

The *Réalité-humaine* of Henry Corbin
Rebecca Bligh

A Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
Goldsmiths College
August 2011

Acknowledgements

To my mother and father, for their love, and for letting me loose on books. To Howard Caygill, for, well, for being Howard Caygill. Special thanks to Deirdre Daly, Isabel Waidner. And to the lot of you: well, you know who you are. x

Dedicated to the presence of my father, 14.04.1944 – 29.01.09, who just happens to share a birthday with Henry Corbin.

“Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui”

Abstract

This thesis sets out to correlate—to hyphenate, even—the dual and historically disparate personae of Henry Corbin the first French translator of Heidegger, and Henry Corbin, Iranian Islamist and pioneering comparative philosopher. The thesis' cynosure is a case for the philosophicohistorically contextual reconsideration of Corbin's infamous translation of Heidegger's term *Dasein* as “*réalité-humaine*”, as the result of the young Corbin's own profound engagement with Heidegger *as* informed by the then philosophically avant-garde.

A contextual reading of Corbin's late “Biographical Post-Scriptum” is enriched by the introduction of a correspondence between Corbin and the Warburg Library (chiefly Gertrud Bing), discovered to lie in the Warburg Library Archive in London, but which to date does not appear in Corbinian literature.

The self-proclaimed point, and cause of Corbin's divergence from Heidegger is examined further. Traces of Corbin's own professed “debt” to Heidegger will be shown to have indeed persisted throughout Corbin's oeuvre. Close readings of the ontological role accorded to the transcendental imagination by Heidegger (after Kant) in the Kant book, and Heidegger's proofs of the finitude of both Being and *Dasein*, as set forth in (the majority of) those texts included in Corbin's 1938 Gallimard translation of Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (including Part 4 of the Kant book) and Parts 1-3 of the Kant book are read against Corbin's own philosophy of the *imaginal*.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	p.2
Epigraph	p.3
Abstract	p.4
Introduction	p.6
Chapter One: From Paris to Teheran	p.9
Chapter Two: <i>Réalité-humaine</i>	p.28
Plate: p.13 of J.P. Sartre's <i>Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions</i>	p.36
Chapter Three: Corbin's Debt to Heidegger	p.55
Chapter Four: The Imagination in Heidegger's Kant book	p.79
Chapter Five: Corbin's Imaginal	p.114
Plate: Stanley Spencer's <i>The Resurrection at Cookham</i>	p.118
Plate: p.25 of J.L. Nancy's <i>Noli me Tangere</i>; Dürer's 32nd woodblock of the Small Passion	p.119
Conclusion	p.140
Bibliography	p.145

Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis considers Henry Corbin's contribution to the communication of philosophical ideas between Germany and France in the 1920s and '30s. Not only for his role as Heidegger's translator, but also his reviews of German publications for various journals, his own sojourn at Marburg, his engagement with Warburg Institute and its scholars, most notably Gertrud Bing and Ernst Cassirer, as documented in the Corbin-Warburg correspondence, as both discussed and discovered here (to the extent that although it is known to, and has been archived with characteristic efficiency by the Warburg Institute Archive, I have come across no other reference to it in the Corbinian literature).

Chapter Two offers a reading, and a strong and I hope self-evident case for a reconsideration of Corbin's Gallimard translation of Heidegger in its philosophicohistorical context: which reading Ethan Kleinberg has called a 'proudly revisionist'¹ history. Of course, as Nigel Tubbs has remarked², it is perfectly possible for Corbin to have got Heidegger "wrong" and still produced a rich interpretation, valuable in its own right: albeit those of a more utilitarian regard for the task of the translator may not greet this proposition with such sanguinity. I must concede to having become quite invested in Corbin's having got Heidegger "right", at least at the outset, and have taken an at times pedantic joy in exposing a number of errors—factual, historical and orthographic—which appear in the literature in relation to the translation.

Doubtless, a motivating factor has been to clear Corbin's name, *as* translator, of the odium and opprobrium heaped upon it. I have grown quite fond of him, after all, and I hope I have gone some way toward this. Ultimately, as the author of the statement that if he himself lays claim to phenomenology, 'it is because philosophical hermeneutics is essentially the key that opens the hidden meaning (etymologically the *esoteric*) underlying the exoteric statement,'³ we may imagine Corbin to have remained quietly sanguine at the prospect of having produced a translation of Heidegger, and of *Dasein* in particular, whose *full* contemporary resonance was and is only available to a self-initiated elite, or group of adepts, as indicated by this reading.

This close reading of the translation also serves the purpose of characterising Corbin's reading of Heidegger, *in* its precision, in order to situate most precisely the point and character of his divergence from Heidegger, which he himself pinpoints quite clearly in the late transcript "From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī",⁴ against what he kept with him. To wit, that while departing the Heideggerian *Weltanschauung*, the horizon of finitude, Corbin does not abandon *Dasein*, departing rather in such a way as potentiates, for Corbin, a restoration to *Dasein* of its vertical plane, its "verizons", as we might say: which restorative potential arises precisely at the intersection of their relative accounts of the ontological role of the imagination. Their divergence at this point may be accounted for as broadly consequential upon their respective ontotheological preference for either the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* which so forms and informs the

¹ Ethan Kleinberg, in his preliminary viva notes

² In his viva notes

³ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī, also cited in my chapter "Corbin's Debt to Heidegger"

⁴ Not for Corbin, the Deleuzian *enculage*; Corbin's style as a reader is courteous, rather, chivalric, even at the moment of parting

paradigm of traditional western metaphysics (Heidegger), vs. a prophetic hermeneutics informed by the device of the *significatio passiva* (Corbin). A further, highly consequential, “pre-existential” choice that characterises the Occidental/Oriental difference⁵ for Corbin, is that between an Averroean, or Avicennan cosmology, as I have set out to show here in my chapter “Corbin’s Imaginal”. Finally, the thesis segues into a close comparative reading of Heidegger’s treatment of the finitudes of Being and of Dasein, and the ontological role of the imagination as set out in *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* and the Kant book, against Corbin’s own philosophy of the imaginal.

For Heidegger, Kant’s “Copernican Revolution”, whereby ‘rather than utilising ‘the “old” concept of truth’—the *adequatio*, i.e., according to which knowledge must correspond to *objects*—we should assume instead ‘that objects must conform to our (a priori) knowledge’. far from doing away with the *adequatio*, not only presupposes but ‘indeed even grounds it for the first time’ in ontology, since the correspondence of ontic knowledge to beings as “objects” now depends on the knowledge of beings *as* beings, i.e. on ‘the unveiledness of the constitution of the Being of beings’.⁶

Here we have the Kantian genesis of the old philosophical tussle between what Geroulanos has called a rationalism ‘allied to neocriticism and the claim that science proceeds from the reasoning human mind and encompasses the world as it may be understood’, opposed to a realism characterised by the claim ‘that science seeks to comprehend a grand world external to man and proceeds from the real data provided by this world’,⁷ both of which were challenged by the convergence of post-Newtonian physics, i.e., Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, and the emerging post-humanist thought of the 1920s and ‘30s. As Heidegger observes in the Kant book, *both* of these models of truth are constituted of subject-object relations. Whether you proceed from reason to the object or vice versa, the one is required to correspond adequately to the other. These are both thus truths of the *adequatio*.

What makes of Heideggerian ontology what Meillasoux has called a “correlationism”, the “truth of Dasein” a *truth of correlation* is not only that for Heidegger, as per the Kant book, ‘the “I propose” which “accompanies” all representing’ is the “I think”, as an “I propose”—and always an “I think [something]”, e.g., “I think substance”, “I think causality”—or rather, ‘always already [an] “it means”’⁸—but *also* that which was so *interesting* for Corbin’s French philosophical peers of the early 1930s about the Uncertainty Principle e.g., which Kojève, e.g., is known to have read both *into*, and through Heidegger, is that Geroulanos has referred to as ‘the interaction between observing and observed systems’.⁹ That which in both Heideggerian and Corbinian terms, we might describe as the (Being-, or) being-revealed in being’s being-revealing. The truth of correlation is always an ontic-ontological truth because it is ontological truth, i.e., the knowledge of beings *as* beings, which makes ontic truth, the knowledge *of* beings, possible. For Heidegger, as for Corbin, it is always an *experiential* truth: a truth of *Verstehen*, “understanding” as which is experienced, undergone; and of *aleitheia*, revelation.

⁵ N.B., this is not an earthly geographic distinction; there are Orientals in the West (mystics) for Corbin, as he is quick to aver.

⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

⁷ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* p.60

⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.105

⁹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.64

For Heidegger, the fundamental truth of being as *Dasein*, in its revelation of Being, is revealed as finitude. In Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?", his proof of the finitude of Being in terms of Creative Being's dependency on the Nothing, as that which *being* is created *from*, itself depends on the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. A similar model of dependency (as a kind of relation-to) as a proof of finitude appears also in the Kant book, wherein Heidegger's proof of *Dasein*'s finitude is established *not* on the basis of the finitude of human reason (which however is also established there) and not, as the unlearned might perhaps expect, on the grounds of *Dasein*'s plain old biological death—*Dasein* is not, after all identical to a biological human—but rather on the basis of *Dasein*'s dependency for its knowledge of Being, and thus for its being as *Dasein*, on the "already there encountered". Thus Heidegger states in the Kant book that the innermost nature of the human being is finite; finitude 'completely determines the human being from the ground up as the being that it is.'¹⁰ The -thrownness and -thereness, i.e., 'the existence of human beings' amongst other beings, some of which, the non-human, are evidently presumed *not* to have an awareness of Being as Being thus constitutes for Heidegger 'an irruption into the totality of beings' of such awareness; in human-being's 'surrendering' to which—i.e., in its letting 'the being as such *be*', and in so doing, itself being '*delivered up as a being*'—it is that 'the being in itself first becomes manifest, i.e., as being'. Thus, for Heidegger, existence—as the "irruption", the 'thrown being' of human-beings, necessarily 'means dependency', because precisely in order to '*let* the being as such *be*...what and as it is...the existing being must already have projected that it is a being on the strength of what has been encountered'. Thus it is by the dependency of human-being, as *Dasein*, on the "already encountered" for its *being* *Dasein*, definitively aware of Being as Being, etc; —by which Heidegger characterises human "-*sein*'s" intrinsic *relation* to the "Da-", "-*there*". And, as dependency is the mark of finitude for Heidegger, it follows that the being of *Dasein*, i.e., *existence* 'as a mode of Being', is now declared as 'in itself finitude'. Heidegger further states that:

Only because the understanding of Being is the most finitude in what is finite, can it also make possible the so-called "creative" capacities of the finite human creature. On the grounds of the understanding of Being, man is the there [*das Da*], with the Being of which occurs the opening irruption into the being so that it show itself as such for a self. *More original than man is the finitude of the Dasein in him.*¹¹

Corbin is with Heidegger, so far as this "letting be" is concerned. For Corbin, however, this "letting be" is precisely a creative *be*/ing, an unconcealment of Creative *Be*/ing in *significatio passiva*, according to each *be*/ing's capacity, as per the epigraph and the leitmotif of this thesis: *Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*.¹² Thus while the "horizontal" axis, the *ontic*-ontological truth of *be*/ing, for Corbin, is also a truth of *being*-there, of correlation, like to *Dasein*, *ontological* truth is what we might call the *vertical* axis or dimension of the truth of correlation, i.e., acc. to the gnoseology of the Ishrâqiyûn', the Orient of Being.¹³ According to this theosophy, every "utterance", every iteration of *Be*/ing as *be*/ing is a creative theophany. It is Corbin's radical divergence at this point from Heidegger that this thesis seeks to discuss and document, from here on.

¹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.154

¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.160

¹² Roughly, "What I could see, I was able to capture" H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.75

¹³ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi"

Chapter One: From Paris to Teheran

To wit, a philosophical quest that does not end in personal spiritual realization is a vain waste of time, and the search for mystical experience without first going by way of a serious and extensive philosophical education, has every chance of ending with the seeker lost in aberrations, illusions and errancies.

So says Henry Corbin, in his 1978 “Biographical Post-Scriptum” (from here on “Post-Scriptum”), appended to the transcript of “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, a 1976 radio interview with Philippe Nemo, for publication in the dedicated volume *Henry Corbin: Cahier de l’Herne* (no. 39).¹⁴ As the name suggests, the interview itself is chiefly concerned with how it came to be that ‘the translator of Heidegger and the man who has introduced Iranian Islamic philosophy to the West are one and the same’;¹⁵ the “Post-Scriptum” intended to add some essential “precisions”.

In fact, however, the interview’s title, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, is rather misleading since, he says, (having received his Diploma from the School of Oriental Languages in 1929), his ‘first publications on Suhrawardî go back to 1933 and 1935’¹⁶ while his ‘translation of Heidegger appears in 1938’. This is not, in fact, strictly accurate, as while the *Gallimard Edition* of *What is Metaphysics?* translated by Corbin was indeed published in 1938, Corbin’s *first* translation of Heidegger’s essay, *What is Metaphysics?* appeared in the journal *Bifur* in 1931.¹⁷

The interview transcript might thus more accurately have been entitled “From Suhrawardî to Heidegger to Suhrawardî”. Of the precise circumstances in which Corbin came to undertake his translations of Heidegger, whether the 1931 *Bifur* journal article in 1931, or the 1938 book for *Gallimard*, the “Post-Scriptum” has frustratingly little to tell us; save by inference, in that that he brings up the fact of his translation in the same breath as he recollects the philosophical circle around his friend Alexandre Koyré, including Bernard Groethuysen, without whose strenuous efforts Corbin says the *Gallimard Edition* may never have been commissioned at all.

The fact that several major contemporary works on the period, including Ethan Kleinberg’s *Generation Existential* (2005), Stefanos Geroulanos’ *An Atheism That is not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (2010), Peter Eli Gordon’s *Continental Divide; Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (2010), and Daryush Shayegan’s *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L’Islam Spirituel* (2011), all source facts from the “Post-Scriptum”, one might hope to stand as testament to its historical veracity; albeit, as I have discovered in the course of this research, Kleinberg (who is far from alone in this, cf. my chapter “*Réalité-humaine*”) e.g.,

¹⁴ “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, recorded for Radio France-Culture, on Wednesday, the 2nd June 1976, and reproduced (with revisions drawn from notes taken at the time) in *Henry Corbin: Cahier de l’Herne* (No. 39) Paris, l’Herne, 1981. Jambet, Christian, (Editor). *Consacré à Henry Corbin, 1981*, working here from the (anonymous) English translation published online by the *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin*. (<http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/propos.htm>). As there are no page numbers to this online version in all footnotes to follow, throughout this thesis I simply reference the text, specifying either “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, or “Post-Scriptum”. As both are fairly concise, I hope this should not prove too inconvenient for anyone wishing to consult the original.

¹⁵ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”.

¹⁶ The first of these appearing in Volume II of *Recherches Philosophiques* (1932-3).

¹⁷ H. Corbin, “Pour l’anthropologie philosophique : Un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardî d’Alep”, *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. II, 1932-3, Boivin & co. Paris, pp.371-424

confuses Corbin's two quite different but identically named translations of Heidegger, one an essay, the other a book which includes a new translation of that same essay, both of which are named "What is Metaphysics?", an error which may have been borne out of relying on the "Post-Scriptum" *too* much; whereas Shayegan blithely overlooks what is stated quite plainly in the "Post-Scriptum" to attribute the source of Ernst Cassirer's influence upon Corbin otherwise than Corbin himself does—facts which might seem to tarnish their credibility as witnesses a little. Still, as noted Corbin himself also offers us some mildly erroneous dates in the "Post-Scriptum"; and perhaps none of this should concern us too gravely, here, at least, if we are to take him at his word, in "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi" (though somewhat belied by his own meticulous scholarship) that for him:

As Unamuno wrote, it is important to recognize "that the past is no more and that nothing exists in truth except that which acts. That a legend, as we call them, when it pushes human beings to veridical action, by firing their hearts or by consoling them with life, is a thousand times more real than the relation of some random act festering in the archives"¹⁸.

In any case, largely lacking for other sources the *first* part of this chapter mainly consists of a gloss of the "Post-Scriptum", until we come to such points as other, relevant sources intersect; whereupon our perspective widens to set Corbin's narrative in historico-philosophical context.

We begin, as does the "Post-Scriptum", with Corbin's first encounter with Islamic philosophy, via the 12th century Toledo School translations of Arabic texts into Latin taught by Etienne Gilson in his 1923-4 class on Medieval Philosophy at the *École pratique des hautes études* (EPHE) in Paris. Gilson's describes Gilson's 'incomparable' teaching method, of "live" translation followed by 'magisterial commentary that penetrated to the very heart of things', as having made such a profound and 'dazzling impression' upon him that he resolved, there and then, to take Gilson as his model. Thus from the outset, the act of translation is integral to Corbin's ideal of the scholar-philosopher.

In 1926-7, both enthused and encouraged by Gilson, Corbin decided against entering for the *agrégation*, instead reading Arabic at the *École Nationale des Langues Orientales* that he might further explore what he then perceived as a certain 'correspondence' or 'connivance' between cosmology and angelology, 'at greater length and from other angles'.¹⁹ This *was* an unusual step for a would-be French scholar, since 'From its inception, the French academic system' has been structured toward the top-down 'dissemination of a specific canon, and the training of teachers to impose this canon', with the national university 'tak[ing] charge of primary, secondary, and higher education'. Along with those other high-scoring *baccalauréat* student wishing to become academics, Corbin would "normally" have entered the *École Normale Supérieure*,²⁰ where in exchange for three fully-funded years of study, he would have been contractually bound to teach the national curriculum at one level or another for no less than ten years; a safe and steady route to professional academia, which, while being neither 'in possession of a personal fortune', nor of

¹⁸ Corbin, "Biographical Post-Scriptum" (from here on "Post-Scriptum")

¹⁹ Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

²⁰ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.50.

‘time to waste’ either (as ‘a friendly Sorbonne professor’ enquired of him) Corbin yet chose to eschew in favour of his own path.

Thus it was that Corbin and his friend Georges Vajda found themselves as ‘pretty much the only errant philosophers’ in the ‘venerable establishment’ of the *École Nationale des Langues Orientales*. Corbin states that he also studied with Emile Bréhier, then ‘ensconced in translating and establishing the critical edition of Plotinus’ *Enneads*’, and whose students, including Corbin, continued to enjoy ‘the windfalls’ of Bréhier’s 1922-1923 lecture series on Plotinus and the Upanishads. Though we might imagine how this kind of comparative work might appeal to Corbin, he states that it was difficult, coming out of a class ‘on Duns Scot, *Doctor subtilis*’, e.g., as taught by Etienne Gilson, to accept Bréhier’s contention ‘that there was no such thing as Christian philosophy’.²¹ Nonetheless ‘eager for metaphysical adventure’, Corbin was inspired by Bréhier’s classes to undertake his own investigation of ‘the influence and trace elements of Indian philosophy to be found in the works of the founder of Neo-Platonism’. Corbin thus began to study Sanskrit as well as Arabic; and, as this went against the received wisdom of every philologist and linguist whom he cared to consult, he chose ‘heroically’, he says, to do so in secret. Heroic indeed, since finding himself ‘astray among the linguists’, Corbin recalls this period as one of great mental asceticism, during which, at times, ‘starved’ of philosophy, and faced instead with ‘nothing but grammar books and dictionaries’, he felt he must ‘surely perish’, more than once asking himself ‘What am I doing here? What have I got myself into?’

In 1928, however, Corbin at last found a welcome ‘refuge’ and intellectual sustenance in ‘the finest substance of Islamic Spirituality’, as taught by Louis Massignon. Massignon, who taught at the *Collège de France* from 1928, was also Director of Islamic Studies in the Religious Science Section of the EPHE—in which post Corbin was to succeed Massignon two decades later.

Corbin qualifies his somewhat critical recollection of Massignon’s relentless pursuit of his own prodigious and ‘fulgurating intuitions’ which could sometimes leave the listener ‘exhausted and lost’, by claiming this teaching style of the ‘great mystic’ Massignon to be ‘simply a necessary aspect of the passion burning inside’ him. Thus, while recognising there were ‘certain vulnerable sides to [Massignon’s] thinking, certain breaches’ which, ‘over the course of the years it was impossible not to perceive’, Corbin yet evokes the name of Massignon with veneration. And how could he do otherwise, since it was Massignon,²² who, in response to Corbin’s questions ‘regarding the connections between the philosophy and mysticism of a certain Suhrawardî, was “inspired by the Heavens” to present Corbin with ‘a lithographed edition of the principal work of Suhrawardî, *Hikmat al-Ishrâq: “The Oriental Theosophy”*’, saying ‘Here...I believe that there is something in this book for you’’. That “something”, writes Corbin, ‘was the presence and company of the young *Shaykh al-Ishraq*’, henceforward Corbin’s lifelong companion.

²¹ In “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, Corbin makes special mention of Heidegger’s own 1916 habilitation thesis on Duns Scotus’ *Grammatica Speculativa*. It is possible that Corbin may either have encountered Heidegger’s thesis while studying with Gilson or may have come upon the thesis some years later—who knows, but perhaps—to compare Heidegger’s Duns Scotus with Gilson’s.

²² Massignon, whose ‘fiery soul’, whose ‘intrepid penetration into the arcane regions of mystical life in Islam, into hitherto unexplored regions and depths, the nobility of [whose] indignations before the shortcomings of this world...inevitably left its impression upon the spirit of his young auditors’ (H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”).

Here, according to his conviction that ‘one is born a Platonist, just as one can be born an atheist, a materialist, etc. It is a question of the impenetrable mystery of pre-existential choices’; Corbin states that he has ‘always been a Platonist (in the broadest sense of the term of course)’. As such, ‘young Platonist’ that he was, says Corbin, he ‘could not help burn at the very contact of [Suhravardī], he who had been the “Imam of the Persian Platonists” (hence also, his “family feeling” for the Cambridge Platonists, upon being introduced to them by Ernst Cassirer). For Corbin this Platonism of Suhravardī’s, which ‘expressed itself in terms belonging to the Zoroastrian angelology of Ancient Persia... illuminated the path’ Corbin says he ‘had been searching for’, and upon discovering Persia as an ‘entire spiritual universe, a hearth and meeting place in the history of religions’, he felt no more need ‘to remain torn between Sanskrit and Arabic.’ His ‘great adventure’ had begun. In 1928 Corbin was assigned to the Oriental Language Section of the *Bibliothèque National de France*; thus it was, says Corbin, that he passed, for a time, ‘into the rank and file of the Orientalists’, whereupon, it was only after a ‘long [and highly instructive] period’ that Corbin came to see ‘that in future it would be the Philosophers and not the Orientalists who would be the only ones capable of assuming responsibility for the “oriental philosophy”’.

