitude of cheerfulness the communication and propagation of such dispositions, religion will gradually grow into a kingdom of God through its inner power, like a seed in good soil or a ferment of goodness.... (R 6:160)

Kant explains that the figure of Christ, as archetype, provides us with a ‘vivid’ (or an “intuitive,” *anschaulich*) grasp of a complete religion.”<sup>70</sup> The full passage reads:

Here we then have a complete religion, which can *be* proposed to all human beings comprehensibly and convincingly through their own reason; one, moreover, whose possibility and even necessity as an archetype for us to follow (so far as human beings are capable of it) has been made visible in an example, without either the truth of those teachings or the authority and the worth of the teacher requiring any other authentication.... (6:161)<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Stiegler, “Fidelity at the Limits,” p. 256.

<sup>70</sup> Palmquist, p. 406–409. I am indebted to Palmquist reading of this passage in particular.

<sup>71</sup> [*Hier ist nun eine vollständige Religion, die allen Menschen durch ihre eigene Vernunft faßlich und über zeugend vorgelegt werden kann, die über das an einem Beispiele, dessen Möglichkeit und sogar Notwendigkeit, für uns Urbild der Nachfolge zu sein (soviel Menschen dessen fähig sind), anschaulich gemacht worden, ohne daß weder die Wahrheit jener Lehren noch das Ansehen und die Würde des Lehrers irgend einer anderen Beglaubigung...*]

Christ, as archetype, is the founder of the first true church. He teaches that the pure disposition can only be demonstrated in deeds.

And he wants these works to be performed also in public, as an example for imitation...in an attitude of cheerfulness...in such a way that, from a small beginning in the communication and propagation of such dispositions, *religion* will gradually grow into a kingdom of God through its inner power, like a seed in good soil or a ferment of goodness (*R* 6:161).

In this passage we learn that through the communication and propagation of the disposition, *religion* gains power. As Palmquist explains: “Recalling Jesus’ work *empowers* those who believe, precisely because his life activated and brought this archetype into public awareness.”<sup>72</sup>

## ii. Historical Religion

The truth of Christianity, Kant proclaims, is not based on religious authorities or doctrines. Instead of relying on miracles, we can be grateful for, even “venerate the cover that has served to bring into public currency a doctrine whose authentication rests on a document indelibly retained in every soul and in need of no miracle” (*R* 6:85). But this too is a kind of faith. A doctrine here is introduced that rests on a “document retained in every soul” (*R* 6:85). Here again we can push the question of technicity.

Kant continually finds that to articulate what he means by the good disposition, he needs to rely on external supports. Furthermore, it is only through external supports that this religion becomes a self-maintain system, or so it would seem. The visible church, its organization, its laws, and the holy book upon which it is based all play a part in the gradual establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In the following passage Stiegler explains what it means to say that faith has a history, and in the same context relates the “absolute of any faith” to universal reason.

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<sup>72</sup> Palmquist, p. 407. On his reading, the archetype is “an idea of reason.”

To speak of prostheses of faith is in fact to speak of the *graft* and *adoption*. What Derrida thinks through the supplement is the originary graft. Not a supplementarity which could be produced in any conditions whatsoever, as if nothing was to be found under the name of the “proper.” On the contrary, the question is that of accounting for *attachment to the supplement*.<sup>73</sup> Everything is supplementary, and yet no supplement can stand in general for what is supplemented and what supplements. . . . This is the reason why faith has a history: the alphabetic support does not give access to the same regime of belief as hieroglyphic writing, or indeed any other form of trace. Every trace calls for a witness, supports a belief, but all traces do not make possible the same beliefs, *even if every belief calls upon the absolute past*: which is why universalizing reason is required and promised as the absolute of any faith.

When Stiegler suggests that faith has a history, what he means is that mnemotechnics, technologies specifically designed to support and organize memory, have changed over time, and yet there is a principle of selection that helps to explain our attachment to certain types of technological objects and systems. Stiegler is also insisting, in the passage above, that the structure of faith—also known as the prosthesis of faith—is constituted through both adoption *and* grafting. By adoption he means a selection (which, as we saw in Chapter 5, depends on technological change and has important implications for human sociality); and his reference to a “graft” or “grafting” in this context signifies a process through which one inserts something alien (something one considers to be outside of oneself) into a preexisting structure.

Kant’s argument, as I reconstructed it above, suggests that we are to adopt the disposition of the archetype. But it would seem that in adopting this disposition we are at the same time grafting this disposition onto a preexisting structure. As he writes near the conclusion of the second *Critique*:

When this is well established, when a human being dreads nothing more than to find, on self-examination, that he is worthless and contemptible in his own eyes, then every good moral disposition can be grafted onto it, because this is the best, and indeed the sole, guard to prevent ignoble and corrupting impulses from breaking into the mind. (*CPrR* 5:161)<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>74</sup> Kant’s point here is not unlike one that Martin Luther makes when he states that “It is *impossible* for a person *not* to be *puffed up* by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are *not his* but God’s.” Heidelberg Disputation. Luther’s Works. American Edition.

Here Kant seems to be suggesting that “good dispositions” (plural) are grafted on to a preexisting structure. This structure itself is the structure of action, of the pursuing of ends and striving to bring the highest good in the world. Recall what we noted in Chapter 5 about the logical interest of reason. The logical interest of reason (to further its insights [*Einsichten*]) is never immediate but presupposes purposes [*Absichten*] for its use (*G* 4:460). It is only in the pursuing of ends that the human gains insights. This insight can be used in two ways: either to influence others for the sake of one’s own purposes, or to gain “insight [*Einsicht*]” into how to properly unite all purposes to one’s own “enduring advantage.” Recall also Kant’s claim that history can be composed pragmatically when it makes us prudent, which is to say, when it “instructs the world how it can look after its advantage better than, or at least as well as, the world of earlier times” (*G* 4:417). And recall that the *Religion* concerns “religion applied to a history handed down to us...” (*MS* 6:488)

### iii. Ethical Community Exhibited in the Church

Elsewhere in this dissertation I have discussed a form of social ontology that seems to arise with certain conceptions of technology. I argue that because Kant represses technicity he ends up naturalizing a political order such that the lines between the ethical community and the political community are difficult to discern. This is particularly problematic when we consider Kant’s claims regarding natural religion.

Kant claims that Christianity is both a natural and revealed religion (*R* 6:155). This is how religion can be validated through everyone’s own reason. It is objectively a natural religion, and subjectively a revealed one. This means that it is something that humans could have arrived on their own, and yet has been revealed. Though Kant will insist that we cannot allow our practical faith to rest on a historical document, the teachings of Christ, the founder of the first

true church, spread much more efficiently. Scripture, a holy book, supports this process.

