

Ontological Destruction of the Kantian Critique of the Paralogism of Rational Psychology

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Preview

In Kant, remarkably, and for the first time perhaps in the history of philosophy, the problem of the Ego receives an ontological signification. The critique of the paralogisms of rational psychology concerns, explicitly, this fundamental problem of the being of the ego. Kant's examination of this problem constitutes an essential moment of the history of modern philosophy. This examination results finally in the complete failure (*échec total*) to determine such a being, a failure that Kant attempts to pass off ultimately as a metaphysical impossibility. This is affirmed constantly through the labyrinthine analysis of the Transcendental Dialectic: what emerges from its difficulties, and obscurities, is that the being of the Ego can be neither determined (*circonscriit*), nor posited, metaphysically. The conclusion is unquestionably the following: the ego cogito does not contain in itself any sum, at least if, by the latter, one intends, as does rational psychology, the metaphysical and, in some way, absolute being of the 'I' (I'Ego).

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The Fundamental Presuppositions of Kantian Ontology: The Concrete Formal Structure of Being

In Kant, remarkably, and for the first time perhaps in the history of philosophy, the problem of the Ego receives an ontological signification. The critique of the paralogisms of rational psychology concerns, explicitly, this fundamental problem of the being of the *ego*.¹ Kant's examination of this problem constitutes an essential moment of the history of modern philosophy. This examination results finally in the complete failure (*échec total*) to determine such a being, a failure that Kant attempts to pass off ultimately as a metaphysical impossibility. This is affirmed constantly through the labyrinthine analysis of the *Transcendental Dialectic*: what emerges from its difficulties, and obscurities, is that the being of the Ego can be neither determined (*circonscrit*), nor posited, metaphysically. The conclusion is unquestionably the following: the *ego cogito* does not contain in itself any *sum*, at least if, by the latter, one intends, as does rational psychology, the metaphysical and, in some way, absolute being of the 'I' (*I'Ego*).

The ontological destruction of the Kantian critique imposes itself upon us as a task that cannot be deferred: one can no longer evade the question of knowing what idea of being is found at the origin of this systematical refusal to confer being to the *cogito* as such. There are implicit presuppositions that determine this philosophical position, according to which we are henceforth disallowed to say "I think, therefore I am," at least if we want to attribute any sense whatever to the

¹¹ [Henry refers to Kant's critique of metaphysical and theological doctrine of the soul, or *Seelenlehre*, in the first of the three principal parts of the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For Kant's distinction between, and characterization of, the three dialectical sciences (*Seelenlehre*, *Weltwissenschaft*, *Gotteserkenntnis*), see A 335, B 392 (as is customary, citations are to the A [1781] and B [1787] pagination of the *Akademie* edition of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*). For his description of the relation between them, and the "progressus" from *Seelenlehre* to *Gotteserkenntnis*, see A 337, B 395.—*Trans.*]

being who is implied in such a proposition. On the basis of which horizon must the proposition *cogito sum* contain a paralogism?

These questions challenge us to nothing less than the decisive elucidation of the very foundations of Kantian ontology. The task of such an elucidation could seem infinite, were we not already in possession of a guiding thread for our analysis. Kantian ontology as such is determined by absolutely general, and, in some way, final, philosophical presuppositions that we have denounced under the title of ontological monism.² These presuppositions, as we have seen, limit the philosophical horizon, arbitrarily, to only one region of being, that of transcendent being. Any philosophy that obeys the presuppositions of monism will find itself totally incapable of determining, if such there be, the subjectivity of the Ego; it will be able only to alter, to falsify, to disqualify it into the order of a transcendental reality, or it will observe, regarding its subject, a total agnosticism. In this last case, the problem that poses itself will be that of knowing if this agnosticism can be as total as one pretends, and if it is possible to discuss for so long something about which one is supposed to know nothing.

It is important to bring to light, then, the special form that ontological monism takes within Kantian philosophy. It is not that we should oppose this special determination to ontological monism as we have denounced it, in its most general and, in some way, absolute aspect: Kantian ontology is more a specification of ontological monism in general, a particular expression, a definite and systematic exposition, thereof. The subsumption of Kantian ontology to the horizon of the monism of transcendent being is not made here, by us, for architectonic reasons; it is a real subsumption. The structures of being that Kantianism implicitly presupposes in all of its analyses are, effectively, a historically and philosophically determined formulation of the structures and most general horizons of monism as such. The difficulty lies in the fact that Kantian ontology does not exhaust itself completely in this specification of the latter, in some way universal themes of monism; its fundamental presuppositions can often be found in fact there, in their original state, prior to their historically determined, specifically Kantian, mode of expression. The elucidation of the foundations of the Kantian critique must therefore follow in a way that affords a rigorous distinction between this specific form, and the most general essence, of monism. Our deepening of this distinction will lead to the idea of a solidarity, such that the relation between the essence and the historically manifest form thereof will not

² With this term of art, 'ontological monism,' Henry refers to *L'essence de manifestation*, 2 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1963), § 1, "The Clarification of the Concept of Phenomenon: Ontological Monism," 47-134. Therein, for Henry's treatment of its "persistence throughout history of [this] common ontological horizon," see *ibid.*, 60; for the implication that "it is on the foundation of an unexplained concept of phenomenon that philosophy has always posited and resolved its problems," see *ibid.*, 59. These passages evince the basic difference between ontologically monistic theories, which as such "*limitent arbitrairement l'horizon philosophique à une seule région de l'être, celle de l'être transcendant,*" and the specific character of Kant's own theory, which involves the more intricate, and important, interpretation of the theory of time as form of inner sense.—*Trans.*]

only be made more intelligible, it will appear within Kantianism itself. The essence will truly be present within the form. The thesis of a subsumption is not arbitrary.³ For

Kant, real knowledge (*connaissance réelle*) is phenomenal knowledge. In this way, Kantian ontology is governed by (*obéit*) phenomenological presuppositions, from which it clearly derives its legitimacy. But the concept of the phenomenon within Kantianism is subject to such a limitation that the philosophy that derives therefrom constitutes an unacceptable mutilation of the richness of being, as really given in the human experience of life. A phenomenon, according to Kant, is that which is given to sensibility and thought through the understanding. It follows that transcendence belongs originally to the being of the phenomenon so conceived. Sensibility is thus consciousness' power of intuition: however, this intuition does not create its object—if it created it, nothing would change [as it would have then to receive its own creation]—it finds it, encounters it. Only because human knowledge (*connaissance*) rests upon sensible intuition can Kant assert that it is finite. Through its power of intuition, consciousness addresses itself towards something that is inherently exterior to it, to a reality independent of it, and *transcendent* with respect to its own life, its own intimate being. The being of the phenomenon that is constituted by means of this sensible element, and is founded wholly upon it, will be itself transcendent. The exteriority of the phenomenon is something final in comparison to the otherwise absolute immanence of a purely subjective life. The exteriority or original transcendence of the phenomenon is related in this way to the condition to which the being of the phenomenon is submitted, according to which this phenomenon must always be received in intuition. The being of the phenomenon consists precisely in its being intuited (*intuïtionné*). Transcendence qualifies as a matter of principle the being of the phenomenon as thus subsumed, by virtue of an eidetic necessity, to this condition of the receptivity of intuition.

It is easy, now, to see that this transcendence, which characterizes, from an ontological point of view, the being of the phenomenon, receives in Kantianism a more precise meaning, to the degree that *Kantian intuition is always empirical intuition*. To empirical intuition, which gives to consciousness its content, Kant of course opposes the pure form of intuition. The possibility of a pure intuition is thus, explicitly, preserved. However, one should not forget that, in Kantianism, the idea of intuition is linked, decisively, to that of the irreducible receptivity of human knowledge (*connaissance humaine*). For pure intuition receives nothing and, thus, of itself, cannot in any way lead to knowledge. It is precisely because time is only a pure intuition, an 'empty intuition,' as Kant himself declares, that it cannot generate an object of perception, and that the knowledge of the I of inner sense, the form of which is time, does not receive from it any positive contribution. As a pure intuition, space is in no way able to fulfill here a role that time cannot.

³ [This paragraph, and its assertions of a relation between a specifically Kantian form of monism, and a general form of monism, makes sense only within the economy of *L'essence de manifestation*. One could also say that the latter, and its assertion of a relation between a specifically Kantian, and a general, form of monism makes sense only upon the addition of the argumentation contained herein.—*Trans.*]

If knowledge (*connaissance*) of the empirical self (*le moi empirique*) is possible only if supported by space, it is not because space is, in itself as a pure *form* of intuition, less empty than time.⁴ It is instead only that it offers its content in a way that allows the application of the categories and, notably, the categories of substance and causality. But this content is always an empirical content. The form of intuition designates only the way in which our knowledge must necessarily be fulfilled: pure intuition is still only an abstract condition and is, consequently, totally insufficient of itself to render consciousness effective. Intuition fulfills its role as a possibility-condition of effective human knowledge, and becomes a concrete function, when it is linked with the manifold of empirical elements, when it yields an empirical intuition. Pure intuition yields sense, then, only insofar as it unfolds the frame in which intuitive intentionality will find its fulfillment. This is given only through the form of sensation.

Sensation constitutes the core (*noyau*), from which the phenomenon will be constituted; it is the element that pure consciousness does not include in itself and that shows, consequentially, a region of being to which consciousness as such does not belong, and to which it has no access except through the intervention of intuition. Thought does not possess being, but rather its radical privation, through itself; it is outside of thought that what is termed reality, the efficacy of being, must be found. Reality is defined in Kant on the basis of sensibility: “sensation, says Kant, is what defines reality.”⁵ In a general way, the second postulate of empirical thought regarding the knowledge of *reality* (the emphasis is Kant’s own) of things, demands perception, and consequentially, a sensation, accompanied by consciousness, of the object the existence of which must be known. In this way, sensation really plays the role of an origin. *Existence finds in it its foundation*. Experience is possible only through it. Experience is always the empirical existence of an existence itself empirical.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* is an analysis of the general conditions of human knowledge (*connaissance*). This analysis is not at all exhausted in a reflection on the nature of this empirical element of sensation. It leads instead to the discovery of the presence, within all knowledge, of a non-empirical element, a pure form. However, already the analysis of pure intuition has brought us back unavoidably to the empirical element as that which secretly animates the power of even pure intuition. This is because human knowledge is receptive, because it orients itself toward that which is sensed, while itself taking the form of a sensible knowledge. The pure character of the form of intuition is in a certain sense only a means for empirical intuition to attain its end. If we now consider the principles of

⁴ [I translate “*moi*” almost without exception as “self,” and otherwise as “subject;” I do so, following Douglas Brick, in spite of several instances (cf. Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Douglas Brick [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993], 33-34) for which “subject,” in this Kantian context, would have been more natural. I have recorded the French term in each case of the latter usage. I normally translate “*connaissance*” as “cognition,” and translate it otherwise as “knowledge;” I record the French term in each case of the latter usage as well.—*Trans.*]

⁵ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud (Paris: PUF, 1944), 303.

understanding, we note that they too constitute only an empty form, incapable of leading of themselves to real knowledge.⁶ “We cannot, Kant says, understand the possibility of anything through the simple category; rather we must always have an intuition in order to demonstrate the objective reality of the pure concept of the understanding.” In other terms, the effective use of the category is always an empirical use. By itself, the category is not yet a concept of the object: “without the condition of intuition,” a pure intellectual concept “is of a transcendental use, that is, no use at all.”⁷ The transcendental use of the principles of the understanding does not get to any real knowledge, but rather to the transcendental appearance where reason loses itself within an illusion of its own making.⁸

One could also express the fundamental ideas just described by saying that, for Kant, real knowledge (*connaissance réelle*) is always synthetic knowledge (*connaissance synthétique*). One should understand by this that the subjective condition of thought does not in itself possess any reality. Consciousness realizes itself only when one adds the real element of being, sensation, to its subjective condition. Truly, for Kant, the subjective condition of thought acquires its sense, and avoids illusion (*délire*), only when it is turned toward, and focused on, a radically heterogeneous element, its intention and desire. Consciousness is synthetic because it realizes itself only when, to this intention, the empirical and concrete element that fulfills the subjective intention of consciousness is added. This element is genuinely transcendent with respect to the proper being of this intentionality. More precisely, this intention for Kant does not yet possess any proper being of its own. It is but a logical condition of human consciousness; even the qualifier ‘subjective,’ with which we denote it, has, fundamentally, only a logical significance. It is simply a reflexive determination that asserts that the pure element of knowledge is neither empirical, nor includes within itself any being.