Corbin’s ‘brief overview of the “career” of [Corbin] the Orientalist Philosopher, and his decisive encounter with that Iranian land said to be the “colour of sky” and “homeland to philosophers and poets”’, now segues into an account of his ‘complementary’ encounter ‘with the old Germany that was also once “homeland to philosophers and poets”’ in its own right, to which he was introduced via the ‘frequent meetings’ and seminars held in the home of the ‘inimitable’ and ‘immensely cultivated’ Baruzi brothers ‘on the Place Victor Hugo’, where ‘one met among the participants all kinds of unexpected European personalities’, including always ‘a strong German contingent’. It was the younger Baruzi²³ brother, Jean,²⁴ whom Corbin characterizes, in part, by the ‘twenty years’ he took ‘to produce his enormous thesis on Saint John of the Cross [of Jerusalem]’²⁵, that introduced the Baruzi ‘seminarians’, Corbin included, ‘to the theology of the young Luther’, then a ‘fashionable subject’ in contemporary German theology; and useful to Corbin, as he would later be “called upon” to ‘stand in’ for Alexandre Koyré at the Section of Religious Sciences of the EPHE²⁶, ‘during the years 1937 through 39’ and ‘discourse upon Lutheran hermeneutics’,²⁷ (a task for which Corbin’s familiarity with Heidegger’s habilitation thesis on Duns Scotus’ *Theory of the Categories* would also come in handy). From Luther, on they went ‘to the great Protestant spirituals: Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenkfeld, Valentin Weigel, Johann Arndt, etc.’²⁸ To set these seminars in context, S. Geroulanos e.g. cites the fact Jean Baruzi has an essay ‘on the languages of mysticism’ included in the inaugural volume of *Recherches Philosophiques* as “speaking to” the then ‘contemporary resonance of the problem of mysticism’²⁹. Of Koyré himself, the founder of *Recherches Philosophiques*

²³ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

²⁴ The elder Baruzi brother Joseph being ‘a musicologist whose articles, bearing the fruit of a profound musical thinking, appeared regularly in the review *The Minstrel [Le Ménestrel]*’, also the author of *The Will or Drive to Metamorphosis (La Volonté de métamorphose)* and *Dream of a Century (Rêve d’un siècle)*’ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

²⁵ and also by his having ‘assisted Alfred Loisy at the *Collège de France*, before becoming chair of Religious History there’

²⁶ Later to become renowned as a historian of science,

²⁷ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”

²⁸ Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

²⁹ Cf. S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.56

and later to gain great renown as a historian of science, S. Geroulanos notes that ‘until about 1935, Koyré continued to teach and publish mostly in the history of theology and mysticism’.³⁰ In any case, it was ‘all new and captivating’ for Corbin, for whom ‘the circle of friends that had formed around the inseparable Baruzi brothers was already in itself an invitation to dare the adventures of the Spirit’. With hindsight, says Corbin, this “invitation” was ‘none other than the hermeneutic path already unfurling in the morning fog’. Recalling the compulsion he had felt ‘upon hearing Etienne Gilson’s interpretation of Avicenna’ to learn Arabic in order that he might go to the original texts and “see for himself”, Corbin says ‘it was equally impossible to hear the call of the Spirituals interpreted by Jean Baruzi without taking the decision to enter into that world as well’. Thus Corbin was set upon ‘the path towards a Germany that was home to the philosophers and the “great individuals” of mystical spirituality’. His ‘first step’ on this path was to the ““inspired hill”” of Marburg University in July 1930, where he made great many new and significant acquaintances and discoveries, amongst students who Corbin says in those days ‘led a remarkably intense theological and philosophical life’. It happened that at the time of Corbin’s first visit, Olga Fröbe-Kapteyn was visiting with Rudolf Otto to discuss what from 1933 onward would be realised as the annual ‘Ascona Eranos circle’, in which Corbin would later become a regular and notable participant.³¹ ‘There was also Rudolf Bultmann, whose theology, says Corbin, ‘was then beginning to provoke... agitation’; Friedrich Heiler, ‘then Professor in the Faculty of Theology’ (also a friend of Joseph Baruzi’s), a ‘painful figure’, who was ‘the author of an important book on prayer, aspiring towards the development of a Christianity freed of confessional attachment’. It was also at Marburg that Corbin’s French friend Ambert-Marie Schmidt introduced Corbin to Swedenborg, whose ‘immense oeuvre’ would become another of Corbin’s lifelong companions, by presenting him with ‘an edition of the French translation *Du Ciel et de l’Enfer* (Of Heaven and Hell)’. There too, Corbin was first introduced to the work of Karl Barth by Corbin by one Professor Theodor Siegfried, who had ‘passed his habilitation with Rudolf Otto’, whereupon despite Siegfried’s having ‘alerted [him] as to the pure formalism to which dialectical theology condemned itself’, Corbin nevertheless ‘plunged with passion into the reading of...Barth’s dense commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans’, which he says imparted to him ‘a first presentiment of a great number of things’ that he ‘had yet to formulate’ for himself. Corbin’s encounter with Barth made such a strong impression on him that he says its consequences were ‘to play themselves out over several years’.³² These included, back in Paris, Corbin’s joining a small group called the New Protestant Theologians, who came to cherish ‘every hope that Karl Barth might bring about a renewal of Protestant theology’. In the year 1931-1932, along with Denis de Rougemont, Roland de Pury, Albert-Marie Schmidt, and Roger Jezequel, Corbin co-founded ‘a small review entitled *Hic et Nunc* [*Here and Now*],

and advanced with the kind of juvenile brutality that causes consternation not only among one’s elders, but ultimately in the young themselves; after life has

³⁰[ctd] the core of his early corpus includes books on Saint Anselm and Jacob Boehme, an uncompleted manuscript on medieval Jewish thought, essays on (among others)’. S. Geroulanos, *ibid.*, p.81

³¹ Cf. e.g., H. Corbin, “The Time of Eranos”, in Campbell, Joseph, ed., *Man and Time, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Bollingen Series XXX, Vol. 3, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1957, p. xix.

³² Of a trip to Bonn in the spring of 1932, Corbin writes that ‘Karl Barth was there at that time, of course, along with the powerful cohort of his students and adepts. The theological discussions went ahead full steam, all the more so as we shared a presentiment of the approaching catastrophe—. He recalls this ‘not without emotion’, as he thinks ‘of all those who have since disappeared (among whom Landsberg and so many others)’; though whether by old age, accident of war, or bellicose murder, he does not say.

taught them a thing or two and they in turn are elders. Alas! Our illusions were to come tumbling down from great heights.³³

Their great hopes for Barth, raised by e.g., Barth's commentary on Paul's letter to the Romans, 'with its prophetic sparks', and other early writings were only to be dashed by later works, such as 'the heavy colossal *Dogmatic*'; *not* what the New Protestant Theologians had been hoping for at all.

Following their disappointment with Barth, the New Protestant Theologians subsequently 'adopted Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky' as their 'spiritual forefathers'; which while being a good move, in Corbin's book, was not however 'enough to jar philosophy' in the way that the NPT had originally set out to; though not before Corbin had gone to the length of translating 'one of Karl Barth's opuscles': *Die Not der evangelischen Kirche*, lit. "The Distress of the Protestant Church", but which, 'following the advice of Pierre Maury'³⁴ (editor of the review *Faith and Life (Foi et Vie)*, Issue 39, in which it was published in 1932)³⁵, was given the French title of "*Misère et Grandeur de l'Eglise évangélique*", ("Grandeur and Misery of the Evangelical Church".) Here Corbin also recalls Barth's own 'memorable visit to Paris in 1934' during which Corbin spoke with Barth of his own (Corbin's) interest in those Right-Hegelian speculative theologians of the early 19th century 'who read Hegel in the same manner that they read Meister Eckhart'; Philippe Marheineke in particular, for whom Corbin discerned in Barth 'a discrete [albeit inexplicable] sympathy'. Ultimately, however, Corbin says that this sympathy was to remain 'Karl Barth's secret...creating a gulf between his "dialectical theology" and this Hegelian theology of the Right,³⁶ of which Corbin states

It is important to remember that this Hegelianism was vigorously opposed to rationalism, something easily forgotten when the grand majority of our translations mistakenly give "reason" as the equivalent of *Vernunft*, even though this word refers to the Greek word *Noos*. The entire Hegelian and Post-Hegelian climate would change if we kept this reference in mind.

Elsewhere, in "From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī", Corbin suggests that, just as 'the philosophy of Hegel has given birth to a Hegelian right and a Hegelian left, so 'Heidegger's philosophy' may yet '*volens nolens*...give birth to a Heideggerian right and a Heideggerianism left.' It is left to the reader to guess where Corbin might situate himself here.³⁷

Corbin's own eventual, 'disastrous realization' about Barthism was that, while "Religious science" had been in large part the work of Protestant theologians', Barth's theology 'professed the most profound disdain for both religious science and the study of religious history', naively opposing 'other religions as the products of human effort' against Christianity as the 'descent and initiative of God towards humanity', and maintaining 'that for this reason Christianity should not even be understood as a "religion". This, of

³³ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

³⁴ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

³⁵ <http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/bibliographie.htm>

³⁶ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

³⁷ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī"

course' continues Corbin, 'is nothing very original, indeed something along the same lines had been said in Islam, well before Karl Barth'. Hence Corbin offers the same response to this Barthian doctrine 'as to the legal theologians of Islam', i.e., 'the answer provided by Ibn 'Arabi and his school'; those masterless "disciples of Khidr" for whom there can never be 'one theophany identical for all'. Rather, to each 'his own theophany', 'correspond[ing] to his "inner heaven, to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality (*ayn thabita*)'.³⁸

As for *philosophy* at Marburg, while Martin Heidegger had already returned to Freiburg in 1928 to take up his chair as Husserl's successor, Corbin says 'there were still two eminent *privatdozent* in the philosophy department there': Karl Löwith, with whom Corbin had 'wonderful conversations on the subject of [the pietist-Lutheran theologian-philosopher] Hamann and the currents connected to his work', and Gerhard Kruger, 'an expert phenomenologist' whose seminars gave Corbin 'a taste of all the problems then fashionable in Germany', leading to the simultaneously 'enthusing and... crushing revelation' that he would surely have to 'begin [his] philosophical education all over again'. In this realisation, despite his own singular path and progress, Corbin came to be quite in step with (if not ahead of most of) the philosophical avant-garde in France, as we shall now discover.

In Corbin's era, as from the outset of the Third Republic (1870-1940), French university professors were effectively charged with impressing upon their students, and so perpetuating, the legitimacy of 'the new republican institutions'— of the state, i.e.,—via the dissemination of various canonical doctrines that agreed in general terms upon a teleological narrative according to which (thus presuming the primacy of reason amongst the human faculties), 'humankind had never ceased to progress toward an agreement on specific reasonable principles', the selfsame principles, i.e., upon which said institutions were founded.³⁹ Toward the end of the long nineteenth century (the period in Europe beginning with both the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in England, and ending with the First World War) the rationalistic humanism dominating French philosophy was also complemented by the widespread popularity of Bergson, though come the cataclysmic birth of the 20th century proper, in the trenches of WWI, Bergson, in the eyes of the young at least, seemed rooted firmly in the century that had passed.

By the time Henry Corbin came to make his own way through academe, Leon Brunschvicg was in place as 'the head of the *jury d'agrégation*'⁴⁰, and thus empowered not only to preside over the jury's deliberations and selection of candidates for examination, but also to determine the French national syllabus for university philosophy departments. Under Brunschvicg's direction, this consisted of Plato, then Descartes, and then Kant; so chosen and ordered as to best describe what Brunschvicg saw as 'the logical progression of philosophy',⁴¹ according to his particular strain of 'French neo-Kantian rationalism'.⁴²

³⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.61

³⁹ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.5, citing Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott Fox and J.M. Harding (Cambridge University Press, 1980) p.6-7

⁴⁰ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.5

⁴¹ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.5

⁴² Having prevailed, according to Kleinberg, over its closest doctrinal competitor, namely the sociological positivism of Émile Durkheim. (Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.5)

There were, however, states of exception, notably the EPHE and the *Collège de France*, research institutes where original and extra-curricular research was encouraged. To this day the Collège de France, (so called from 1870, with the birth of the Third Republic, formerly the *Collège Impérial*), motto *Docet Omnia*, offers free public access to its seminars and lectures for the nation's edification, awarding prestigious research-and-lecturing only posts to a limited number of eminent professors—who, whether lecturing 'to consistently full halls', or conducting their research 'in relative obscurity'— are free to rove outside the national curriculum.

As for the EPHE, Kleinberg writes that it was 'Founded in 1868, largely in response to the perceived superiority of German research institutes (which was to become an abiding concern in France)'⁴³. Following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), the Third Republic was possessed of a patriotic drive to equal and then surpass the Germans in *all* fields, including academia, where a number of French studies had come to the uncomfortable conclusion that according to a variety of measures the Germans were well ahead of them. There was there was a 'perception that the [French] educational system had become mired in the classics and consequently unable to look to the future. Henceforth, 'the German University became the mark by which the French system would be measured'; although Kleinberg (after Smith, *The ENS and the Third Republic*), stresses that the French were not "'uncritical imitators'", and any 'changes made would be uniquely French.'⁴⁴ Albeit 'in practice an administrative superstructure designed to dispense funds for advanced research', faculty were also expected to *teach* advanced research skills, teaching, as it were, by doing. These seminars thus further disseminated their findings and provided a permissive forum in which to explore dissenting and extracurricular views. The EPHE offered relatively modest salaries to its *directeurs d'études*—so called, rather than "professors"; the only degree the EPHE was entitled to award was 'a "third cycle doctorate" which allowed *émigrés*...to teach in France without having taken the entire program of *concours, agrégation, thèse de doctorat*'; though only at 'other small research institutes and not at the lycée or university level'.⁴⁵ The EPHE thus 'became a magnet for intellectuals on the periphery of the national education system—foreigners, those who professed theories outside of the canon, and scholars more interested in ideas than in exams',⁴⁶ including our own Henry Corbin. By the early 1930s the EPHE was surely the most interesting *institutional* philosophical forum in Paris.

Beyond strategic educational reform, the lived experience of WWI and its aftermath had a profound effect on French thought. For many, writes Kleinberg, the 'optimistic view of progress and history embodied in French Philosophy and the Third Republic' seemed hardly adequate to the thinking of such industrially wrought carnage, of a so-called "victory" in which so many were maimed and lost. Unwilling to abandon the idea of historical progress entirely, many began to search outside of the French canon for alternative 'methodologies'⁴⁷, other systems of thought, i.e., in which it might be re-founded. Meanwhile, however much *informal* dissent might be permitted, the ENS curriculum was still determined by, and gauged

⁴³ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.51

⁴⁴ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.52

⁴⁵ This actually sounds like a pretty good deal

⁴⁶ Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.51

⁴⁷ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.55

towards, the national examination syllabus over which Leon Brunschvicg continued to preside, and there dissent ‘would not be tolerated’. Kleinberg e.g., cites Raymond Aron’s account of an ENS seminar given by Leon Brunschvicg on *The Progress of Consciousness in Western Thought*, in which Jean-Paul Sartre clashed with an immovable Brunschvicg over Nietzsche’s definition of truth, which, against Nietzsche, Brunschvicg held to be immanent, versus Sartre’s protestation that ‘truth claims were based entirely on the fickle and absurd meanings that individuals force on the objects that surround them’.⁴⁸ Kleinberg *also* notes that Sartre failed the *agrégation* at his first sitting.⁴⁹ The quest for—*something else*—more appropriate to the post-war moment in which they found themselves—would have to be conducted elsewhere. And where else but the EPHE, where the Alexandres Koyré and then Kojève were to give their famous Hegel seminars? *Outside* the institution, there also sprang up more or less formal, but vitally important—nay, “seminal”—seminars and *journals*, such as e.g., *Bifur*, in which Sartre’s “Legend of the Truth” appeared alongside Corbin’s first attempt at translating Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics?”⁵⁰, the *Revue de la France et de l’étranger*, where one could find ‘commentary on German phenomenology and *Lebensphilosophie*’; and *Recherches philosophiques*, where one ‘could read French translations of works by Husserl, Karl Jaspers, and Heidegger’, and to which up-and-coming French ‘thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Aron, Henry Corbin, Jacques Lacan, Raymond Queneau, Jean Hyppolite...[and] Georges Bataille’ also contributed.⁵¹

Founded by Alexandre Koyré (a member of the original Göttingen circle of phenomenologists) in 1931, a year after Husserl’s *Jahrbuch* ceased publication, the journal *Recherches philosophiques* was overseen by an editorial board to which Koyré had recruited a number of establishment figures including Brunschvicg himself (with whom, upon his return to Paris in 1912, Koyré became friends, despite Brunschvicg’s initial resistance to phenomenology), who thus, while continuing to beat the bounds of the national curriculum, at once lent his name and weight to the journal’s extracurricular, but nonetheless patriotically approved aim of ‘exposing the French intellectual world to foreign (and specifically German) philosophy’.⁵² Kleinberg also notes that it was also ‘on the editorial boards of journals that émigrés such as Koyré, Kojève, Eric Weil, Georges Gurvitch, Bernard Groethuysen, and Jacob Gordin could interact with established French intellectuals.’⁵³ The journal thus initially served as a kind of crucible, or no man’s land in which philosophical commerce might occur without, as yet, breaching the integrity of the national canon. As noted by S. Geroulanos⁵⁴, a number of more or less seismic philosophical events in the period immediately prior to the founding of *Recherches Philosophiques* also lent urgency and encouragement to this endeavour, as follows.

In 1928, the Japanese philosopher Count Shuzo Kuki, a former student of Heidegger’s (to whose work, it is said, he was the first to introduce Jean-Paul Sartre, with whom the Count is also said to have discussed

⁴⁸ E. Kleinberg, citing Aron’s *Memoire (Paris: Juillard, 1983)* in *Gen. Existential*, p.55).

⁴⁹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.55

⁵⁰ J. P. Sartre, “Légende de la vérité” *Bifur*, Edition 8, 1931 pp.77-96

⁵¹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.56

⁵² E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.58

⁵³ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.56

⁵⁴ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not a Humanism ...* p.49

various ‘figureheads of French thought’)⁵⁵ gave a number of public lectures in Paris. In the last of these, entitled ‘General Characteristics of French Philosophy’ he set out his disdain for the present state of the French philosophical establishment, as represented by e.g., ‘Henri Bergson, Leon Brunschvicg, Celestin Bouglé, Emile Meyerson and others’, in terms of what he summarily identified as the four main strains, or traits of its ‘distinctly national’ character, to wit: ‘(i) *inner observation*; (ii) *an alliance with positivism*; (iii) *a fundamental metaphysical—essentially Cartesian-dualism*; and (iv) *a “striving to be social”*⁵⁶—in contrast with ‘the work of those German theologian-philosophers he himself was trained by—particularly Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers’. The *main* finding of the Count’s final lecture, as identified by Geroulanos, is of establishment French thinking as so scientific in both emphasis and origin that it is ‘limited to the concept of science it emerged from’, and consequently ‘at a loss when dealing with questions concerning the status of man in modernity’, which in order ‘to avoid existential and theological issues that exceeded its scientism,’ it attempted to answer by it ‘imposing an antiquated, optimistic, and teleological conception of Man’. Geroulanos continues:

If there was something rude or coarse about Kuki’s caricature of “French philosophy”, it nevertheless resonated...among young philosophers Alongside the powerful Kantian and rationalist glorification of Man, the issues presented by Kuki as limitations of French philosophy were seen in these years to be raising new demands in *philosophical anthropology*, that is, the thematization of man as a properly philosophical problem rather than merely a self-sufficient and self-evident ideal or ground of thought, knowledge, and existence.⁵⁷

As explored further in my chapter “*Réalité-humaine*”, Geroulanos argues persuasively that what these demands would yield, after an initial proliferation of anthropologies, was ultimately a *negative*—i.e., an anti-*humanist* anthropology (such as Kojève’s, e.g.), set on stripping away the attributes that had made Man of man⁵⁸. As evidence of Corbin’s own active, and it would appear, positive engagement with the prospect of a new “philosophical anthropology” (to which term Corbin says Bernard Groethuysen, ‘once a student of Dilthey’s’, himself the author of an unfinished work entitled “Philosophical Anthropology”, and a prominent member of Koyré’s circle was to ‘inaugurate’ for “them”) I note that his first publication on Suhrawardî in 1933, included in *Recherches philosophiques: “Pour l’anthropologie philosophique : un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardî d’Alep”* (“Toward a philosophical anthropology: an unpublished Persian treaty by Suhrawardi of Aleppo”).⁵⁹ We also find that in his letter of July 15th to Gertrud Bing of the Warburg Library, 1933 Corbin refers to those ‘philosophemes’ which he says he is currently attempting to ‘systematize via philosophical anthropology, i.e., the crisis of historicism and phenomenological ontology!’⁶⁰

⁵⁵ According to S. Geroulanos, this introduction preceded the event of Raymond Aron’s recommending to Sartre that he should read Emmanuel Levinas’ (Heideggerian) *Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, that he would thereafter be equipped to philosophize, for example, the very martini glass that Aron was holding up). S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not a Humanism Emerges in French Thought* p.49

⁵⁶ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not a Humanism ...* p.49

⁵⁷ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not a Humanism ...* p.50

⁵⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is Not a Humanism ...* pp.50, 98

⁵⁹ “Pour l’anthropologie philosophique : un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardî d’Alep”, *Recherches philosophiques*, Vol. II, 1932-3, pp. 371-423.

⁶⁰ in relation to which, he says, he finds the oeuvre of Aby Warburg of especial interest and relevance (Corbin-Warburg correspondence, Warburg Institute Archive, London).

