

# The Metaphysical Character of Philosophy

Marie-Élise Zovko<sup>1</sup> and Jure Zovko<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of Philosophy, Zagreb,*

<sup>2</sup>*University of Zadar,  
Croatia*

## 1. Introduction

In the history of philosophy there exists a clear continuity regarding investigation of the epistemic conditions of understanding and explanation of reality. Herein lies philosophy's essentially metaphysical character – and the reason why metaphysics continues to comprise an indispensable constituent of philosophizing and a philosophical approach to life. Drawing on selected paradigms from classic works from the history of philosophy, we focus on metaphysics of subjectivity as fundamental philosophical discourse of modernity, which finds its archetypal expression in Kant's conception of the unity of self-consciousness (transcendental unity of apperception), as precondition for our understanding and explanation of objectivity and the world of our experience. This opens a range of possibilities for innovative analysis of the metaphysical character of philosophy.

Today, no consideration of metaphysics is possible without reference to "post-metaphysical" thought, that is, to the "destruction" or rejection of metaphysics which emerged from Kant's and the Idealists' critique of traditional metaphysics, as well as from criticism directed towards the German Idealists' own "absolute-dialectic" brand of metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> The situation of "metaphysics after metaphysics", however, requires more than theoretical illumination of the epistemic conditions of human knowledge and self-consciousness; it requires a deep connection to the implementation of our role and purpose in the world and in society. One possible source for active renewal of metaphysics in the post-metaphysical era may be found in the communal aspect of *interpretation*, the basis of all knowledge and communication, as exemplified by Royce's reconceptualisation of Peirce's semiotics and his expansion of Peirce's idea of the "community of scientific investigators", within the context of an "absolute pragmatism" and a "philosophy of loyalty" to the ideal of universal community of interpretation.

The methodology of exposition applied here exemplifies what is described by Wolfgang Wieland<sup>2</sup> as a productive relationship of philosophizing to its own history. In Wieland's

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. L. Nagl. *Das Verhüllte Absolute. Essays zur zeitgenössischen Religionsphilosophie*. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 13.

<sup>2</sup> "Über den Grund des Interesses der Philosophie an ihrer Geschichte," in: Rolf W. Puster (hrsg.) *Veritas filia temporis: Festschrift für Rainer Specht* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995) 11-30.

estimate, study of the history of philosophy can play an integral and productive role in philosophy, if philosophy takes as its aim not only to learn *about* its history, but to learn *from* it, when history is taken as a source of truth.<sup>3</sup> Although the precise method and the rules for successful study and interpretation of philosophical texts often remain unreflected, it is the question of doing justice to an historical work's ability to be a carrier of truth which is at the center of this approach. Every text has both a material and an intentional aspect. The former concerns the circumstances of its genesis – its time, author, the conditions under which it was composed, the whole constellation of psychological, social, individual, and transindividual relationships which led to its existence as a thing and object of study. The latter regards the capacity of the text, as a "sign", to refer to something other than itself. The text functions thereby as a medium by which to turn the reader's attention to the subject matter in question, a medium which allows us to reflect upon the "truth content" it is intended to convey.

In this article, selected texts from the history of philosophy serve as a medium for consideration of the specific problem of the possibility of metaphysics and the metaphysical character of philosophy. The historical circumstances of the selected texts is of secondary importance. This approach entails the reader's active participation in a dialogue with specific previously existing attempts to formulate and resolve the philosophical problems at hand. For, properly understood, the search for truth and the process by which philosophical problems emerge, whether in older or more recent philosophical texts, is part of a permanent and ongoing process of interpretation, an exchange in which the interpreter attempts to draw forth the truth content of the text to be interpreted for those for whom it is to be interpreted and who, by their own act of reflection, carry forward the process of interpretation, participating thus as co-interpreters in the larger process of inquiry and exchange.

### 1.1 Metaphysics and the post-metaphysical era

Metaphysics is a fundamental, defining discipline of the European philosophical tradition. The origin and original meaning of the word "metaphysics" is disputed, having in all likelihood been coined by the first editor of Aristotle's writings, Andronicus of Rhodus, to designate the body of more or less contiguous writings grouped together "after the physics".<sup>4</sup> These writings dealt with "being as such", its "principles" and "causes", the subject matter of what Aristotle variously calls "first philosophy", "wisdom", "theology".<sup>5</sup> Therewith, Aristotle takes up central questions which first arose among his predecessors, the so-called Presocratics, whom Aristotle in this respect calls the "first philosophizers"<sup>6</sup>, and with his own teacher Plato: what (really) is? what makes it the way it is? where does it come from? how does it come to be? The word metaphysics, thus a more or less accidental creation, becomes in medieval philosophy a general designation for reflection on issues connected

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Cf. H. Flashar, Aristoteles. In: *Grundriß der Geschichte der Philosophie*. Bd. 3, *Ältere Akademie-Aristoteles-Peripatos*, ed. H. Flashar (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwab, 1983) 256.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 982 a 1-3; 983 a 8-9.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 983 b 5-6.

with these fundamental questions, questions which continue to define the central concerns of the discipline known as metaphysics from Ancient times until the present.

Prominent thinkers from the field of classical metaphysics attempted accordingly to answer questions regarding the "first" or "highest" principles and causes of things and being as a whole, as well as of our knowledge of them, i.e. of reality, its causes and principles. Historians of philosophy customarily differentiate three main periods or stages in the history of metaphysics: the Ancient and Medieval period, when the discipline which later came to be known as "ontology" concerned itself with the question of the *being of that which exists*<sup>7</sup>; second, the modern period extending from Descartes until the collapse of German Idealism, during which metaphysical reflection was directed toward establishing the epistemic conditions of our knowledge of reality, taking the form, thus, of a primarily subjective, foundationalist metaphysics of (self-)consciousness; and finally, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, the "post-metaphysical" era of philosophy in its various forms.<sup>8</sup>

This division is heavily influenced by the thought of Martin Heidegger and his claim to have "destroyed" the history of metaphysics and its purported "forgetfulness of being" by what he calls "thinking from another beginning", i.e. from "being itself" in the verbal (extra- or non-categorical) sense of its "existing" or "occurrence" (Ereignis). Heidegger opposes his approach to what he sees as traditional metaphysics' concern with conceptualisation of the "being-ness of being" (Seiendheit des Seienden), which in his estimate always involves imposing a certain inappropriate "thingfulness" (Dinglichkeit) on what cannot be described by general characteristics or made into a thing possessing even the most eminent properties.<sup>9</sup> Heidegger's "destruction" of the history of metaphysics largely neglects currents of thought like (Neo-)Platonism, from thinkers like Plotinus and Proclus, Medieval and Renaissance Platonism to Platonists or Platonist-influenced thinkers of the modern period and German Idealism, whose thinking on the relationship of finite things and the unconditional source of all that is and is thought tends to contradict central assertions of Heidegger's interpretative stance and purported "destruction" of metaphysics.<sup>10</sup> This has

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<sup>7</sup> In contrasting the perspectives of the Ancient & Medieval period on the one hand, and the modern and postmodern period on the other, our selection of thinkers and texts is necessarily limited. While striving to be representative, our exposition focusses on the problems themselves, and is not intended as a valuation of individual thinkers. For reasons of space, and because their treatment presupposes consideration of the encounter between the major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and works of Classical Antiquity, thinkers of the Medieval period are not considered in this article.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken. Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M: Suhrkamp, 1988) 20f.

<sup>9</sup> Heidegger's standpoint after the so-called "Kehre" ("turn", "conversion") represents a development of Schelling's later philosophy, with its opposition of "negative" and "positive philosophy" and advocacy for a historical and "positive" philosophy over metaphysics of essence. Cf. M.E. Zovko, "Die Spätphilosophie Schellings und die Kehre im Denken M. Heideggers." In: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie des Forschungsinstituts für Philosophie Hannover* (10) 1999, 135-173.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M.E. Zovko, *Plotinovo i Heideggerovo Poimanje vremena*. (Zagreb: Filozofska izraživanja, 1991; Magisterarbeit: Freiburg i. br., 1985). Regarding similarities and differences between Heidegger's approach to philosophizing from the "other beginning" and Platonist views of the highest principle of thought and being "beyond being", cf. M.E. Zovko, (1999) 143. Concerning Fr. Schlegel's influence on

done little, however, to attenuate its wide-reaching influence and its role in ushering in a new "post-metaphysical" era. Additional impetus for the idea of the "end" of metaphysics was provided, moreover, from another corner, by the movements known as analytic philosophy and logical positivism, as initiated by Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein, and their view that philosophy has to do not with higher truths, principles or causes, but with the analysis of propositions.

In contrast to the view that following Kant and the German Idealists philosophy irrevocably entered a post-metaphysical era, we shall attempt in this article to delineate the thematic unity and continuity of European philosophy as concerns inquiry into the epistemic preconditions of knowledge and explanation of reality. It is this thematic continuity, we argue, which constitutes what may be called the metaphysical character of philosophy and which, regardless of the changing aspect of philosophy's specific interest and expression, cannot be revoked or eliminated – short of elimination of philosophy, and consequently, of humanity itself.

## 1.2 Classical origins of metaphysics and epistemic conditions of knowledge: Plato and Aristotle

Plato (and in an historical and foundational respect his predecessors among the Presocratic thinkers, in particular Parmenides and Heraclitus<sup>11</sup>) may be credited with two important discoveries upon which the whole of European metaphysics is founded: first, the principle of identity, that a thing is what it is, with its complement, the principle of non-contradiction, according to which it is impossible "for the same thing to be attributed and not to be attributed at the same time to the same thing in the same respect."<sup>12</sup> These together comprise the precondition of coherent speech, scientific argumentation and successful communication. The second discovery is that of the primacy of concepts as the basis of explanation. This discovery is embodied in Socrates' so-called "flight to the *logoi*" (*kataphugē eis tous logous*), as described in the *Phaedo*, outcome of his youthful fascination and ultimate frustration with the search for causes, or rather, with the manner in which the investigation of nature (*historia peri tes psuchēs*) had hitherto been conducted. By replacing the unending regress entailed by mere enumeration of the successive phases or

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Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics, cf. also Michael Elsässer, *Friedrich Schlegels Kritik am Ding*, (Hamburg: Meiner 1994). Cf. also Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952, as well as John Caputo, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*. (Fordham University Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M.E. Zovko, "Plato's Heracliteanism Reconsidered," *Dionysius*, 20 (2002): 23-50.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Plato, Rep.* 436b: "The same thing will never do or suffer opposites in the same respect in relation to the same thing and at the same time". Cf. *Phaedo* 102e, *Theaetetus* 188a, *Sophist* 220b, 602e; Cf. Aristotle's three formulations, *Met.* IV 3 1005b19–20, with respect to existent things: "It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation"; 1005b 23–24, in the form of an "ultimate belief" which anyone trying to demonstrate anything refers back to: "it is impossible for the same man to suppose at the same time that the same thing is and is not; for the man who made this error would entertain two contrary opinions at the same time"; and finally, in its logical form: "the most certain of all beliefs is that opposite statements are not both true at the same time" (1011b13–14).

stages in a sequence of natural phenomena, i.e. of proximate "causes" and their "effects", with the hypothesis of ideas<sup>13</sup>, Plato provided philosophy with a unified explanatory approach to ontological, epistemological and ethical phenomena. This enabled him to turn his attention to human beings' role as *subjects* of philosophical inquiry into the constitution of reality – and to the implications of such inquiry for the conduct of our lives.

Plato recognized that the phenomena of the sense world can only be known and explained by concepts or *ideas* which name or correspond to them. Knowledge of phenomena is made possible by "participation" of the matter of sensation in ideas, and of ideas in the matter of sensation. In other words, sensation itself (and hence experience, knowledge) is impossible without ideas. These he postulates as the unchanging principles and causes of things whose essence they (the ideas) define or express. At the close of the dialogue *Cratylus* (339c-340c), an argument is presented by which to explain how our knowledge and understanding of changeable phenomena can be enduring and reliable. The *logos* lends to our perceptions, and therewith to the changing phenomena of the world of flux, eidetic stability. The ineluctable and undifferentiable fluidity of change achieves solidity, stability, and form for our experience only by means of conceptualisation and linguistic expression. In this respect, Harold Cherniss' claim is justified that the world of phenomena can only be "saved", that is, adequately explained, with the help of ideas: "The instability of phenomena can be explained only by assuming a world of Ideas as source of phenomenal characteristics".<sup>14</sup> This hypothesis proves to be the only adequate basis for explanation in the realm of epistemology, ontology, and ethics.

Plato's discovery that one and the same idea is present in diverse phenomena and that as such ideas possess the explanative structure of "one in the many" (*hen epi pollon*), is called by Aristotle the "argument from science" (*logoi ek ton epistēmon*).<sup>15</sup> Plato is therewith one of the first philosophers to recognize the fact that we explain the experiential world by means of eidetic structures which are the result of our process of cognition.<sup>16</sup> Simply put, there exist ideas for all the data of which we have knowledge. This, however, is for Plato not a purely epistemological insight. The central, burning question of the early dialogues is how to achieve a good and happy life.<sup>17</sup> While physicalist and scientific neo-ontologies attempt to reduce knowledge to its descriptive content and associated practice to potential technological applications, for Plato and his teacher Socrates knowledge of things is

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the anecdote regarding the "second-best route" (*deuteros plous*), Plato *Phaedo* 96 a-100a (followed by Socrates' summary of the "theory of ideas", 100b-102a). Cf. H. Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas", *American Journal of Philology* 57 (1936), 455. The "economy of the theory of ideas", i.e. Plato's demonstration of the indispensability and adequacy of the hypothesis of separate and substantive ideas as causative and explanatory principles of being, knowledge and value, is characterised in Henrich's interpretation as the replacement of the "unity of nature" by the "unity of concepts" (Cf. Henrich 1987, 62). Cherniss' argument turns on the "determination of intellection as an activity different from sensation and opinion" and on the priority of the former with respect to the latter (cf. Cherniss 449).