Taken by itself, the transcendental condition of human knowledge (*connaissance humaine*) is only a shadow, a phantom. It is deprived fundamentally of the efficacy of real being. This is why it must go look, outside of itself, *in the element of transcendent being*, for such an efficacy and, by so doing, become an intuitive and receptive consciousness. Regarding this subjective foundation of knowledge, one remains in doubt. But for as long as one pretends to remain with this concept, the response will remain tautological; it will be able only to repeat this concept, rather than bring the positive element of a solution. The concept

⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 324. [For Kant’s assertion that the categories, shorn of the formal condition of sensibility, has “only a transcendental use, that is, no use at all” see A 248, B 305. For Kant’s assertion that “the categories” and in particular “the category of substance” cannot be applied to inner intuition, see B 422. —*Trans.*]

⁸ [Henry refers here to Kant’s doctrine of “transcendental illusion.” Kant dedicates the Dialectic (which would “expose the illusion in transcendent judgments” (A 297, B 354) as a “threefold transcendental illusion” in “three illusory sciences” of “transcendental psychology, transcendental cosmology, and transcendental theology” [A 397] respectively). It thus gives “the logic of illusion [*Schein*]” (A 293, B 350). For Kant’s general definition of *transcendentale Illusion*, see A 297, B 354. See also the standard work by Michelle Grier, *Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).—*Trans.*]

“turns always on itself, and never allows us to penetrate further into any questions that concern synthetic knowledge.”⁹ The latter—that defines, we repeat, real knowledge—implies the addition (*adjonction*) of an intuition; this is why it can be termed synthetic. It is only through such a synthetic demand (*injonction*) that the transcendental condition of thought can genuinely perform the function of a subjective foundation of knowledge, to guide the constitution of an experience that remains always turned toward objectivity. To designate this transcendental condition, the expression ‘subjective intention’ is inadequate: we introduce it here in order to show that it is fundamentally inappropriate to [the problem-context of] Kantian thought and that, as soon as one inflects the latter toward a phenomenological, rather than a merely reflexive, interpretation of this ‘subjective’ foundation, one supersedes the latter.¹⁰

Indeed, the indigence of the foundation of human knowledge must now receive its real meaning. For this indigence does not refer only to the fact that, reduced to the concept, knowledge remains tautological, a kind of analytic reduplication of a purely logical principle, that can be transformed into a real experience only through the condition of intuition. More fundamentally, it indicates the impossibility that the concept, through itself, be able to achieve either an objective cognition (*connaissance*), or even a self-cognition (*connaissance*). *The ultimate ontological meaning of this indigence thus comes to light for us, it is expressed by the fact that, for Kant, experience is always experience of an object.*¹¹ What is refused by Kantian ontology a priori—this refusal is not deduced in any way from any other problematic or position—is *the idea of a truly subjective experience, of an immanent life that would not as such be equivalent to a non-entity.*

The metaphysical indigence of the power of knowledge as understood and described at length by Kant, most notably within the critique of the paralogisms, is intimately linked to this final ontological indigence regarding the being of subjectivity, which will not again and as such be the object of any thematization by Kant. The necessity that the faculty of understanding find the element of experience and the efficacy of being outside of itself can only be understood on the basis of this primordial ontological indigence that afflicts this faculty in its proper *being* and renders it a simple logical condition, *and no longer a subjectivity*. Experience in this way receives a univocal meaning; it is the experience of a transcendent being exterior to, and altogether estranged from, the power of knowledge itself. The idea of a transcendental inner experience, of the life of this power of knowledge as such, is wholly absent. Never has the philosophy of the

⁹ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, 296. [For Kant’s assertion that regarding the “transcendental subject of thoughts = x” we can “never have the least concept,” see A 346, B 404. As Henry suggests, Kant depicts there the way that “we revolve around a constant circle, since in order to make any judgment regarding it we must always already make use of its presentation.”—*Trans.*]

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, trans. J. Barni (Paris: Flammarion, 1976), 334.

¹¹ [Henry refers here to Kant’s well-known formula that “the conditions for the possibility of experience as such are simultaneously the conditions for the possibility of objects of experience” (A 158, B 197).—*Trans.*]

subject been further removed from the demands of a theory focused on *what constitutes the being of the subjectivity of the subject*.

Kantian ontology results in the illumination of a determinate region of being. The determination of this, however, implies the dismemberment (*mutilation*) of a more fundamental region of existence, which is ignored entirely. The positive content of Kantian ontology can be expressed in this way: the existence of an object and, generally, any such existence, is possible only on the condition of certain fundamental structures, the internal coherence of which establish the horizon of being. How is the existence of something in general possible? How is it that this something, whatever it be, emerges into being? The answer of the *Critique* consists in the enumeration of a certain number of conditions that are, essentially; concept, pure intuition, and empirical intuition. Taken together, these conditions determine the formal structure of any existent, and this formal structure is nothing other than Kant's answer to the problem of being.¹² Within this formal structure, that defines being in general, the idea of a content that is not added to this form but that is integral to it, is included originarily. The concept of being that Kantian ontology elaborates contains within itself an empirical prescription. What one too frequently terms, with Kant, the form of knowledge, is still only an abstract moment and, thus, unreal (*irréel*); it is not coequal with the concrete structure of being as such. Yet it is only by means of the function of this concrete structure that anything can be given and that, at the same time, it proves itself capable of a *progressus* in the knowledge (*l'intelligence*) of being.

The Repetition of the Fundamental Presuppositions of the Kantian Ontology within the Problem of the Determination of the Being of the Ego

The problem that Kantian ontology cannot evade, however—by means of this problem, instead, it must prove its validity—is that of the *being* of the Ego. One must understand whether the being of the Ego is homogeneous to the formal concrete structure of being as Kant comprehends it. The problem of this homogeneity is not posed directly by the author of the *Critique*, it is addressed in the Transcendental Dialectic, however, insofar as it calls into question explicitly the legitimacy of rational psychology. If the latter is subjected to a systematic critique, it is precisely because it pretends to determine the being of the Ego without taking into account the formal structure of being as elaborated in Kantian ontology. The principle of the Kantian critique is as simple as it is clear; it consists essentially in an examination of the results of rational psychology, in which these results are confronted by the fundamental prescriptions of Kantian ontology.

Rational psychology is not empirical psychology. This means that it will fail necessarily in its attempt to determine the being of the Ego. For Kant, the

¹² [Henry refers here to Kant's claim that "...the proud name of ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general...must give way to the more modest title of a transcendental analytic" (Cf. A 247, B 304).—*Trans.*]

concrete formal structure of being implies an empirical prescription. Rational psychology claims to constitute itself as a science, and accomplish a real knowledge of the soul (*connaissance réelle de l'âme*), on the basis of pure thought, prescinding from all of the empirical predicates that would compromise the rational purity of this science. But a [claim to] knowledge in which there is no intervening empirical predicate could neither be synthetic, nor, thus, amount to real knowledge. It could offer only transcendental, and thus empty, predicates. These predicates (substantiality, simplicity, identity, and distinct existence) are certainly predicates of thought (*la pensée*). But thought is nothing more than the logical condition of consciousness and, in itself, purely abstract. These predicates offer nothing more than an empty abstraction, and afford at most a purely analytic signification. They are in no way real predicates, the real predicates of the real being of the Ego. Thus, rational psychology does not succeed in founding a real knowledge of the subject (*moi*), because it could do so only with the help of empirical predicates, based in turn on the effectiveness of a sensible intuition, which it claims to do without.

It is not only from the side of intuition, however, but also from the side of the concept, that rational psychology violates the prescriptions of the concrete formal structure of being. As nothing more than an empirical intuition, it does not have a true concept of the self. First, a true concept is more than a category; it is a concept of an object, and a concept of an object determines an intuition as an object of possible experience. The determination of the concept is linked to its real use, which means to its connection with an intuition. Now, pure psychology lacks this, by hypothesis. Furthermore, it would be necessary that this concept of an object be that of the self (*moi*), specifically. However, from a subjective condition of thought, this concept [of a self] cannot derive this second specification, which is as essential to the accomplishment of effective knowledge as its first determination, as a concept of the object. Because if the subjective condition of knowledge can be assimilated to the concept, taken in its most general meaning, it is nevertheless still only the concept of an object in general, and in no way the concept of a self: “knowledge, says Kant, is not a representation that distinguishes a particular object,”¹³ and thus one would not originally be able to designate the

¹³ [Henry refers here to A 346, B 404. There, Kant diagnoses “four paralogisms of a transcendental doctrine of the soul...” in his account of “the nature of our thinking being.” Henry refers specifically to the concluding sentence of the following, famous passage “At the ground of this doctrine we can place nothing but the simple and in content for itself wholly empty representation I, of which one cannot even say that it is a concept, but a mere consciousness that accompanies every concept. Through this I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks, nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x, which is recognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and about which, in abstraction, we can never have even the least concept; because of which we therefore turn in a constant circle, since we must always already avail ourselves of the representation of it at all times in order to judge anything about it; we cannot separate ourselves from this inconvenience, because the consciousness in itself is not even a representation distinguishing a particular object, but rather a form of representation in general, insofar as it is to be called a cognition; for of it alone can I say that through it I think anything.—*Trans.*]

concept of the particular object that I call self.¹⁴ Rational psychology lacks both the intuition, and the concept, of self. Relying solely on the subjective form of thought, one finally does not have at one's disposal any of the conditions that are prescribed by the concrete formal structure of being, as elucidated by Kantian ontology.

How to determine, then, the being of the ego?¹⁵ The theory of inner experience seems to be a solution to the problem of the determination of the ego.¹⁶ In many respects, this theory is a simple reaffirmation of the general presuppositions of Kantian ontology; inner experience determines the being of the Ego by submitting it to the general conditions that constitute the concrete formal structure of being, while rational psychology, by disregarding these conditions, improperly claims to determine such a being. Therefore, inner experience will be accomplished by means of an intuitive determination of a concept and will result in an effective knowledge of a phenomenon, namely the empirical self (*moi*).

