Western University Scholarship@Western

Digitized Theses

Digitized Special Collections

2009

THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM: KANT AND LEVINAS IN PROXIMITY

Brock C. Baines Western University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses

Recommended Citation

Baines, Brock C., "THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM: KANT AND LEVINAS IN PROXIMITY" (2009). *Digitized Theses*. 3974. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/digitizedtheses/3974

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Special Collections at Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digitized Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact wlswadmin@uwo.ca.

THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM: KANT AND LEVINAS IN PROXIMITY

(Spine title: The Practice of Freedom)

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

Brock C. Baines

Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

L

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada

© Brock Baines 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Supervisor

Dr. Stephen G. Lofts

Examiners

Dr. Jan Plug

Dr. Antonio Calcagno

Dr. Corey Dyck

The thesis by

Brock C. Baines

entitled:

The Practice of Freedom: Kant and Levinas in Proximity

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Date_____

Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

ii

Abstract

With the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Immanuel Kant became known for his provocative claim that human freedom, insofar as it proves itself as the fact of pure practical reason, forms the original ground of the whole of the system of pure reason. The purpose of this paper shall consist in submitting this fact to critique in the Kantian sense. For this we will be looking to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, who had assumed the task of subjecting the ontological concept of freedom that we find in Kant's philosophy to a critical interrogation. Where Levinas had expressed a certain "affinity" for Kantianism, it shall be our position, in opposition to that of the existing scholarship on the subject, that it was because Kant, with his notion of practical freedom, had succeeded in making ethics, in the very sense Levinas had understood it, the condition and highest possibility of pure reason.

Keywords

Freedom, Kant, Levinas, Practice, Ontology, Practical Reason, Heidegger

Acknowledgements

I would first of all like to thank Steve Lofts for his patience and for tolerating my flights of philosophical fancy. Thanks also to Jan Plug, Antonio Calcagno, Corey Dyke, Maria Rosario Paler, the Taint family and, of course, Mom and Dad.

Table of Contents

Certificate of Examination Abstract and Keywords Acknowledgements Table of Contents Introduction		ii			
		iii iv v 1			
			Chapter I:	Freedom and the Productive Imagination	8
			Chapter 2:	Levinas's Ordeal of Freedom	30
			Chapter 3:	Distance Through Proximity: Levinas with Kant	50
Curriculum Vitae		119			

Introduction

Now, the concept of *freedom*, insofar as its reality 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. (CPrR 3)

In the discussion to follow our task will be to test the legitimacy of Kant's claim that the concept of freedom must of necessity form the "keystone," the central foundation upon which the unity of a system depends, of the architectonic of pure reason. However, as a necessary preparatory step towards such a task, we must first decide what it might mean to "test the legitimacy" of that which announces itself as a basic "fact" of pure reason, the fact of the necessary "reality" of human freedom, where such reality scarcely requires and, in fact as Kant's third antinomy has shown, precludes every possibility of a theoretical deduction or proof. Rather, the fact of freedom comes to be disclosed in reason's encounter with its own essential practicality, that is, by means of "an apodictic law of practical reason," whereas it proves itself to be the very condition of that same pure practical reason. Leaving aside for the moment how this experience of freedom unfolds, which we will be returning to at some length below, it will suffice for now to point out that, for Kant, freedom, far from demanding an evidentiary justification in and by our knowledge as proof of its existence, *proves itself* as the condition of possibility of all knowledge whatsoever. Thus, we need to ask ourselves what it could possibly mean to test the legitimacy of something that encounters us as a basic fact of our existence, as something fundamentally self-legitimating and beyond refutation, which must be presupposed in and by any test according to which we might endeavor to measure it.

In testing the legitimacy of Kant's location of the concept of freedom at the centre of the system of pure reason, our task will not lie in disputing or questioning as to whether or not, or by what rights, freedom should assume such a preeminent position in and for our knowledge. On the contrary, we shall, along with Kant, accept that freedom is a basic fact of human existence, one which, as we shall discover below, derives its very facticity by virtue of its possessing at once both a transcendental and a transcendent relation to our understanding. However, to accept something as fact is not the same as a mere blind and dogmatic faith in its concept as persisting beyond the possibility of all critical investigation or even reproach. To admit freedom as a fact of human existence does not imply an unconditional acceptance of any one signification of this term. Indeed, Kant himself was relentless in his pursuit of putting into question all of our most sacred truths, everything that our knowledge claimed for itself as fact. However, his questions never issued from doubt concerning the factuality or reality of our knowledge as such, nor was his ever a skeptical exercise in refutation. Kant never directly challenged the truthfulness of our sacred truths per se, but rather their right of immunity from all critical examination.

Nothing, for Kant, could legitimately remain beyond the reach of our questions, even where such questioning must inevitably lead to nothing more than an affirmation of our absolute ignorance concerning its object. Even our very ignorance in regards to that which remains completely outside the bounds of our comprehension itself could only be established by means of critical investigation. Indeed, as he writes, "but that my ignorance is absolutely necessary and hence absolves me from all further investigation can never be made out empirically, from **observation**, but only

critically, by getting to the bottom of the primary sources of our cognition" (his emphasis, CPR A759/B787). This "getting to the bottom of" (Ergrundung) was the very essence of Kant's critical method, of what Kant understood by the term "critique." Critique meant searching beneath the fact of our knowledge toward its essential grounds, toward those constitutive foundations of our understanding that made it possible in the first place. In putting into question a fact by means of the method of critique, Kant did not proceed by hastily seeking to negate its factuality. but by looking to discover the ontological foundations determining it in its very facticity. Now, surely such an analysis might lead to the discovery that what knowledge had assumed to be a fact was a mere illusion, a "paralogism" of our reason, or that it remained beyond the possibility of the confirmation of factuality our knowledge claimed to attribute to it, that is, appeared for our reason as an ultimately undecidable "antinomy." However, that a fact might ultimately be denied its very factuality was but a secondary consequence of critique, which was centrally concerned with grounding our knowledge by bringing to light its latent, yet preexistent grounds. Thus, the interest of critique resided principally in the unconditioned, both in the sense that it sought to interrogate that of which our knowledge assumed to have a certain, yet unexamined grasp, but also in the sense that its investigation took the form of a search beneath our knowledge in order to discover its ultimate conditions.

To "test the legitimacy of Kant's concept of freedom" for us will mean subjecting it to critique in the sense he attributed it, that is, to give it support by seeking out its essential grounds. This will require looking elsewhere or otherwise

than the constitutive structures of our knowledge. This is because freedom, for Kant, is, in fact, not a concept at all, but, as we have intimated above, is itself the unconditioned, which means it must subsist forever beyond the reach of our knowledge in general. In other words, freedom, as the unconditioned, is transcendent. Nonetheless, it also possesses a constitutive relation to our knowledge, in that it is presupposed as the necessary foundation of all knowledge whatsoever, including even transcendental knowledge itself. With our first chapter, we shall be working through Kant's Critique of Pure Reason in order to elucidate the place and function of freedom within his analytic of finite human reason and its corresponding knowledge and experience. Our interest shall lie in disclosing the manner by which Kant positions human freedom at the very centre of his characterization of pure reason. Particularly, it will be our contention that in uncovering the productive imagination as the transcendent foundation of transcendental knowledge, Kant discovered freedom as the orginary and creative act of self-foundation that constitutes the very ground of human existence.

It is this notion of freedom as the self-founding foundation of the human subject that we will thereafter be submitting to a thoroughgoing critique. For this we will be turning to the work of Emmanuel Levinas, who had made it one of the chief occupations of his critical project to work out just such an examination of that particular notion of human freedom we are here attributing to Kant. With our second chapter, we will be following Levinas's own critique of this concept of freedom, as it appears throughout the course of his critical project, in order to question the possibility of there being a more original ground prior to and conditioning our

originary freedom, which might have been covered over by means of subreption in Kant's ontological interpretation. As we shall see, this is precisely Levinas's critical claim against a philosophy of human existence that would assume the concept of freedom as the unconditioned cornerstone of its system. It was Levinas's expressed intent, in the spirit of Kantian critique, which he once described as the "essence of knowing," to submit such philosophical systems to critical evaluation by tracing an expository line back behind the spontaneous freedom of their ontological knowledge toward that which necessarily precedes and animates it. For him, this meant probing beneath the purely theoretical knowledge of ontology, which as he understood it determined the very exercise of human freedom as self-founding foundation, in order to open the possibility of a retrieval of that ethical encounter with an infinite and personal alterity, an "Other," which simultaneously both puts into question and is the precondition for the spontaneity of human freedom. In following Levinas's critique of human freedom, we will be taking particular note of his assertion that any such investigation must endeavor to look elsewhere than to our knowledge, which is precisely that which requires grounding in the first place, for its justification. For Levinas, to critique freedom, as we shall discover, will mean opening it to examination by the Other, as the one to whom we owe the very occasion of and for the exercise of our freedom.

Once we have given a thorough exegetical account of Levinas's critique of human freedom, with our third chapter we will attempt to allow the major themes of his discussion to orient and direct us through a reading of Kant's practical philosophy, which is that body of work where Kant himself had attempted to demonstrate the specific ethical dimension of his concept of human freedom. For this we will be drawing not only on our previous interpretation of Levinas's own ideas on human freedom, but also quite extensively on the only original text he ever devoted to the Kantian system itself, namely *The Primacy of Pure Practical Reason*. From our findings here, we shall hope to work out precisely how and why it was that human freedom, in what we regard as a shared understanding between Kant and Levinas, constituted the highest principle of the system of pure practical reason. However, it should also become evident through our discussion that freedom, for Kant, while indeed forming the groundless ground for ontological knowledge, draws its primary signification from an ethical purpose. Indeed, we shall find, through Kant's discovery of what he named the "pure practical interest" at the basis of the whole of the exercise of ontological freedom, which was regarded as something remaining forever outside the general horizon of ontology as such, he had endeavored to position ethics as the supreme possibility of our knowledge in general.

With our fourth section, we will be taking up and responding to series of a criticisms concerning the ethical possibilities of Kant's notion of human freedom. These will be drawn primarily from other commentators that have concerned themselves specifically with the relationship between the ethical philosophies of our two thinkers. From our summary of the scholarship surrounding the subject, we will be noticing a more or less unanimous disavowal of Levinas's admitted "affinity" for Kantianism, undertaken in the name of his own ethical principles. With our final effort, we will attempt to respond to these doubts and concerns by demonstrating the

way in which they have been provided for within the Kantian system of pure practical reason.

Freedom and the Productive Imagination

With the following discussion of Kant's first *Critique*, our primary purpose will be to characterize a certain concept of freedom that he develops under the name of "the productive synthesis of imagination." For this we will be drawing significantly on the work of Martin Heidegger, specifically from his seminal interpretation of the first *Critique* offered in what has since become known in English simply as the *Kant Book.*¹ In particular, we will be taking notice of the faculty of imagination, this "mysterious" ground of the temporalization of time, and the way in which, for Kant, it constituted the condition of possibility of experience in general. From this, we shall make the claim that according to his description of the role of the productive imagination in the formation of a pure transcendental or ontological knowledge, Kant positions a particular notion of freedom at the centre of his characterization of the finite human subject.

First we will need to say something about why and how this belongs intrinsically to a "critique of pure reason." As Kant asserted in the Preface to the first edition, the first *Critique* is a matter of "deciding as to the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, and [to] determine its sources, its extent and its limits" (CPR 101). This is not simply to ask about whether or not metaphysics has ever truly existed, in the sense of questioning whether there has ever been a body of knowledge that would be suited to its title. Instead, his question concerns how it is that metaphysics, as that science that lays claim to a knowledge of the "objects of nature" that is "independent of all experience," is capable of such insights and under what

¹ Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics

conditions it may yield knowledge that is adequate to this claim. It is a renewed attempt to uncover the essential foundations, the "already laid ground," of metaphysics by staking out its elemental possibilities as a mode of knowing objects (KPM 2). This positive delineation of its "internal possibilities" must simultaneously offer their negative determination, which would ultimately come to mean a delimitation of the sphere and jurisdiction of its knowledge.

Metaphysics, as Kant will tell us, refers to that science that yields knowledge of the objects of nature which is universal and produced entirely *a priori*, meaning prior to any empirical encounter with them, solely by means of concepts. Only where knowledge is purified of any empirical content could it be said to hold at all times, in all places and for all objects, that is, could claim universal validity. If this knowledge is to discover something of natural objects completely *a priori*, however, its concepts could not be derived from experience, but must have their "seat" within reason itself (CPR 111-116) Thus, a delineation of the elemental possibilities of metaphysics necessarily assumes the form of a critique of pure reason, as that which makes *a priori* objective knowledge possible.

This metaphysical knowledge, brought about through the exercise of pure reason does not reveal anything particular about this or that set of empirical objects. Metaphysics concerns itself exclusively with universal knowledge proper, which must apply for any and every possible object as object. For Heidegger, this meant that metaphysics, as Kant understood it, concerned the "knowledge of beings as such and as a whole" and, therefore, was rightfully "ontological knowledge" (KPM 4-9).² In fact, empirical sciences must presuppose metaphysical truths as a requisite condition of their knowing anything at all. For example, for physics to provide a mathematical theory of gravity that applies for all physical objects, it must assume at the outset that these same objects exist within, and are subject to the laws of, space and time and, thus, are mathematizable. It could never turn around to question this assumption, as it is imperative to every one of its concepts and principles and, hence, to its possibility as a legitimate source of knowledge. Thus, physics assumes a prior interpretation of the Being of beings as such, which circumscribes a general field determining what is discoverable by it. It, like all other empirical or "ontic" sciences depends essentially upon ontological knowledge, of which it falls upon metaphysics to evaluate as to its foundations, nature and limits.

In regards to Kant's supposed "Copernican Revolution," for him metaphysics had always operated from the assumption that its primary task consisted in bringing its own knowledge into accord or agreement with its object; it had worked from and according to a "correspondence theory of truth."³ The modern empirical sciences, on

² In his 1927-28 lecture course on the first *Critique* gathered under the title *Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Heidegger provides a longer discussion of the origins and meaning of Kant's notion of metaphysics as *metaphysica generalis* or general metaphysics. It is his claim that "Kant attempts for the first time to clarify the concept of ontology and so to conceive anew this concept of metaphysics" (11).

³ In his book *The Renewal of the Heidegger-Kant Debate* Frank Schalow offers a detailed discussion of the significance of Kant's Copernican Revolution in Philosophy, specifically as it determines his views on the relationship between the natural sciences and the science of metaphysics. In agreement with Heidegger, Schalow regards this transformation not as a way of borrowing the methodology of the modern natural sciences, but of disclosing their common root "in the mathematical in the widest sense." Schalow writes: "the Copernican revolution

the other hand, beginning with Copernicus, had become disillusioned with the idea that they could approach nature free from the bias of arbitrary expectations, such that from experience alone they could extrapolate the universal laws under which it moved. They discovered that their existence as legitimate sciences depended upon their approaching nature with a preformed system of concepts, built upon unchanging principles or "laws," whereas, from there forward, nature would become the testing ground for reason's own constructions (CPR 110-111). This was no mere accidental insight, as it had been unconsciously presupposed all along as the basic condition for these sciences to reveal anything about nature whatsoever.

Since, under the rule of the correspondence theory of truth, metaphysics had "come to nothing" other than disagreement with itself, Kant proposed that rather than presuming that its knowledge should be made to agree with nature, it would be better served if it started from the assumption that "nature must conform to its knowledge" (CPR 110). If this were the case, it would immediately solve our initial problem as to how pure reason could purport to know something of the objects of nature prior to any empirical encounter with them, for it would fall upon reason itself to contribute the very "form" or structural design of that experience. From this changed perspective, as opposed to its role as a mere observer and judge of experience, reason would be accorded an active role in its very formation. It is this primary shift in methodology that gives direction to the central line of questioning of Kant's critique of metaphysics, whereas, if we are to show that pure reason must supply the basic form of our experience of nature, our first and leading question must be: how does

becomes significant precisely in marking the dimension of that disclosure so as to bring forward the understanding of being on which scientific inquiry rests" (317).

pure reason make experience in general possible? Where pure reason is the capacity to generate knowledge of the constitution of objects as such, as the form alone through which things appear within experience, this, as Heidegger has argued, would amount to a "knowledge of the being of beings in general" (KPM 8). Therefore, to ask this question of pure reason, in Heidegger's estimation, would be to ask: how does ontological knowledge first make possible an experience of beings as a whole?

Kant's analysis is, thus, not primarily concerned with the formulation of empirical knowledge, but pure, *a priori* knowledge and the manner by which the latter allows for the possibility of the former. If such ontological knowledge is to be possible, we must possess the capacity for making judgments that apply for any experience whatsoever and are the very "conditions of its possibility," but do not require anything from it; we must have the ability for making "*a priori* synthetic judgments." Thus, the more pointed question of the first *Critique* becomes: how are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible? For Kant, answering this required nothing less than a complete delineation of the whole of the internal constitution of pure ontological knowledge, that is, a working out of its necessary elements and structures, which not only required an indication as to its positive possibilities, but also its limits.

With all this what I mean to argue is that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not itself "a system of metaphysics," nor is it an epistemology, which would already presuppose its finished project.⁴ Rather, as a critique of metaphysics, which is a

⁴ This aspect of Kant's philosophy appeared as a major point of contention during the now famous "Davos Disputation between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger" (KPM 193). During this debate, Heidegger wished to distance himself from what he understood as "neo-Kantianism," which, for him, referred to a "conception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* ... as a theory of knowledge" (194). "Kant did not want,"

characterization of the structure and possibilities of ontological knowledge, it is, as Heidegger makes clear, a "fundamental ontology" (KPM 6-12). Any "theory of knowledge" would require this preliminary ontological analytic from the outset, as it would need to begin from an understanding of beings in their entirety, as that which allows for their empirical appearance in the first place, before it might have anything to tell us about the ways and means by which ontic knowledge of them is produced. Thus, Kant's "transcendental" method of inquiry is so named because it treats the necessity and possibilities of ontological knowledge, which is that knowledge that "steps beyond," as in reaches passed, particular empirical things toward the structural conditions determining them universally as objects. It is the knowledge that concerns the objectivity of objects and constitutes them as such. In Kant's terms, "the problem of the inner possibility of *a priori* synthetic knowledge" is the question of determining the essence of "transcendental truth, which precedes all empirical truth and makes it possible" (CPR 276).

In order to discover the basic constitution of pure ontological knowledge, we will need to look to the preliminary discussion of the pure intuitions of space and time, which, as we will see later, provide a source of pure sensibility for such knowledge, within the "Transcendental Aesthetic", before we move to its more immediate characterization in the chapters on the "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Categories of the Understanding" and the "Schematism." In the "Transcendental Aesthetic" Kant gives the first sustained argument for the pure intuitions of space and

according to Heidegger, "to give any sort of theory of natural science, but rather wanted to point out the problematic of metaphysics, which is to say, the problematic of ontology" (KPM 194).

time as basic elements in all experience. However, this section considers them merely as the essential "forms" of intuition in general, deferring the more crucial consideration of their role in the formation pure knowledge for the discussions of these latter two sections.

With this section, Kant makes three basic and interrelated arguments concerning time and space: that they are the necessary foundations of all human experience; that they are the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition and, as such, apply only to objects as "appearances," not as "things in-themselves;" and that their representations are given *a priori* as "pure" intuitions (CPR 155-157). From these three central conclusions he draws a series of secondary ones concerning the possibilities, limits and composition of human experience, specifically in its relation to a finite sensibility or intuition. Rather than lumping together what I see as the proofs belonging under each of these three assertions, I will try for the most part to stick as close to Kant's own order of exposition as possible.