Scripture seems to be the best means for speeding up what Kant already begins to conceive of as a *natural* process (*R* 6:131).<sup>75</sup> Scripture works as a vehicle to disseminate the rational system of religion.

The ethical community also plays an important role. Kant insists that the form, constitution, and order to the ethical community is different from other types of communities.<sup>76</sup> While humans are authors of its *organization*, God is the author of its *constitution*. Though Kant insists that the ethical community is neither a juridical community nor a political community, the members of this community are expected to behave not just as human beings living in the ethical state of nature, but as *citizens* within a divine state on earth. Statutory laws are also necessary (*R* 6:104–5:105). But the ethical laws of the community are not directed at the “legality of actions,” but are rather directed “inner” morality (*R* 6:99). “[A]n ethical community,” Kant tells us is conceivable only as a people under divine commands, i.e. as a people of God, and indeed in accordance with the laws of virtue” (*R* 6:99). United, the ethical community sides against the “principle for the propagation of evil” (*R* 6:100) and creates a force that “counteracts” the “evil forces within united forces” (*R* 6:94).<sup>77</sup>

The ethical community is an ideal, but it is an ideal that *can* be exhibited [*Darstellung*] in a visible form. That form is the form of the church.<sup>78</sup> “The *church visible* is the *actual* union of

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<sup>75</sup> There is an opportunity here to connect this back up with what Stiegler says about *physis*, but unfortunately, I cannot address it here.

<sup>76</sup> Kant compares it to a family structure: a household under a father, but mediated through the son.

<sup>77</sup> Oddly it seems the principle for the propagation of evil is the same principle that makes make a holy book an object of respect. “Inasmuch as we can see, therefore, the dominion of the good principle is not otherwise attainable, so far as human beings can work toward it than through the setting up and the diffusion of a society in accordance with, and for the sake of, the laws of virtues - a society which reason makes it a task and a duty of the entire human race to establish in its full scope. - For only in this way can we hope for a victory of the good principle over the evil one” (*R* 6:94).

<sup>78</sup> “The mere idea of the union of all upright human beings under direct yet moral divine world-governance, as serves for the archetype of any such governance to be founded by human beings” (*R* 6:601).

human beings into a whole that accords with this ideal” (R 6:101).<sup>79</sup> “The true (visible) church is one that displays the (moral) kingdom of God on earth inasmuch as the latter can be realized through human beings” (R 6:101).<sup>80</sup>

If the ethical community is to be represented in the form of the church, not just any church will do. Kant provides four requisites the true church visible.<sup>81</sup> The requisites, which are also its *marks*, are the following: 1) The church must be universal and numerically one in *quantity*; 2) Its nature must be pure not driven by any motivating forces except moral ones (quality). 3) The principle of freedom must govern its relations (relation). 4) The church must contain a priori the idea of its purposes so that it remains unchangeable (modality) (R 6:101). All four requisites are directed at universality. This means not only that everyone is welcome to join, but that its doctrines are communicable to all. What makes something communicable? It must be something that is present within us and something we can reasonably articulate to others outside of us. In addition to communicability, permanence is also crucial. Matters of permanence lead to a conversation about revealed religion. If a purely revealed religion would either have to rely on tradition or scripture to secure its teachings or it would “disappear from the world” (R 6:156). In fact, even an enduring revelation, one that is ongoing within each and every individual would need to be externally communicated so that a “community could be combined.”<sup>82</sup>

After laying out these requisites, Kant decides that scripture is the best instrument, not only for bringing the community together, but because it self-sustaining, establishes permanence, and is especially effective at disseminating and promulgating the spread of the good principle (R

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<sup>79</sup> In the original, italics are used for “church visible”; here I use italics to emphasize “actual.”

<sup>80</sup> However, its organization, the church can never reach a complete unity. Thus, whenever he refers to the ethical community or visible church he refers to an incomplete or partially represented schema.

<sup>81</sup> There are similarities between these four requisites and the categories of understanding in the first *Critique* and the categories of freedom in the second *Critique*. Unfortunately, this is not a topic I can properly address here.

<sup>82</sup> He also seems to suggest that our internal disposition, might be supported with symbolic presentation (R 6:171).

6:124, 6:153).<sup>83</sup> Scripture is so valuable, in fact, that the “union of human beings into one religion” could not be “feasibly established and given permanence without a holy book and an ecclesiastical faith based on it” (*R* 6:132).

#### iv. The Virtues of Scripture

Scripture, according to Kant, is useful for a variety of reasons. One reason concerns its function in moral education. The narrative is given “only for the vivid presentation of its true object (virtue striving toward holiness), it should at all times be taught and expounded in the interest of morality....” (*R* 6:133) Symbolically speaking, the history portrayed in scripture illustrates the lives of virtuous and unvirtuous human beings.

[W]e cannot do better than adopt, as a medium for the elucidation of our ideas of a revealed religion in general, some book which contains [instances] of that sort, especially a book inextricably interwoven with teachings that are ethical and hence relate to reason religion and virtue accredited to revelation....” (6:157).<sup>84</sup>

However, scripture is not only important for symbolic purposes. Kant claims that any ecclesiastical faith based on scripture is able to maintain itself internally as a system. He insists that faiths based on scripture are *always* more resilient than those based merely on custom or tradition (*R* 6:131). Scripture allows the community of believers to remain *self*-directed and *self*-maintaining.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, scripture is an efficient instrument for dissemination. What all this points to is that it is not only the meaning of scripture that is valuable—not only its contents—but its achievements in terms of what scripture has been able to produce. Its effects are

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<sup>83</sup> Bennet’s translation, p. 68 (*R* 6:124/153).

<sup>84</sup> Palmquist’s translation. Once Kant makes his case for why faith based on scripture is best, he considers how revealed texts should be interpreted (*R* 6:166). Every faith based on a revealed religion, and more specifically on scripture, will need a learned public. That’s, in part why biblical scholars are indispensable to any faith based on a scripture.