Then, in 1929, the year after Count Shuzo Kuki's vigorous assault on French philosophy, there was Davos. Inaugurated in 1928, the Davos conference is said to have been intended to encourage warmer pan-European, and especially 'Franco-German relations' on the 'neutral soil of Switzerland,'⁶¹ via encounters between the nations' thinkers in highly pleasant and conducive surroundings.^a Although the conference, which only ran until 1932, was quite "starry"^b for every one of those 5 years, the reputation of the 1929 conference, with the timely theme of *What is Man?* is such that its memory has quite eclipsed that of the others, so that in philosophy, "Davos" is essentially synonymous with the disputation there between Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, as the culmination of their "shared" course of Kant lectures⁶². As Peter Eli Gordon states:

It would be difficult to name another modern event of such pronounced symbolism, [or]...that seemed, even to the participants themselves, so closely bound to the fate of European culture.⁶³

The eminent Professor Cassirer, then chair of Philosophy at the University of Hamburg, and himself the recent editor of a 'new scholarly edition of Kant's collected works that became the standard apparatus for German philosophers',⁶⁴ devoted his *four* lectures to the 'three problems' of 'space, language, and death', formulated in terms of philosophical anthropology, 'with a view to taking issue with Heidegger's *Existentialanalyse*'⁶⁵. There is no evidence to suggest that Henry Corbin was himself present at Davos, of which event, in his "From Heidegger to Suhrawardī" and the accompanying "Biographical Post-Scriptum" Corbin entirely omits to make mention. As for Corbin's compatriots, Ethan Kleinberg argues with conviction that with the notable exception of the young Emmanuel Levinas,⁶⁶ most of the French contingent was apparently oblivious to the momentousness of the occasion, responding with at best 'only mild curiosity'. Given, he says, 'the agenda of [French] philosophy at the time' and what he calls 'the absence of phenomenology in France', Kleinberg for one finds this hardly surprising, adding that, seeing that lines were being drawn, the majority of the French present instinctively aligned themselves with Cassirer in light of 'the perceived proximity'⁶⁷ of e.g. the critical idealism of Léon Brunschvicg with the neo-Kantians of Marburg⁶⁸, though if anything this tells us most about the constitution of the French delegation.

As even Kleinberg has to concede, there *were* those amongst the French whose curiosity and perplexity

⁶¹ Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential, Heidegger's Philosophy in France 1927-1961* p.39. See also Peter Eli Gordon, "Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at Davos, 1929—an allegory of intellectual history" *Modern Intellectual History*, 1, 2 (2004) p.229

^a Journalists were to 'dub it the "Locarno of the Intellectuals"' Peter Eli Gordon, "Continental Divide:" p.229

^b Having boasted 'such luminaries Albert Einstein, Paul Tillich, Eberhard Grisebach, Werner Sombart, and Alfred Weber' Peter Eli Gordon, "Continental Divide..." p.229

⁶² Which included some uncompromising swipes at the interpretation of the then prevailing Marburg School of neo-Kantianism, of which Ernst Cassirer was considered to be one of the heirs-apparent

⁶³ Peter Eli Gordon, "Continental Divide..." p.222

⁶⁴ ...'including Heidegger', according to Peter Eli Gordon, in his "Continental Divide:..." p.226

⁶⁵ D.P. Verene, *Symbol Myth and Culture, Essays & Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945*, Ed. Donald Philip Verene, Yale University Press (1979) p.37

⁶⁶ Lithuanian émigré, and "Parisian by choice", Levinas, having graduated from Strasbourg, was studying phenomenology at Freiburg under Husserl, where he was also attending lectures by Heidegger, and was therefore understandably well informed

⁶⁷ Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, p.41

⁶⁸ Perhaps for their placing of neo-Kantianism 'on a decisively scientific ground' (Martin Heidegger in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. p.213)

were piqued into a urgent desire to know what the “something” that they had just undeniably witnessed had *been*, exactly; why, we might imagine they may have wondered, had Heidegger—already marked as an odd man out, and not a little improper, by his regular attendance at evening events and conference sessions in either his ski-wear, fresh from the slopes,⁶⁹ or his distinctly ‘unmodern’ Bavarian short-suit⁷⁰—had so obstinately refused to “play nicely”, in the face of the elegant Cassirer’s conciliatory charm. Emmanuel Levinas, who at the time preferred Heidegger⁷¹ (indeed, he is named by Kleinberg, citing a letter from Jean Cavaillé to his sister, sent from Davos, on March 23rd 1929, as the sole ‘defender’ of Heidegger amongst the French)⁷² recalls Heidegger’s “constant attacks” on Cassirer’s position⁷³, quite in keeping with the freely admitted “violence” of his interpretation whilst one Ernst Howald recalls of the disputation that ‘one enjoyed at most a theatrical performance, two spoken monologues, between a very nice man and a very violent man, who, however, made a terrible effort himself to be nice’.⁷⁴

For Levinas, Cassirer’s “defeat” by Heidegger—for so it was generally understood—heralded ‘the end of a particular type of humanism’. He adds that ‘A young student could have had the impression that he was witness to the creation and the end of the world.’⁷⁵

As Heidegger states in his preface to the fourth edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, aka “The Kant book”: ‘The Kant book [was] written immediately after the conclusion of the second Davoser Hochschule course (March 17-April 6, 1929)...based on the preparatory work’⁷⁶ for his lectures there.⁷⁷ The *fourth* section of the Kant book, entitled “The Laying of the Ground of Metaphysics in a Retrieval”,⁷⁸ is included in the collection of ‘opuscles and excerpts’⁷⁹ translated by Henry Corbin, in consultation with Heidegger, published in 1938 by Gallimard as *Qu’est-ce que la Métaphysique?* In subsequent chapters of this thesis, I intend to show that Corbin *the philosopher* engaged with, and continued “in conversation” with those texts of Heidegger’s he translated for the 1938 Gallimard Edition, including Part 4 of the Kant

⁶⁹In a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann written shortly after his own return from Davos, Heidegger wrote ‘my hope for the new powers among the youngest [students] has grown stronger...it was wonderful, when on intermittent days Riezler and I could get out for excursions...fatigued, full of the sunlight and freshness of mountains...we made our entrance every evening in our ski-suits amidst the elegance of evening attire...For most of the Docents and audience, this was something unheard of.’ Martin Heidegger and Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel, 1918–1969, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach am Neckar, 1989), p. 30, in Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at Davos, 1929—an allegory of intellectual history in Modern Intellectual History*, 1, 2 (2004), Cambridge University Press pp. 219–248), p.228

⁷⁰ Certainly, as Toni Cassirer puts it, perhaps rather archly, in her memoir, a ‘remarkable nemesis’. Toni Cassirer, *Aus meinem Leben mit Ernst Cassirer* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; New York, 1950), cited in Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at Davos, 1929—an allegory of intellectual history in Modern Intellectual History*, 1, 2 (2004), Cambridge University Press, p.228

⁷¹ to the extent of powdering his hair to white in order to render a comic impression of Cassirer in a theatrical reenactment of the debate at a revue of sorts

⁷² E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.41

⁷³ In *Emmanuel Levinas, Les imprévus de l’histoire* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1994), “Entretien avec Roger-Pol Droit,” 203–10, Le Monde (Tuesday, June 2, 1992), p.2, in P Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger At Davos, 1929—an allegory of intellectual history in Modern Intellectual History*, Cambridge University Press 2004, p.228

⁷⁴ In “Betrachtungen zu den Davoser Hochschulkursen”, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (April 10, 1929), both cited in P Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger At Davos, 1929—an allegory of intellectual history in Modern Intellectual History*, 1, 2 (2004), Cambridge University Press p.228

⁷⁵ Levinas in Francois Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987). p78.

⁷⁶ M. Heidegger, Preface to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics* pp. xvii-iii

⁷⁷ It is said that Heidegger began working on the *Kant book* immediately on his return from Davos, and that ‘after three weeks of uninterrupted work he had it set down in writing’ F.W von Hermann, in his Editor’s Afterword, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.220

⁷⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics* p.143

⁷⁹ Henry Corbin in his Biographical Post-Scriptum to From Heidegger to Suhrawardī: a Philosophical Interview with Philippe Nemo (1978) at www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/interviewnemo.htm

book (cf. my chapter “Corbin’s Debt to Heidegger”). I will also give a close reading of Parts 1-3 of the Kant book, although *not* included in the Gallimard, in which Heidegger treats of the imagination; which treatment, as I will try to show in the chapter, entitled “The Imagination in the Kant book”, “speaks” to “Corbin’s Imaginal”, though Corbin wholly rejected the Kant book’s “official” conclusion, as set out in Part 4.

It is quite remarkable to find the names of Heidegger and Cassirer side by side in *any* European philosopher’s account of the 1920s and 1930s, with no mention of Davos, as we do in the “Post-Scriptum”; let alone that of Heidegger’s first French translator. This is testament, perhaps, to what Howard Caygill has called Corbin’s ecumenical view of philosophy. That Corbin maintains this position with no apparent sense of conflict or contradiction is perhaps aided by the acuity with which Corbin identifies which aspects of their respective works he acknowledges as having been influential upon him, and which, whether by overt identification (as in the case of Heidegger), or omission (Cassirer), he indicates as having not.

Corbin’s stated intention in supplementing “From Heidegger to “Suhravardī ” with the “Post-Scriptum” was to add ‘certain more or less essential precisions...to the presentation of the stages of [his] spiritual itinerary’ as it is set forth there.⁸⁰ One such “precision”, which I would render more precise still, is Corbin’s evocation of two of his stays in Hamburg, in which he refers firstly to his acquaintance there with Ernst Cassirer, who was then a Professor at Hamburg University; and secondly, to the fact that Hamburg ‘as it happens, was also then home to the Warburg Institute with all the resources of its library’.⁸¹ The two points are of course closely related; Ernst Cassirer was also a “Warburgian scholar”, working closely with Aby Warburg, and continuing to work and publish with the Warburg Institute for some years after Warburg’s sudden death in 1929.

Contrary to Daryush Shayegan’s barely substantiated claim, in his book *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L’Islam Spirituel*,⁸² that Corbin’s philosophy of the imaginal draws on Cassirer’s thinking of the symbolic, (citing p. 131 of Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Volume II, Mythical Thought*, in which Cassirer explains that the law of paradox does not pertain to symbolic thought)⁸³, Corbin himself tells us, in the “Post-Scriptum” that it was rather his ‘very thorough knowledge of the Cambridge Platonists’, by which Cassirer revealed to Corbin ‘yet another branch of [his] spiritual family thereby broadening my path as well as the scope of what [he] was ultimately searching for’, i.e., that which was to become Corbin’s ‘philosophy of the *mundus imaginalis*’,⁸⁴ albeit Corbin had ‘but an obscure presentiment’ of it at the time. It is therefore to Cassirer’s 1932 book, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*⁸⁵ which I have turned here in

⁸⁰ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

⁸¹ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

⁸² Daryush Shayegan, *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L’Islam Spirituel* (Editions Albin Michel), 2011

⁸³ Shayegan cites e.g., p.131 of the French edition of this volume. I note with interest that Heidegger reviewed this particular volume in 1925; the review is included as an appendix in the fifth English edition of *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*, (ibid., p.180) which also includes a transcript of Heidegger and Cassirer’s 1929 debate at Davos.

⁸⁴ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

⁸⁵ A very different, and it must be said far more delightful book than *Die Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Die Platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* Berlin & Leipzig, B.G. Teubner 1932, translated into English by J. Pettegrove as *The Platonic Renaissance in England* (1953) ‘as a contribution to the ‘Studies of the Warburg Library’ J. Pettegrove, “Translator’s Foreword”, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* Univ. Texas Press, Austin 1953, (v)

order to discover something of Corbin's "debt" to Cassirer, in my chapter on "Corbin's Imaginal." Enquiring further into Corbin's engagement with the Warburg Library itself, I was pleased to discover that a Corbin-Warburg Institute correspondence has been preserved in the Warburg's archive. Running from September 1931 to June 1949, the bulk of it between 1931 and 1933, the correspondence reveals a close and friendly co-operation between Corbin, in his dual capacity as scholar-philosopher and *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* librarian and Gertrud Bing, his Warburg counterpart (also a notable scholar-philosopher in her own right), and sheds further light on his engagement with Ernst Cassirer.

Spanning the period 2nd September 1931 - 24th June 1949, the majority of the Corbin-Warburg correspondence occurs between 1931 and 1933, the year in which the Warburg Institute relocated to London. The correspondence, now stored in the Warburg Institute Archive, consists of letters between Henry Corbin and, most frequently if not exclusively, Gertrud Bing of the Warburg Institute. This uncertainty arises from the fact that while all the archived correspondence from Corbin is addressed *to* Bing, the archive holds only carbon copies of letters *from* the Warburg, which are thus unsigned. Thus while content identifies the majority of the Warburg letters as from Bing, a few are so very different in tone and content that at least one other Warburgian correspondent may be indicated. Corbin's chief (if not sole) Warburgian correspondent in these letters, Gertrud Bing completed her dissertation on Lessing and Leibniz in 1921 under the supervision of Ernst Cassirer. The online (DAH) lists her first Warburgian role in 1922 as librarian, followed in 1924 by that of personal research assistant to Aby Warburg; this role was more comprehensive and influential than the title might imply, as per the *Dictionary of Art Historians*⁸⁶, which states e.g., that 'Together with Fritz Saxl, the three [Bing, Saxl and Warburg himself] became the Warburg Institute of those early years'. After Warburg's death in 1929, Bing went on to edit Warburg publications, including Warburg's own *Gesammelten Schriften*, and went on to become first Assistant Director in 1948, and then Director of the Institute itself, after the death of Fritz Saxl, also 'lecturing at the University of London as the Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition'.⁸⁷

We learn from the correspondence that Corbin's role as specialist librarian at the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* enabled him to assist the Warburg Institute in many practical matters while also pursuing a personal intellectual engagement with several of the most notable Warburgian scholars, including Fritz Saxl, Edgar Wind, Ernst Cassirer, and Gertrud Bing herself, as well as reviewing a number of Warburg Institute publications in French journals. As such, the Corbin-Warburg correspondence, previously unknown to Corbin scholarship, to the best of my knowledge, not only adds precision to a reading of the "Post-Scriptum", but suggests new directions for future research regarding the "early Corbin".

Corbin's practical assistance included e.g., the location and procurement (and sometimes photographing) of library items held in the French national collections for the Warburg's collection and publishing requirements, often by exchange or by loan, as the Warburg Institute came under increasing financial pressure following the 1929 death of its founder.

⁸⁶ A useful online resource recommended to me by the Warburg Institute archivist Veronika Kopecky in 2010

⁸⁷ Lee Sorensen, ed.; "Bing, Gertrud", *Dictionary of Art Historians*, www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org

Most significantly, for our purposes we learn from Corbin's letter to Bing on 16th September 1931 that in his capacity as librarian, Corbin is happy to facilitate Professor Cassirer's access to the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* for essential preliminary research on 'a general history of the ideas of the 18th Century'. Corbin looks forward to the beautiful (*beaux*) and fertile conversations he may hope to have with Cassirer in Paris. We learn in his next letter, of September 24th 1931 that he was not disappointed, and though sad that Cassirer will be leaving Paris on the 25th, he looks forward to exchanging Cassirer for Fritz Saxl, "one for the other", as the next Warburgian to arrive in Paris. Then, making it clear that these are more than simply professional courtesies, so far as Corbin is concerned, he closes the letter by stating that 'it is truly the task of us philosophers to create a spiritual connection (*lien*) as our world is delivered over to demented forces'.

Corbin next writes on April 1st 1932, stating how much he is looking forward to seeing Cassirer again in Hamburg, in anticipation of which meeting he is 'plunging down the third boulevard' of Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, meaning, presumably, the third volume. Nonetheless, as already noted, Corbin in the "Post-Scriptum" tells us quite clearly—albeit by omission, and thus not, *per se* that it was *not* this work of Cassirer's that influenced the development of what was to become Corbin's philosophy of the imaginal, but rather that it *was* Cassirer's 'very thorough knowledge of the Cambridge Platonists'. Here Corbin also enquires after details of Fritz Saxl's soon-to-be published book on the microcosmos (*Mikrokosmos*), for which theme, Corbin says, he has a 'strong passion'. We duly find reference to 'the macrocosm or *Homo maximus (insan kabir)* and the microcosm'.⁸⁸ in, e.g., a discussion of symbolic exegesis in the context of Ismaili gnosis in Corbin's *History of Islamic Philosophy*. This enquiry into Saxl's work therefore suggests an intriguing direction for future comparative research.

The unknown author of the Warburg letter of 11th August 1932 offers to put Corbin up with a friend near the Warburg Library when he next visits, and concludes by declaring an interest in the first edition of *Recherches Philosophiques*. In 1933, as an expression of her 'heartfelt gratitude for the personal interest and friendship' which Corbin has 'shown the library', Bing offers Corbin a copy of Aby Warburg's newly published *Collected Works* along with the polite request that Corbin might consider making mention or even writing a review of them, in Paris; but primarily to share with him 'an idea of the foundations upon which the library was built, since [he has] shown such interest in it in its completion.' Corbin replies by saying he is very glad to receive the volumes, which he says it should certainly be possible for him review.⁸⁹ Bing is aware, he says, of the great interest he has long held in the oeuvre of Warburg, particularly in connection with those 'philosophemes' which he is currently attempting to 'systematize via philosophical anthropology', i.e., the crisis of historicism and phenomenological ontology! Here, again, is as clear a signal as can be that comparative Corbin-Warburgian research may be worth pursuing, though it falls outside the scope of the thesis at hand.

⁸⁸ H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.12-13 Cf. Corbin's stated interest in Fritz Saxl's work on the microcosm, as per the Corbin-Warburg correspondence (as per my chapter here "From Paris to Tehran").

⁸⁹ ...in either the Parisian "*Revue critique d'histoire et de Litterature*", or the "*Revue d'Histoire et de le Philos.*", published by the Faculty of Protestant theology in Strasbourg.

After the Warburg's relocation to London, Bing writes on 7th June 1935 to ask if Corbin, as a French national, will give a reference for a Jewish-German Warburgian scholar called Elspeth Jaffe, attesting to the purely academic intentions of her proposed trip to France on her way to China. The last exchange of the archived correspondence, after a lapse of 14 years, opens on 24th June 1949, with a typewritten letter from Corbin, signed in green ink⁹⁰ on headed paper from the Franco-Iranian Institute in Teheran, and enclosing the first of the *Bibliothèque Iranienne* series founded by Corbin, one of 22 published between 1949 and his death in 1978, being a Persian edition Abu Ya'qub Sejestâni's *The unveiling of that which is hidden [Kashf al-Mahjub]*, with an introduction in French by Henry Corbin⁹¹. Bing writes back with thanks, and after touching on the sad fact of her life-partner Fritz Saxl's unexpected death on 22nd March 1948, concludes the archived correspondence in quite as cordial a manner as it began, by stating that she 'should be glad to do anything for [Corbin] in London that [he] may want', and hopes to hear from him again.

Meanwhile, returning to the "Post-Scriptum"; back in Paris, (no dates are given here), it is no surprise that Corbin's 'Germanic experiences' should have widened his circle of friends. Now, far from the philosopher-in-exile that he had been amongst the Orientalists, e.g., Corbin found himself right at the very heart of things, including Alexandre Koyré's Hegel seminar, and "circle". Corbin relates how they most often ended up at the Café d'Harcourt; an 'historic, comfortable café [now long gone], on the corner of the *Place de la Sorbonne* and the *Boulevard Saint Michel*', where 'a significant part of the French philosophy of the time was elaborated.'

Corbin also recalls the presence there of Alexandre Kojève (Kojevnikov), who took over and taught Koyré's Hegel seminar at the EPHE from 1933 onward, and who, most pertinently with regards to Corbin—whose translation of *Dasein as réalité-humaine* was made, he says in "From Heidegger to Suhrawardî", "in agreement with friends"—S. Geroulanos credits with the first usage of the term *réalité-humaine* for *Dasein* (see my chapter *Réalité-humaine*). For his part, Corbin makes little further mention of Kojève in the "Post-Scriptum besides the following:

Discussion sometimes became very heated. Kojève and Heinemann were in complete disaccord upon the interpretation of the phenomenology of Spirit [Hegel]. There were frequent clashes between the phenomenology of Husserl and that of Heidegger. On other occasions we would provoke Queneau: "just how did he go about writing a novel? Did he draw up a plan? Did he just let things flow?"⁹²

Amongst those who frequented the Harcourt, Corbin says he cannot omit to mention his 'old friend Bernard Groethuysen',⁹³ thanks to whose tenacity it was that Corbin's 1938 Gallimard translation of Heidegger 'appeared on the shelves' at all, 'for at that time', says Corbin, 'this "unknown" philosopher was of only

⁹⁰ to which colour an 'extraordinary pre-eminence' is accorded ... in Islam'. H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* (ibid.) p.57. Cf. also my chapter "Corbin's Imaginal".

⁹¹ At the time of writing, a complete list of the series can be found here: <http://www.ifriran.org/Publications/BI-complete.htm>

⁹² H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

⁹³ Who it was, according to Corbin, that 'inaugurated "philosophical anthropology" (although his great work carrying this title remains unfinished)'.

mediocre interest to the publishers'. Corbin names Groethuysen 'our incomparable Socrates, a central and unforgettable figure in the soirées held by Alexandre Koyré and his wife in their little apartment on the rue de Navarre', at which 'the program for the next volume of the review *Recherches Philosophiques*... occupied a central position'. 'Rarely', says Corbin, 'has such a pleiad of philosophers been assembled, nor such a number and variety of new subjects been addressed' amongst which, 'it goes without saying...phenomenology held a most significant place'.⁹⁴ For his own part, Corbin contributed two articles to *Recherches Philosophiques*: "Toward a philosophical anthropology: An unpublished Persian treatise by Suhrawardî of Aleppo"⁹⁵ in Vol.I, (1932-1933), and "Dialectic Theology and History"⁹⁶ in Vol.II (1933-1934), which reflects his present engagement with Karl Barth. He also contributed numerous reviews, all of which are of German books—including a German translation from the Arabic by Herman Ritter,⁹⁷ a Warburg Institute *Picatrix* publication, supplied directly to Corbin courtesy of Gertrud Bing, as per the Corbin- Warburg correspondence,⁹⁸—with one exception, D. Draghicesco's *Truth and Revelation*.⁹⁹ Thus, extra to his translations of Barth and his first translation of Heidegger in 1931 for the journal *Bifur*, Corbin can already be seen to be making a significant contribution to the communication of philosophical ideas between Germany and France, even prior to the 1938 Gallimard translation, which itself, I have argued, I hope persuasively in my chapter *Réalité-humaine*, constituted a *philosophical* engagement with Heidegger on the part of Corbin, imbued with the concerns of his contemporaries, as well as with Corbin's own emerging philosophy of the imaginal.

Also, in the "Post-Scriptum"—although it is not stated how this should have come to pass, or by whose introduction, etc—we learn that Corbin first visited Martin Heidegger in Freiburg in Spring 1934, where, together, they 'drew up a plan for the collection of opuscles and excerpts' that Corbin 'was to translate under the title *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*'. Corbin was granted a year's sabbatical leave from his library post by the *Bibliothèque National de France* Administrator Julien Cain in 1935-6 which he spent at the *Französisches Akademikerhaus* in Berlin, working on the translation. In 1936, Corbin returned to Freiburg, whereupon he 'was able to submit to our author several of the translation difficulties' he had been having. Here, too, Corbin states in no uncertain terms that Heidegger, having 'every confidence' in his translator, approved all of his 'French neologisms'—including, i.e., his "*réalité-humaine*" for "*Dasein*"—leaving Corbin, in his own words, with 'a rather heavy responsibility'.