In order to *be*, then, the self has first of all to be received in intuition, and in a clearly determined manner. On one hand, a specifically empirical element must be provided; this will be the sensible impression such as it is received in inner sense; on the other hand, this impression will be submitted to the form of pure intuition, which is time. More precisely, inner sense is nothing but this pure form of temporal intuition. Further, the empirical impression, once received in inner sense, must then be submitted to the pure principles of understanding; that is, to the categories. The latter will determine this impression, and will assign to it a determinate position, alongside all other givens, within the general system of experience. It is precisely this necessity, of subsuming this empirical impression to the categories in order to respect the concrete formal structure of being, that leads Kant to reject psychological idealism. The category, and in particular the categories of substance and causality, can only be applied to a permanent object. Inner sense is powerless to exhibit this permanence, since it is, in itself, nothing but the temporal form in which everything flows and nothing perdures. It is only within space that one finds impressions capable of providing the material of an object that could be subsumed under those categories that require the existence of a permanent [element]. The interior life, that is, the subjective succession of impressions in inner sense, can be constituted by the organizing action of the

¹⁴ There is, then, for Kant only one type of experience, even if there obtains a subjective experience different than external experience (in the sense that certain factors constitutive of objective knowledge, like the categories, do not yet intervene), but this is governed, like the latter, by certain ultimate presuppositions, which are those of ontological monism in general, and which define precisely only one fundamental type of experience.

¹⁵ [This aspect of Henry's analysis, and this particular passage, is retained without amendment in the better-known, later account (Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 113-4), across two long paragraphs from "How to determine..." until "...a truly philosophical understanding of Kant's theory of the self." This series of positions and claims forms the basis of Henry's critique of Kant in both contexts, even if the rhetorical focus in the later account shifts to a "metaphysics of representativity."—*Trans.*]

¹⁶ [For Kant's assertion that "I have an inner experience...which expresses the perception of oneself," see Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 343, B 401.—*Trans.*]

category, that is, thought and known, only if the subject of knowledge grounds this on an objective world and on a permanent order of objects within space.

Consideration of the refutation of problematic idealism obstructs considerably (*gène considérablement*) a truly philosophical understanding of Kant's theory of the self (*moi*). Fundamental problems concerning its ultimate interpretation of being are, in this context, ignored. Kant's interest here shifts toward the derivative question of whether an autonomous subjective series and outer experience, obtain together, that is, whether self-knowledge in time is an integral part (*solidaire*) of the determination of an objective external and universal order. In posing this question, one wonders whether for Kant there are not *two types of experience*, or whether this duality is not illusory, such that it reduces to a single experience of those real phenomena objectively determined by the categories. One should understand, however, that even if Kant had admitted the existence of an autonomous subjective series, the mode according to which the *being* of such a series would be given in our experience, would remain subject to the fundamental ontological prescriptions of Kantian monism, of ontological monism in this its final and most general form.¹⁷

A truly philosophical critique of the Kantian interpretation of the being of the self (*moi*) must develop in two directions. It first must show, how, within a strictly monistic conception of objective experience, Kantian ontology can claim to determine the being of this self. It then must show how the failure (*échec*) of this determination brings Kant to position the problem of the ego on another level, that seems to escape the presuppositions of the monism of 'experience,' understood in a strictly Kantian sense, but that remains within the horizon of ontological monism in a more general, and more fundamental, way. Within this horizon the real being of the Ego can neither arise nor be determined.

The Impossibility of a Determination of the Being of the Ego within the Ontological Horizon of Kantianism; the Failure (*échec*) of Intuition, the Problem of the Specificity of the Matter of Inner Sense, and the Theory of the Affection of the Self in its Self-Positing

It is a basic ontological absurdity to claim to be able to determine the being of the Ego by means of a formal ontological structure that remains subject, definitively, to the idea of the receptivity of cognition (*connaissance réceptrice*), such that the being of this structure as such can only be understood in light of the fundamental phenomenon of transcendence. In fact, and as we have seen, intuition plays a central role in the constitution of the concrete ontological structure that Kant elaborates. The problem of the being of the Ego thus becomes the problem of the knowledge of the Ego in intuition. *However, the Ego is that which is not, on*

¹⁷ The specific difference of self-consciousness lies only in the fact that in the latter, the manifold of intuition is determined by the category. Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, § 25, 159. [Henry here appears to cite the second edition deduction, § 25 (B 157-9), and its discussion of inner sense as a "limiting condition" which renders "consciousness of oneself [as] far from being cognition of oneself."—*Trans.*]

principle, capable of being intuited. That which is found by means of the intuitive power of knowledge is never the Ego as such, but is rather, and essentially, the not-I. How, when it transcends itself [in its movement] toward an object given in intuition, could the power of knowledge come to the idea that that which it finds in this way, within the element of transcendent being, is an Ego? How could it take such an element not only for any Ego, but also for its [own] Ego?

The problem of self-cognition in intuition (*se connaître dans l'intuition*) can without question be resolved. But this problem is posed in the first place only because the power of intuition is in reality the Ego. The task of a self-knowledge (*se connaître*) in and through intuition arises only for a power of apprehension that is always already linked, essentially, to subjectivity as such. This [subjectivity] pertains in principle to a transcendental sphere. An impersonal transcendental field would not know how to form the intention to find *it* in intuition; this it could do only if it were in reality a transcendental *Ego*. But nor would the transcendental Ego be able to find itself, in turn, within outer intuition. Nothing intentional can be given as an Ego. The empirical object that arises in sensation is rather, on principle, a not-I. This character results from an essential limitation in the structure of intuition as such, based on the ontological phenomenon of distance and alienation. In virtue of such a prescription, the power of intuition cannot find *its own ego* in the transcendent empirical element that it intuits; it could do it only on the condition of *henceforth no longer being itself* (such that it would be absurd to say, then, that it is 'its own'). The self (*moi*) would not know itself in intuition.

With a certain obstinacy, Kant nonetheless claims the intervention of empirical intuition in the determination the being of the self in real cognition (*connaissance réelle*).¹⁸ It is precisely the absence of any intuitive element in the system of rational psychology that causes the failure of such a system. Knowledge of the soul (*la connaissance de l'âme*) can be advanced by means of pure concepts, but these presuppose an application to outer intuition. The spontaneity of thought does not contain within itself the being of a self: the determination of such a being can be realized only by beginning from a manifold (*divers*) [of intuition], with respect to which thought must remain receptive. While the intuitive manifold (*divers*) is that which one finds shorn, in principle, of any element of subjectivity, Kant instead sees in this manifold the first condition of the existence of the self. Self-knowledge presumes, in Kant's view, the effective apprehension of such a manifold of empirical intuition. One knows oneself only by means of the mediation of the receptivity of intuition, "one does not somehow create oneself." The concept that one has of oneself cannot be acquired a priori, but only empirically. *Self-consciousness is not, in Kant, identical to the pure spontaneity of thought.* This consciousness can be fulfilled, can truly become self-consciousness, only on the condition that it locates a manifold in inner sense, with respect to which it is passive; "the manner in which the manifold is given in spirit without spontaneity,

¹⁸ [Brick has "Kant nevertheless stubbornly insists that intuition intervene to determine self-being" (Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 115) for this sentence, as carried over into the later essay.—*Trans.*]

must, because of this distinction, be termed sensibility.” As Kant writes elsewhere, “for the knowledge of myself, in addition to consciousness, independently of my thinking, I need also an intuition of the manifold within me in order to determine such a thought.”¹⁹

In Kant, then, the phenomenon of consciousness has no ontological signification. It does not contain within it the being of the Ego. Consciousness must look for such a being outside of itself, in a transcendent element. Therefore, *the Kantian theory of the self (moi) is based on a transcendent element that is deprived in principle of the essence of all subjectivity*. The constitution of the being of the self is certainly not achieved in the reception of this empirical element. If this constitution must thus be pursued through the significance of objectification, if it requires the intervention of the categories, it is precisely because it begins logically with the intuition of a manifold. For only a manifold requires unification, by means of the synthetic action of the understanding, in order to produce an object of a genuine experience. There is an internal link between the powers of cognition (*connaissance*) as Kant describes them, and a thoroughgoing comprehension of their metaphysical unity as can be provided uniquely by the theory of the self. It is because the being of the Ego is given originally in intuition that it must be constructed in accordance with the exigences of the principles of the understanding and, consequently, subsumed under a concept. *It is for this very reason, though, there is strictly speaking no concept of self: the concept needs to search for the self outside of the self because it does not contain it.*

It is true that the idea of the receptivity of intuition may seem limited by the idea that Kant opposes thereto, that of an intuition that creates its object. An understanding whose representation would at the same time produce the existence of its object would not need to perform a synthesis of a manifold in order to construct the being of the Ego. However, and first, this creative intuition is explicitly refused to human cognition; we have to recognize, second, that even if it were granted, it would not be by means of such an intuition that the ego could receive a positive determination. If the power of knowing were capable of creating its object, it would nonetheless have then to find [receive] it again. Intuition is a power that addresses itself in principle to transcendent being. If intuition were to become creative, the transcendental element that it would give itself would simply

¹⁹ It appears, then, that knowledge of the self and knowledge of the external object are both exclusive and homogeneous. They are exclusive because attention must choose and because self-consciousness (*connaissance*) cannot merely accompany external knowledge; it cannot be only a marginal phenomenon that occupies the sense of consciousness only when the external object recedes into the background. However, in the natural attitude, in which one is interested only in the world, there is no room for any self-consciousness. This implies a modification of the intentional aim (*visée intentionnelle*) of consciousness, the advent of an explicit thought (*l'avènement d'une pensée explicite*) [thereof]. If knowledge of the self and knowledge of the world are exclusive, it is because they are homogeneous: they are both linked to the irruption (*surissement*) of their respective object in the element of transcendent being. This is why they cannot, in reality, be contemporary, at least in their explicit form. The ontological identity of the spheres in which these two cognitions (*connaissances*) look for the being of their object prohibits however either of them from containing within them an essential reference to subjectivity; the latter could only emerge within a specific ontological milieu.

receive a new signification. This could not, however, alter its fundamental ontological status. In virtue of such a meaning, the transcendent element would be received by intuition as if it emanated from intuition itself. It would remain nonetheless a transcendent element and, as such, something found by consciousness.

Intuition is always receptive. It cannot, therefore, make manifest in any way the being of an Ego. Even on the hypothesis that it creates its object—a hypothesis that has, we repeat, a purely regulative status—it remains oriented fundamentally toward an object, toward an element that primarily has no ontological reference to the sphere of subjectivity. Kant has shown that there is no autonomous self-consciousness because there is no creative intuition. But, in reality, it is the very idea of intuition, whether receptive or creative, that is essentially inadequate to the determination of the original being of the Ego: it destroys a priori the idea of an autonomy and of an innateness (*innéité*) without which, clearly, there can be no *self*-consciousness. The idea of intuition as a power to determine the being of the Ego is in fact incompatible with the fundamental ontological conditions that establish the possibility of such an Ego.

If the being of the Ego is that which cannot, on principle, be intuited, then it must be possible to show—focusing no longer on the eidetic status of the Ego, but rather on the element exhibited in intuition—that it is impossible to discover in such an element anything that constitutes any real reference to intuition. The proof of this impossibility can be gained through an *examination of the matter of inner sense*. It is not easy to determine what exactly such a matter is for Kant. Insofar as inner sense is nothing but the pure form of temporal intuition, it seems initially to possess no matter of its own. As designating only the manner in which spirit apprehends the manifold of outer intuition, inner sense can receive the transcendental significance that the schematism affords it. According to the latter, a pure time, deprived so to speak of all irreducibly intuitive properties, can be conformed to the action of the categories and serve as a mediating principle. But the knowledge of the self, as we have seen, implies the existence of a manifold that cannot be confused with that of external intuition.

