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KANT AND THE NEED OF REASON

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### ***Abstract***

At the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant calls us to give our attention to a peculiar “fate” of human reason. This fate, he contends, lies in both the inability and ineluctability to address a certain “need” for questioning, of *metaphysics as a natural disposition* (*metaphysica naturalis*). What is this “need” in which reason inevitably finds itself caught up? How can we begin to interpret this “need” within Kant’s own corpus? Could Kant’s discussion merely be operative as a “root metaphor”, as some would have it, or is he referring to something *more*? It is my contention that, in order to properly understand reason’s “need” and its sources, we must follow Kant in undertaking a *differentiation*. It is in this differentiation of sense and intellect, a being of the “sensible world” and a being of the “intelligible world”, and right and left hands, that we see that this ‘need’ arises out of the very *fact* of this difference, which is itself the revelation of our finitude *as a discord*. This *fact*, revealed most fully by the “moral ought” expresses the necessity of this “need”

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***Introduction: Reason's Fate***

“Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers it cannot answer.” (Avii)<sup>1</sup>.

The opening pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* introduce us to a certain “fate” of reason, one which necessitates reason to questions the solutions to which are unattainable. It is the specter of these fateful questions that serve as the point of *convocation* for the Critique. Reason is, Kant tells us, “compelled to resort to principles which overstep all possible empirical employment” (Avii). What is it about pure reason that fates it to these questions? More specifically, what is in the very structure of reason that forms the necessity of these questions? The attempt to follow Kant, and understand the *fateful necessity* of these questions will serve as the primary goal of this thesis.

Let us look another instance in which Kant refers to this fate. In his 1787 addition to the ‘Introduction’, Kant reformulates this question in terms of a “disposition”. It is here we are told that “human reason, without being moved merely by the idle desire for extent and variety of knowledge, proceeds impetuously, driven on by an *inward need*, to questions such as cannot be answered by any empirical employment” (B21—emphasis mine). This need, this *Bedürfnis*, of reason is what brings reason to its questions. What does Kant mean when he refers to this fate as a “need” of reason? What is this fateful disposition? How is it that reason comes to have a need? Some have characterized

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<sup>1</sup> For all texts other than the Critique of Pure Reason, I will cite with the Academy volume followed by the page in the following manner: (X:yyy).

Kant's talk of reason's "need" as one that serves *merely* metaphorically. Taking "need" to be a mere metaphor, we can then absolve Kant of the "philosophical rigor" of this description of pure reason. However, in doing this, we seem at the same time to cover over what will be not only an essential critical premise, namely the humbling retreat to the very fact of the limits of our reason, but moreover, the specific force and ground needed to critique the "mock battlefield of metaphysics", i.e., the argument against traditional metaphysics contained in the Transcendental Dialectic. The move to weaken, or even more strongly, to ignore the philosophical implications pitted within the Dialectic is tantamount to missing the point of the 200 pages that precede it. Yet, some credence must be given to the objection that Kant himself would not whole-heartedly endorse the notion of a "need" in a philosophical text. Yet, this objection already presupposes beforehand that Kant intends "need" as a mere metaphor and secondly that the very philosophical "value" of a metaphor. In one motion, this objection remains prejudiced without merit. We must rather follow Kant and follow the discussion of the need for metaphysics close to the discussion of the structure of reason itself.

This move is, to a degree, taken by Pauline Kleingeld. In her essay, "The Conative Character of Reason in Kant's Philosophy", Pauline Kleingeld straightforwardly deals with the question of the status of some of the ways in which Kant seems to "personify" reason. For example, more than just "needs" that require "satisfaction," reason is also characterized as a faculty with "interests". Kleingeld notes that many people read this language as a metaphor. If indeed this language is supposed to be a metaphor, two important questions must be raised. (1) For what is this language a metaphor?, and (2) What systematic role is this metaphor playing in Kant's thought; that

is, is it merely a decorative metaphor, or does it play a much more important role either as a root metaphor or a symbol?

If Kant's language were merely decorative, Kleingeld contends, then "it should be possible to give a literal alternative"<sup>2</sup>. She gives an example of a "need" to draw a conclusion. In a modus ponens, it is indeed a "need" to conclude Q from  $P \rightarrow Q$  and P. However, against this, Kleingeld rebuts that to pose this as a non-metaphorical, literal explanation of a "need" is to equivocate the term necessity. That is, in the above modus ponens, the "need" to conclude Q is a *logical necessity*. However, in Kant's sense of necessity is *not logical, but rather, a subjective necessity*, which, is, for Kant, bound up with an "interest". The necessity of logic is one that is to be an *objective necessity*, apart from such interest. Further, against the possibility of articulating "needs" in literal terms, appeals to the "nature of reason" cannot of itself provide a specific enough account for "reason's interest" in this or that end. In this case, one must seemingly appeal to "needs" and "strivings" again. On this, Kleingeld concludes that it is not possible to articulate "needs" and "strivings" in literal terms, and, on this basis, one cannot regard their use as a merely decorative metaphor.

If it is the case that no literal articulation can substitute the metaphorical terms used to describe and define reason, then Kleingeld asks about a "deeper" sense of a systematic role of metaphor in Kant's thought. She sees a twofold possibility for such a deeper role. Either the metaphorical language is functions as a "root metaphor" or a functional metaphor. A "root metaphor" is one that "*underlies* and shapes philosophical

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<sup>2</sup> Kleingeld, 93

thought”<sup>3</sup>. A functional metaphor, on her account, is one that “*functions within* a body of philosophical thought and has philosophical import, without being replaceable by an exhaustive literal paraphrase”<sup>4</sup>. In Kleingeld’s view, to argue the former would indicate “that figurative speech had made its way into the heart of Kant’s philosophy, without being able to be accounted for in Kantian terms”<sup>5</sup>. This, she notes, is *not* an impossibility and, in fact, she remarks, “it may turn out to be our only option”<sup>6</sup>. It is the latter that Kleingeld chooses on the basis of being the best “hermeneutical option”, in that she is able to account for this language in Kantian terms. Using Kant’s sense of the “symbol,” as an *analogical* transference “of our reflection on an object of intuition to an entirely different concept, to which perhaps no intuition can ever directly correspond” (CJ V, 352), Kleingeld proposes that Kant’s use of “needs”, “interests”, and other related characterizations can be considered a symbol in this sense. Further, she claims that the analogy is made between reason and an *organism* such that “an organism (A) is to the object of its needs (B) as reason (C) is to the regulative ideas or postulates (D)”<sup>7</sup>. The advantage of such a reading, she concludes, is that it paves for “a possible way of reconstructing or perhaps more accurately of developing the methodological foundation of Kant’s characterization of reason”<sup>8</sup>, given the fact that reason cannot be given to itself as such.