On October 30th 1939, Henry Corbin departed Paris for Istanbul, on assignment to make photographic copies of 'all the manuscripts of Suhrawardî that could be found dispersed amongst the libraries of Istanbul, in view of a critical edition of his works in Arabic and Persian'. As Corbin describes going accompanied by his wife and all 'the paternal anxieties of Julien Cain', in light of 'all the unbridled events then taking place'—the outbreak of war, i.e.—we may assume it was as librarian he was assigned there. Expected to

⁹⁴ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

⁹⁵ "Pour l'anthropologie philosophiques: Un traite persan inédit de Suhrawardî d'Alep"

⁹⁶ "La théologie dialectique et l'histoire"

⁹⁷ *Pseudo-MAGRĪTĪ, Das Zeil des Weisen, I, Arabischer Text*. Hrsgb.von Hellmut Ritter. Leipzig/Berlin, B.G. Teubner (coll. «Studien der Bibliothek Warburg», XII: Picatrix 1), 1933. in Vol 3, 1933-1934 of *RP*

⁹⁸ Corbin's letters of 1st April and 12th May, 1932

⁹⁹ D. Draghicesco, *Vérité et Révélation*. Paris , F. Alcan (coll. « Bibliothèque de philosophie contemporaine ») In Vol. 2, 1934.

last three months, the assignment kept Corbin in Istanbul throughout the whole of the war, returning to Paris in September 1945.

Extra to his rather unsubstantiated claim regarding the source of Ernst Cassirer's influence upon Corbin's philosophy of the imaginal,¹⁰⁰ which conflicts with what Corbin himself has to say, Daryush Shayegan's 2011 *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L'Islam Spirituel* (self-described as the first synthesis of Corbin's entire oeuvre, though with only fifteen pages devoted to Corbin's work of the 1930s and '40s) *does* contain some significant discoveries pertaining to Corbin's time in Istanbul. Shayegan reports, e.g., that according to Mme. Corbin, while otherwise deeply immersed in the work of Suhravardî, Henry Corbin also 'profited from his presence in Constantinople' and his relative isolation by 'deepen[ing] his knowledge of Russian and Greek Orthodox theology'¹⁰¹, going so far as to attempt a translation of Boulgakov. This accords with the "Post-Scriptum", in which Corbin makes a point of naming 'the Sophiology of P. Serge Boulgakov'¹⁰² amongst the diverse interests of Fritz Lieb, a colleague of Karl Barth's at Bonn, with whom Corbin became acquainted during his visit of Spring 1932.¹⁰³ Shayegan's reference to Istanbul as Constantinople when describing Corbin's work there on Russian and Greek Orthodoxy, and his "attempted" translation of the Sophiologist Serge Boulgakov echoes Corbin's own highly deliberate invocation, below, of the city's previous incarnations, and of its Orthodox significance:

But Istanbul was Byzantium! It was Constantinople! In the same way that the Temple of Solomon was the centre of Jerusalem, the temple of Saint Sophia was the centre of the second Roman Empire.¹⁰⁴

Shayegan's revelation offers compelling grounds for future comparative research into the intermediary role of Corbin's imaginal and the Orthodox icon as intermediary between the human and the divine.

Of more direct relevance to *this* thesis is Shayegan's further revelation, that according to Mme. Corbin¹⁰⁵, Corbin *continued* to work on his translation of *Being and Time* while in Istanbul, while he was there compiling a critical edition of Suhravardî manuscripts in Arabic and Persian.¹⁰⁶ That is to say, beyond the excerpt which he translated for the 1938 Gallimard Edition of *What is Metaphysics?* Corbin may well have embarked upon a complete translation of *Being and Time* and though it remains uncertain as to whether it was ever completed, or if the manuscript, whether finished or unfinished still exists, it is nonetheless highly significant to learn that Corbin was at once working on Heidegger *and* Suhravardî during this period.

This revelation also makes for a fruitful comparison with Corbin's recollection, also in "From Heidegger to Suhravardî", of Denis de Rougemont's recollection of the fact that, when they were students together, Corbin's 'copy of *Being and Time* contained numerous Arabic glosses in the margins;' after which revelation Corbin immediately states that, vice versa, 'it would have been much more difficult to translate

¹⁰⁰ as before, and as discussed in my chapter "Corbin's Imaginal"

¹⁰¹ Daryush Shayegan, *Henry Corbin...* p.24

¹⁰² H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

¹⁰³ Corbin characterizes Lieb (who, like Corbin, was also a friend of Nicolas Berdiaev), as 'a touching figure by dint of his mystical love for Orthodox Russia, a love so unlimited that he seemed never to have noticed that the Holy Orthodox Russia had for the moment... passed on Heavenwards.' H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

¹⁰⁴ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

¹⁰⁵ Here Shayegan cites Edition no. 33 of the *Eranos Jahrbuch* (1964) as his source

¹⁰⁶ Shayegan, *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L'Islam Spirituel* Editions Albin Michel, 2011 p.24

the vocabulary of a Suhravardî, an Ibn ‘Arabi, or a Mollâ Sadrâ Shîrâzî, etc... had [he] not already undergone a training in the acrobatics required to translate the extraordinary German vocabulary that one encounters in reading Heidegger.’¹⁰⁷ Shayegan’s revelation thus has immediate ramifications for e.g., the misapprehension which Corbin is at pains to dispel in “From Heidegger to Suhravardî”, that he had gone on to work on Sufism because he was ‘disappointed’ with the philosophy of Heidegger. It tells us, moreover there was no definitive *break* with Heidegger as such, which in turn encourages my conviction that Corbin continued “in conversation” with Heidegger, even into his time in Teheran, and even if with “just” those texts Heidegger had published up until the time of the Gallimard’s publication.

It was while in Istanbul that ‘in August of 1944’ Corbin received ‘a mission order for Persia from what was then still the “Government of Algiers”’, but was unable to leave until September 1945, when someone finally arrived to take over his wartime “caretaking” role at the French Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. In 1947 the French Ministry of Cultural Relations founded a Department of Iranology, ‘annexed’ to the French Institute in Teheran, headed by Corbin. He writes:

The moment had finally come: I was to carry out the project that had been germinating in my spirit ever since my attendance, all those many years ago, in the classes taught by Etienne Gilson. ...¹⁰⁸

The last of Corbin’s archived letters to Gertrud Bing at the Warburg Institute, by now in London, is dated 1949, and accompanied by an edition of Abu Ya’qub Sejestâni’s *Kashf al-Mahjub, Le dévoilement des choses cachées*, or *The Unveiling of That Which Is Hidden*¹⁰⁹, a fitting title indeed for the inaugural edition of the *Bibliothèque Iranienne*, founded in 1948 by Corbin who ‘over the course of twenty five years and with the help of several collaborators’¹¹⁰ was to edit a further twenty-one volumes. The text is in Persian, with an introduction by Henry Corbin. The “Post-Scriptum” also concludes here, but not before noting that in 1954 Corbin was asked to succeed Louis Massignon as Head of Islamic studies in the Department of Religious Sciences at the EPHE in Paris. He would thereafter divide most of his time, year in, year out, between Paris and Teheran.

¹⁰⁷ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardî”

¹⁰⁸ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

¹⁰⁹ This translation from the English translation of “From Heidegger to Suhravardî”

¹¹⁰ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

Chapter Two: *Réalité-humaine*

The importance of *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard 1938), Corbin's eagerly awaited translation of Heidegger, to the "first wave" reading of Heidegger in France can hardly be overstated. Indeed, Corbin's translation was itself really the first great "wave" of Heidegger to reach France *in French*, and the new lexical set contained therein was duly adopted as Heideggerian,¹¹¹ including and especially Corbin's now infamous translation of Heidegger's *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*. The subject and cynosure of this chapter, the Corbinian-Heideggerian term *réalité-humaine* subsequently made its way into the work of other French philosophers, most notably Sartre's, only later to become the subject of great controversy, to the extent that it appears to have become *the* go-to case study in discussions of philosophical *mistranslations*, in e.g. Jonathan Rée's essay "The Translation of Philosophy."¹¹² The aim of this chapter is to lay out some such criticisms as are levelled at Corbin's *réalité-humaine* and to respond as best we are able, with reference firstly to Corbin himself, in his translator's foreword to *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*¹¹³ and the much later "Biographical Post-Scriptum"¹¹⁴; then to Corbin's translations themselves, and finally Stefanos Geroulanos' unprecedented and historically acute defence-by-contextualisation of Corbin's *réalité-humaine*.

But first, some necessary clarification. Corbin is rightly referred to as "the first translator of Heidegger". Criticisms are levelled at "Corbin's translation", but which one? Why, the *first*, one might well assume, and yet this is not so. Even if one should refer by name to the text in question, therein lies cause for confusion, as Corbin's first and second translations of Heidegger are respectively entitled: 1) "Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?" and 2) *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* The *first* is a translation of the text of Heidegger's *lecture*, entitled "Was ist metaphysik?",¹¹⁵ published in essay form in Issue 8 of the journal *Bifur* in 1931¹¹⁶, the *second*, a book first published by Gallimard in 1938, comprising a number of Heidegger's 'opuscules and excerpts'¹¹⁷ as translated by Corbin, *including* the eponymous translation of the essay "Was ist metaphysik?" as "Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?"; which is, however, a *very* different translation to that which appears in *Bifur*. This contrary, to Ethan Kleinberg's claim, e.g., in his book *Generation Existential*, (subtitled *Heidegger's Philosophy in France 1927-1961*) that "this essay"—referring quite unmistakably to the *first* translation by Corbin of "Was ist metaphysik?" that was published in *Bifur*—'along with several other of Heidegger's essays translated by Corbin, was published as *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (1938)'¹¹⁸. Building on this false foundation, Kleinberg then makes reference to Sartre's first reading of Corbin's *Bifur* translation of "Was ist metaphysik?", which he (Sartre) claimed to have read 'without understanding'¹¹⁹. Claiming this manner of reading to have 'only intensified

¹¹¹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* Cornell University Press Ithaca and London 2005 p.70

¹¹² J. Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy" *New Literary History* Volume 32, Number 2, Spring 2001, pp. 223-257

¹¹³ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* Gallimard, Paris 1938

¹¹⁴ H. Corbin, "Biographical Post-Scriptum" English translation by *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin* (<http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/propos.htm>). From here, "Post-Scriptum".

¹¹⁵ the text of the inaugural lecture Heidegger delivered at Freiburg University on July 24th 1929

¹¹⁶ *Bifur*, Issue 8, Editions Du Carrefour, Paris 1931, pp.9-27

¹¹⁷ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

¹¹⁸ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* footnote no.15 on page 117

¹¹⁹ J.P. Sartre, as cited in E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.117

its effect'¹²⁰ on Sartre, Kleinberg enters into a discussion of the effect of this “reading without understanding” upon what Kleinberg identifies as Sartre’s first ‘philosophical treatise’, “La Transcendance de l’ego” (1937). Kleinberg writes: ‘In Heidegger’s *Was ist metaphysik?* Sartre found a formula that could explicate the relation of “existence to Being”’. Next, Kleinberg offers his own translation of a passage from Corbin’s translation of Heidegger’s “Was ist metaphysik?”, sourced from the book *Questions I/II* (Gallimard, Paris 1968), in which he says “this essay”—still clearly referring, by “this essay” to the one that was published in *Bifur*—was reprinted.

Error upon error; since, as Kleinberg’s translation includes the term “human-reality”, followed by Kleinberg’s own square-bracketed qualification that ‘[Corbin translated Heidegger’s *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*]’—the term here correctly reproduced, I am pleased to say, replete with its hyphen—we know that it *cannot* have been Corbin’s *Bifur* translation that was reprinted in *Questions I/II*, as Kleinberg would have it, but *must* have been the later, improved, indeed *Heidegger-approved*, 1938 Gallimard translation, as is in fact the case. And how do we know this? Because the term *réalité-humaine* simply does not *appear* in the *Bifur* translation. Thus the text cited here in translation by Kleinberg, with reference to his analysis of the development of Sartre’s ideas—from his (Sartre’s) first “reading without understanding” of Corbin’s translation of Heidegger in *Bifur*, via his own “La Transcendance de l’ego”, first published (as “*La Transcendance de L’Ego: Esquisse d’une description phénoménologique*”) in the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* (Issue VI, 1936-37), which ‘investigation into Husserlian phenomenology’ Kleinberg claims to also having served as ‘the prime motor for his [Sartre’s] displacement of the primacy of “things” in *L’imagination* and *L’imaginaire* through his use of the relation between being and nothingness’¹²¹ — simply could *not* have been the precise and actual published source of Sartre’s “formula” for ‘explicat[ing] the relation of “existence to Being” (Kleinberg, *ibid.*), because it was not published until 1938, in the Gallimard Edition to which it lends its name.

Sartre had, however, most certainly read the *Bifur*. Now, whether or not, as a fellow contributor to *Recherches Philosophiques*, the very journal in which his own “La Transcendance de l’ego” was first published, Sartre could have had access to a manuscript copy of Corbin’s Gallimard translation prior to its publication in 1938 is another matter entirely; and for scholars of Sartre, a very important one. Scholars are famed for their pedantry, and rightly so; in this case, in the face of such great claims on the part of Kleinberg for Sartre’s encounter with “this essay” having forming the ‘impressionistic basis of what would become his philosophical and literary project’,¹²² it does seem of fairly fundamental importance to nail down which essay “this essay” is, exactly. But to err is human, and without this pertinent information to hand, Kleinberg goes on to compound the error arising from his fudge of “this essay” by stating quite explicitly that:

What is certain is that Corbin’s translation in *Bifur* gave Sartre the vocabulary and the philosophical tools he needed to begin his investigation into an understanding of consciousness that was not beholden to the subject-object

¹²⁰ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.117

¹²¹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.118

¹²² E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.119

split nor to the distinctions of interior and exterior, which Sartre saw as characteristic of all French Philosophy.¹²³

This statement, referring as it does only to the *beginning* of Sartre's investigations, is still vague enough not to be outright wrong in itself, were it not for Kleinberg's already having quoted an excerpt of (his own translation of) Corbin's translation of "Was ist metaphysik?" which he erroneously claims to be *identical* with that which appeared in *Bifur*. As above, this passage, sourced from *Questions I/II* (1968, Gallimard) is in fact from the later *Gallimard* translation, which, as we have seen, offers very different *vocabulary* than the *Bifur* translation, including the term *réalité-humaine*, which Sartre *was* indeed later to adopt into his own lexicon, henceforth to reproduce inconsistently (whether by his own or his publishers' carelessness), variously with or without its hyphen, and it shall further be argued, to largely deracinate, and make his own. Thus, as has been clearly shown here, "what is certain", rather, is that Sartre's much criticized use of the *Corbinian* translation of *Dasein*, *réalité-humaine*, as a "philosophical tool", simply *cannot* have been drawn from his (Sartre's) reading of *Bifur*.

The need for precision in reference to these two translations by Corbin, as in relation to references *to* them, has been made clear, but has, unfortunately, far from always been observed. From here on, for the sake of clarity and precision I will refer to Corbin's two translations of the essay "Was ist metaphysik?" as, respectively, the *Bifur* and the Gallimard translations, and to the entire *book* translated by Corbin (and published as *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*) as the Gallimard Edition, giving dates as necessary. On the need for *orthographic* precision, more to come.

As the majority of the criticism directed toward Corbin's translation of Heidegger has centred on his translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*, such of it as is correctly directed, at least (unlike Kleinberg's, *ibid.*) refers to the Gallimard translation. There is of course a substantive difference between the publication of a book, which was at the time *the* book, i.e., the *only* book of Heidegger's to exist in French, and that of one essay in an avant-garde theoretical journal (*Bifur*)—albeit one well known to Paris philosophers, including the "first wave" readers of Heidegger, many of whom *also* published in *Bifur*, including Sartre, whose "Légende de la vérité" appeared in the very same edition¹²⁴—so that, even without the infamy of *réalité-humaine* it might be expected that the Gallimard Edition should have garnered the most attention. The fact remains, even so, however, that the *Bifur* translation *was* the first appearance of Heidegger in French, and yet it seems to have escaped not just criticism in the common sense but much of any scholarly attention at all, certainly in anglophone studies of the period. To his credit, aside from his erroneous identification of the *Bifur* as the *réalité-humaine* translation, Ethan Kleinberg does suggest other and evidentially plausible ways in which Corbin's influence on the first wave reception of Heidegger in France may have preceded the Gallimard's publication, attributing e.g., what he calls Alexandre Kojève's 'sophisticated, if slightly impressionistic understanding of Heidegger', to Kojève's 'relationship with [Emmanuel] Levinas and [Alexandre] Koyrè... [and] his friendship with Henry Corbin'.¹²⁵ Kleinberg grounds this finding in the fact of Kojève and Corbin shared participation in Koyrè's seminar; their

¹²³ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.119

¹²⁴ J. P. Sartre, "Légende de la vérité", *Bifur* Issue 8, Editions Du Carrefour, Paris 1931 pp.77-96

¹²⁵ [My italics. RB] E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.69

‘common interest in Orientalism, Eastern languages, and German philosophy’, and the fact that they were ‘later’ to become colleagues at the EPHE, though his ‘later’ is a bit vague; Corbin, we may infer, is not exactly at the eye of Kleinberg’s storm of interest. Certainly, by 1933, when Kojève took over the Hegel seminars from his friend Koyrè, Corbin had already published his first translation of Heidegger’s “Was ist metaphysik?” in *Bifur* (1931), and may plausibly have begun his translation of the collection that was to become the 1938 Gallimard Edition. Noting Corbin’s two visits to Heidegger in the cause of this translation made in April 1934 and July 1936, Kleinberg states that it would be no exaggeration to regard the “first French translation of Heidegger” as having taken place ‘in the room adjacent to Kojève’s Hegel seminar at the EPHE’ (though I am uncertain as to whether this is to be taken factually or metaphorically).¹²⁶ As for Corbin himself, he states in the “Biographical Post-Scriptum” that his 1934 visit with Heidegger in Freiburg was occupied with their drawing up together ‘a plan for the collection of opuscles and excerpts that I [Corbin] was to translate under the title “*Qu’est ce que la métaphysique*’. Having been granted a year’s sabbatical leave from his post at the *Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF)*, where since November 1928, he had been ‘assigned to work with the oriental collection’¹²⁷, Corbin spent the academic year of 1935-6 resident at the *Französisches Akademikerhaus* in Berlin, working on the translation. The “Post-Scriptum” itself offers no clue as to whether or not Corbin had begun his translation for the Gallimard Edition in earnest prior to his first, 1934 trip to visit Heidegger. Certainly the translation was underway from April 1934 onward, while Corbin was still in Paris and Kojève’s Hegel seminars were ongoing. It is interesting to note that Corbin makes no mention of Kojève’s seminars in the “Post-Scriptum”, referring rather to Kojève as a fellow student and member of Alexandre Koyrè’s circle. While the “Post-Scriptum” is not an academic historical or philosophical text, but rather a narrative reminiscence, it is as such perhaps inevitably partial, but nonetheless a valuable and much cited source.

Kleinberg’s emphasis on the personal and even physical proximity of Kojève, and his conduct of the Hegel seminar, to Corbin as the first French translator and translation of Heidegger, and thus *to Heidegger*, via Corbin, at only one remove, also serves to call our attention to Corbin’s unique position as intermediary and translocator between Heidegger and his philosophy and arguably the most important philosophical assembly in Paris at that time (i.e., Kojève’s Hegel’s seminar, following on from Koyrè’s), even before the Gallimard book’s publication albeit *after* his initial contribution to *Bifur*. Kojève’s own “impression” of Heidegger, via Levinas, Koyrè, *and* Corbin, is said by Kleinberg to have greatly influenced Kojève’s own, highly influential reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*;¹²⁸ I note that even prior to 1933, i.e., while the EPHE Hegel seminar was still Koyrè’s, *Kojève* is said by Corbin to already have held some fairly strong views of his own on the *Phenomenology*, recalling that Kojève and Fritz Heinemann were in complete discord as to its proper interpretation.¹²⁹ Koyrè, in turn, had strong feelings about Heidegger. We shall examine further the relationship between Kojève and Corbin, their respective readings of Heidegger, and use of the term *réalité-humaine* as a translation of *Dasein* later in this chapter. For now, let us turn to Corbin’s *Bifur* translation.

¹²⁶ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.70

¹²⁷ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

¹²⁸ [My italics] E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.69

¹²⁹ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

Corbin's *Bifur* translation of Heidegger's "Was ist metaphysik?" is prefaced by a luminous introduction by Alexandre Koyrè—literally so, as he describes Heidegger's as the brightest star in Germany's philosophical firmament, or, no, perhaps rather a new *sun* rising, whose brightness eclipses all that of his contemporaries. This momentous introduction is not so much only of the text at hand, but of Heidegger himself (though many would already know of him through reports of his perceived routing of Ernst Cassirer at Davos in 1929, e.g.), and of what for Koyrè appear as the major, refreshingly "down to earth" themes and problems of Heidegger's oeuvre—his consideration of such 'banal' and 'simple' things as 'existence and death, of being and nothing', and his posing again of the question 'of the self and the problem of being; what am I? and what does it mean: to be?'¹³⁰—into French thought.¹³¹ Heidegger's philosophy of existence heralds not only the start of a new *stage* in the development of Western philosophy for Koyrè, but a whole new *cycle*. We are left in no doubt whatsoever that the occasion of this introduction is indeed considered and intended by Koyrè to be momentous. In the glossary of *Bifur*, Heidegger is described as: 'One of the most important philosophers in Germany. Founded the philosophy of Nothingness [*du néant*]. It is said that he had the revelation *grâce à* the practice of skiing'.¹³² This would have been kind of an in-joke for those who had attended the 1929 Davos conference at which Heidegger reportedly went skiing every chance he got. They may have skied with him. Of Sartre, who also contributed an essay to this issue of *Bifur*, entitled "Légende de la Vérite" (Legend of the Truth), it is simply but ominously written: 'Young philosopher. Preparing a volume of destructive philosophy'.¹³³

With the *Bifur* translation right, as it were, here in front of us, we should recall that, as has already been observed, this translation does not contain a single instance of Corbin's French neologism or "composition", as he himself refers to it in the Gallimard Edition, *réalité-humaine*. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, renowned translator of Jacques Derrida's *De La Grammatologie* [Of Grammatology]¹³⁴ has famously called translation "the most intimate act of reading".¹³⁵ Of this first intimacy with Heidegger, however, here Corbin remains modestly uncertain. The text is pitted with original German words and phrases, and these are not limited, as one might perhaps expect, to Heidegger's own consistently employed, i.e., proprietary, *Heideggerian* terms, the most proper of these being surely, as Corbin will come to state in his translator's preface to the Gallimard Edition, 'the term *Dasein* which supports the fundamental concept of Heidegger's analytic'. Here he goes on to remark upon translational precedents he is aware of wherein the term *Dasein* is either simply cited in German, or 'translated as "existence", which latter translation, while certainly offering 'the usual meaning of the word', would he says, be sure to precipitate 'a most unfortunate confusion between the notions of *existentiel* and *existential*'.¹³⁶ The practice of "simply" citing

¹³⁰ A. Koyrè [my translation] *Bifur*, Issue 8, 1931 pp.5-8

¹³¹ See Derrida's "The Ends of Man", in *The Margins of Philosophy* (trans. Alan Bass, Chicago University Press 1984) where he states that it is indeed useful and realistic to conceive of "French thought" as distinct and distinguishable as such during this era, however fuzzy and permeable the borders

¹³² Glossaire [my translation] *Bifur*, Issue 8, 1931

¹³³ 'Jeune philosophe. Prépare un volume de philosophie destructrice'. Glossaire, *Bifur*, Issue 8, Editions Du Carrefour, Paris 1931.