In fact, no concept of the self (*moi*), and no matter specific to the self *qua* object (*objet moi*), could result from the subsumption of any such manifold, or by means of its effectuation. It pertains to the manifold of intuition, instead, to specify the object of knowledge in the case that this knowledge is a self-knowledge. Because no concept of the self as object obtains independently of intuition, the responsibility of founding a concept—that will be able to become the concept of the self truly only when it will determine a *specific* intuition—falls to intuition. It falls to inner sense to provide a manifold that is not merely indeterminate. But this exigence, according to which a specific manifold is required in order to accomplish an effective knowledge of the self, encounters an impossibility in principle. For this manifold is always indeterminate. Sensation, as received in inner sense, does not contain within it any indication that would allow us to refer it to an Ego rather than an object as such. For Maine de Biran, muscular sensation cannot yield knowledge of the real activity of the Ego; sensation does not contain this activity,

to which it can be referred only subsequently, and only on the condition that we possess an original revelation of this activity in itself.²⁰ We cannot employ Kant's blind *Empfindung* in any way at all toward self-knowledge; it could be referred to the latter only if the being of the Ego is given to us otherwise, in an ordinary experience of ourselves.

It is true that, in the second edition of the *Critique*, the origin of the sensation of inner intuition is, if not the theme of an explicit problematic, at least the object of a theory. As a consequence, the question of the specificity of the manifold of inner intuition is, in fact, no longer that of an indeterminate manifold, but rather one that contains impressions that originate from the determination of this sense by acts of the understanding. This determination, insofar as it pertains to the mind (*l'esprit*), constitutes nothing other than the affection of the by the self, an affection through which spirit produces the impressions that it experiences in inner sense. Do such impressions not constitute a clearly defined manifold, consequently capable of conferring to the concept that will be applied thereto—in order to organize and determine a concept of the object—the specific character of a concept of the self (*moi*)? The theory of the affection of inner sense by the power of knowledge seems, thus, to bring a decisive support to Kant's effort to make manifest (*faire surgir*) the existence of the self in the element of empirical intuition.

The feeling (*sentiment*) of the self can become manifest only at the level of psychology. The existence of the self, like all existence(s) in general, is inexorably linked to an empirical element. A priori representations themselves are said to exist only to the extent that they pertain to inner sense, as modifications of the mind (*l'esprit*).²¹ Kant does not confuse transcendental knowledge and inner sense. By this fundamental distinction, however, he rejects deliberately the sentiment and the existence of the self from the side of inner sense, or rather, from the side of a modification that pertains to this sense and that obtains as the repercussion within it of an original act of the power of knowledge. When this power performs the synthesis of the manifold of outer intuition, it affects inner sense at the same time; it belongs to inner sense henceforth in the form of an impression, the after-effect (*contre-coup*) of its exercise. The original act of this power, and the impression that results therefrom, should certainly not be confused: *it is only in, and by means of, this impression that spirit becomes aware (prend conscience) of itself. The self-consciousness of spirit obeys the presuppositions of Kantian ontology. It is far from the case that the empirical element need intervene only in this result (élaboration) of self-knowledge; this empirical element is already required as the condition of the possibility of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness (connaissance) is only the conceptual determination of the empirical element that derives from the affection of sense by the mind (l'esprit). It*

²⁰ [For Henry's account of Maine de Biran, see his *Philosophie et phénoménologie du corps. Essai sur l'ontologie biranienne* (Paris: PUF, 1965), Ch. I ("Les présupposés philosophiques de l'analyse biranienne du corps"), and particularly § 3 ("La théorie de l'Ego et le problème de l'âme").—*Trans.*]

²¹ [The phrase 'modifications of the mind' occurs at A 99, in the context of the first of the three syntheses; "regardless of the place of origin of our presentations, as modifications of the mind they yet belong to inner sense" (*ibid.*).—*Trans.*]

is the organization of inner experience by the categories and the constitution of the object-self (*l'objet-moi*), the empirical self. It is in this determination of a specific empirical intuition that the concept receives, perhaps, the meaning of being a concept of the [specific] object that is the self.

The theory of the affection of inner sense proves to be incapable of founding the specificity of the intuitive manifold that is supposed to contain the existence of the self. Three difficulties should be highlighted:

When the power of knowledge effects the synthesis of the manifold of outer intuition, the category that performs this synthesis does so through the mediation of time. Inner sense intervenes here only as a transcendental function. Its material is provided to it, in reality, by outer intuition; the object of consciousness is constituted on the basis of outer intuition. In the whole of this *processus*, there is no place either for the existence, or for the thought, of the self (*moi*) as such. The latter can be brought to light only if the theme of consciousness is subject to a radical modification, in accord with which thought, rather than focus on the external object, would reflect instead on the impression that the first act of knowledge is supposed to have left in inner sense.²² However, inner sense receives

²² In his remarkable work *L'Idéalisme kantien*, Lachièze-Rey has shown clearly how Kant is unable to link the impression of inner sense to the self (*moi*). But the changes to the Kantian theory that this author deems necessary do not constitute, in our opinion, a satisfactory solution to the problem of the passivity of the self. He suggests that “it should be granted that the self is first present to itself via the determinable object and not only via the determining subject and the spiritual activity of formal construction. The self (*moi*) makes itself into an object; it poses itself as originally passive, first with respect to (*vis-à-vis*) itself, and then with respect to other objects that, in the *Übergang*, appear equally as posited by it, in such a way that it can then be considered as affecting itself (*s'impressionnant*) externally and internally. This self-position of the self as an inflection point of the *Setzung*, and as a determinable object, will remain constant throughout all of the transformations of the phenomena of inner sense that transcendental consciousness effects, and it is precisely why they will remain always, in reality, phenomena of inner sense.” Self-position, this commentator continues, “precedes necessarily position [of the subject with-] in itself or [the position of another object] relative to self” (Lachièze-Rey, *L'Idéalisme kantien*, 174-5). One cannot reduce interiority to passivity, however, as Lachièze-Rey would have been right to do if this passivity were nothing more than a transcendental inner experience. But the self (*moi*) that effects its own objectivity through self-positing (*l'auto-position*) lacks interiority in principle; the problem of the originary self (*moi originaire*) will always remain. The determinable self may emanate from the original self, but it should not be confused with the latter; it no longer belongs to the sphere of absolute immanence. The impression that is inserted within it is still related to only a transcendent term. The relation (*l'appartenance*) that we are attempting to make explicit is still only an ideal relation. The interpretation of the passivity of the self remains determined, in spite of Lachièze-Rey's declarations, by the preoccupations of a philosophy essentially oriented towards objective knowledge. Thus, the elucidation of the being of the ego conforms to (*obéit*) the presuppositions of monism. This can be seen clearly when Lachièze-Rey, interpreting the *Übergang*, declares that in this work the self replaces the Universe, or the object in general, as the correlate of spiritual activity, and thus becomes the imperative (*l'impératif*) of consciousness. Certainly, the self that now provides the term of the construction is borrowed from the originary self, but it remains nonetheless an ideal, a term to be determined: it is not a power capable of an experience of an impression. The idea of self-position is retained explicitly in order to explain the originary phenomenon of passivity, but it serves only to explain the representation of this phenomenon. One cannot understand how Lachièze-Rey could escape the objections that he himself addresses to Kant, and how receptivity could retain the interiority without which one is driven to an infinite regress.

here a completely different signification. It no longer coincides with transcendental time, which collaborates with the category in order to allow for the determination of the manifold of outer intuition. It ceases in reality to be a constitutive element of the power of knowledge, oriented toward the determination of inner experience and toward the creation of the objective universe. It now designates the faculty of living a subjective impression, the power to be affected. That which has the power to be affected is nothing other than a subject (*subjectivité*). Subjectivity alone is capable of experiencing an impression, of receiving and living it.

The originality of the Kantian thesis of inner sense appears, then, to reside in the fact that Kant confers upon it a transcendental significance, oriented fundamentally toward the constitution of objective experience. *However, the ancient psychological function of inner sense is retained by Kant, subreptically. It is this function alone that allows for an inner experience. The latter is based entirely on this acceptance of inner sense, and its pretention to afford an experience of the self.* However, this traditional meaning of inner sense is shrouded in an essential ontological obscurity. With the theory of inner sense, philosophical thought is at the threshold (*rode aux frontières*) of the idea of subjectivity.²³ But the latter remains unclarified. The ontological phenomenon of revelation is not the subject of a systematic elucidation. Instead, it is denatured by an empiricist interpretation of impression, considered as an opaque psychological element somehow capable of self-knowledge. The idea of inner sense is linked to that of an empirical psychology. This interpretation of inner sense is absorbed wholly by Kant, and then juxtaposed with a transcendental interpretation, which is also forced upon inner sense.

In spite of these two construals—essentially heterogeneous and juxtaposed in a completely confounded manner—inner sense as conceived by Kant cannot in any way fulfill the function that is ultimately conferred upon it; to account for self-affection. The idea of subjectivity, which alone can constitute the ontological foundation for the affection of the self by its impressions, is not incorporated within either of the two perspectives, empiricist or transcendental, which intervene within the Kantian theory of inner sense. Empiricism refuses the idea of a power, in itself non-empirical, of being affected. Kant recognizes that the existence of the power of knowledge is certainly not empirical, but two irreducible characters identify it as fundamentally incapable of founding an experience in which a concrete Ego lives (*vit*) its impressions. First, this power is oriented, decisively, toward the constitution of objective experience; it designates merely a spontaneity, an organizing activity which grasps a foreign content in order to order it within the form of a world (rather than an apprehension of an impression that belongs in some way to this apprehension as such). Second, such a power is not originally self-conscious: it is not subjective—at least if we want to give to this word any signification besides that of ‘transcendental’ in a Kantian sense.

²³ [*“Rode aux frontières”* could be translated as “approaches the boundary.” Brick here has “Kant takes the metaphysics of representativity to the limit, to that extreme point where claiming ultimately to found itself, to subordinate its own condition to representation, it falls into the abyss and self-destructs” (Henry, *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*, 124).—*Trans.*]

At this point, the impression of inner sense can only hover (*flotter*) in front of the mind (*l'esprit*) as a sort of neutral sensation, or be submitted to the determining action of the category in order to be assigned to it a place in an objective universe. To be clear, inner sense assumes in Kantianism, successively, two functions that confer upon it, alternately, an empirical interpretation and a transcendental interpretation. In the first, sensation is given initially as an empirical impression, according to a mysterious *processus* that is accomplished by 'inner sense.' For this process inner sense is only the verbal expression. This sensation is then (it matters little here whether this is a chronological, or only logical, order) subsumed, by means of the mediation of time (and in this way inner sense accomplishes its transcendental function) to the informing activity of the category. But this sensation, initially blind and then positioned within a world, is not yet the sensation experienced by the self. The subjective experience of this impression totally escapes Kant's systematization.