That reason has needs is to be seen within the light of reason’s symbol, an organism. This reading, furthermore gains support in one of Kant’s other important

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<sup>3</sup> Kleingeld, 88

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Kleingeld, 95

<sup>6</sup> Kleingeld, 88

<sup>7</sup> Kleingeld, 96

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

critical premises, viz., “[p]ure reason is, indeed, so perfect a unity” (Axii). Yet, even this is still plagued by taking the symbol with the organism as a *prior* hermeneutical ground of understanding the “need” itself. Indeed, as far back as the *Inaugural Dissertation*, Kant identifies, pure reason with “symbolic cognition”<sup>9</sup>. However, the symbol itself only becomes possible by virtue of the “need” itself. Thus, to take the symbol as the *primary* hermeneutical ground to understand this need itself is to reverse the primacy and overlooks the very necessity of these fateful questions. The starting point in this essay will then, rather than assigning it a role as a metaphor, first look to the contexts in which we Kant names a need of reason as it functions along his discussion of the concept of reason. Further, we must also take heed of Kant’s repeated claim that “reason is ultimately practical”<sup>10</sup>. We will see that the concept of a need when looked at from the standpoint of both *transcendental reflection* and *consciousness of the moral law* really names the *fact* the “disposition” is our “moral disposition”, which consists of the limits that are *our finitude*, our being of a *discord*, not wholly sensible and not wholly intelligible.

“How is metaphysics, as a natural disposition, possible?” (B21). What is it about *us* that makes us drawn to such questions such that we ever and again seem to go *beyond* every given experience? It is this question that Kant takes as the central task of the Transcendental Dialectic. What is this inward need? What is required so that we can see this “need”? In the subsequent subsections, we will follow Kant to the Transcendental

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<sup>9</sup> see §10 *Dissertation* : “There is (for man) no *intuition* of what belongs to the understanding, but only a *symbolic cognition*; and thinking is only possible for us by means of universal concepts in the abstract, not by means of singular concept in the concrete” (2:396).

<sup>10</sup> see 5:121



Dialectic, in which he exposes an “illusion”, one which, as reason’s fate, it cannot be removed, only “exposed”. Thus our inquiry must direct itself first in *Section One* to determine what Kant means when he says pure reason is the “seat” of transcendental illusion, but also what Kant means when he says that the task of a transcendental Dialectic is to “expose” this illusion. Before we attend to the Dialectic, however, let us examine the situation of the critical project and Transcendental Idealism in general. In this section, we will see how the critical-transcendental project demands consciousness of a peculiar *differentiation*. In *Section Two*, we will examine the structure of transcendental illusion, a constant confusion the resolution to which demands the above differentiation. Yet this still will not show us in its acuity the *necessity* that must attach to a need. This will be shown in consciousness of the moral law. It is here we will see the necessity of the need as the necessity of this differentiation. In *Section Four*, we will see how Kant sees this need, this fact of finitude, as a means for “orientation”.

## ***Section One: The Transcendental Turn and the Confrontation With Traditional Metaphysics***

In this section, I will introduce the critical project as the transcendental project. In the first third, I will elucidate the concern that motivates Kant in *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e., the frail state of *metaphysics* and this frailty in relation to human reason. For Kant, the a questions about the very capacities for this metaphysics need to be brought to the fore. In the second third, I look at the doctrine of *transcendental idealism* inasmuch as it is considered from the point of view of the “Copernican Turn”, i.e., the turn to the subjective conditions. The final third will highlight transcendental idealism as doctrine that implies a *limit*.

### **1.1 A “Call” Out of the “Chaos and the Night”**

Human reason, “beginning” in experience, finds what is given in experience insufficient to the task it takes itself to be undertaking. In this manner, it finds itself “compelled” to use certain “principles”, which yield from its very own existence, to transcend this experience. In taking itself to be the executor of this task, it finds itself on a “battlefield”. This battlefield is metaphysics. Human reason, in its drive to move “beyond” all given, factual experience (or, “what is the case”), in which it utilizes its own principles for its task, sets down on a path of metaphysics to do this task. Kant’s concern will always be the first step on this path. The situation in which we find philosophy in now, Kant tells us, battlefield is the site of the antinomies, the very contradiction within human reason. On this battlefield, we find two “sides”, both of which human reason cannot give up, for neither can, on their own terms, refute the appropriateness of the other. “Metaphysics,” Kant tells us, has “lapsed back into the

ancient time-worn dogmatism...” (Ax). What is more, since human reason has put its efforts (its own principles) in metaphysics, all “methods, so it is believed, have been tried and found wanting”; human reason appears to be “insufficient”. This semblance of human reason in its turmoil in metaphysics has induced a heavy “weariness”, an “indifferentism”. We are falling asleep to the manner of a need of reason, i.e., its *necessity* for us.

Kant, it is true, has admitted to “slumbering” before. It was in the Prolegomena that Kant told us it was Hume’s work that “first interrupted” his “dogmatic slumber and gave it a completely different direction” (4:259). Hume had woken Kant up to a problem. What is essential to Hume’s interruption is that Kant realized that anything that is to have *necessity* cannot be derived from that which is empirical. His most famous example is the challenge to causation. Hume argues that we can never infer validly the possibility of an effect as a direct result of a preceding cause. This, because one cannot deductively infer a prediction without relying on induction and further induction cannot itself be justified inductively, for it would beg the question. Thus there is no necessity of the connection between cause and effect obtained through experience, which ultimately, for Hume only rests on a subjective belief.

Kant took to heart much of this objection to the very basis of the sciences. Any attempt to find the very conditions and grounds of this necessity a posteriori is an *impossible* task. However, we do in fact have sciences exhibit necessity that goes well beyond Humean belief. Examples of these sciences are mathematics, geometry, and physics. Moreover, the assertion that all we are afforded is our “subjective” belief as we work through experience has also the most disconcerting results for the possibility of

morality. For, in that case, what is the case can never lead to any claim of what “ought” to be the case, a hallmark for a moral life. Simply put, the “is” is in all cases essentially different than the “ought”; it is the manner in which this difference is marked that will prove pivotal to understanding the “grounding” of Kant’s philosophy. Thus, the very ground of necessity of both our concepts and the claims on our action must have their ground of necessity elsewhere. The search for the ground of this necessity will lead Kant to the “Copernican Hypothesis”.

This slumber on the battlefield, in which “reason is perpetually being brought to a stand” (Bxiv), i.e., this indifferentism, is the precise aim of Kant’s Critique. This indifferentism is the “mother, in all sciences, of chaos and night”, our dogmatic slumber. However, what is important to note here is that this chaos and night, induced by the malaise, is also a “source, or at least the prelude, of their approaching and restoration (Aufklärung)” (Ax). On this stale battlefield of metaphysics, covered in darkness and night, the “spark” of Hume (4:257) appears. This spark, we see, is a “call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely that of self-knowledge” (Axi). We could not remain in this state of indifferentism, the indifference to the state of metaphysics, in which human reason has poured all of its efforts, and, in failing, has rendered all other paths dark. Indifferentism in fact strikes Kant as in untenable position. For, he tells us, that though “they may try to disguise themselves by substituting a popular tone (Tone) for the language of the Schools”, they “fall back, insofar as they think at all, into those very metaphysical assertions which they profess to so greatly despise” (Ax). This indifference, Kant tells us, is a source, a “prelude” to a more original tone, a call to self-knowledge. This path is a “critique of pure reason”. Here reason determines its own

“sources, its extent, and its limits” (Axi); that is, it is to find its way back to the very grounds that at the same time give it its limits (the question of its origin and application). It reveals to itself its own finitude, its limits, and on this account, the possibilities appropriate to its very nature.