<sup>85</sup> Is this simply a protestant bias? Palmquist doesn’t think so. He thinks it has to do with political conflicts. Kant seems to be suggesting that tradition is more likely to be associated with political power.

beneficial. In fact, Kant refers to scripture's effects as good fortune [*Glücklich*] (R 6:107).<sup>86</sup> "No human wisdom or art can climb up to heaven, but we can be satisfied enough by the fact that the faith was introduced in a particular way: i.e. with human reports which we must eventually trace back to very ancient times, and in languages now dead, to evaluate their historical credibility" (R 6:112). A holy book "can command an authority equal to that of revelation."<sup>87</sup> He will even go as far as to say that it "arouses the greatest respect even among those who do not read it" (R 6:107).<sup>88</sup>

But perhaps most importantly, although Kant will insist that we cannot allow our practical faith to rest on a historical document, the teachings of Christ, the founder of the first true church, spread much more efficiently. Scripture, a holy book, supports this process. More specifically, scripture seems to be the best means for speeding up what Kant already begins to conceive of as a *natural* process (R 6:131). Scripture works as a vehicle to disseminate the rational system of religion (R 6:131).<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> He adds a note: "An expression [*Glücklich*] for everything wished for, or worthy of being wished for, but which we can neither foresee nor bring about through our effort according to the laws of experience; for which, therefore, if we want to name a ground, can adduce no other than a generous providence" [*Ein Ausdruck für alles Gewünschte oder Wünschenswerte, was wir doch weder voraussehen noch durch unsere Bestrebung nach Erfahrungsgesetzen herbeiführen können;; von dem wir* ) also, wenn wir einen Grund nennen wollen, keinen anderen als eine gütige Vorsehung anführen können.]" (6:107n).

<sup>87</sup> In his essay on books Kant explains that the material aspect of the book is a "mute instrument for the diffusion of the author's discourse to the public." *On the Wrongfulness of Unauthorized Books* (8:81). It is a vehicle for expression. The book has its "existence only in a person" (8:87).

<sup>88</sup> Perhaps *both* humans and scripture are worthy of respect. Or perhaps the respect we assigned to a holy book is similar to the feeling that we experience when we witness the practice of skill or exercise of talent. I am not sure Kant makes this clear.

<sup>89</sup> To be sure, Kant thinks scripture is necessary, but only up to a point. He insists that this "*principle of constantly coming closer to pure faith is what constitutes every faith*. As such we should eventually be able to dispense with ecclesiastical faith (in its historical aspect)" (R 6:153). He further explains that moral perfection is what constitutes the true end of all religion of reason. Within the true end of all religion of reason we find the "supreme principle of all scriptural exegesis" (R 6:112). Put in theological terms, Kant is not advocating for justification by grace alone. He insists that we are to strive for moral improvement. Here he may be drawing on 2 Timothy. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV).

## VI. The History (and Form) of Pure Religious Faith

We are now in a position to deal more directly the role Kant assigns to historical faith. Why does pure religious faith need to rely on historical religion? Kant insist that while pure religious faith should be enough on its own (since it is closely aligned with morality), nevertheless, due to a fundamental lack in human nature—an originary de-fault, we might call it—pure religious faith is simply *not* enough. What's more, is that ecclesiastical faith is historically prior to the public appearance of pure religious faith, though technically speaking, it should have happened the other way around. As Kant writes:

Thus in the molding of human beings into an ethical community, ecclesiastical faith naturally\* precedes pure religious faith: there were temples (buildings dedicated to public service, before churches (places of assembly for instruction and inspiration in moral dispositions); priests (consecrated stewards in the practices of piety) before ministers (teachers of pure moral religion), and for the most part they still come first in the rank and value according to them by the crowd at large. (*R* 6:109)

If historical religion (i.e. ecclesiastical faith is necessary) what form is best? This is essentially the question that drives the second experiment in Kant's *Religion*. Namely, Kant sets out to test whether Christianity, as one of many examples of historical religion, harmonizes and indeed supports, the individual and collective efforts to fight the dominion of evil and achieve moral perfection.

Kant also credits Christianity for its potential for remedying religious delusion. One of the arguments he makes in the *Religion* is that the ultimate remedy for religious delusion is to adopt a form of historical religion that contains within itself the principle to establish the moral life as the real goal of religion. Christianity, at least on the surface, appears to be the one historical faith, as far as we know, that contains this principle. This principle is the very notion of a universal religion. And as I will explain below, it also carries with it both a drive toward expansion as well as a drive toward destruction.

## i. The Form of Pure Religious Faith

In the last chapter, I noted that Kant claims that religion has a formal aspect and a material aspect. Its “formal aspect is the ‘sum of all duties as divine commands’ and belongs to philosophic morals. It expresses the idea of God, which “reason makes for itself.” Kant renders this in terms of a duty that humanity has to itself. Its ground is “subjectively logical.”

That is to say, we cannot very well make obligation (moral constraint) intuitive for ourselves without thereby thinking of *another's* will, namely God's...But this duty *with regard to God*...is a duty of a human being to himself, that is, it is not objective, an obligation to perform certain services for another, but only subjective, for the sake of strengthening the moral incentive in our own lawgiving reason (*MS* 6:487).

In contrast to the formal aspect, the material aspect of religion refers essentially to religious service, that is, services performed for or to God. This aspect is cognized empirically and belongs to revealed religion. In this case, God's existence is assumed not for practical purposes, but “set forth as given directly (or indirectly) in experience” (*MS* 6:487).

Kant abstracts the form of pure religious faith from the material side of religion. The method he follows is not unlike the one he utilizes in the *Metaphysics of Morals* when he discusses books and money. From the very concept of faith, Kant abstracts the greatest and most useful means for exchanging feelings that are not directly tied to sensibility. Here we will be able, again, to make use of Stiegler's arguments.

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, money and books get treated together as external objects and instruments that make the transfer of ownership possible. It is somewhat strange that Kant treats these topics in the *metaphysical* doctrine of the right, since this means that whatever is said must be made in accordance with a priori principles. Book and money are unique since in order to understand what makes the transfer possible, it is necessary to “abstract from the matter that is exchanged” and consider “only the form itself.”<sup>90</sup> Kant explains: “the concept of money, as the

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<sup>90</sup> Kant, *MS* 6:286.

greatest and most useful means human beings have for exchange of things, called buying and selling (commerce), and so too the concept of a book, as the greatest means for exchanging thoughts, can still be resolved into pure intellectual relations” (*MS 6:286*).