<sup>14</sup> Cherniss 452f.

<sup>15</sup> *Met.* A9 990 b12.

<sup>16</sup> Heraclitus was arguably the first to explicitly recognize this fact. Cf. Zovko (2002).

<sup>17</sup> Republic I, 352d.

inextricably tied to the Delphic imperative to "know thyself". Definition and argument are inextricably bound to the attainment of the inherent excellence (*aretē*) of the knower and of the things known. Theory is thus inseparable from morality.

In modern science, the criteria of a theory's validity is its ability to accurately describe observable phenomena and reliably predict their future behaviour on the basis of mathematical models and replicable experiments. Despite their efforts to maintain complete "objectivity", however, the sciences are never, in fact, "value neutral". Every theory is influenced by the standpoint of the researcher, and by value-related assumptions, and has implications or consequences which require ethical reflection and choice. Purportedly "objective" descriptions of phenomena, furthermore, do not in themselves provide a meaningful context for human action, including qualifying reasons for choosing one set of actions or aims, one path in life over another. Pragmatists appeal to the principle according to which thought distinctions are to be resolved by their practical consequences. The question remains, however, – above all with respect to technological development and application of theoretical discoveries in practice: why should one set of consequences be preferred over another?

In Plato's "theory of ideas", descriptive, mathematical, and ethical predicates are ultimately grounded in the triad of ideas: beauty, goodness, and justice, which function not only as standards of truth and causes of being, but as *ideals* for the direction of our moral behaviour. The ethical predicates, for their part, possess particular relevance, not only for the constitution of our individuality and for the conceptualisation of our life's orientation, but also for the foundation of knowledge. In other words, there are ideas of things, mathematical ideas, ideas of virtues, but these are never hermetically separated from each other; and all ideas are founded ultimately in the idea of the good. Ideas establish thus not only *what a thing is by nature and how it behaves*<sup>18</sup>, but also the criteria or point of orientation towards which we may "turn our gaze" (*apoblepein*) in the search for knowledge, as to a standard and paradigm (*paradeigma*), by which to judge whether our actions and the actions of others are just, prudent, pious or otherwise.

With the Analogy of the Line, Plato elaborates his understanding of the epistemic conditions of knowledge and reality. The Line functions as image or *interpretandum*, of the interrelationships of knowledge (*epistēmē*), probable opinion or belief (*doxa*), and their objects, intelligible and sensible reality (*noēta, aisthēta*). Socrates presents the image of the Line in the manner of a mathematical problem: he asks Glaukon to first imagine a line and then to cut it into two unequal parts, and when this has been accomplished to divide each part *according to the same ratio (ana ton auton logon)*. Plato utilizes thus a geometrical proportion as analogue of the complex relationship of the knower to the content of his knowledge, providing at the same time perhaps the first explicit example analogical reasoning as a specific *method* of investigation.<sup>19</sup> In keeping with the law of proportion, the

<sup>18</sup> Heraclitus' formulation of the original task of the philosopher, Cf. H. Diels/W. Kranz *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* . Vol I(Hildesheim: Strauss & Cramer, 1985), 22 [12] B 1; and Zovko (2002) 35.

<sup>19</sup> Recent research in the fields of psychology, cognitive science and artificial intelligence regards analogical reasoning as one of the most highly advanced operations of human intelligence. On structures of analogical reasoning and recent research on this topic cf. M.E. Zovko, "The Way Up and

cross products, i.e. the products of the means and of the extremes, can be used to find a missing term. The three known terms of the analogy can thus be used to discover a fourth missing term. The original ratio of unequal sections is repeated in each of the ratio's component parts. This implies the proportionality of the subordinate ratios both to each other and to the original ratio, illustrating not only the reflection, or refraction in another dimension, of the original ratio of knowledge and opinion, the sensible and the intelligible, in each of the constituent members of the proportion, but also the analogy of the internal relationships of the analogues from each individual realm to each other and to the whole (i.e. the analogy of the relationship between imagination [*eikasia*] and belief [*pistis*], to the relationship between discursive [*dianoia*] and intuitive thought [*noēsis*], as well as of the corresponding relationships between their respective objects [for *eikasia* the *eikones* or images/ for *pistis* the *zoa*, *phuta*, *skeuasta* (animals, plants and the "whole class of objects made by man", of which things the *eikones* are likenesses)/ for *dianoia* the *mathēmatika* / for *noēsis* the *ideai*] and of both analogies to the overarching division of knowledge and reality into opinion and "science", sensible and intelligible (*doxa*/with its objects the *horata* or *aisthēta*: *epistēmē*, also called *noēsis* in a broader sense, including *noēsis* and *dianoia* as subordinate functions/with its objects the *noēta*).

The layered proportionality of the Line admonishes against a dualistic interpretation of Plato's division of reality and the corresponding activities of the soul.<sup>20</sup> While the Line represents a *unity in duality*, the primary duality is not that of opposition of the intelligible and the sensible, but what might be called a *duality of reference*, the Line referring, on the one hand, as a complex *sign* or *symbol*, to the whole of reality and on the other to the integrated functioning of the faculties of the soul or intelligence which make reality accessible to us. Each section of the complex proportion of the Line represents both an activity or function of the soul and the specific object or aspect of reality which that particular activity "intentionally" contains or refers to. At the same time, according to the fundamental image of the Line, reality is *one*: the functions of the soul which enable cognition of reality are *one* and convey *one reality* by means of its different aspects. Intelligence is *one* taken in the entirety of the process of knowing and in unity with the reality which the diversity of its functions conveys. The law of proportion (the method of analogy) which forms the basis for analogy appears, moreover, as a specific, indirect method of discovery (as opposed to identification, recognition, deduction, induction and

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the Way Back are the Same. The Ascent of Cognition in Plato's Analogies of the Sun, the Line and the Cave and the Path Intelligence Takes," in: *Platonism and Forms of Intelligence* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 313-341; 334f. and n. 49-52. The Analogy of the Line has been widely interpreted, particularly in Anglo-american literature. Cf. R. N. Murphy, *The interpretation of Plato's Republic*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1951), 157-160; R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. (London: Oxford Press 1953), 147-201; A. S. Ferguson, „Plato's Simile of Light. I. The Simile of the Sun and the Line“, *Class. Quarterly* (15) 1921, 131-152; cf. also Th. Ebert, *Meinung und Wissen in der Philosophie Platons* (Berlin: de Gruyter 1974), 173-193; H. Krämer, *Idee des Guten. Sonnen- und Liniengleichnis* (Buch VI 504-511e), in: O. Höffe (ed.) *Platon. Politeia* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag 1997), 179-204.

<sup>20</sup> Even though Plato in places, for example, in the first part of the *Parmenides*, appears to favour a dualistic conception of the relationship of ideas to sensible particulars, the complexity of his exposition must not be ignored, and requires a correspondingly complex interpretation. W. Wieland, *Geschichte der Philosophie in Text und Darstellung. Bd. 1 Antike. Einleitung* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1988), 25.

other forms of inference).<sup>21</sup> The constellation of relationships which holds among the individual sections of the line proceeds thus not from simple gradation of degree or a simple opposition of terms, but proportionately and organically – with unexpected consequences for our understanding of the relationship between knowledge and reality.<sup>22</sup>

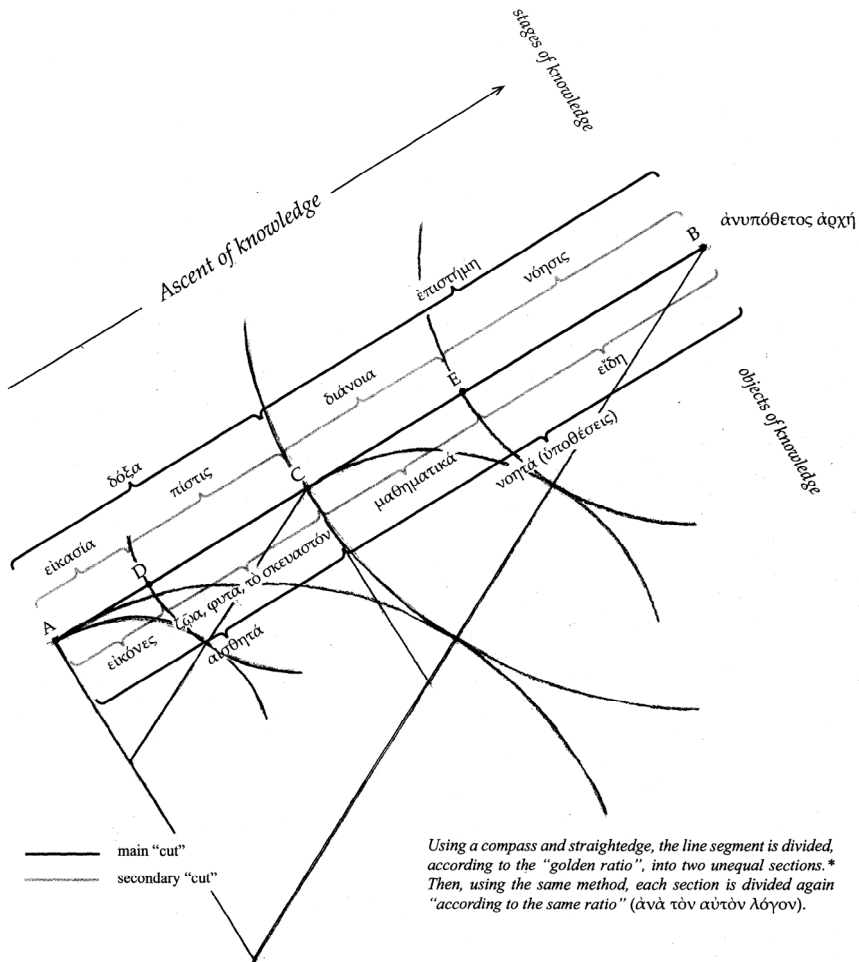
Excursus: The Metaphysical Character of Philosophy according to the Plato's Divided Line<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Socrates explicitly mentions this method in connection with the investigation of the virtues as a method of discovering a fourth, unknown term (*Republic* 428a). Since in the *Politeia*, the image of the state and its constitution (its division and parts, the proper education of its citizens, its injustice or justice) is intended as an analogy of the soul (its division and parts, its proper education, of the path to the realisation of its virtue/ justice, i.e. the good life), the same method can be applied, at a multitude of levels, to the interpretation of the dialogue as a whole.

<sup>22</sup> On the mathematical properties of the proportion equation and, cf. Zovko (2008) 326 f., and n. 37, 40, 41. For complete mathematical formulation of the proportion equation and its component ratios cf. J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato. With Critical Notes, Commentary and appendices*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. with an introduction by D.A. Rees, Vol. II (Cambridge University Press 1963), 64 n. 3. The fundamental ratio  $CB:AC$  gives the equivalencies  $CB:AC::EB:DC$  and  $CB:AC::CE:AD$  and furthermore  $CE:EB::AC:DC$ , *componendo*,  $CE + EB : EB::AD+DC::DC$ , in other words  $CB:EB::AC:DC$ , and so forth (for the remaining steps of the formulation cf. Adam 141, n. to 534a). Although in Plato's time the proportion was solved geometrically, and the numerical value was not calculated until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Plato frequently refers to the so-called "rule of three", the method by which, on the basis of an original ratio, when three terms are given, a fourth can be derived (cf. above n. 21 and Zovko [2008] 327 f.). Plato is also credited with having been the first to study the proportion known as the "golden ratio", whose discovery is attributed to the Pythagoreans. The Line may have been intended to be sectioned according to the golden ratio, to which Plato refers in the *Timaeus* 31c-32a in describing the regular or Platonic solids, some of which contain the "golden section". "The golden ratio, also known as the divine proportion, golden mean, or golden section, is a number often encountered when taking the ratios of distances in simple geometric figures such as the pentagon, pentagram, decagon and dodecahedron." Wolfram Mathworld <http://mathworld.wolfram.com/GoldenRatio.html> (16 December 2011). The term "golden ratio" was not used until much later. Euclid calls this "division into the mean and the extreme", "the line  $AB$  is divided in extreme and mean ratio by  $C$  if  $AB:AC = AC:CB$ " (*Elements*, Book 6, Definition 3).

