

## TRANSCENDENTAL CONSTITUTION OF WORLD AND EGO OBSERVATIONS ON HEIDEGGER'S PERCEPTION OF KANT

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**Abstract.** Immediately after his ultimately fragmented main work “Being and Time” (1927), Heidegger had a phase of intensive engagement with Kant, especially his main work “Critique of Pure Reason” (1781). Kant’s topos of the “metaphysics of metaphysics” thus plays a central role. This figure of thought is of central importance not only for the interpretation of Kant, but also for the history of modern philosophy after Kant and after idealist philosophy.

**Keywords:** Kant; Heidegger; metaphysics of metaphysics; transcendental constitution; being; freedom

According to the structure of perception, the contributions to this conference appear to be unequal poles: Here Immanuel Kant, the philosopher of “Sapere aude!”, who elevated maturity to a program, and there the “Wizard of Messkirch”, whose supposed dark whispers seem to belong to his odium and whose labyrinthine paths into the other beginning are said to have made immaturity their very program<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, this objection is not without reason. The contrast is initially obvious: here Kant as the *sui generis* thinker on freedom, there Heidegger, whose proton pseudos was described by none other than Karl Jaspers as not understanding anything about freedom<sup>2</sup>. Here Kant, who to this day set unassailable rationality standards of a reflexive enlightenment, there Heidegger’s decline into the paradoxically abysmal exposition of the fundamental question of the meaning of being, which had not been asked in the whole of Western philosophy and which, while not leading him to the Faustian Mothers, did lead him into a pre-Platonic archaism. In addition, one might expect that Heidegger’s readings of Kant, like most of his interpretations, would proceed by “using violence”. However, an examination of such prejudices should itself be part of critical philosophy.

Heidegger already prominently inscribes the Kant reference in ‘Being and Time’, inasmuch as the first section of the second part of the treatise, which was to be pub-

lished, should have been dedicated to “Kant’s doctrine of schematism and time as a preliminary stage of a problem of temporality”. It can be assumed that Heidegger then dealt with the problem at least in part in the Kant book (1929) and in the accompanying Marburg lectures (especially those preceding the monograph), so that these texts are also to be understood as ‘side pieces’ to ‘Being and Time’ (Heidegger 1984, p. 40). The genius loci of Marburg already led to a deepened Kant orientation in the run-up to ‘Being and Time’ on the way to fundamental ontology, which was otherwise not discussed in phenomenology, especially not in Husserl. Alongside Descartes and Aristotle, it should therefore only be Kant who should have a constitutive significance for the foundation of fundamental ontology and thus also for turning the question of time as the horizon of being around (Ibid., p. 437). This thematic problem indication at least suggests that the erratic opposition of Kantian reason and Heideggerian irrationality is not so simple and that a revising view could be useful. Heidegger is known to have been influenced by Heinrich Rickert before he met Husserl. He had a classical student relationship with him. As his only partially edited correspondence with Guardini shows, he nevertheless distanced himself from the neo-Kantianism of southwest German provenance early on. Heidegger aimed for a philosophy of concrete vitality, an unreduced experience that would lead beyond Kant’s transcendental philosophy and at the same time open up a third realm of ideas<sup>3</sup> that was by no means complete with Kant. The dissociation from Rickert goes hand in hand with the search for this new positioning. However, it is not entirely new and follows classical traces. Almost every attempt at a post-Kantian self-exposure goes in a similar direction. This was most prominently expressed in the beginnings of post-Kantian philosophy, when Schelling remarked to Hegel that Kant had only provided the results, and that it was important to find the principles<sup>4</sup>. It only articulated itself quite emphatically a few years later in the ‘Oldest System Program of German Idealism’ and in the subsequent system efforts as a protological refutation of Kant’s assumption that the generations to come would be sufficiently occupied with the coinage of his critiques<sup>5</sup>.

Regardless of the early *reservatio mentalis* against any Kantianism, combined with the insight that guided his beginnings that he had to speak the language of the philosophy of the time for a long time (this was primarily the language of Kantianism), Heidegger approached Kant in a new, deepening way, especially in the Marburg years that were decisive for the formation of ‘Being and Time’.