Kant starts out in this section by defining his concept of an "appearance," which is an empirical representation of an object that has been received according to our capacity for sensible intuition, prior to its being determined in and by thought (CPR 155). Properly speaking appearances are representations of those things that affect the faculty of sensibility prior to their becoming objects at all, since their objectification always takes place by means of an active synthesis on the part of the understanding. This ambiguity stems from Kant's use of the term to mean both representations stripped of any conceptual determination, which he will also refers to simply as intuitions, and representations in general, in so far they are subject to the

essential forms of intuition. For the remainder of our discussion I will abide by this differentiation of the concepts of intuition and appearance in order to avoid some of the ambiguity that affects Kant's own analysis.

The first significant point made in this first section concerns an important difference in the mode of operation of the two essential faculties of human knowledge, which of course is synonymous with experience for Kant, namely, thought and intuition. The latter names a capacity of the subject for representing to itself those things coming into contact with its senses. Since intuition does not itself produce anything, but rather is the ability for apprehending things affecting it from outside of itself, Kant will describe it as a faculty of "receptivity" (CPR 155). The receptivity of intuition also constitutes its finitude, insofar as it depends essentially upon being presented with something preexistent and independent of it as the condition of representing anything at all. In fact, as Heidegger writes, "the character of the finitude of intuition is found in its receptivity. Finite intuition, however, cannot take something in stride unless that which is to be taken in stride announces itself. According to its essence, finite intuition must be solicited or affected by that which is intuitable in it" (KPM 18).

Thought, on the other hand, is a capacity for actively structuring what is manifested in intuition and thus, for Kant, must be both "spontaneous" and "original." However, as Kant will also tell us, "all thought as a means is directed at intuition as an end," by which he means that the primary function of thought is one of understanding what is offered to it in intuition (CPR 155-157). Where an intuition is that representation related immediately to the object of a receptivity, thought, by means of the concept, relates to it only mediately. Indeed, the concept, as that alone through which thought is related to the object of an intuition, is itself only ever the "representation of a representation" (CPR 155-157). In fact, the concept, as a representation relating a multiplicity of particular intuitions according to what they share in common, is merely a way of understanding a wholly singular intuition by determining it under a general representation of thought. It is for this reason, as Heidegger argues, that, for Kant, thought is shown to be of a higher order of contingency than even intuition. As Heidegger writes,

Finite intuition, as something in need of determination, is dependent upon the understanding, which not only belongs to the finitude of intuition, but is itself still more finite in that it lacks the immediacy of finite intuiting, Its representing requires the indirection [Umweg] of a reference to a universal by means of and according to which the several particulars becomes conceptually representable. (KPM 21)

With this human knowledge is revealed as fundamentally a spontaneous receptivity, whereas intuition comes to occupy the central role in its formation. What is important in all of this is that it demonstrates the essential finitude of human knowledge, in the sense that it is shown as the primary way in which we creatively contend with a world of things we did not ourselves found, but which affects us, in other words, addresses or demands a certain attention from us.

An appearance, as we saw, refers to the empirical representation of an object before its being determined conceptually by thought. The "form" of an appearance, as a structural order according to which whatever is yielded in intuition is given under a system of definite relations, must precede its representation in empirical intuition; it must be given in advance of all sensible apprehension of objects. In no way could the

form of an appearance have its origins in experience, as it is assumed at the outset as the condition for our encountering any empirical object at all (this will become more clear when we discuss space and time particularly). So, where the basic forms of appearance comprise a total set of structures determining our very ability to receive altogether any representation of an object, they must themselves be capable of representation prior to all experience; that is, they must be non-empirical or pure (CPR 156). When we subtract those parts of an appearance belonging respectively to thinking and sense perception we are left with these pure representations of a system of formal relations, which constitute the principles of organization for the multiplicity of appearances given in sensible intuition. As Kant states, "if I separate from the representation that which the understanding thinks about it such as substance, force, divisibility etc., as well as that which belongs to sensation, such as impenetrability, hardness, color etc., something from this empirical intuition is still left for me, namely extension and form" (CPR 156). In other words, what remains are the pure representations of space and time, which, as the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition, attach "necessarily" as "predicates" to every sensible object as appearance. We can see this in another way; we can never think of a real object outside of space and time, but we have no difficulty in cognizing a particular space or time devoid of objects. Thus, where experience is always an experience "of" intuitable objects, space and time would of necessity have to be capable of representation independent of all experience and so must be a priori. Moreover, given that space and time are not themselves objects of a possible sensibility, we do not taste, touch, smell, hear or see

space or time as such. Since they are determinative of every sensible object as object, they must be mere forms of sensibility.

In addition to the preceding negative proofs of Kant's three theses concerning space and time, in the "metaphysical exposition" Kant gives four arguments, including one positive one, which treat space and time separately. As he tells us, space refers to a pure representation governing the specific modes by which the human subject represents objects as existing "outside" and separate from itself and each other. Space names the form of "outer sense" (CPR 157). Time, on the other hand, signifies the mode by which the subject apprehends itself as "that within which" appearances in general are given. The pure intuition of time, in other words, is the representation determined by the a priori affect on itself of a finite subject, which is that representation in and through which it determines itself as an object for itself. However, insofar as the pure intuition of time constitutes the form of intuition as whole, it is the subject's a priori apprehension of itself that prefigures the possible ways anything whatsoever can be given to it as appearance (CPR 163-165). Indeed, since every empirical object, as a mere representation proffered by means of the faculty of intuition, is subject to the conditions of sensibility and, therefore, only ever exists for the subject as a mere internal appearance, time, as the form of "inner sense," relates to every object of experience "generally" as appearance (CPR 164).

The first argument of the metaphysical exposition concerns the impossibility that either space or time should have an empirical origin, as they are presupposed in advance as necessary elements in every experience. Any experience of an object as distinct from myself requires that I recognize it as located in a place other than the one I am currently occupying as the very condition of its appearing for me at all. Thus, for objects to be present for me as something external, I must represent them all as being in space. However, for this to be possible it would require that space be given as a representation of an order of relations that is determinative of objects, prior to their being offered to me empirically (CPR 157-158). Similarly, I could never perceive an object as belonging to a particular time, which it must if it is to exist for me at all, if I did not represent time as something predicative of objects *a priori* (CPR 162-163).

Kant's third thesis states that space and time are not universal concepts, but rather pure intuitions. This is evinced by the fact that every determinate space or time I might point to, say this room or this moment, is properly speaking only ever a part of space or time as singular unities. Unlike the restricted, synthetic unity of the concept, which consists of running through a finite set of particular representations and combining them to form a unity within a general representation, the parts of space and time are only ever arrived at through the limitation of a particular whole (CPR 162-163). I could never generate a general concept of time by gathering together the totality of its parts, as these parts exist as parts only in so far as they can be refereed to the representation of time as a whole, otherwise they are nothing (CPR 162). We do not acquire the concept of "now" by combining together all possible past and future "nows," but rather by distinguishing it as a distinct part of a limitless succession. So where any concept of time I may have must be generated by way of placing limits on a whole, these concepts would require a pregiven representation of a homogeneous unity to serve as their matter (PIK 78-83). Since, as we mentioned,

concepts are both composite and general, space and time must be pure intuitions, as only intuition is capable of representing things in their particularity.

Kant's fourth argument offers the first positive characterization of time and space as "infinite magnitudes." By this he does not mean to say that they are actual magnitudes, in the sense of the quantitative totality of all possible spatial or temporal magnitudes. Indeed, the representations of time and space, as we found, are not presented as composite, but, in so far as they appear as whole in each of their parts, are given as homogeneous unities (CPR 162). Thus, where neither time nor space are composed of discrete elements that could subsist on their own, but rather the whole is present in each of its parts as their essential foundation or ground, they are not themselves infinite quantities. Rather, every particular magnitude of space or time presupposes the whole as something non-quantitative that underlies it. If this were not the case, time and space, as the sum of an infinite number of individual components, would be entirely incapable of representation *a priori*. Indeed, it is only on the basis of their being pure intuitions of non-quantative unities that space and time can function as the universal mediums within which a given magnitude of extension or succession could ever exist for us. Under this condition alone could their parts permit of quantification.

Taken together these four arguments reveal time and space as *a priori* forms of a finite sensibility, which necessarily apply to all objects insofar as they can be given as appearances within a possible experience. Therefore, they could not possibly be attributes of or relations persisting between objects in themselves, if we understand this to mean objects as they might exist independently of our ability to apprehend them in intuition (CPR 164). In other words, we cannot come by their concepts by way of abstracting from our perception of objects, as these forms constitute the universal conditions of our perceiving anything at all. Thus, as essential dispositions of our faculty of sensibility, Kant declares the transcendental ideality of space and time, which simply refers to the fact that they are nothing other than the modes by which the subject receives empirical objects. However, as an ensemble of structural relations pertaining necessarily to every object of a potential experience, he also admits of their empirical reality (CPR 164).

Not only are space and time necessary forms of our sensibility in general, they are also themselves pure sensible intuitions, which, like empirical intuition, yield a manifold or undetermined multiplicity of sensible appearances, although in this case one which is given before any experience and which makes experience possible in the first place. That space and time offer a manifold of pure sensibility accounts for our ability to generate pure and synthetic spatial and temporal concepts, like we find in geometry and arithmetic, which are objectively valid and serve as the basis for a universal knowledge of their objects (CPR 166). What becomes clear in this is that any concept of space or time we may happen to form, results from an active determination or limitation of their original intuitions by means of thought. Thus, whenever we consciously represent time or space to ourselves we inevitably objectify what is originally non-objective, which must always take place according to a limitation of their essential wholes. From here we can say that the objective, calculable time of science is itself derivative of a more essential time, as the original unity that allows for the phenomenal discovery of things within a given order.

21

For Kant knowledge is always composed of a "unity" of two essential elements, concepts and sensible intuitions, both types of representations. These belong to two separate but structurally related capacities or faculties, one spontaneous and the other receptive, namely thought and intuition. Intuition always represents a singular and particular thing, whilst a concept renders this same thing intelligible by bringing it into synthetic relation with a number of other like representations; it represents things generally. Thus, thought is fundamentally subservient to intuition. On account of this receptivity of our faculties of knowledge, which is their dependence on the appearance of something given from outside themselves, human knowledge is fundamentally finite.

The finitude of our knowledge also becomes apparent in another important sense. Since any act of knowledge necessarily takes place through the union of both thinking and intuition, such that it is always the product of a conceptual synthesis of particular intuitions, what gets recognized by the understanding is necessarily a generalized object. When I judge "this here" to be a chair, what I recognize is not the "this here" as it is "in-itself," but rather a four legged object for sitting. Any act of knowledge, while intrinsically a revealing of objects, is at the same time a "concealing," insofar as it excludes that aspect of a particular intuition not fitting with the universal representation of its concept (PIK 62-69). Thus, for Kant, finite knowledge would be incapable of gaining insight into the singularity of an intuition. In Kant's words, we can never know the "thing as it is in-itself."

What we are dealing with here is the manner in which thought and intuition, the concept and sensible appearances, are unified in the production of ontic

knowledge or experience. In other words, we are looking at the union of thought and intuition in an empirical synthesis. What Kant is after, however, are the elements and conditions of a pure ontological knowledge, as what makes this empirical synthesis possible. If we are to have the capacity for formulating knowledge of the constitution of objects that precedes any experience of them and that originally determines their empirical manifestation, we must be capable of what Heidegger has called an "ontological synthesis" (KPM 43-46). Where all human knowledge is of necessity comprised of a synthesis of both thinking and intuition, a priori ontological knowledge would have to arise from the union of a pure thinking and a pure intuition. "Their essential structural unity," Heidegger insists, "immerses pure intuition and pure thinking in their full finitude ... [a] pure synthesis originally unifies the elements of pure knowledge" (KPM 53). With his proof of space and time as the basic forms of sensibility, which, as pure intuitions, yield a manifold of pure sensation, Kant has already taken care of the possibility of the latter. What remains to be seen is how this pure intuited content is brought together with a pure thinking to form the horizon of objectivity through which every encounter with empirical objects is determined. Kant will name this transcendental horizon the "understanding," whose system of pure categories supplies the constitutive structures of all human experience.

In his discussion of the possibility of metaphysical knowledge, Kant has already demonstrated, in a negative way, the necessary existence of the categories or pure concepts of the understanding for the production of a universal knowledge of objects that precedes all experience. However, it is only with the Transcendental Deduction that we find a positive delineation of the nature, origin and function of the categories. Indeed, deduction in this sense does not refer to a logical procedure, but, as Heidegger has suggested, an ontological exposition of the subjectivity of the human subject (KPM 48-53).

Right away in his "transition to the transcendental deduction of the categories" Kant breaks with the bipartite model of knowledge he had been developing up to this point, where he states "there are however three original sources (capacities or faculties of the soul) which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and cannot themselves be derived from any other faculty of the mind, namely sense, imagination and apperception" (CPR 225). Since each of these capacities is indispensable for all cognition, they each must have both an empirical application and a transcendental one that conditions it. The faculty of sense, in its empirical employment, yields "perception," which names the subject's ability to receive and represent to itself those things coming into contact with its senses. However, perception, as the Aesthetic has made explicit, depends upon the pure sensible representations of space and time as the sole formal mediums through which the subject could possibly apprehend inner and outer appearances.

Pure thought is merely the representation of a self-same activity or spontaneity that functions to combine other representations into a unified whole. This representation of a "unifying unity," which is captured in the expression "I think," maintains its identity throughout the multiplicity of sensible appearances it receives in intuition by bringing them together under its own synthetic whole (CPR 246-248). "This pure, original, unchangeable consciousness," Kant writes, "I will now name *Transcendental Apperception*" (CPR A107). Empirically this takes place through the

act of recognition, whereby a sensible object, in its affinity with the general rule of a concept, is represented as belonging to it. Apperception, however, is more importantly a transcendental foundation or principle of all empirical knowledge insofar as it must at least be possible for the representation "I think" to be attached to every possible experience the subject may have. Otherwise, where representations could not be referred to the same self-consciousness as to their subject, these appearances would be meaningless or as Kant says "as good as nothing" for us (CPR 246).

However, where transcendental apperception, in order to preserve its uniformity in the midst of the diversity of appearances it receives in intuition, must bring these appearances together under the unity of a self-consciousness, it must have at its disposal a set of universal rules for synthesis that would permit of combining representations within a singular and coherent experience. These are none other than the pure concepts of the understanding or the categories, which taken together constitute the concept of an object in general or the Kantian "Object = X" (CPR 233). This Object = X is never given as an actual entity in experience, but rather forms the pure, transcendental horizon of objectivity on the basis of which alone sense appearances can be presented to the subject empirically as objects. Thus, the categories comprise a total set of *a priori* structures or a transcendental system of ontological knowledge, which prefigures the possible ways objects can appear to the subject in experience (KPM 57-60).

The spontaneity of thought and the receptivity of intuition as two distinct faculties of the human subject cannot alone yield experience. Indeed, the very

25

possibility of experience rests upon a third faculty – "the imagination" – as that which brings thought and intuition together in the unified act of knowledge. This unification of thought and intuition in the production of knowledge, as accomplished by the imagination, is what Kant properly means by the term synthesis. This is why he states "synthesis in general, as we shall hereafter see, is the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom ever conscious" (CPR 211). Just as with the other two stems of knowledge, the imagination has both an empirical and a transcendental application. Within the formation of empirical knowledge, the function of imagination is one of reproduction, whereby, through the act of reflection or comparison, it represents an affinity it discovers between empirical appearances by synthetically reproducing within the image of a concept. Without such an image a concept could never arise, as it would be devoid of any sensible content and, thus, both meaningless and, as Kant says, "empty" (CPR 219-22). A concept without image, which for Kant is impossible, would be empty in the sense that no empirical object that might confer meaning upon it could possibly be identified as its instance in empirical intuition.⁵ It is this synthetic act of the imagination in bringing together the unity of apperception and perception through the medium of the concept-image that we have been calling the empirical synthesis or experience. Of course, this

⁵ John Llewelyn has also suggested this in his book *The Hypocritical Imagination: Between Kant and Levinas* where he writes: "concepts are schematized concepts i.e. concepts restricted by a temporal condition. Where that condition is removed we do not know how to apply a concept or do not have a concept to apply" (36). In this case he is referring to the categories, which do not have images but schema. Nevertheless, this would apply for the image of empirical concepts as well, which, as the product of the reflective synthesis of the reproductive imagination, first gives rise to these concepts.

reproductive synthesis presupposes a prior discovery of objects in perception and, thus, ontological knowledge or the pure understanding (KPM 36-42).

If knowledge is always generated from out of a synthesis of the three faculties, the understanding itself must be the product of the ontological synthesis. Indeed, as Kant states, "the unity of apperception in relation to the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, is the pure understanding" (CPR 237). So what is this relation for Kant? We find it outlined in his short discussion of the "Doctrine of the Schematism." It is in these few pages that Kant describes the transcendental function of the power of imagination for the synthesis of the pure knowledge of the objectivity of objects embodied in the categories. In contrast to empirical concepts, no object corresponding to the categories could ever be discovered in perception. Rather, the categories constitute an ensemble of formal laws for combining the manifold of appearances yielded in empirical intuition under the unity of apperception. Nevertheless, for these pure concepts to be predicable of sensible appearances, they must share something in common with them in the way of a sensible content. However, as pure concepts, universally predicable of objects as such, this content, whilst sensible, cannot be drawn from experience, but must be pure and a priori. The pure intuition of time, which, as the form of inner sense, supplies the form of appearance in general, also yields a pure manifold of sensation (CPR 271-277). Not surprising, it is temporality itself that establishes the common ground connecting the categories with empirical appearances.

In fact, as Kant will explain, the categories themselves are nothing but "transcendental time-determinations," wherein the pure sensible matter of the

intuition of time is actively synthesized to form a pattern or "method of representing," which Kant will call the schema of the category (CPR 272). The schemata, which are the means by which sensible appearances get represented to the subject as objects of a possible experience, are the pure invention of a spontaneous synthesis on the part of the transcendental power of imagination. In Kant's words, "the schemata of sensibility [which] first realize the categories" are "[in-themselves] always a product of the productive imagination" (CPR 273). The transcendental synthesis of the imagination is distinguished as productive insofar is it is a creative or unconditioned modalization or temporalization of the auto-affected time of inner sense, which is the initial ontological synthesis composing the genetic source of the pure understanding or what we have referred to as the ontological horizon of possibility of all experience. It is the act of an original freedom, which precedes consciousness and, in fact, first constitutes it. In Kant's own words, "the principle of the necessary unity of the pure (productive) synthesis of the imagination prior to apperception is thus the ground of the possibility of all cognition, especially that of experience" (CPR 237).⁶

It is, thus, finally with his doctrine of the schematism that we see the manner in which Kant positions a particular concept of human freedom as the very ground of

⁶ In drawing upon and extending the Heideggerian interpretation of the first *Critique*, John Salis makes a break with Heidegger on this issue of the primacy of the productive synthesis of the imagination in relation to the analytic unity of apperception. For Heidegger, it was this former synthesis that determined the possibility of the analytic statement "I think," such that it was the imagination that first effected the synthetic unity of self-consciousness upon which this analytic unity would depend. In Salis's unique formulation "in one sense transcendental apperception is the ground of the synthesis of the manifold of intuition, whereas, in another sense, as is now evident, the synthesis of the manifold grounds apperception" (73). It is our position that Salis's interpretation is an untenable one, insofar as this equiprimordiality of apperception and the productive imagination leaves open the question as to how these faculties could come to be mutually grounding.

the subjectivity of the human subject. This fundamental ontological freedom of the productive imagination is what originally determines the *a priori* categories of the understanding from out of an openness onto the pure self-disclosure of temporality. Indeed, it is from out of the free temporalizing power of the productive imagination that the pure categories of the understanding, which serve as the necessary principles of all conceptualization and, thus, preconfigure the general parameters within which a world of objects becomes available to the subject, first originate. As Heidegger writes:

Freedom already lies in the essence of pure understanding, i.e., of pure theoretical reason, insofar as this means placing oneself under a selfgiven necessity. Hence understanding and reason are not free because they have the character of spontaneity, but because this spontaneity is a receptive spontaneity, i.e., because it is the transcendental power of imagination. (KPM 109)

Thus, in grounding the very structure of pure reason itself in the freedom of an imaginary synthesis, the ostensibly closed unity of the Kantian subject opens onto groundlessness, in other words, onto the pure void, the no-thing, of time.⁷

⁷ John Llewelyn has gone as far as to suggest that the characteristically free synthesis of the productive imagination, which leads to a kind of "normativity without norms, leaves an opening to the principles of the understanding" (17).