<sup>23</sup> On the Analogy of the Line, its interpretation and graphic illustration, cf. Adam (1963), 63ff. notes to 509dff. and Appendices to Book VII, I: "On the Similes of the Line and the Cave" 156-163; cf. also M.E. Zovko (2008), 323ff. Any diagram of the Line is necessarily inadequate to the task of depicting the dynamics and complexity of the Line's construction and exposition. Step-by-step illustration of the unfolding of the proportion and its interpretation, including possible alternatives and disputable aspects, would be more appropriate. The method of reasoning by analogy, namely, though employing analysis and inference, is not that of demonstrative proof, but an experimental awakening of insight into the actual content of our experience and the premisses on which that experience is based. G. Patzig provides an illustration of the Line similar to the one provided here, dividing the line, "for the sake of simplicity" and "in order to ease our understanding" into nine equal parts, and making the original cut at the "third partial division from below", whereby he obtains as fundamental ratio 2:1 (*Tatsachen, Normen, Sätze* [Stuttgart: Reclam 1988], 134, cf. 132f.). Plato, a geometer at heart, in all probability would not have taken this approach. It is likelier he would have constructed the Line geometrically, "in the extreme and mean ratio" (for example, using triangles or the "golden rectangle") to produce what was later termed the "golden section", such that "as the





\* Cf. M. Frings, *Der Goldene Schnitt*, <http://www.marcus-frings.de/texte/text-gs.htm> (12. April 2012); *Die Elemente von Euklid*, nach Heibergs Text aus dem Griech. übers. und ed. von Clemens Thaeer, 8. Aufl. (Darmstadt 1991), VI, Def. 3, cf. II, Prop. 11; *Goldener Schnitt*, [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldener\\_Schnitt#Konstruktionen\\_mit\\_Zirkel\\_und\\_Lineal](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldener_Schnitt#Konstruktionen_mit_Zirkel_und_Lineal) (12. April 2012); B. Peter, *Goldener Schnitt*, "Geometrische Konstruktionen (1)", <http://www.dr-bernhard-peter.de/Goldsch/seite74.htm> (12. April 2012); R. Herz-Fischler, *A Mathematical History of Division in Extreme and Mean Ratio* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ., 1987).

Fig. 1. Diagram of Plato's Line transected according to the Golden ratio

The Analogy of the Line is a seminal text in the history of philosophy and of metaphysics. Its division of the stages of knowledge and their objects was of pervasive influence for subsequent divisions of human faculties from Antiquity to the Modern period. As Adam maintained, the Line contains "perhaps more

whole line is to the greater segment, so is the greater to the less" (cf. Euclid, *Elements* Bk VI, Def. 3, and above n. 22). On various methods for dividing a line segment according to the "golden section" cf. R. Knott, *The Golden section ratio: Phi* <http://www.maths.surrey.ac.uk/hosted-sites/R.Knott/Fibonacci/phi.html> and *Two-dimensional Geometry and the Golden section* <http://www.maths.surrey.ac.uk/hosted-sites/R.Knott/Fibonacci/phi2DGeomTrig.html#phi2D> (16 December 2011).

δόξα	– doxa = (more or less probable) opinion
ἐπιστήμη	– epistēmē = (well-founded, true) knowledge
εἰκασία	– eikasia = image-making ability, apprehension by means of images, imagination
πίστις	– pistis = belief (confidence that something is what it is perceived to be)
διάνοια	– dianoia = discursive thought, including deductive, inductive, inferential abilities
νόησις	– noēsis = intuitive thought, grasp of the whole
ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή	– anupothetos archē = unconditioned beginning, first principle
εἰκόνες	– eikones = images
ζῶα, φυτά, τὸ σκευαστόν	– zōa, phuta, to skeuaston = animals, plants, manufactured things (the content of sense experience)
μαθηματικά	– mathēmatika = objects of rational/analytic thought, discursive reasoning
εἶδη	– eidē = ideas, principles of knowledge and being, object of noetic/intuitive thought
αἰσθητά	– aisthēta = sensible things, objects of sensation, perception, belief, opinion
νοητά	– noēta = intelligible things, objects of rational and intuitive thought
ὑποθέσεις	– hypothēseis = hypotheses, assumptions, first, in the sense of self-evident assumptions, objects of rational thought, then, in a genuine sense, as provisional hypotheses of intuitive thought

Fig. 2. Transliteration and meaning of terms from the diagram of the Line

Platonic teaching than any passage of equal length in Plato's writings and is of primary and fundamental importance for the interpretation of his philosophy."<sup>24</sup> The Analogy of the Line is preceded by the Analogy of the Sun and followed by the Analogy of the Cave. Together the analogies of the Sun and the Cave, it forms the centerpiece of Plato's *Republic* in its search for an answer to the question "what is justice", or "what does it mean to live well?" (*eu zen*).<sup>25</sup> The Analogy of the Sun provides the backdrop for the Line, depicting the fundamental relationship between the realms of sense and intellection, sensible and intelligible things. The Sun is conceived as "offspring of the Good which the Good begot to stand in proportion to itself." An ontological correspondence and hierarchy is thereby established, the image of the Sun, the eye and its objects able to act as analogue for the realm of the intelligible, intellect and the Good, *because* of the latter's role as principle and archetype of the former. Thus, it may be said that: "as the good is in the intelligible region to reason and the objects of reason, so ... [the sun] in the visible world to vision and the objects of vision." (508c).<sup>26</sup> In the Analogy of the Line, Socrates proceeds to elaborate the stages by which we attain to knowledge of being. He does this by presenting a task, the resolution of which will establish the preconditions for greater depth of reflection and independence of thought on the part of the interlocuter – insofar as he or she is able to "crack the code". At first, it is left to the reader's imagination to decide what the orientation of the Line should be, and which of the sections, the longer (larger) or the shorter (smaller), should represent the realm of

<sup>24</sup> Adam (1963) 63 n to 509d ff.

<sup>25</sup> The three central Analogies of the *Republic* may be taken to form a proportion of their own, whose fourth term is to be inferred from the "ratios" of the other three. Cf. M.E. Zovko (2008), 328f.

<sup>26</sup> For a detailed interpretation of the Analogy of the Sun cf. Adam, *loc. cit.* and M.E. Zovko (2008), 319ff.

intelligible, which the realm of visible things. It is unclear whether the sections should be assigned according to quantitative criteria (i.e. the relative "portion" of our experience which each occupies – whether in temporal or spatial terms, or by degree of intensity), or according to their relative value (the longer section representing what is more valuable, the shorter that which is less valuable). Subsequently, the criteria of relative clearness, reality and truth are introduced, but again the imagined interlocuter must decide how these relate to the individual functions of the soul and their objects and how they "map" onto the sections of the Line. Towards the close of the initial interpretation (the Line is further expanded on 533ff), Socrates speaks of "ascent", and of "higher" and "lower" sections of the Line (cf. 511e f.); and, in fact, the hierarchical relationships described in the Analogy the Sun are repeated in their gnoseological dimension in the Line. The orientation of the line corresponds furthermore to the stages of ascent described in the "pedagogical" image of the Cave. The Line is drawn here accordingly, not vertically, but as a diagonal, in order to convey the quasi-physical aspect of the ascent. The differentiation of "higher" and "lower" regions is, moreover, a natural one with regard to human beings' geocentric experience of the cosmos, "higher" regions generally being associated with what is of greater value and more akin to the divine, "lower" with that which is of lesser value, the bodily and the physical, which draw one earthwards.<sup>27</sup>

Plato's vision of the integrated functioning of a complex whole of sensible and intelligent faculties corresponds to a complex integrated whole of sensible and intelligent reality. True opinion (*doxa*) as based on the integrated functioning of image-making (*eikasia*, basis for sense perception and memory), and belief (*pistis*, the initial preconceptual recognition or identification of the "things" of sense experience for what they are), no matter how inferior to true knowledge (*epistēmē*) of ideas, provides the indispensable material foundation for these, whereby ideas are taken to be "clearer" (*saphesteron*), "truer" and "more real" than the things which are formed in their "likeness".<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, the same universal ontological and gnoseological principles inform and enable the existence and knowability of both sensible and intelligible being. As the highest principle of being and knowledge, the Idea of the Good is the "unconditional" or "groundless beginning" (*archē anupothetos*) from which both ultimately proceed. As in the Analogy of the Sun the Idea of the Good is called not *ousia*, but the cause (*aitia*) or condition of being and truth which enables them to be and to be known,<sup>29</sup> so in the Analogy of the Line the *anupotheton arhe* is not itself a *hypothesis*, is not itself an idea in the sense of an assumption made in the process of thought – but the unconditioned principle of thought and intellect itself.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> One might justifiably represent the Line as the radius of a sphere, proceeding (in its "lowest" stages) from any point on the periphery toward the center, the latter corresponding to Idea of the Good (from the Analogy of the Sun), and to the *anupothetos archē* of the Line, as the "highest" point of the "ascent" of knowledge. An analogous relationship is suggested by the (Neo-)Platonic geometrical metaphor, describing God as principle of reality: "Deus est sphaera cuius centrum ubique peripheria nusquam." Cf. D. Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt. Beiträge zur Genealogie der mathematischen Mystik*. Halle/Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1937. 6ff.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Republic* 510a-b; 511c. The relationship of "the likeness to that of which it is a likeness" (τὸ ὁμοιωθὲν πρὸς τὸ ὃ ὁμοιωθήν *Republic* 510b) establishes a thematic unity which extends through the whole of the Analogy, the understanding of which is essential for proper understanding of the interrelationships among the analogues. Images, for example, are likenesses of animals, plants, the whole class of manufactured products. Each of the following sections on an ascending scale "treats as images the things imitated in the former division" (τὸ μὲν αὐτοῦ τοῖς τότε μιμηθεῖσιν ὡς εἰκόσιν 510b), i.e. contains intentionally the more real and true "things" of which the things "below" were only a "likeness", the clearer and more real and truer being "the things seen only by the mind"(511b).

<sup>29</sup> *Rep.* 509b.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 510b7; 511b7.

Strictly speaking, as principles of definitional unity, ideas cannot themselves be defined, but are presupposed by the process of definition itself and are assumed in the form of a hypothesis<sup>31</sup> to be tested. In the Analogy of the Line, two uses of hypotheses are described: an axiomatic use and one which is in a true sense hypothetical. In the first, the "technical" and "mathematical" use of hypotheses, hypotheses are employed as "arbitrary starting-points", i.e. as self-evident assumptions from which to deduce whatever may be deduced. In the ascent to the ideas described by the "highest" section of the Line, however, "reason itself lays hold [of the intelligible] by the power of dialectics" and "treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards" is able to "ascend to that which requires no assumption and is the starting point of all"<sup>32</sup>, i.e. to the unconditional ground of hypothetical thinking itself. Having attained this, and taking hold of that which directly depends on it, it "descends" again, "making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas", arriving at last at the ideas of sensible things of experience from which our theoretical reasoning took its point of departure.<sup>33</sup> Ideas are thus presupposed as hypotheses which enable thinking itself. How then are these first principles of knowledge and being themselves to be discovered and what "knowledge" can we have of them? In what does the "being" of a first principle consist if it is not "like" the things of our experience? Why and to what extent is knowledge of first principles necessary to knowledge and experience as a whole?

In *Metaphysics* IV, 1003 a 31, Aristotle asserts that, as opposed to other sciences, which specialize in knowledge of the particular characteristics of beings and things, metaphysics as "first science" and "first philosophy" concerns itself with the "causes and principles of being in so far as it is" (*to on hē on*), insofar as things are what they are with respect to their essence and existence. Since the concept of being is multivalent (*pollachos legomenon*), Aristotle turns his attention to being as it is considered "in relation to the one and to one nature" (*pros hen kai mian tina phusin*)<sup>34</sup>. It is a question here of the structural principle which enables the unity and connection of things, which is considered by Aristotle as the relationship between substance and the categories. Aristotle's position is that in the manifold of all that we call being we can find something in common, first of all the "characteristic" of existence, that which Aristotle calls "ousia" in the original meaning of the word. The task of philosophy is to recognize this principle as the ground of all being.<sup>35</sup> In considering "being as being" we rely on principles which are presupposed as *conditio sine qua non* of our argumentation, of which the most important is the principle of (non-)contradiction, since it excludes the possibility that something is and is not at the same time. Every word signifies something, and that which is signified cannot at the same time be the opposite of what it is, for example, „human being“ and "not human-being“. Anyone who would assert that something identical is at the same time not what it is would deny the principle of non-contradiction, the most reliable foundation (*bebaiotate ton archon*) of our knowledge and thought. This would result,

<sup>31</sup> the "strongest *logos*", cf. *Phaedo* 101a.

<sup>32</sup> μέχρι τοῦ ἀνοποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχὴν ἰόν, *Rep.* 511b.

<sup>33</sup> *Rep.* 511b.

<sup>34</sup> *Met* 1003 a 34

<sup>35</sup> Cf. I. Düring, Aristoteles. *Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter 1966), 596.

in Aristotle's eyes, in the annihilation of "substance and that which being is" (*ousian kai to ti ēn einai*)<sup>36</sup>. Aristotle affirms thereby the metaphysical character of philosophy, while suggesting that we come to knowledge of the original principles of knowledge by our constant use them in our reasoning.<sup>37</sup>

The relationship of identity in Aristotle (the *pros-hen*-relationship) represents a complex constellation of semantic and ontic interrelationships, in which words and things permeate each other in the focus of their shared identity and their interconnection.<sup>38</sup> With the help of the relationship to the "one", Aristotle considers the cognitive process, adopting therewith *de facto* Plato's explanation of phenomena on the basis of their eidetic characteristics.<sup>39</sup> Cognition takes as its point of departure that which is "more known" to us according to the senses (*gnorimoteron hēmin*) and proceeds towards what is more known to us according to its nature (*gnorimoteron tē phusei*).<sup>40</sup> Explanation of the substantial structures of reality begins accordingly with sensibly perceivable "substances", which may be corruptible or perennial, but finishes with explication of the eidetic structures which are the principles and causes of unity and knowledge.

In *Metaphysics* III 4, Aristotle admits that on purely epistemic grounds it is necessary along with the endless multiplicity of particular things which exist in the phenomenal world to postulate the existence of other entities which enable their cognition: „we in fact know all things (*panta*) only insofar as they are one (*hen*), the same (*auto*) and general (*katholou*).“<sup>41</sup> *Metaphysics*, as first philosophy, concentrates primarily on that which in a *conceptual* sense is one and identical in things (*hen ti kai to auto*).