The problem at the center of these difficulties is that of passivity. It is remarkable that Kantianism, that has so insisted on the finitude of human cognition (*connaissance humaine*), and on the essentially receptive character of such cognition, has in fact not elaborated any real theory of passivity. This paradox can be attenuated if we notice that the ontological phenomenon of passivity can only be elucidated correlatively to that of subjectivity. With regard to the latter, too, however, Kantianism is altogether without resources (*totalemt d muni*). The absence of any ontology of subjectivity is veiled to the eyes of an inattentive observer, in a theory conformed to the *telos* of the objective determination of the object. The latter monopolizes interest. The problem of the *subjectivity* of the subject of knowledge is easily evaded by means of formulas such as the following: "The subject knows itself only through the object," "the activity of the mind (*l'esprit*) consists in the determination of objective relations," etc. But a theory of 'feeling' (*sentir*), that no system of the knowledge can avoid indefinitely, brings to the forefront the problem of this subjectivity of the power of knowledge, and the lacuna that undermines so many philosophies from within, can be fully illuminated.

The examination of the passive self allows us to reveal such a lacuna within Kantianism. It allows us to understand that Kant could not in any way account for the phenomenon of the passivity of the Ego with respect to its impressions, for the reason that he had no ontology of subjectivity. In order to speak of a passive self, it is necessary that passivity become a character of the very *being* itself of the Ego. It is only in the light of the specific idea of the being of the Ego that the passivity of such a being can be understood within the relevant ontological horizon. In this way the passivity of the Ego cannot be compared to that of a thing, termed passive when it undergoes the action of an [other] exterior thing. In the case of the ego, passivity signifies its making itself passive, in its being; it lives its passivity originally, in the mode of transcendental inner experience. The Ego can be termed passive only because it is an absolute subjectivity. We understand in this way, that the impression of inner sense can be termed passive only if it affects a subjectivity that adopts the specific mode of

passivity, so as to be able to apprehend such an impression. The apprehension of the impression is a passive mode of subjective life (*la vie subjective*). In order that inner sense designate this passive mode of the life of absolute subjectivity, it should be nothing but such a subjectivity, or at least refer explicitly to an essential structure of the latter. But the idea of a genuine subjectivity is wholly absent in Kantianism.

For this fundamental reason, it is not possible, within a Kantian perspective, to account for the phenomenon of the passivity of the Ego. The various attempts that have been made in this direction by Kant or by some of his commentators can only lead to failure (*échec*). In particular, *the idea of a self-positing of the self* that emerges in the *Übergang* cannot constitute a solution to the problem that we are considering. The self-positing of the self (*moi*) as passive can provide the milieu in which impressions (that result from the affection of this self through the activity of the subject of knowledge in accomplishing the synthesis of the manifold) will be exhibited. Because such a milieu is explicitly derived from the self that constitutes this self-positing, it must retain within it a character that allows us to designate it as such a self. The impressions that are exhibited by self-positing, and that occupy a place within this milieu, thus seem genuinely to belong to an Ego. But this is an illusion. The passive self that results from self-positing belongs, in principle, to the sphere of transcendent being. This is not, in reality, a passive self, but only the representation of such a [passive] self. The inclusion of impressions within it can confer at most an ideal relation (*appartenance*) to a self that is as such also ideal. However, the *subjective experience* of the impression signifies a real relation to the impression. The Ego to which the impression belongs—and this is a determinate way, that involves a necessary reference to the phenomenon of transcendental inner experience—is itself a real Ego.

One should see that the ideal appurtenance (*appartenance*) of the impression to the Ego (as transcendent and represented, and as the result of a self-positing) can in reality emerge only on the basis of a real appurtenance to the absolute Ego. It is an eidetic requirement (*prescription éidétique*) of the *phenomenon* of appurtenance that the Ego can reveal itself only in a sphere of radical immanence. The possibility of *being receptive* (*impressionné*) belongs in principle to absolute subjectivity. The representation or the idea of the reference to the Ego is different from *being impressed* (*l'être-impressionné*) as such. The latter manifests itself in the sphere of transcendent being. But the condition for this manifestation is the *original revelation of the phenomenon* of being-impressed itself, a revelation the accomplishment of which is possible only within the sphere of the absolute immanence of subjectivity.

The idea of self-positing is incompatible with the retention of this radical immanence and the fundamental ontological structure that characterizes it. The attempt to account for the existence of the passive self that commences from the self-positing of the absolute self can arise only if the being of the Ego is originally deprived of that which constitutes its ownmost possibility, of constituting itself as passive. Self-positing designates only a specific mode of the life of absolute subjectivity. It posits nothing, since that which is posited is always, and as such, in

the element of transcendent being. The Ego does not posit itself either, precisely because it could do so only by destroying itself, and by renouncing, in a certain sense, its ontological milieu and the condition for the possibility of its very existence. The self-constitution of the passivity of the Ego is not a self-positing; it designates only the characteristics of an essential structure of consciousness, it is a possible transcendental inner experience, amongst others. Self-constitution is, on the contrary, and in a well-determined sense, a constitution that refers itself to the position of a transcendent being. It is a positing of the self in the transcendental element.

Only a philosophy essentially oriented by an exclusive preoccupation with the *constitution of the object* can attempt to account for the phenomenon of passivity, and the existence of the passive self, by commencing from a self-positing that remains ordered by the general presuppositions of ontological monism. However, the impression that is referred to the self-positing, passive subject (*moi*) enters into relation in this way with a reality shorn of that which constitutes the essence of life, and remains incapable of *experiencing* such an impression. Life can find itself only in its own proper milieu. Its impression cannot be experienced by anything other than an originary and absolute subjectivity, and as a mode of such a living subjectivity.²⁴

The problem of impression is linked to that of the passive self thanks to an eidetic connection in virtue of which the latter clearly constitutes, *as a power of being impressed*, the foundation and the ontological possibility-condition of the existence of any impression in general. If one attempted to abstract from this essential connection and to abstract thus from the problem of the *receptivity* of impression, its subjective apprehension by the concrete Ego that experiences it and lives it, and if one considered therefore the impression in itself and in its own proper materiality, as if it could obtain *in abstracto* and hover somehow in the element of being without being related to a more fundamental and in some way absolute existence, such an impression would be deprived of any inherent relation to a self (*moi*). This could not in any way comprehend the existence of an Ego. However, this latter condition is necessary if the sensation of inner sense would constitute a determinate manifold. Could the *origin* of such a sensation, and not its belonging (*appartenance*) to the Ego that receives it, confer upon it the determinacy in virtue of which it contains a certain degree of *ipseity*? Is the theory of the affection of inner sense *by the self (moi)* not a theory of precisely such an origin?

At this point, we can indicate the second fundamental difficulty encountered by the idea of the specificity of the manifold of inner sense. We note, initially, the essential obscurity in which the matter of the inner sense *as derived from the I* is shrouded. What, indeed, is the nature of this matter? Is it really made of impressions in inner sense that are the repercussion of the transcendental acts of

²⁴ This concerns, clearly, a 'subjective' and transcendent temporality. [This last phrase reads "l'impression ne peut être vécue par rien d'autre que par une subjectivité originaire et absolue, comme un mode de celle-ci: elle est vivante."—*Trans.*]

the subject of experience, which derive in some way from a succession of impacts (*chocs*), or is it constituted by *representations* of these acts, exhibited successively in subjective time²⁵ to the degree that the acts of the subject are objectified within it? Representations are not impressions.²⁶ The impressional matter of inner sense is opaque. The representation of an act contains, on the contrary, the Ego that expresses itself in this act. This Ego, however, is not the original Ego, but only a represented Ego. The Ego that belongs to the representation of an act evidently becomes what this act itself becomes when it passes into [the form of] representation. The act, and the Ego that it contains, manifest themselves in the element of transcendent being. The possibility of such a manifestation has been the subject of a special study. The latter has shown precisely that the Ego, the being of which consists in the originary phenomenon of a revelation that is possible only in a sphere of radical immanence, can manifest itself only if this revelation is always already accomplished in its proper sphere. On the basis (in the double sense indicated above) of this revelation, the manifestation of the Ego first becomes possible. The being of the Ego cannot on principle be made manifest, but the manifestation of the Ego is possible on the basis of its being.

The manifestation of the Ego, in sum, can be nothing but a representation of the Ego. If a transcendent element presents this character—not the being of the Ego but a reference thereto in the form of a representation of its being—then this element can be nothing other than a representation. Applied to the Kantian theory of the affection of inner sense by the self (*moi*), the eidetic requirements just recalled signify this; the matter of inner sense can carry within itself the indication of a reference to a Ego only if it is constituted by the representations of the acts of the Ego. However, such representations are possible only on the basis of the being of the Ego. The representation that constitutes the specific content of inner sense can only be a representation of *the self (moi)*. This representation is possible only on the basis of the *ontological phenomenon of the original and absolute Ego*. Is there in Kant any theory of this originary ontological phenomenon?

Two cases allow (us) to consider impression as requiring a relation to the Ego: impressions must either be *produced by the Ego* or *experienced by it*. The critique of the Kantian theory of the receptivity of impression in and by inner sense has shown to us that Kant was in fact incapable of accounting for the latter's receptivity. We must also consider here the case in which the impression is *produced by the subject (moi)*. To this exigence, the conception of an affection of inner sense by the subject likely responds. On which conditions, however, can the

²⁵ The analysis of the possible specificity of the content of inner sense must be divided internally, then, according to whether one considers this content as constituted by the impressions that derive from the acts of the subject or by the representations of these acts. We will examine these two hypotheses in turn.

²⁶ The problem of receptivity is posed only with regard to sensation and not with regard to representation. The latter has not been put in relation with receptivity, and emanates entirely from the spontaneity of thought. The problem of the representation of the Ego should be distinguished from an analysis of inner sense. The content of this is taken often by Kant, however, as constituted by subjective temporal representations. Is not inner sense also time? It may be that there is still a confusion here between the transcendental function, and an empiricist interpretation, of inner sense.

impression really be produced by the subject (*moi*)? Only on the condition that this production, the effect (*fait*) of the originary ego, gives itself in self-consciousness. The assertion that the impression is produced by the I cannot remain in effect a simple metaphysical assertion. It possesses a meaning only if it is based on the transcendental inner experience of this production. The character of being produced by the subject that the impression assumes must itself have a phenomenological character. It must be able really to belong to an impression given (*donné impressionnel*). If the idea of a production of this given by the Ego is only a hypothesis, it is not one suggested by this given itself. Considered *in abstracto*, and in its materiality, impression leads us nowhere. One can examine that which is intuited for as long as one might wish; one will never find within it a reference to the productive Ego. The idea that such an impression is produced by the exercise of the originary power of knowledge (*connaissance*) must come from elsewhere. The transcendental inner experience of this power alone, in its activity, can offer to us the foundation sought for here. It is in positing ourselves in the sphere of the radical immanence of absolute subjectivity, and in placing ourselves within the same *experience* of the original power of consciousness, in its activity, that we will be able to experience the impression that it provokes in inner sense as an impression produced by the Ego.

Two conditions are required, then, in order that the manifold of inner sense exhibit this specificity through which it can *appear* as including a relation to the Ego: (1) the power of production should be known in itself and should appear to itself as that which produces the impression; (2) the *phenomenon* of this production, the transcendental inner experience of this power in its activity, should be nothing other than the *being* of the Ego as such. *The character of the impression by means of which it appears to have an essential relation to the self would not obtain if it emanated from an impersonal power.* To ground the specificity of the impression of inner sense, therefore, it is insufficient to advance a theory in which the transcendental power *reveals itself* to be essentially a subjectivity; it is necessary also that the ontological identity of subjectivity and the Ego be shown.