With respect to money or currency, Kant tells us that “money is a thing” that “can be used only by being alienated” (*MS 6:286*). Money is intended not as a gift, but for “reciprocal acquisition.” Money “represents” all goods, since it is conceived of universally as the accepted, mere means of commerce (within a nation). Money is, in fact, the most useful thing, and yet has no value in itself. It is the universal means by which men exchange their industriousness with one another.<sup>91</sup> The intellectual concept of money, under which the empirical concept falls, is therefore the concept of a thing which determines the price of all other things (goods). “The price of a thing is the judgment of the public about its value in proportion to that which serves as the universal means to represent reciprocal exchange of industry (its circulation) (*MS 6:288*).” This is apparently how we abstract the *form* from the material in order to arrive at the concept of money. It is something that is accepted as the standard measure to decide all other things.<sup>92</sup>

If, as I am suggesting, we consider how Kant’s argument in the *Religion* employs a similar form of abstraction to articulate a form of pure religious faith, then this comes with a troubling implication. The implication is that Kant is effectively offering two supplements to human judgment, one is the figure of Christ and the second is a system of religion. The latter is also the organization of a community, an ethical community, and this community is manifested [*Darstellung*] in a visible church.

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<sup>91</sup> Paraphrasing Kant, who draws on Adam Smith here. The gendered term “man” is historically appropriate here.

<sup>92</sup> Significantly, the archetype in the *Religion* can be described as both the measure and an incentive.

The formal and material aspects of religion can also be mapped on to the objective and subjective side of religion. The third essay of the *Religion* is separated into two parts. The first part treats the philosophical representation of the of the good principle's victory over evil. In this section he describes the ethical community under laws, its realization in a church, the importance of scripture, and the gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith toward "the exclusive domain of the pure religious faith" (which is the kingdom of God) (*R* 6:115). The second part deals with the "historical representation" of the gradual establishment of the dominion of the good principle on earth" (*R* 6:124).

With the shift from philosophical to historical religion, Kant turns to articulate the subjective side of religion. Religion, he explains, is not, strictly speaking, public (*R* 6:124). This has two important implications. First, it means that he cannot provide a universal history of *religion*, only a "universal history of faith."

Hence we can expect a universal historical account only of ecclesiastical faith, by comparing it, in its manifold and mutable forms, with the one, immutable, and pure religious faith. From this point onward, where ecclesiastical faith publicly acknowledges its dependence on the restraining conditions of religious faith, and its necessity to conform to it, the church universal begins to fashion itself into an ethical state of God and to make progress toward its fulfillment....(*R* 6:124).

Kant's attempt to identify pure religious faith in the historical representation part of the text presupposes there is a formal part and a material part to religion. But now it would seem that he wants to abstract the form of pure religious *faith* from the material side of *faith*.

What is the form that is abstracted from Kant's review of the history of faith? Once again, scripture is crucial: "Anyone with insight into the distinction between the rational, unchangeable core of the universal church and the historically determined features of any given faith community would it makes sense to adopt scripture as its vehicle of expression."<sup>93</sup> In this way we see how the history of true religion progresses from bad to better. We cannot prove the

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<sup>93</sup> Palmquist, p. 341.

miracles Jesus was said to perform. But the promulgation of the stories is itself a kind of miracle that requires a trust in history (*R* 6:129).<sup>94</sup> We cannot know that Christianity had an actual effect on the inner moral disposition, however, we can nevertheless recognize its extreme *success*.

After Kant offers a sweeping account of the universal history of faith, Kant claims that Christianity is said to contain the germ or predisposition to universal religion. The history of “the universal church” starts when the pure religious faith is made public, that is to say, when it becomes visible in the form of a church. The church then develops a public of its own.

To be sure, Kant also acknowledges that the history of Christianity is itself full of conflict and struggle. But it also so happens that the story of pure religious faith is both a story of progress as well as setbacks. The historical narrative of the universal history of faith allows us to see how the bad propensity in human nature founded a universal world religion. To use a phrase borrowed from Stiegler, here Kant is attempting to “make good” on what was previously explained as a lack or fault in our nature. This very fault provides us with hope that we can unify and harmonize our ends and orient ourselves toward a future human becoming.

## **ii. The Idea of Objective Unity of Religion**

The “objective unity of the religion” (*R* 6:123n) Kant explains, is an “idea of reason” that constantly urges us to resolve or reconcile ecclesiastical unity of faith with the freedom of matters of faith. Kant insists that the interest we have in the “objective unity of the religion of reason” is a moral interest (*R* 6:123n). But how can he be so sure? Kant admits that if we look at human nature we will not be encouraged to believe that we have any hope of bringing about the visible church. The “idea of objective unity of religion is one of reason, which is impossible for us to display in an intuition adequate to it but which, as practical regulative principle, has

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. *R*, 6:127.

nonetheless the objective reality required to work toward this end of unity of the pure religion of reason” (6:124n). But here we should note again that regulative *principles* do not create concepts, they order concepts. Ironically, this idea of reason, which is a practical regulative principle, is only comprehensible through an analogy with the idea of a nation state and a collection of states under an international law. “It is the same here as with the political idea of the right of a state, insofar as this right ought at the same time to be brought into line with an international law' which is universal and *endowed with power* (6:124n). Kant next alludes to a propensity (and therefore an inclination) in human nature in which the drive toward expansion is balanced by a drive toward dissolution and disharmony.

Though Kant refers to the political idea of the state, he insists that the objective unity of religion cannot be gained from experience. If we look to experience we find that once a social organization such as the church or the state expands to a certain point, it always breaks down into smaller sects.

There seems to be a propensity in human nature (perhaps put there on purpose) that makes each and every state strive, when things go its way, to subjugate all others to itself and achieve a universal monarchy but, whenever it has reached a certain size, to split up from within into smaller states. So too each and every church entertains the proud pretension of becoming a universal one; as soon as it has propagated and acquires ascendancy, however, a principle of dissolution and schism into various sects makes its appearance. (6:123n)

What I want to draw attention to in this passage is Kant’s mention of “dissolution and schism into various sects.” The fusion of states, Kant adds, is chiefly averted by two effective causes: difference in language and differences in religion.

Without either refusing the service of ecclesiastical faith or feuding with it, we can retain its useful influence as a vehicle yet equally deny to it . . . every influence on the concept of true (viz. moral) religion. And so, in spite of the diversity of statutory forms of faith, we can establish tolerance among their adherents through the basic principles of the one religion of reason, with reference to which teachers ought to expound all the dogmas and observances of their various faiths; until, with time, by virtue of a true enlightenment (an order of law originating in moral freedom) which has gained the upper hand, until finally the form of a degrading means of compulsion can be exchanged, with everybody's consent, for an ecclesiastical form commensurate to the dignity of a moral religion, viz. a free faith. (R 6:123)

The “degrading means of compulsion,” explains the other side of the drive to unify and expand power. But just like in the case of the drive to unify the state, there is a tendency for this drive to transform into a principle of destruction. In other words, all forces are driven toward their own end and this end is not a greater unity and wholeness, but ultimately, destruction. This is not completely surprising since Kant will speak elsewhere about our unsocial sociability. But what he says next *is* surprising. He seems to suggest that this propensity itself can be used for practical purposes. It should be possible to *exchange*, with everyone’s consent, for an ecclesiastical form of faith that is commensurate to the dignity of a moral religion.