Aristotle conceives of his ontology as a refutation of Protagoras' relativism, as expressed in the statement: "man is the measure of all things, those which are that they are, and those which are not that they are not."<sup>42</sup> Being and reality are considered by Protagoras exclusively from the standpoint of our subjective relationship to them, that is, as they appear to us. For Aristotle, the fact that *knowledge* itself, albeit of contingent and corruptible being, does not decay, provides the main argument against relativism and scepticism.

## 2. Subjectivity and the metaphysical character of philosophy

From Antiquity to the modern period, metaphysics persists as general ontology, carrying forward Aristotle's inquiry into "being as being" through investigation of the structural unity in diversity of our experience and knowledge. Modern metaphysics begins with Descartes' methodical doubt, by which knowledge of being in general is reduced to its firm

<sup>36</sup> *Met.* 1007 a 20.

<sup>37</sup> W. Wieland, *Die aristotelische Physik. Untersuchungen über die Grundlegung der Naturwissenschaft und die sprachliche Bedingungen der Prinzipienforschung bei Aristoteles*. 2. durchgesehene Auflage mit einem Nachwort. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1970), 218.

<sup>38</sup> G. E. L. Owen speaks in this context of "focal meaning", cf. „Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle“, in: I. Düring/ G. E. L. Owen, *Aristotle and Plato in the mid-fourth century*, (Göteborg 1960), 163-190, 179.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Met.* A 989 a 15; Z 1208 a 32; Q 1049 b 11; M 10077 b 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Met.* Z 3, 1029b 3-12.

<sup>41</sup> *Met.* 999 a 28-30.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Diels-Kranz, Vol 2, 80 [74], B 1.

and unshakeable foundation in human self-consciousness. The metaphysical principle which Descartes arrives at by the method of doubt, upon which *fundamentum inconcussum* the reliability and certainty of our knowledge and thought processes are based, is the self-consciousness of the thinking subject: the *cogito me cogitare*. Thought (*cogitatio*) is the one constituent of human existence which cannot be eliminated in the process of doubt. By the establishment of the principle of self-consciousness in modern philosophy, metaphysics begins to distance itself from the traditional concept of being and its transcendent principles. The concept of an *ordo essendi* which dominated traditional metaphysics since Aristotle is therewith replaced by the concept of an *ordo cognoscendi*. Even though Descartes believes that the *res cogitans* needs to be founded in God's omnipotence and perfection, that is, in the concept of an *ens necessarium* – his equation of the concepts „dubito“ and „cogito“ in his method of doubt effectively constitutes the passing of traditional metaphysical realism. This pivotal event in the history of philosophy receives characteristic expression in Kant's position, as expressed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that the world is able to be known theoretically only as it appears to us, not as it is in itself.

### 2.1 Kant and the conditions of the possibility of knowledge

The ability of the human mind to find in itself sufficient principles of knowledge is equated by Kant with the idea of a „transcendental critique“ , whose object of investigation are not books and historical thought systems, but the "conditions of the possibility of cognition *a priori*". These are the inherent conditions and principles of the self-conscious mind, according to which human reason and understanding necessarily function and by which experience is constituted. In this connection, Kant asserts that it is „only possible to learn to philosophize, that is, to put the talent of the mind into practice, by following its universal principles“. He emphasizes therewith reason's need and incontestable right to investigate, reject or confirm those principles and origins.<sup>43</sup>

Kant fervently hoped that the transcendental method of critique would establish the metaphysical principles on the basis of which could be constructed a new *metaphysica generalis*.<sup>44</sup> In other words, while Kant believed that a transcendental critique was necessary in order to determine the boundaries and validity of our reasoning and understanding, he also believed that such a critique would enable the discovery of the apriori conditions which apply to any object of knowledge. This, he believed, would enable the establishment of a new kind of metaphysics, whose goal would be not to expand the boundaries of theoretical knowledge beyond sense experience, but to discover the "elements and highest maxims" of reason which enable "the very *possibility* of some sciences" and which govern "the use of all sciences." This newly established metaphysics would not attempt to usurp the primacy of the sciences in the investigation of nature and the realm of empirical cognition, but would

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Critique of pure Reason* (B 866), henceforth CR. Quotes from Kant, if not otherwise noted, are given in the translation of W. Pluhar: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. W. Pluhar, intro. P.W. Kitcher, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996). Cited according to the page numbers of the second edition from 1787 listed in the margins.

<sup>44</sup> Despite the disrepute and contempt into which metaphysics had fallen as a result of its neglect of the necessary propaedeutic which only a transcendental critique of pure reason could provide, Kant was sure "that we shall always return to metaphysics as we would to a beloved woman with whom we have had a quarrel" Cf. B 878.

reestablish philosophy's primary objective of referring "everything to wisdom". For whereas mathematics and natural sciences have a "high value as means to purposes of humanity", they remain focussed on the means to "contingent purposes", and only in the end on the means "to essential purposes of humanity". Metaphysics, on the other hand, "a rational cognition from mere concepts," provides "the completion of all *culture [cultivation]* of human reason" - a task which remains "indispensable" even after the false assertion that metaphysics is possible as a science is set aside. The fact that metaphysics has a primarily negative role to fulfill with respect to the sciences, as regards its establishment of the boundaries for the application of the categories of understanding and the ideas of pure reason, does nothing to reduce its value. Rather, it "gives to metaphysics dignity and authority through the censor's office that it operates" , securing "the general order and the concord...indeed the prosperity of the scientific community", and at the same time ensuring that "that community's daring and fertile works" do not deviate from their primary purpose, which is to ensure human happiness.<sup>45</sup>

By its influence on subsequent developments in philosophy, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, together with his later *Critiques* of practical reason and of judgment, extended the scope of transcendental critique beyond its function as a propaedeutic to the proper use and role of concepts of pure reason in scientific endeavour to establish the foundations for a metaphysics of subjectivity. The foundational aspect of Kant's idea of *Critique* crystallizes in the centerpiece of his investigation of the structure, application and epistemic scope of human reason, the "*Deduction of the pure concepts of reason*".<sup>46</sup> Kant's goal in the Deduction was to demonstrate that pure reason comprises not merely the ability for formal-logical reasoning, but the unified source of "pure" categories of understanding, the original and singular "synthetic activity" which produces the "concepts" or "forms" of judgment operative prior to sense experience. These enable, together with the synthesis of "apprehension" through (external and internal) sense intuition under the apriori forms of space and time, and the "synthesis of reproduction in imagination," the complete synthesis of whatever is "given" to us in sense perception into a coherent whole of experience.<sup>47</sup> Whereas in the "metaphysical deduction" of the categories, Kant preemptively establishes "the apriori origin of the categories as such through their complete concurrence with the universal logical functions of thought,"<sup>48</sup> his goal in the "transcendental deduction" is to justify his assertion of the categories' role in cognition - since they are neither discoverable in experience nor deducible from self-evident concepts. In the transcendental deduction, he thus attempts to determine how the categories of understanding arise from our spontaneous ability to synthesize, the "transcendental unity of apperception", and how, as conditions of the possibility of cognition, they are able to refer to objects of experience "a priori", i.e. antecedent to actual experience. In other words, in the transcendental deduction Kant seeks to determine how "subjective conditions of thought" can have "objective validity".<sup>49</sup> The transcendental deduction thus refers to a specific form of self-consciously directed reflection

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<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.* A XVI.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.* A 98f., A 100f.

<sup>48</sup> Kant took the table of logical functions which he adopts on the basis of Aristotle's system of logical categories and syllogisms to be a complete description of those functions. Cf. *ibid.* B 159.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* B 122.

on a formal aspect of our experience which is separable in thought, though in fact never separated from the sensible occasion of experience.<sup>50</sup>

Kant's original insight and the basis for his deduction of the categories of the understanding is his recognition of the fact that the fundamental form of any judgment whatsoever, the connection of a subject with a predicate, enables insight into certain preexisting formal criteria of cognition, and thus recognition of forms of thought which constitute our self-consciousness. In the "metaphysical" and "transcendental" deduction of the categories, Kant showed that the categories are conditions of our understanding of anything "objective" whatsoever. In this respect, transcendental philosophy establishes the basis for a new form of metaphysics, a metaphysics of subjectivity. The world and the phenomena of experience appear to us according to inherent conditions of sense perception by means of the synthetic unity of apperception under the categorical criteria of our self-consciousness as derived from the logical functions of understanding, which unify everything which we perceive and concepts of quantity, quality, relation, and modality.

With the help of the so-called "schematism"<sup>51</sup> of judgments, Kant ties the four cardinal divisions of the categories: quantity, quality, relation, modality, as the preconditions that allow anything to be thought as unity, to actual sense experience, arriving thus at four principles of judgment:

- the principle of the necessary extensive magnitude which allows the objectivisation of phenomena;
- the principle of the necessary intensive magnitude or corporal perceptibility of objective phenomena;
- the principle of necessary causal connection (*Zusammenhang*);
- the principle of modal determinability with respect to whether experience is possible, actual or necessary.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 118.

<sup>51</sup> The ability to "subsume" empirical content under the unity of the forms of judgment derives from the integrated synthetic functionality of our powers of understanding, sense intuition, and imagination, "a blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition whatsoever, but of which we are conscious only very rarely." (B 103) Since concepts of understanding are heterogeneous with respect to sensible intuitions, a third thing is required to enable an intuition to be "subsumed" under a category and categories to be applied to appearances (B 176f.). A "transcendental schema" is the third thing that mediates between the two, being homogeneous with the category, on the one hand (as being universal and resting on an *a priori* rule), and the appearance, on the other, "insofar as every empirical presentation of the manifold contains *time*" (B 177f.). Kant determines the schema to be a "transcendental time determination". The "schematism" itself, i.e. our understanding's application of forms to the appearances "is a secret art residing in the depths of the human soul ... whose true stratagems we shall hardly ever divine from nature" (B 180f.), but which involves the imagination's production of an image, the "schema" of sensible objects being "a product and, as it were, a monogram of the pure *a priori* imagination through which, and according to which, images become possible in the first place", "a transcendental product of the imagination which concerns the determination of inner sense as such, according to conditions of that sense's form (*viz.* *time*), in regard to all presentations insofar as these are to cohere *a priori*, in conformity with the unity of apperception, in one concept." (B 181)



With respect to these four principles of possible objective experience, Kant is able to assert that transcendental subjectivity, the "highest principle of all synthetic judgments", must be seen as the foundation of objectivity. For „[E]very object is subject to the conditions necessary for the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience.“ The possibility of metaphysics understood as *metaphysica generalis* is contained in the application of these four principles. Synthetic judgments, namely, "are possible a priori", if the "formal conditions of a priori intuition, the synthesis of the imagination, and the necessary unity of this synthesis in a transcendental apperception" are referred to "experiential cognition as such" (as the conditions of its possibility). If we accept, furthermore, that "the conditions of the *possibility of experience* as such are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the object of experience*", then the conditions of synthetic judgment, including the principles of judgment, "have objective validity in a synthetic a priori judgment."<sup>52</sup>

The objective deduction of the pure concepts of reason is only achieved in the schematism, that is, in the so-called proof of the principles of judgment. In other words, only in the application of judgments to our experience is it possible to speak of truth and falsehood. The synthetic unity of self-consciousness represents thereby for Kant "the highest point to which should be tied all use of understanding, even the whole of logic, and in accordance with it transcendental philosophy; indeed, this power is the understanding itself."<sup>53</sup> As Kant affirms in a letter to Prince Beloselsky, it is the sphere of higher powers of cognition derived from that unity which represents the specificum of human beings, and sets them apart from other living beings, whereas sense apprehension and mere representation of external objects without the synthetic unity of self-consciousness is characteristic of animals: "...*apprehensio bruta* without consciousness is only for livestock, ... the *sphere* of *apperception*, that is of concepts, comprises the sphere of understanding as a whole." Nevertheless, "[T]hrough neglect, human beings can sometimes fall back to the emptiness of stupidity (*betise*)".<sup>54</sup> In his 1790/91 lectures: „Directions on the Knowledge of the World and of Man“ („Anweisungen zur Welt- und Menschenkenntnis“), Kant emphasizes that "understanding is called the higher, and sensibility the lower faculty of knowledge". In contrast to the primarily receptive character of the "lower faculty", i.e. of sense intuition and representation of objects, "[T]he dignity of the understanding is comprised by its spontaneity, that is, its ability to freely act." Understanding, thus, as "the ability (Vermögen) to be conscious of every state of mind (Gemüt)", is "the ruler in the house", and we must allow it to rule, if we are not to be left to empirical dissipation in the "throng of phenomena" (im *Gewühle* von Erscheinungen).<sup>55</sup>

Kant's transcendental deduction is thus fundamentally opposed to an epistemology which conceives of knowledge as a purely descriptive representation of external reality. His transcendental project is not limited to explication of the epistemic structures of self-consciousness, however. Rather, the "transcendental logic", whose task is to determine the "source (Ursprung), extent and validity (Gültigkeit)" of every kind of knowledge,<sup>56</sup> is to be

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<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* B 197.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* B 134 n.