## 1.2 Back to the Grounds

Kant puts as the driving method of critical philosophy his conception of the “*transcendental*”. It is, of course, always important to note the distinction between *transcendental* and *transcendent*. For Kant, what is properly transcendental involves not what lies beyond all possible experience, but the *conditions that make experience possible*. In the ‘Introduction’, Kant identifies the transcendental as the following:

“I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori.” (A11-12/B25).

Thus, what is ‘transcendental’ is not transcendent. Rather, it concerns the very conditions of the possibility of knowledge. Yet, this definition is still lacking a methodological specificity. That is what does Kant mean by this “mode”? If we jump ahead in the text to the appendix to the Transcendental Analytic, we get good beginning as to Kant’s sense of what is meant by “mode” in this transcendental sense.

“*Reflection (reflexio)* does not concern itself with objects themselves with a view to deriving concepts from them directly, but is the state of mind in which we first set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which

[alone] we are able to arrive at concepts. It is the *consciousness of the relation of given representations to our different sources of knowledge; and only by way of such consciousness can the relation be rightly determined...* This act by which I confront the comparison of representations with the cognitive faculty to which it belongs, and by means of which I distinguish...*I call transcendental reflection.*"  
(A260-1/B316-7—emphasis mine).

The *Copernican Hypothesis* is a return to the subject, back to grounds that lie *a priori* within the subject that make both experience and knowledge possible. This return though does not turn back to a subject outside and external to all possible experience, but rather turns towards the subject “on the brink” of all experience. *In* transcendental reflection, we are brought *to consciousness of the difference* between different grounds (origin) of knowledge and the relations they take up in the leap over this edge (application). It is important, we will see, to hold on to this very fact of transcendental consciousness, viz., that it is essentially consciousness of a differentiation on the edge of all experience. For, as even Kant hints at here, this consciousness of the fact of this differentiation is key to determining “rightly” what properly “belongs” to our knowledge; “rightly”, of course, expresses a necessity.

### **1.3 Towards the Limit**

Yet, in the *fact* of this differentiation, which takes place on the brink of all experience, we ourselves are faced with a necessity of a *limit*. *That* our cognitive capacities depend totally on the conditions which make experience possible, conditions

which, though not “out of experience” yet still “of experience” bring us toward a certain *fact of our finitude*. The *fact* of sensibility as an independent faculty of knowledge goes directly against the prejudice of modern philosophy since Descartes, viz., that sensibility is itself a mere (albeit confused) *species of representation*. For we learn that all knowledge is subject to the formal conditions of sensibility, space and time, and it is only in view of these conditions that we can make sense of ourselves as a being who can know itself and other things. Thus our return to this *subjective differentiation* must include at the same time an openness to listen to the very limits inscribed at this differentiation.

That this return is to a humbling subject “of experience” highlights at the same time the humility of the Copernican Hypothesis and the arrogance of Ptolemaic view. In the latter, the earth remained the center around which everything else revolved. Here what revolves around us is ‘for us’ is given immediately in the most direct sense. The former however, demands that we must constantly work to move our consciousness to the sun rather than remain upon earth. It is in this we must pay attention to both the earth and the sun. Thus, we must *work* to maintain a relation to something outside of ourselves. It is *in* this relation that what is ‘for us’ is understood in a mediated manner, i.e., by the sun. It is this the humility of this move, the understanding of the ‘for us’ as an accomplishment or rather as an accomplishing of a relation that we have understood the Kantian turn.

### ***Section Two: Reason's Illusion***

Now that we have a preliminary understanding of what Kant intends with the critical project as a transcendental project, we now return to the task laid out above. Our inquiry is directed to understand what Kant means when he tells us that reason is fated to questions to which it must necessarily bring itself.

Kant divides the Transcendental Logic, the critical account of the formal and spontaneous powers of the mind, i.e., of thought, according to the faculty understood to be at work in each account. The first of the two divisions is the Transcendental Analytic, the home of the pure understanding. There we saw the very formal conditions of thought in their necessary objective validity, or, their possibility to yield knowledge. The second of these two divisions, an account of spontaneous thought, is the Transcendental Dialectic, the home of pure reason. Following Aristotle, Kant terms the critical account of pure reason as “dialectic”, or doctrine of “illusion”. It is this exposing “illusion” of pure reason that becomes the central aim of the Dialectic. This illusion, as we will see, is the very “point” at which reason falls into a misunderstanding. However, this illusion, this “point”, is also endemic to the very nature of human reason.

“Reason, like understanding, can be employed in a merely formal, that is logical manner, wherein it abstracts from all content of knowledge. But it is also capable of a real use, since it contains within itself the *source* of certain concepts and principles, which it does not borrow either from the senses or from the understanding.” (A299/B355—emphasis mine).



Reason, as the “seat” of illusion, is also a “faculty of principles”. Pure reason is thus also a “source”. These principles are yield from spontaneous activity of the subject, but not along the order of those of the understanding. The activity of pure reason is a source that belongs nether to sensibility or understanding. The unity of understanding was understood to be the unity of a possible experience made possible by the formal synthetic activity of the categories. The *unity of reason*, Kant tells us, “is essentially different form such a unity” (A307/B363). Reason, Kant holds, much like the understanding, can be regarded as having a logical use and a transcendental (pure) use of reason. Furthermore, this logical use provides the “clue” to the transcendental use. In the case of the understanding, the table of judgments provided the “clue” to the transcendental use of the understanding by pointing out that they are they same activity viewed from different perspectives<sup>11</sup>. This analogy is to hold for the logical and pure use of reason. In the logical use of reason, like “syllogisms”, reason operates according to a maxim. This maxim issued by reason is “to find for the conditioned knowledge obtained through the understanding the unconditioned whereby its unity is brought to completion” (A307/B364). However, Kant tells us that this maxim, this logical use of reason in respect of all knowledge, in order for it qualify as a principle of pure reason, must presuppose another principle. This principle Kant refers to as the “supreme principle of reason”, which is pure reason. This principle states:

“if the conditioned is given, the whole series of conditions, subordinated to one another...is likewise given, that is, contained in the object and its connection” (A307/B364).

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What is key about this principle is that it is based on a “presupposition”. This presupposition, Kant holds, we are “compelled to think”. It is this compelling that is very “need” of reason. That we ever and again compelled to make this assumption Kant calls transcendental illusion (*Schein*).

*“Reason does not really generate any concept. The most it can do is to free a concept of understanding from the unavoidable limitations of possible experience, and so to endeavor to extend it beyond the limits of the empirical, though still, indeed in terms of its relation to the empirical.”* (A408/B435—emphasis mine).

Why is this called an illusion and what is entailed in this assumption? This illusion consists in the very fact that pure reason’s demand of its principle, i.e., the givenness of the unconditioned, is for us a synthetic proposition. Here we return to the very “fate” of human reason. On the one hand, we have a capacity, pure reason, by which it commands all of our thinking beyond all factual experience. However, insofar as *we* must do this, on the other hand, it must do it in a relation of the conditioned to the unconditioned, thus in a relation to experience. The conflict on the battlefield of metaphysics, on which reason was entangled in a “mock battle” with itself that in turn induces a soporific stupor to all human reason, is over the very manner of this relation, that is, whether there is a relation or whether this relation is traversable by human cognition. This relation appears (*scheint*) as a contradiction within reason itself and this takes the form of an antinomy of pure reason. As a preliminary distinction, we can see two senses in which this relation can be viewed: (1) by *adequation* or (2) by

*differentiation*. This distinction needs qualification and clarification. For the moment, however, we must see some more textual support for this distinction.