### iii. Holy Mysteries – Subjective Necessity and the Moral Disposition

In attending to the “subjective” side of religion, Kant is able to make a further claim about a holy object or mystery. This has important political implications as well. At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that Kant’s human sociality, is linked to the repression of technics in his theory of religion. I further suggested that because Kant represses technicity he ends up naturalizing a political order such that the lines between the ethical community and the political community are difficult to discern.

Despite Kant’s insistence that the ethical community is not a political community, in the third General Remark (i.e. parergon) he will go on to describe the trinity, a holy mystery, as representing a kind of political order—but one that exhibits a *practical idea*. In the third general remark, he writes:

Investigation into all forms of faith that relate to religion invariably runs across a *mystery* behind their inner nature, i.e. something *holy*, which can indeed be *cognized* by every individual, yet cannot be *professed* publicly, i.e. cannot be communicated universally. - As something *holy* it must be a moral object, hence an object of reason and one capable of being sufficiently recognized internally for practical use; yet, as something *mysterious*, not for theoretical use, for then it would have to be communicable to everyone and hence also capable of being externally and publicly professed. (R 6:137)

The first thing to note about this passage is that Kant seems to be suggesting that there are some forms of faith that do not relate to religion. Kant most certainly thinks Judaism falls into this category. Indeed, according to Kant, Judaism is not a religion at all (*R* 6:125). Why? He offers three reasons: Judaism is first and foremost a political organization (*R* 6:125), secondly, it conceives of no afterlife, and finally, it does not admit the entire human race. There is one religion, recall, and various kinds of faith. Judaism therefore is a faith that is not a religion.<sup>95</sup>

The second thing to note about this passage is that the encounter with something holy is not something we can communicate. It is not universal. Kant further explains that it is “impossible to determine, a priori and objectively, whether there are such mysteries or not. Hence, we shall have to look directly into the inner, the subjective, part of our moral predisposition in order to see whether any can be found in us” (*R* 6:138). If we do find such a mystery when we look within, we should not expect to communicate this to everyone. At the same time, there is one mystery that we can point to that is not quite a mystery, and this mystery is available to everyone. Kant explains:

Thus freedom - a property which is made manifest to the human being through the determination of his power of choice by the unconditional moral law - is no mystery, since cognition of it can be *communicated* to everyone [*So ist die Freiheit, eine Eigenschaft, die dem Menschen aus der Bestimmbarkeit seiner Willkür durch das unbedingt moralische Gesetz kund wird, kein Geheimnis, weil ihre Erkenntnis jedermann mitgeteilt werden kann*]. This property's basis, however, which is inscrutable to us, is a mystery, because it is not given to us for cognition.<sup>96</sup>

Kant assures us that the mystery that we encounter behind all forms of faith cannot be freedom itself. Freedom is not a mystery, it is something we can communicate to others. However, the ground of freedom—its determining cause—cannot be brought to intuition. When we apply this

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<sup>95</sup> For an overview of Kant's understanding of Judaism, especially as it pertains to his dialogue with Mendelssohn, see Allen Wood's *Commentary on Religion*, p. 200–203.

<sup>96</sup> The phrase “made manifest” is misleading here. Cf. Palmquist's translation: “Thus freedom, a property of which the human being becomes informed through the determinability of his volition by the unconditionally moral law, is not a mystery, because the cognition of it can be *communicated* to everyone; this property's basis, however, which is inscrutable to us, is a mystery, because it is *not given* to us for cognition” (p. 356).

mysterious aspect of freedom to the “final object of practical reason” (i.e. the realization of the final moral end) we will indeed be led to mysteries. Why? Because it leads one to believe that we are not able on our own to achieve the highest good in the world.

...the human being cannot realize the idea of the supreme good inseparably bound up with the pure moral disposition, either with respect to the happiness which is part of that good or with respect to the union of the human beings necessary to the fulfillment of the end, and yet there is also in him the duty to promote the idea, he finds himself driven to believe in the cooperation or the management of a moral ruler of the world, through which alone this end is possible (*R* 6:139).

As individuals strive to bring about the highest good in the world, one realizes that for complete unity and wholeness we need the cooperation of a moral ruler. And here “an abyss of mysteries” opens up about God’s relation to us. Only a few lines later, Kant insists that our inquiries into the nature of God and God’s relation to us is not a mystery after all, at least not if we consider this relation as *God’s moral relation* to the human race. All human beings should be able to arrive at this understanding of God on their own. But that’s not all. What Kant says next is striking. He insists that all reasonable beings should be able to, on their own, arrive at the idea of the trinity. How is he able to make such a claim? The answer lies in his three descriptions of God.

In Chapter 4 we saw how Stiegler made much out of Kant’s claim that God is understood to be the ground of all possibilities. But this is not Kant’s only idea of God. Instead, Kant’s understanding of God can be broken down into three aspects, and together they exhibit God’s moral relation to us. Theoretically speaking, 1) God is the ground of all possibilities, 2) practically speaking, God is a postulate for pure practical reason as we strive to bring the highest good in the world and 3) God is the divine lawgiver, who we can assume acts on behalf of a community—a community open to all (at least anyone who is considered to be human). In this context, Kant calls attention to the problem of anthropomorphism once more, but nevertheless insists that the trinity is a mystery that has the power to purify the moral relation of human beings to the highest being.

But since this faith, which purified the moral relation of human beings to the highest being from harmful anthropomorphism on behalf of universal religion and brought it up to measure with the true morality of a people of God, was first set forth in a certain doctrine of faith (the Christian one) and made public to the world only in it, its promulgation can well be called the revelation of something which had hitherto remained a mystery for human beings through their own fault. (R 6:141)

It would seem that as we strive for the highest good we come up to a mystery and that mystery is a kind of organization of persons. But what is particularly striking here is that Kant seems to be suggesting that it is the *promulgation* of this faith, its spread and dissemination that itself reveals the first true mystery. One final time, with Stiegler we must ask: what if we pushed the question of technics here? What, then, are we to make of this mystery?