<sup>54</sup> Kant, AA 11: 345.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Immanuel Kants Anweisungen zur Welt- und Menschenkenntnis. Nach dessen Vorlesungen im Winterhalbjahre 1790-1791.* Ed. F. Chr. Starke, Leipzig 1931, 7; cf. CR A 111, 108. Cited in: G. Schulte, *Immanuel Kant* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1994), 97, 98.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* B 81.

completed and crowned by the deduction of the *transcendental ideas*. Together with the exposition of the other preconditions of knowledge, the deduction of transcendental ideas is intended to permit their expansion to a metaphysical system of thought. From Kant's transcendental viewpoint, an idea is "a necessary concept of reason for which no congruent object can be given in the senses."<sup>57</sup> Ideas, thus, can "never become cognition of an object". Nevertheless, those "presentations" (*Vorstellungen*) of reason which we call ideas have a specific indispensable function in human cognition, thought, and action. Ideas and the associated "problem of the supersensible", arise, namely, from reason's demand "for the unconditioned for the given conditioned". This demand is inherent to the nature of reason and occurs with respect to each of the higher cognitive powers: the power of understanding, of judgment and reason per se, with respect to theoretical knowledge, reflective judgment and the practical use of reason.<sup>58</sup> Ideas, taken "in the broadest sense", refer thus "to an object according to a certain principle (subjective or objective)."<sup>59</sup> The tendency of the higher cognitive powers to expand their use beyond application to objects which can be intuited through sense experience (or, in the case of aesthetic and teleological ideas, beyond concepts which can be applied to such objects) gives rise to the realm of ideas as a whole, including "ideas of reason" , "practical ideas"<sup>60</sup> , "aesthetic ideas"<sup>61</sup> and what might be termed

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<sup>57</sup> *ibid.* B 384.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* For each of these higher cognitive powers, there arises, when its use is expanded beyond the realm of conditioned objects, an antinomy, "(1) for the cognitive power, an antinomy of reason concerning the theoretical use of the understanding when this use is extended up to the unconditioned; (2) for the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, an antinomy of reason concerning the aesthetic use of judgment;" and "(3) for the power of desire, an antinomy of reason concerning the practical use of our intrinsically legislative reason." This division, and the corresponding division of ideas, may be seen to correspond to the three questions which according to Kant express the entire *interest* of reason: what can I know? what should I do? what can I hope for? whose intention is seen to converge and culminate in the one question which comprises the whole concern of philosophy and in itself describes the whole field of philosophy in its "cosmopolitan" significance: "What is a human being?" "The first question is merely theoretical...The second is merely practical... The third: if I do what I ought, what may I then hope for, is theoretical and practical at the same time...For all hope concerns happiness, and is with regard to the practical and to moral law the same thing, as cognition and natural law with respect to theoretical knowledge of things." Cf. *CRV* B 832f.; cf. Kant, *Logik* AA 16: 25.

<sup>59</sup> *Critique of Judgment* § 57, Comment I, 342. the *Critique of Judgment* differentiates two main kinds of ideas, the aesthetic or those which refer to an intuition, "according to a merely subjective principle of the mutual harmony of the cognitive powers (imagination and understanding)", and the rational, i.e. those which refer "to a concept, according to an objective principle" although they can never yield cognition of the object (*CJ* 342). Among ideas of the second type, Kant counts ideas like "the supersensible substrate of all appearances generally", but also the "rational concept of the supersensible that must be regarded as underlying our power of choice in relation to moral laws, i.e. , the rational concept of transcendental freedom." *ibid.* 343. In the case of ideas of reason, it is the "*imagination* with its intuitions" which fails to reach the given concept, whereas in the aesthetic ideas it is the "*understanding* with its concepts" which "never reaches the entire inner intuition that the imagination has" "in its free play" "and connects with a given presentation." The distinction between rational and aesthetic ideas undergirds the transition from knowledge to morality, providing the basis for a theory of motivation and inspiration to moral action.

<sup>60</sup>I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, tr. W. Pluhar, introd. by S. Engstrom (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett 2002), 134f (pagination of the *Akademie Ausgabe*). Practical reason requires the existence of the "postulates of practical reason" - God, freedom, immortality - for the possibility of its object, the

"teleological" ideas.<sup>62</sup> The first are the particular topic of the Transcendental dialectic, the second come into their own in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, while the last two are the topic of the *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>63</sup>

Ideas of reason, though not *constitutive* of human knowledge and although their own "objective reality cannot be cognized in any way", are "not arbitrarily invented", but "imposed by the nature of reason itself",<sup>64</sup> and must insofar be "purposive" and "accordant" with reason's correct use.<sup>65</sup> Thus, while their tendency "to expand positively the realm of the

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"highest good". The practical postulates – as "assumptions in necessarily practical regard", are "theoretical", but "indemonstrable" propositions which proceed from the "principle of morality", a "law by which reason determines the will directly". Kant also speaks of the practical ideas: the idea of immortality "flows from the practically necessary condition of the adequacy of duration to the completeness of fulfillment of the moral law", the idea of freedom "from the necessary presupposition of dependency on the sense world and the ability to determine one's will according to the law of an intelligible world", the idea of the existence of God "from the necessity of the condition of such an intelligible world". These concepts remain "problematic", i.e. merely thinkable, yet they are affirmed (though not cognized) as concepts to which real objects correspond, "because practical reason unavoidably requires the existence of these for the possibility of its object, the highest good", which in practical respect is absolutely necessary. The idea of freedom, paradoxically, is the only idea of pure reason which finds its object among matters of facts, since its reality, as idea of "a special kind of causality (the concept of which would be transcendent if we considered it theoretically), can be established through practical laws of pure reason and, [if we act] in conformity with these, in actual acts, and hence in experience." Cf. *CJ* 468.

<sup>61</sup> Unlike, *transcendental ideas* or "concepts of reason", which are "indemonstrable", that is, for which no corresponding object can ever be given in sense intuition, *aesthetic ideas* are "*unexpoundable* presentations of the imagination", for which no adequate concept of the understanding can be found (*CJ* 342).

<sup>62</sup> Here it is a question of the idea of "purposes", "purposiveness" or "final causes", i.e. reason's "regulative" concept of "a causality distinct from mechanism", a concept which serves as a "guide" for reflective judgment by which to conceive of organized natural products, their production and also the whole of nature, according the subjective principle of judgment, which is that of a "purposiveness without purpose" (*CJ* 226, 236, 241). According to this principle "we must judge certain things in nature (organized beings) and their possibility in terms of the concept of final causes", i.e. not according to an objective view of finality, but "as if" they had been produced by "a cause that acts according to intention....in a way analogous to the causality of an understanding" (*ibid.* 389, cf. 397f.). This is not to say that we can "objectively establish the proposition" that an intelligible being exists which produced things according to its intention, but that "given the character of our cognitive powers, i.e. in connecting experience with the supreme principles of reason, we are absolutely unable to form a concept of [how] such a world is possible except by thinking of it as brought about by a supreme cause that *acts intentionally*." For although "we do not actually *observe* purposes in nature as intentional ones, but merely add this concept...in our *thought* as a guide for judgment in reflecting on these products", "it is quite certain that in terms of merely mechanical principles of nature we cannot even adequately become familiar with, much less explain, organized beings and how they are internally possible." (*ibid.* 399, 400)

<sup>63</sup> Kant defends his decision to adopt the word "idea", based on Plato's use of the word to signify "archetypes of things, and not merely keys to possible experiences." Plato's endeavor with respect to the origin of moral and natural things from ideas is one "that deserves to be respected and followed". For "Plato well discerned" that "our cognitive power feels a much higher need than to merely spell out appearances according to synthetic unity in order to be able to read them as our experience." Cf. B371ff., B374ff.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.* B 384, 386, cf. B 310.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* B 670.

objects of our thought beyond the conditions of our sensibility" creates an "irresistible" illusion,<sup>66</sup> nonetheless, it is not the ideas themselves, but their misdirection which leads to "errors of surreption".<sup>67</sup> Directed toward "the purposive engagement" of the understanding, ideas of reason have a legitimate "regulative" use. By means of ideas, reason sets "a certain collective unity" or "*focus imaginarius*", "as the goal of the understanding's acts, which otherwise deal only with distributive unity."<sup>68</sup>

Ideas of reason refer hence to the "use" of understanding in its entirety, "in order to prescribe to the understanding the direction leading to a certain unity ...which aims at collating all acts of understanding... in an *absolute whole*."<sup>69</sup> These ideas consider "all experiential cognition as determined by an absolute totality of conditions." They seek "to take the synthetic unity of thought in the category up to the absolutely unconditioned", i.e. to a "concept of *totality of conditions* for a given conditioned".<sup>70</sup> Corresponding to the three "kinds of relations that the understanding presents by means of the categories", three types of unconditioned arise with respect to the synthesis of intuitions under the categories: the "*categorical synthesis*" in the ultimate *subject* of all predications, the "*hypothetical synthesis*" of the *complete series of conditions* or causal relations, and "the *disjunctive synthesis* of the parts in a *system*" in the idea of completeness of all that is possible. Kant thus arrives at the transcendental ideas of the Soul (the "complete" or "substantial" subject), World, and God.<sup>71</sup>

The actual cause of reason's tendency to expand the use of pure understanding beyond the realm of possible experience, and its attempt to make possible intuitions "conform to concepts – instead of concepts' conforming to possible intuitions", lies in the fact "that apperception, and with it thought, precedes all possible determinate arrangement of presentations."<sup>72</sup> In referring "necessarily to the entire use of understanding", ideas of reason have transcendental or subjective reality.<sup>73</sup> As epistemic conditions of experience, ideas of pure reason have a central role to play in the new metaphysics of subjectivity – in conjunction with the postulates of practical reason: God, immortality of the soul, freedom, with the aesthetic ideas of Beauty and the Sublime, and the teleological ideas of purposiveness in organic beings, in nature as a whole, and in human beings as final purposes.

The central role of the postulates of pure practical reason: God, immortality, freedom in Kant's transcendental project is manifest by his lectures on metaphysics, where Kant affirms that we cannot break our understanding of the habit of asking the questions of metaphysics,

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.* B 672, Cf. B 311, B 343f.

<sup>67</sup> The error of "slipping in a concept of sense as if it were the concept of an intellectual characteristic" Cf. Pluhar, *CR* B 672 n. 14.

<sup>68</sup> *CR* B 672. In their proper use, ideas of reason not only "guide" and "further" cognition, but also make possible "a transition from the concepts of nature to the practical concepts" (Cf. *ibid.* B 386).

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* B 383 f., B 378.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* B 383, Cf. B 379.

<sup>71</sup> *Prolegomena* § 43, Cf. *CR* B 379. The exposure of the necessary illusion which arises from reason's attempt to apply these concepts to the realm of theoretical knowledge is the task which Kant sets himself in the Paralogisms, the Antinomies and the exposition of the Transcendental Ideal (Cf. *CR* B399ff.).

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.* B 345.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* B 384.

so intimately are they bound up with our way of thinking. Those who would do so only create for themselves a new form of metaphysics: for those ideas are so "woven into the nature of the mind... that we cannot simply rid ourselves of them," and all those who, like Voltaire, would appear as "despisers of metaphysics" have, in fact, "their own metaphysics ...because every one wants to think something about his soul."<sup>74</sup>

Despite his critique of misguided attempts to expand the realm of theoretical knowledge beyond the boundaries of sense experience, Kant is thus deeply aware that there is a sense in which *knowledge* of what transcends the realm of empirical knowledge as condition of its possibility, and of the ideas which provide the world of our experience with meaning and purpose, *is possible*, though he admits „that this type of investigation will always remain difficult, because it contains in itself a *metaphysics of metaphysics*."<sup>75</sup>

## **2.2 Post-metaphysical thought and metaphysics of subjectivity – Evolving the transcendental approach**

Kant's limitation of "theoretical" knowledge in a strict sense to the realm of sense perception, and his critique of traditional proofs for the existence of God, went hand in hand with relocation of metaphysical questions to the realm of practical reason, and aesthetic and teleological judgment, that is: with an understanding of the complexity of knowledge in relation to the whole of our being and experience in the diversity of its forms. The advance of experimental and mathematical testing of hypotheses in the natural sciences since Galileo, on the other hand, tended to favour descriptive knowledge as a representation of empirically observable phenomena, and the associated dichotomy of fact and value. This preference contributed to the rise of physicalism and logical positivism, with its one-sided reading of Kant and rejection of metaphysical questions out of hand as meaningless. With their "professionalistic" rhetoric and scientific reductionism, the language and analytic schools of philosophy which came to dominate Anglo-American philosophy departments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century effectively banned rational discourse on topics such as transcendence and the absolute in art, religion and speculative philosophy from the arena of serious philosophical debate, denying its meaningfulness and possibility (analytic "triumphalism"<sup>76</sup>). Despite efforts to eradicate interest in traditional metaphysics, however, the "post-metaphysical" era heralded in by phenomenologists, existentialists, logical positivists and scientific reductionists alike, proved unsuccessful in eliminating interest in metaphysical questions. Instead, as Nagl noted, a pluralism of new approaches to transcendence and to metaphysical questions emerged among representatives of Critical Theory (Habermas and Adorno), Deconstructionism (Derrida), Pragmatism and Pragmaticism (Royce, James, Peirce) and Neopragmatism (Rorty, Putnam). The crisis of metaphysics produced thus not only physicalism and the scientific reductionism of logical empiricism, but also a more "restless" variant of post-metaphysical philosophical reflection, an interest in "metaphysics after metaphysics", to which alternative Nagl reckons important

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<sup>74</sup> Henrich, *Konzepte. Essays zur Philosophie in der Zeit* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 1987) 14; I. Kant, AA 29: 765.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. letter to M. Herz from May, 1781; Kant, AA X, 195.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Nagl 13.

thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century: Benjamin, Adorno, Habermas, Wittgenstein, Putnam, Cavell, Arnold Davidson, James Conant.<sup>77</sup>