Kant tells us that the “unconditioned”, if its actuality be granted, is (can) especially to be considered in respect of all the determinations which distinguish it from whatever is conditioned, and thereby must yield material for many synthetic a priori propositions” (A308/B365). It is important to hold on to this remark. For here Kant tells us that (1) if we grant the unconditioned, that (2) is to be thought by the manner it is different from what is conditioned, and that (3) this considering this relation in terms of their differentiation we arrive at a “material” for synthetic a priori propositions, thus this difference yields us material for this connection. These other synthetic *a priori* propositions are the *Ideas* of reason. This remark is important to hold on to for here Kant gives us a “clue” as to what the ground of a need of reason. The manner of thinking a synthetic connection in this way, however, is ignored, I contend, for the most part in this work with the exception of the *third Antinomy*.

The principles that have their “material” in this “space”, this differentiation, when considered “in relation to all appearances” are transcendent. This notion of transcendent, Kant contrasts with the immanent principles of the understanding that yield from the categories in their possible application to the pure manifold of intuition, i.e., experience. This “relation”, Kant tells us, marks the principles from this differentiation “transcendent” because they can in no way be adequate to an empirical employment; they fail to constitute a condition of the possibility of an object of experience. Thus, what yields from this “space” cannot be considered in a relation of *adequation*. The legitimate ways of considering the relation between the principles of this “space” and the

conditioned as adequation, however, occupies the rest of the Dialectic. For Kant's essential questions in this paragraph, the answer to which he identifies the "task" of the Dialectic, all surround the possibility of an "objective" applicability of the principles that yield from this "space" (the Ideas of soul, world, God) and their relation to the understanding. Insofar as what we can "know", in Kant's sense of scientific knowing, the consideration of this relation is appropriate. For knowledge, as we saw in the Analytic, is constituted by a synthetic relation informed by the unity contained within a (critical) "object in general". Thus, the consideration of these principles, or what comes to be the same, any possible knowledge of what these principles indicate must assume the synthetic relation under the guise of an "object in general". What must be held on to at this step is that these principles in themselves resist all constitution *as an* "object"; thus they refer to *no-thing*.

We have now seen the structure that comes about in metaphysics from a natural disposition. It is through an illusion, in which we are "compelled" to assume the unconditioned by pure reason itself. However, we have also seen that the principles we are compelled to assume do not admit of a deduction in the manner of the pure concepts of the understanding. For there, we were able to see the understanding as a necessary independent source of the conditions of experience, with the limitation that this source provides us with only the form of thought without any content. Pure reason, however, cannot be subject to the same deduction because this faculty is to be defined as a faculty that stands absolutely independent of possible determination as an *object of our knowledge*. However, that these principles force themselves upon us inevitably such that we are compelled to assume them is no way clarified. That is, pure reason, as an

independent origin of the Ideas is not shown. Transcendental philosophy, inasmuch as it requires *consciousness* of the differentiation of our different sources of knowledge, requires that we show pure reason *in its differentiation* from sense. It is important to note, however, we cannot assume pure reason to be *external* to pure sense, for this would be to indicate that pure reason itself originates *outside* all possible experience. Pure reason, rather, must arise on the brink of all experience. This is necessary to counter the objection that the Ideas really are “mere fictions” or the result of “reason in love”<sup>12</sup>. Kant then must show pure reason as an independent source of the Ideas. That pure reason is an independent faculty depends on showing it to be an independent wellspring of our activity; this, we will now see, depends upon demonstrating *that* reason is practical.

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<sup>12</sup> An important objection of the Ideas of reason as “merely fictions” is levied against Kant by Thomas Wizenmann, who was a friend of Jacobi and entered the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi in the so-called “Pantheism Controversy” (*Pantheismusstreit*), which is discussed below. Kant recounts Wizenmann in the second Critique (see 5:144n), who responds to Kant’s own “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (1786) in a published piece in February of 1787 shortly before he died, where he claims that the practical postulates (i.e., the Ideas from their practical point of view) are an “example of a man in love, who, having fooled himself into an idea of beauty that is merely a chimera of his own brain, would like to conclude that such an object really exists somewhere” (Ak: 5:143n)

### ***Section Three: Consciousness of the Moral Law***

The above elucidated problem in the Critique of Pure Reason that concerned the Ideas, the principles which all yielded from the “supreme principle of pure reason”, this the principle which expresses the *synthetic relation* of the given conditioned and the given condition itself unconditioned, was that their deduction was not possible in the same manner as was possible for the categories of required for a priori knowledge. It is this relation that needs to be taken *as differentiation*. Kant needs to show that the Ideas, themselves the basis of the questions of traditional metaphysics are *not mere fictions*, but in themselves carry a necessity, a need of reason. Kant hinted at the end of the *Critique* and will explicitly state in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that pure reason is “ultimately practical”, however, he did not provide any “demonstration” of this, i.e., to show its claim in its legitimacy. Thus the burden for Kant is to show *that* pure reason itself can be practical. Once this is shown, the faculty of reason is secured *as an independent source* of what we call the Ideas, and they will be seen to be immanent to experience, but one always markedly *different* than that of the constitutive principles of experience. Thus, transcendental illusion is so because it always confuses, on the model of adequation, the *sense of givenness* of the conditioned and the unconditioned. In what follows, I shall only provide a brief recounting of Kant’s account of the moral law as the “fact” of reason. It is in the consciousness of this law, itself the supreme principle of pure practical reason.

In what does this demonstration of pure reason as an independent source consist? After the elucidation of the Ideas of reason as the necessary grounds of reason’s illicit flight beyond all possible experience, he still has yet to show that these Ideas are not

mere fictions, i.e., he must show that, properly, the Ideas have an “immanent” use “within” the field of experience. As the transcendent principles of theoretical understanding, the Ideas led thought beyond all possible experience. However, as immanent principles of practical reason, they are to lead thought to possibilities of experience<sup>13</sup>. It is Kant’s conviction that the metaphysical knots into which we have found ourselves have their source in the very structure of human reason. However, given the inability to provide a deduction of the Ideas as conditions of the possibility of experience, he was unable to secure the faculty of pure reason as a *source independent* of all sense. As a mere faculty *independent* of all sense, it can only be regarded *as negative*. Yet, as an independent *source* capable of being seen *in its application*, we can see the manner in which this faculty carries a “positive” independence<sup>14</sup>. What the account in the Transcendental Dialectic for the most part amounted to was a mere assertion of the very “nature” of reason. Kant’s other conviction that pure reason itself is “ultimately practical” was another assertion at the end of the Critique. However, this still stood without convincing argument.

However, in the ‘Dialectic’, the ‘Third Antinomy’ made a step in this direction by articulating most clearly the possible ground of a clean distinction between sense and intellect. In the ‘Third Antinomy’ he was able to distinguish between the claims of the dogmatic-empiricist and the dogmatic-rationalist by holding fast to the doctrine of

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<sup>13</sup> I am here drawing on the use of 'possibility' found at A807/B835, where Kant remarks: "Pure reason, then contains, not indeed in its speculative employment, but in that practical employment which is also moral, principles of the possibility of experience, namely of such actions as, in accordance with moral precepts, might be met with in the history of mankind". There is, of course, a contextual distinction to be made here between "possibility" in the sense of "condition of the possibility" and "possibilities experience can have in history".