Levinas's Ordeal of Freedom

Any attempt to summarize Levinas' views on the nature and significance of human freedom promises to be, as the title of his collection of essays from the 1960s called Difficult Freedom would suggest, well, "difficult." Indeed, as one of his frequent commentators has remarked "Levinas does not share the tradition's confidence in this freedom that he judges severely" (Chalier 1993). In the following discussion we shall find that Levinas' ambivalence concerning human freedom runs so deep, in fact, that he at once regards it as both the source of humanity's potential for the greatest violence and injustice and also that which allows for its most original generosity and kindness. That human freedom, for Levinas, contains within itself, and as a necessary possibility, the potential for violence, is encapsulated in a statement from *Totality and* Infinity where he insists that "the imperialism of the same is the whole essence of freedom" (86). The sentiment of this statement seems anything but ambivalent. It is, rather, quite unequivocal and straightforward: freedom, in all its exercise, is an extension of the power and territory of a certain uniformity by means of violence and coercion. This would initially appear to contradict our initial insistence that Levinas' position should be regarded as a more nuanced and difficult one. However, as we will discover over the course of our discussion, according to Levinas' own critical treatment of its concept, this statement, in spite of its claim, does not tell us the whole story of the essence of human freedom. Nevertheless, it does provide a profitable entry point into his views regarding a particular tendency toward violence, which,

though it does not encompass the whole of the essence of human freedom, at least belongs essentially to it.

Any understanding of what, for Levinas, amounts to the violence inherent within the nature of human freedom itself resides within what he regards as its inalienable relationship with ontology as a mode of knowing "the existent." For Levinas, ontology refers to any manner of human comprehension whereby an existent, that is, something possessing its own "individual existence" entirely independently of the manner in which it appears to and within such comprehension, is made "intelligible" or "thematized" as a "being" (TI 46-48). Every apprehension of a being makes an existent, which is always an absolutely individual entity, known by ascribing it with a meaning that is general. Through its act of comprehension, ontological thinking determines an existent confronting it as something individual, which is to say, as wholly "other" or different from itself, as something "same," that is, as a mere moment belonging to and within its own experience. Thought accomplishes this subsumption of the individual under its own general structure by means of what Levinas names the "third term."

The third term, of which Levinas provides the examples of "the concept," of "sensibility," and, more controversially still, of "Being," interposed between thought and the existent, determines the specific manner according to which the singular existent is manifested for and by thought as a generalized being. As he writes: "through a third term, a neutral term, which itself is not a being, … the individual that exists abdicates into the general that is thought" (*TI* 43). The third term, which itself a

being," but rather a kind of "profile" of a set of structural relations for bringing the existent into relation with other beings within a unified context of significance or "totality" (TI 45). Thus, the third term makes the being known by referring it to other known beings and, thus, by designating it with a meaning within a general context of reference.

Ontological knowledge, "the work of [which] consists in apprehending the individual (which alone exists) not in its individuality but in its generality," is intrinsically an "impersonal" and "neutral" knowledge, in the sense that it constitutes a mediated relation between existents through the interposition of the third term, but also insofar as it depersonalizes or "neutralizes" the infinite difference, the individuality, of the entities it relates (TI 44). The individuality, the difference, of the other is precisely its otherness as such, or its "alterity," from the perspective of the I that thinks it, which is to be distinguished from a mere relative difference, as would be, say, the difference between two entities with distinct beliefs, opinions and values, which would already presupposes the recognition of a certain sameness, a capacity for holding beliefs, opinions and values, as the underlying basis for any and all difference. On the contrary, the difference of the other, its alterity, is an absolute or "infinite" difference, which merely signifies the fact that the individuality of its existence remains forever "exterior" to any and every thinking that would endeavor to comprehend it as something general, as "a being among beings," and, thereby, make it same (EI 105). Thus, thinking as ontology, insofar as it renders the other visible by way of incorporating it as a theme within the general totality of its knowledge and

experience, necessarily and in every instance involves a neutralization of the alterity of the other. As Levinas writes:

The neutralization of the other who becomes a theme or an object – appearing, that is, taking its place in the light – is precisely his reduction to the same. To know ontologically is to surprise in an existent confronted by that which is not this existent, this stranger, that by which it is somehow betrayed, surrenders, is given in the horizon in which it loses itself and appears, lays itself open to grasp, becomes a concept. (TI 44)

However, just as the individuality of the other is neutralized in its incorporation to and within the same, the I must surrender its own singularity, its *"ipseity" (which we will see later is determined by its "separation" and "isolation," by its "solitude"), to this very same sameness. In the act of comprehension, which Levinas also refers to as "identification," the I comes also to recognize itself within, through, and as the totality of its knowledge and experience, which is merely another way of saying that the I, in and through the third term, comes to identify itself as the universal subject of its knowledge; the I becomes an "ego." Thus, ontological thinking, through which the other is comprehended as a general being belonging to and within the totality of the experience of the I, is simultaneously an act of identification, whereby the I apprehends itself as a being within that very same experience, as that being for which such experience. To borrow an example from Levinas:*

The I that thinks the sum of the angles of a triangle is, to be sure, also determined by this object; it is precisely the one that thinks of this sum, and not the one that thinks of atomic weight. Whether it remembers or has forgotten, it is determined by the fact of having passed through the thought of the sum of the angles. (TI 125)

In ontological knowledge, the I itself becomes entangled and enmeshed within the very structure of sameness it projects toward and upon the other, such that it encounters itself, not at as an absolutely unique self, but as the general subject of its experience in general. In Levinas's own words: "When the I is identified with reason, taken as the power of thematization and objectification, it loses its ipseity. To represent to oneself is to empty oneself of one's subjective substance" (*TI* 119).

To make clearer sense of the way in which the above quote pertains to ontological knowledge, particularly in terms of the manner in which it involves an introduction of the I and the other into what Levinas will call an order of "impersonal reason," we will have to take a closer look at his own characterization of the essentially theoretical nature of ontology, which will lead us directly into that discussion of its relationship with human freedom that we are after. The third term, which, as we have already discussed, is a sort of outline of a system of relations, what Levinas, in keeping with Husserl, also refers to as a "horizon," through which thought brings beings to light by configuring them within a totality. However, because it is itself not a being, but rather a kind of no-thing, a "nothing," the third term, through the thematization of the being that it conditions, itself remains, for the most part, unthematized. Just as the eye, in general, fails to catch sight of the light that illuminates its field of vision, the structural horizon in and through which thought comprehends the existent likewise goes primarily unnoticed by it. Yet in a certain respect the third term must be capable of being comprehended by thought a priori, that is, if it is to function as the very structure from and through which thought thinks and comprehends the existent in the first place. Thus, as Levinas insists of Heidegger, "Being is inseparable from the comprehension of Being; Being is already an appeal to subjectivity" (*TI* 45). This says that in its comprehension of the being of the existent, the context through which it is given as something intelligible, thought must always and in advance comprehend the transcendental horizon constituting the structure of ontological comprehension in general, which is another way of saying comprehends "Being as such and in general." That is, thought must possess ontological knowledge. Therefore, in the sense that such an ontological comprehension, through which thought introduces and projects the third term between itself and the existent, predetermines the manner of apprehension of beings in general, the horizon of Being is merely another name for the transcendental subjectivity of the subject.

It is this ontological comprehension that determines an existent from out of the nothingness of the third term, that knowledge that "amounts to grasping being out of nothing or reducing it to nothing, removing from it its alterity," that characterizes, for Levinas, the very activity of human freedom. Freedom, as Levinas writes, "denotes the mode of remaining the same in the midst of the other, knowledge, where an existent is given by interposition of impersonal Being, contains the ultimate sense of freedom" (TI 44). Moreover, ontological knowledge is first and foremost a theoretical knowledge insofar as it necessarily involves a spontaneous and speculative foray into the nothing, as that from which it apprehends and takes hold of its own horizon and through which alone it grasps the existent. Ontology is the work of the "spontaneity" of human freedom, such that freedom is the very "exercise of ontology" (TI 43). This is why, as Levinas asserts, "to theory as comprehension of

beings the general title ontology is appropriate" (*TI* 42). Even the Heideggerian readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), which some commentators have interpreted as a certain privileging of practical over theoretical knowledge, as the fundamental mode of comportment through which Dasein discovers beings by means of their practical manipulation, presupposes "circumspection," which itself assumes an a priori and prethematic apprehension of a set of transcendental structures, the "in-order-to" (*das Um-zu*) and the "for-the-sake-of-which" (*das Worumwillen*), as the underlying condition of its determining beings in practice.⁸ Hence, where ontology is concerned, the theoretical comprehension of Being always takes priority over the practical projects of the existent (BT 119).⁹

Ontological comprehension, in that it predetermines every possible thematic comprehension of and by the existent and insofar it mediates both the relation of the I with itself and with the other, that is, is essentially impersonal, draws both the I and the other into "impersonal structures of reason" (*TI* 208). As Levinas writes:

The existing of an existant is converted into intelligibility; its independence is a surrender in radiation. To broach an existent from Being is simultaneously to let it be and comprehend it. Reason seizes upon an existent through the void and nothingness of existing – wholly light and phosphorescence. (TI 45)

⁸ See, for instance, Einar Overenget (2002) *Seeing the Self: Heidegger and Subjectivity* (Springer), where the author claims "Heidegger advocates the primacy of practical activity over theoretical contemplation" (179).

⁹ Concerning Levinas implication of Heideggerian ontology as remaining within a philosophical tradition that privileges the theoretical, see Adrian Peperzak (1983) *Phenomenology — Ontology — Metaphysics: Levinas' perspective on Husserl and Heidegger*, where he writes: "Heideggerian comprehension repeats the gesture of Western reason. Letting be (Seinlassen), the permission to given to the beings to present themselves in the splendor of being, is in fact the exercise of power and domination. The reduction of particulars to universality is the first theoretical form of violence.

Where the exercise of human freedom is accomplished in and as thought's grasping the other from out of nothing, whereby the absolutely different abdicates into the totality of an impersonal reason, it is also simultaneously a giving to itself and giving over of itself to this very same general structure. If freedom is, indeed, "the mode of remaining in the same in the midst of the other," it is in the same instance an act of determination of both the self and of the other within the very same totality of sameness. To maintain one's sameness, one's identity, against and despite the incomprehensible heterogeneity of the exterior existent surely does mean bringing the existence of the wholly other under the intelligible horizon of one's own experience and, thereby, robbing it of its difference. Otherwise, one would, in fact, no longer be one, but rather a multiplicity of fragmented and meaningless impressions and perceptions. Nonetheless, this freedom, that gives itself the other by stripping it of its otherness as such, also and in this very same gesture of giving, gives itself reason by giving itself up to it, by subjecting itself to reason in the act of taking it over as the horizon of its own subjectivity. Thus, as Levinas tells us in Freedom and Command, "the individual act of freedom which decides for impersonal reason does not itself result from impersonal reason" (CPP 18). Reason, which arises in and from the act of human freedom, that is, from the ontological comprehension that moves in and out of the nothing, is decided for, in one and the same act, as the subjectivity of the subject, the selfhood of the self, the "egoity" of the ego. In deciding for reason, which is another way of saying in the free exercise of ontological comprehension, the I relinquishes its ipseity, its singularity and difference, in the act of determining itself as a self, as the subject of its experience, which amounts to assuming itself as a generality, as, in fact, the generality of the general, the sameness of the same.

That the I sacrifices its own individuality in the very exercise of its own most freedom is why Levinas, in conceding, but qualifying Heidegger's point, writes:

To be sure, the freedom involved in the essence of truth is not for Heidegger a principle of free will. Freedom comes from an obedience to Being: it is not man who possesses freedom; it is freedom that possesses man. But the dialectic which thus reconciles freedom and obedience in the concept of truth presupposes the primacy of the same, which marks the direction of and defines the whole of Western philosophy. (TI 45)

For Levinas, as it was for Heidegger, to be free means at the same time to submit oneself to one's freedom; to be free is to become subject to one's freedom in becoming the subject of one's freedom. In other words, possessing freedom means becoming the possession of my freedom. In its freedom, the I takes possession of both itself and the other through its introduction of the third term, which reduces the infinite difference of the individual entities by subsuming them as obverse correlates – always some variant of the subject/object relation - within a totality. Thus, the third term, which is itself a generality, a profile of a set of general relations, is a generality that generalizes, in the sense that it is that horizon in and through which the I comes to recognize both itself and the other as general beings, that is, through which it generalizes the wholly individual. The third term is the very generality of the general, which freedom gives to itself and in and through which it finds, founds, its self. Hence, the freedom of ontological comprehension is an act of self-foundation, which presupposes the other, the existent that is "the very appeal that is addressed to

38

comprehension," but which accepts nothing from it (TI 44-46). Freedom is, thus, a self-foundation that is "self-sufficient," for it is, as Levinas writes:

the possibility for the other to be determined by the same, without introducing alterity into it; it is a free exercise of the same. It is the disappearance, within the same, of the I opposed to the non-I. (TI 124)

Freedom, in its reaching out into the nothing, comprehends, in the sense of appropriates or a takes possession of, the third term from and through which it grasps the existent, whereas, insofar as it permits no difference whatsoever to enter its context, that is, it takes nothing in from the outside or is self-founding, it is fundamentally a "spontaneity." This means that, irrespective of the fact that comprehension is always comprehension "of," that is, has an intentional structure, and, therefore, is always a response of sorts to the address of the other, the third term, the light in which beings shine forth, is wholly a product of the freedom entailed in the response; it is a "creation *ex nihilo*," arising entirely from out of thought's own speculation into the nothing. Therefore, as Levinas asserts:

there is an absolute, creative freedom, prior to the venturesome course of the hand which chances on to the goal it seeks – for at least the vision of that goal had cleared a passage for it, had been already projected forth. Representation is this very projection, inventing the goal that will be presented to the still groping acts won a priori. This 'act' of representation discovers, properly speaking, nothing before itself. Representation is pure spontaneity, though prior to all activity. (TI 125)¹⁰

¹⁰ It is important to keep in mind that, for Levinas, ontological comprehension, as a theoretical mode of existence, remains wedded to a representational paradigm of experience. Thus, the phenomenology of Husserl, as Levinas explains (TI 125), is most clearly bound to this same perspective. However, despite his having gone along way in critiquing the primacy of theoretico-representational thinking, for Levinas, the ontological comprehension of Heidegger, despite its prethematic character, is but a transmogrified version of the traditional concept of representation. See again Adrian

This is why, for Levinas, the very notion of a finite freedom is "absurd." To posit freedom as an activity that is at one and the same time both unconditionally selfdetermining and yet conditioned or limited runs into the difficulty of accounting for how this freedom, which creates itself from out of nothing, that is, is an absolute and productive spontaneity, could possibly be limited from the outside? Even were the exterior other, in its address to the I, to be encountered simply as a limit to its freedom, it would appear merely as an obstacle to be overcome in the free capacity to respond, which would retain nothing at all from that initial encounter. Thus, where freedom appropriates for itself the source of its light (the third term), through which the existent is given to comprehension and as that by means of which it responds to the address of the other, the light arises spontaneously from out of this freedom, receiving and preserving nothing at all from the encounter that provoked it. In Levinas' words: "To receive nothing of the Other but what is in me, as though from all eternity I was in possession of what comes to me from the outside - to receive nothing or to be free" (TI 43).

The freedom of ontological comprehension is, indeed, a response. It is a reactionary movement proceeding from an encounter with the wholly exterior, but which is itself simultaneously irresponsible toward the other. More precisely, as we shall see in a moment, the spontaneous exercise of human freedom is a response to the absolutely Other that is in the same instant forgetful of its "infinite responsibility" to him. It is this "spontaneity" of human freedom that, as Levinas echoes throughout

Peperzak (1983) Phenomenology – Ontology – Metaphysics: Levinas' Perspective on Husserl and Heidegger.

a number of his texts, constitutes the "naïve arbitrariness" of its exercise. In the spontaneity of its employment, freedom is arbitrary in the sense that it is non-receptive of the difference of the other. In its free act of comprehension, the I refuses to accept and acknowledge the difference of the other - its otherness as such - by enveloping it within the universal horizon of its experience as something general and, thus, same. Rather than "welcoming" the difference of the other within the same, which would mean recognizing and admitting its infinite irreducibility to the totality of its knowledge, the I negates the alterity of the other by bringing it under the power of its own understanding; the I negates the other as such. In the spontaneity of its free exercise, the I refuses to allow the other to inform or instruct its knowledge, but instead arbitrarily decides the light in which it comes to be viewed.

The spontaneity of freedom also constitutes its naiveness insofar as it entails a "forgetting," what we might be tempted to call a "repression," of that originary encounter with the other that aroused it. The other that addresses thought, that calls it to attention and demands its consideration, always confronts it as something unfamiliar and different, as a "stranger," which lacks the plenitude of what is already present for it. The stranger that meets it is wanting of the wealth of properties of what thought already possesses. In projecting its gaze toward and upon the other, that is, in endeavoring to draw it into the light of its comprehension, thought intends to give the other the possessions it lacks by presenting it with the gift of its own most light. However, once it has presented the other with the light, once it has furnished it with those possessions of which it feels the other is in need, it assumes these to have belonged to the other all along; it forgets its very own "generosity."

When this confrontation is with another, a personal other – when thought comes "face to face" with the "Other" - this forgetfulness concerning its own generosity is a forgetting of the ethical nature of the gesture of its freedom, which means, more essentially, that it is a forgetting of the "ethical relation" that founds it. The ethical relation, the face-to-face encounter with the Other, is that initial address of a personal existent who greets me as a stranger, as an absolutely unique individual, an infinitely different existent. What the I encounters in the Other, what it sees in the face of the stranger, is precisely its strangeness, which is to say that what is "revealed" for thought in the face is precisely the difference of the different existent, the "infinity of the infinitely Other." To encounter the infinity of the Other is to discover the impossibility of his ever being comprehended within thought's general horizon and, hence, of his ever being subject to the freedom of the I as a mere possession of its knowledge. What is revealed is the absolute incomprehensibility of the Other, which is his interminable exteriority, his "transcendence in relation to the same" (TI 45-50). The transcendence of the Other is also his freedom, such that when the I is confronted by the freedom of the Other it does not encounter his difference on the basis of his possessing a spontaneity resembling its own, but as a different freedom altogether, as, in fact, the very difference of the different existent. As Levinas writes: "the Other is not transcendent because he would be free as I am, his freedom is a superiority that comes from his very transcendence" (TI 224).