¹³⁴ J. Derrida, Of Grammatology [*De La Grammatologie* (first French edition Éditions de minuit, Paris 1967)] trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, London, first English edition 1974

¹³⁵ Of who exactly is "speaking" here, Spivak the theorist, or Spivak the translator, and whether it is useful or even possible to make such a distinction maybe be interesting to consider in the case of Corbin the philosopher-translator (philosopher-translator-librarian, to be most accurate).

¹³⁶ H. Corbin, Translator's Preface, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* Editions Gallimard, Paris 1938

the term *Dasein* in German has become quite conventional in contemporary *English* translations and discussions of Heidegger. Further still, David Krell, e.g. in his English translation of Heidegger, *Basic Writings*,¹³⁷ either follows, or certainly concurs with the example set by Macquarrie and Robinson's 1962 translation of *Being and Time*, of rendering *Dasein* as Dasein, just so, i.e., in roman rather than italic letters. By reason and utilization of precisely which orthographic nicety, says Jonathan Rée, in his essay "The Translation of Philosophy"¹³⁸ Macquarrie and Robinson have not "simply" left the German term *Dasein* untranslated, but actually *coined* Dasein as a new English term of Heideggerian vocabulary¹³⁹, exclusively proper (and to all intents and purposes, aside from its lack of italicization in the English text, *identical*) to the (German) Heideggerian "existent-being" *Dasein*; which incidentally translates most directly into English as *being-there*, or more literally, if unnaturally, as *there-being*; thus retaining, in translation, all of the term *Dasein*'s "thereness", i.e., its "thrownness"; its "displacedness" and at once its "placeness", its spatiality. Furthermore, according Rée, the English word *being*, the gerund form¹⁴⁰ of the verb "to be" appears to be rather more adept in bypassing the metaphysical Latin of *esse* than either the German *Sein*, or the French *être*—both of which are compelled, by their own etymological routes, to go via the Latin *esse* to the Greek *einai*—to directly summon the Greek *to on* of *ontology*¹⁴¹. It is interesting to consider the fact that Macquarrie and Robinson *have* therefore chosen what we might call their absolute transliteration (and so avoid being forced to take a position, for now, on whether it is or is not a new English coinage, as Rée asserts) of Dasein, *over* "being-there", in itself a quite satisfactory literal translation, one which is indeed currently employed by many other English scholars of Heidegger who have chosen not to share/follow Macquarrie and Robinson's usage. Rée's argument for Macquarrie and Robinson's usage of Dasein, as such, *as* an English coinage, turning, as it does, on such a strict orthographical axis (i.e., *no italics*) becomes not only interesting but surprising when we turn to Macquarrie and Robinson's own "Translators' Preface" to *Being and Time*,¹⁴² in which they in fact make very little of the special case of Dasein, other than to refer to it as one among several other cases (including *Zeitlichkeit* [temporality], *Sorge* [care], *In-der-Welt-sein* [being-in-the-world]) where Heidegger 'uses abstract nouns...as subjects of sentences where a personal subject would ordinarily be found', and then stating very plainly that 'we have tried to use as few English terms as possible to represent the more important German ones.'¹⁴³ By "important" in this context it seems reasonable to infer that Macquarrie and Robinson have rather left untranslated—let us not say "cited in German", because that brings us again to the tricky

¹³⁷ M. Heidegger, trans. D. Krell, *Basic Writings* 2nd. Edition, Harper Collins 1993

¹³⁸ J.Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy" *New Literary History* Volume 32, Number 2, Spring 2001, pp. 223-257

¹³⁹ J.Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy" p.232

¹⁴⁰ Formed from a verb, and therefore indicating an action or a state of being, but acting as a noun, i.e., taking the place of a noun in a sentence, we might consider the gerund form as an "active/stative noun". Source: "Gerunds", Purdue OWL, Purdue University <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> 2011

¹⁴¹ Rée states 'Of course the biggest problem for philosophical translation is the verb "to be." ... each European linguistic form has a long inheritance of past philosophical translations wrapped up inside it. Thus German and French discussions of *Sein* and *être* are linked together not only as presumed translations of each other, but also as successors of the Latin *esse*, which in its turn translates the Greek *einai*. But they cannot pass straight into English, where the infinitive is never used as a noun: the closest equivalent is the gerund "being." On the other hand, *esse*, *Sein*, and *être* have also been used as translations of the Greek *to on*, for which "being" is a far closer equivalent. In that sense translating the German, French, and Latin infinitives by the English gerund (as in *Being and Time* or *Being and Nothingness*, for instance) could be regarded as an improvement on the original: it recaptures something of a Greek concept, that was lost in the Latin, French, and German translations.' J.Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy" *New Literary History* Volume 32, Number 2, Spring 2001, pp. 223-257

¹⁴² John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, "Translators' Preface" to M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford 1962 p.13-16

¹⁴³ Stating that 'puns are not uncommon', they also argue that in light of the many times that Heidegger might use a word 'in a special sense...before he gets round to the explanation', and then may alternately 'often use it in the ordinary senses as well. In such cases the reader is surely entitled to know what word Heidegger is talking about'. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, *Being and Time*, (ibid) p.14

question of italics, or lack thereof—what they consider to be the essential *Heideggerian* terms, *because* they consider them *important as such*, and *not*, as they are keen to stress, as “some” may have said, *untranslatable*. The discrepancy between Rée’s declaration of this translational decision as a *coinage* and Macquarrie and Robinson’s own clear statement that *Dasein* is one amongst several important Heideggerian terms “simply” left untranslated is quite interesting in itself; whether it is possible to argue that a sovereign English-Heideggerian term *Dasein* came to exist as such via back-formation, i.e., was “coined” gradually, via by others’ reference to Macquarrie and Robinson’s un-italicized precedent, and whether or not in that case it would still *count* as a coinage, *per se*, is something else again, it is notable that Rée has not found it necessary here to make any reference whatsoever to the translators’ explanation. When we come to Rée’s treatment, in the same essay (“The Translation of Philosophy”, *ibid.*) of Corbin’s translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*, it should be noted that while Rée, with all appearance of academic propriety and erudition, not only acknowledges the existence of, but gives a commendably accurate reference (page number *et al*) to Corbin’s own translator’s preface to the Gallimard Edition, in which he (Corbin) offers a far more discursive explanation for his translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* than is offered by Macquarrie and Robinson for their *Dasein* for *Dasein*, Rée then offers a one sentence, two-step summation of Corbin’s “defence”¹⁴⁴ of *réalité-humaine*, which is not only reductive (to be expected, given the relative length and scope of Rée’s essay), but in its second “step”, as we shall see, pretty much plain *wrong*. Scholarly citation of a text being no guarantee said scholar has always actually *read* said text with any great degree of thoroughness.

And so on to *réalité-humaine*, and the Gallimard translation; but not before returning first to Corbin’s *Bifur* translation of “What is Metaphysics?” to give it, if not its *due* attention, then enough attention, at least, in order to differentiate it substantively from the Gallimard. As in Macquarrie and Robinson’s own assessment of *Being and Time*, here in the *Bifur* translation it does not appear to be the case that the residual German pitting the text in parentheses, including (*Dasein*), has been judged *wholly* untranslatable. French phrases are proffered, but not insisted upon, as the subsequently offered German words in parentheses attest, and thus the opportunity, in fact, *many* opportunities for further, individual interpretation are made over to the reader. Such opportunities, as has been noted, are not limited to Heidegger’s proprietary, *Heideggerian* terms. The young Corbin-Petithenry—the name under which he has published this translation¹⁴⁵—does not, what’s more, give us, e.g., a (*Dasein*) after *every* instance in which *Dasein* appears in the German original. Thus a first impression of this early *Bifur* translation might be that of caution and inconsistency. This cautious and uneven approach may be attributable to this being Corbin’s first *published* translation, but it also betrays a deep concern for acuity, transparency (apparent e.g., in the provision of so many German “originals”), and linguistic nuance, as his first footnote confirms, in which Corbin worries over the impossibility of giving an exact French equivalent to the grammatical twist in the

¹⁴⁴ Cf. . Rée, “The Translation of Philosophy” p.234, footnote no. 20

¹⁴⁵ the second “barrel”, Petithenry, being the name of Corbin’s paternal aunt, who along with her husband Monsieur Petithenry, brought Henry Corbin up in their own house after his mother died shortly after his birth and his father lapsed into grief “Memories from the Childhood of Henry Corbin”, *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin* <http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/anglaistextes.htm#childhood>). By the time of the Gallimard translation, he published as Corbin, and all of his letters to Gertrude Bing of the Warburg Institute e.g., (1931-1949) are signed plain “Henry Corbin”

German phrase “*es ist einem unheimlich*”.¹⁴⁶ All this suggests (to me) also a profound respect for both material and reader, and the seriousness of the task.¹⁴⁷ Besides the complete absence of the contentious *réalité-humaine*, the original German term ‘(Da-sein)’ appears as such, in parentheses, only three times,¹⁴⁸ in contrast to its many occurrences in the original German. In place of *Dasein* and its variants as they appear in the German text, we find in the *Bifur* translation the multiple and various terms with which Corbin experiments in place of *Dasein*, e.g., (in order of appearance): ‘*l’être humain*’ [the human being];¹⁴⁹ ‘*son existence*’ [the existence] (i.e., ‘...*d’un être aimé*’ [of a beloved being]);¹⁵⁰ and ‘*notre existence*’ [our existence] for Heidegger’s ‘*unseres Da-Seins*’,¹⁵¹ which is immediately provided in parentheses, the first such offering of the original German of any form of *Dasein* in the translation, and as such perhaps the first evidence of a dawning intuition on Corbin’s part that the various, i.e., *inconsistent* terms with which he has thus far made do must necessarily remain inadequate to Heidegger’s proprietary *Dasein*, not least in their very variety, notwithstanding Heidegger’s own play-full and emphatic variants, such as *Da-Seins* and *Da-Sein*¹⁵². This “intuition”, if such it was, was fully realised by the publication of the Gallimard Edition, for which, in consultation with Heidegger, Corbin devised his own handy lexical “tool kit” to match Heidegger’s. This included, of course, the compound term *réalité-humaine*, which he duly employed, with Heidegger’s asked-for-and-granted approval, in place of every occurrence of *Dasein*, and whose composition and use he justifies at some length in his translator’s preface.

Jonathan Rée’s 2001 essay “The Translation of Philosophy”¹⁵³ comes to Corbin’s *réalité-humaine* by a slightly convoluted route via its translation into English as “human reality” by Bernard Frechtman, in his 1948 translation of Sartre’s 1938 [sic] *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions*, in which, says Rée, the term appears as *réalité humaine* [sic]. His usage of *réalité humaine* [sic], is, according to Rée, a ‘deliberate allusion’ by Sartre to ‘a recent book by Henry Corbin called *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?*’¹⁵⁴ Note Rée’s incorrect reproduction of the term as *réalité humaine*, i.e., *sans* hyphen, whereas even in my 1995 edition of *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions*¹⁵⁵, which according to the information provided is a faithful reproduction of the first, 1938 edition, the term is correctly and consistently rendered as *réalité-humaine*, complete with its hyphen, as illustrated overleaf (albeit the purported first edition *this* page belongs to was in fact published in 1939 contrary to the claim made in my 1995 edition). Here, the term first appears in quotations, directly attributed to Heidegger, for whom, Sartre writes here, ‘the notions of world and of « *réalité-humaine* » (*Dasein*)’ are inseparable’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁶ H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur*, Issue 8, footnote 1., p.17

¹⁴⁷ I can only hope for the same generosity to be accorded the good intentions, at least, of my own English “first-time” translation of Corbin’s Preface to the Gallimard Edition, to follow shortly.

¹⁴⁸ H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur* Issue 8, pp.18, 20, 20

¹⁴⁹ H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur*, Issue 8, p.11

¹⁵⁰ H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur* Issue 8 p.15

¹⁵¹ H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur* Issue 8 p.16

¹⁵² each of which appears once on p.17 and p.16 respectively (H. Corbin, “Quest ce que la métaphysique?” *Bifur* Issue 8)

¹⁵³ *New Literary History* Volume 32, Number 2, Spring 2001, pp. 223-257

¹⁵⁴ J. Rée, “The Translation of Philosophy” p.234

¹⁵⁵ J.-P Sartre, *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions*, Livre de Poche, Hermann 1995

¹⁵⁶ J.-P Sartre, *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions*, p.13

signifie. De même je puis chercher à saisir l'essence du « prolétariat » à travers le mot « prolétariat ». En ce cas je ferai de la sociologie. Mais le linguiste étudie le mot prolétariat *en tant qu'il signifie prolétariat* et il s'inquiètera des vicissitudes du mot en tant que porteur de signification. Une telle science est parfaitement possible.

Que lui manque-t-il pour être réelle ? D'avoir fait ses preuves. Nous avons montré que si la réalité-humaine apparaît au psychologue comme une collection de données hétéroclites, c'est que le psychologue s'est placé volontairement sur le terrain où cette réalité devait lui apparaître comme telle. Mais cela n'implique pas nécessairement que la réalité-humaine soit autre chose qu'une collection. Ce que nous avons prouvé c'est seulement qu'elle ne *peut* pas apparaître autrement au psychologue. Reste à savoir si elle supporte en son fond une enquête phénoménologique, c'est-à-dire si l'émotion, par exemple, est véritablement un phénomène signifiant. Pour en avoir le cœur net, il n'est qu'un moyen, celui, d'ailleurs, que préconise le phénoménologue, « aller aux choses-mêmes ». Que l'on veuille bien considérer les pages qui suivent comme une *expérience* de psychologie phénoménologique. Nous allons essayer de nous placer sur le terrain de la signification et de traiter l'émotion comme *phénomène*.



So much for Rée’s own orthographic precision. Noting Derrida’s description of *réalité humaine* [sic] in his “*Les fins de l’homme*,”¹⁵⁷ as ‘a “monstrous” phrase, but “so much the more significant”’, Rée goes on to say that ‘even though Corbin’s book is no longer much read’, as it is, nonetheless ‘a founding document of the existentialism of the war years...it is worth being reminded of the philosophically cracked note that sounds in it’¹⁵⁸; the “note”, that is, of *réalité-humaine*. This translation is ‘cracked’, for Rée, due to the loss it represents of *Dasein*’s ‘long linguistic pedigree’, including the fact that ‘it was the word that Schleiermacher had used as the equivalent of *ousia* in his classic translations of Plato’ as well as for the loss of *Dasein*’s “everydayness” in German, which he says was also integral to Heidegger’s choice and use of the word. Although Rée will only concede Heidegger’s “apparent” [sic]¹⁵⁹ endorsement of Corbin’s translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*, he does also offer his own summary of Corbin’s defence of the term, in a footnote, as follows:

Martin Heidegger, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?*, tr. and ed. Henry Corbin, Prologue by Martin Heidegger (Paris, 1938). This volume contains translations of the first two chapters of Division Two of *Sein und Zeit* (sections 46–53 and 72–76), where *Dasein* is consistently translated as *réalité humaine*. Corbin defends the translation (it is clearly preferable to existence, and preserves the divisibility of *Da-Sein*) in his Introduction, p. 13.¹⁶⁰

We have referred to this last sentence of Rée’s as a two-step summation. The first “step”, i.e. his statement that for Corbin, *réalité-humaine* is ‘preferable to existence’, is a direct reference to Corbin’s Preface to the Gallimard Edition, in which Corbin states that the use of “existence” in place of *Dasein* could ‘result in a most unfortunate confusion between the notions of *existentiel* and *existential*’, and, as such, he suggests, might further encourage the misapprehension that Heidegger’s *Existenzphilosophie* amounts to no more than ‘a return to the old debate of “essence” and “existence”(1).’¹⁶¹ So far, so good. As for Rée’s “second step”, i.e., his assertion of that Corbin defends *réalité-humaine*—or, rather, as Rée consistently mis-renders it, *réalité humaine*—as “preserving the divisibility of *Da-Sein*” (ibid.); it is very curious, since, far from referring to the so-called *divisibility* of *Dasein*—even rendered, as Rée has chosen to do here for emphasis (quite correctly following Heidegger’s own occasional, emphatic usage), as *Da-Sein*—Corbin is utterly clear that the compound term *réalité-humaine* ‘refers to a whole, homogeneous from the outset’.¹⁶² Neither is the term grammatically constituted by, or otherwise meant to stand for a subject, “*réalité*”, which receives the predicate *humaine*. Since Corbin’s stated emphasis is on wholeness, rather than divisibility we might well ask why then use a *compound* term at all? We might well ask the same of *Dasein*, and expect an answer in the region of the *thereness*, or rather the *-thereness*, that is, the *thrownness*, the dis-placedness of *Dasein*; a being-there which is precisely not a subject, nor any kind of a thing—not even a *human-*

¹⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Les fins de l’homme,” *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris, 1972), p. 136

“The Ends of Man,” tr. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* p. 115.

¹⁵⁸ “existentialism”, says Corbin, with an almost perceptible shudder, ‘a word which the early Heideggerians would never have pronounced’. (H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”.

¹⁵⁹ J. Rée, “The Translation of Philosophy” p.234

¹⁶⁰ J. Rée, “The Translation of Philosophy” p.234, footnote no. 20

(1) [Corbin’s footnote] Cf. in the IXth International Congress of Philosophy, our communication over “Transcendental [sic] et Existential”, VIII, 25-31

¹⁶¹ H. Corbin, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.13

¹⁶² H. Corbin, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.13

Thing¹⁶³—to “be thrown”, or to “be there;” but a there-being, a being-there. Another, simpler answer might also be that the formation of new compound terms is in itself characteristically Heideggerian, as noted by Macquarrie and Robinson¹⁶⁴, who although they have not themselves chosen to emulate this practice of composite-coinage, have faithfully translated Heidegger’s own compound terms *into* English, with many hyphens.

In Corbin’s own words, which, in part since they have been so overlooked, misrepresented and ignored to date in numerous discussions and often rather out-of-hand (and second-hand) condemnations of his translation, it seems only necessary and fair to reproduce quite fully¹⁶⁵:

It appeared to us that the method of forming new lexicological resources with the hyphen symbol was infinitely preferable to the all too frequent creation of unforeseen or irritating neologisms. In the German, the author also frequently uses such notation, thanks to which the movement and new cohesion uncovered in his thinking are announced directly in the words themselves. These particularities have been carefully respected in the French text; and it is important, upon each encounter with these 'compositions', to reflect upon the intention that they express. Beginning with this term, what we are witnessing is the development of a technical lexicon of fundamental ontology. If *réalité-humaine* is not a simple *Positum*, if its being is not the being of a thing that subsists in a uniform present, it is only in the most "active" sense of the verb being that it *is* its presence ; as a subject, it does not receive, but rather *is* this predicate; *réalité-humaine realises*, effecting a real-presence (*Das Dasein ist sein Da*). This presence, this "Da", is its Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*); and the ontological implications of this thesis means that "in the world" does not represent a receptacle containing its being; on the contrary, here "being" represents the original condition that renders possible the phenomenon "in the world".¹⁶⁶

What is immediately made clear is that the *réalité humaine* to which Rée refers is *not* Corbin’s *réalité-humaine*, for the elemental reason that the hyphen is missing in Rée’s—the very symbol that Rée himself provides for us, implanted, thus, in a “*Da-Sein*” ostensibly so as to demonstrate that term’s very “divisibility”, which divisibility his pseudo-Corbinian *réalité humaine*[sic], *sans* hyphen, is supposed by Rée to be supposed *by Corbin* to preserve. Here is the same Rée who founded such a grand claim on the non-italicization of *Dasein* by Macquarrie and Robinson, while failing to engage with their own explanation. And yet Rée has overlooked the hyphen, which symbol Corbin makes a point of naming (in French, of course as *trait d’union*) as technically and lexicologically *integral* to the composition of this composition, *réalité-humaine*; here employed by Corbin not only as symbol of the unity or homogeneity—versus Rée’s “divisibility”—of *réalité-humaine*, but also and in addition, sometimes even in the midst of ostensibly non-compound words, to clarify the precise details of Heidegger’s thought; emphasizing *not* divisibility, but pro-jection; out-standing [*ex-sistance*]; out-folding [*ex-plication*]; trans-scendence: thrownness.

¹⁶³ Cf. Heidegger’s “*Menschending*”, or “human-Thing” *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson Blackwell, Oxford 1962, 2006 p. 87.

¹⁶⁴ Macquarrie and Robinson, “Translators’ Preface” *Being and Time*, p.13

¹⁶⁵ The translation is my own, with the kind oversight of Dr. Deirdre Daly.