<sup>14</sup> This is also the critique against Kant’s position in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, where he showed sense and intellect to be two independent and heterogeneous sources of knowledge, yet failed to show their application.

transcendental idealism, namely, that our representations are mere appearances and not things in themselves. So holding, we can see the former represents a claim of the understanding and the latter a claim of reason. Reason, Kant notes further, can be distinguished “in a quite peculiar and especial way from all empirically conditioned powers”, because “it views objects *exclusively* in the light of ideas, and in accordance with them determines the understanding, which then proceeds to make an empirical use of its own similarly pure concepts.” (A547/B575). To see reason itself as independent we need to consider this peculiar and especial with *in which* it is distinguished. This, Kant notes, is given to us by the “ought”.

“That our reason has causality, or that we at least represent it to ourselves as having causality, is evident from the *imperatives* which in all matters of conduct we impose as rules on our active powers.” (A547/B575).

Here Kant gives us here the possibility of a specific means to make a *meaningful*<sup>15</sup> distinction between sense and intellect. Kant finds it in the “ought”. However it won’t be until the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where Kant articulates most clearly the significance of this ought.

“I ask instead from what our cognition of the unconditionally practical *starts*, whether from freedom or from the practical law. It cannot start from freedom, for we can neither be immediately conscious of this, since the first concept of it its negative, nor can we conclude it from

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<sup>15</sup> i.e., practical



experience...It is therefore the moral law...inasmuch as reason presents it as a determining ground not to be outweighed by any sensible conditions and indeed quite independent of them, leads directly to the concept of freedom.” (5:29-30—emphasis mine).

The Idea of *transcendental freedom* in the Critique of Pure Reason consisted in a *negative* exposition, as the “power of beginning a state spontaneously.” (A533/561) This negative view of freedom, however, as it stands to the immanence of experience, is without content, it only expresses a power outside all causally determined or factual events. However, without meaning, the very *necessity* of the Idea remains *obscured*. That is, it is unclear whether this Idea is a *mere abstraction* from various elements of experience or it, of itself, outside of all merely given experience, can play a role in experience. On the first view, this Idea can, with Wizenmann<sup>16</sup>, be expressed as a mere self-delusion; this is clearly an unacceptable path. The burden is then to show, in the second view, that this Idea, independent of all abstraction from factual experience, has a presence or significance. I here emphasize the *thatness* in what remains to be shown; independence from all sense only merely expresses the mere “not sensible”. This “something” must show itself “as” something (the moral law that of itself lays a claim). Thus, as a starting point, as a *ratio cognoscendi*, we cannot begin with the merely

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<sup>16</sup> An important objection of the Ideas of reason as “merely fictions” is levied against Kant by Thomas Wizenmann, who was a friend of Jacobi and entered the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi in the so-called “Pantheism Controversy” (Pantheismusstreit), which is discussed below. Kant recounts Wizenmann in the second Critique, who responds to Kant’s own “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (1786) in a published piece in February of 1787 shortly before he died, where he claims that the practical postulates (i.e., the Ideas from their practical point of view) are an “example of a man in love, who, having fooled himself into an idea of beauty that is merely a chimera of his own brain, would like to conclude that such an object really exists somewhere” (Ak: 5:143n)

*negative* Idea of transcendental freedom. To show that reason can of itself be practical, is to secure *both* the immanence and necessity of the Idea. Kant's concludes that the evidence for the immanence and necessity of the Idea of freedom is entailed *consciousness of the moral law as an imperative for action*.

"Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason because one cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason for example, from consciousness of freedom (since this is not antecedently given to us) and because it instead forces itself upon us of itself as synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any intuition, either pure or empirical..." (5:31).

The moral ought, which Kant names the "categorical imperative"<sup>17</sup> signifies a "mere form" of a maxim for action. Entailed in the emphasis on the form of the law is "motive", or the "in what manner" of the action. Though one could follow a law according to its "letter", without a motive that is itself a response to the call of the "ought", the unity of the subject's desires has not conformed appropriately to the call. This law, in any case, arises *wholly independent* of any factual experience, but itself "forces itself upon us". What is extremely important to note here, moreover, is that this ought, itself a necessitation, expresses the *dependence of a will to the law*. It is the fact (and fact taken in the sense of a *brute fact*) of this dependence that precludes our having what Kant terms a "holy will", i.e., a will that would "not be capable of any maxim conflicting with the moral law" (5:30). In the case of the holy will, there is an *eternal*

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<sup>17</sup> I will avoid discussion of Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative in favor of the more general 'moral law'. What specifically interests me about the categorical imperative is the means and mode of its necessity. ,

*coincidence* of the will and the law, motive and duty. In the case of the calling of the “ought”, there is an ever-present *discord* between the two, the duty itself and the now-“free will” open to conform to it.

That is, it is in the consciousness of this discord:

"the will of rational being that, as belonging to the sensible world cognizes itself as, like other efficient causes, necessarily subject to laws of a causality, yet in the practical is also in consciousness of itself on another side, namely as a being in itself, consciousness of its existence as determinable in an intelligible order of things." (5:42).

Thus a differentiation is made in consciousness of the discord between different "sides" of the subject, the side given as factual and the other a side given as *possibility* other than itself (as merely factual)<sup>18</sup>. It is the moral "ought", the givenness of the law, that *subtends* both sides. In its role of subtending both, the givenness of the law announces, as it were, a splicing or an "opening"<sup>19</sup>. Yet, this finitude is at the same time an “opening” for us. That the moral law forces itself upon us as an ought shows us that we are not a being who resides *wholly within* what is given as a mere factual occurrence, i.e., as “the what is.” Rather, in the force of the moral law, we are commanded from “outside” all given experience, but yet still in relation to it, to take up or reject this

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<sup>18</sup> "In default of this intuition (intellectual intuition), the moral law assures us of this difference between the relation of our actions as appearances to the sensible being of our subject and the relation by which this sensible being is itself referred to the intelligible substratum in us." (5:99)

<sup>19</sup> cf. *Conjectural Beginning* (7: 112) "He discovered in himself a power of choosing for himself a way of life, of not being bound without alternative to a single way like the animals. Perhaps the discovery of this advantage created a moment of delight. But of necessity, anxiety and alarm as to how he was to deal with this newly discovered power quickly followed; for man was a being who did not yet know either the secret properties or the remote effects of anything. He stood, as it were, on the brink of an abyss."

command and are revealed to be beings who are not bound to factual givenness. As was the case with transcendental reflection, where we stood in "the consciousness of the relation of given representations to our different sources of knowledge", we see a symmetry here in the case of the moral ought wherein we are forced upon a consciousness of a differentiation within ourselves (A260-1/B316-7). For in both cases "only by way of such consciousness can the relation be rightly determined" (ibid.).