Not least because of his preoccupation with Kant, Heidegger probably realized the necessity of a “metaphysics of metaphysics”, which should leave behind hasty epithets of completion and overcoming<sup>6</sup>. It is all the more regrettable that he did not follow this path more consistently. As will be indicated, there is a hardening and dogmatization of the view of Kant on the path of his historical attempts at thought, similar to other metaphysical constellations of thought. Nevertheless, Heidegger returned to Kant in 1961 with a degree of differentiation that is rare in his late work. It is from this last elaborate testimony to his understanding of Kant that I start.

### **I. 'Kant's thesis on being'**

1. Kant's thesis on being is, as Heidegger makes clear, fundamental to Kant's positioning in relation to classical metaphysics. Nevertheless, according to his observation, this thesis is only introduced episodically in Kant's text and is not exposed as the "primal proposition of a system" or developed into a system<sup>7</sup>. Heidegger explicates the thesis himself according to the wording of the Critique of Pure Reason, although he always takes into account its previous formulation in the pre-critical Beweisgrund-Schrift: "Being is obviously not a real predicate, not a concept of anything that could be added to the concept of a thing. It is merely the position of a thing or of certain determinations in itself" (A 598 / B 626 f.). Heidegger distinguishes between the affirmative and the negative part of the proposition, which, of course, together constitute the thesis. With regard to the affirmative statement (being as position), Heidegger emphasizes that Kant distinguishes a *respectus logicus* from the absolute position of being with regard to the thing. He exposes the central point of note no. 6276 (AA XVIII): "Through the predicate of existence I add nothing to the thing, but the thing itself to the concept. Thus in an existential proposition I go beyond the concept, not to another predicate than what was thought in the concept, but to the thing itself precisely with the same no more, no less predicates, only that the absolute position is thought in addition to the relative one"<sup>8</sup>. According to Heidegger's interpretation of *respectus absolutus*, the problem of onto-theology, i.e. the question of whether and within what limits the proposition 'God is' is possible as an absolute position, is "the secret sting that drives all thinking in the 'Critique of Pure Reason' and moves the subsequent major works" (Ibid.). A strong thesis<sup>9</sup> that Heidegger had not yet put forward in his Marburg Kant lectures.

2. The fact that the concept of *Dasein* (reality), in connection with the other modal concepts of possibility and necessity, would remain tautological as a pure concept of reason according to Kant, contributes to the development of the problem. Only by way of sensory perception is this position able to generate a wealth of knowledge of the object: an approach that Kant only arrived at on the way to the second edition of the C.p.R. Only here is the copula defined as a proposition that refers to what is given through the affection of the senses. The logical explanation of a judgment that it is about the "idea of a relationship between two concepts", on the other hand, remains at the level of abstraction. It therefore remains underdetermined. For Heidegger, the constitution of the objective unity of apperception, the linking of 'being' with 'unity', which Heidegger evocatively refers back to the "great beginning of Western philosophy since Parmenides"<sup>10</sup>, thus gains key significance. Judgment is defined with a Kantian definition as "the way of bringing given knowledge to the objective unity of apperception". It is the synthetic apperception that "contains the ground of the possibility of understanding even in its logical use" (B 131). According to Kant, the synthetic unity of apperception is "the highest point to which all use of understanding, even the whole of logic and, according to it, transcendental philosophy, must be

attached; indeed, this faculty is understanding itself" (B 134). This brings being, including the modal determinations of possibility, reality and necessity, into the focus of Kant's thinking. That leads to a special illumination of the "postulates of empirical thinking in general", through which the modal categories of possibility, reality and necessity are explained in their function. It is through them that "the existence of the object of experience is determined"<sup>11</sup>). According to Heidegger, it is of the greatest importance that Kant no longer examines the relationship of the postulates to the faculty of understanding, but "to the faculty of cognition" (A 19 / B 266 f.), which at the same time means a reference to the power of judgment<sup>12</sup>. Heidegger thus draws the conclusion from the three postulates of empirical thinking<sup>13</sup> that the modalities are indeed predicates, albeit not real predicates, but rather "predicates of the respectively required relation" in a judgment that "every judgment about an object of experience must satisfy"<sup>14</sup>.