Consequently, however one imagines the content of inner sense, whether one considers it as constituted by impressions or representations, in any case the specificity of this content implies a necessary reference to the being of a subject (*moi*) that must reveal itself originally in an inner transcendental experience before it is able to manifest itself in the form of such a content. The problem of the empirical subject, constituted by means of the impressions of inner sense, returns us to the problem of the transcendental subject (*moi*). The intuitive element of transcendent being was unable ultimately to exhibit the being of the Ego. This must be sought instead in a distinct original region, in the ontological sphere of absolute subjectivity. Remarkably, this original ontological region is not, in Kant, made the object of any problematic. And yet, Kant confronted, and pretended to evade, this fundamental problem, when he needed to determine, or rather when he needed to discuss, in spite of itself, not the empirical I, *but that which constitutes the very being of the I of 'I think.'*

The Problem of the Being of the I of the 'I Think'

The preceding analyses have shown that the determination of the being of the Ego was impossible within the ontological horizon of Kantian monism. Within such a horizon, there is a place only for an empirical subject (*moi*), the being of which must be determined by means of an element given in empirical intuition. The general critique that has just been directed against the empirical manifold shows that the emergence (*surgissement*) of ipseity within such a manifold—ultimately, the constitution of an empirical subject (*moi*)—is impossible if the original being of the Ego is not given to us. The consideration of the originary being of the absolute Ego implies, nevertheless, the rejection of those prescriptions of Kantian ontology that constitute the concrete formal structure of being, in which the empirical element plays a determinative role. When he considers—only in passing and inexplicitly—what it is that constitutes the being of the I of the 'I Think,' Kant has to disclaim (*desavouer*) the absolutely general character of the concrete formal structure of being that we have elucidated.

The fundamental insufficiency of Kantian ontology manifests itself when we see Kant's effort to attempt to determine the being of the Ego, [while] abstracting from the fundamental conditions that his own ontology prescribes. This attempt—to which he is constrained, given the nature of the case—is nothing but Kant's effort to supersede (*échapper*) his own philosophy, and it can only end in failure (*échec*). To determine the being of the Ego is possible, in fact, if one has a positive ontology oriented explicitly toward a concern for this being. Kant, however, is quite helpless in this regard; he has no ontology of subjectivity. Therefore, while Kant will try to determine the being of transcendental Ego outside the presuppositions that characterize his monism, the effort of his thought, having no positive ontology of subjectivity to rest upon, will fail. It will fall again into what it will not be able to supersede, but that it will remain always within—the horizon of the specifically Kantian form of monism from which it was trying to escape, and the horizon of ontological monism in general.

Is Kant worried sufficiently by certain problems and, in particular, that of the being of the Ego, to supersede the prescriptions present within the concrete formal structure of being, the elucidation of which was furnished by the general theory of the division of the faculties of the human mind into intuition and understanding, and by the [thesis of their] necessary collaboration, toward the constitution of experience? Certain signs attest to it.

*Four fundamental presuppositions of the Kantian system are in fact incompatible with Kantian ontology: (1) The idea of a noumenal or absolute subject (*moi*) that is not subject to the condition of time and that must not be confused with the empirical subject (*moi*) of external experience. It is precisely because this idea of the noumenal subject is posited that inner experience, as conforming to the general conditions of experience, understood as the prescriptions of [the specifically] Kantian [form of] monism, finds itself depreciated (*dévalorisée*), such that the sensible cognition (*connaissance sensible*) of the subject (*moi*) must renounce the pretention to be an absolute knowledge*

capable of providing us with the being of our subject as it is in itself. In this way, Kant is brought to recognize, however implicitly, the radical insufficiency of self-cognition (*connaissance de soi*) as he understands it. The problem arises, however, of how we can acknowledge such an insufficiency; of how, in other words, one can derive the idea of a subject (*moi*) in itself that limits consciousness (*connaissance*) of the empirical subject (*moi*), which, as above, we have no ground for knowing as a ‘me’ (or as ‘mine’). (2) The idea of an ‘I can’ that would appear not from the side of the intuitive element, as the ‘I’ of an empirical subject (*moi*), but from the side of the power of knowledge, abstracting from all empirical elements. Kant utilizes constantly, in fact, the expression ‘I Think,’ in a way that apparently does not refer in any way to the I of inner experience. How, then, is the I of the ‘I Think’ derived? And, indeed, why [as an] ‘I’? (3) The idea that the soul retains a value as a heuristic concept, capable of enabling us to separate internal and external phenomena. It is the task of first philosophy, however, to exhibit the foundation of such an evidently essential distinction. Concern for this latter cannot be left to a heuristic concept regarding the *origin* of which nothing is asserted. The elucidation of such an origin would lead inevitably to the question of the original being of the Ego. (4) The idea that if theoretical speculation is powerless to determine the being of the absolute subject (*moi*) and can only lead to transcendental appearance, then such a determination, nonetheless, is possible by means of the immanent exigencies of practical reason. On this point, it is useful to recall again that a determination of the being of the absolute subject (*moi*) is incompatible with Kantian ontology and that the idea of an absolute subject (*moi*) in any case precedes necessarily the project of the determination of the being of such a subject. Regarding the requirements of practical reason, their examination, too, would bring us to the question of their origin, to the *being* of the moral law and more fundamentally, of moral *consciousness*, the determination of which would seem no less incompatible with Kantian ontology.

The presuppositions just enumerated all revolve around the idea of the original being of the Absolute Ego; they amount, in sum, to a single fundamental presupposition. Such a ‘presupposition’ is not contained in any way within Kantian ontology; it remains fundamentally foreign to it. However, to the degree that he effectively did not leave such a presupposition totally unjustified, Kant had to seek the foundation of the being of the originary Ego *outside of the field of existence circumscribed by the prescriptions of his own ontology*.

To the question regarding the being of the I of the ‘I Think,’ Kant has given two responses. First of all, he suggests that the being of the ‘I Think’ is an indeterminate empirical intuition.²⁷ By such an intuition, one should understand the impression *specific* to inner sense prior to its categorical determination. Here one sees the author of the *Critique* clearly violating the fundamental prescriptions

²⁷ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pratique*, 310, [This citation is erroneous. It is in the 2nd edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, instead, at B 423, that one finds Kant’s depiction of the ‘I Think’ through “an indeterminate empirical intuition.” Henry’s typed copy of “*Destruction ontologique*” (Ms. 3522-92) reads “Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, trad. Barni, p. 346.” The published citation to the second *Critique* can only be an editor’s error.—*Trans.*]

of the ontology that this critique elaborates. According to the prescriptions of this ontology, in fact, being always presupposes the determination of an intuition by the category. If this can have only an empirical usage, the empirical element, reciprocally, is not *being* in itself; its manifestation in existence entails the intervention of a concept of an object possible via the category. Here Kant explicitly asserts (*faire état*) an existence that is not submitted to the category of existence: “existence is not yet here a category.”²⁸ *The self belongs to [a sphere of] existence which supersedes the conditions of human existence.* This assertion, which leads to insuperable difficulties within Kant’s ontology, nonetheless could be interpreted as a premonition of an ontology oriented towards the theme of the being of the Ego, even if it did not obey one of the fundamental presuppositions that constitute the formal structure of being as it is conceived by the *Critique*.

This presupposition is that existence is always founded on sensation. At the very moment that Kant separates the existence of the self (*moi*) from a conceptual determination, it seems clear that this is done in order to entrust it to the empirical element of sensation. Immediately after having declared that the proposition ‘I Think’ expressed an indeterminate empirical intuition, Kant adds that “this proves, consequently, that sensation, that pertains to sensibility, serves as the basis of this proposition of existence.”²⁹ However, as we have seen, the empirical element can in no way exhibit the existence of an I. The fact that such an element remains initially indeterminate implies that it [as an indeterminate empirical intuition] would not be able to confer upon it [the I] an identity (*ipséité*) that belongs in principle to another region of being. As indeterminate, intuition is not less ‘blind’ than the object. On the contrary, it is only an existence in general, something that exists and that has as of yet no name. A conceptual determination would not effect, truly, an existence that contains a subject (*moi*). It is Kantian ontology in its entirety, and the formal, concrete structure of being that it elaborates, that must be challenged, in order that the problem of the being of the Ego be posed in an ontologically adequate horizon.

These difficulties did not totally escape Kant,³⁰ who sought to determine the being of the ‘I Think’ *in abstraction from both intuition and concept*, by reasoning for once outside of the horizon determined by the ontology of the *Critique*. But as soon as he needs to assign a basis for the existence of the ‘I Think,’ considered no longer as an empirical proposition based on intuition but as a fact of pure thought, Kant struggles with inextricable difficulties. These difficulties are manifest in the different formulas that Kant employs in order to designate the ‘I Think.’ This is defined at turns as a concept, a proposition,³¹ an expression or a

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, trans. J. Barni, 346.

³⁰ This is clear from the end of the second note of the critique of Mendelssohn’s argument for the permanence of the soul. Cf. Kant *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, 310). [For Kant’s “Refutation of Mendelssohn’s Proof of the Soul’s Permanence,” see the 2nd Edition Paralogisms, B 414-26.—*Trans.*]

³¹ Cf. for example, *ibid.*, 288: “This concept or, if one insists, proposition.” [For Kant’s treatment of the ‘I Think’ as “the concept—or rather, if one prefers, the judgment—I think,” see A 341, B 399.—*Trans.*]

simple empty form. The very term ‘concept,’ that [if] in its proper sense [would] replace the problem of the determination of the being of ‘I Think’ in Kantian philosophy, should not be retained. The ‘I Think,’ Kant says explicitly, is not a concept. When Kant declares, on the contrary, that the ‘I Think’ is a ‘proposition,’ he means by this that it is a proposition that expresses the spontaneity of pure thought. This pure thought, however, is still only an empty form, deprived of being. Its emergence implies the actualization of the concrete formal structure of being, which means that the essential factors of empirical intuition, pure intuition, and the concept intervene.³²

But what constitutes the *being* of this pure and empty form that is thought? How should one comprehend it as it is in itself, apart from the transcendent being that it constitutes? Because it does not belong to the sphere of transcendent being in which constitution functions by means of the collaboration of a concept and an intuition, is it not deprived essentially of that which constitutes the element of being as such? Because it is not subjected to the concrete formal structure of being, is the being of the ‘I Think’ not announced as identical to a nothingness (*néant*)? Kant expressly states that the thought [of the subject] is given neither to the concept nor to intuition. How can it manifest itself in the [sphere of] being? Evidently, this question is not made thematic in the overall problem that runs through the *Critique*. And yet, Kant was indeed obliged to pose it; on one hand, because one cannot elude it indefinitely, and on the other hand, because Kantian ontology itself returns necessarily to such a question to the degree that it supposes as its own root (*racine*), the being of such a ‘I Think’ *insofar as this is the power that thinks and intuitions*. The decisive response of Kant, once separated from the pseudo-solutions that the author of the *Critique* could not abide, is the following: the being of the ‘I Think’ is neither an intuition nor a concept, it is in no way given by them, *it is in reality nothing more than an intellectual representation*.