Further, *for us*, this law, in subtending both our "sensible nature" and our "intelligible nature" is forced upon us as a synthetic *a priori* proposition. If we recall the "supreme principle of pure reason", transcendental illusion, we saw there that we were compelled to assume that the conditioned and the unconditioned be brought together by means of a synthetic *a priori* proposition. However, with respect to "objective" knowledge, we would always begin on the side of the conditioned, and could never find any ground on which to make this transition, i.e., the "synthesis". We could only, from the standpoint of transcendental-reflective consciousness, see this proposition really stemmed from *heterogeneous* sources, i.e., the claims of sense and intellect. Yet here, the necessity of the grounds of this confusion was not apparent here, for the heterogeneity of the sources was not yet grasped in its "fullness"<sup>20</sup>; it was only thought "negatively". Thus, there wasn't sufficient room to see this heterogeneity in distinctive sense *as a bare beginning fact of the human mind*. The *moral law*, on the other hand as the "supreme principle of morality", lays bare the heterogeneity in a positive manner, inasmuch it draws the boundaries that belong to both sense and intellect. The moral law, that is, reveals the fact of our finitude: *as a discord*.

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<sup>20</sup> That is, in its *real* bearing upon us. The deduction of the practical secures the grounding of these metaphysical problems as ones that have bearing upon our actions "in the world".

Recall the following passage from the 'Dialectic' of the first *Critique*: “ the unconditioned, if its actuality be granted, can especially to be considered in respect of all the determinations which distinguish it from whatever is conditioned, and thereby must yield material for many synthetic a priori propositions” (A308/B365). Only in virtue of the moral law, and its bindingness on us, the unconditioned, as freedom, is revealed to be *actual* within us. The necessity the "ought" carries of itself is what therefore properly reveals reason as a *source independent* of all experience and gives the "material" for the many synthetic a priori propositions, i.e., the Ideas<sup>21</sup>.

"That this is the true subordination of our concepts and that morality first discloses to us the concept of freedom, so that it is practical reason which first poses to speculative reason, with this concept, the most insoluble problem so as to put it in the greatest perplexity, is clear from the following: that...*one would never have ventured to introduce freedom into science had not the moral law and with it practical reason, come in and forced this concept upon us.*" (5:30—emphasis mine).

Thus, the origin of the Ideas and the necessity they have for us comes solely in its connection with the "ought". The “need” of reason is thus grounded in the law as an “ought”, itself the revelation bare “fact” of our finitude as a discord<sup>22</sup>. It is this “fact”

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<sup>21</sup> Kant of course cautions that this proper use of the Idea only holds for practical purposes.

<sup>22</sup> What is, to a great degree, misleading here is the appearance that this discord is what grounds the moral law. An objection, then, could be levied that the moral law is thus grounded on “contingent” fact about the human being. However, this presupposes that the very reason for this discord, namely the fact of our “temporality”, owes itself to *something* as it is in itself. However, Kant’s position is clear that time, is *not*

which consists in our being fundamentally and irreducibly “present” to ourselves (qua sensible being) and at the same time “present” to ourselves in a *wholly different* manner (qua intellectual being). The *difference* between these two modes of is identical with the consciousness of the moral law and this is further identical with a “space” in which no-*thing* is *given* beforehand as for theoretical cognition. The Ideas, in their genuine and practical origin Kant terms the "postulates" are grounded in the moral law and thus the “fact” of our discord. It is the “ought” that reveals the sensible *as* sensible. The “as” is itself the expression of the “ought” in which and Idea holds sway immanently. That is, in this “as” signifies the Idea in its two-fold function, as a limiting and a freeing<sup>23</sup>. What merely “is” can *in* this “ought” be otherwise.

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characteristic of things in themselves. However, this appearance, in any case, is one that is a result of exposition. The *moral law is essentially the differentiation*.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Groundwork 4:462: “[The Idea] signifies only a “something” that is left over when I have excluded from the determining grounds of my will everything belonging to the world of sense, merely in order to limit the principle of motives from the field of sensibility by circumscribing this field and showing that it does not include everything within itself but that there is still more beyond it.” Emphasis mine.

#### ***Section Four: Space, Differentiation, and Orientation***

In the previous two sections, we have tried to what Kant refers to as the “need” of reason. The way in which this “need” shows itself depends on the manner in which we *differentiate* between sense and intellect, our being *qua* “sensible world” and being *qua* “intelligible world”. This need, then, is essentially grounded in this difference of this *discord*. This being a discord is for Kant is *our* finitude. Thus, the unifying question of philosophy, “What is man?” depends on starting from the *fact* of this discord, by which we can “become” *who* we are. A recurring theme throughout Kant’s corpus is the discussion of the determination of *hands* and *handedness*. This discussion Kant explicitly links up to the notions of 'space', 'direction', 'orientation', 'vocation', and, finally, 'fate'. Kant’s discussion of hands appears in texts from 1768 in his "Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space" through 1796 in his "Proclamation of the Imminent Conclusion of a Treaty of Perpetual Peace in Philosophy". The midway point in this discussion, as we will see, comes in his 1786 "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?". This line of discussion throughout his works, we will see, will show further Kant's interest in *differentiation* and *consciousness of this differentiation* as a means to not only diagnose the problems of metaphysics, but also articulate a new conception of reason, one that is immanent in our finitude. In this section, we will explore more broadly how this notion of differentiation will play a key role in “orientation” or the very “meaning “ of our existence. Though we are beings bound to time as the condition of our inner sense, we are also bound to a certain relation to space. This relation, we see, depends, again, on a prior *differentiation*.

#### 4.1 Orientation in Space

One of the most prominent debates in natural philosophy took place between Newton and Leibniz on the nature of space. In his well-known essay "Concerning the Ultimate Ground of the Differentiation of Directions in Space", Kant seeks to provide an argument against Leibniz's relationist position of space by (to a degree) taking sides with Newton. This is a reversal for Kant, as he had previously in his thinking sided with Leibniz. For Leibniz, space, though itself further grounded in the monad, thus makes it an "abstraction" and thus not fundamental, consisted in relative distances between positions of bodies. Spatial facts, further were to be analyzed by a well known but little understood notion of Leibniz's, viz. *analysis situs*. According to Leibnizians, this accounting of space was to account for space in terms of congruence. This account depends on his "Identity of Indiscernibles"<sup>24</sup>, a notion which Kant would later criticize as one committing an error based on the "amphiboly of concepts", which, itself based on a *confusion* of the sensible and intelligible, had not consulted previously the *diffusion* of transcendental reflection (see A260/B316-A266/B322).

In this essay, Kant argues that Leibniz's account of space cannot account for the direction and orientation of bodies, which, for Kant, are necessary elements of any account of space and spatial qualities. While Leibniz relies on the relation of points on a material body, the determination of direction and orientation "refers to the space outside the thing itself" (2:377). This space to which they refer, furthermore, is "universal space as a unity, of which every extension must be regarded as a part" (2:378). Here Kant takes

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<sup>24</sup> In the critical notes to Leibniz's "On Analysis Situs", Loemker provides a clear account of the presuppositions in Leibniz's account. (i) corresponding parts of congruent figures are congruent; (ii) that any point can be substituted for another whose relations are congruent to its own; and (iii) that things congruent to the same thing are congruent to each other" 258 n11 Loemker .



up the Newtonian position of absolute space as a condition of understanding relations between bodies. Further, and this can be seen as a harbinger of further views of both space and transcendental philosophy to come, Kant notes that a relation to the subject as a starting point for all *spatial analysis* :

"Concerning the things which exist outside ourselves: it is only insofar as they stand in relation to ourselves that we have any cognition of them by means of the senses at all" (2:378).