3. Heidegger draws attention to the fact that Kant did not explicate the reason for the distinction between the modal categories in the C.p.R., but only ten years later in the note to § 76 of the Critique of Judgment. Here, in this, according to Schelling's judgment, singular "concentration of so many deep thoughts" on so few pages (Schelling 1976, p. 242), it becomes clear that the distinction between possibility and reality, which is "inevitably necessary for the human mind", lies "in the subject and in the nature of its cognitive faculties". Possibility is directed towards the ability to think, whereas reality means "the positing of the thing in itself", so that possibility and reality denote two fundamentally different ways of taking a position, the differentiation of which is essential for man. Kant takes a further hint from the "amphiboly of the concepts of reflection": transcendental reflection constitutes "the network of places in the place of being", whereby the connection between being and thinking is exposed.

4. Despite the differentiation of this late reference to Kant, Heidegger's aim at the end of the essay is clearly to balance the significance of Kant and the break with his approach. Kant's approach is not sufficient to expose the question of being, let alone to find an answer to it. Nevertheless, Kant – and only Kant – is conceded that the definition of being as a pure position is a summit that, on the one hand, leads back to the Western basic definition of being as *hypokeisthai* (*hypokeimon*) and, on the other hand, points ahead to the Hegelian speculative-dialectical interpretation of being "as an absolute concept". The fact that the Kant chapter concludes the 'Waymarks' is therefore of compositional significance, even if it corresponds to the chronological structure of the 'Waymarks'. The special role that Kant plays in Heidegger's thinking is already made clear at the end of his most extensive discussion with the C.p.R.: *Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* from the winter semester 1927/28. There, Heidegger emphatically formulates a confessio on Kant, in which the exemplary rank he accords him is expressed. When he reads Kant again "against the background of Husserl's phenomenology", the scales fell from his eyes. What struck him in the process is less clear than the 'how' of Kant's way of

thinking. With Kant, more than with any other philosopher, one has the certainty that “he is not fibbing”<sup>15</sup>. And this is precisely where the great implicit danger of philosophy lies, that it fibs. One might add, perhaps with a sigh: If only Heidegger had entrusted himself more permanently and consistently to Kant’s guiding orientation, even in the years after his Kant book of 1929, where a fault line in his thinking is unmistakable.

## II. Constitution of Being and Correlation: A Problem of the Marburg Lectures

1. Already in the lecture “Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie” (GA 24) from the summer semester of 1927, which can be read as a companion piece to ‘Being and Time’, the “Kantian thesis that being is not a real predicate” plays a decisive role. And here Heidegger already emphasizes the guiding character of this insight, which remains a guiding principle for both the pre-critical and the critical approach. In 1927, the year of publication of his main work, Heidegger does not question phenomenology from Kant’s point of view, but rather considers Kant in the light of phenomenology. Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s thesis states an ambiguity that could in no way be remedied by empirical improvements, such as a psychology of perception. A phenomenological deepening should be undertaken for factual reasons, because a “more fundamental version” of Kant’s thesis is required. Heidegger explicitly notes: “Kant’s thesis that being is not a real predicate cannot be touched in its negative content” – in this content it says: “Being is nothing existing”<sup>16</sup>. However, the determination of being as a position in general remains ontologically underdetermined. It requires a penetration into the “constitution of being of perception” and the “constitution of being of position”. Therefore, the phenomenological clarification leads to the intentionality of the act of perception. Determining the act of perception phenomenologically requires breaking the encapsulation in subjectivity. However, this “*inverted subjectivization of intentionality*” (Ibid., p. 89) that Heidegger refers to is, as it seems to me, no longer directed against Kant but implicitly also against Husserl. Heidegger links this to the statement that subjectivity, as existence, must first and foremost be understood in terms of intentionality and by no means vice versa. Intentionality thus proves to be a correlation, a structure “that constitutes the *relational character* of the behavior of Dasein as such” (Ibid., p. 19). It is therefore neither subjective nor objective in the conventional sense, but rather leads back to the originality of subjectivity and objectivity. In Heidegger’s understanding, perception is thus ‘transcendence’ in process. It sets in motion the original ontological question as the discovery of the existent in the how of its being and at the same time as the exploration of existence. According to Heidegger, however, the unexplained nature of Kant’s thesis leads to the necessity of an ontology of existence in its being-in-the-world.