Post-metaphysical interest in metaphysics is embodied in a specific form by contemporary metaphysics of subjectivity, which has its roots in renewed reflection on central insights of the philosophy of Descartes, Kant and German Idealism, and attempts to develop those insights within the context of contemporary scientific achievements, modern attitudes, and our present-day experience of the world.<sup>78</sup> Evolving Kant's transcendental approach, German Idealism took as its point of departure the premise that the spontaneous and productive activity of the subject contains the foundation for philosophizing. Finite subjectivity, however, if it is to provide insight into the highest, autonomous principle of being and thought, must be liberated from its own inherent boundaries, from its dependency on the object (of knowledge, of desire, of action), on the one hand, and from its finitude, on the other. This can only occur through a specific form of self-directed, self-conscious reflection native to our subjectivity, but discoverable only by preliminary abstraction from and carefully deliberated re-construction of our conscious experience of ourselves and the world according to what may be inferred (from structures which may be elucidated in every conscious and self-conscious act) to be the stages of its natural development.<sup>79</sup>

The efforts of the German idealists to explain thought and human existence from analysis of the deep structures of human self-consciousness, as they evolve from the spontaneous activity that is the source of self-consciousness, gained renewed attention in the representatives of contemporary metaphysics of subjectivity. Along with renewal of metaphysics from the standpoint of a "speculative" analysis of self-consciousness, contemporary metaphysics of subjectivity emphasizes the subject's consciously reflected orientation and direction of its life, harking back, thus, to the original unity of epistemology, ontology and ethics from which the history of philosophy took its point of departure. In a polemical exchange with Habermas,<sup>80</sup> D. Henrich, one of the main representatives of metaphysics of subjectivity, defends the assertion that metaphysics is neither a palliative nor

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. Nagl 15. Thinkers like Putnam and Austin reject the encroachment of descriptive cognitive language into contexts where it does not apply (eg. vis-à-vis "speech-acts", and the manifold situations, from promising to judging to praying, where we "do things" with words). Description, as Nagl argues – drawing on Kant's philosophy of religion and contemporary philosophers of religion whose thought has been influenced by it – is not the primary function of language and not the universal standard by which all other types of "language game" can be judged.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. J. Ritter, *Subjektivität. Sechs Aufsätze.* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1974); D. Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Subjektivität und Metaphysik.* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1999); D. Henrich, *Denken und Selbstsein. Vorlesungen über Subjektivität* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 2007); M. Frank (Hg), *Selbstbewusstseinstheorien von Fichte bis Sartre.* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1991); M. Frank *Selbstbewußtsein und Argumentation* (Assen: Van Gorkum 1997); M. Frank *Selbstbewusstsein und Selbsterkenntnis* (Stuttgart: Reclam 1991); R. Wiehl, *Subjektivität und System* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 2000).

<sup>79</sup> Such as, for example, carried out by J.G. Fichte in his *Foundation of the Whole Science of Knowledge* from 1794. Cf. *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, in: *Fichtes Werke*, Vol. I, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: de Gruyter 1971) 83-328; cf. I. Teil, 91-123.

<sup>80</sup> Henrich, „Was ist Metaphysik – was Moderne? Zwölf Thesen gegen Jürgen Habermas“ u: *Merkur* 439/440 (1985), 898 f.; *Konzepte, Essays zur Philosophie in der Zeit* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1987), 11-43.

obsolete, but a fundamental aspect of philosophy and constituent of modernity, retaining a position analogous to that which it held in older philosophical tradition. In Henrich's estimate, the most important thinkers and inventors of the 20th century were at heart metaphysicians, or demonstrated an openness to metaphysical thought: „That is true of Cantor, Einstein, Kandinsky, Klee and Becket, just as it is for Heidegger and Wittgenstein."<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, as Putnam recognized, the physicalism and reductivism of the "old" analytic school of philosophy engendered an uncritical neo-ontology of its own.<sup>82</sup>

Representatives of a metaphysics of subjectivity do not conceal their satisfaction that the second generation of analytical philosophers (Thomas Nagel, Roderik Chisholm, Sidney Shoemaker, Robert Nozick, Wilfrid Sellars) has abundantly contributed to the destruction of scientific naturalism, imposed upon thinkers of the Anglo-American world by W. V. O. Quine. This eminently antimetaphysical approach, at base a coherently argued materialism, advocates the reduction of philosophy to a physicalistic description of the world, whose final goal, in Henrich's estimate, is the self-annihilation of philosophy and the disappearance of all fundamental philosophical questions.<sup>83</sup> In the physicalist view of the world, which came to prevalence in the wake of Wittgenstein's declaration that the thinking subject does not exist, there is no place for subjects and subjectivity.<sup>84</sup> In recent decades, however, physicalism has lost its universal appeal, its demise ushered in by contemporary theories of self-knowledge. Wilfrid Sellars, in „The Myth of the Given“<sup>85</sup>, showed the relationship of thought and reality to be far more complex than mere representation of external reality. Hector-Neri Castañeda recognized the importance of self-consciousness in the mediation between the world and thought, and Arthur Danto drew attention to the need for reflection on that which is called objective mind and to the fact that it is not sufficient, if we are to distinguish human beings from animals, to define human beings as *entia repraesentantia*.<sup>86</sup> Quine's disciple, Thomas Nagel, convincingly showed that the concept of subjectivity cannot be reduced to the linguistic use of the first person singular, nor does it disappear in a physicalist picture of the world. Sidney Shoemaker has shown in detailed analyses of the descriptivity of "selfhood" how these always presuppose self-consciousness, while Robert Nozick has brought Fichte's theory of identity of "selfhood" *mutatis mutandis* to new relevance, showing selfhood's role in efforts to genuinely understand things within the context of a meaningful whole, as opposed to a type of philosophical discourse confined to unconnected and contextually unintegrated proofs.

Taking Kant's unification of the three fundamental questions of philosophy in the key question of how to reflect upon the nature of human beings as model, representatives of a metaphysics of subjectivity advocate focussing modern ontology on human subjectivity. In their view, only

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<sup>81</sup> Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Nagel 313.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Henrich, *Konzepte*, S. 72. Frank (1997), 13 f.

<sup>84</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 5.631: „Das denkende, vorstellende, Subjekt gibt es nicht“; „Das Subjekt gehört nicht zur Welt, sondern ist eine Grenze der Welt“ (5.632).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* [EPM\*], edited by Robert Brandom, (Harvard University Press. 1997).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Arthur C. Danto, *Connections to the World: The Basic Concepts of Philosophy*. New York: Harper & Row 1989, cap. 40.

by such a focus can the gap between theoretical and practical life be overcome, and only then will theory be in a position to articulate fully our experience of the world and ourselves. The task of philosophy is accordingly to consider the questions which arise from the activity and structure of our consciousness – whether in our experience of everyday life or in the world of scientific investigation – in the light of their *reasons* and their interconnectedness in a context.

Advocates of a metaphysics of subjectivity like D. Henrich, J. Ritter, M. Frank, and R. Wiehl grant that "metaphysics" and "subjectivity" may not be the most readily accessible terms for those engaged in contemporary philosophical debate. This is due to the fact that practically all paradigm changes of the modern period (linguistic turn, pragmatic turn) have been directed against just these terms. All major philosophical movements of the 20th century argued decidedly for the superfluousness both of metaphysics and of subjectivity in philosophy. Representatives of logical positivism, philosophy of language, pragmatism, phenomenology, hermeneutic philosophy and post-modernity, for all their differences, agree in their blanket rejection of every form of metaphysics and every aspect of abstract subjectivity. Nevertheless, no more suitable concepts are available for the task of reflection on and articulation of conscious and self-conscious life. Any attempt to eliminate the term "self-consciousness", moreover, belies the essential role which the individual human subject plays in the organization and planning of an intentionally led life.<sup>87</sup>

### 2.3 Henrich's analysis of self-consciousness as a basis for metaphysics

Representatives of metaphysics of subjectivity apply various models from modern philosophy in their theory of conscious life, for example, Descartes' prereflexive acquaintance with our knowledge of ourselves, Kant's concept of transcendental unity of apperception and the associated insight into the inseparability of self-knowledge from knowledge of the categories as pure concepts a priori, Fichte's theory of self-consciousness as distilled in the question: whence the „I“ knows that it relates to itself when it relates to itself, and last, but not least, Hegel's concept of the self-conscious Absolute which „recognizes itself in the other of itself as itself“ („Sich im Anderen seiner selbst als sich selbst wissen).<sup>88</sup> Appealing to the founder of the philosophy of modernity, Kant, Henrich affirms that metaphysics is formed and constituted "in the spontaneous thought of every individual".<sup>89</sup> Like Kant, Henrich sees all questions of philosophy are united in the fundamental question: what exactly does each of us think of himself and the last questions which by nature preoccupy us human beings? In Henrich's view, it is this fundamental question which enables us to differentiate and recognize things in world, provides the coherency and groundedness of our argumentation, establishes the relevancy of the structures and autonomy of subjectivity for our ethical actions, and allows us to reflect upon and give meaning to our own existence.

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. M. Frank (1997), 13: „Wenn wir ...darauf verzichten, uns ...als Subjekte zu verstehen, können wir überhaupt nicht mehr Philosophie treiben ... nach der Elimination von Subjektivität [ist] keine Möglichkeit mehr den humanen Gehalt zu retten, der in einer der Formulierungen von Kants kategorischen Imperativs verkörpert ist.“

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Dieter Henrich, *Fluchtlinien. Philosophische Essays*. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1982), 175.

<sup>89</sup> Henrich, *Konzepte* 14.



Henrich admits that the concept of subjectivity has much in common "with what Kierkegaard called *existence* and Heidegger...*Dasein*."<sup>90</sup> These terms, however, are inadequate for description of the structures of self-knowledge, of the *truth* contained in the explication of those structures, and of the fundamental unity and reality in which they are rooted. Knowledge of self and of the productivity of the human mind – the activity by which the human intellect constantly re-creates the content which invests our lives with meaning – comprises the fundamental characteristic of a metaphysical theory of subjectivity, wherein human beings are distinguished from all other animals: „We are *subjects* by having such knowledge of ourselves and on the basis of this knowledge we come to knowledge with a claim to truth and in acting realize our lives in the world.“<sup>91</sup>

Detailing his theory of self-consciousness, Henrich affirms that the "I" is that which relates to itself, is "conscious of itself", and thus presupposes the existence of self-consciousness. Without this close "familiarity" (*Vertrautheit*) with oneself it would be impossible to explain the relationship of the subject to any "objective" state of things and vice versa. Self-consciousness, which constitutes itself in the "identity of its relata", and articulates itself by means of the principle "I = I", attains philosophical relevance only if it is conceived as the "I" which in understanding becomes conscious of its identity with itself. The possibility is opened thus for philosophy to consider mind and consciousness in the life of human beings and to interpret their conscious life with respect to the „unity of meaning“ and the possibility of its harmonious integration with the "all-encompassing unity" (*All-Einheit*).<sup>92</sup>

Henrich's primary intention in showing self-consciousness to be the foundation of human life and knowledge is thus not epistemological, but to demonstrate that it is self-consciousness which enables us to discover how to direct our lives in a meaningful way: "The fact that our life is conscious, is the precondition for us to be able to *lead* our lives“, – and not have our lives simply occur or happen to us.<sup>93</sup> Human beings exist not as abstract concepts, but as persons who are able to distinguish themselves as *acteurs* from inanimate things, plants, animals and from other human beings. As human beings we live in a concrete, shared world and are capable, at the same time, of rising above the world as a whole, both in knowing the world as the totality of what we think, know and experience, and in realizing our lives under the aspect of the demand for truth and harmony.<sup>94</sup> Only in light of the question: "Who am I really?" is it possible for us as subjects of knowledge and action to realize a harmonious unity between ourselves and the world, because only then

<sup>90</sup> D. Henrich, *Versuch über Kunst und Leben. Subjektivität – Weltverstehen – Kunst*. (München: Hanser 2001), 343 (our italics).

<sup>91</sup> Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben* 15.

<sup>92</sup> Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben*, 25; Henrich, *Versuch über Kunst und Leben*, 157. As opposed to Hegel and British Hegelians like John M. E. McTaggart ("The Relation of Time and Eternity", *Mind* 18, 343–362), Henrich does not advocate abstraction from temporality, but sees temporality rather as a fundamental constituent of thought and self-consciousness. Cf. also Dan Zahavi, *Subjectivity and Selfhood: Investigating the First Person Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). Taking Husserl's transcendental phenomenology of the subject as a basis, Zahavi is able to maintain the irreducible character of Self-consciousness. Cf. John Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996). Both thinkers provide insightful analyses of subjectivity.

<sup>93</sup> Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben*, 13.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Henrich, *Konzepte* 117f.

can our conscious life unfold within the context of an ordered, interconnected and meaningful whole (*Ordnungszusammenhang*).

The focus of these considerations is the "final context" (*letzter Zusammenhang*), which Henrich calls "the connected meaningful order of human life" (*Sinn-Zusammenhang des menschlichen Lebens*). Meaning becomes manifest in human life when when we understand ourselves and our world. The explanation of life from this meaning which manifests itself to us, is what the ancient Greeks called wisdom, what Henrich calls an authentic form of life (*Lebensform*).<sup>95</sup> Meaningful interpretative explanations of life (*Lebensdeutungen*) are a fundamental characteristic of the history of humankind. The great religions tried to interpret and explain the interconnectedness of the world (*Weltzusammenhang*) by offering hope of redemption from our lost state – from trials and conflict, sickness and decay, evil, imperfection, finitude, frailty, death – and of our restoration in a world of harmony after death. In the Christian tradition, for example, the purpose of this visible world is to prepare us for salvation in a world to come. As a universal world view encompassing life, death and the afterlife, the religious symbol system provided an interpretative pattern capable of investing human existence with meaning at every level at which it finds expression, from the daily life of the individual to its greatest literary and cultural productions. In today's world, it is no longer possible for the unified symbolic systems of traditional religions to provide a universally acceptable interpretation of human experience. Nonetheless, the undeniable need persists for (re-)interpretation of our image of the world from the point of view of our present-day experience of conscious life. Radical changes resulting from advances in modern science, industrialisation, technological advancement, mass production and consumption have not eliminated, but rather fueled the need for reconceptualization of human experience, and of the motives and questions once formulated in mythical, symbolic or artistic form by religion. Philosophy, in this respect, has become, according to Henrich, a successor to religion in an age characterized by the collapse of traditional symbol systems.