It is because I encounter the Other as transcendent, because I know I share nothing in common with him, that I feel obliged to offer him my most intimate of possessions. This obligation I feel toward the Other, since I can never know whether he will accept my gifts and can never hope that he will reward my generosity in kind, is an obligation I must renew at every moment: it is my "infinite responsibility" to the Other. Thus, it is only in the ethical relation with a transcendent Other, that is, from an encounter with an absolutely different freedom, that my own freedom is first aroused. It is the "heteronomy" of my freedom: a "passivity," my openness to the freedom of the Other (the idea of infinity), that is simultanously an "activity," the absolute spontaneity of my act. It is my passivity before the face of the Other that calls my freedom to action, as a giving of what is most uniquely my own, that which comes entirely from out of me and me alone, that which arises spontaneously from the singularity of my freedom. For Levinas, "the opposition of the face, the freedom of the Other – is not revealed by its coming up against my freedom; it is an opposition prior to my freedom, which puts my freedom into action" (CPP 19).

The free gift of my freedom, in that it is founded in an ethical generosity, is "justice." To act freely from justice means to act from an infinite responsibility to the Other, which is to give to the him without the slightest knowledge of what he may desire and without a glimmer of hope of gaining anything in return. Justice means giving to the Other, not from self-interest nor from an interest in giving him what he wants, which could be construed as self-interest, but purely from obligation alone. However, in the spontaneity of its act, in its giving of the light, thought fails to take notice of the fact that it "dispossesses" the Other of that which is most proper to it, that in moving the Other into the light it steals away the "invisibility" of the stranger, which is the very individuality of the Other, its alterity and its difference. In envisaging the Other, in the spontaneous freedom of ontological comprehension, thought forgets the confrontation with the invisibility of an invisible Other that animates it; it turns away from the ethical relation of the encounter with the face by covering it over with the light of its freedom. Thus, as Levinas writes:

To affirm the priority of Being over existents is to already decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with someone, who is an existent (the ethical relation) to a relation with the Being of existents, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing), subordinates justice to freedom ... It would be opposed to justice, which involves obligations with regard to an existent that refuses to give itself, the Other, who in this sense would be an existent par excellence. (TI 45)

The freedom of theory, of ontological comprehension, which is always itself founded in justice, in the spontaneity of its act of self-foundation, or self-origination, forgets this foundation prior to its foundation, what Levinas will call, that "origin before the origin," that is justice. Hence, philosophy as the theoretical understanding of beings, as ontological comprehension, reverses the essential order of priority between justice and freedom, making the former a condition of the latter by putting the self before the Other, which means positing the spontaneity of the I as prior to the address of the Other and the infinite responsibility it engenders. In placing freedom before justice, ontology errs: theory is naïve.

To the idea of philosophy as naïve theory Levinas counterpoises philosophy as "critique," which for him encompasses the true "essence of knowledge." The essence of knowing, as he sees it, means looking beneath what one already knows, moving behind knowledge itself, toward what conditions it, its source. Critique means "putting in question" the naïve self-certainty of knowledge by forcing it to answer for itself, to "justify" itself, in moving beyond what it knows to that which makes its knowledge possible in advance. Knowledge becomes critique in moving beyond what it knows by moving behind it, in "transcendence." Philosophy as opposed to ontology is "metaphysics." However, transcendence does not come to thought from the freedom of its knowledge, as it does for ontology, and even for "fundamental ontology," but from the Other and as the "idea of infinity." Indeed, to locate the source of transcendence in the capacity for stepping beyond beings toward Being, which means placing the problem of "grounding" ontic cognition within the ontological knowledge that constitutes it in the first place, leaves the task of justifying knowledge to knowledge itself - it assumes that knowledge should be self-justifying. As Levinas writes:

to identify the problem of foundation with an objective knowledge of knowledge is to suppose in advance that freedom can be founded only on itself... To identify the problem of foundation with the knowledge of knowledge is to forget the arbitrariness of freedom, which is precisely what has to be grounded. (TI 85)

Where knowledge is self-justifying, which is to say, where freedom assumes itself as self-grounding or spontaneous, it is fundamentally uncritical and "dogmatic," which means arbitrary. Philosophy as metaphysical critique refers to an opening of that knowledge that finds itself as self-justified to scrutiny and examination, it means subjecting one's knowledge to the critical questioning of the Other.

To open my knowledge to the critique of the Other, to allow him "to put into question" the spontaneity of my freedom, is to welcome the Other by receiving him in and as the idea of infinity. Receiving from the Other the idea of infinity amounts to the exposure of the I to his absolute transcendence, which reveals not the limit, but the utter "worthlessness" of its freedom in the face of his unbounded exteriority. The

calling into question of my knowledge by the Other, through which I discover the inadequacy of my understanding for making the acquaintance of the stranger, the utter uselessness of my resources for assimilating him within the general totality of my self-same possessions, is not felt as frustration, but rather, as Levinas tells us, is "accomplished as shame." In receiving the idea of infinity, the I is not frustrated by his lack of knowledge about the stranger, but on the contrary feels ashamed about the total groundlessness of its knowledge as such. In being shamed by the Other, the I is exposed to the naivity and arbitrariness of its self-certain knowledge, whereas it comes to discover for the first time its own spontaneity, its own freedom, and to feel ashamed for it. In feeling shame over its spontaneity it discovers that its knowledge had been an attempted theft, a botched plagiarism, by which it had tried unjustly to steal from the Other that which it could never understand, that which was beyond all possibilities of its comprehension - the incomprehensible. Thus, in shame, the I also for the first time feels ashamed of its injustice and its violence toward the Other, for the first time it develops a "conscience." In Levinas' words: "To welcome the Other ... is the revelation of a resistance to my powers that does not counter them as a greater force, but calls in question the naïve right of my power, my glorious spontaneity as a living being. Morality beings when freedom, instead of being justified by itself, feels itself arbitrary and violent" (TI 84).

Through philosophy as critique, or Metaphysics, by which the I seeks to ground its knowledge by opening it to the questioning of the Other and which is realized here in shame, the I is "taught," is given a lesson, by the Other concerning both its own freedom - the singularity of the absolute spontaneity of the I - and also

that of the Other - his infinity or transcendence. To be taught the transcendence of the Other is simultaneously an instruction in one's own freedom. Transcendence, which discloses the impossibility of ever knowing the Other, teaches "distance," the infinite and impassable space separating thought's own freedom from that of the Other. The infinity of the Other, in showing it the space of transcendence, teaches the I its own "separation," which is the impossibility of ever being intimate with the other, of ever entering into a total relation with him, that is, of ever forming a universal totality with him. In bringing the I back beneath the totality of its knowledge to its originary condition, to the address of the wholly Other who greets it precisely as space, as the infinity of the space of separation, the I is brought to its freedom by being brought before its freedom. It is in being taught, in being brought before its freedom to the encounter with the Other that precedes and conditions it, that the I is taken back from its freedom, taken back from the general totality in which it possesses itself as a self. It is only in this transportation back from its self by the Other that the I is afforded that space alone through which the exercise of its freedom becomes possible at all. Only the Other can give the I that free space, that abyss of its transcendence, in and through which an absolutely spontaneous act of freedom, one that, as opposed to its originating from the general totality of an impersonal reason, arises as and from the very individuality of the I, is possible. Only a separated existent, which means also a "created" one, one whose separation is constituted in the relation with a transcendent Other, is capable of freedom. Thus, as Levinas writes, the alterity of the Other,

is manifested in a mastery that does not conquer but teaches. Teaching is not a species of a genus called domination, a hegemony at work within a totality, but is the presence of infinity breaking the closed circle of totality. Representation derives its freedom with regard to the world that nourishes it from the relation, essentially moral, with the Other. Morality is not added to the preoccupations of the I, so as to order them or have them judged; it calls in question and puts at a distance from itself the I itself. (TI 171)

Only the freedom of heteronomy, a freedom simultaneously determined in the passivity of separation and the activity of infinite responsibility, that is, as "invested" by the Other, is deserving of the name. And only an existent that is determined first and foremost in and by its "sociality," by the relation with a wholly Other that is anterior to its spontaneity, can be granted its freedom.

However, this idea of an invested and created freedom, as a freedom arrived at by means of its being opened to the questioning of the Other, comes with a particular caveat, where Levinas states: "the separated being can close itself up in its egoism, that is, in the very accomplishment of its isolation. And this possibility of forgetting the transcendence of the Other -of banishing with impunity all hospitality from one's home, banishing the transcendental relation that alone permits the I to shut itself up in itself - evinces the absolute truth, the radicalism, of seperation" (TI 172). This is the forgetfulness of spontaneity, its naivity and its arbitrariness, that always remains as a possibility belonging essentially to freedom itself. Freedom will always have a tendency to lose itself in itself, to get entangled in its work and possessions, and to forget him to whom it is indebted and for whom it owes everything it has and, therewith, the infinite responsibility it entails. Thus, critique must never be complete, such that it must never be satisfied once and for all with the work it accomplishes. Rather, critique must be an interminable process of returning to the Other by remaining open and ready to listen to his questions. Critique means being forever

open to the teaching of the Other, of remembering to listen for his originary address, as that which allows for my freedom to be instructed in and as the pure generosity of justice.

Distance through Proximity: Levinas with Kant

If the above discussion concerning Levinas' difficult and profoundly ambivalent thoughts on human freedom has made one thing apparent it is that he must regard with deep suspicion any philosophy that would make freedom the highest condition and potentiality of ethics. Indeed, to do so, for Levinas, would, by placing my freedom before and above that of the Other, deny and forget ethics altogether, which is determined in the face to face relation with an infinite and personal alterity that precedes and first makes possible my own most spontaneity. It should seem strange then that Levinas should recognize such a strong affinity with Kantiansim, which was perhaps the first philosophical system that expressly assumed freedom as the very cornerstone of its edifice. In the section to follow, in order to bring Levinas' critique of human freedom into a more immediate dialogue with our broader arguments concerning the theory and practice of Kant's ethical freedom, we will first be taking a look at the only text that Levinas ever devoted entirely to a discussion of Kant's critical philosophy as such. It will be our intention to allow Levinas's The Primacy of Pure Practical Reason, as a supplement to his ideas on human freedom discussed at length above, to guide our own analysis of Kant's practical philosophy, in order that we might ultimately discover what for him constituted a certain proximity or closeness between his own ethico-philosophical project with that of Kant. In drawing their respective projects into proximity, in the sense of bringing them together under a common thematic light, our goal will be to position Kant's ideas on ethics and human

freedom, particularly in terms of the relationship existing between them, within the context of the Levinasian critique of its ontological concept.

The Primacy of Pure Practical Reason

For Levinas, it was the discovery of a kind of "interest" at the basis of the whole of the exercise of reason, of any "use" it might possibly put it to, that, for him, constituted Kant's most "characteristic" and "profound" contribution to the philosophical discourse on ethics. That reason should be motivated by an interest, not a particular interest derived from the needs, desires, or appetites of one's empirical existence, but a pure, intellectual interest, a "disinterested interest," expressed as an a priori respect for the moral law, meant subordinating knowledge to ethics. This, according to Levinas, was what Kant intended with his doctrine of the "primacy of pure practical reason," which made speculative or theoretical reason dependent upon and at the service of pure practical reason. In fact, as Levinas insists, for Kant, "speculation is subordinate to action. There would be no thought if speculative reason were without interest … In the beginning was the interest" (PPR 451). But why should reason in its practical employment take primacy over its theoretical faculty and what does this mean for Reason as a whole?

That for Kant a critique of pure reason meant not only a positive determination, by means of its own self-reflection, of the nature and possibilities of pure speculative reason, but at the same time the negative designation of its limits, and that this resulted ultimately in Kant's restriction of theoretical knowledge to the objects of a possible experience, is well-known. Commentators have frequently

pointed to a statement from the first Critique, where Kant writes, "I had to deny knowledge to make room for faith," as evidence of his prioritization of pure reason's practical function over its theoretical one. Moreover, it is also widely recognized that it is only with the second Critique, wherein the ideas of freedom, God, and the immortality of the soul, knowledge of which was altogether denied theoretical reason, received their respective proofs as necessary postulates of pure practical reason, that the critique of pure reason as such was accomplished. However, for Levinas, none of this is sufficient for either explaining or establishing the primacy of practical over theoretical reason. That reason in its practical use, in contradistinction to its speculative application, could legitimately reach beyond the limits of experience to establish the reality of those ideas that remained indissolubly problematic for theoretical knowledge was neither adequate for deciding the priority of pure practical reason nor was it sufficiently encompassing of what Kant intended in asserting its primacy. It is not that pure theoretical reason is more finite or limited than pure practical reason. Rather, both theoretical reason, which yields pure transcendental knowledge of the objectivity of the object, and practical reason, which produces the a priori principles of all practical action, as faculties or modalities of pure reason as such, are equally determined by its essential finitude.

Practical Reason and the Principles of Human Action

Before we begin to unravel these connections binding human finitude and interestedness with the primacy of pure practical reason, it would benefit us to undertake a closer examination of what, according to Kant, such a pure practical

reason actually looks like. Toward that end, any discussion of practical reason must begin with what Kant refers to as the "good will." Indeed, as he says: "inasmuch as reason has been imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e. as one which is to have influence on the will, its true function must be to produce a will which is not merely good as a means to some further end, but is good in itself" (GMM 396). Where the sole task of pure practical reason is to be found in its production of the good will, its proper work consists in supplying the will with the very principles of its own act, namely willing. Thus, as a source of principles of the will, reason comes to determine action and in that way is practical. However, if the will is to be good, not as a mere means to some effect, but in itself, reason must come to determine the will as something identical with itself. Reason could in no way claim to produce a will that was good in itself were it to come upon it from the outside as an external force. Therefore, reason directing action, or practical reason, and the will are, in fact, merely two ways of referring to one and the same act. Moreover, where the will is identical with practical reason as such, all of its principles of action must originate a priori in pure reason itself. Analogous to the way in which the categories of the understanding operate as the pure principles of theoretical reason, the principles of the will are precisely the pure principles of practical reason.

Any act that would derive its principle from a source other than that of pure practical reason would not itself be an act of will at all, but rather one of "desire." Indeed, every action, for Kant, possesses both a subjective "principle of volition," which at once functions as the motive of an act and also as a practical rule for governing its specific means, and an object, as the end or aim toward which it is directed. The former Kant refers to as an action's "maxim." More specifically, a maxim is any practical principle whose "condition is regarded by the subject as holding only for his will," which is to be distinguished from a practical law, whose "condition is cognized as objective, that is, as holding for the will of every rational being" (CPrR 17). The maxim of an action, where it is grounded "pathologically" in inclination, arises from an expectation of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure to be brought about by the existence of some sensible object. It is, thus, grounded in the faculty desire, which seeks "happiness" as the highest end of all action by working to maximize the subject's pleasure, while wherever possible avoiding any feelings of displeasure.

For an act to be that of will, however, it must, as we said, be grounded *a priori* in a pure practical reason, which means that its principle of volition must be given, independently of all experience, as a pure practical principle. Now, for any action intended toward bringing about a specific effect, we have said that the source of its motive is to be found in the feelings of pleasure or displeasure the subject connects with its object. Therefore, for any action originating in the desire to bring about either the existence or non-existence of some object, because any feelings reason comes to represent as combined in the object are initially only ever to be arrived at by means of an immediate sensible encounter with it, the condition of its maxim will in every case be an empirical one. Experience, then, as a source of practical principles, only ever determines action as an "efficient cause," such that, from a practical perspective, it merely functions to instruct the subject regarding the appropriate procedure for achieving an effect that it has already discovered therein as something desirable. Of course, where the maxim of an action is to supply both its object and the rule according to which it moves toward this aim, that is, where the maxim constitutes the very intention of an act, it must itself be the product of reason. For any action intended toward bringing about a particular effect in the sensible world, its maxim must arise from a rational knowledge of which means are appropriate for achieving its specific aim. Only reason can provide insight into the causal relations prevailing amongst objects in the sensible world, such that reason alone is capable of determining the particular empirical conditions under which a given action is possible. As Levinas explains,

To achieve his goals, man indeed pursues various means. Now, the choice of means depends on a rational cognition, on a knowledge of the causes and effects that govern the world. To know what to do *(savoirfaire):* this is reasoning. To prove that the means appropriate to obtain an end are not available requires modifying the very goal proposed by the action. Thus, reason incontestably directs action. (PPR 448)

However, as we have said, such an action, even though its very intention has its source in reason itself, is not yet the determination of a pure practical reason – it is not yet the action of the good will.

The law of pure practical reason must be *a priori* and thus must determine the will as an immediate condition of action. A maxim, determining action as an efficient cause, could never be fit to serve as a practical law, as it determines action only mediately by means of the representation of an object of desire. "In a practical law reason determines the will immediately, not by means of an intervening feeling of pleasure or displeasure, not even in this law; and that it can as pure reason be practical is what alone makes it possible for it to be lawgiving" (CPrR 22). Therefore,

for Kant, that reason that directs action as a mere means to an effect is not in itself practical, but is instead, as Levinas insists, "technical" (PPrR 448). Any action governed by technical reasoning, because its maxim is determined in a theoretical knowledge of the particular constitution of its object, is actually the product of theoretical reason. In Levinas's words,

the practical reason that intervenes in the choice of means is technical. It is only an application of the knowledge obtained by theoretical reason, since the goal of the action in the technical enterprise always remains derived from needs, desires, passions. This is known from the experience we have of human nature. For Kant, a pure reason introduces principles independent of experience: *a priori*. The reason that directs action through the choice of means is thus not a pure reason. (PPrR 448)

Morality and Rational Feeling

If every action determined as a means to end is grounded, not in a pure reason that is practical, but in a technical knowledge of its object, which is only ever arrived at by the extension of theoretical reason to the empirical conditions of a possible action, the act of pure practical reason must belong to that type of action that is an end in itself. The activity that takes no consideration of its possible effects nor of any extrinsic purpose, but instead is practiced simply for its own sake, is, for Kant, the very definition of morality.¹¹Moral action, as opposed to instrumental action, which is done for the sake of some effect, is done simply out of duty toward the law of itself.

¹¹ This is what is often referred to as "Kant's paradox." In his book *German Philosophy* 1760 – 1860: *The Legacy of German Idealism*, Terry Pinkard describes this as the idea of a "quasi-paradoxical formulation of the authority of the moral law itself, which seems to require a 'lawless' agent to give laws to himself on the basis of laws that from another point view seem to be derivate from the legislation" (59). Pinkard attributes the "formulation" of this notion to Robert Pippin; see Robert Pippin "The Actualization of Freedom" in Karl Ameriks, *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

This is why, for Kant, the act of will is in itself a good act. It is, in fact, the one and only good act, to which everything good must refer as to its condition of possibility. As he writes: "while the will may not indeed be the sole and complete good, it must, nevertheless, be the highest good and the condition of all the rest" (GMM 396). Of "anything at all in the world," only the will gives itself to our thinking as "good without qualification," that is, as good unconditionally or in itself, whilst also attaching as a necessary condition to whatever we might cognize under the very concept of the good.

Moral action, we said, is always carried out merely for its own sake and not for the sake of what it accomplishes. "An action ... has its moral worth, not in the purpose that is to be attained by it, but in the maxim according to which the action is determined" (GMM 399). Thus, it is the motive of the will, its subjective principle of volition, and not its object, which constitutes the moral significance of its act. However, once we have ruled out the possibility of every empirical condition of the will, that is, after we have subtracted everything "material" from its principle, what could possibly remain for it as a motive for action? The good will, Kant informs us, draws its sole motivation from a special feeling he names "respect." The feeling of respect is, indeed, of an absolutely unique kind among our feelings as a whole. Respect, like all other feelings, arises within the faculty of sensibility, which, as a receptive faculty, presupposes the existence of some other representation as its condition. Nevertheless, unlike every other "sensible feeling," it is not grounded within sensibility itself, but has instead a purely "intellectual" origin. In Kant's own words: "sensible feeling, which underlies all our inclinations, is indeed the condition

of that feeling we call respect, but the cause determining it lies in pure practical reason; and so this feeling, on account of its origin, cannot be pathologically effected but must be called practically effected" (CPrR 65). Contrary to pathologically determined feelings, whose condition and effect both reside in the representation of our faculty of sensibility and, thus, have an empirical origin, what arouses the sensible feeling of respect is to be found *a priori* in a representation of pure practical reason. For no other reason than it is pure practical reason, as the faculty of morality, which is alone capable of commanding our respect, Kant calls this "moral feeling" (CPrR 65).