2. Kant, however, comes into view in a second sense: against the background of the Cartesian ontology of ‘res cogitans’ and ‘res extensa’ and in his conception of

“personalitas transcendentalis”. Kant recognizes the determinations of the ego in the “representations”, the ideas. For Kant, the ego is fundamentally conceived as self-consciousness. Kant therefore understands the ego ipso facto as “I think”. Heidegger thus penetrates the principle of transcendental deduction, according to which the “I think” must be able to accompany all representations – a pivotal point that was to recede into the background in his Kant book three years later. The ego is neither imagination nor imagined. It does not fall under categories, but is the condition of the possibility of categories at all (Ibid., p. 181). What is remarkable in the context of ‘I think’ is the differentiation from Rickert’s understanding of the “logical I”. The Kantian ego in Heidegger’s sense is precisely not a “logical abstract”, but rather a “subject of the logos”, i.e. of thinking in its execution itself (Ibid., p. 183). This is where the transparency of practical philosophy and morality is established. For it is only in the ego as “personalitas moralis” that Heidegger sees Kant’s definition of the ego explicated in its highest purity and clarity, namely in the immediacy of a sense of self, in which the “ego that feels in this way feels itself” (Ibid., p. 191). As is well known, Kant exposes this feeling more closely as a “feeling of respect for the moral law”, as the way in which this moral law is encountered in general and thus the moral subject encounters itself. The goal is the determination of the human being as an end in itself, which can never be reduced to end-means relations.

The phenomenological deepening in turn begins with a meta-critique. It consistently adheres to Kant’s formulation of the pure ego as X. Kant had “clearly recognized the impossibility of grasping the ego as something existing” (Ibid., p. 209). With regard to the “personalitas moralis”, he goes further, he does not stop at the dictum of tautology or indeterminacy, but defines the freely acting intelligence as the mode in which the ego becomes aware of itself. However, the nature of the moral person as an end remains undiscussed. More serious is the desideratum named by Heidegger that Kant does not address the connection between the threefold persona (the empirical, transcendental and moral ego) and their overall context: this would indeed indicate a fascinating research program, which Heidegger himself did not pursue at all: not in his Kant book and certainly not later, when he departed from the Kantian line.

Nevertheless, in the early lecture he hints at a phenomenological theory of personality based on Kant. Referring back to Kant’s statement: “It is intellectual whose concept is a doing”, Heidegger notes that this makes it necessary to develop a phenomenology and ontology of the ego. Heidegger rightly emphasizes that the ‘I think’ is the condition of the possibility of synthesis and thus of the explication of categories. There is a fundamental dichotomy within the ego; on the one hand, it is determined by affection and receptivity, but on the other hand, as ‘I think’, it is pure spontaneity and therefore not accessible to any categorical determinability. Kant did not, however, pursue the resulting necessity of “*first asking about the possibility of an appropriate ontological interpretation of the subject, i.e. one that is free from the entire tradition*” (Ibid., 207), even though it was quite obvious in the line of flight of

the determination of practical intelligence. This leads to the concept of the person as a bodily-spiritual unity.

With subjectivity (ego) and person, two problem titles are named that are not the central focus of the explications in 'Being and Time'. Heidegger rightly points to the development of the problem that "obviously the interpretation of this being, which we ourselves are, is the least self-evident and the most subject to the danger of being placed in an inverted horizon" (Ibid., p. 218). With reference to classical German philosophy, he goes on to note that the understanding of subjectivity from self-consciousness, as a concept of itself, also skips over the ontological problem, since the being of the subject never consists only in knowing itself. It is a highly relevant path that Heidegger again hints at without going any further, either at the time or later. Subjectivity could thus be explicated in the context of personality and thus in relation to its personal-bodily constitution. In the lecture GA 24, however, Heidegger follows this with the basic structures of existence in its being-in-the-world known from 'Being and Time', to the quite justified and possible disappointment of attentive readers.