¹⁶⁶ H. Corbin, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) pp.13-14.

the fundamental thesis is that "the essence of *réalité-humaine* consists in its ex-sistance" (*Das Wesen des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz*). We must make absolutely clear in French, by means of orthographic modification, the specific relation of existence to *Dasein*. each time we want to emphasize the modality proper to *réalité-humaine*, we write *ex-sistance*; as for the verb of this *existence*, we reserve its etymological form "exist" (*exsistere*). In ex-sisting, *réalité-humaine* trans-scends; it pro-jects (entwirft) a world, it makes to reign a world [*elle fait que règne un monde*].¹⁶⁷

This project is the potential-being [*pouvoir-etre*] (*Seinkönnen*) which is absolutely proper to it; potential-being always already actualised (*existentiel*), in which it ex-sists, and of which it belongs to this analysis to unveil the possibility of an initial outline (existential) (1). In ex-sisting, *réalité humaine* ex-plicates [*ex-plier*, lit. "out-folds"] a world; it is always already [*d'ores et déjà*] comprehension and interpretation (*Auslegung* ["out-laying"]). Its mode of being is of being-revealing (*Erschliessend* [disclosing]), and at the same time, revealed-reality (*Erschlossenheit* [disclosedness]); of *aleitheia*¹⁶⁸, ontological truth.¹⁶⁹

If the being of *réalité-humaine* is not that of a given-reality, a subsistent-reality (we have used, as accordant with this case, these two nuances of translation) it is that its presence is not a present uniform and continuous in time. The trans-scendence is the *pro-ject* (Entwurf) into which *réalité-humaine* is always already [*d'ores et déjà*] thrown (*geworfen*) in its effectivity, (its abandonment, [*sa déréliction*]: *Geworfenheit*), assuming in advance its potential-being (its ultimate potential-being: death). This resolute decision (*Entschlossenheit*) is *not* a psychological disposition, but the mode of being of *réalité-humaine* as presence to [*de par*] its future. *Ex-sistance* is ek-static: the triple *exstasis*¹⁷⁰ of the temporality of Time is the very structure of its transcendence.¹⁷¹

Close attention should be paid to these further instances of orthographic modification in which Corbin has applied the hyphen or *trait d'union* as an aid to clarity and emphasis, e.g., "*ex-sistance* [lit "out-standing]", where both the use of 'a' rather than 'e' to denote 'the active noun from the participle', and the hyphen, serve 'to emphasize the modality proper to *réalité-humaine*¹⁷², that is, "ex-sisting". Following suit from its function in *ex-sistance*, the *trait d'union* next serves to emphasise how 'in ex-sisting, *réalité-humaine* trans-scends¹⁷³ [lit., 'from Old French *transcendre* or Latin *transcendere*, from *trans-* 'across' + *scandere* 'climb']; it pro-jects [lit., "throws forth", 'from Latin *pro-* 'forth' + *jacere* 'to throw.' ¹⁷⁴] (*entwirft*) a world'.¹⁷⁵ These passages make it abundantly clear that the hyphen, or *trait d'union* is being entrusted to perform a great deal more than just its unifying function, whereby it serves to indicate the *rapport*, or *corrélation* of two verbal elements. The hyphen: lit., 'together, in one, lit. Gk. *hyph*, *hupho* + *en* = 'under + one'¹⁷⁶; in French, the *trait d'union*: *trait* = from Latin *tractus* 'drawing, pulling', *union* = 'from ecclesiastical Latin *unio(n-)* 'unity,' from Latin *unus*, one.'¹⁷⁷ The hyphen does also *mark* division (French *césure*) such as when a single word is "wrapped" from the end of one typographical line to the beginning of

¹⁶⁷ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.13

¹⁶⁸ [my transliteration of HC's Greek. RB]

¹⁶⁹ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) pp.14-15

¹⁷⁰ [my transliteration of HC's Greek. RB]

¹⁷¹ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.15

¹⁷² H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.13

¹⁷³ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) pp.13-14

¹⁷⁴ *New Oxford American Dictionary 2010*

¹⁷⁵ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) pp.13-14

¹⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition Vol VII.1 Oxford 1989*

¹⁷⁷ *Oxford American English Dictionary 2010.*

the next one. So where it marks such a division, it indicates either a division, a separation where there should *not* be one, throwing the readers' attention onward toward the separated yet inseparable element; or else, where there is *not* a separation any more. As for the other, more straightforwardly unifying function of the *trait d'union*, indicating *rapport*, or *corrélation*: whereas e.g., the *Oxford American English Dictionary* (2010) has of *English* "correlation" 'ORIGIN mid 16th cent.: from medieval Latin *correlatio(n-)*, from *cor-* 'together' + *relatio* (see relation)' ¹⁷⁸, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) ¹⁷⁹ has 'french *cor* + relation: cf. F. *corrélation* 'the condition of being correlated; mutual relation of two or more things (implying intimate or necessary connexion)'. *Harrap's Standard French and English Dictionary* (London, 1996) then has of French *cor-*, "tine, prong, or horn"; in this context, rather as if the hyphen were at once a prong—which may as well *propel*, to *pro-ject*, even, as *secure*, or *skewer*—*and* a bond ¹⁸⁰, which tensile and dynamic conceit accords very nicely with Corbin's above usage and explication. A veritable pushmi-pullyu.

Thus, as we have seen, the correlative form may indicate where separation, or division *formerly* existed between two original words or terms, prior to their present conjoinment; or indicate a separation where there should be none; so for Rée to state, either in his own right, or to state that Corbin has stated that the composition *réalité-humaine*, or *réalité humaine* [sic] as he has it, is intended to preserve the *divisibility* of "Dasein/Da-Sein" seems at best a badly expressed half-truth, at worst a reductive inversion of what Corbin not only intended but went to great pains to disclose.

If all of this attention paid to the hyphen seems somehow preposterous, or should a precedent be required I refer the reader to Jean-Luc Nancy's book *Noli me tangere*, e.g., in which a great deal is made of that *trait d'union* which appears in the customary French rendering of the name of Mary Magdalene as *Marie-Madeleine*, and which for Nancy indicates *both* separation *and* unity, or identity, even; traction and attraction. Thus:

Everything about Mary-Magdalene is contained in her hyphen: ... But the hyphen does not make anything else appear and does not set into motion any dialectical machine. It remains a line of separation, keeping each at a distance from the other. Each is the truth of the other. Mary of Magdalene, and Magdalene of Mary...Mary-Magdalene is neither one nor the other; she withdraws beneath her hyphen, overwhelmed by being exposed in this way. Mary—dash—Magdalene. Mary separated from Magdalene by a hyphen or a dash. Mary drawn or withdrawn from Magdalene. It is a question of Mary, Myriam, Meriam, MRAM, the feminine tetragram floating on fragrant waters. The Magdalan makes woman float: between grace and sin, creator and creature, she makes the dash float, this unifying dash that thus disunites. Like an unstable gangway between the *nihil* and the *something*, between the abyss and existence, this woman (perhaps woman *herself*? But stretched into two, her unity withdrawn in the between-two) introduces the irruption of something in the midst of nothingness and, reciprocally, the eternal return of the nothing in

¹⁷⁸ Oxford American English Dictionary 2010.

¹⁷⁹ Second Edition Vol VII.1

¹⁸⁰ In German "BINDESTRICHE" = "hyphen"; lit. Gm *binde* + *strich*: *binden* = tie, bind; *strich* = line, stroke (*Oxford Duden German Dictionary*, Revised Ed. Oxford 1990, 1997)

every thing. The same line or dash traces something in nothing and nothing in something: that is the line, the trait, the traction, of Mary-Magdalene¹⁸¹

Here, a digression, as the inevitable auto-presentation of the word *hymen*—inevitable given the subject¹⁸², the matter¹⁸³; the whole *unity*—might we say *intactness*¹⁸⁴—and/or separation of Mary-Magdalene as MRAM, the female trinity of mother-virgin-whore, and its orthographic proximity, in English as in Greek, to the word hyphen—makes for a cruder and infinitely more delicate reading of our hyphen. But what is this? A feminine *Da-sein*? We note with interest that “she” also has the characteristic (and) self-knowledge of *thrownness* for Nancy:

She is the creature who knows herself to have been created, who knows that she has been thrown onto the earth and for nothing other than the earth itself, for its beauty and its barrenness, its pleasure and its pain¹⁸⁵.

Here, Nancy’s is an abject and authentic thrownness, far more existentialist, I would submit, than it is Corbinian-Heideggerian. Returning to Corbin, who, writing¹⁸⁶ in 1978 in defence of his translation, states quite clearly that his use of the hyphen was both highly deliberate, and so integral to his attempt to convey the pro-jection, the trans-scendence, the *ex-sistance*, the there-being of Dasein *réalité-humaine*, that its negligent omission weakens the translation:

Pre-sence, *Da-sein*. I do not want to return here to a discussion of the reasons that, back in the day, led us, in agreement with our friends, to translate *Dasein* by *réalité-humaine* [human-reality]. I am aware of the particular weaknesses of this translation, especially when by an all too frequent negligence, we omit the hyphen, whose necessity we have explained elsewhere.¹⁸⁷ *Da-sein*: being-there, this is understood. But being-there, is essentially to be enacting a presence, enactment of that presence *by* which and *for* which meaning is revealed in the present. The modality of this human presence is thus to be revelatory, but in such a way that, in revealing the meaning, it reveals itself, and is that which is revealed.

Rée, with his emphasis on division, is not alone in his mis-taking of Corbin’s *réalité-humaine*. Alas while Ethan Kleinberg correctly reproduces *réalité-humaine* as such, replete with its *trait d’union*, unlike Rée, who *has* taken, but alas *mis*-taken notice of Corbin’s introduction to the translation, Kleinberg’s own failure to take notice of the introduction at all, and consequently to engage with Corbin’s explicatory emphasis on the pro-jection, trans-scendence, and *ex-sistance* of *réalité-humaine* also results in a poor assessment of the translation, which we, on the other hand, are now equipped to consider as a faithful attempt to convey Heideggerian Dasein, as (after, but not entirely *with* Meillasoux) “a correlationism”, albeit one with its own peculiarly Heideggerian characteristics. That is, to convey the “truth” of Dasein *as réalité-humaine*, as a

¹⁸¹ J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere* pp.64-6.

¹⁸² from Latin *subjectus* ‘brought under,’ past participle of *subicere*, from *sub-* ‘under’ + *jacere* ‘throw.’ Senses relating to philosophy, logic, and grammar are derived ultimately from Aristotle’s use of *to hypokeimenon* meaning [material from which things are made] and [subject of attributes and predicates.]

¹⁸³ from Latin *materia* ‘timber, substance,’ also ‘subject of discourse,’ from *mater* ‘mother.’

¹⁸⁴ from Latin *intactus*, from *in-* ‘not’ + *tactus* (past participle of *tangere* ‘touch’).

¹⁸⁵ J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere* pp.63-4.

¹⁸⁶ (and/or talking, as this passage is excerpted from the transcript of an interview with Phillippe Nemo, later carefully polished up for publication as “From Heidegger to Suhtravardi”, the text to which the Post-Scriptum is appended.

¹⁸⁷ Regrettably, I have yet to discover this explanatory “elsewhere”.

correlative truth, a truth of correlation, whose prime characteristic is that of the pro-jection and transcendence of (and to) the phenomena. This too, we can say, is its thrownness.

Kleinberg, however, begins by stating that despite Corbin's *attempt* 'to convey the specific nature of Heidegger's term by distancing it from the traditional philosophical understanding of "essence" and "existence"', his (Corbin's) 'better intentions' are 'betrayed' by his decision to use the term *réalité-humaine* for *Dasein*, firstly because, he says, the term fails to 'convey the spatial character of *Dasein*, which displaces the subject as the localizable site of being'; this fault he finds to be compounded by Corbin's translation of *Geworfenheit* as *sa dérélition*, i.e., abandonment, dereliction, which while it corroborates e.g., 'Jean Wahl's reading of Heidegger as an existentialist in the tradition of Kierkegaard', also, according to Kleinberg, 'led the readers of Corbin's translations to assume that Heidegger was emphasizing the specific and individual abandoned subject'.¹⁸⁸ This is reasonable criticism, though we are bound to ask of Kleinberg, which readers? Though we must be left to wonder which of those readers also skipped over the translator's introduction, a citation, to follow, of Jean-Paul Sartre, will give us strong indications that he was amongst them. Secondly, as a consequence of said failure to 'convey the spatial character of *Dasein*' and thereby 'displace the subject', Kleinberg states that 'those 'French scholars' who were 'trained in the Cartesian tradition' subsequently 'assumed that the presence of being was located in the specific human subject'.¹⁸⁹

Recalling that although Kleinberg thinks he is referring to the *Bifur* translation, which he believes to be identical to the Gallimard translation, in fact he, because it, is not: let us now refer these criticisms, indeed this accusation of "self-betrayal", to Corbin's introduction to the Gallimard Edition, and to our refutations, above, of Jonathan Rées, made with reference to said introduction, by which the first of Kleinberg's accusations, regarding the conveyance of "spatiality" and displacedness, or lack therein, of *réalité-humaine*, are very well answered.

With regard to Kleinberg's secondly holding Corbin responsible, due to this apparent failure to 'convey the spatial character of *Dasein*' and thereby 'displace the subject', etc, for the erroneous assumptions subsequently made, according to Kleinberg, by said Cartesian readers, that 'the presence of being was located [for Heidegger] in the specific human *subject*'¹⁹⁰: let us refer to Corbin's translator's introduction, in which he states that 'It should however never be forgotten that this compound term does not designate a reality that would first be posed, and then receive the predicate "human"; no, it refers to a whole, homogeneous from the outset.'¹⁹¹ Thus it is made abundantly clear that, grammatically or otherwise, the constitution of *réalité-humaine* is *not* that of *subject*-predicate.

Thus far, Corbin's worst mistake must surely be said to be his expectation that serious readers would not fail to read the translator's foreword. Kleinberg's remaining major criticism is of Corbin's choice to

¹⁸⁸ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.71

¹⁸⁹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.70

¹⁹⁰ [my italics] E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.70

¹⁹¹ H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Gallimard) p.12 [My translation. R.B.]

translate *Vorhandenheit* [more or less “at-handness”, or more literally but unnaturally, “fore-handness”] and *Zuhandenheit* [lit., more or less “to-handness”] as, respectively, *realite-des-choses* [reality-of-things] [sic] and *realite-ustentile* [utensile-reality], for being at once too theoretical, in not conveying the active nature of *Zuhandenheit*, and not theoretical enough, in the case of *realite-des-choses* [sic], which for Kleinberg ‘does not convey the contemplative and theoretical aspects of *Vorhandenheit* and instead implies that Heidegger is investigating the reality of things’, and furthermore, according to Kleinberg, caused a number of Corbin’s contemporaries, recalling Husserl, to have conceived of Heideggerian “human-reality” as the locus of consciousness as the basis for intentionality¹⁹². This Husserlian reading is a little beyond the narrow scope of our enquiry. As for Corbin’s *realite-des-choses* [sic], he states in the introduction that:

Instead of *ex-sistance* [lit., “out-standing”] (which is always the *ex-sistance* of a world), the mode of being of the existent there discovered in the world is that of an *in-sistance* [lit., “in-standing”] in that world. It is that which, as opposed to *réalité-humaine*, forms reality-as-given, the reality-of-subsistent-things [*réalité-des-choses subsistantes*] (*Vorhandenheit*), and the encircling range of *utensile-reality*¹⁹³ [*réalité-ustensile*] (*Zuhandenheit*), all of those objects whose reality is revealed in the usage, in a “for ...”.

While the word “*subsistantes*”, is not adjoined to the other words that together make up the term’s long form, *réalité-des-choses subsistantes*, French grammar demands that it be considered an inclusion. Elsewhere in the introduction, Corbin abbreviates *réalité-des-choses subsistantes* to not *réalité-des-choses*, but *réalité-subsistantes* [subsistent-reality]. It is certainly true even as *realite-des-choses subsistantes* and *réalité-subsistantes*, both long and abbreviated forms of this term still lack the literal “handiness” of Heidegger’s, while in Corbin’s *realite-ustentile*, a certain handiness is at least implied. As to whether the term correctly rendered as *realite-des-choses subsistantes* still fails to convey *Vorhandenheit*’s ‘contemplative and theoretical aspects’ (ibid.), before even getting into a discussion of the erroneous omission of “subsistent” by Kleinberg one might just as well counter that if taken alone and out of context, so might the term *Vorhandenheit*, to the extent that it relies upon its context for a nuanced explication. Unlike the virtual self-sufficiency of *Dasein*, which has the rare distinction of a kind of conceptual onomatopoeia (i.e., that in or out of context, it means very much what it *reads* like), the same general and ahistorical accusation and defence of over-reliance on context (including rather heavily, on his translator’s introduction) can very well be made of Corbin’s *réalité-humaine*. However, cf. Jonathan Rée’s argument in his “The Translation of Philosophy” that the term “Schematism”, e.g:

is always specifically Kantian, and no one could begin to understand it without studying the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is the same with Leibnizian *monadologie* and Hegelian or Husserlian *Phänomenologie*: to understand them is to understand not just a universal concept, but an individual thinker.¹⁹⁴

Having observed, by now, how Kleinberg’s errors of citation, attribution and inference have multiplied and radiated outward from his first erroneous assumption that Corbin’s 1931 *Bifur* translation was the *same*

¹⁹² E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* pp.70-1

¹⁹³ I have risked my own coinage here, of *utensile-reality* which I hope is fairly self-explanatory, on the grounds that “instrumental-reality”, the closest “natural” English term that came to hand, as it were, is too reminiscent of e.g., dials and gauges and clockwork, and not sufficiently handy, or tool-like

¹⁹⁴ J. Rée, “The Translation of Philosophy” p. 229

translation as appeared in the 1938 Gallimard Edition of *Qu'est-ce que la Métaphysique?*¹⁹⁵ compounded by further errors arising from his failure to attend to Corbin's translator's introduction, we can agree with Rée, at least, on the importance of gaining an accurate grasp of a given term-, or text-'s, precise philosophical, and, we shall add, *historical* context. Based on his false assumption of the identity of these two textual entities, Kleinberg wrongly claims the *Bifur* translation to have contained the term *réalité-humaine*. It is "this essay" which he now wrongly states to have been the subject of Sartre's first "impressionistic" reading of Heidegger, which is said to have had so profound an effect on Sartre's early work.¹⁹⁶ Getting into stride, Kleinberg takes arguments put forth in *Le Collège de sociologie: 1937-1939*¹⁹⁷ regarding 'Corbin's translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*' and applies them to an analysis of Sartre's novel *Nausea*, written 'in its first form between 1931 and 1933 and then rewritten while Sartre was studying Husserl in Berlin'¹⁹⁸, in 'the academic year of 1933'.¹⁹⁹ Kleinberg:

The concern of *Nausea* is to understand being as it is manifested in the human being, and here we see how Sartre's interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy diverges from Heidegger's own project. Sartre, like Jean Wahl, Jean Hyppolite, and many others, took Henry Corbin's translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* quite literally and therefore assumed that Heidegger was investigating the human actor.²⁰⁰ For Sartre, *Dasein* and human being are equivocal terms...the important point is that Sartre always equated *Dasein* with *human-reality*.²⁰¹

If we accept the dates given by Kleinberg for the *writing* of *Nausea*, even though it was not to be *published* until 1938, it is impossible for the term *réalité-humaine*, which Kleinberg finds to have been such a profound influence on the conception of *Nausea*, to have been drawn from Corbin's 1931 *Bifur* translation of "Was Ist Metaphysik?", as Kleinberg claims, and thus to have affected or determined Sartre's concern, according to Kleinberg, to 'understand being as it is manifested in the human being',²⁰² because, as has been well established, the term simply does not appear therein; though it may well be that Sartre's "impressionistic" reading of the *Bifur* translation may still have affected his composition of *Nausea*; and, who knows but should any other scholar choose to embark upon a close reading of *Nausea* with reference to the 1931 *Bifur* translation, it may yet prove most enlightening. Meanwhile, several pages later, Kleinberg reiterates his erroneous citations of Corbin's translation(s), while allowing the diagnostic precision of their stated *influence* to get looser:

the most important factor in Sartre's understanding of Heidegger is Henry Corbin's translation of Heidegger's work. Corbin's translation of *Was ist Metaphysik?* appeared in 1931 and was republished [*sic*], along with translations of *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and two sections of *Being and Time*, in 1938. Sartre describes the event of this translation in terms of the contingency of circumstance of history. It is probably best to consider it in this

¹⁹⁵ And then again in the 1968 Gallimard collection *Questions I/III*, Kleinberg's sole source for "the" translation

¹⁹⁶ The potential significance of these errors for the general (mis)understanding of this period comes into focus when it is considered that aside from Geroulanos (whose book came out in 2010), Kleinberg's 2005 *Generation Existential* is to my knowledge the only English language book-length work to have specifically addressed the French reception of Heidegger. Dominique Janicaud's influential *Heidegger En France* (Bibliothèque Albin Michel. Idées 2001) is yet to be issued in translation

¹⁹⁷ Denis Hollier, Georges Bataille, *Le Collège de sociologie: 1937-1939* (Paris, Gallimard, 1979) p.55

¹⁹⁸ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.124

¹⁹⁹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.120

²⁰⁰ It is at this point Kleinberg refers the reader to the *Le Collège de sociologie*, *ibid.*

²⁰¹ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.124

²⁰² E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.124

light, rather than assign it the position of a specific “influence.” Corbin’s translation of Heidegger appeared to Sartre’s “situation, his generation, his époque” just when it “had to.”²⁰³

Sartre:

It was *for us* that Corbin made the translation. It stirred our first interest in Heidegger’s philosophy but we were not ready for it. It took 12 or 15 years for Heidegger’s thought to arrive in France. It came little by little through the translations in *Bifur* (1930) and *Recherches Philosophiques* (1933) until finally it came to truly organize itself and to reclaim its teachings.²⁰⁴

Reading these alongside one another, one might assume that Kleinberg’s assertion that ‘*Was ist Metaphysik?* ... was republished, along with translations of *Vom Wesen des Grundes* and two sections of *Being and Time*’ (ibid.) must be taken to mean that *all* of these texts were republished in the Gallimard Edition, i.e., that they had all been published elsewhere before, and on this erroneous basis, infer again that at least one of these initial publications might be that which Sartre recalls as having appeared in *Recherches Philosophiques* in 1933, perhaps translated by Corbin. Even knowing Kleinberg to be wrong in his assumption that the Gallimard Edition contains a reproduction of the *Bifur* translation of “Was ist metaphysik?”, the conscientious *researcher* might then set off to consult said first publication(s)²⁰⁵, only to find that while Corbin did have an essay published in Vol. III (1933-4) entitled “*La theologie dialectique et l’histoire*” in which he *mentions* Heidegger, along with Karl Barth, Karl Löwith, and Soren Kierkegaard, in a section entitled ‘*Le temps propre de l’existence et l’eschaton*’, no *translation* of Heidegger, by Corbin or anyone else, appears in either Vol. II (1932-3), or Vol. III (1933-4) of *Recherches Philosophiques*. Corbin’s Vol. III essay itself contains no direct translation of Heidegger, and nor, as a matter of record, does Corbin make any independent use in it of the terms *Dasein* or *réalité-humaine*. A translation of Heidegger’s “Vom Wesen Des Grundes” *does* appear in *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. I in 1931-2 (not ’33) entitled “De la nature de la cause”, and it is likely to this that Sartre refers, as translated not by Corbin, but rather by one A. Bessey. Corbin’s translation of a section of “Vom Wesen des Grundes” in the 1938 Gallimard Edition of *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* is thus published there for the first time.