Moral feeling, as the unique subjective motivation of the will, would always have to be a respect "for" something. In fact, where the feeling of respect, like all sensation, is produced within the receptivity of our sensibility, something must first appear therein as the initial cause of its representation. For the feeling of respect to exist for the subject, as would be the case with sensation as a whole, there would have to be an object-cause of its sensible representation. Yet, for any particular object to become the ground of feeling, it would first have to be made available for our sensibility within a possible experience.¹² Respect, however, if it is to ground an act of will, would have to be capable of being felt prior to the experience of any object whatsoever. Therefore, as Kant insists, we can "indeed have an inclination for an

¹² Henry Allison in *Kant's Theory of Freedom* has a nice discussion of this particular problem. He suggests that: "just as it is impossible in the epistemological context to explain the possibility of a priori knowledge, if one assumes that our knowledge must conform to objects, so too, in the practical context, one cannot explain the possibility of a categorical imperative, or more generally, an a priori practical principle with the requisite universality and necessity, if one assumes that an object (of the will) must be a source of moral requirements" (100).

object as the effect of [a] proposed action; but [we] can never have respect for such an object" (GMM 400). Besides this negative explanation, if one thinks for a moment of the positive nature of respect, Kant argues, it should become immediately evident that it is not of the kind of feeling that one could ever have for a mere object (CPrR 63-68). However, it still remains to be seen what that representation of pure practical reason, which alone has the ability to awaken the feeling of respect in us, actually looks like and to explain how and why it should exercise such a profound effect upon the will.

What sort of representation, wholly unmixed with anything taken from experience, originating in pure reason alone, could exist universally as the objectcause of our respect? We know from Kant's critical philosophy that reason in and of itself is altogether incapable of giving us objects, but requires for this an entirely independent faculty of intuition or sensibility. In fact, the object of our consciousness will always be the synthetic unity of reason's pure concepts and a manifold of sensible appearances to be found empirically in intuition. Reason, with its pure concepts, depends upon sensible intuition for the material content of its representations, which, if they were to give us objects, would of necessity have to be drawn from experience. Nonetheless, pure reason, as we discovered in our first chapter, does have at its disposal a manifold of pure sensation, available to it completely *a priori* in the form of the pure intuitions of space and time. In fact, we found, that it is the pure sensation of the intuition of time that comes to serve as the pure sensible content of the categories, which together form for us the concept of an object in general. Thus, while reason, without the aid of experience, may indeed be

incapable of representing objects themselves to us, it does as pure reason, however, before any experience whatsoever, furnish us with the pure representation of an object in general.

It is, finally, this pure representation of an object as such, originating entirely a priori within a pure reason, which is the cause of the feeling of respect in us. This pure representation is, of course, not itself that of an object at all, but rather, as Kant says, an "object = X." We say that this representation = X because the object as such and in general could itself never become available to a possible experience and thus ultimately lies beyond the possibilities of our knowledge. "The pure concept of this transcendental object (which in all of our cognitions is really always one and the same = X)... cannot contain any determinate intuition at all and therefore concerns nothing but that unity which must be encountered in a manifold of cognition" (CPR A110). Even though it remains objectively unknown to us, the transcendental object, as Kant also makes clear here, forms an essential condition of our experience as a whole. It, thus, possesses both a transcendent and a transcendental relation to our knowledge. In fact, as discussed in our first chapter, insofar as the categories of pure reason constitute the formal principles by which a manifold of appearances is first united to give us objects of experience, the transcendental object, as the synthetic unity of the categories themselves, provides the universal form according to which every particular object as object must conform. Thus, it is the pure concept of an object in general, which, though not in-itself an object, constitutes the very objectivity of objects. When we say it is the representation of objectivity itself this is merely meant to signify that, insofar as it represents "nothing" but unity in the manifold of appearances, it is none other than the concept of the law as such. As Kant writes in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*: "the concepts {categories} of the understanding ... of themselves signify nothing but the form of the law in general" (454).

Duty and the Form of Law

We have now provided an answer for the first of our questions, namely what sort of representation, free from any and all empirical content, having its source strictly within pure reason alone, could form the *a priori* basis of the feeling of respect? Once we remove everything empirical from the representations of reason, isolating only that which originates *a priori* within a pure reason, what remains for us is simply the form of representation as such, which, as we found, is merely the representation of objectivity itself or, in other words, the form of the law in general. It is this pure representation of the form of the law as law that causes in us the sensible feeling of respect. In Kant's own words,

One cannot wonder at finding this influence of a mere intellectual idea on feeling quite impenetrable for speculative reason and at the same time to be satisfied that one can yet see a priori this much: that such feeling is inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being. If this feeling of respect were pathological and hence a feeling of pleasure based on the inner sense, it would be futile to discover a priori a connection of it with any idea. But it is a feeling which is directed only to the practical and which depends on the representation of a law only as to its form and not on account of any object of the law. (CPrR 68)

This says that the representation of the form of the law in general, which as a transcendental representation remains beyond all comprehension for theoretical

reason, will be "inseparably connected" with the feeling of respect in every human subject, provided by that we mean that it is both finite and rational. Just as our respect, if it is to be capable of motivating action entirely *a priori*, could never be for an object, which, as concerning its content, is always something empirical, it could likewise never be for any particular law. The particular law, like we might find, for example, in some positive legal or moral doctrine, as an actual rule prescribing some specific action, quite obviously would require some empirical content, for otherwise it would consist of mere form and would be wholly unsuited to its purpose. Consequently, the feeling of respect, where its cause must have its source in a pure reason alone, must, indeed, be for the law, but strictly as to its form. Moreover, the law, insofar as it is the ground for an activity, namely for that action we call the will, must of itself be a practical representation. Therefore, the representation of the form of law as such, as a ground for action a *priori*, is none other than the representation of pure practical reason.

At the beginning of our discussion, we set for ourselves the task of characterizing the notion of a pure practical reason, which, for Kant, had come to signify the determination of a will that was good in itself. This meant that the motive of the will could never be derived from the object of experience, as then it would be good only conditionally in relation to some purpose and not unconditionally and for its own sake alone. Now we have come to see that a pure will, once we have taken away everything empirical as a potential condition of its action, if it was to be possible at all, would in the first place have to be motivated out of a pure regard for practical reason as such. We call this pure regard respect, which as a sensible feeling must receive its impetus by means of some other separate representation and hence will always be a respect *for* something. Finally, we found that, the feeling of respect, in insofar as it must be commanded universally by pure practical reason, is constituted as a respect for the practical law itself, which specifically meant respect for the pure form of the law in general as a potential ground for action. Thus, a pure will, whose subjective motive must be that of respect, which could never be respect for an object, must have as its object instead something like objectivity itself. As Kant writes: [once] we altogether exclude the influence of inclination and therewith every object of the will ... there is nothing left which can determine the will except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, i.e., the will can be subjectively determined by the maxim that I should follow such a law even if all my inclinations are thereby thwarted" (GMM 400).

Now it still remains for us to explain how and why the practical law of pure reason should possess such a powerful command over the human will, such that, simply out of respect, we should be motivated to act always in accordance with its representation, even where this means a complete disavowal of every object of desire. That the law should be so thoroughly connected with the feeling of respect and, by means of that sensation, with the activity of the will, as Kant has hinted at above, is determined within the essential finitude and rationality of the will itself.

To act from a pure respect for the practical law is, according to Kant, what we truly mean when we say that an action has been performed from duty. "Duty is the necessity of an action done out of respect for the law" (GMM 400). Where duty refers to that action that is performed solely out of respect for the law, which we now know

is nothing but a respect for the mere form of the law, this means that the only potential end of such an action must concern nothing but its own form, that is, that it be in conformity with the form of law as such. Thus, the action performed from duty will, as concerning its form, be determined from and in accordance with the pure concept of objectivity. In other words, its sole purpose will lie in determining that the subjective principle, the maxim, of its act should at once assume the form of an objective practical law, which, as we discovered, is any practical principle whose condition we comprehend as "holding for the will of every rational being." Moral action, we said, is that activity that is performed solely for the sake of its own law and not for the sake of what it affects. Where duty names any action done merely out of a concern for its own principle, that is, that it assume the form of a practical law, moral action is precisely that action that is motivated by duty alone. The law of pure practical reason is at the same time the law of every moral action – it is the "moral law."

The will, then, would have to be grounded in duty, which is to say the sole purpose of its act would lie in determining that its maxim could exist objectively as a practical law for the will of every rational being. Its principle would have to be a "categorical imperative." This simply states: the subject "ought" always to act in such a way that the maxim of its will would at the same time be a universal condition of action for every will as will. The will, as Kant defined it, was simply that action which is grounded in a pure practical reason, such that its sole condition concerned that its maxim be determined *a priori* in accordance with the practical law. The good will, insofar as its principle must be a categorical imperative, wills only the conformity of its actions with the form of the law as law, which is none other than the immediate condition of willing as such. In other words, the will, where it refers exclusively to an action commanded by a pure practical reason, is in itself a rational will. "Only a rational being has the power to act according to his conception of laws ... Since the derivation of actions from laws requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason" (GMM 412). Hence, every act of will must be a rational act; every will must be a rational will. Thus, in willing that its subjective principle be at the same time a universal practical law, the will wills precisely the rationality of its action, its purity, which is always already the condition of possibility of all willing whatsoever.

Yet if every action determined from duty, that is, from a pure respect for the practical law, is thereby imbued with absolute moral as well as practical significance, the rational will must at the very same time be the good will. Every will insofar as it is always a rational will, would have to be a good will also. "Moral action" Levinas writes, as "the action commanded by reason ... [is] rational action" (PPrR 448). However, the good will, we decided, is a will that is good in itself, such that it would have to be "good only through its willing" (GMM 394). That is to say, it could never receive the condition for its action from a source outside itself, otherwise its goodness would be determined only contingently in relation to what it willed, rather than universally as the mere fact of its willing as such. Hence, if it is to be the practical law that, as the universal cause of the feeling of respect, first motivates the will as the rational action that it is, it could never appear for us in the form of an external call to action. Seen in another light, the pure "ought" of the categorical imperative could

never be received as the entreaty of an "impersonal reason," as the command of a universal law issued as something distinct from the particularity of each individual person, that is, from its "personality" as such. Indeed, if that were the case, this appeal of the ought would invariably run the risk of being ignored altogether, of having its call go unheard by the subject, and therefore would always remain only contingently connected with its actions. The practical law, if it is to possess a universal significance for the subject's actions as whole, as that which determines the entirety of their moral worth, would have to be issued for it as the necessary condition for its very existence as a subject.¹³

It might initially appear strange, maybe even contradictory, that one should come to encounter the very fact of one's existence, of one's own unique subjectivity, in and through the form of a universal law. What is perhaps even more perplexing is that this encounter of the subject with its own existence should at the same time constitute the precondition for its very being as a subject. The key to an understanding of these propositions must reside in the meaning of what Kant called the pure "ought" of the categorical imperative. Indeed, if the law is as essentially bound to the being of the subject as we have suggested, such that it constitutes the actual subjectivity of the subject, why should it be given to it in form of an ought at all? Surely, if it is as we have described it, the subject could not very well choose to

¹³ Frank Schalow in his book *Imagination* attempts at length to "establish that practical reason rests on the existential conditions for being a self" (154). His reading, as opposed to the one we will be suggesting below, relied heavily on what he recognized as shared "concept of the hero" between Heidegger and Kant. While his discussion is a very convincing one, we believe it is possible to demonstrate this thesis without introducing any concept not already explicitly at work within the Kantian practical texts themselves.

act in contradistinction to what amounts as the law of its own subjectivity? The answer to these questions, as we shall discover in the discussion to follow, is to be found in Kant's ontological description of the essential finitude of pure practical reason, as that which discloses to us what for him constituted the meaning of the finitude of the human subject in general.

Finitude and Infinity

In our previous examination of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, we found that pure speculative reason, which is that faculty given the exclusive attention of this the first chapter in his critical course, is finite only insofar as it depends upon and is subordinated to sensible intuition. This signifies fundamentally that pure reason, and therewith the human subject more generally, is given over to and bound by a world – the "sensible world" - of which it is itself not the author, but which "interests," in the sense of concerns, it nonetheless. Interest here means something much more than a capricious curiosity in the surrounding world of sensible appearances. Pure speculative reason does not decide for or choose the interest that it pays to that which announces itself to and within intuition. Rather, the sensible world necessitates the interest of the subject. Indeed, as a "created" being, the human subject does not possess ontological or divine intuition, which would make of it a God capable of creating the world spontaneously from out of itself. On the contrary, the human subject, before and in spite of any choice of its own, finds itself immersed in a world of appearances that demands its attention. Thus, it is only as a thinking subject, a subject that, as opposed to creating its world absolutely, creatively interprets the

world it always already belongs to, that it is finite. Thinking, specifically transcendental thinking, names that activity through and by which the human subject responds to and contends with the world of phenomena that interests it. Thinking, animated by a sensible world that commands its interest, is the existing existence of the finite human subject. We call the pure, productive activity of transcendental thinking imagination, which, as we have seen, names the very freedom of the human subject.

Just as pure theoretical reason, in its finitude, must be grounded in an interest, so to must pure practical reason. In the very same way that theoretical reason, because the finite human subject is wholly incapable of divine intuition, is conditioned in advance by the interest demanded of it by the sensible world, pure practical reason, in that this same subject possesses not a "holy will," but a finite *human* will, must also be initially animated by an interest.

If the subject were to possess a holy will, which as Kant informs us, is "such a will as would not be capable of any maxim conflicting with the moral law," practical reason, as that which commands the subject in regards what in every circumstance *ought* to be done, would never find the occasion for its activity (29). This is because the subject would be so constituted as to be wholly unable to take any action not always already in conformity with the form of the law in general. It would, therefore, require no special faculty for determining the rightness of its action; it would have no need for a "conscience" as such, as it would be altogether incapable of performing any immoral action whatsoever. However, where immoral action would be ontologically impossible for the holy will, moral action would have to be as well.

Moral action, if we recall, had to be performed from duty alone, which meant strictly out of respect for the practical law. The pure feeling of respect, founded a priori in the pure form of the law, refers merely to the way the law gets revealed to the subject as the sole possible ground for the will. "Respect [is] consciousness of direct necessitation of the will by the law." In other words, respect, as "a way of representing things, " is the mode of disclosure in and through which the subject comes to discover the practical law as such. Despite being a pure feeling, however, respect remains nonetheless a sensible feeling, which is always something "based on the receptivity of the subject" (CPrR 20). Thus, the feeling of respect names the specific mode of receiving the law as a "subjective determining ground for the will," which, for Kant, is in the way of a necessary motive for action. What gets revealed in the feeling respect is indeed the pure form of law, but in the manner of a universal "incentive" of the will.

That the law should be given, in and through respect, as an incentive of the will means only that its appearance be received in the form of an immediate call to action. Through and by means of respect, the objective practical law is "regarded as a subjective ground of activity - that is, as the incentive to compliance with the law - and as the ground for maxims of a course of life in conformity with it" (CPrR 68). However, as an objective incentive, it must be received as the sole possible ground for the very activity it compels. Respect for the objectivity of the law means receiving it as the only potential subjective ground of the will. It is in that way exclusively that respect becomes the recognition of an immediate "necessitation" of the will by the law.

On the basis of this concept of an incentive, as Kant informs us, "arises that of an *interest*, which can never be attributed to any being unless it has reason" (CPrR 68). For anything to serve as an incentive for action, it would evidently initially have to be of some interest to the subject. That something is of interest for the subject simply refers to the fact that this thing appears for it as a concern, as something requiring its consideration, in some specific way. Therefore, whatever is of interest to the subject would first have to happen upon its sensibility in some particular fashion, so as to initially constitute the occasion for its concern. It is precisely this interest the subject must take in whatever addresses itself to its sensibility - its very openness to be affected by its surrounding world - that forms its fundamental receptivity.

For something of interest to become an actual incentive for action, however, it would require not only this capacity to be affected by things i.e. the faculty of receptivity, but also the spontaneous ability for connecting sensible appearances, according to a certain concept of causality, under a possible rule for action. This is why Kant writes, "on the concept of an interest is based that of a *maxim*." Reason, as the faculty of synthesis, names precisely such a spontaneous ability for unifying a manifold of sensible appearances under a single rule. However, in the case of the maxims of reason, it is "not with a view to the 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 practical reason" (CPrR 56). Nevertheless, as a spontaneous capacity for unifying a manifold of sensibile of sensibile of sensibile of sensibile of sensibile of sensibility, whether for the purpose of cognizing objects or for creating possible rules for action, it is merely a faculty for responding to

what first concerns our sensibility, that is, it is fundamentally a spontaneous receptivity. Thus, only for the being that acts from reason, which is a being whose action is grounded not in an absolute spontaneity, which could never depend on any sensible incentive, but in a spontaneous receptivity, could there ever correspond something like an interest. Only for that being whose action must always be a product of reasoning, as a way of responding to and contending with a sensible world that concerns it in advance, could an interest constitute a necessary condition of its action.

The practical law, since it must constitute the sole potential incentive of the will, would first have to arouse the interest of the subject. Therefore, the law, in advance of its becoming the ground of the will, must first come to exercise an effect on the receptivity of the subject. However, as the pure representation of practical reason, any effect it could have on our sensibility would have to take place prior to the possibility of any experience at all. In other words, the law would have to be given to a sensible encounter by the subject, which, as prior to all experience, was free of any empirical sensation whatsoever. "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" (CPrR 68). Practical reason, as the a priori determination of the will by the pure form of the law in general, must itself be conditioned in advance by the pure moral interest. Indeed, where respect reveals the practical law as the one potential incentive of the will, such that it is only through and by means of this pure sensible feeling that the law is made the ground of its maxim in duty, it is the pure interest the subject takes in the law, the pure effect it has on the subject's faculty of sensibility, which is the primary condition for the activity of pure practical reason. As the

quotation from the beginning of our section had predicted, as far as pure practical reason is concerned, "in the beginning was the interest."

All three of the practical concepts introduced above, "that of an *incentive*, of an *interest* and of a *maxim*," whilst necessary elements for every moral action, as Kant writes, "can be applied to finite beings only. For they all presuppose a limitation of the nature of a being, in that ... 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 68). A divine or holy will, it was said, would be one that was ontologically capable of only those acts whose principles would uniformly accord with the form of the law in general.¹⁴ The holy will, therefore, would require no sensible incentive toward obedience with the moral law, as its principle would always already be in conformity with it.