For Henrich, a universally accessible foundation capable of providing a meaningful context for human life and action is to be sought, on the one hand, in reflection on the "ground" and source of our self-consciousness which manifests itself in our consciousness (*Grund im Bewußtsein*), and, on the other, in the "sense of unity" (*Einheitssinn*), which directs all our metaphysical reflection.<sup>96</sup> The "last thoughts" (*letzte Gedanken*), i.e. the "final" questions which preoccupy all human beings, represent in this connection a path for interpretation of the meaning of life (*Lebensbedeutung*). Reflection on the "final questions", when conducted within the context of reflection on the "ground" of self-consciousness, and on the "sense of unity" with oneself and the totality of being, allows us, according to Henrich, to realize our being-in-the-world in such a manner as to attain inner tranquillity, satisfaction and happiness. To lead a conscious life in this manner means then: "to be conscious of one's disappearance in time, the transitoriness of one's own existence, and thereby not to fall into melancholy", but to know in every passing moment how to "pluck the days of one's time like precious flowers in a garden".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Henrich, *Fluchtlinien* 13.

<sup>96</sup> Henrich, *Bewußtes Leben* 126.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.* 12.

But what justifies Henrich's assertion that reflection on the ground of self-consciousness in consciousness is capable of ensuring such an outcome? Is it not equally conceivable that such reflection might lead to resignation, for example, in the face of thoroughgoing determination of our conscious life by the whole process of nature and history? Conversely, how does reflection on the ground in conscious life lead to affirmation of the meaning of this transient and corruptible existence? Might not the same reflection lead to something more like Spinoza's conviction of the immortality of the human mind, whose only offer of relief from the burden of finitude appears to lie in the attribution of its limitations to our present finite perspective? Henrich's doctrine of All-unity represents his attempt to synthesize transcendental analysis of the conditions of self-consciousness with traditional metaphysics of substance, as well as with the temporal condition of human existence. By his analysis of self-conscious life, Henrich attempts, thus, on the one hand, to illuminate the fragility of human existence. On the other hand, he places human consciousness at the center of a unified context of meaning constituted by consciousness' own inherent tendency to self-interpretation and by its inalienable demand for harmonious integration within a larger whole. Human self-consciousness appears thereby as part of a cosmic order in which it constitutes its own meaning and contextuality. In order that the outcome of reflection on the "final questions" might not lead to melancholy, quietism, scepticism and despair, it suffices, in Henrich's view, to focus on this metaphysical dimension of our understanding of self as it emerges from reflection on the ground of conscious life, and on the integration of that reflection into a meaningful context of validating structures gained through our experience of ourselves in the world, and supported by scientific and philosophical investigation.

Metaphysics of subjectivity attempts then to return to philosophy that which was removed by Heidegger's "fundamental ontology", above all to return the subject to "Dasein". While it is undeniable that fragility, temporality, finitude are fundamental aspects of human experience, the need and inner requirement to realize one's life as a meaningful entirety in the face of uncertainty, failure, and finitude is an equally pervasive aspect of human experience - and a binding imperative confronting every human individual in her relationship to herself. Freedom appears in this connection as indispensable foundation for human action in its contingency and as the primary factor in self-conscious realisation of personal existence. Yet it is a freedom determined and limited by certain inescapable threats to the self-conscious life of the individual. "Besides sickness, frailty, and death, which we share with the animals," Henrich highlights three dangers which are constantly imminent in the course of our consciously led lives and which can prevent us from realizing our proper "telos", the goal or aim which we espouse for our lives:

1. the danger that it is not possible to retain the continuity of our life as a person;
2. the danger that we will no longer be able to take responsibility for our lives;
3. a permanent loss of consciousness.<sup>98</sup>

Human existence is permeated thus not only by fragility, contingency and fallability, but by our *conscious awareness* of ourselves as such: as threatened in our own identity and selfhood, and limited in our ability to plan and carry out our lives both with regard to finitude and in the face of these particular threats. Knowledge of self comprises in this respect the

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<sup>98</sup> D. Henrich, *Selbstverhältnisse, Gedanken und Auslegungen zu den Grundlagen der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982), 99.

precondition not only for our intelligent relationship towards things and processes in the world, but also for our ability to gain insight into the *unity of meaning* (*Einheitssinn*) which permits all things to be *understood*, both in themselves and as members of a single unified world.<sup>99</sup>

It was the great achievement of Husserl and Heidegger to have shown that human understanding presupposes a coherent, unified, and interconnected context (*Einheitszusammenhang*) in which unfold our exposition and interpretation of life (*Lebensdeutungen*).<sup>100</sup> A weakness of Heidegger's "metaphysics of finitude"<sup>101</sup>, however, is its focus on finitude and temporality as fundamental characteristics not only of human existence, but also of the intelligible and intellectual world in which we live. This focus deprives our outer and inner world of redeeming qualities which self-conscious reflection might otherwise attribute to the living context of human life and action, eg. by finding in the unique constellation of human and material relationships which comprises the individual context of our lives not only a reflection of our own finitude and corruptibility, but the positive means by which to achieve meaningful interpretation of the same.<sup>102</sup> The concept of a metaphysics of subjectivity, because of its orientation toward a wholistic context of meaning, retains a more optimistic character than existential philosophy or Heidegger's temporally structured "fundamental ontology", stripped as it is of a theory of consciousness and subjectivity. For in a metaphysics of subjectivity human beings are not considered primarily from the point of view of finitude, uncertainty and mortality (*Sein zum Tode*), but as beings which – thanks to the inherent transcendental organisation of our (self-)conscious life – can justifiably be taken to be the "center of the world".<sup>103</sup> By directing our attention toward the "last questions", which comprise the "deep layers of our subjectivity", metaphysics of subjectivity can provide our conscious life with stability, consolation, and the motivation and justification for responsible action. The undeniable fact that we live a conscious life deserves in itself thorough interpretation, just as it is necessary to explain the deeper meaning beneath the layers of apparently self-evident comprehensibility of the empirical world. For a metaphysics of subjectivity, this entails exposition of the entirety of our experience together with the realities which contribute to it from the point of view of self-consciousness, its structures and principles, as well as the transcendental preconditions which make it possible for us to intentionally *lead* a conscious life.<sup>104</sup>

The aim of a renewal of metaphysics in our time is not therefore the transformation of our self-conscious experience of finitude into a form of "immaterial realism"<sup>105</sup>, rather, as Henrich sees it:

revisionary metaphysics is *interpretation* of conscious life on the part of conscious life.  
It is by no means the disclosure of supramundane realm which we could conceive as

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<sup>99</sup> Henrich, *Bewusstes Leben*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Henrich, *Fluchtlinien*, 16.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 222f.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 34.

<sup>103</sup> Henrich, *Fluchtlinien*, 113.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* 12.

<sup>105</sup> D.Henrich, *Fixpunkte. Abhandlungen und Essays zur Theorie der Kunst* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp 2003), 295.

the domain into which we have to transform ourselves. What undergoes transformation is our *understanding* of ourselves and our condition. Thus, the very world in which we live appears in a new light once it has become subject to new description.<sup>106</sup>

Henrich's "revisionary metaphysics" is concerned with the "last thoughts", which are capable of investing our conscious life with stability, by allowing us to orient ourselves in the context of modernity. It remains to be seen whether this focus on the "final questions" offers a viable alternative to life interpretations formerly provided by traditional symbol systems and religious world-views.

Henrich conceives of his metaphysics as a unitary process of making oneself understood to oneself (*Selbstverständigung*). This involves self-elucidation of conscious life as it emerges from "total unity", a development of Kant's concept of a transcendental anthropology (*anthropologiae transcendentalis*), whose aim was to explain the position of human beings as point of mediation among ideas. In this regard, a successful life without metaphysics would appear to be no more plausible than a metaphysics which denies its origins in the antinomian problems which determine our experience of life and the world.<sup>107</sup> The concept of "total unity" (*All-Einheit*) emerges from transcendence of the distinction between subject considered in general and the individual person, between the relationship of the individual consciousness to itself and its relationship to the world, and between particulars and the entire order of things in the world – formerly the subject matter of a "natural ontology". This process of transcendence is made possible by the principle of self-consciousness, the "ground from which subjectivity proceeds, ... which it cannot reliably cognize",<sup>108</sup> reflection upon which, however, permits a coherent self-description of conscious life. The transcendent(-al) moment in the finitude of conscious life consists according to Henrich in our finitude not being opposed to the absolute, but entering "absolutely" into everything "particular", forming thus together with particulars a "unified totality" (*All-Einheit*), which preserves the individuality and singularity of its constituents within itself. Human beings are thereby for Henrich the "place or moment, where the impersonal principle of the world or anonymous all-consciousness [*Allbewußtsein*] comes to awareness of itself".<sup>109</sup> By absolute participation of the principles and structures of self-consciousness in every aspect of human experience the possibility of a new ontology as a constructive theory is established.<sup>110</sup>

#### **2.4 The Individual and the community of interpretation: Royce's philosophy of loyalty as the basis for a renewal of metaphysics**

Whether or not one agrees with his proposal for a renewal of metaphysics, Henrich's idea of "Selbstverständigung", as the source of such a renewal appears to be incomplete. The task of "making oneself understood" requires more than communication of meaning to oneself, both for the achievement of a genuinely meaningful understanding of one's life context, and for the constitution of consciousness itself. It requires participation in a larger

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<sup>106</sup> Henrich, *Konzepte*, 122.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Kant, *CR A VII*, B 432ff.

<sup>108</sup> Henrich, *Versuch über Kunst*, 131; 39.

<sup>109</sup> Henrich, *Fluchtlinien*, 24.

<sup>110</sup> Henrich, *Selbstverhältnisse*, 196 ff.

process of interpretation and communication. In this point, the potential for further development of a metaphysics of subjectivity may be perceived. The communal aspect of interpretation and self-interpretation was advanced by Charles Peirce's semiotic, in his idea of the "community of scientific investigators".<sup>111</sup> This concept was then further expanded by Josiah Royce to include investigation in the human sciences, as well as the process of interpretation which forms an integral part of every aspect of daily life. This, Royce's expanded concept of the "universal community of interpretation", offers a promising point of departure for fruitful expansion of contemporary theories of self-conscious life.

In his later philosophy, as presented in his lectures on *The Problem of Christianity*, Royce distinguishes two "levels of human life", the level of the individual and the level of the community.<sup>112</sup> Royce conceives of the problem of the individual and his self-conscious life with respect to what he calls "community of interpretation." Relying on his understanding of the "Spirit" of the early Christian community<sup>113</sup>, Royce passes beyond denominational boundaries to derive, on the basis of his own psychological and anthropological insights, a theory of universal community as the ideal goal of humankind. In Royce's view, namely, Christianity's original groundedness in the Spirit of community and aim to realize a Universal community must be regarded not only as a "plan for the salvation of man but a revelation concerning the origin and fate of the whole cosmos", an "account of the universe."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. C.S. Peirce. *Collected papers*. Vols. 1-6 ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss; vols. 7-8 ed. by A. W. Burks. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958-1966); 5, 407. Nagl (2010) 232 f.; 241ff. Peirce provides therewith a concise formulation of the modern understanding of scientific research according to which no individual scientist works alone, i.e. all science is conducted within a community of scientists. As J. Royce saw it, Peirce was the first philosopher to investigate the "community-dependent processes" in the sciences which are distinct from the essentially bipolar relationship of perception and conception to "external" reality, "interpretation" comprising a "third" factor which cannot be reduced to the dyadic relationship comprised by rational analysis of sense data.

<sup>112</sup> J. Royce. *The problem of Christianity : lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute in Boston, and at Manchester College, Oxford*, vols. 1, 2 (New York: Macmillan 1914), vol. 2, 57f.

<sup>113</sup> While inspired by his understanding of the "Spirit" of the early Christian church and his interpretation of Pauline Christianity, which Royce takes to be "in its essence, the most typical, so far in human history, the most highly developed religion of loyalty" (ibid. vol. 1: xviii), Royce's philosophy of loyalty and of community has an undeniably universal appeal. Whatever the fortunes of Christian institutions or traditions, Royce is convinced that what he calls "the religion of loyalty", "the doctrine of the salvation of the otherwise hopelessly lost individual through devotion to the life of the genuinely real and universal Community, must survive, and must direct the future of religion and of [hu]mankind, if [hu]man[ity] is to be saved at all." (ibid. xix). The doctrines of Christianity as Royce interprets it need "no dogmas of any historical church to define them", but are "based on deep metaphysical truths whose significance is more than human". What Royce sees as "vital" in Christianity depends on his understanding of "certain aspects of the Christian social experience and of human destiny" (xx, xxii) capable of transforming the experience and destiny of humankind as a whole. The "essence of Christianity" depends for Royce, correspondingly, not on the person of its founder, about whom Royce declines to advance any "positive thesis" or "opinion" (xxviii f.), but on what Royce calls his doctrine of the "Beloved Community", the "ideal of one beloved and united community of all [hu]mankind" (ibid. vol. 2: 11) a doctrine which he believes is "empirically verifiable" and "metaphysically defensible as an expression of the life and the spiritual significance of the whole universe." (vol. 1: xxvi)

<sup>114</sup> ibid. vol. 2: 6, cf. 7.