## VII. Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation I have been suggesting that wherever the relationship between theoretical and practical reason is being renegotiated in Kant's works the question of technics arises but is mostly repressed. In this chapter and the last, I drew upon Stiegler's arguments regarding originary technicity to read Kant's *Religion*. This chapter specifically focused on the role of Christ, though much more could be said. My reading revealed that for Kant, Christ is not merely a symbol for the moral life, he also functions as a schema of recognition and is the founder of the first true church. This church is the visible manifestation or presentation [*Darstellung*] of the Kingdom of God.

Throughout the chapter I pointed to some of the moral and political implications of Kant's arguments. I argued that if the figure of Christ becomes a principle for human judgment, then the relationship between theoretical and practical reason should always foreground the dignity and worth of individual human beings. However, my reading of Kant also showed that behind Kant's claims about the subjective and objective sides of religion, and natural and revealed history, is a model of human sociality based on exchange.

## CONCLUSION

Stiegler's theory of originary technicity is one of many attempts in recent years to rethink and redefine the human-technical relation. But Stiegler, like many other leading theorists, is dismissive of the moral self. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown that this is actually to Stiegler's disadvantage. Stiegler understands his work to be concerned with identifying the conditions that make technical evolution possible.<sup>1</sup> But as I understand him, underlying his theorizations and his many provocative claims is a deep concern for human freedom. This makes his work especially valuable for metaethical inquires today. Whereas for Kant the concern was to offer an account of freedom within a Newtonian universe, today we need to consider how freedom is possible in a world governed by computational logic and information machines. How can we acknowledge the human as a being that is bound up in complex relations with others in dynamic environments without losing the dignity of persons? How are we to make sense of responsibility at a time when persons are easily lost within vast communication systems, and when individualized actions are quantified and swept up in the sea of big data?

This dissertation brought Kant and Stiegler together in order to test whether or not we can accept the claims of originary technicity and yet still affirm moral freedom and lend credibility to the experience of the moral ought. By bringing these two thinkers together in this way, I was able to diagnose an important problem. I found that contemporary reconfigurations of the human-technical relation tend to perpetuate a myth regarding the coming to be of social entities.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Stiegler, Elie During, and Benoît Dillet. *Philosophising By Accident: Interviews with Elie During* (Edinburgh: EUP, 2017), p. 31. In this context Stiegler suggests that he has always been concerned with the conditions of the possibility of knowledge, but since his account of individuation is based on an account of the coming to be of technical objects, the point still stands. Indeed, as Stephen Barker notes, for Simondon, as well as for Stiegler, 'the conditions of the possibility of knowledge are in fact the causes of existence of the individuated being.' See Stephen Barker, *Techno-pharmaco-genealogy*, in *Stiegler and Technics*, specifically, p. 273.

I demonstrated that, ironically, this pattern of thought can be traced back to Kant and his account of the unity of consciousness as laid out in the first *Critique*. I say “ironic,” because this way of thinking tends to limit what we can and cannot say about moral agency by allowing social exchange to determine the limits and scope of what is morally possible. Against this position, I defended the claim that our relations to others are never determined by any kind of synthesis, nor social or technical systems.

I further argued that because Stiegler is reading Kant through the lens of Heidegger, he overlooks the ways in which his theory of technicity mirrors some of the features of Kant’s theory of religion. Rather than correcting Stiegler’s reading, I used his criticism to return to Kant on the question of technics to ask: if it is the case that Kant represses technics, then why, when, and how? And: what can we learn from Kant’s writings when we read his work with an eye toward technicity?

I offered a critical reconstructive reading of his work through the lens of originary technicity. I retrieved concepts from Kant that are often overlooked by theorists of technology and I made a point to defend moral freedom and push back against the effacement of the moral ought. On the surface, it appears that Kant cannot tell us much about the human’s technical nature. Though his turn to anthropology implies that in order to live the ethical life, we need to know something about what the human is and how the human functions in particular contexts, technical capacities, admittedly, do not receive much attention from Kant. Nevertheless, I found that there are moments where the question of technics is repressed in Kant’s writings. Most notably, I found that wherever the line between theoretical and practical reason is being renegotiated in Kant’s works, the question of technics is beginning to emerge, but is, for the most part, repressed. The point where this comes to the surface is in his *Religion*. It is also in this

context where Kant appeals to what seems to serve as a universal supplement to human judgement, namely, the figure of Christ.

I also found that by returning to Kant on the question of technics it is possible to reconstruct a theory of human subjectivity that is much more complex than most readers of Kant realize. This broader conception of human subjectivity, I argued, can accommodate certain aspects of Stiegler's theory of technicity. This is particularly the case when it comes to Stiegler's notion of tertiary retention and the technical tendency. That said, I have covered a lot of ground, and brought together two very different thinkers. And though I have found that they share similar concerns—a concern to defend human freedom—the way they approach those concerns, and the language they use, are quite different. To make their argument's intelligible and, in a sense, make them speak to each other, I have found it necessary to define and reconstruct various conceptual schemes throughout all of the chapters. As such, rather than providing a systematic account of how we might coherently bring Stiegler and Kant together in sort of dialectic, to conclude this project, I will summarize the results of each of the chapters, identify some of the conceptual tools that I think we can draw from this study, and end with a discussion on the limits of moral inquiry.

Chapter 1 offers a brief sketch of some of the contemporary trends and movements that make up the general backdrop for philosophical and ethical discourse on technology today. I begin by explaining the significance of Heidegger's critique of technology. I focus on two main ideas: first, Dasein as "being-in-the-world," which problematizes definitions of technology that presuppose the subject/object divide; and secondly, Heidegger's claim that *techne* is a *mode of revealing*. This discussion allowed me to introduce some of the themes and concepts that were then used throughout the rest of the study. Next, I used the empirical turn to explore three

additional lines of inquiry: postphenomenology, science and technology studies, and new materialism. This brief sketch provided context and support for my claim that reconfigurations of the human-technical relation in recent years negates or elides the moral experience. Providing this general context also helped to better situate Stiegler's project and explain the strengths and weaknesses of his position.

Near the end of the chapter, I made a point to explain how Stiegler's theory of technicity is somewhat unique in that he is willing to theorize both the empirical and transcendental aspects of technology. This discussion led to a question about what Stiegler means by transcendence. I noted that while Stiegler appears to be building upon Heidegger's ontological understanding of transcendence, he qualifies Heidegger's argument's in important ways. Two in particular stand out. First, he revises Heidegger's existential analytic in such a way that all relations to time are constituted in and through technics, which in effect has implications for Stiegler's own account of transcendence. Second, he attempts to bring together Heidegger's fundamental ontology with Gilbert Simondon's theory of ontogenesis. I then used these two points of difference to set up the next two chapters, both of which further demonstrate how Kant's arguments become the very means through which Stiegler attempts to modify and further develop Heidegger's critique of technology.