The Failure (*échec*) of the Determination of the Being of the Ego within the Horizon of Monism in General. The Interpretation of the Being of the ‘I Think’ as an Intellectual Representation and the Poverty of the ‘Sole Text’ of Rational Psychology

Wherever Kant attempts to determine the being of the ‘I Think’ as such, the only expression that he utilizes, without needing then to replace it immediately with another, is that of a—not empirical but purely intellectual—‘representation.’ *The being of the ‘I Think’ belongs to the element of representation, which implies the element of transcendent being. The being of the ‘I’ that is contained in this way in the ‘I Think,’ the Ego of the cogito, manifests itself in such an element as well. Kant escapes the presuppositions of his own monism only in order to succumb to those of ontological monism in general.* The representation of the ‘I Think’ is neither thought nor felt. It contains no intuitive matter within it, and it is not subject to categorical determination. It is nonetheless a representation. It denotes the

³² [Margin Note:] “The ecstatic structure (unity of representation).”

originary *phenomenon* of thought that it expresses—or, more precisely, represents. But precisely because it represents it, it must not be confused with it. The original *phenomenon* of thought is nothing but the being of absolute subjectivity as such, the being that is also that of the Ego. Such an Ego reveals itself originally in a sphere of radical immanence. Representation is not to be confused with the being of that which it represents. *It is precisely the being of the absolute Ego that cannot be represented*; it cannot manifest itself in the transcendental element, [as] only its *representation* is susceptible to be a part of such an element. But Kant proves unable to grasp the *original* being of the Ego as it reveals itself immediately in a sphere of radical immanence: he rather confounds such a being with its representation. We see here the author of the *Critique* falling victim to a prejudgment so pervasive that one must denounce it everywhere; the belief that only that which manifests itself, determinately, has being. Whichever particular form this manifestation assumes, it always realizes itself in the ontological sphere of transcendent being.

This is why, when confronted finally with the fundamental problem of the being of the Ego, Kant cannot do better than to assimilate this being to its representation, confusing it with its replica in the sphere of transcendent being. To know the being of pure thought, Kant had to reject the point of view of synthetic construction, in which the object finds its foundation in the conceptual determination of an intuition. However, if one abstracts from this determination and considers pure thought in its own most being, as in a certain sense preceding the constitution of experience, one understands that this thought cannot ultimately define itself by means of the synthetic unity of apperception. More originally than the latter, serving as its ground, is the analytic unity of consciousness, as a basis for the synthetic unity of apperception. This is to posit that the latter unity contains in itself an experience that is nothing other than the unity of thought. The experience of this unity is precisely consciousness. Analytic unity attains its proper significance only by reference to the latter, interpreted as a transcendental inner experience.

Kant affirms in a formal way that synthetic unity is not in itself such an experience; “the form of apperception, inherent in all experience, is not itself an experience.” The analytical point of view that the *Critique* retains, almost despite itself, when it must comprehend the being of pure thought considered in itself, does not in reality offer any profound significance. Only a radically immanent interpretation of the unity of thought, *considered thus as subjectivity*, could confer upon the analytical point of view the privilege of giving us access to a new region of being. The tautology that the analysis produces would not give us anything other than the infinite richness contained in this new ontological dimension. The tautology would truly be a tautology if it would posit for us something that is already given, in itself, while neither adding, nor subtracting, anything else. Its sterility would be the sign and the condition of its infinite richness. The tautology that Kant considers, the sterility of which he denounces, is not truly a tautology. It is not the sign ‘=’ on either side of which we write the same thing each time. The ‘I Think,’ that expresses the fact of my thinking as it is in itself, represents it; it is

its *repetition in the element of transcendent being*. Between that which expresses and that which is expressed, there is, as it were, an identity of essence (*identité d'essence*). The 'I Think' is the expression of my thought.

One should not confuse this identity of essence, however, with an *onto-logical identity*. What separates the fact and its mode of expression in this case is, on the contrary, the *ontological difference* itself. Because such a difference intervenes, the Kantian tautology is rather that the operation by means of which something radically new is posited does not result in the enrichment of the primordial fact, but, rather its essential impoverishment and, in a certain sense, its denaturation. In a transcendental sphere, only its shadow is present, in the form of representation. For consciousness, the position of the self (*soi*) as an object implies the deprivation (*déchéance*) of this 'self,' that is really no longer itself, but rather something else, deprived of that which effects the essence of the life of ipseity. Certainly, in the representation 'I Think' there is nothing other than the Self of the Ego that is represented, but this representation is in principle something different from the Self and the Ego as such. In Kant, consciousness becomes self-consciousness only when the subject makes itself into an object: "self-consciousness, writes Kant, is the *representation* of the condition of all unity, while being itself unconditional."³³ The analytical interpretation of consciousness consists of the act by which consciousness takes itself as an object and makes itself in this way self-consciousness. The 'I Think' expresses the objectification of thought, or, better, the objectified thought (*pensée objectivée*). It denotes the object that is in front of thought as soon as this thought makes itself into an object.

Only when thought thus manifests itself in the element of transcendent being does it become something that one can discuss, and something to which the proposition 'I think' can refer. Before this manifestation—that Kant takes into consideration in the second edition of the *Critique*, and with even more insistence in the *Übergang*—there is nothing.³⁴ Therefore, the Kantian tautology is not, in reality, an analytical interpretation, but is rather *a conversion of the subject into an object*. It is true that Kant says in the *Übergang* that the representation 'I Think' is not an object. In this conversion the transcendent term that results from the objectification of the thought contains no intuitive element, and nor is it yet submitted to categorical determination. Our concern lies, most precisely, with Kant's attempt to determine the being of the 'I Think' as given neither to intuition, nor thought through the concept. This being is still, to his eyes, an object; it is in the element of transcendent being that it arises. It is not an empirical object; it is a transcendental object. It is the shadow that the transcendental reality of the absolute ego projects, within the sphere circumscribed by the ontological horizon of monism in general, that Kant is unable to grasp in its originary and ownmost mode of revelation.

³³ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, 324.

³⁴ In the first edition of the *Critique*, the proposition 'I Think' is taken only problematically. [For Kant's assertion that the 'I Think' is to be taken "only problematically," and "not insofar as it may contain a perception of an existence (the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*) but only in its mere possibility," see A 347, B 405.—*Trans.*]

The elucidation of the ontological interpretation of the being of the ‘I Think’ as representation discloses the principle of the Kantian critique of the paralogisms. It explains, according to ontological principles, *the fundamental indigence of the sole text of rational psychology*. In so far as psychology must be pure and non-empirical, its text is constituted precisely by the ‘I Think’ as a purely intellectual representation. The *essential poverty* of this representation is due to the fact that the being of the Ego is that which on principle cannot manifest itself in the transcendent element to which its representation nevertheless belongs. The representation of the Ego is, then, a quite special representation, even unique in its genre, because it gives itself as a task the representing what is not, in principle, capable of being represented.

Unique in its genre, we suggest, because *only the being of the Ego* is subject to this principled impossibility. The sphere of radical immanence, in which an *original* revelation constitutes the element of being, circumscribes an ontological field that is confused with that of the Ego. Everything that belongs to this field, belongs also for this reason to the being of the Ego, and, as an integral part of such Ego, constitutes it. Reciprocally, the entire being of the Ego conforms to the conditions prescribed by a specific mode of revelation in accord with which this can effect itself only in a sphere of absolute immanence. Nothing that pertains properly to the being of the Ego is capable of manifesting itself. *Kant rightly asserts that the representation ‘I Think’ is the poorest of all. It is with good reason that he evinces the impossibility of constructing a positive science on such an empty ground. The representation ‘I Think’ cannot in any way contain a real knowledge of the being of the Ego.* This real knowledge is one with the being of the Ego; however, by these two names, we denote one and the same fundamental ontological *phenomenon*, that of original revelation. Such a phenomenon, with its own ontological content, does not pertain to representation. Kant identifies this representation arbitrarily as a “unique text” of pure psychology. Only and precisely for this reason does he pretend to found [pure psychology] upon a *representation* that metaphysical knowledge of the being of the subject (*moi*) appears to his eyes impossible.

Once one has understood and denounced this fundamental error at the basis of the entire critique of rational psychology, one can only praise Kant for the description that he has given of the poverty of the representation ‘I Think.’ This poverty is often highlighted, it is true, with the aid of a comparison between the effective content of such a representation and, on the other hand, the conditions that real objects must satisfy. It is often because it does not satisfy these conditions—that are nothing, in their internal coherence, other than the concrete formal structure of being—that the content of the representation ‘I think’ is declared empty and illusory. One explains the sterility of this representation by the fact that it does not contain any manifold,³⁵ or one shows that it is not a concept,

³⁵ Kant, *Critique de la Raison pure*, 2nd Edition, trans. A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacaud, 332. [For Kant’s claim that “through the I, as simple presentation, nothing manifold is given,” see, e.g., B 135. For Kant’s depiction of the I as a representation of the formal condition of thinking, see A 363. For the depiction of the I as the “vehicle” of all concepts, see A 342, B 399.—*Trans.*]

but only the representation of the formal condition of thinking, the vehicle of all concepts.³⁶

Occasionally, the emptiness of such a representation is depicted as such; this is the case, for example, in the paralogism of simplicity. The text of the first edition utilizes the word ‘simplicity’ in two very different senses: by simplicity, one understands first of all a positive character that must determine the being of the subject (*moi*) as real predicate thereof. The paralogism lies in precisely such a predicative determination. However, the term ‘simplicity’ is retained in the development of the text, and appears to be used quite properly to denote the being of the representation ‘I Think.’ But this being is nothing more than a pseudo-being, characterized by an essential poverty that consists of nothing more than a pure unity, as represented and as empty. Simplicity designates precisely the fundamental indigence of an empty representation: “I am simple, signifies nothing more than this representation [of the subject (*moi*)] does not pertain to any manifold and is thus an absolute (simply logical) unity.”³⁷ This simplicity is that of “something in general, the representation of which must be absolutely simple in virtue of the fact that one determines nothing about it; nothing cannot be represented more easily than by the concept of something absolutely simple.”³⁸ The simplicity of the representation therefore does not imply a knowledge of that simplicity, but rather the absence or, if one prefers, the emptiness of such a knowledge.

The essential poverty of the representation ‘I Think’ is denounced similarly in another text related to the paralogism of personality. Even more remarkably, *at the same time that the subject (*moi*) is confounded with its representation, the poverty of its being manifests itself as a phenomenological characteristic pertaining to this very representation*; “Nothing remains in the soul...except, if one insists, the *I*, that is so simple only because this representation has no content.”³⁹ That is why, when Kant declares again that the proposition that everything flows and that nothing remains permanent in the universe “is not yet refuted by the unity of self-consciousness,”⁴⁰ it is important to understand that the poverty of the being thus considered is not sufficient to refute the idea of a universal flow because of the poverty of the representation itself, since *the unity of self-consciousness is rigorously identical to the representation of the unity of consciousness*.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 321. [For the (Second) Paralogism of Simplicity in the 1st Edition, see A 351-62.—*Trans.*]

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁸ *Ibid.* [For Kant’s argument that “through this I we do not indicate in this subject the least property,” such that “the simplicity of the presentation of a subject is not therefore a cognition of the simplicity of the subject itself,” see particularly A 335.—*Trans.*]

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 295. [For this passage, see the “Observation on the Sum of Pure Psychology” in “Consequence of these Paralogisms” at A 381; “In that which we call ‘soul,’ everything is in perpetual flux, and nothing abides, except perhaps, if one insists, the I; the I is so simple because this presentation, having no content and hence no manifold, seems to present...a simple object” (A 381-2).—*Trans.*]

The ontological interpretation of the essential indigence of the representation 'I Think' allows us to understand the internal law that presides over the different conclusions that these Kantian texts taken together reach regarding the self, and that renders these conclusions necessary. The indigence of the representation 'I Think' implies the almost complete indeterminacy of the term that manifests itself in the transcendent element and that purports to be the pure self (*moi*). Its belonging, as indeterminate transcendent being—not, that is, subject to the concrete formal structure of being—to the horizon of ontological monism on one hand and, on the other, the (purely arbitrary) designation of this being as the self (*moi*), are the only constitutive elements of the determination of the transcendental object 'I.' This pseudo-determination of the transcendental object, according to which the latter will receive a series of different significations that imply no modification of the intrinsic nature of this object; their advent, however, implies, as a possibility-condition, the permanence of this nature—that is, the essential ontological indigence of the transcendent term to which the pure I is assimilated. The different meanings that specify the transcendental object, and make it appear, successively, as the object of the inner sense, as the reference point to which subjective representations are related, as an ideal term produced by Reason to unite all inner phenomena, as an Idea or as a thing in itself unknown and unknowable, or, finally, as a self-positing and passive self (*moi*)—certainly do not appear [in such a variety of forms] merely by chance.