Since the sensible feeling of respect names the particular mode of disclosure of the law as an incentive of the will, the divine being could never be given to respect for the law as such. "Since respect is an effect on feeling and hence on the sensibility of a rational being, it presupposes this sensibility and so too the finitude of such beings on whom the moral law imposes respect, and that respect for the law cannot be

¹⁴ In regards Kant's treatment of the divine being, too much has been made over the question: is it the case that the holy will must act in conformity with the universality of the law by virtue of its being the moral law or is it that the principle of its action becomes moral law by virtue of its belonging to the holy will? Both ways of interpreting Kant's position I feel obscure its original intention. His point, as I understand it, is that the concept of a divine being presupposes that its will be ontologically determined in such a way as to preclude the possibility of its possessing any principle which was not itself a universal practical law. It is neither that the holy will acts in conformity *to* the moral law, which implies receptivity, nor is it a matter of its willing any principle, regardless of its form, into being as a moral law. The divine being wills only under the form of universality as such.

attributed to a supreme being or even to one free from all sensibility, in whom this cannot be an obstacle to practical reason" (CPrR 66). Respect for the law, as an incentive of the will, would apply only to that being for whom its very sensibility, that is, its receptivity as such, constituted an "internal obstacle" to its action as a whole. That the receptivity of a rational being should itself impose an internal barrier to action refers to the fact that its activity would always have to be "impelled" by something and thus would presuppose a prior interest in the existence of some appearance.¹⁵ Therefore, if respect for the law would not form a necessary ground of action for the divine being, it is because the holy will would require no such sensible condition. In fact, the very concept of a subjective ground for action could not even be applied to such a will at all, as every one of its actions would take place unconditionally from and in accordance with one and the same objective ground. Its activity would be wholly without condition, which is always something imposed by the receptivity of a being, and thus would be that of an absolute spontaneity. In other words, the divine will, insofar as it would be free of any sensible condition for action, would be entirely without interest. The holy will would have to be an absolutely "disinterested" will.

¹⁵ It is important to recall that, for Kant, an appearance is the "undetermined object" of the faculty of sensibility. It is, in fact, not an object at all, insofar as an object is always a general representation determined according to the pure concepts of the understanding. An appearance is a singular entity that affects our receptivity in some specific way prior to its determination as an object in and for our consciousness. The concept of appearance, then, refers to the way things matter to us both prior to and as the condition of any experience of them at all.

Practical reason, however, is always conditioned by an interest, namely the pure moral interest in the law as such and in general. As Levinas writes,

the practice that reason determines cannot, as practice, bypass all interest. Kant maintains (and this is one of his most profound insights, in any case the most characteristic) that to every exercise of a faculty of the soul there corresponds an interest, that no 'power of mind' can put into operation without condition, and that this condition is an interest. (PPrR 449)

It is precisely the transcendental priority of the interest in relation to every one of its faculties, to every possible action that is open to it, even to the whole of its experience in general, which as the totality of its knowledge would form the organic unity of the act of self-consciousness (i.e. the faculty of apperception), that for Kant constitutes the essential finitude of a being. That, for a finite being, an interest would comprise a transcendental condition of all its action, we said, would signify that before anything at all could become a possible ground for action, it must initially have an effect the sensibility of this being in some specific fashion. Thus, for a finite being, in contrast to the absolute spontaneity implied in the concept of a divine being, receptivity itself forms an internal condition for action. Moral action, as that of the good will, where it depends initially upon a pure interest, would be a possibility belonging to a finite will only. Indeed, where pure respect for the law, as the subjective ground of the will in duty, forms the condition for moral action as a whole, it presupposes the sensibility of a finite being for whom the law would be a matter of interest. Thus, as Levinas has insisted, "the moral act thus finds as a sort of interest that which respect - an exceptional, intellectual sentiment, according to Kant - still preserves of the

sentimental" (PPR 449).

Interest and the Thing-in-itself

The rationality of the human being already implies this notion of finitude, insofar as reason, as a faculty for understanding and acting toward things, does not of itself produce these things themselves, but rather characterizes a way of relating to things whose existence must already be at issue for it. However, as a transcendental condition of every faculty of the finite human subject, including that of pure speculative reason, which as the seat of the categories of the understanding forms the pure temporal horizon of possibility of its knowledge and experience in general, the interest must constitute a transcendent condition as well. That is to say, the interest of the subject, as the condition of possibility of all action, even that of cognition itself, would itself remain wholly outside the empirical horizon of temporally related appearances that circumscribes the boundaries of its knowledge as a whole. Indeed, whatever is given to the interest of the subject encounters it there as something "unconditioned," as an originary condition for action having before itself no prior condition, that is, as the groundless ground of a series of temporally related conditions reciprocally determined as parts of an action as a whole. When the action in question is that of the subject's knowledge and experience, we call the totality of the temporally determined conditions belonging to this action the "phenomenal world" or "nature." The unconditioned, however, as the spontaneous ground of the "time-series," could never itself be subject to any temporal conditions of determination, which would always presuppose a prior condition in time, but would

have to be something existing entirely outside of the horizon of temporality (CPR 493-495). Thus, the existence of the unconditioned would necessarily subsist beyond the reach of the human understanding, as one that thinks by means of the categories alone, which, as mere transcendental time determinations, allows us to comprehend objects under the condition of time only. What interests the subject is the pure existence of an entity as such, the very facticity of the existent, which, as the unconditioned, remains forever outside the bounds of its comprehension. We are already familiar with this concept of the pure factical existence of an entity, as that which first addresses itself to the receptivity of a finite being and which forms the unconditioned condition of its knowledge and experience in general; we know it, however, as the "thing-in-itself" [Ding an sich]. "The sensible faculty of intuition is really only a receptivity for a being affected in a certain way with representations ... The non-sensible cause of these representations is entirely unknown to us, and therefore we cannot intuit it as an object; for such an object would have to be represented neither in space nor time (as mere conditions of our sensible representation) without which conditions we cannot think any intuition" (CPR 513).

Where the interest of the finite being, as the transcendental condition of all its faculties, is only ever commanded by the "supersensible," by the prior existence of the noumenal existent, which as such is something entirely incomprehensible for it, its awareness of having ever even taken such an interest is something that only ever avails itself to its thinking as a mere "fact of reason" [*Faktum der Vernunft*] (CPrR 28). The *fact* of reason refers to an object of thought that appears in the mode of an indisputable presupposition, a "necessary postulate," of reason's own activity, but

which, as something supersensible, is entirely inaccessible to any determinative theoretical cognition whatsoever. For speculative reason, the independent existence of a "noumenal world," as what concerns the receptivity of a finite being which, before any activity of its own, always already finds itself absorbed in a world that interests it, but which, even as the specific occasion for its activity, always transcends its grasp, constitutes just such a necessary postulate. "It is insisted (by the critical method) on letting objects of experience as such, including even our own subject, hold only as appearances but at the same time on putting things in themselves at their basis and hence on not taking everything supersensible as a fiction and its concept as empty of content" (CPrR 5). However, this *fact* of pure speculative reason, which reason could never discover in experience and yet has no recourse but to presuppose, only discloses itself inasmuch as pure reason is pushed to reflect on the conditions for its own activity.

The Law of Pure Will

The interest of pure practical reason, if it must be an a priori condition of the will, could never originate from out of an encounter with an object belonging to the surrounding world. In fact, as Kant writes, "the feeling that arises from the consciousness of this necessitation is not pathological, as would be a feeling produced by an object of the senses, but practical only, that is, possible through a preceding (objective) determination of the will and causality of reason" (CPrR 69). The ground of the feeling of respect, insofar this feeling names the universal manner of discovery of the practical law as such, could never reach the receptivity of the subject from an

exterior source, but would have to be something issued from and by itself. Indeed, where the pure form the law must be the ground of a good will, which would have to be good merely through the fact of its willing alone, it would have to appear as nothing other than the law of the will as such. Thus, by means of respect for the law what the finite subject comes to discover is the pure representation of a law in general as the law of its will qua will. In other words, the practical law is the representation of a law in general precisely as the law of the will itself. Through respect, as that feeling wherein the practical law itself is manifested, what the finite subject receives is none but the very law of its will.

Where for a finite subject, as that being for which receptivity itself forms a condition of action, respect signifies receiving the one and only law of its will, which as a practical law is given in the form of a subjective ground for action, that is, as the direct necessitation or motive for an act, duty would signify that act wherein it wills the law of its will as such. The good will, as one that acts from duty alone and thus wills only the practical law, wills nothing but the law of itself i.e. the very law of and for its existence as will. In other words, the good will, insofar as it wills none but its own law, wills nothing but pure willing as such. Indeed, as Jean-Luc Nancy once wrote, "pure practical reason is pure will. Pure will is the will that wills absolutely, which means the will that determines itself from nothing other than itself. The law of pure will is the law determined for the existence of the will which is to say the will is willing itself" (Nancy 48). This says that the being of the will, its very existence *as* will, is only ever determined in and through its own self-willing. Duty, then, names that act by which the pure will gives itself the law of itself, by which it determines

itself as itself, in taking over the ground for its own existence. The will is a pure selfdetermining activity; it is "autonomous" (CPrR 30).

Nevertheless, insofar as the activity of the will depends upon its having first received the law in respect, it is not an absolute spontaneity. Rather, pure practical reason, as pure will, inasmuch as it is conditioned by respect for the law, must again be a spontaneous receptivity. Indeed, the autonomy of the will, as its own selfdetermination in and through the practical law, presupposes the prior representation of the form of the law in general. However, insofar as this must be a pure representation, which would thus have to originate a priori in some faculty of a finite being, what is in fact presupposed is this power of a being for self-legislation, that is, the capacity for giving itself the law. It is "this lawgiving of its own ... [that] is freedom in the *positive* sense" (CPrR 30). Therefore, the practical law, as the object of respect, itself presupposes this faculty of a being for producing for itself the pure representation of a law as such and in general; it assumes freedom in the positive sense. In Kant's own words: " among all the ideas of speculative reason freedom is also the only one the possibility of which we know a priori, though without having insight into it, because it is the condition of the moral law, which we do know" (CPrR 3-4). The good will, which wills only the practical-moral law itself, is selfdetermining or autonomous, but only insofar as it wills the very law of its freedom, that is, it wills the pure form of the law as the representation of freedom.

The autonomy of the will does not, however, consist in its willing freedom as such, which as something supersensible could never be represented in a concept, but in willing the form of law as a pure representation determined in and by a pure and spontaneous synthesis, that is, by means of the pure lawgiving act of freedom. Thus, the good will, as a will determined by the practical law, determines itself, but only inasmuch as it gives itself the law of its freedom, which, as it happens in duty, is taken over as the very ground for its existence. The pure will becomes itself in and through the act of grounding itself in the law of its freedom, which is at one and the same time the law of its existence as will. Moreover, since pure practical reason, as pure will, is the only faculty of a finite being whose motive can be discovered a priori in the practical law, such that its action alone is performed for the sake of the law of one's freedom, it constitutes the autonomy of the human subject in general.

Transcendental Freedom and the Giving of Law

Freedom, as the pure lawgiving faculty of a finite being, is only ever given to our thinking through and by means of the moral law itself and only then as a postulate of the supersensible cause of its representation. As Kant writes: "how freedom is even possible and how this kind of causality has to be represented theoretically and positively is not thereby seen; that there is such a causality is only postulated by the moral law and for the sake of it" (CPrR 111). Nonetheless, freedom forms a necessary postulate - a fact - of pure reason, insofar as the transcendental lawgiving synthesis must be assumed as the pure cause of the representation of a law in general, which is in turn the condition of the whole of the activity of pure reason as such. Indeed, the pure representation of the form of the law as law, regardless of whether it be applied for theoretical cognition (in the synthesis of a manifold of sensible perceptions that gives us objects of experience) or for praxis (in the synthesis of manifold of sensible

desires that give us maxims for action), would remain one and the same concept of the unity in a manifold of sensible conditions and as such would form the necessary ground for all synthesis in general. Thus, freedom, as the orginary source of the representation of a unifying unity that constitutes the basis of synthesis as a whole, as Kant writes: "constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason" (CPrR 3).

Respect for the practical law is not, in fact, a respect for the universality of the form of law at all, as we could never "think of a feeling of a law as such," but rather is respect for what the law itself signifies, namely human freedom (CPrR 36). Indeed, respect, as Kant tells us, "is always directed to persons, never to things" (CPrR 66). However, it is directed to persons not as objects of the subject's experience – respect is never for empirical beings – but rather to their freedom, as their own individual capacity for being the "authors of their own law," which Kant will call their "personality" as such. Respect, as he tells us, is directed to "nothing other than personality, that is, freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature" (CPrR 72).

The pure representation of the law, inasmuch as it forms the pure legislative ground for the act of synthesis in general, including that of the empirical synthesis that constitutes nature so-called, which is defined as "the totality of all objects of experience," must itself compose the formal structure of "the mechanism of the whole of nature" (PFM 296). As Kant writes, "the universality of law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as to form)" (GMM 28). Therefore, a person's freedom, as its capacity for

81

being the author of its law, would have to stand above and outside the empirical world of nature, whose structural horizon is always determined in and through that very law. In fact, where the pure form of the law comprises the ground of synthesis as a whole and is thus the formal structural condition of the entirety of a person's experience and praxis alike, freedom, as the transcendental cause of the law itself, means nothing less than the ability of a person for giving itself the very law of its existence. As the author of its law, a person gives itself the pure temporal horizon of its existence in general i.e. a person gives itself time as the formal system of relations through which it relates to the sensible world as a whole. Freedom, or the personality of the person, "can be nothing less than what elevates a human being above himself (as part of the sensible world), what connects him with an order of things that only the understanding can think and at the same time has under it the whole sensible world and with it the empirically determinable existence of human beings in time and the whole of all ends" (CPrR 74).

Through the recognition of the moral law a person comes to encounter the fact of its own existence as the transcendental cause of this representation, that is, the fact of its freedom, which is the only true object of one's respect. The subject, which only ever experiences itself in and through the law as an empirical being, that is, as part of the temporal world of sensible appearances, through an encounter with the law itself, which, as that alone *from* which empirical phenomena are given to it, always remains concealed in experience, discovers its own existence as the transcendental author of that law as such. "For, the *sensible life* has, with respect to the *intelligible* consciousness of its existence (consciousness of freedom), the absolute unity of a

phenomenon" (CPrR 83). In respect for the law, the subject is confronted with the fact that its own existence consists in determining for itself the very law from which it exists. In other words, the subject encounters its own responsibility for having determined its existence from nothing other than itself. It is confronted with the fact of its existence as constituted in and as transcendental freedom.

The Interest of Pure Intuition

The pure sensible feeling of respect, as an effect produced by the existence of something on the receptivity of a finite being, where it is to form an a priori ground for the will, we said, could never be affected empirically. Thus, the interest of pure practical reason, since it could never be aroused by an entity belonging to the surrounding world, would have to be affected in the encounter of a finite being with its own existence. The pure practical interest would have to originate in a pure intuition issued of and from oneself; it would have to be self-affected. However, as something affected a priori and thus before the possibility of every experience altogether, it could never be given in the way of an empirical intuition of a being's sensible existence. Therefore, pure practical reason, as the faculty of a finite being for which the interest composes a necessary condition of its activity, would depend essentially upon the possibility of this being for encountering its own existence a priori as something supersensible, as that of a noumenon. Pure practical reason presupposes the possibility of the subject for affecting itself as a "being in itself" (CPrR 37).

We are already acquainted with this possibility of the subject from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where we came across the pure intuition of time as a representation produced out of the pure effect on itself of a finite being. Regarding this Kant writes:

"Now that which, as representation, can precede any act of thinking something is intuition and, if it contains nothing but relations, it is the form of intuition, which since it does not represent anything insofar as something is posited in the mind, can be nothing other than the way in which the mind is affected by its own activity, namely the positing of its representation, thus the way it is affected through itself, i.e., it is an inner sense as far as regards its form" (CPR B67-68).

The pure intuition of time, as a set of formal relations for receiving sensible appearances, is nothing but the manner of a finite being for representing itself to itself, that is, for making itself an object for itself. "Time ... is to be regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object" (CPR A37/B54). However, not as an empirical object, which would require empirical sensation for its content, but rather as a pure transcendental object, which would be no more than a system of formal relations or structures for determining sensible appearances as potential objects of an experience. The pure object, as a set of structural parameters for determining objects themselves, would be something more like objectivity as such. Indeed, as we discovered previously, it would "signify nothing but the form of law in general" (GMM 454).

The pure intuition of time, however, insofar as it would constitute the form of inner sense as a whole, which, as that alone through which representations are possible for us, would be equivalent to thought generally speaking, it must amount to the horizon of the phenomenal world itself. In fact, Kant insists,

since ... all representations, whether or not they have outer things as their object, nevertheless as determinations of the mind themselves belong to the inner state, while this inner state belongs under the formal condition of inner intuition, and thus of time, so time is an a priori condition of all appearance in general. (CPR A34/B51)

Thus, since the pure intuition of time, as nothing other than that wherein a finite being comes to represent itself as a pure object, forms the structural horizon of the phenomenal world in general and inasmuch as all of that being's experiences (including that of itself) and every one of its actions are themselves only ever determinable as phenomena within that world, it would constitute the very subjectivity of the human subject. In other words, it is only through its being affected by its own existence a priori does the finite subject come to "posit" its own representation as a pure object, which at the same time amounts to its own selfdetermination as the transcendental subject of its experience and action in general.

Where the finite being, as the condition of possibility for its action as a whole, must come to determine itself as a pure object and where this must assume the form of a "positing of its representation," this would necessarily imply a transcendental synthesis, that is, spontaneity. What is presupposed is precisely the spontaneous synthesis of the productive imagination that we discovered in our first chapter, which, as we saw, was a pure act of transcendental time determination that first gave rise to the transcendental concept of an object in general (Object = X). We are only now in a

85

position to see that this transcendental synthesis refers to nothing but the way of a finite being for representing itself to itself as a pure object, such that it is only through the temporalization of temporality enacted in the productive synthesis of imagination, that is, by means of the subject's giving itself to itself in and as time, that it first becomes a being capable of experience and action in general; in other words, that the finite being becomes a subject at all. This is why, as Kant insists, "synthesis in general is ... the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious" (CPR A78). The pure act of productive imagination is, in fact, none other than the transcendental freedom of the human subject, as the spontaneous capacity of a finite being for giving itself the very law of its existence as subject.

The activity of the productive imagination, however, even where it determines the very freedom of a finite being, like every other of its faculties, is once again not an absolute spontaneity. Indeed, the pure intuition of time would itself be a mere representation belonging to inner sense, i.e. the representation in inner sense of inner sense itself, and thus must have as its basis the existence of something in itself as the occasion for its representation. In fact, for a finite subject whose intuition "is not original, i.e., one *through* which the existence of the object of intuition is *itself* given (and that, so far as we can have insight, can only pertain to the original being); rather it is dependent on the existence of the object, thus it is possible only insofar as the representational capacity of the subject is affected through that" (CPR B72). Therefore, the pure intuition of time, as that wherein a finite being makes itself a pure object for itself, must first be affected by its own existence as a being in itself, which, as the condition for the pure intuition of itself, would have to affect it as nothing more than the fact of existence as such. Only out of this encounter with its own facticity, which, as the condition for its sensibility in general, would be the only instance of a pure receptivity, would a finite being discover the occasion for its own freedom. Therefore, transcendental freedom, in its dependence upon a pure receptivity, would once again have to be a spontaneous receptivity.

From the above discussion of the transcendental power of the imagination as the pure act of self-foundation of the finite human subject, we have actually managed to lend support to a reading of Kant's practical philosophy that Heidegger himself had sketched out in the Kant book, but which he never came to work out for himself by means of any extended textual engagement with that body of work. It had been Heidegger's suspicion that "insofar as freedom belongs to the possibility of theoretical reason, however, it is in itself as theoretically practical. But if finite reason as spontaneity is receptive and thereby springs forth from the transcendental power of imagination, then of necessity practical reason is also grounded therein" (KPM 109). It has now come to our attention that this interpretation does, in fact, find justification within the Kantian practical texts themselves. Indeed, insofar as the pure representation of the from of the law, as that in and through which the finite being determines itself as an object for itself, must have its source in the free synthesis of the productive imagination, the very law of pure practical reason would be grounded in the activity of a transcendental freedom.