More specifically, Chapter 2 addresses Stiegler's way of reworking the existential analytic, while Chapter 3 deals with Stiegler's attempt to bring together Simondon's theory of ontogenesis and Heidegger's fundamental ontology. The argument that holds these two chapters together can be summarize as follows: Stiegler argues that Kant's failure to acknowledge the human's reliance on technical supplements led him to miss something crucial in his account of human consciousness. Kant was unable to see how the synthesis of recognition as it is

formulated in the first *Critique* is determined by tertiary retention. From Stiegler's perspective, Kant effectively effaces or hollows out what should be described as tertiary memory. What Stiegler overlooks, however, is the possibility that what he calls "tertiary retention" is not something we can bring to consciousness—at least not without the help of religion construed as historical faith. Furthermore, rather than working through Kant's faculty of desire and following through with some provocative claims regarding the needs of reason and "crutches of faith," Stiegler inscribes his theory of tertiary retention within Kant's account of the transcendental subject.

Chapter 3 in many ways shows the result of this move. In this chapter, I explained how Stiegler's theory of human sociality sounds similar to those of others who have attempted to rework Kant's transcendental subject. Though Stiegler's utilization of Simondon's theory of ontogenesis opens up new possibilities for thinking about the coming to be of individuals and collectives, it is Kant's theory of schematism—or rather Heidegger's reading of Kant's theory of schematism—that forms the basis for Stiegler's social ontology. The "I" of the transcendental deduction is replaced by an external synthesis (outside of the moral person) and yet is wrapped up with *human* history. The conclusion of Chapters 1–4 was that though Stiegler opens a space for defending moral freedom with his inquiry into the nature of instrumentality, he quickly covers it over with a model of social ontology that omits the ethical relation.

Chapter 4 considers Stiegler's arguments from a different angle. Though Stiegler's reading of Kant is largely based on Heidegger's reading, some of the questions he raises in the third volume of *Technics and Time* indicate that Stiegler found it necessary to move beyond Heidegger and engage Kant on his own terms. Though Stiegler once again finds reasons to

critique Kantian thought, I use this criticism to chart a course through Kant's moral philosophy that allows us to read Kant differently on the question of technics.

Chapter 5 begins this reconstructive reading of Kant on the question of technics. My reading is directed at 1) retrieving resources within Kant's thought for thinking about moral freedom and obligation in light of the claims of ordinary technicity and 2) finding those places within Kant's works where the repression of technics potentially hinders his ability to defend the dignity of the moral person.

One important conclusion I draw from my engagement with Kant's practical philosophy is that one of the first places where the question of technicity arises is when he lays out a typology of practical principles in the *Groundwork*. Kant eventually revises this typology, preferring in his latter works to distinguish between "moral practical principles" and "technical practical principles." Nevertheless, by tracking these changes and recounting Kant's own reasons for revising this initial typology, I was able to show how Kant's uncertainty regarding *techne* (in the broader sense of skill or craft) led him to expand his theory of judgment and, eventually, appeal to religion in order to account for the ways in which human interest is inherited, shared, and cultivated within a society.

Chapter 6 focused on Kant's account of the feeling of respect. In short, this chapter allows me to assess what is gained—and lost—with Heidegger's reading of Kant on the topic. After closely reading key passages from *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, I present an alternative reading of Kant's account of moral personhood that underscores Kant's claim that the feeling of respect can only ever have a moral ground—and therefore it cannot and should not be reduced to the religious, the technical, nor the aesthetic. This chapter also helped me explicate how Kant's moral philosophy meets up with his theory of religion, and I drew an important

distinction between moral feeling and the feeling of respect. I also introduced and defined Kant's conception of the *Gesinnung* which is important for the next two chapters.

Chapters 7 and 8 focused on Kant's theory of religion, particularly as it is presented in the four essays that make up *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. At the start of Chapter 7, I offered a brief summary of the text and identify four themes that are important for investigation. I then used these themes to organize Chapters 7 and 8. Whereas Chapter 7 focused on Kant's conception of moral anthropology, which I argue is fundamental to Kant's conception of human subjectivity, Chapter 8 centered the argument around the figure of Christ in Kant's *Religion*. Unlike Chapters 1–4, which slowly pushed Stiegler's arguments toward ethics, Chapters 5–8 pulled Kant's ethics in the direction of technics.

In Chapter 7, I argued that the *Gesinnung*, i.e., the subjective ground, becomes for Kant a sort of mediating space where the intelligible realm meets the sensible realm. My reading of Kant in this chapter also features a discussion of the two determinations of "divine blessedness," as well as the "religious disposition," which I argue is distinguished from the good disposition. In Chapter 8, I argue that the figure of Christ operates as both a symbol and a schema bringing together and ultimately resolving various tensions between theoretical and practical reason. This chapter also considered the way in which Kant's arguments regarding religion presuppose a theory of human sociality, one that we can use originary technicity to question.

The argument of Chapters 7 and 8 can be summarized as follows. On the one hand, Kant is able to offer crucial insight into how it is that we come to recognize other human beings as, not only examples of the moral law, but as manifestations of the divine will. This insight reveals the depths of Kant's humanism. On the other hand, Kant claims that Christ as the archetype of human perfection founds a community, that is, a church, and this community is the manifestation

of the Kingdom of God. For all of Kant's efforts to keep the political separate from the moral, in the *Religion*, we learn that the good principle, personified in the figure of Christ, belongs to all of humanity as a matter of right. It is at this point where the individual and society converge.

Throughout this dissertation I suggested that in rereading Kant through the lens of originary technicity it is possible to retrieve resources for thinking about the human as a technical and moral being. Next, I identify the concepts that I think are the most important for construing the human as both a technical and moral being and for defending moral freedom in a technical age. In other words, I will articulate how some of these concepts might be utilized in theological and ethical reflection.

### *Technicity*

As I explained in the Introduction, by using the term "technicity" I mean to align myself with the discourse on originary technicity. I also think originary technicity can more broadly function as a mode of interpretation that contributes to a multidimensional way of looking at human life. Along with Stiegler, I want to stress the way in which technology is radically constitutive of human subjectivity and agency. However, one of the main objectives of this dissertation was to find space within contemporary discourse on technics and technicity to reflect on the moral and religious aspects of human life.<sup>2</sup> Rather than presupposing that technicity partially or fully controls our situation, we can instead follow Stiegler and align technicity more with human freedom (as indetermination and the possibility of self-transformation), even while at the same time finding ways to reconceive of what moral agency looks like when we are not forced to presuppose social, biological, and political determinations.