### III. Fundamental ontology and Kantian deduction

In the winter semester 1927/28, Heidegger's lecture sequence is followed by the phenomenological interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason: although the later fundamental thesis of Kant's book on the function of the imagination mediating between the two stems, sensuality and understanding, is prominent here, it is still rather subliminal<sup>17</sup>. The focus is on the possibility of *synthetic judgments a priori* as an indication of the possibility of ontological knowledge, a knowledge that is factual and at the same time independent of experience, which takes shape through transcendental deduction as a necessary relationship between perception and thought. In the 'transcendental deduction', Heidegger notes the forensic-juridical question of the "Quaestio iuris", i.e. the necessity, misjudged by traditional "dogmatic" metaphysics, of first demonstrating the legal claim of every ontological cognition (Ibid., p. 312 ff.). In the structure of deduction, however, this interest is overlaid by the other: "the revelation of the inner possibility of the categories as a priori object-related concepts" (Ibid., p. 329).

### IV. Temporality of being and turning point of the genesis of thought: Heidegger's Kant book

1. Heidegger's Kant book from 1929 draws a specifically perspectival sum from this in-depth study of Kant in the 1920s, which was to be of significance for his further path of thought after 'Being and Time'. The guiding principle here is *prima facie* Kant's statement of the "natural disposition of man to metaphysics", which, in the sense of the famous dictum in the letter to Marcus Herz, requires a "metaphysics of metaphysics"<sup>18</sup>. Heidegger therefore exposes the Kantian approach as the foundation of metaphysics and as the revelation of the origin of ontology. A question that also

played a decisive role in Kant's other works is brought into relief here: "How can a finite being, which is at the mercy of existence and dependent on its acceptance, recognize existence before all acceptance, i.e. look at it, without being its 'creator'?"<sup>19</sup>. The Kantian question is therefore the question of the "inner possibility of ontology" and in this respect it belongs in the immediate context of the fundamental ontological question. Heidegger's reconstruction leads to a "foundation" of the Kantian question that is divided into five stages. It first goes through (1) transcendental aesthetics and thus pure contemplation in finite cognition; then (2) the essential unity of pure cognition is treated before the focus of the category problem and transcendental logic. A third step (3) questions the ways of transcendental deduction, in order to finally (4) determine schematism first and foremost as a demonstration of the inner possibility of ontological cognition. Only then (5) can the "supreme synthetic principle" of all synthetic judgments be obtained as the full determination of ontological transcendence. Heidegger goes one step further, however, when in the third section of the work he closely links the originality of the "Groundwork of Metaphysics" with the exposition of transcendental imagination as the third, common, original stem of knowledge, which is not only correlated with imagination and understanding, but from which both emerge in the first place. Of course, Heidegger does not miss the fact that in the B edition the transcendental imagination recedes and no longer operates as an independent "basic source of the mind" (Ibid., p. 164)<sup>20</sup>. This is remarkable, since in the late Kant interpretation of 1961 he assigns the complete insight into the intricacies of Kant's thesis on being to the B edition (cf. above). Kant had, according to Heidegger's stylization in the Kant book, retreated from this insight and had, as it were, veiled his exposition of fundamental ontology again "in the original nature of the transcendental imagination" (Ibid., p. 169). As is well known, the pivotal point of Heidegger's reconstruction of the transcendental imagination is its inner temporal character. This makes it obvious that pure synthesis manifests itself as pure apprehension in the present of empirical contemplation, as "pure reproduction" of the distinction of time in relation to the past ("earlier", "then") and that finally pure synthesis manifests itself as pure recognition, for Heidegger the concealed character of futurity. Time is therefore pure self-affection, from which the subject in turn is temporally constituted. Against this horizon, there is a constitutive interweaving between the temporally finite subject (Dasein) and the idea of temporality itself (Ibid., p. 231).