Royce is convinced that many of the problems of metaphysics, for example, the problem of the One and the Many, can be resolved with reference to the idea of Community. In contrast to Henrich's reflection on the universal "ground" in individual self-consciousness, Royce's analysis takes as its point of departure the problem of "individually distinct minds or selves", i.e. the fact that "challenged to explain who we are, none of us finds it easy to define the precise boundaries of the individual self or to tell wherein it differs from the rest of the world, and, in particular, from the selves of other [human beings]." Our "social common sense" insists, on specific "gaps", which are in a certain sense "impassable", and separate us from our fellows, defining us as individual selves. First, there is the "empirical sundering of feelings", the fact that you do not feel what I do and vice versa. Then, we become aware of the separation of our individual "intentions, thoughts and ideas", i.e. the "law that our trains of conscious thought and purposes are mutually inaccessible through any mode of direct intuition". Finally, we recognize that a person is individuated by his deeds, each of us having "a soul of his own, a destiny of his own, rights of his own, worth of his own, ideals of his own, and an individual life in which this soul, this destiny, these rights, these ideals get their expression", and that, when I choose, my choice is my own and "coalesces with the voluntary choice of no other individual", and consequently my act, my responsibility, and my guilt are my own.<sup>115</sup>

The distinctness of social individuals as delineated by Royce provides the basis for a somewhat different perspective on individual self-consciousness than that which is emphasized by Henrich and the metaphysics of subjectivity. The problem of how the apparently unbridgeable chasm between selves may be overcome forms, namely, an integral part of Royce's "psychology of the social consciousness", in which the separation of our individual selves is contrasted with the phenomenon of community. A community has a highly developed social organisation. Communities "in many cases" behave "as a unit", making them appear as though they have a life of their own. As opposed to social groups which "have little or no history", and to social processes of relatively short duration, which are characterised by "either the predominantly pluralistic form of the relatively independent doings of detached individuals, or to the social form of the confused activities of a crowd" , *community* is a product of a "coherent social evolution, which has gone on... for a long time, and is more or less remembered by the community in question." A community is thus not, as W. James believed, a "mere blending of various consciousnesses" involving "a sort of mystical loss of personality on the part of its members". True community is a product of a "time-process". It has institutions, organisation, coherent unity, a history, traditions: community "has a past and will have a future". The *memory* of the community is thereby not only of "facts", but may also contain legendary elements. This is "beside the point", however, insofar as these elements – legendary, historical or factual – play an integral role in the formation of the highly developed consciousness of the community, "its consciousness that it *is* a community, that its members are somehow made one in and through and with its own life." In this sense, a community – not just the isolated human individual – is possessed of a "mental life".<sup>116</sup>

On the surface of it, with regard to the individual self and its striving to formulate a meaningful life interpretation, Royce is very much in accord with contemporary

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.* 18, 19, 22f., 24.

<sup>116</sup> *cf. ibid.* 25, 36, 29, 30, 36, 37, 39.

metaphysics of subjectivity. A meaningful interpretation of the self's life context, however, emerges, in Royce's account, not exclusively and not primarily from analysis of the structures of self-consciousness, but from an integrated view of the personal, psychological, historical, social, and cosmological aspects of the individual self, and from the universal process of interpretation which Royce sees as comprising the order of the universe. A self, in the first analysis, is by its essence "a being with a past": "One must look lengthwise backward in the stream of time, in order to see the self, or its shadow, moving with the stream..."<sup>117</sup> "Considered simply in this passing moment of my life, I am hardly a self at all", "just a flash of consciousness...not a coherent personality". Memory, however, "links me with my own past", though "not, in the same way, with the past of any one else." Rather, my self is cut off "by various barriers from the lives of other selves", constituting in its "stream of tendency" "an intelligible sequence", each individual's present carrying on the plan of her past, making the individual human self "one more or less coherent plan expressed in a life". In this sense, it may be truly said that the "Child is Father to the Man".<sup>118</sup>

I thus "define myself with reference to my own past." My "idea of myself", as "an interpretation of my past", is tied "to an interpretation of my hopes and intentions as to my future". However, I am myself not only by reason of what *separates* me from other selves, but "by reason of what links me, in significant fashion, to the remembered experiences, deeds, plans and interests of my former conscious life." Therefore, I am in need of "a somewhat extended and remembered past to furnish the opportunity for myself to find, when it looks back, a long process that possesses sense and coherence", and I rely for this on "my fellows", who help me to "interpret the sense, qualifications and the possessions of my present self" on the basis of my "antecedents".<sup>119</sup> Here, the question of "other selves" is resolved by our individual consciousness of our need for a community of interpretation in order to establish our own individual identity. "I know you are real," says Royce, "because my life needs and finds its interpreter."<sup>120</sup> My understanding of my self depends on the understanding mediated by a whole "community of interpreters" with reference to a common past. This necessarily involves an "interpretation of the significance of facts" which "extends the quasi-personal memory" of the individual into memory of a past which can be "indefinitely long and vast" (the memory of the past of my family, people, country, of humankind, and of the universe), but which is at the same time "significantly linked" with my personal history.<sup>121</sup> In this connection, Royce introduces the concepts of "community of memory", and "community of expectation", which is also, in a modified sense, called a "community of hope". "Community of memory" refers to the phenomenon that a community "is constituted by the fact that each of its members accepts as part of his own individual life and *self* the same *past* events that each of his fellow members accept." A "community of expectation" "...is constituted by the fact that each of its members accepts, as part of his own individual life and self, the same expected *future* events that each of his fellows accepts." *Community of memory* and *community of expectation* describe the "community of interpretation" which exists between individual members of a community and their shared understanding of certain past and future events.

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<sup>117</sup> *ibid.* 40.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.* 41. Cf. G.M. Hopkins, *Poems* 1918; and W. Wordsworth, "My Heart leaps Up..." 1802.

<sup>119</sup> Royce vol. 2: 42.

<sup>120</sup> *ibid.* 315.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.* 48f.



While it can be seen how the community is constituted by individual selves, it is Royce's special achievement to have shown that individual selves require participation in a community of memory and a community of hope "in order to secure their significance".<sup>122</sup>

Royce recognizes *community* thus as the second of two kinds of "mental being" which make up our human world, inseparable from the first, the self-conscious life of the individual.<sup>123</sup> The constituting activity of the individual that results in conscious experience *includes* the participating activity of other individual consciousnesses distinct from but intimately and inextricably woven into my own. The universal community of interpretation constitutes itself as a community of mutually experiencing subjects and this is the only way in which consciousness can occur. In effect, the epistemic conditions of reality which Kant demonstrated to be the foundation of human experience are shown by Royce to require our participation in such a community. The fact that "The real world itself is, in its wholeness, a Community,"<sup>124</sup> is discovered by the method of interpretation, which is also the method of comparison, based on the theory of signs. The universe, so Royce's thesis, constitutes a "World of Interpretation", "dominated by social categories". The "system of metaphysics" which is required in order "to define the constitution of the World of Interpretation" is that of a "generalized theory of an ideal society."<sup>125</sup> Utilizing Peirce's concept of the sign as "an object to which somebody gives or should give an interpretation", Royce expands Peirce's semiotic beyond what he sees as its original intention as the basis for "a logical theory of the categories" to provide the basis for a new metaphysical system.<sup>125</sup> With Peirce, Royce admits that "just as percepts have, for their appropriate objects, individually existent Things; and just as concepts possess, for their sole objects, Universals, - so interpretations have, as the objects which they interpret, Signs." Royce takes the existence of signs and their interpretation as evidence that "there are beings in the world that are neither individual objects of perception nor yet beings such that they are mere universals, the proper objects for conception", but selves distinct from my individual self, and for the existence of community: "If the sign-post is a real sign post there is in the world a community constituted of at least three distinct minds."<sup>126</sup> A Sign is, namely, in its essence, the expression of a mind or a "quasi-mind - an object that fulfills the functions of a mind." For example, a clock-face, a weather-vane, a gesture are expressions of a mind and require interpretation through a mind which acts as mediator between the sign or the maker of the sign and one for whom the sign needs to be "read" or interpreted. Such an interpretation is again an expression of the interpreter's mind and needs in its turn to be interpreted, creating thus an endless sequence of signs and interpretations.

Royce sees his metaphysical theory as a "doctrine of signs", "the very being of the universe" consisting "in a process whereby the world is interpreted." The "history of the universe" comprises an unending sequence of acts of interpretation - forming the basis for an infinite community of interpretation. The "temporal order" reveals itself, accordingly, as "an order of purposes and deeds", and an order of interpretation, since "it is of the

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.* 50f., cf. 52f.

<sup>123</sup> vol 1: 164.

<sup>124</sup> vol. 2: 279

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.* 282.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.* 288, 287; cf. 282.

essence of every rational deed to be an effort to interpret a past life to a future life". "[E]very act of interpretation aims", furthermore, "to introduce unity into life, by mediating between mutually contrasting or estranged ideas, minds, and purposes." The conciliating force of this community of interpretation provides then the foundation for Royce's doctrine of Universal community.<sup>127</sup>

### 3. Conclusion: The metaphysical character of philosophy and the universal community of interpretation

Royce believed that "loyalty" to the "Spirit" of community, and ultimately to the idea of a Universal and Beloved Community, is "able to supply us not only with a 'philosophy of life,' but with a religion which is 'free of superstition' and which is in harmony with a genuinely rational view of the world."<sup>128</sup> With Royce, we must agree that his philosophy of loyalty contains "novel views" concerning "the central life-problems of all of us", and that its "successive expressions" together form "a consistent body of ethical as well as religious opinion and teaching, verifiable, in its main outlines, in terms of human experience". Conjoined with the ideas of Henrich and the representatives of a metaphysics of subjectivity, Royce's philosophy of loyalty is "capable of furnishing a foundation for a defensible form of metaphysical idealism"<sup>129</sup> and of providing firm evidence for the metaphysical character of philosophy as a whole. Royce was justified, however, in distinguishing his position from that of James (and herein also from later forms of a metaphysics of subjectivity) who in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* "deliberately confined himself to the religious experience of individuals", whereas it is "a social form of experience...upon which loyalty depends."<sup>130</sup> Royce's idea of loyalty to the spirit of the universal community of interpretation provides therewith the missing link required for a complete renewal of metaphysics, allowing for verification of its principles on the basis of an "absolute pragmatism"<sup>131</sup> and a "psychology of the social consciousness".

What Royce calls community "exists in countless different forms and grades" throughout history.<sup>132</sup> Human beings in their present state, so Royce, are "lost". In other words, we are incapable, in isolation from true community, of attaining "the true goal of life", prevented as we are by the limitations imposed on us by our finitude and the dispositions of our own nature, as well as by our situation in the physical and historical world. The "natural and social cultivation of the conscience" enacted by modern education manifests itself as a "training in self-will", favouring the perpetuation of a "community of hate". What is required for the "salvation" of the individual is loyalty to a "community of love".<sup>133</sup> The thesis which Royce's "philosophy of loyalty" ultimately attempts to defend is that "we are saved, if at all, by devotion" to the spirit of universal Community.<sup>134</sup> "Loyalty", the

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.* 282, 283, 284f. 285f.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.* vol 1, vii.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.* ix.

<sup>130</sup> *ibid.* xiv.

<sup>131</sup> An aspect of Royce's philosophy which cannot be further pursued in this context. Cf. Nagl 221f.

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.* xxxvi.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* xl.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.* xvii.

"thoroughgoing, practical and loving devotion of a self to an united community" of humankind<sup>135</sup>, is the only path to "salvation" of the "lost individual", for "[i]f by salvation one means a winning of the true goal of life, the individual, unaided, cannot be saved."<sup>136</sup> The help which humans need for overcoming their "lost state" must come from some other source "entirely above" our own level, a source which is in some sense "truly divine".<sup>137</sup> Loyalty is the "loving aspect of the 'will to interpret'"<sup>138</sup>. "My life", so Royce, "means nothing, unless I am a member of a community", the community of interpretation: "I win no success worth having, unless it is also the success of the community to which I essentially and in virtue of my real relations to the whole universe, belong."<sup>139</sup> My knowledge of self depends on knowledge drawn from the community of interpretation. Only by participation in the ongoing process of interpretation which comprises the order of time and the process of the whole universe do I attain the truth about my being, as so poignantly expressed by Royce:

Alone I am lost, and am worse than nothing. I need a counsellor, I need my community. Interpret me. Let me join in this interpretation. Let me be the community. This alone is life."<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *ibid.* 114.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.* 117.

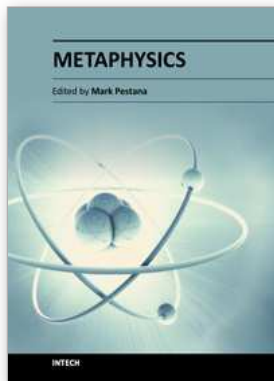
<sup>137</sup> *ibid.* cf. 116.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* vol. 1, xlv.

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Unit 405, Office Block, Hotel Equatorial Shanghai  
No.65, Yan An Road (West), Shanghai, 200040, China  
中国上海市延安西路65号上海国际贵都大饭店办公楼405单元  
Phone: +86-21-62489820  
Fax: +86-21-62489821

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