These different significations respond, instead, in each of these different moments, to exigencies or prescriptions of the system. The distance that separates the self-positing, determinable self (*moi*) from the determined and cognized empirical self (*moi*) measures the progress of the constitution of experience. However, no real determination is conferred upon the transcendental object while it assumes these different meanings: they do not properly pertain to it [the transcendental object]; they are rather founded in the system itself. The transcendental object 'I' provides [these different meanings], and its ability to serve as their common subject is due to its own indigence. Like a cloud that can assume all the forms that one can imagine precisely because it has none, the representation 'I' lends itself easily to the treatment that the system requires of it in order to satisfy its various exigencies.

However, the indigence of the representation 'I Think' does not only provide its negative possibility condition to the refusal (*la déclinaison*) of the transcendental object. It is also an inner law of the system, and we should thus recognize that the latter does not have a complete freedom to assign to the transcendental object 'I' the different roles that it pretends to, but that in many respects it can only make explicit and develops these inner needs or, better, phenomenological characteristics of the representation 'I.' The impossibility in principle that prevents the being of the Ego from really manifesting itself has a consequence; the indigence of the representation 'I.' This indigence implies in turn, as a consequence, the essential obscurity of this representation. This is not truly a representation, but is rather something ambiguous: it is not a transcendent diurnal, but also a transcendent nocturnal, term; it is the incessant passage from

one to the other. The representation of the I is unstable. Its indigence signifies a somehow positive possibility of being different things, of receiving multiple meanings. These meanings are not separated, but are rather connected to one another; they are founded upon the same essence, that is itself something rather inessential, a pure and simple privation of being.

The representation 'I Think' is subjected more to the law of the night than to the light of the day. In reality, the representation 'I Think' represents nothing; it is rather a "proposition;" by its means, something is only indicated. "The self (*moi*), Kant suggests, is so simple only because this representation has no real content and thus no manifold, such that it seems to represent or, better, to designate a simple object."⁴¹ It is an eidetic prescription that something designated by the representation 'I Think' remain in reality only a something = x .⁴² The idea of a noumenal unknown self (*moi*) does not intervene in Kant's account as a radically new and heterogeneous element. It is not a presupposition, but rather the logical culmination of an inexorable dialectic that does nothing but unfold the contradictions included in the project of determining the being of the I as a representation.

Thus, this representation quickly becomes a simple notion, an idea—not the richness of a concept or the infinite fecundity of a need of reason, but rather the simple emptiness of a representation without content. The content of such a representation, the transcendent term = x , designated as a principle or substrate of the phenomena of inner sense, could just as well be, or do, anything—e.g., constitute the origin of the phenomena of outer sense so that the problem of the relation of soul and body is resolved. Therefore, it is because the being of the I is assimilated to that of representation that by this 'I,' by this 'it,' this 'thing that thinks,' no more than a transcendental subject of thought = x is represented. Will we say that the object of inner sense, defined as the self (*moi*), eludes such a determination and that it consequently does not pertain to the sequence of disclaimed meanings, starting with the transcendental object, that were intended to be the representation of the self (*moi*)? Let us not forget it is the impossibility of conferring ipseity upon the givens of inner sense that obliged us to attempt a new determination of the being of the self (*moi*), independently of intuition and concept. If the I is present in the object of inner sense, this can be only as something beyond the impression, in the representation that is appended to it. This representation 'I' belongs certainly to a sequence of meanings in which the transcendental object, which designates the manifestation of the I within the horizon of the ontological monism in general, expresses itself.

The impoverished representation with which Kant attempts to determine, or rather to indicate, the being of the ego, the 'I Think,' still seems to Kant too rich. Indeed, how does he derive its reference to the subject, to the ipseity that it is

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 281. [For Kant's depiction of the transcendental subject as an = x , see A 346, B 404; "through this I or he or it (the thing) that thinks nothing further is represented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x . This subject is cognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the least concept of it."—*Trans.*]

supposed to contain or designate? It is insufficient to assert that, like all representations, 'I Think' implies the existence of a naturing thought (*pensée naturante* [as distinct from a *pensée naturée*]) that serves as its foundation and support—an assertion that cannot be formulated speculatively in any case, but rather must be founded phenomenologically.

What needs to be explained is the specificity of such a representation, the fact that it gives itself as a representation of the I (*moi*). Not only the form of all representation, but more particularly the content of the representation 'I Think' implies an essential relationship to the original being of the absolute Ego. However, when it comes to the content of the representation I, this relationship must be included in a well-determined manner. It is not as a pure form, empty of all content, that the I Think can be the foundation of *its own* representation. It is rather the transcendental content, originally provided by a revelation, realized within the sphere of radical immanence of absolute subjectivity, that can provide the consistency and reality to the shadow that the ego projects in the world—in order that this shadow be given at least as the shadow of the Ego. The indigence of this representation does not exclude the designation of the subject as an object (*objet moi*). Rather, the poverty of the representation 'I' has an essential meaning: it indicates the Ego as such.

It is for us, only, however, that such a meaning emerges. For the concrete Ego, that lives in the presence of this representation, by which it manifests itself to itself, it is the experience that it has of its own life that provides it originally with all the knowledge that it has of itself, knowledge that its own representation represents to it. It is an eidetic prescription that transcendental inner experience, that is itself nothing other than the phenomenon in which the being of the Ego reveals itself, is a personal experience. Because it is based upon such an experience, from which it derives its content, the representation 'I' (*moi*) is a representation of the I or, to better say, the *representation of an I*. Kant acknowledges this, most profoundly, when he declares that "*the representation 'I am' that governs the assertions of pure psychology is a singular representation.*"⁴³ It is precisely when this representation, "*individual in all respects,*" as he repeats, gives itself as a universal representation, valid for all the thinking beings, that there is a paralogism.⁴⁴

This text is still more remarkable for its suggestion that this singular and individual representation is based upon experience, and that pure psychology—that pretends "to determine the object in itself, independently of experience, by pure reason"⁴⁵—is based on a concrete element that it should do without in order to remain faithful to the pure rationality of its project. In this way, when one assimilates this to a representation, consciousness gives itself as the representation of a determined and singular object, or, better, as a determined and singular

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 326. [For Kant's treatment of "the singular presentation 'I am,'" is "in every respect singular" while yet "announcing itself as a universal proposition holding for all thinking beings" and thus, paralogistically, "extending further than possible experience could teach," see A 405.—*Trans.*]

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

representation. The representation 'I' is singular, not as a representation among others, but as a representation of a determined I (*moi déterminé*). The I is principally a singular reality; it is always a subject (*moi*), 'this subject here,' rather than 'that subject, there.' It is because it is based upon such a reality, to which its singularity belongs in virtue of an eidetic necessity, that the representation 'I' is, in its turn, a singular representation. On what basis, however, is Kant able to attribute the singularity of such a representation?

To pose the problem of the foundation of this singular representation 'I' is to pose the problem of the original being of the Ego. But because it remains the prisoner of the ontological horizon of monism in general, Kantianism turns out to be incapable of determining the being of the I otherwise than by means of a representation. It does not establish, regarding the being of the Ego, any fundamental insight. To establish such an insight regarding the being of the Ego would require an escape from not only the specific presuppositions of Kantian ontology, but also from the horizon of ontological monism in general. The representation 'I Think' has a basis for Kant insofar as it corresponds to something that it represents and designates. This something is the power to know. However, this [power] can be conceived as the foundation of the representation 'I' only if it fulfills two conditions. First, it must be conscious of itself, exist for itself and by itself, so as to merit the status of a foundation. A foundation must necessarily be a *concrete* reality. It is also necessary that this concrete reality be that of an Ego, and that it contain its ipseity immediately within itself, if one wants to be able to account for the singularity of the representation that is based on it.

The power of knowing in Kant, however, is originally neither self-conscious, nor personal. Self-consciousness is acquired only in its representation, by manifesting itself in the element of transcendent being. As for personality, one cannot see how it can become a character of this singular representation 'I' (*moi*) if the latter is nothing only the representation of a *thought essentially impersonal*. If self-consciousness and selfhood (*ipséité*) had belonged to the power of knowledge as eidetic properties, the problematic concerning the I would have shifted. It would have not taken as the theme of its reflection the representation 'I' but would have endeavored instead to capture the being of the I at the core of the power of knowing as such. It would have put in evidence the identity of the being of the I, and the originary power of knowledge. It would have grasped this identity not as the result of a reflexive process, but within the original phenomenon of truth, the foundation of all knowledge.

In spite of its insufficiency and its uncertainties, Kantian thought on the problem of the I evinces certain presentiments, the philosophical significance of which is indisputable. The critique of rational psychology, notably, is founded on a profound insight. Kant has seen clearly that a psychology that could not support its affirmations on *experience* would be nothing but empty and groundless speculation. As a denunciation of speculation that "exceeds the limits of experience," Kantian thought retains its full value. Kant has understood also that the pure I could be neither intuition nor concept.

To those representations that imply the receptivity of human knowledge, to phenomena, he opposed the representation 'I' in which "we are not at all affected." This last representation is thus not a phenomenon, but rather a pure apperception. Sensation, the foundation of all receptive cognition, cannot therefore intervene as a constitutive element of the being of the 'I Think.' The latter is thus often interpreted by Kant as a pure spontaneity, and as a power radically different from everything empirical. Kant makes us, if not conceive, then at least intimate, the existence of an I that is independent of affection and of sensation, and thus not the object of a concept. We should thus recognize that the *critique of the paralogisms is undermined by a deep contradiction*. This critique reproaches rational psychology for its attempt to construct a positive science of the subject (*moi*) while abstracting from the concept and, more particularly, from intuition. If the subject is not a phenomenon, an intuitive reality determined by a concept, then is not the project of pure psychology—that wants to disregard these factors of the human knowledge in its determination of the being of the I—perfectly well-founded? Kant can no longer see which experience this pure psychology could use as a basis.

In reality, one must recognize the validity of the project of rational psychology in its pretension to purity; one must also be able to assign a foundation within experience to the science that constructs this psychology. One must posit the concept of an experience that is neither empirical nor intuitive. Such an experience obtains: it defines and opens the sphere of the infinite experience of the I; it is the manner in which all human life is fulfilled. In the face of this life, Kantianism is destitute. It has ignored the substance of man, his infinite essence. The constructions of practical reason that attempt in vain to recapture the substance of human destiny are possible only on the basis of this fundamental agnosticism; they merely mask the deep despair that is immanent in, and that logically results therefrom, the *Critique*.

Translated by Garth W. Green