It is in the end the pure interest, what Levinas has called Kant's "singular idea of a disinterested interest," as the a priori effect of its own supersensible existence on the receptivity of the subject, that forms the condition of activity for its transcendental freedom and therewith the whole of its action in general. However, the transcendental freedom of the subject, which immediately signifies its own existence as a being in itself, is only ever disclosed by means of pure practical reason itself. "A rational being that, as belonging to the sensible world cognizes itself as, like other efficient causes, necessarily subject to laws of causality, yet in the practical is also conscious of itself on another side, namely as a being in itself" (CPrR 37). It is solely through the recognition of the pure form of law as a practical representation in and of itself, that is, as the objective ground for the will in respect, that transcendental freedom, as the necessary condition of the practical law, is revealed. Thus, it is only as the fact of pure practical reason as such, wherein the law is discovered as the objective ground of the autonomy of the will, that human freedom, as the transcendental cause of this representation, appears as a necessary postulate of its activity. For this reason, as Kant insists, "self-consciousness of pure practical reason ... [is] identical with the positive concept of freedom" (CPrR 27).

The positive concept of freedom, however, even though it brings with it an awareness of one's own existence as a being in itself, must not be taken for a knowledge of this existence as such. Indeed, as Kant writes: "but as for the concept which makes of its own causality as noumenon, it need not determine it theoretically with a view to cognition of its supersensible existence and so need not give it significance in this way" (CPrR 44). The noumenal existence of the person, its

88

personality, as something supersensible and thus wholly outside of time, could never be represented in a concept, which, as an appearance belonging to inner sense, would always be determined under the condition of time alone. Consequently, the concept of freedom, which, as the concept of a transcendental causality, is itself merely the representation of a particular figuration of time, could never represent for us the existence of a person in itself. On the contrary, where this concept signifies a supersensible existence, what it discloses for us is precisely its supersensibility as such. In other words, through and by means of the practical law and the causality it presupposes, what becomes known is the existence of a being as something essentially unknown to us. In the freedom of the person, one discovers the incomprehensibility of the incomprehensible being in itself, that is, it comes to experience the fact of the impossibility of its ever determining the existence of a person as a possible object of its experience in general. Thus, the personality of the person signifies nothing but the transcendence of a transcendent existence. In Kant's terms: "the pure moral law itself lets us discover the sublimity of our own supersensible existence" (CPrR 75).¹⁶

¹⁶If we remember from Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* "what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this *inadequacy*, which *does* allow of sensible presentation" (CPJ 129).

The Primacy of Practical Freedom

We are now in a position to thoroughly assess Levinas's claim that it was the priority of the interest in relation to the whole of the faculty of pure reason that for Kant not only decided the primacy of its practical faculty, but which placed human freedom at the very centre of the whole of the system of pure practical reason. Through our analytic of the faculty pure practical reason, we managed to uncover the notion of a pure interest, which, as the pure effect on a finite being of its own facticity, comprises the condition for the spontaneity of its freedom. The transcendental freedom of the subject, as its specific response to being confronted with the facticity of its own existence, referred to its way of representing itself to itself, for determining itself as a pure object for itself. However, inasmuch as this pure intuition of itself (time) constituted the form of representation or synthesis in general, that is, the pure form of law itself, it would at the same time compose the condition for the activity of pure reason as a whole. In fact, pure reason, as none but the faculty of synthesis, would derive its very structural design from this representation. Consequently, where pure reason itself predetermines all of the possibilities open to the subject in the way of both knowledge and praxis and thus would be equivalent to the transcendental subjectivity of the subject, transcendental freedom would amount to the faculty of a finite being for founding itself in its own existence as subject. Therefore, where its first taking a pure interest in its own existence comprises a condition of the freedom of the subject, that is, where transcendental freedom is a spontaneous receptivity or finite freedom, and since it forms the cornerstone of the whole of the system of pure

reason, the interest would indeed constitute the necessary and primary condition of the exercise of pure reason in all of its faculties.

Whatever is given to the interest of a finite being, however, inasmuch as this being would be entirely incapable of original or ontological intuition, would necessarily meet it there as a noumenal entity; in other words, as a supersensible being. Therefore, every possible representation effected through the receptivity of this being, as a mere sensible appearance determined under the form of inner sense, would invariably entail a dissimulation of the being that inspired it. In other words, the representation of a being, as what as an object of our knowledge comes to stand in for the being itself, necessarily hides from us its existence as a being in itself, which is nothing but the absolute independence of its existence in relation to our powers of representation. This would extend even to pure intuition, which, as the subject's a priori representation of itself as a noumenon.

It is precisely this dependence of the faculties upon the interest, that is, on the finitude of the subject, as what determines its reliance on the prior existence of the noumenal being, that makes its freedom both necessary and possible in the first place. Indeed, it is only through the "separation" engendered by the interest, that absolute disjuncture between our knowledge and the being in itself, that an act of freedom makes any sense at all. Without this separation, our knowledge would be entirely dictated by the constitution of the object itself and thus would contain nothing original whatsoever. A purely theoretical knowledge, devoid of all interest, would contribute nothing of its own, it would be without the slightest modicum of creativity;

in other words, there would be scarcely anything free about it. In the transparency of a world without interest, there would be no higher purpose than "the knowledge of the object pushed to the most elevated a priori principles" (PPR 450). This utterly disinterested world, however, would be wholly lacking in any real significance for us, as every one of our actions be would entirely determined by forces beyond our influence. In other words, it would be a world without human practice, which, for Kant, is that wherein human beings come to contribute in the shaping of their own worlds. In that respect Levinas writes: "the disinterested activity of speculative reason – reason impassively searching for truths ... [this] knowledge for the sake of knowledge 'would not be worth an hour of trouble' as Pascal understood" (CPP 450).

Only our freedom is capable of conferring meaning on our worlds, as it alone places our knowledge into a context of human practice, and this freedom is nourished by the interest. Reason, as aforementioned, inasmuch as it alone has the capacity to give us maxims, which supply both the ends of our actions and determine the choice of means used in achieving them, must govern human action as a whole. When the principle of volition of an action, its particular interest, is derived from an object in the surrounding world, we said that its maxim would be the product of a theoretical knowledge of the constitution of the object and thus must have its origins in speculative reason. However, now we see that even this action presupposes human freedom, insofar as the particular interest, if it is to become a ground for action within our maxim, would have to be determined as a possible goal for an action, which means determining it as an object of knowledge under a general representation of our faculty of desire, i.e., pleasure or displeasure. The interest, which is the particular

ground of our desire for the thing and is only ever given in the receptive encounter with its existence in itself, gets substituted for the representation of "an object of feeling," which would be an empirical concept of the understanding. Nonetheless, this presupposes the free synthesis of imagination as what initially establishes the affinity of the interest with this representation and facilitates its subsumption under it. Thus, the act of subsuming the particular interest, which is always for a noumenal entity and thus beyond our powers of representation, would, indeed, involve a dissimulation of the existence of the thing in itself; and yet it is in the very space of its transcendence, in its complete independence from our knowledge, where a free and creative act of imagination would become both possible and necessary as the condition of its representation. Therefore, even pathological action, insofar as pure speculative reason, through "a rational reflection," which characterizes the empirical employment of the imagination, must come to determine the interest within the general representation of the object of its maxim, would be a product of our freedom and thus of human goodness. This action, nevertheless, even as an effect of our freedom, where its interest comes to it pathologically from a source other than this freedom itself, could never be good in itself. In that regard, Kant writes:

the end itself, the gratification that we seek, is in the latter case not a good but a well being, not a concept of reason but an empirical concept of an object of feeling; but the use of means to it, that is, the action, is nevertheless called good (because rational reflection is required for it) not however good absolutely. (CPrR 54)

It is only in relation to predetermined human ends that our knowledge has any meaning for us at all. In fact, it is precisely the end of any particular knowledge that sets it in motion in the first place and which prefigures the specific counters of its

field of operation (CPJ 105-106). To posit an end for knowledge means moving beyond its limits by placing oneself at its beginning; it is "to achieve a free act." Thus, according to Levinas: "speculation is subordinate to action. There would be no thought if speculative reason were without interest. Speculative reason is not deployed in an impersonal serenity" (PPR 458). This is particularly evident in the case of instrumental action, which as that of an efficient cause, is directed toward bringing about particular effects in the sensible world. This action would, as we said, depend on a theoretical knowledge of the causal relations governing sensible objects, and thus its choice of means would be decided by speculative reason alone. Of course we only ever judge means themselves in relation to their intended purpose. In fact, it is always the end of the technical enterprise that initially puts theoretical reason into operation - that makes it work - by circumscribing a specific region of objects, a sort of terrain of objectivity, in which to apply itself. However, the act of positing an end, as what determines a specific region for our knowledge, inasmuch as it not only prefigures the possibilities open to this knowledge, but also puts it into operation at the outset, could never be comprehended within this knowledge. Thus, the end of our technical knowledge would not itself be anything technical at all and therefore could never be known by a technical knowledge as such. Indeed, we know that the end proscribed for our instrumental knowledge of the object always has its source in the faculty of desire, i.e. in the expected feeling of pleasure or displeasure to be achieved in bringing about the existence of its object, which is itself nothing technical.

Only reason is capable of positing ends for our knowledge, such that, insofar as this is always a function of the imagination as what determines the interest as a potential object for action, human freedom would be a condition of action in general. Instrumental action, however, where its end originates within the faculty of desire, subverts this freedom by placing it at the service of an object. Indeed, theoretical reason, in its representation of the object of desire, functions to mask the particular interest that underlies it, which at the same time amounts to concealing its existence as a noumenon. However, insofar as the theoretical object hides from us the transcendence of the thing in itself, it also serves to cover over the originary act of imagination that founds our knowledge of it, that is, freedom itself becomes dissimulated. Therefore, in making our freedom a mere means to an object and thereby concealing our own existence as a being in itself, speculative reason relieves this freedom of its own most practical possibility, which is none other than moral action or the autonomy of the pure will.

Pure speculative reason, we know, is that faculty which determines for us objects of experience in general. The pure representation of the law, as the form of synthesis as such, is that through and according to which this faculty is able to "think appearances for objects." Thus, it is the pure form of law itself that circumscribes the context of its knowledge, such that its terrain of objectivity would be nothing less than the objectivity of objects as such, which would be no mere region for knowledge, but rather would form the transcendental horizon of our experience and knowledge as a whole. However, as the very field of operation of our knowledge in general, the pure form of the law could thus never appear to the experience of pure speculative reason. It is only pure practical reason that discloses for us the law of and for our existence, which is given as the very fact of its practicality as such. In other

95

words, it is only in respect, wherein the pure representation of practical reason is revealed as the law for the autonomy of the will, where the practical law appears for us at all.

This encounter, however, does not stop at the practical law, but rather immediately carries us beyond that representation into a space where none of our representations could tread; through it one is brought to the supersensible. In the law, the subject for the first time comes to discover itself as the author of its law and as a result is forced to confront the open space, the no-thingness, of its transcendence as a being in itself. In Levinas's words:

to place oneself beyond experience is not to traverse, by thought, the entire series of conditions on which experience rests, by regressing from condition to condition unto the principle, unto the unconditioned. To place oneself beyond experience, beginning with practical reason (which commands unconditionally) ... is the dignity of the moral being placed, in freely acting, at the origin of the series of phenomena, a stream to the source of which no thought can return. 'The concept of freedom,' Kant writes, 'forms the cornerstone of the entire edifice of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason. (PPR 450)

In the encounter with the practical law, the subject, in finding itself at the origin of the stream of its experience, is exposed to the fact that, before any conscious activity of its own, it has always already acted, that is, without its ever having known, it alone is responsible for having given itself the law of itself. From the practical law, the subject is exposed to its own transcendence, to the "sublimity of its own supersensible existence," as the very space of and for its freedom and by this is forced to relive the pure interest that originally awakened it.

Only pure practical reason exposes the subject to its ontological freedom by disclosing its own supersensible existence as the origin of and beyond the limits of its

knowledge, that is, of ontology in general. Whatever comes to be determined under the faculty of pure speculative reason must be given under the form of the object and thus will always be determined within an infinite causal series in time. Everything appearing as an object under this faculty would, therefore, only ever be given as a mere means within the mechanism of nature as a whole. Through this faculty, we only ever come to experience ourselves, that is, our empirical selves, as mere means to an end, namely, that of nature itself, which from this perspective always remains hidden from us. The practical law alone lets us discover the end of nature as such, which as the origin beyond its boundaries, is none other than our existence as a being in itself. What is disclosed to us is our pure interest in our own existence - the pure practical interest - which, as the original inspiration for the spontaneity of our freedom, constitutes the end that determines this mechanism in advance.

Only pure practical reason is capable of revealing our freedom and of allowing it its full dignity in directing human practice. "The interest of theoretical reason," as Levinas tells us "is subordinate to the interest of practical reason, all interests being, in the final analysis, practical. The disinterested activity of 'speculative reason' is conditioned, and the interest that makes it 'function' is complete only in practical use" (PPR 450). Through its disclosure of the human being as a being in itself, what Kant will call its "humanity" as such, pure practical reason for the first time permits this being of becoming aware of itself, in opposition to a mere means "under the lead strings of nature," as an end in itself. Indeed, as Kant tells us,

A human being is indeed unholy enough but the humanity in his person must be holy to him. In the whole of creation everything one wants and over which one has any power can also be used merely as a means; a human being alone, and with him every rational creature, is an end in itself." (CPrR 74)

Pure practical reason alone permits us of placing the whole of our knowledge in the service of a human end, namely, that of our humanity as such. The practical law, insofar as it exposes the subject to its own supersensible existence, thereby forcing it to confront the impossibility of ever representing itself as an object and thus as a mere means to an end, first allows it to become an end in and for itself. In willing the practical law, as the law of its freedom, the subject does not surrender itself absolutely to this law; duty does not entail the total submission of its existence under the law. On the contrary, in willing the law, the subject puts this law of pure reason to work in human practice; it places it in the service of the pure practical interest in its existence as both a being and end in itself. Duty is that wherein the subject takes itself back from the law of pure reason, which would always seek to make of it a mere means, by subordinating this law to its own purpose, which, as the sublimity of its own humanity, could never be determined as an object of theoretical knowledge. It is, in other words, to accept responsibility for the law by preventing the law from concealing the freedom that founds it. Duty, as that wherein the human being takes responsibility for the law of its freedom, is autonomy. Morality means always keeping freedom in view, of acting for the sake of freedom, by resisting the urge to make of oneself a mere means, an object, of nature. To give Levinas the final world on the subject:

"That pure reason rests on an interest; that there exists an interest when there no longer are interests; that interest - inseparable from pure practice - can be recognized as the ultimate meaning of rationality; that practice (or as one more commonly says, "praxis") is the basis of *logos:* this is the great novelty in the primacy of pure reason. It is this subordination of knowledge to an interest" (PPR 451).

Ethics and Affinity

It was in this "great novelty" of Kantian ethics, i.e. his submission of the whole of the faculty of human knowledge to an interest, which, as such, remained irrevocably beyond the limits of our cognition, that Levinas came to discover his closest of philosophical allies. With his so-called "doctrine of the primacy of pure practical reason," not only had Kant managed to make morality, which, in his rational, as opposed to theological or "onto-theological," conception, came much closer to what Levinas understood as "ethics," the highest possibility of a system of rational knowledge, he had also made it its first and supreme principle. Indeed, where the concept of freedom came to form the cornerstone of the architectonic of pure reason, the reality of which was confirmed through the analytic of its necessary practical function, its true significance, as it turned out, was to be primarily an ethical one.

Kant, like Levinas after him, sought to invert the traditional hierarchical relationship between ontology or onto-theology and ethics, which conventionally placed the possibility of the later squarely within that of the former, and generally only as an afterthought. Indeed, both thinkers worked to challenge the notion that made just and rightful action between human beings contingent upon some form of ontological knowledge, regardless of whether of it was a knowledge of the human being, the divine being, or even Being as such and in general. For them, not only would every such knowledge, to have any significance at all, have to be deployed in some form of practical context relating concrete individuals, within what Levinas called "sociality," it was only in the service of ethical practice that ontological knowledge would find the opportunity to emerge at all.

Ethics was first and foremost a way of relating toward oneself and others and not a relation toward or with knowledge. In fact, for both thinkers, ethics assumed the form of a universal obligation, a duty, in relation to the self and the other, which would be binding for us independently of any knowledge we may happen to possess. In fact, the ethical relation was one that could never be mediated by knowledge, by a "third term," without immediately undermining its ethical significance. To introduce knowledge into the space of the ethical interest, for both thinkers, meant destroying the immediacy of the relation with the unique existence of an entity, which is that relation wherein ethics is founded. This connection is frequently overlooked by commentary treating the relationship between these two philosophers, which incidentally, as we shall see, tends to focus more on their differences. In contrast to other thinkers of the ontological tradition, the interest of ontological knowledge, that is, of the spontaneity of our freedom, for both Kant and Levinas, does not come to it from an impersonal source, what Levinas has dubbed "the neuter," but rather is affected in the actual receptive encounter with a living individual. Nevertheless, our primary concern, now that we have dealt with Kant's own critique of human freedom, is not to establish a connection between these thinkers respective ethical philosophies, but rather is to make a judgment concerning whether or not Kant's own ontological notion of human freedom can hold up in the face of Levinas's criticism of the traditional treatment of this concept at large.

It should be apparent from the above discussion that Kant's characterization

of the notion of human freedom and its significance for our existence is very much in keeping with Levinas's own description. For Kant, human freedom, as the work of the imagination, determines our capacity for making a thing known from out of the nothing of its transcendence as an entity in itself. It is through the productive act of the imagination that we establish an affinity, a resemblance or sameness, between the wholly separate existence of the thing in itself and a general representation of our knowledge. It is only through this act of subsuming the individual entity under a universal representation of reason that we are able to comprehend it as an object of our experience in general.

This term "in general," with which Kant so often predicates his notion of experience, is not only meant to signify something like "as a whole," but also to introduce a qualitative distinction. Experience is always in general; it is a mode of representing a manifold of entities through the Concept, which is always a way of relating them synthetically by combining them under a single, universal representation; in other words, by making them general or same. It is this act of interposing the universal representation of reason between thought and the entity that Kant calls understanding, which, as we know, is the faculty of experience. Nonetheless, through our comprehension of a thing, we inevitably lose sight of the fact of its existence as a thing in itself, of its possessing an existence entirely exterior to the possibilities of our understanding of it, which is to forget the interest in an entity that initially demands the attention of our understanding.

At the same time, where the concept places a kind of screen between thought and the transcendence of the thing in itself, it functions to mask the free and creative act of imagination that grounds our understanding in general. The concept hides from us our freedom, which is only ever determined in the immediate receptive encounter with the transcendence of the transcendent existent. Indeed, the finite being comes to determine itself as a general object within this very same act of understanding, that is, as the object *of* this understanding, as that *for* which it exists, which is the same as saying the subject of its understanding. In the simultaneity of the instant of its being affected by a being in itself, the finite being is affected by its own existence, as that for whom this thing is a concern, and thereby comes to determine itself as an object for itself, that is, as precisely the object of its experience in general or the transcendental subject.

This representation of itself, we saw, is carried out in the transcendental synthesis of imagination, by which this being posits its own representation in and as a pure object. It is this transcendental productive synthesis, as that which configures the constitutive structures of our understanding as such, which makes possible the second empirical synthesis that subsumes the exterior thing under the concept; the pure determination of our own existence itself grounds our comprehension of another entity. Thus, it is in the one unified act of understanding, which has its originary ground within the imagination, as that which opens onto the groundlessness of the unconditioned, whereby the human being determines itself as the subject of transcendental apperception - the "I think" - and in the very same gesture subsumes the exterior entity under itself as the general object of this thought. Therefore, human freedom, for Kant, as the transcendental power of imagination, is indeed the groundless ground of ontology.