2. The Kant book can also be understood to mean that the idea of fundamental ontology is first of all to be presented in its justification, which implies the insight that this legal basis had not yet been sufficiently established in 'Being and Time' itself. In the notes surrounding the Kant book, it becomes clearer than in its texture itself that Heidegger's relationship to Kant is anything but dogmatically clear and that the clarification is closely linked to his philosophical self-understanding. In this context, he tries out *topoi* that he would later use in prominent places: for example, "debate", which would become the characteristic term for his Nietzsche discussion; and he also

uses the topos of the “unsaid” with regard to Kant, which should be reflected upon: “instead of pinning Kant down to what he has said. The said is the meagre, the unsaid is filled with richness” (Ibid., p. 249). This formula would later become a recurring figure in the discussion of the basic constellations of traditional Western metaphysics, for example in the ‘Contributions’. In contrast, Heidegger gains the factual basis of the Kant debate with the formulation: “But the question is: *the problem of metaphysics* and that says – *the question of being*.” (Ibid., p. 250).

3. In the high-level discussion with Ernst Cassirer in Davos in the same year, 1929, the Kant problem is implicitly and constantly present. It is remarkable that Heidegger readily admits to Cassirer “that my interpretation is violent and exaggerated” (Ibid., p. 302). However, it exposes the one and actual problem of originality and foundation that is hidden in Kant’s topos of transcendental imagination, namely the transparency of the temporal human self (Dasein) to the question of the meaning of being. This also reveals man’s natural disposition towards metaphysics. Heidegger did not feel compelled to revise his interpretation of Kant in his discussion with Cassirer. Due to the rather traditional cultural-philosophical tectonics of Cassirer’s statements, he had no objective reason to do so<sup>21</sup>. However, the fundamental difference in the problem of freedom is striking. In the light of his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger understands freedom not primarily in a normative moral-theoretical sense (although this certainly played a role in his Kant lectures in the Marburg period), but as the “liberation of existence in man” (Ibid., p. 285) on its own metaphysical ground.

### V. Kant, Heidegger and freedom

In the Freiburg lecture from the summer semester of 1930, Heidegger explicitly continues the line of understanding freedom. The problem of freedom, of which Jaspers claimed that Heidegger had understood nothing (Jaspers 1978), becomes the pivotal point of the closer definition of the fundamental ontological central question of the being of existence. The exploratory, tentative character of the reflections on the nature of freedom is also particularly striking in comparison to other lectures from that time. Heidegger searches for the excellent place that the problem of freedom occupies in Kant. Transcendental freedom as absolute spontaneity, as the “capacity of the self-initiation of a state”, is distinguished from autonomy as the “self-legislation of a rational will”<sup>22</sup>. Transcendental freedom is not secondary to practical freedom, but rather prior to it, as the “key to explaining the autonomy of the will” (AA IV, 446). Heidegger takes from this close interlocking, up to the definition of the moral law as “causality from freedom”, that Kant situates freedom “in the perspective of primordial being”, so that the question of freedom implies the question of the nature of causality (Ibid., p. 29). In § 14 of the Kolleg, Heidegger then performs one of his famous reversals. If he had claimed in the first part of the Kolleg that the question of the nature of freedom was “built into” the “leading question of metaphysics” about the being of existence, he now subjects the problem to an inversion: the leading question of philosophy is rather