This relation to the subject, furthermore consists in the relation of things to the different sides of our body, left and right. That is, in order to account for directions and orientation of bodies in space, one must relate these things back to the different sides of our body. This relation, Kant adds, consists in the "distinct feeling (*verschiedene Gefühl*) of the left and right side" (2:380). It is this "distinct" or "clear" feeling *of the differentiation* between left and right that we apprehend the relation of bodies to ourselves.

The relationist position cannot account for this orientation, since all spatial facts are accounted for in terms of congruence. Kant offers as one means of demonstration of the relationist position the fact of "*incongruent counterparts*". Under the model of relationist *analysis situs*, we would account for the space, Kant tells us, of the hand by the relations that hold between the different points of the hand. With respect to the relations of points on the hand, each hand would occupy the *same space*. Yet, if one were to attempt to fit the left hand into the right hand's space, it would not fit, precisely because they are oriented in different directions. Thus two things "can be exactly equal and similar, and yet still be so different in themselves that the limits of the one cannot also be

the limits of the other" (2:381). The left hand and right hand may be *outwardly* (*externally*) similar, however that they cannot fit in the same space indicates that there must be an "*inner difference*" between the two and this difference consists in the fact that "surface which encloses the one cannot possibly enclose the other" (2:382). Thus, Kant argues that the relationist view of space, modeled on congruence, *must* presuppose its orientation in absolute space. This relation to absolute *space is not given to us by congruence, but rather first by differentiation.*

"This relation to absolute space, however, cannot itself be immediately perceived, though the differences, which exist between bodies and which depend exclusively on this ground alone, can be immediately perceived" (2:381).

Thus, for us absolute space, the ultimate ground of orientation, is for us only available as differentiation, itself *dependent on* a "distinct feeling" of this differentiation between left and right. We now move on to "orientation in thinking".

#### **4.2 Orientation in Thinking**

An intellectual firestorm that further served as the spark for one of the most electric intellectual environments in the history of philosophy, German Idealism, was the Pantheism Controversy (*Pantheismusstreit*). The Pantheism Controversy began as an "outing" of G. E. Lessing by F. H. Jacobi based on his confession to a young Jacobi that he had allegiances to Spinozistic doctrines. Lessing, however, publicly, had been regarded as the great champion of Enlightenment thinking. Spinoza's philosophy, at the time, was regarded as atheism, a publicly dangerous position. Lessing's alleged allegiances caused a renaissance in readings of Spinoza. The main debate took place

between Moses Mendelssohn and Jacobi. Mendelssohn was an adamant defender of (classical) rationalism as a means to understand the supersensible in order to "orient" one's life. Jacobi, who saw in Lessing's conversion a fact about rationalism, namely that every consistent version of it must necessarily lead to nihilism; a faith not dependent on reason was thus required for such "orientation". Kant, whose philosophy could easily, albeit only selectively in the eyes of each, be friendly to either of these positions. Both, in fact, saw affinities with their view and Kant. Thus, Kant's critical philosophy was put in the middle and at stake in this controversy. "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" is Kant's attempt to claim the proper position of the critical philosophy. As we will see, Kant recalls his previous rejection of the Leibnizian relationist position of space, in order to articulate the "critical" notion of "orientation".

Having argued in the Critique of Pure Reason that our knowledge is limited to knowledge of experience and the conditions that make experience possible, Kant sets this essay in light for a search after "heuristic methods of thinking...hidden in the experiential use of our understanding" (8:133). In the Critique, the means of *pure thinking* consisted in the *pure concepts of the understanding*, themselves formal expressions of the synthetic activity of the unity of consciousness in one experience (see A80/B106). However, as formal expressions, they are fundamentally "empty" with respect to content, and on that account demand, to yield an object, the givenness of content in an intuition. Thus, in the in thinking of the supersensible, precisely what Mendelssohn and Jacobi attempt to do, nothing is given. The problem Kant must answer is how an account of one's orientation or vocation is possible, given that both of these ultimately lead to a question of the supersensible in which *no-thing* is given for intuition. Kant will seek for this "*hidden*

method of thinking" in considering space once more and recalling his concept of orientation in physical space.

"In the proper meaning of the word, to orient oneself means to use a given direction (when we divide the horizon into four of them) in order to find the others--literally, to find the sunrise" (8:134)

However, Kant adds, what must be possible for this orientation to be had at all must be the relation back to the "feeling of a difference" between right and left hands. This feeling again is again related to an "interior" as "opposed" to a mere "externality", hence, "if he (the astronomer) pays attention only to what he sees and not at the same time to what he feels--would inevitably become disoriented. With this caveat in place, Kant proceeds to excavate these hidden methods with this conception of orientation as his point of departure. Kant proceeds to put a subject in three scenarios, each of which include the relation as differentiation and a given (of lack thereof). An example of *Geographical orientation* is given to us by a "be-wondered" astronomer under the "starry heavens" above her. Kant, notes, if she were to only follow what she sees (and thus losing her "wonder"), and by some "miracle" the constellations were to be reversed<sup>25</sup>, no "human eye" would ever notice<sup>26</sup>. But, if the relation to the differentiation of left and right hands were kept in place, such a reversal would be noticed. Kant then moves to what he calls *Mathematical orientation*, orientation generally or "in any given space". Here someone walks into a *dark room*, in which, otherwise, this person would know the position of everything. However, as a result of a mere practical joke, someone reversed

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<sup>25</sup> In the "Ultimate Ground" essay, Kant referenced the reversal of the words on a page.

<sup>26</sup> In this text, Kant shows notable criticism of "vision".

the room such that everything on the left was now on the right and vice versa. This person, however, given the subjective ground of differentiation between left and right would be able to find her way through the room.

The third sense is the place of the “hidden” method, that *Orientation in Thinking*. However, this is no longer a dark room of which the subject had been previously familiar. In contrast to the previous dark room, nothing here is given and nothing can be given in that same manner. Here thinking has arrived at merely space<sup>27</sup>, in which nothing is given. It is in the darkness of this empty space, that thinking is:

"no longer in a position to bring its judgments under a determinate maxim according to objective grounds of cognition, but solely to bring its judgments under a determinate maxim according to a subjective ground of differentiation in the determination of its own faculty of judgment. This subjective means still remaining is nothing other than reason's feeling of its own need." (8:136--emphasis mine)<sup>28</sup>.

In the darkness we are given nothing other than the need of reason, as a subjective ground of differentiation. According to this need, Kant tells us, we can "orient ourselves".

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<sup>27</sup> That space itself serves as the perfect analogy for thought with respect to thinking of the supersensible makes sense. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant argues that space, as a formal condition of outer intuition, is essentially a unity in which there are only limitation on this unity. Thus, while things in space can occupy parts of space, they are still, if space is to be ideal limitations on the "all-encompassing space". Cf. Critique of Judgment 7:409 "space merely resembles the basis we are seeking inasmuch as no part in space can be determined except in relation to the whole (so that the possibility of the parts is based on the presentation of the whole)"

<sup>28</sup> This 1786 account of subjective determination by subjective principle is a proto-"reflective judgment".