As for Sartre’s *L’être et le néant/Being and Nothingness*, the term ‘« réalité humaine »’ first appears exactly so, as in ‘*pour Heidegger, la « réalité humaine » est ontico-ontologique, c’est-à-dire qu’elle peut toujours dépasser le phénomène vers son être*’.²⁰⁶ This is translated in the first English edition by Hazel A. Barnes as: ‘for Heidegger also “human reality” is ontic-ontological; that is, it can always pass beyond the phenomenon [sic] towards its being’.²⁰⁷ Note then that in the first occurrence of the term in *L’être et le néant*, and although it is attributed to Heidegger, the proprietary hyphen is omitted. A couple of pages later,

²⁰³ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.132

²⁰⁴ J.P. Sartre, *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, p. 407, cited in E. Kleinberg, and before that E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.132

²⁰⁵ slightly aghast, in my case, that I may have somehow overlooked its/their existence in my own initial consultation of the complete volumes of *Recherches Phil.*

²⁰⁶ J.-P. SARTRE *L’être et le néant* (1943) p.15

²⁰⁷ J.-P. Sartre (trans. Hazel E. Barnes), *Being and Nothingness* (1957) p.xvliii

Sartre commences with his ordinary usage of the term *réalité humaine*, [sic]²⁰⁸ without quotations and released from its explicit connection to Heidegger, although perhaps still implicitly referring back to that first Heideggerian « *réalité humaine* ». Indeed perhaps one might assume it to be Sartre’s implicit intention for every further instance of *réalité humaine*[sic] and *réalité-humaine*—as the hyphenated version also appears very occasionally throughout the book, according to no discernible grammatical or intentional design²⁰⁹—from the first on, to be read *as* Heideggerian. Yet four pages on, Sartre has recourse to the German term *Dasein* for the Heideggerian existant, thus: ‘*C’est ce qu’exprime fort bien Heidegger, lorsqu’il écrit (en parlant du « Dasein », a vrai dire, non de la conscience)*’²¹⁰ [‘This is what Heidegger expressed very well when he wrote (though speaking of *Dasein*, not of consciousness...’]²¹¹, and this is not the only such case.²¹² This usage pattern strongly suggests that wherever Sartre uses the term—whether it appears as *réalité humaine* [sic], or *réalité-humaine*, in either case *without* quotations and unloosed from its explicit belonging to Heidegger (i.e., whenever the term is *not* explicitly used to designate the Heideggerian *Dasein*), it could well be argued that here it functions as a *Sartrean* term. And while even these occurrences may arguably be variously distributed along a continuum between the Sartrean and the Heideggerian, it is clear that Sartre’s *general* deployment of the term *réalité humaine/ réalité-humaine* is by no means a consistently precise and referential deployment of Henry Corbin’s translation of *Dasein*. Indeed, the “Key to Special Terminology” in the 2010 English Routledge edition seems to settle this point, as the entry for “human-reality”²¹³ reads: ‘Sartre’s term for the human being or For-itself. Used both generally like (“mankind”) and for the individual man.’²¹⁴ In short, there is a strong case for the argument that following the 1943 publication of *L’être et le néant*, *extra* to the French-Heideggerian term *réalité-humaine*, Heidegger’s *Dasein*, as translated by Corbin, there was now also a *Sartrean* term in philosophical circulation, rendered indiscriminately as *réalité humaine* or *réalité-humaine*.

It was highly fortunate for the late progress of this thesis that in 2010 Stanford University Press published Stefanos Geroulanos’ book *An Atheism That is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought*²¹⁵. In a chapter entitled “The Anthropology of Antifoundational Realism”²¹⁶, Geroulanos offers a valuable historico-philosophical contextualisation and defence of Corbin’s translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine*, as follows. Geroulanos argues that ‘the anthropological (and anti-anthropocentric) impulse’ that so characterized ‘the radical transformation of French thought in the early 1930s’, had two main sources, namely: 1) ‘new approaches in the philosophy of science’ and 2) ‘the import of German

²⁰⁸ ‘It goes without saying that any attempt to replace the *percipere* by another *attitude* from human reality would be equally fruitless.’ Footnote 3, page 7 Routledge Classics English edition (Oxford 2010) trans. Hazel Barnes: J.-P. SARTRE footnote (1), p.17) *L’être et le néant* (1943)

²⁰⁹ Cf. J.-P. SARTRE *L’être et le néant* pp. p.129 and 130

²¹⁰ J.-P. SARTRE *L’être et le néant* (1943) p.21

²¹¹ J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel A. Barnes Routledge Classics Oxford 2010 p.11 (N.B., the translation of this sentence is identical to that which appears in the first English edition, to which first edition I have generally referred here)

²¹² Cf. also e.g., the first page of Section III (“*Le Pour-Soi et l’Être de la Valeur*”) of Chapter I (“*Les Structures Immédiates du Pour-Soi*”) of Part Two (“*L’Être-Pour-Soi*”).

²¹³ N.B. unusually rendered here *with* the hyphen

²¹⁴ Key to Special Terminology, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel A. Barnes Routledge Classics Oxford 2010 p.652

²¹⁵ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism Emerges in French Thought*, Stanford University Press, 2010

²¹⁶ Subtitled “Philosophy of Science, Phenomenology, and “Human Reality” in France, 1928-1934

phenomenology²¹⁷. These new approaches, writes Geroulanos, originating in and around Corbin's avant-garde Parisian milieu, were to radically alter

the perceived relationship between the human subject and the world in which this subject finds itself, reducing man from his rationalist and idealist apex as supreme being and rational ruler of nature to a subject fundamentally trapped in modern reality'.²¹⁸

It is immediately obvious how an exploration of the second of these “new approaches” might provide us with relevant context for Corbin—who not only translated Heidegger in the period in question, but continued to develop what he has explicitly described as a phenomenological approach to his later work on Islamic and comparative philosophy—but what of the first? This comes to seem less incongruous upon acquaintance with e.g., Corbin's later work *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*²¹⁹, in which he expresses an abiding concern for the character of the Western scientific paradigm and its inherent consequences, and in which it is hard not to find a trace of Corbin's teacher and friend, the scholar of science and religion Alexandre Koyré's formative influence.²²⁰ Just so, Geroulanos describes how the development of these new approaches occurred in ‘the circle of *émigrés* around the historian of science and religion Alexandre Koyré’²²¹. Koyré, a great friend and later also a colleague of Corbin's at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* [EPHE], was also a founding editor of the journal *Recherches philosophiques*²²² to which journal Corbin was not only a contributor (of two essays²²³ and a number of reviews) but was also involved, with Koyré and others, in planning its content²²⁴. Corbin writes of *Recherches philosophiques* that its pages ‘represented a kind of precious laboratory’. Koyré also wrote the introduction to Corbin's first, 1931 translation of “Was ist Metaphysik?” in the journal *Bifur*. The importance of the EPHE as a kind of hub for all that—and so many of those—who were shaping and would continue to shape French thought for the next few decades cannot be overestimated. It was the institutional home for first Koyré's, then Kojév's influential lectures on Hegel, although Corbin recalls that ‘most of Koyré's classes finished at the Harcourt, the historic, comfortable café on the corner of the place de la Sorbonne and the boulevard Saint Michel’, at which Café Harcourt Corbin says ‘a significant part of the French philosophy of the time was elaborated’. Then there were also ‘the soirées held by Alexandre Koyré and his wife in their little apartment on the rue de Navarre’, in the course of which, says Corbin, ‘The program for the next volume of the review *Recherches philosophiques* [Studies in Philosophy] always occupied a central position’²²⁵. The EPHE was, crucially, one of only a few institutions in France at that time where (paid) research could be,

²¹⁷ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.27

²¹⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.27

²¹⁹ H. Corbin, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*, trans. P. Russell, Golgonooza Press, Ipswich 1982

²²⁰ Corbin writes of Koyré: ‘I would like to tell how much my friendship with Alexandre Koyré meant to me. His was one of the most beautiful minds I have known,’ and recounts how he [Corbin] was ‘the last of his colleagues from the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes to take his hand at the clinic, on the eve of his death’ H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”.

²²¹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.27

²²² Christopher Delacampagne, “Heidegger in France”, *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Columbia University Press, New York 2006 p.251

²²³ H. Corbin, “Pour l'anthropologie philosophique : Un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardi d'Alep”, *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. II, 1932-3, Boivin & co. Paris, pp.371-424; H. Corbin, “La théologie dialectique et l'histoire”, *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. III, 1933-4 p.250

²²⁴ Corbin writes: ‘The program for the next volume of the review *Recherches philosophiques* [Studies in Philosophy] always occupied a central position in the course of those soirées on the Rue de Navarre... held by Alexandre Koyré and his wife in their little apartment’. H. Corbin, “Post-Scriptum”

²²⁵ H. Corbin, ““Post-Scriptum””

and indeed was *encouraged* to be conducted and disseminated outside the rigid confines of the French national curriculum.

To some extent, writes Geroulanos, what he calls the French philosophical “event” of the 1930s should be understood as the fruition²²⁶ of various developments begun in the 1920s catalysed by such radical, outside interventions and influences as the “bitingly reductive” final public lecture in a series delivered in Paris in 1928 by the Japanese philosopher and former student of Heidegger’s, Count Shuzo Kuki, on the “General Characteristics of French Philosophy”, in which Kuki summarized (and more or less summarily dismissed) establishment French philosophy according to these four traits:

(i) inner observation (ii); an alliance with positivism; (iii) a fundamental metaphysical—essentially Cartesian-dualism; and (iv) a “striving to be social”²²⁷

And the infamous 1929 encounter at Davos between Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, where they debated ‘the contemporary importance of the Kantian tradition,’ prompted in large part by the publication, earlier in 1929, of Heidegger’s *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*, which ‘had challenged the “official” reading of Kant by the two major German Neo-Kantian schools’.²²⁸ The French contingent at Davos included, e.g., Leon Brunschvicg and the young Emmanuel Levinas. Geroulanos observes that while ‘both Cassirer and Heidegger rejected...the limits of anthropocentrism’, the ‘originality and harshness’ of Heidegger’s argument won out over Cassirer, which in the French context could really not fail to be read as a critique—and thus by implication, a symbolic *defeat*, also—of Brunschvicg’s reigning brand of neo-criticism. As for Brunschvicg, who had ‘openly supported Cassirer’, Geroulanos relates that Brunschvicg later responded to Heidegger’s “victory” by attempting to recast, and thus ‘to recuperate the “profundity”’ of Heidegger’s argument, as ‘a testament to the power and self-transformative potential of Kantianism,’²²⁹ which to some extent, of course, it was; the young Levinas, for one, however, saw Heidegger’s Davos performance as nothing less than “the end of a particular kind of humanism”,²³⁰ i.e., according to Geroulanos, ‘the old, conventional, secular humanism’ which was then associated with Kantianism.²³¹

As corollary to the philosophical ‘attack on man as at once *ideal* and *ground*’ begun in French thought of the 1920s, most clearly evident, according to Geroulanos, in:

²²⁶ catalysed by such “outside” interventions and influences as those of Kuki, and Heidegger at Davos. The period was also notable for the increasing presence of numerous “outsider”, i.e., *émigré* scholars in Paris, often exiles, in and around the EPHE, the eminent Koyré, and later Kojève (both *émigrés* themselves).

²²⁷ S. Geroulanos’ endnote 3, p.49 [ibid.]: Kuki, “General Characteristics of French Philosophy”, in Light, *Shuzo Kuki and Jean-Paul Sartre*, pp.92-95. While perhaps a little crude, writes Geroulanos, Kuki’s observations, and the unfavourable comparisons he made between establishment figures of French thought (‘Henri Bergson, Leon Brunschvicg, Celestin Bouglé and others’) and ‘the work of German theologian-philosophers he himself was trained by—particularly Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers’ nonetheless ‘resonated’ for those ‘young [French] philosophers’ who were also bent upon ‘rejecting the dominant themes...in contemporary [French] idealism’, albeit perhaps in a more ‘polite and systematic’ fashion than Kuki did. (S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... ibid., pp.49-50)

²²⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... ibid., p.50

²²⁹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... ibid., p.51

²³⁰ S. Geroulanos’ endnote 9, p.51 (ibid): P. Gordon, *Rosenzweig and Heidegger; Judaism and German Philosophy*, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley 2003 p.279

²³¹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... ibid., p.51

(i) phenomenological and epistemological arguments directed against scientific positivism and neocriticism and (ii) the dismissal of man's standing as a privileged observer of nature and causality

Geroulanos identifies 'an overturning of the classical transcendental juxtaposition of subject to object', leading, in turn, to what he has coined '*antifoundational realism*, a kind of philosophical "realism" that not only 'denies man any kind of transcendental separation *from* the reality he finds himself in, [but also] attributes to him a contribution to this reality'.²³² Acknowledging the special importance of the journal *Recherches Philosophiques* to this period, Geroulanos cites two major philosophical moments: (i), 'the transformations in epistemology occasioned by the discovery of uncertainty in quantum physics', and (ii) 'the arrival of German phenomenology, rendering obsolete Kantian idealism and the debate between *realism* and *rationalism* that had dominated French epistemology and philosophy of science', after which:

In the hands of Jean Wahl, Gaston Bachelard, and Alexandre Kojève, the critique of scientific determinism in quantum physics combined with the phenomenological critique of idealism, leading to *antifoundational realism*. Antifoundational realism undermined existing realism/idealism distinctions, and it specifically rejected the conception of Man as an all-powerful observer, transcendental to nature and the world.²³³

This claim is well evidenced in the indices of *Recherches Philosophiques*, whose inaugural volume contains, in a section called "Present tendencies in Metaphysics", both Jean Wahl's introduction to his seminal "*Vers le Concret*", Bachelard's "*Noumène et microphysique*"²³⁴, and an essay by Corbin's teacher and friend Jean Baruzi²³⁵ 'on the languages of mysticism'²³⁶, alongside a translation of Martin Heidegger's "*Vom Wesen Des Grundes*".²³⁷ 'What these essays share', writes Geroulanos, 'is a critique of both classical realism and Kantian idealism; Wahl and Bachelard also converge by their attention to new scientific claims, while Baruzi and Wahl speak to the contemporary resonance of the problem of mysticism'.²³⁸ Picturing Corbin here at this extraordinarily catholic—in the broadest sense—intersection of philosophical enquiry it is not so difficult to conceive of how the first French translator of Heidegger, growing up out of the same philosophical "scene" that gave rise to existentialism, could have "grown up" to become what Christopher Delacampagne in *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought* (2006)²³⁹ correctly if rather narrowly calls 'a specialist in Shi'ite Islam', i.e., a scholar of comparative philosophy and mysticisms, once that that scene is rediscovered to have been as rich and strange as it was.

Extra to acknowledging the vital importance of the 'precious laboratory'²⁴⁰ that was *Recherches Philosophiques*, Geroulanos also wishes to stress the as yet undersung 'major philosophical role' played by Alexandre Koyré, the journal's founder, especially for his 'presentation of modern thought and science as conditioned by their metaphysical and religious premises'. Geroulanos also finds Martin Heidegger's

²³² S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.51

²³³ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.52

²³⁴ *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. I, 1931-2 Boivin & co., Paris

²³⁵ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

²³⁶ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.56

²³⁷ "De la nature de la cause", M. Heidegger, trans. A. Bessey, *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. I, 1931-2 Boivin & co., Paris

²³⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.56

²³⁹ *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Columbia University Press, New York 2006 p.251

²⁴⁰ H. Corbin, "Post-Scriptum"

‘approach to transcendence’ as set out in his “*Vom Wesen Des Grundes*” [“On The Essence of Ground”], and as translated and published, as above, in the first incredible volume of *Recherches Philosophiques* (1931-2)²⁴¹, to have “rounded out” ‘the part played by antifoundational realism and Koyré’s study of man in modernity’ by ‘helped overturn the existing perception of the human being as transcending the world, so as to center on man’s “casting” of this world’.²⁴²

The second of Heidegger’s essays to be published in French translation, this first French publication of “*Vom Wesen des Grundes*”, under the title “*De la nature de la cause*”, was the work one A. Bessey.

Here I must give notice of having discovered, in the course of my research, yet another in the remarkable series of errors which continue to emerge in references to, or citations of, Henry Corbin’s translations of Heidegger, as In *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, (2006) Christopher Delacampagne, in his essay “Heidegger in France”²⁴³, wrongly attributes the above mentioned first French translation of “*Vom Wesen Des Grundes*” to Henry Corbin. I can only guess that the reason for this strange accrual of false and references and citations is that none of these authors have considered Henry Corbin and his translation as the main focus of their own project. They seem therefore to have hurried, inferred, assumed, and only very rarely rather inattentive made forays into the original material. Thus, in the face of such mounting errata, while it is pleasing to note the acknowledgement of difference implicit in Geroulanos’ noting that Corbin’s second, Gallimard translation of “*Was ist Metaphysik?*” was, as he puts it—in a radical understatement, verging on error, since as we have noted, this was in fact a substantially different translation to that which appears in *Bifur* —‘adjusted’ to include the translation of Dasein as *réalité humaine* [sic], we are somewhat weary, but not surprised to notice that as Geroulanos now introduces the term *réalité humaine* [sic]²⁴⁴, in order to mount his sound and unprecedented defence of it, he nonetheless fails, though at least consistently (unlike, e.g., Sartre’s first edition of *L’Etre et Neant*), to include the hyphen, whether in English translation, in which language the hyphen seems a little more “unnatural” and unnecessary (despite which I note that Alan Bass, the English translator of Derrida’s *The Margins of Philosophy*, has chosen to consistently render his own translation of the term as “human-reality”²⁴⁵) or in French²⁴⁶, although he does still recognise the vital significance of the (he says *two*) terms ‘codependence [sic]’.

As for Geroulanos’ treatment of such criticism as has been levelled at the term, Derrida’s sensational description of the term as “monstrous” is repeated here, along with more straightforward calumnies such as “poor”, “anthropologizing,” and ‘even [Janicaud’s] “execrable”²⁴⁷— although rather than just being “thrown out there”, so to speak, as by e.g. *Rée*, Derrida’s “monstrous” is rather more shrewdly characterized by Geroulanos as ‘a classically polysemous gesture.’²⁴⁸ Geroulanos does go so far as to

²⁴¹ “De la nature de la cause”, M. Heidegger, trans. A. Bessey, *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol. I, 1931-2 Boivin & co., Paris

²⁴² S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.52

²⁴³ *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought*, Columbia University Press, New York 2006 p.251

²⁴⁴ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.88

²⁴⁵ J. Derrida, *The Margins of Philosophy* pp.117-8

²⁴⁶ e.g., S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* p.67

²⁴⁷ In *Heidegger en France*, p.46, as cited by S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* endnote no. 14, p.53

²⁴⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* endnote no. 14, p.53 (and although it lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be well worth following up Howard Caygill’s intriguing suggestion of wandering into a maze or two and seeing whether a Derridean minotaur, e.g., could bring any more light here).

concede that the ‘plethora of harsh criticisms’ directed toward the term since its use by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, and subsequent rapid post-war decline in usage may perhaps, he says, be deserved ‘insofar as it humanized and concretized a term used by Heidegger to denote the “thereness” of the human being and its disclosure of Being, but neither its humanity nor its reality.’²⁴⁹ This obvious, literal objection is indeed hard to refute. Of Geroulanos’ remarks on the fate of “human reality” [sic] after its appearance in Sartre’s in *Being and Nothingness*, it might also be argued that it was not so much Corbin’s, but Sartre’s inconsistently rendered term that fell into disuse and popular disrepute, which historically nuanced argument bears comparison with Ethan Kleinberg’s suggestion that ‘the fundamental problem with Corbin’s translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* may not have seemed egregious before Sartre’s popularization’.²⁵⁰ Indeed, returning to the term’s pre-war, indeed pre-Sartrean significance, Geroulanos’ writes that:

Perhaps the most appropriate term for a description of the place of man, following the antifoundational and realist tendencies of the early 1930s is that of *human reality*. Marking the codependence of the two terms—the impossibility of a reality pure of any human interaction and the lack of transcendental or absolute status for the human...In “human reality,” the human loses its separation from this reality and becomes enmeshed with it; at the same time, reality is designated as decidedly human, and not real by itself.²⁵¹

We may recognise this “codependence” as what Meillasoux terms “correlationism”. Geroulanos continues:

But “human reality” has a further force in 1930s thought...with Corbin’s translation, it now means *Dasein*, that is, it largely names “human reality” the pure thereness, nonideality, and existence that is indicated by *Dasein*, and thus adjusts both “human” and reality”...pulls away “the human” from the foundationalism and idealism to which it was formerly tied and for which “human reality” would later be unhistorically criticized²⁵²

Thus Geroulanos gives us to understand that the term had a dual significance in the early 1930s; while, he says, it ‘largely names [that] “human reality [etc]... indicated by *Dasein*’, what escapes this “largely” would largely to be accounted for by its naming of the co-dependence of the “human” and “reality” so characteristic of the emergent thinking of antifoundational realism, of which, says Geroulanos, the ‘*complementarity* of phenomenology and quantum physics’ formed the ground.²⁵³ Note how closely Geroulanos’ characterization of the co-dependence of this *antifoundational realist* “human reality” accords with our reading, thus far, of the indispensable hyphen, the *corrélation* of Corbin’s *réalité-humaine*. Indeed, had Geroulanos not omitted the hyphen from his consideration of Corbin’s use of the term, it could only have strengthened his analysis. Considered in this light, Corbin’s choice of translation, made in agreement with friends, can be read as a gesture of situating Heidegger in the then *most* contemporary context, by using the term that was most au courant, and which would then have had a matrix of resonances for the *most* contemporary, i.e., the most avant-garde readers, and but which with the passage of time would,

²⁴⁹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... *ibid.*, endnote no. 14, p.53

²⁵⁰ E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential*, footnote no. 36, p.133

²⁵¹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... *ibid.*, p.53

²⁵² S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... *ibid.*, p.53

²⁵³ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.59

perhaps inevitably, elude later, “unhistorical” critique, as in the not-so-old adage, “You kind of had to be there.”