It was our insistence, however, that, for Kant, the primary significance of human freedom was not to be found in its role in the formation of knowledge, that is, in ontology as what prefigures the possibilities of knowledge in general, but instead in its essentially ethical nature. For Levinas, this would mean a freedom that resisted the intrinsic urge to bring violence upon the Other; in other words, that gave "respect [to] the in-itself-ness of the other by not dragging it into thought or absorbing it into the egoism of the self" (295). An ethical freedom would be of the kind that opened itself to critique, that allowed itself to be instructed by the Other's transcendence, that is, that would allow the Other its own freedom as the end of our knowledge and not a mere moment belonging to it. More than anything, this would mean the openness of freedom to its own infinite responsibility to another person, to the necessity of its obligation to the transcendence of the Other as the inalienable right of his own singularity.

Ethics without Ethics

If Levinas's having expressed an allegiance with his moral philosophy is any indication of Kant's managing to provide for any of these conditions of ethics, Levinas's commentators do not share in this opinion. Indeed, the available scholarship dealing with the relationship between these two thinkers, which is admittedly small and nearly exclusively approached from the perspective of Levinas's own work, does not appear to ally with his affinity for Kantianim. We are certainly not the first to identify this trend, as, in his translator's introduction to *The Primacy of Pure Practical Reason*, Blake Billings wrote:

Surprisingly little has been written on this rapport between Levinas and Kant. While texts by Levinas devoted exclusively to Kant are few, the acknowledged debt is great. Commentators on the Kantian themes in Levinas are similarly scarce, and the tendency to separate the two thinkers predominates. Yet, in that area which has come to define "Levinasian thought" - an ethical command prior to theoretical or ontological thought – Levinas finds himself most Kantian. (PPR 445)

The general agreement among scholars in this field, as one of them was able to express in a single sentence, is that "the Kantian subject may recognize the other as an alter ego on the exclusive basis of a move back to the self, but Levinas thinks such a subject fails to encounter the other" (Chalier 269). This is not an insignificant claim, however, for if the Kantian subject only ever recognizes the other as an alter ego and thus on the basis of the persons being the same as itself; and, thereby, never really encounters the other at all, Kant would have neglected the possibility of ethics altogether. In fact, ethics, for Levinas, is always determined within the immediate encounter with the absolute alterity of another person, which is simply its total difference from any term I might endeavour to replace it with; the other is nothing but its own irreplaceability. Respect, then, as that wherein the Kantian subject discovers its alter ego - its fellow "rational subject" - would have nothing ethical about. Its encounter with the other would be mediated by an ontological knowledge of the being of the individual person, which would have already made of it a general object for itself. Consequently, "what does that respect mean," Chalier asks on behalf of Levinas, "if the unique and irreplaceable person must perish as a result?" (Chalier 31) It would signify, for Levinas, that Kant's was nothing less than an ethics without ethics.

What is at stake in this claim that the Kantian subject, by means of its own

self-enclosure, would be left entirely without an opening for an encounter with the Other, is nothing short of the possibility for the very ethicality of Kantian ethics. What concerns Levinas scholars is that the Kantian moral subject, as they understand it, would only ever come to recognize its obligation to another person through a mere form, i.e., the form of the law, which, as the representation of its own reason, would mediate all of its potential ethical relations with other people. "The Kantian moral subject goes to the other on the basis of a form – the law" (Chalier 69). When the subject did come to acknowledge a responsibility for another person this would only take place insofar as this individual could be recognized as bound by the very same moral law. Duty, then, would be something paid exclusively to the law of my own reason and therefore could only be extended to other people indirectly on the basis of that law, that is, according to their being both in possession of this law and subjects to this law.

In recognizing an ethical responsibility toward another person, the "moral subject does not directly perceive" the other, but rather, in perceiving the law in the other, the subject perceives the other through the law (Chalier 31). Therefore, what the subject encounters in another rational being is the form of the law only and through that law observes the same obligation to the other as it has for itself, all obligation ultimately being for the form of the law alone. "An autonomous subject," Chalier writes, "goes to the other on the basis of the moral law in him; it is not the alterity of the other that it respects, but what he or she has in common with the subject, namely, reason" (Chalier 68). The feeling of respect, as that through which the subject cognizes an ethical responsibility to the other, arises from an awareness of

the moral law they both share, which is synonymous with the knowledge of a common faculty of reason or rationality. "Kant," as Peter Atterton insists, "would strenuously deny that the will is capable of being obligated by anything other than reason" (Atterton 340). The moral subject, indeed, comprehends the freedom of the other person, but is only conscious of it, as would be the case with its own freedom, as a consequence of the moral law in him.

The respect the subject feels for the other is always merely the respect it has for its own reason redirected toward the reason of another. The subject is made to feel that it would "have to respect the other person in the same way I respect myself, because we are both rational subjects" (Chalier 265). Therefore, respect for another is not affected in an immediate receptive encounter with this person, but is achieved through a process of "self-reflection," whereby the subject surmises from the fact of its own law, its own reason, that every other human being must be in possession of this same law, this same reason. For the Kantian moral subject "the perception of the other is obviously not immediate and does not result from the encounter with the face of the other: it comes at the end of a process of deduction carried out in complete solitude" (Chalier 68).

Respect for the personality of the person would signify a respect, not for what made him unique or different, but for what was universal in him, namely, reason. Where our duty toward this person would be a matter of our respect for the universal humanity in him, it would be a respect for the law and nothing else. "Whereas Kant honors that which is universal in humanity, that by virtue of which we can all be conceived as the same, Levinas suggests that only what is singular and absolutely other in the other can be the 'source' of the command to responsibility" (Perpich 321). Therefore, the Kantian moral subject, in contrast to Levinas's "ethical subjectivity," receives its moral command from an ontological knowledge of that which human beings possess in general, namely, their rational humanity as such.

The freedom of the moral subject, as a property conferred through its possession of reason, would be strictly a source of violence toward the Other. Indeed, freedom would be that property of the subject that would assure it of its own selfsufficiency, that would comfort it in the knowledge that, by virtue of its sharing a universal reason, it would always already be in possession of a knowledge of the right and good course of action. Freedom would be the greatest of ethical palliatives, as it could assure the subject that it need not concern itself with the thoughts, judgments or reasons of other individuals; it would know in advance that any opinion that did not conform to its own knowledge would simply be wrong. The autonomous moral subject could learn nothing from the critical attention of the other, as it would always understand in advance, in accordance with its ontological knowledge of the rational nature of humanity, this person's reason. The principle of its autonomy, in other words, "avoids the surprising and disturbing aspect of the encounter with exteriority" (Chalier 26). In never allowing itself to be caught off guard by the stranger, that is, of being precluded altogether from ever encountering the transcendence of the absolutely singular person, and thus of refusing anything from the Other that did not already possess itself, the freedom of the Kantian subject could only be the source of the greatest tyranny and injustice.

Ethical Freedom and the Other

To put such great stock, such immense faith, in a mere form; so much, in fact, as to make it the basis of the entirety of ethical human behaviour, would, indeed, seem a curious position to take. Even more, to place the whole of the dignity of the human being, of its humanity as such, within a representation of our reason would appear a very broad stroke indeed. Fortunately for Kant this does not seem to be the position he wished to advance.

If we pay careful attention to the development of his discussion of the pure feeling of respect within both the Groundwork and the second Critique, we will notice that it unfolds through a certain process of refinement unto its final formulation; this, of course, being Kant's famous method of "deduction," of advancing a proposition by moving backwards through a refinement and clarification of its essential foundations. He always begins his deduction with what is closest to our experience of things, with what he regards as most immediately observable and least open to skeptical complaint - what he sometimes refers to as "common reason" or "ordinary knowledge"- and from there moves backward through what he understands to be the series of conditions of a phenomenon, until finally reaching its unconditioned grounds, which is always that which is furthest from our common understanding of things (GMM 5). This method of deduction, or critique, is, however, not intended to be a vain pursuit of erudition, a mere intellectual curiosity, but is meant to effect an essential and qualitative transformation of our ordinary knowledge and experience of a phenomenon. One particular side effect of this method, which is dictated by the theoretically incomprehensible nature of the unconditioned itself, is

that most of what gets said about a given phenomenon does not directly capture what is most essential to it. In fact, all these theoretical interrogations, which could never disclose for us the unconditioned as such, can ever hope to do is bring us closer to an encounter with what is essential, in spite of our inability to speak about it directly.

With this in mind, his discussion of respect, within both major practical works, does, indeed, initially appear under the formulation of a respect for the moral law as the form of a law in general. It is this conception that Kant believed made itself most immediately comprehensible to our everyday experience of the phenomenon itself. The reason for this was that it was the form of the law that he viewed as most accessible to our ordinary understanding of moral action, which was his departure point for the whole of the critique of the practical faculty. "Everyone must admit," Kant insists on page two of the Groundwork, "that if a law is to be morally valid, i.e., is to be valid as a ground of obligation, then it must carry with it absolute necessity" (GMM 389). However, over the course of his analysis, he progressively transforms this notion of respect. In fact, we later come to find out that respect, as an effect on the sensibility of a finite being, could never be felt for the mere representation of a form alone, no matter how pure its source. This was not a matter of its being not "sensible" enough, in the sense of not sufficiently physical or material, but rather concerned the fact that Kant could not conceive of an empty form exercising such a strong effect on feeling, especially in terms of such a profound feeling as respect, which was to comprise a necessary element of all moral action. Consequently, respect became a feeling reserved for persons only. "Respect is always directed only to persons, never to things" (CPrR 66). Nonetheless, as a pure effect on our sensibility,

respect could never be for an empirical person, i.e. a person given as an object within experience, but would have to be for what set them apart from our experience of them in general.

There is a crucial distinction to be made here that appears to have been lost on many Levinas scholars. There is a difference between the necessity for respect to be given a priori, which refers to the possibility of its being given before experience, and that it be pure, i.e. that it not have its source within experience. It is a fine distinction, but, nevertheless, an important one. The former concerns a criterion for deduction only, that is, that we be able to establish its reality universally, whereas the latter concerns its origin, i.e. that it not have its source within experience. It is this latter distinction that is most significant for its application in the everyday moral action of actual persons.

Respect, where it is to be a ground for moral action, must not be for the empirical person as such, as whatever appears within experience must be given under the form of the object and thus within an infinite network of causal relations. In other words, experience, as a source of practical principles, because it is incapable of yielding for us an end in its own causal series, gives us means only. Every action deriving its principle from the empirical world will have always already been drawn into an endless series of action and reaction, wherein every end is but a means to some other end *ad infinitum*. Moral action, however, is never performed as a means to any end whatsoever, but rather could only ever be an end in itself. Its principle, therefore, could never be borrowed from experience. Respect for the other, if it is to

become a principle for moral action, could, thus, never originate from an empirical encounter with another person without at once effacing its ethical significance.

Respect for the other, as that through which the moral subject becomes aware of its duty toward another person, would, thus, have to be the effect on our sensibility of what places this person above and outside natural causality. This means encountering the other, not as an object of nature, but as the author of a nature in his own right, that is, the freedom of the other. What we discover is the "personality of the person" as "having under it the whole sensible world and with it the empirically determinable existence of human beings in time and the whole of all ends" (CPrR 74). However, where the personality of the other puts him above and at the origin of the sensible world itself, his existence would have to be determined as something supersensible. Therefore, in confronting the freedom of the other, the moral subject is immediately exposed to the supersensibility of the existence of the person, which is merely his transcendence in relation to the horizon of the subject's own experience in general. "The idea of personality," Kant writes, "awakens respect by setting before our eyes the sublimity of our nature" (CPrR 74).

Over the course of Kant's deduction, respect has gone from a feeling for the form of the law as that of morality itself, to one reserved for persons only, and finally to a pure regard for the personality of person as what sets him apart from the sensible world of our experience. Respect for the other, as that wherein the moral subject recognizes his obligation to a person, indeed, involves all these things. However, in the end, it is the freedom of the person, his total transcendence in relation to the world

111

of sensible appearances, which constitutes the unconditioned ground of the feeling respect.

Kant, in order to demonstrate the practical reality of its concept, may have, indeed, required a deduction to do so. Nonetheless, we do not believe his intention was to suggest that such a deduction would be required in the everyday moral life of the average human being. These moral subjects would not require proof of the reality of their morality, as they would partake of it every day. "Ordinary human reason," Kant tells us, "does not think of [its] principle abstractly in its universal form, but does always have it actually in view and does use it as the standard of judgment" (GMM 44). This is not to say, however, that these same subjects would not benefit from an insight into the abstract principle of their action, or even, for that matter, that they would. Rather, it is simply a matter of hope for Kant that his ideas might guide one in matters he perceives as having an essential significance for the existence of human beings as whole.

With this in mind, we do not share the belief of Kant's critics that the moral subject must proceed through a similar course of deduction in order to reach its respect for the other person. It is not as if the subject, who has respect for the law of its own reason, deduces in "solitude" that this same respect should be afforded any person it might apprehend as similar to itself, by virtue of their necessarily being in possession of this same reason; nor would the subject move, as if through a sequence of stages in time, from the cognition of the other as a bearer of the law, on to a recognition of this person as its author, from there to the supersensibility of this being and only then to a respect for the other. What some have understood as stages of our respect for the person are, in fact, the elements that comprise the unity of this phenomenon as a whole. Moreover, respect for the person is not itself a mode of cognition nor is it grounded in an ontological knowledge of the nature of the human being, but instead describes our way of being sensibly affected by the existence of the person as a being in itself. This effect does, indeed, come to the subject from an "idea," namely that of the personality of the person; nonetheless, this idea signifies nothing but the "complete incomprehensibility" of a person's freedom (CPrR 6). It is, in other words, the "inscrutability of the idea of freedom" (CPJ 156).

Where the idea of freedom allows us to comprehend the complete incomprehensibility of a being in itself, what is even more important for Kant is that it simultaneously reveals this being as an "end in itself." Through the disclosure of the supersensibility of the other, the idea of freedom makes one immediately aware of the existence of a person as beyond the reach of its experience and thereby reveals the impossibility of ever determining the other as an object of and for its knowledge. Through the idea of the other's freedom the moral subject discovers the impossibility of ever placing the other under its own law, of subjecting him to the law of its own freedom, and thus of treating another person as but a means to some end. In the freedom of the other, we find a being capable of his *own* reason, of determining his *own* law, which is to say, we encounter his humanity.

It is precisely the fact that we could never know in advance the other's freedom that he must appear for us as an end in itself. It is his complete incomprehensibility, his utter incalculability, which makes us unable to make of the other a mere means. It is their personality, their absolute independence with regard to one's own reason, that commands respect and obliges one to treat others as ends in themselves. By "their personality ... alone they are ends in themselves" (CPrR 74).

The supreme principle of morality becomes, as a result, the categorical imperative: act only so that your maxim *could be* a universal practical law for the will of every rational being. The principle of all morality, thus, includes within itself a problematic condition, which is precisely what determines it as practical, rather than theoretical. In other words, as a matter of action and not knowledge. "The a priori thought of a *possible* giving of universal law," as Kant writes, "which is thus problematic, is unconditionally commanded as law without borrow anything from experience or from some external will" (CPrR 28). In other words, it is only because one could never come to know the freedom of the Other and thus the law of his will, that the mere act of making the pure form of law the ground of our action, that is, autonomy, is a moral act in itself. Otherwise, were we to share a universal reason understood by all, we would already know in advance the will of the Other, such that the act of making this reason the principle of our action would be a theoretical as opposed to a moral gesture. Indeed, as Kant writes:

Every will, even every person's own will directed to himself, is restricted to the condition of agreement with the autonomy of the rational being, that is to say, such a being is not to be subjected to any purpose that is not possible in accordance with a law that could arise from the will of the affected subject himself; hence this subject is to be used never as a means but as at the same time an end. (CPrR 74)

The autonomy of the will is good in itself only insofar as it is through that action only that the subject submits the principle of its reason, the very law of its existence, to the judgment of the Other. It is only this gesture of offering up its law to the test of universality, to the critique of the Other, which characterizes the will as an ethical gesture in itself. Were we to already know the will of the Other, the act of making the law the ground of our action would simply be a matter of allowing our common reason, our shared knowledge of pure principles, to determine its course. It would mean placing good action in the service of theoretical knowledge, whereby the will would be emptied of its absolute ethical significance. Thus, solely by means of the subject's encountering the Other as a being in itself, as an absolutely alterity, that is, his humanity, does it discover him also as an end in himself, which is to say, as that being to whom the subject offers its law for approval without the slightest regard for receiving it. To act out of respect for the Other means acknowledging both a duty to his freedom, as a being in himself and thus never a means, but also to my own autonomy as that alone by means of which I give my law over to the Other's judgment.

Works Cited

Allison, Henry E. <u>Kant's Theory of Freedom</u>. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

- Atterton, Petter. "From Transcendental Freedom to the Other: Levinas and Kant." In <u>Proximity: Emmanuel Levinas and the Eighteenth Century</u>. Ed. Melvyn New. Lubbock, Tx: Texas Tech University Press, 2001.
- Beavers, Anthony F. "Kant and the Problem of Ethical Metaphysics." <u>In Proximity:</u> <u>Emmanuel Levinas and the Eighteenth Century</u>. Ed. Melvyn New. Lubbock, Tx: Texas Tech University Press, 2001.
- Chalier, Catherine. <u>What ought I to do?: Morality in Kant and Levinas</u>. Trans. Jane Marie Todd. New York: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- ---. "Kant and Levinas: On the Question of Autonomy and Heteronomy." In

Proximity: Emmanuel Levinas and the Eighteenth Century. Ed. Melvyn New. Lubbock, Tx: Texas Tech University Press, 2001.

- Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- ---. <u>Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics</u>. Trans. Richard Taft. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973.
- ---. <u>Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason</u>. Trans. Parvis Emad. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

- Kant, Immanuel. <u>Critique of the Power of Judgment</u>. Trans. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- ---. <u>Critique of Practical Reason</u>. Trans. Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- ---. <u>Critique of Pure Reason</u>. Trans. Paul Guyer, Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- ---. <u>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</u>. Trans. Allen W. Wood. New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2002.
- ---. Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that will be able to Come Forward as Science. 2nd ed. Trans. Paul Carus. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2001.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. <u>Difficult Freedom: Essays in Judaism</u>. Trans. Sean Hand. London: Athlone Press, 1990.
- ---. Collected Philosophical Papers. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Boston: Kluwer, 1987.
- ---. "The Primacy of Pure Practical Reason." in <u>Man and World</u>. Trans. Blake Billings. Vol. 27: 445-453, 1994
- ---. <u>Otherwise than Being: or Beyond Essence</u>. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Boston: Kluwer, 1981.
- ---. Totality and Infinity. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Boston: Kluwer, 1979.
- Llewelyn, John. <u>The Hypocritical Imagination: Between Kant and Levinas</u>. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. <u>The Experience of Freedom</u>. Trans. Bridget McDonald. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1993.

Pinkard, Terry P. <u>German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism</u>. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

- Peperzak, Adrian. "Phenomenology Ontology Metaphysics: Levinas" Perspective on Levinas and Heidegger" in Man and the World. Vol.16, 113-127, 1994.
- Perpich, Diane. "Freedom Called into Question: Levinas's Defense of Heteronomy."
 <u>In Proximity: Emmanuel Levinas and the Eighteenth Century</u>. Ed. Melvyn New. Lubbock, Tx: Texas Tech University Press, 2001.
 - Sallis, John. <u>The Gathering of Reason</u>. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
 - Schalow, Frank. Imagination and Existence: Heidegger's Revival of the Kantian Ethic. Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1986.
 - ---. The Renewal of the Heidegger-Kant dialogue: Action, Thought,

<u>Responsibility</u>. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.