based on the question of the nature of freedom, and at the same time it only comes into view when it is asked “as the ground of the possibility of existence” (Ibid., p. 134). Heidegger even explicitly notes that this approach to the problem lies “even before Being and Time” (Ibid., p. 134). The human being is then to be defined as the essence of freedom, which at the same time is “*the core problem of the possibility of truth as unconcealment*” (Ibid., p. 135). Heidegger initially focuses his attention on the Kantian “analogies of experience” as an indication of the being-in-time of what exists (Ibid., pp. 162 ff.). The analogies are “rules of the basic relations of the possible being-in-time of what exists”. As much as the “close reading” of the analogies of experience, which cannot be reconstructed or even examined in detail here, is more differentiated than in comparable interpretative constellations of Heidegger, the turning away from the Kantian constellation is also expressed more decisively. The polemic against an arbitrary Kantianism and any Kant philology is unmistakably and closely linked to the commitment to the thought form of destruction. The “right Kant” that the philologies were looking for did not exist. “All philosophical interpretation is in itself destruction, confrontation and radicalization, which is not the same as skepticism” (Ibid., p. 168). Rather, the evidence of the analogies must first be made transparent by illuminating what remained unexplained in Kant himself. For Heidegger, this is precisely the inner connection between temporality and the ‘I think’ as the basic form of transcendental deduction. This dissonance also persists on the further path, which, in the resolution of the third antinomy, understands freedom as an indicator of a “causality of reason” and as the transcendental idea of an unconditional causality that is inherent to man as a world being. The transcendental doctrine of method and the tectonic exposition of ideas as the unity of reason, which thereby gains the “form of a whole”, thereby “determining a priori the extent of the manifold as well as the place of the parts among themselves” – and a unity can be gained “to which no possible empirical knowledge can reach” (A 567 f. / B 595 f.).

## **VI. Kant and the question of the thing: The nature of objectivity**

The lecture held in the winter semester of 1935/36 on the topic ‘Grundfragen der Metaphysik’ was first published in 1962 under the title ‘Die Frage nach dem Ding’ and recognizably picks up the thread of the Kant lectures in Marburg in a philosophical objectivity, which once again indicates an intermediate stop and a possible turning point after the ideological low point that Heidegger reached in 1933 and before the elaboration of the history of being of the other beginning, with the references to early Greek philosophy and Hölderlin on the one hand and the far-reaching preoccupation with Nietzsche on the other. The focus is now on the question of the thing, the representational nature of objects, and once again the three Kantian “analogies of experience” form the axis of the argumentation. According to Heidegger, however, the actual point to be reached does not lie in the problem of “temporality”, but in the supreme principle of all synthetic judgments a priori. In Heidegger’s interpretation, it forms the deepest foundation that has been laid in and through Kant’s critique.

According to Heidegger, this lays the foundation for “the original determination of the essence of human knowledge, its truth and its object”<sup>23</sup>, formulated in the formula for this supreme principle: “the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are at the same time conditions of the possibility of experience” (A 158 / B 197).

### **VII. I think and existence**

It remains to be stated that Heidegger did not come to terms with Kant quickly; that the Königsberg world and problem thinker held up a resistance to him that eluded interpretation in the main paths of the history of being. Although Heidegger considers the deficiencies and unfoundedness of Kant’s questions throughout his interpretation of Kant, which essentially concentrates on the Marburg years and the immediate phase after ‘Being and Time’, he also touches on the question of the soundness of the fundamental ontology of ‘Being and Time’, which had not been fully achieved in the main work itself. The Kantian question thus itself defines the horizon on which Heidegger demonstrably continues to work. There is much to suggest that Heidegger had good reasons after ‘Being and Time’ to continue on the Kantian track and that it was not the strongest and most convincing reasons that led him to lose sight of it. In the Logic Lecture of the winter semester 1925/26, he already articulated at least the direction that guided him: the question revolves around the condition of the possibility of the connection between time and ‘I think’, “because time is the form of the manifold in general, which underlies every thinking determination, and the I think is the precondition in general, which should give possible unity to every thinking connection”<sup>24</sup>. In relation to the systems of classical German philosophy after Kant, i.e. above all Fichte, Hegel and Schelling, Heidegger suggests that the Kantian constellation must be uncovered again and questioned as to its “unfinished business”. The Kantian connection between time and subject would then remain inescapable, while classical German philosophy all too quickly placed the emphasis on the ‘I think’ and thus ultimately fell back into the Cartesian constellation. There are good reasons to see this differently<sup>25</sup>. But in any case, Heidegger’s motif of thought, which caused him to return to Kant before these overlapping constellations, deserves close attention.