What does it mean to orient oneself according to a "feeling of a need"? What does it mean to call this need a ground of differentiation? Kant answers these questions are found when reflecting on the role of hands. In this judgment we bring the *relation* of the object to objects of experience under pure concepts of the understanding--through which we do not render it sensible, but we do at least think of something supersensible in a way which is serviceable to the experiential use of our reason" (8:136). What is of concern here is the relation, but, as we saw in the "Ultimate Ground" essay, this relation can only be thought as differentiation, as left and right. This need *is* the *relation* the feeling of which is heard as the orientating shadow between bodies. Yet, what does 'handedness' have to do with thinking? Let us consider two of his other discussions of hands. In the "Ultimate Ground" essay Kant made a passing comment that can bring this to light. In the essay, and referring to the "right" side of the body, Kant tells us:

"the right side, namely, enjoys an indisputable advantage over the other in respect of skill and perhaps of strength, too...the right side of the body seems to enjoy the advantage of power" (2:380-1)<sup>29</sup>.

There is also a relevant remark in his 1796 "Proclamation", an essay in which he again refers to the "health of reason"<sup>30</sup> and its relation to philosophy. Specifically, he is referring to how philosophy can be shown to have a "physical effect". An example is by the Stoic Posidonius, who "proved the effect of philosophy" and proclaimed "*that pain is nothing bad*" (8:415). Explaining this remark even more Kant gives another clue in a somewhat cryptic footnote.

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<sup>29</sup> The "right", of course, has had a history of been afforded a privilege over the "left".

<sup>30</sup> The "Orientation" essay is in search of maxims of "healthy reason".

"The ambiguity in the terms *evil (malum)* and *bad (pravum)* is more easily prevented in Latin than in Greek. In regard to well-being and *evil* (of pain), man, like all sensuous beings, is subject to law of nature, and is merely passive; in regard to *bad* he is under the law of freedom. The former contains what man *suffers*, the latter what he freely *does*. In regard to *fate*, the *difference* between right and left (*fato vel dextro vel sinistro*) is a mere difference in man's relations. But in regard to his freedom, and the relationship of the law to his inclinations, it is a difference within him. In the first case the *straight* is contrasted to the *slanting (rectum obliquo)*; in the second, the straight to the *crooked* or maimed (*rectum pravo, sive varo, obtorto*).

That the Romans placed an unlucky event on the left side may well be because one is not so well able to ward off an attack with the left hand as with the right. But when, in auguries, the *auspex*, having turned his face southward to the so-called temple, declared happy the lighting-flash that occurred on the left, the reason seems to have been that the thunder-god, who was imagined facing the *auspex*, would then carry his bolt in the right hand. (8:415).

The feeling of a ‘need’ is the feeling of a *difference* between left and right within *our* subject. Left and right refer, respectively, to our “two sides”, as a being *of* the sensible world and a being *of* the world “of understanding”. The “ground of differentiation” is precisely the moral law, itself the first marking of “our” discord, in relation to which all orientation and vocation attains its meaning. The “right of need”, which “enters” is thus possibility of something *other than the left hand*. Kant is playing here on the double sense of the word (*dexter*) for ‘right’ (*recht*) as in side, and ‘right’ (*Recht*) as a legitimate claim as opposed to the left (*sinister*). The right side’s *power* consists in the bare possibility other than a mere “left-handed-factual-giveness”, but a giveness of a different order, of an “abyss of possibility”.

“Reason does not feel; it has insight into its *lack* and through the *drive for cognition* it effects the feeling of a need. It is the same way with moral feeling, which does not cause any moral law, for this arises wholly from reason; rather it is caused or effected by moral laws, hence by reason, because the active yet free will needs determinate grounds” (8:140n—emphasis mine).

This ‘lack’, or the ‘dark night’ is the “ground” of reason’s need. Yet this dark night is not a void, there is “something”, namely the *sound* of the calling of the “ought” that lies between and, in its calling draws the *blindness* of the intuition and the *emptiness* of the concept out *as* “orientation”.

Kant recounts in the 1796 footnote the notion of ‘auguries’. Auguries were signs taken to determine the legitimacy of a given course of action. Central to this notion of



the augury, was the distinction between left and right. It involved two people, an *augur* and an *auspex*. The augur would mark the space (a *templum*) in which all the phenomena were to manifest themselves for the *auspex* to read. This *drawing* of the *templum* itself was referred to as a *liberatus* and an *effatus* (a liberating and constraining)<sup>31</sup>. The augur who was to draw the *difference* inherent to the space thus was drawing up the very *fate*, as the “mere difference” between left and right. This fate, the mere difference, the dark space, our lack is our *finitude* and the means of our orientation. Thus, we have now seen the manner in which this ground of differentiation plays with respect to orientation.

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<sup>31</sup> “For the building of a temple, or indeed for any permanent inaugurated *templum*, it was necessary first that the ground should not only be *effatus* (i.e. have pronounced limits), but also be *liberatus*; that is to say, any prior claims upon the ground not merely of private ownership, but of *fana* or *sacella* which might once have been upon it, had to be abrogated [EXAUGURATIO], and the ground and building assigned by the augurs to that deity to whose service it was to be dedicated, and next the temple itself was consecrated by the pontifices.” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ()

## ***Conclusion***

The question that directed this inquiry from the beginning was the question of how we are to understand what Kant means by a “need” of reason. In order to understand this need as the necessity implied in reason’s own fate, we see that it is necessary to stand within the differentiation of both sense and intellect, and the subject as *neither* wholly of the sensible “world” and, at the same time, *neither of* the intelligible “world”. For Kant, “[a]ll necessity, without exception, is grounded in a transcendental condition” (A106). In order to “hear” this necessity, we must first take up the differentiation implied in transcendental reflection, namely the return to the utter *heterogeneity* of sense and intellect. However, this heterogeneity, for transcendental reflection, still requires a *practical separation*, in line with reason being “ultimately practical”. The moral “ought” is itself this separation in its fullest sense, bringing us to the very fact and limit that is *our finitude*, namely our being a *discord*, caught, as it were, in an “opening” on the very brink of experience. It is this *discord*, as an “opening” or “reversal of heart”, which allows for the “need” to be seen in its full and proper sense. *That* this need is our fate serves as the fundamental ground on which the very questions of *philosophy* can be seen to acquire their proper sense and significance.

There are several obstacles and potential adventures that one can take up with this line of thinking. The most notable obstacle is my account of Kant’s moral philosophy. While, I intentionally skirt the issue of the “categorical imperative” as a “universal law” in favor of the mere “ought”, I put Kant’s central notion of *autonomy* in a precarious and perhaps untenable place. This, obviously, would lie in tension with Kant’s own “letter”. Secondly, from this thesis I would take up the notion of “feeling” in Kant more deeply.

As we saw above, it was the “feeling of a differentiation” which at the same time was a “feeling of a need”. This, in particular, is *moral feeling*. It is in the *feeling* of the *sublime* where one can see this *differentiation* most acutely, with respect to the limits ascribed to the sensible and Kant’s notion of “cotrapurposiveness”.

Yet, as noted in the Introduction, I take (within certain limits) my hermeneutical maxim what Kant expresses about Plato.

“I need not only remark that it is by no means unusual, upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject, whether in ordinary conversation or in writing, to find that we understand him better than he has understood himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention” (A313/B370).

It is a task for us to dig up ever and again the dark sides of these concepts to find ever-new ways of expressing them.

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