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<sup>2</sup> In a way similar to how H. R. Niebuhr used the "responsibility" to make sense of the questions and concerns that were being raised during his lifetime.

Furthermore, one of the features of this project that differentiates it from other thinkers who are wrestling with similar problems, is that I insist that technicity, religion, and ethics must be treated together if we are to sufficiently address contemporary ethical questions. Too often when religion is being discussed in relationship to communication and information technologies, the relationship is construed purely instrumentally. Rather than taking this approach, I drew on Stiegler to help articulate the connection between these forms of technology and religion, and in turn, better understand what they contribute to human subjectivity. To be clear, I am not suggesting that religion and technicity are two sides of the same phenomenon. Nevertheless, the work of this dissertation has demonstrated how both religion and technicity speak to the multidimensional aspects of human life and complicate fundamental categories such as time and space, form and matter, life and death.

#### *Tertiary Retention and the Gesinnung*

My reading of Kant supports a vision of human subjectivity that is much more complex than is often credited in the philosophy of technology literature. There is, of course, a long line of thinkers who have attempted to rethink the Kantian subject. This is a topic I raised in Chapter 4, when I situated Stiegler's arguments within a pattern of thought concerned with the production of worlds and the production of meaning through intersubjective exchange and communication. However, more work could be done to think about how we can utilize the resources of Stiegler's understanding of technics as the condition of the social and cultural forms to the question of the moral self. To move this out of strictly epistemological and cognitive domains, I suggested that we read Kant on the faculty of desire and gain a better understanding of the various determinations of the will and how those determinations might be related or unrelated to technicity.

I also suggested at various points that we consider how we might read Kant's notion of the *Gesinnung* alongside Stiegler's notion of tertiary retention. In Chapters 1 and 2, I made a point to emphasize Stiegler's particular way of extending and critique Heidegger's project. Stiegler offers an interesting critique of Heidegger in the sense that unlike various other theorists of technology Stiegler finds it necessary to draw out the implications of Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world and find an alternative way to develop the existential analytic. But even beyond Stiegler, I suggested that instead of using the existential analytic to get at the ego (or the ontological structure of *Dasein*), we might instead view Kant's notion of the *Gesinnung* as a complex set of ontological coordinates that become for us a unique mode of receptivity—a cluster of subjective affects rather than subjective effects, or perhaps a mixture of both. Here I would add that Kant's religious disposition, as I described it in Chapter 7, might indicate one particular way of sketching out how these relations can be drawn together, but there are other ways—and other resources—for describing and possibly critiquing the various determinations that help to constitute a particular human individual.

To elaborate further, Stiegler says that the human is a set of tendencies. Kant describes these tendencies as predispositions, propensities, instincts, interests, inclinations, and suggest they are driven to act according to cognizable ends. His attention to religion and to aesthetics allows him to explain how human communities, culture, and modes and methods of education orient humans toward a future human becoming. The disposition, read alongside tertiary retention, is not an object of consciousness. It is rather a concept we might use to pull together and articulate the various ways in which human individuals, and communities are motivated to act. It need not be construed as a present sense of a self but a layering of relations, rhythms, and patterns, intensities, and depths. This layering need not be construed as a purely ontological

structure. As we saw in Chapter 2, Stiegler's account of tertiary retention is a layering of memory. With Stiegler we can also suggest that the unity and coherence of a "We" is always made possible through technical supports. Moreover, attending to Stiegler's ideas about collective memory, individuation, and the need for memory also means applying his arguments to assess contemporary moral issues, issues concerning the integrity of persons, entities, objects, systems. For instance, mnemotechnics can be understood both as technologies that aid in memory and technical systems of consciousness. They are devices, tools, and materials that allow us to transmit, store, and disseminate information in attempt to create cohesion and unity among generations.

With all of these tendencies, determinations, and structures what is left to say about moral freedom? It was in Chapter 6 that I offered a response to this question. Moral freedom is impossible without space, space between the you and the "I." This space is necessary for all ethical relations. This is one of the reasons we turned to Heidegger's reading on Kant on the question of respect, and why I made a point to distinguish between moral feeling and the feeling of respect. Contrary to Heidegger, I argued that even if we were to agree that the feeling of respect reveals something distinctive about the human subject, as Heidegger's arguments suggest, we have no reason to presuppose that this *something* is a unifying principle, a principle of organization or synthesis. In fact, Stiegler's account of tertiary memory clues us in to other possibilities. The feeling of respect, I explained, could just as easily be described as something de-regulative, disruptive, or nagging—a force, movement, or event that cannot be ignored. Construed in this way, the feeling of respect, points to the auto-heteronomous nature of the moral

ought, the experience of which interrupts whatever we consider to be “our own,” leaving us free to respond to others.<sup>3</sup>

### *Moral Faith and the Originary Default*

At various times throughout this dissertation I have referenced moral faith. I claim that we can accept the claims of originary technicity without giving up on moral faith. Have I defended moral faith sufficiently? Once more I will appeal to Kant’s writings.

A crucial feature of his notion of the feeling of respect is that it is associated with the feeling of necessity not simply with desire and compulsion. Kant says at the end of the *Groundwork* that a human being must presume for himself a will “that lets nothing belonging merely to his desires and inclinations be put on its account, and on the contrary thinks possible – indeed even necessary – through himself action that can be done only by setting aside all desires and sensuous stimulations” (*G* 4:458). The actions and effects associated with the good will pertain to the intelligible world. The only thing we can know about this world, Kant insists, is that reason gives its law. The moral law act on humans immediately and categorically. Nothing from the world of sense can “infringe on the laws of his willing as intelligence” (*G* 4:458). This is because freedom “holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason in a being that believes itself to be conscious of a will, i.e. of a capacity distinct from a mere desiderative faculty (namely to determine itself to action as an intelligence, hence according to laws of reason, independently of natural instincts” (*G* 4:458). Kant thinks we can learn a lot from the various sciences regarding the human actions and decisions. But whatever knowledge we can gain by observation will always be determined in some way by the human’s ways of organizing and

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the structure and ground of moral obligation is not really a ground at all. Perhaps it has no reference point, but is nevertheless marked by absence as well as projective hope. But without further argumentation these are mere speculations, though not unpleasant ones.

representing that information. If this knowledge is used to indicate that human beings are not free, all the moralist can do is come to freedom's defense. Against those "who pretend to have looked deeper into the essence of things" (*G* 4:458), this dissertation has defended moral freedom and deconstructed roadblocks to moral inquiry from within the boundaries of technicity.

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