### **VIII. Heidegger’s metaphysics of metaphysics**

There is much to suggest that Kant, first in the interweaving of freedom, ‘I think’ and time in transcendental philosophy, and then also in the formally adopted claim of the ‘Metaphysics of Morals’, formulated an unassailable problem for Heidegger that actually gave rise to fundamental ontology in the first place. At times he may have suspected that Kant could also be a kind of philosophical conscience that could not be avoided, at least not without suffering damage. Kant’s trace goes further than Heidegger may have been aware of and liked at times. In contrast to it, one can also ask oneself whether some of the ways in which metaphysics was transformed and overcome might not have been aberrations that overshot the legitimate concern of a “metaphysics of metaphysics” – and thus lagged behind it<sup>26</sup>. In a profound essay on ‘Heidegger’s path

to the answer to the question of being', Rainer Enskat pointed out that Kant could become Heidegger's "direct companion" on this path, "albeit for completely different reasons"<sup>27</sup>. This would in turn lead to a different horizon. In an early reflection on the analytic of the pure judgment of taste, Kant had pointedly formulated: "The beautiful things show that man fits into the world" (AA XVI, Refl.1820a).

## NOTES

1. Cf. Klemme 2016, pp. 5 ff.
2. Cf. Jaspers 1978, pp. 43 ff.
3. See H. Seubert und H.-B. Gerl-Falkovitz (Hg.), Heidegger und Guardini. Dokumente und Kommentare, with the collaboration of H. Zenuz (Freiburg Br.-München: Alber, 2021), (forthcoming).
4. F. Schelling, „Brief an Hegel“ of January 6, 1795, in Briefe von und an Hegel, vol.1, ed. by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), 3,14.
5. Kant AA: VI, 420, 536.
6. I have particularly emphasized this basic feature of Heidegger's self-revision and self-examination, which is often overlooked: Cf. Seubert 2019, pp. 185 ff.
7. M. Heidegger, Kants These über das Sein, in: GA, B.9, S.447.
8. M. Heidegger, Kants These über das Sein, loc. cit., GA, B.9, S.455.
9. In this line, Georg Picht's interpretation of Kant follows in Heidegger's footsteps, cf. Picht 1985.
10. M. Heidegger, Kants These über das Sein, loc. cit., GA, B.9, S.459.
11. M. Heidegger, Kants These über das Sein, GA, B.9, S.466.
12. Cf. Wieland 2001, pp. 21 ff.
13. Cf. Enskat 2020, pp. 117 ff.
14. M. Heidegger, Kants These über das Sein, GA, B.9, S.468.
15. M. Heidegger, Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft, in: GA, B.25, S.431.
16. M. Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, in: GA, B.24, S.77.
17. M. Heidegger, Phänomenologische Interpretation von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft, loc. cit., GA, B.25, S.404 ff.
18. I. Kant, Brief an Marcus Herz, 11. Mai 1781, in Gesammelte Schriften. ed.: vol. 1-22 Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 23 Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, since vol.. 24 Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1900ff), AA 10: 269.
19. M. Heidegger, Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, in: GA, B.3, S.38.
20. With reference to C.p.R., B 151 f.
21. Cf. Seubert 2019. See also Kaegi, Rudolph 2002.
- 2.2 M. Heidegger, Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit Einleitung in die Philosophie (Sommersemester 1930), in: GA, B.31, S.24.

23. M. Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1962, 31987), 143.
24. M. Heidegger, *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, in: GA, B.21, S.310.
25. D. Henrich, for example, speaks of a reflexive perspective that began with Kant, which then also became the guiding principle for Fichte's "original question". D. Henrich, *This I that says much. Reflecting on Fichte's Insight*, Frankfurt/Main 2019.
26. Here too I refer to my monograph H. Seubert, Heidegger, op. cit. p. 200 ff. and p. 431 ff.
27. R. Enskat, 'Heideggers Weg zur Antwort auf die Seinsfrage', in *Siebzig Jahre 'Sein und Zeit'* H. Seubert (ed.) (Freiburg-Br. München: Alber 2019), 275 ff., hier 295.

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