In the French philosophical context of the early 1930s, writes Geroulanos, the ‘shared hostility’ of ‘phenomenology and theoretical physics’ toward ‘any imagination of a reality transparent to the mind’ was of particular significance’. The sheer ‘epistemological novelty of these two movements, and the question of their role in philosophical treatments of realism’ had a great impact, ‘most visibly in works on the history and philosophy of science by Koyré and Bachelard, and most importantly in the turn to a new realism by Jean Wahl and Alexandre Kojève.’²⁵⁴

Kojève and others took a particular interest in Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, according to which in attempting to determine both the location and velocity of a moving electron, the physicist must bombard it with photons, whose energy is a) bound to impact on the movement and velocity of the electron b) *in ways the observer cannot predict*. In other words, not only is the physicist/observer inextricably implicated in the outcome of the experiment, their very involvement, i.e., their very attempt to measure a physical phenomenon a) *alters* the outcome of what they are attempting to measure, and b) it does so *in an uncertain way*. Thus not only can ‘the determinist foundation of post-Newtonian physics—that such a movement must be fully observable’, i.e., consequently predictable, ‘no longer be sustained,’ but ‘the Cartesian and modern construction of nature and space’, wherein the ‘thinking, calculating observer (and his tools of study)’ are postulated as ‘strictly independent and separable from the objects and world of his study’, is, at the quantum level, quite simply proved wrong. And with the loss of this ‘transcendent observer’, writes Geroulanos, the ‘scientific and positivist’²⁵⁵ hope that “man” may one day arrive at absolute knowledge—i.e., the absolute “transparency” of a separate nature—is lost. In this way ‘the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics’²⁵⁶ which was understood to represent a ‘scientific revolution’²⁵⁷ also effected a ‘philosophical paradigm shift’.²⁵⁸ The response of e.g., Kojève, Wahl and Bachelard was to call for a new—and for Kojève, *far more complex*—thinking of realism²⁵⁹ than was allowed for by the old schismatic ‘debate between rationalism and realism’ that had characterized a great deal of the early 20th century’s pre-quantum era philosophy of science, wherein a rationalism ‘allied to neocriticism and the claim that science proceeds from the reasoning human mind and encompasses the world as it may be understood’, was opposed to a realism characterised by the claim ‘that science seeks to comprehend a grand world external to man and proceeds from the real data provided by this world.’²⁶⁰ For Kojève in particular, ‘the interaction between observing and observed systems in the milieu of a world’ (as in the Uncertainty Principle experiment, above) was especially interesting for the way in which ‘it reconfigures the philosophical conception of the subject-object relationship’.²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.59

²⁵⁵ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.61

²⁵⁶ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.62

²⁵⁷ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.59

²⁵⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.61

²⁵⁹ Cf. Kojève’s ‘second PhD thesis, directed by Koyré’, *L’Idée du déterminisme* (S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.64)

²⁶⁰ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* p.60

²⁶¹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism* ... p.64

On one hand the observed system is no less real than the observing system, and *it is independent from the latter as regards its being*; their interaction is itself also real. On the other hand, the totality formed by the two interacting systems is certainly real and “objective,” in the sense that it exists independently as much of the empirical subject (the experimenter in the flesh) as from the gnoseological “knowing subject.”²⁶²

Thus for Kojève, the independent realities of the observed and observing “systems” in the uncertainty principle experiment suggest the possibility of ‘separate and complementary ontologies...one *anthropological* ontology and a *separate* one for the world and the things experienced by man’.²⁶³ We learn from Geroulanos that Kojève drew quite explicitly on ‘Heidegger’s treatment of *Dasein* and his rethinking of *world* and *reality*’ as a philosophical resource for ‘interpreting the successes and limitations of [the new] physics’, and vice versa.²⁶⁴ In ‘an elaborate 1936 note on Hegel and Heidegger’²⁶⁵, for example, Kojève reads this “ontological dualism” of observed and observing systems into the separate-being and correlation of that which Kojève refers to here as ‘the human being (*Dasein*)’²⁶⁶ and that which Kojève however deliberately refers to as ‘(*Vorhandensein*)’²⁶⁷, thus lending Being (*-sein*)²⁶⁸ to Heideggerian *Vorhandenheit*²⁶⁹, which for Heidegger, it does not have (but which strangely accords with Corbin’s gloss of the ‘*presential* knowledge (*ilm hozuri*)’ of the gnoseology of the *Ishrâqiyûn*, in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî” (1978), cited in my chapter here “Corbin’s Debt to Heidegger”). Consider the above, in light of the following passages from Henry Corbin’s introduction to the 1938 Gallimard Edition:

By contrast, for the existent that it allows to manifest in the horizon that it [*réalité-humaine*] projects, the truth is essentially that of *being there discovered* [*d’être mis à découvert*] (*Entdecktheit*), *ontic* truth. Instead of *existence* [“out-standing”] (which is always the *ex-sistance* of a world), the mode of being of the existent there discovered in the world is that of an *in-sistance* [“in-standing”] in that world. It is that which, as opposed to *réalité-humaine*, forms reality-as-given, the reality-of-subsistent-things [*réalité-des-choses subsistantes*] (*Vorhandenheit*), and the encircling range of utensile-reality [*réalité-ustensile*] (*Zuhandenheit*), all of those objects whose reality is revealed in the usage, in a “for ...”.

Compare, e.g., the independent being of Kojève’s “observed system”, and the “ontic truth” of Corbin’s *d’être mis à découvert* [being there discovered]. Compare also the *ontological* truth (Corbin) with the “observing system” (Kojève), and the following excerpt from Corbin’s consideration of his translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* in the much later “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî” (1978):

Da-sein: being-there, this is understood. But being-there, is essentially to be enacting a presence, enactment of that presence *by* which and *for* which

²⁶² A. Kojève, *L’Idée du déterminisme*, cited in S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.64

²⁶³ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.65

²⁶⁴ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.65-6

²⁶⁵ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.68

²⁶⁶ A. Kojève, “Note sur Hegel et Heidegger”, *Rue Descartes* 7, 1993, pp.35-46, cited in S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...*p.69

²⁶⁷ A. Kojève, “Note sur Hegel et Heidegger”, *Rue Descartes* 7, 1993, pp.35-46, cited in S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...*p.69

²⁶⁸ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* p.68 In English discussions of Heidegger it is not so unusual to come upon casual-seeming references to *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* as “being-at-hand”, and “being-to-hand”, but this usage is made to seem strange and rather careless by a consideration of Kojève’s intentional use of *Sein* here. In discussions of ontology, it does not do at all to go shoving in extra *beings*, *êtres* or *Seins* where they do not occur in the original without a great deal of thought.

²⁶⁹ translated by Corbin in the 1938 Gallimard Edition as *realite-des-choses-subsistantes*, [the reality-of-subsistent-things]

meaning is revealed in the present. The modality of this human presence is thus to be revelatory, but in such a way that, in revealing the meaning, it reveals itself, and is that which is revealed.²⁷⁰

Of course, they are both reading (into) the same Heideggerian ontology, but it all gets much more interesting again when Geroulanos offers the revelation, based on his research into Kojève's archive, Corbin's "human reality" [sic], was not, as we may have supposed his own coinage but apparently a precedent established by Alexandre Kojève, in his 'use of the term to translate Heidegger's *Dasein* in his early, unpublished work' (no date is provided),²⁷¹ which 'his collaborator and student Henri Corbin'²⁷² is said by Geroulanos to have adopted. This claim certainly accords well enough with Corbin's statement that the translation of *Dasein* as *réalité-humaine* was made 'in agreement with our friends'.²⁷³ As for whose usage followed *whose*, without clear evidence to hand we shall have to trust in the scholarly ethics and good judgement of Geroulanos, but all of this does also suggest, via Kojève, a possible Heisenbergian influence on Corbin's translation of Heidegger, as part of (as before) a wider contextual influence and inflection. Otherwise, considering again the above passage from "From Heidegger to Suhraṣṣavardī" it is perhaps worth asking *why* Corbin did not choose a more literal translation. Why not "*être-la*"? After all, he writes: 'being-there [*être-la*]. This is understood. But...'. Why "But"? Why go further? Corbin quite clearly acknowledges the self-sufficiency of *Dasein*, as such. —'But'— but, for him, it doesn't say quite enough. From our earlier reading of his "Translator's Preface" to the Gallimard Edition, in light of the above defence, it seems clear that the "more" Corbin determined ought to be translated into the naming of the Heideggerian *existent*, is, on the one hand, more of *Heidegger*, and more of *Dasein* in particular: by which I mean, more of the pro-jective aspect of *Da-sein*'s thrown-ness, more of the trans-scendent nature of *Dasein*, i.e., more of the "new transcendence" that Heidegger's work, e.g., his "*Vom Wesen Des Grundes*" (included in the Gallimard translation) had to offer in place of the old, classical, transcendence: more of the potential that Heidegger's work had for the thinkers of this *other* "human reality" [sic], i.e., that native to the French philosophical climate of the early 1930s. On the other hand, by his using their term, "human reality" for *Dasein*, albeit *with* its proprietary, Corbinian-Heideggerian hyphen, he was thus at once, as it were, situating, or orienting, Heidegger's *Dasein*, in-relation-to the French philosophical avant-garde, as if to say, to those readers with a suitably nuanced grasp of all this, "Here is one of ours". If so, it could be said that Corbin was exceeding his "pure" remit as translator. But only a hasty, unhistorical, ahistorical, or, at the time, "unhip" reading of his translation could find, e.g., a *humanist* human—i.e., a Cartesian 'human subject'²⁷⁴ in Corbin's *réalité-humaine*. As ever, *Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*. Again, in the words of Sartre: 'It was *for us* that Corbin made the translation.'²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhraṣṣavardī"

²⁷¹ S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism ...* *ibid.*, p.53

²⁷² Who however did not spell "Henri" with an "i", but a "y". Cf. e.g., all of his publications, and his correspondence with Gertrude Bing of the Warburg Library, 1931-49.

²⁷³ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhraṣṣavardī".

²⁷⁴ Cf. E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.70

²⁷⁵ J.P. Sartre, *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, p. 407, cited in E. Kleinberg, and before that E. Kleinberg, *Generation Existential* p.132

Chapter Three: Corbin's Debt to Heidegger

Having previously traversed the course of the “Biographical Post-Scriptum”, we now double back to the text to which it is appended, namely the 1976 interview transcript, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”, in which Corbin states that in order to ‘facilitate understanding of just what has been [his] work and [his] quest’, he finds it ‘agreeable, and moreover necessary’, to set out precisely what he ‘owe[s] to Heidegger’, and what *of* Heidegger he has ‘kept with [him] during a lifetime of investigations’.²⁷⁶ This is no tautology, or merely rhetorical distinction; there is an inherent difference, if by “owe” we might understand something like “that which I have appropriated”; in that *some* of the Heidegger he has “kept with him”, he represents here, as elsewhere, precisely in order to refute on theosophical grounds; thus, not so much a debt, this, a self-given obligation. The question of whether, and if so, then what, where, and to what extent Corbin may be said to have appropriated Heidegger—according to Robert C. Scharff’s definition of appropriation, given here in relation to Heidegger’s own appropriation of Dilthey as being ‘as much a matter of taking up and taking further as it is a matter of taking over and continuing what has already come to be’²⁷⁷—and where Corbin has rather recalled Heidegger, precisely in order to differ from him entirely, is what is at stake here.

Corbin himself states, quite clearly, in “From Heidegger to Suhravardī” that when he refers to “the works of Heidegger” therein, he means only those that he had at his disposal by the time of the publication of the Gallimard Edition of *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* in 1938, already a substantial (and paradigm-shifting) oeuvre. Healthy scepticism alone would constitute a more than adequate ground to set about testing this claim of Corbin’s; however, such a vast undertaking (considering the volume of both Heidegger’s and Corbin’s collected works post-1938) exceeds the scope of the thesis. I am rather gladly inclined to take Corbin’s insistence on this point as a guide, and have chosen to further confine those Heideggerian texts to which I refer in this reading of “From Heidegger to Suhravardī” to those explicitly mentioned by name therein, and those that appear in the Gallimard translation, which are, in order of appearance: *What is Metaphysics?* (1929); *On the Essence of Ground* (1929); Chapter I and subsections 72-76 of Chapter V of Division Two of *Being and Time* (1927); Part 4 of “the Kant book”, i.e., *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), and notes from a conference on *Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry*, which last I have presumed to set aside here.

I am nonetheless bound to mention here, however, that, as has been noted in my chapter “From Paris to Teheran”, Stella Corbin states that her husband Henry *continued* to work on his translation of *Being and Time* while in Istanbul²⁷⁸, where he was assigned from 1939-1945 in order to compile an edition of Suhravardī manuscripts in Arabic and Persian. This strongly suggests that Corbin may have embarked upon a complete translation of the work, or if not then perhaps at least to reworking and/or expanding upon the excerpts he translated for the 1938 Gallimard Edition. It is highly significant, both in terms of what of

²⁷⁶ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”

²⁷⁷ Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before Being and Time”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 35, Number 1, January 1997, p.113

²⁷⁸ Daryush Shayegan citing Edition no. 33 of the *Eranos Jahrbuch* (1964), in D. Shayegan, *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L’Islam* Spirituel Editions Albin Michel, 2011 p.24

Heidegger Corbin may have “kept with him”, of Heidegger, and for Corbin scholarship in more general terms, to note that he was working on both Heidegger *and* Suhravardī in this period. We also know from the “Post-Scriptum” that Corbin’s own student copy of *Being and Time* was replete with Arabic marginalia.

Corbin opens the main discussion in “From Heidegger to Suhravardī” by stating that, for him, ‘Heidegger’s great merit will remain in his having centred the act of philosophizing in hermeneutics... a term borrowed directly from the Greek and one that has its common usage among biblical specialists.’ He continues:

We owe the technical definition to Aristotle: the title of his treatise *peri hermenēias* was translated into Latin as *De interpretatione*. ...in contemporary philosophical parlance hermeneutics is that which, in German, is called *das Verstehen*...the art or technique of “Understanding”, as this was understood by Dilthey.²⁷⁹

Here Corbin’s apparently general definition of hermeneutics in fact pertains directly to Heidegger, via the Dilthey reference, as follows. As Robert Scharff notes, in his 1997 essay “Heidegger’s “Appropriation of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”; in his ‘famous [1923] Time-lecture to the Marburg Theological Society’²⁸⁰, Heidegger announced as “the first principle of hermeneutics” that gaining access to history rests upon understanding what it means to *be* historical’.²⁸¹ Just a few years later, in Section 77 of Chapter V of *Being and Time*, “Temporality and Historicity”²⁸², Heidegger attributes his own arrival at this understanding of hermeneutics to his appropriation of the work of Dilthey, just as, in the introduction to Chapter V, he states the sole ‘issue’ of the analysis contained therein to be the furtherance of the adoption of Dilthey’s own pioneering research.²⁸³ Scharff, again writing in 1997, states that recent Heidegger scholarship, including ‘reconstructions of [his] early lecture courses’ shows not only that the process of Heidegger’s appropriation of Dilthey ‘took nearly ten years’, during and ‘*in terms of*’ which ‘appropriation process...Heidegger first worked out his conception of philosophy as a “hermeneutical way”’, but moreover that ‘the first, or what Kisiel calls the “Dilthey Draft”’²⁸⁴ of *Being and Time*²⁸⁵ itself began life as ‘a projected review article of the Dilthey-Yorck *Correspondence*’, which then got entirely out of hand.²⁸⁶ In other words, it seems that Heidegger’s “appropriation” of Dilthey, with the aforementioned review at its epicentre, was the very kernel and whorled impetus from which the whole first book of *Being and Time* itself was, as it were, flung out;²⁸⁷ eventually coming to figure within its edifice as Chapter V, “Temporality and Historicity”: this being one of the two excerpts of *Being and Time* that Corbin translated for the Gallimard Edition of *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?*, albeit *excluding* its final Section 77, entitled “The

²⁷⁹ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī ”

²⁸⁰ M.Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit: Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft Juli 1924*, ed. Hartmut Tietjen (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1989); bilingual edition, *The Concept of Time*, trans. W. McNeill; Oxford, Blackwell, 1992

²⁸¹ Robert C. Scharff, citing M.Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit: Vortrag vor der Marburger Theologenschaft Juli 1924*, in Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”, *ibid.*, p.105 (Scharff’s emphasis)

²⁸² M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006 (first ed. 1962)

²⁸³ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* p.429

²⁸⁴ Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”, *ibid.*, p.106

²⁸⁵ originally entitled “The Concept of Time (Comments on the Dilthey-Yorck Correspondence)” Cf. Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”, *ibid.*, p.106, footnote no.4, in which Scharff cites ‘Kisiel’s “A Philosophical Post-Script: On the Genesis of ‘Sein und Zeit’,” *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 8 (1992-93): 226-32’, adding that he has ‘benefited from consulting Kisiel’s unpublished “The Young Heidegger and Neo-Kantianism.”’

²⁸⁶ Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”, *ibid.*, p.106

²⁸⁷ Scharff states that ‘what Heidegger finds [in Dilthey’s] writings is not just a kind of unknowing anticipation of his ontological themes, but the very materials for his own way of handling them’. Robert C. Scharff, “Heidegger’s “Appropriation” of Dilthey before *Being and Time*”, *ibid.*, p.107

connection of the foregoing exposition of the problem of historicity with the researches of Wilhelm Dilthey and the ideas of Count Yorck”²⁸⁸, a vestige of the germinal review, above, cast aside for the Gallimard translation yet with which Corbin is undoubtedly also familiar.

Returning to “From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī”; having now declared the ‘direct link between the *Verstehen* as hermeneutic in Dilthey’s “Comprehensive Philosophy” and Heidegger’s analytic of Dasein, Corbin traces the origin of Dilthey’s concept of hermeneutics, in turn, from *his* own reading of ‘Schleiermacher, the great theologian of the German Romantic period’,²⁸⁹²⁹⁰ going on to state that it is precisely in ‘the filiation of hermeneutics itself passing through the theologian Schleiermacher’ that ‘the theological origins, namely Protestant, of the concept of hermeneutics that we use in philosophical circles today’ may be relocated. That a relocation of ‘this link between hermeneutics and theology’ appears necessary to Corbin derives from his ‘impression’ that ‘unfortunately...our young Heideggerians have somewhat lost sight [of it].’ This “loss to sight” he attributes²⁹¹ to the very ‘idea of theology...that holds sway today, in France as elsewhere’ and which by its nature appears to Corbin to obscure this connection itself, in its very possibility. Here, I believe Corbin is referring to the triumph of religious orthodoxy, and the concomitant exclusion and neglect of esoterism and “prophetic hermeneutics” that Corbin finds to derive in large part from the uniquely Christian dogma of fleshly Incarnation, and the subsequent phenomenon of social, i.e., ecclesiastical Incarnation, and theology as dogmatic mediation, as he sets out in *Alone With The Alone*, e.g..

Thus, in order to restore the connection to sight, i.e., that between theology and hermeneutics, for Corbin it is not sufficient merely to somehow jog the collective philosophical memory, by e.g., retracing the filiation of philosophical hermeneutics, as above, but requires the restoration of an ‘altogether different...idea of theology’ itself, one whose connection to philosophical hermeneutics may more easily be countenanced. Here, we arrive at one of the abiding Corbinian themes—appropriately framed within the familiar Heideggerian device of the *Wiederholung* (“retrieval/revival”)—as such a restoration, for Corbin, may ultimately only be achieved via ‘the concurrence of the hermeneutics practiced within the Religions of the Book: Judaism, Christianity, Islam’ which ‘from the very outset’ have ‘put into play the same themes and vocabulary familiar to phenomenology’, *because*, for Corbin, ‘it is therein that hermeneutics has developed as a spontaneous exegesis’, and thus ‘therein lies reserved its future palingenesis.’²⁹²

But *why?* as Corbin both rhetorically asks, and answers. Not *only* because, as we shall see, for Corbin, as for Heidegger, according to Giorgio Agamben: ‘the origin [in Greek, *arkhē*, meaning at once origin and

²⁸⁸ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2006 (first ed. 1962)

²⁸⁹ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī ”

²⁹⁰ Extra to Heidegger’s own hermeneutical filiation, at one remove, as it were, to Schleiermacher *via* Dilthey, Heidegger is himself also said to have spent the summer of 1917 reading Schleiermacher (this just a year and a half before Heidegger’s wife Elfride would announce Heidegger’s unorthodox “Protestant turn” in a letter to the Catholic priest Father Englebert Krebs on December 23rd 1918). Stating that Heidegger had ‘lost his [Catholic] church faith’, and she had ‘not found’ hers, she continues that after much conversation and prayer together, ‘both of us now think only as Protestants—that is: we believe in a personal God and pray to Him, but without any dogmatic ties and apart from Protestant or Catholic orthodoxy’. Two weeks later, Heidegger would write to Krebs himself. Thomas Sheehan, “Reading A Life”, *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* ed. Charles Guignon, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 70-96.

²⁹¹ not merely to e.g., the vicissitudes of time, the carelessness of youth etc., Heideggerian or otherwise, but—

²⁹² H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhraṣardī ”

commandment] never ceases beginning; that is to say, never ceases to govern and command what it has initiated'²⁹³, apparently regardless of whether it may be lost to sight—but also, specifically, here for Corbin

Because therein one is in possession of a Book upon which all depends. It is indeed a question of *understanding* the meaning, but of understanding the *true meaning*. Three things to consider: there is the act of *understanding*, there is the phenomenon of the *meaning*, and there is the unveiling or revelation of the *truth* of this meaning. Now, are we to understand by this “true” meaning that which we currently call the historical meaning, or rather a meaning that refers us to an altogether other level than that of History as the word is commonly understood?²⁹⁴

Corbin now states that if he himself lays claim to phenomenology, ‘it is because philosophical hermeneutics is essentially the key that opens the hidden meaning (etymologically the *esoteric*) underlying the exoteric statement.’ However, while he is happy to state that he found his *way* to hermeneutics via Heidegger, Corbin rejects the “‘virtuous insinuations’” of syncretism levelled at him by ‘certain historians’ on the grounds that he had “mixed up” Heidegger with Suhravardī.’ Corbin states for the record that he has *not* used ‘Heidegger as a key’ during his own hermeneutic explorations, having rather made use of ‘the same key that [Heidegger] himself had made use of, and which was at everyone’s disposition’: i.e., the *clavis hermeneutica*. The appropriate question, for Corbin, is therefore rather that of the extent to which ‘the Heideggerian hermeneutic, a distant offspring of Schleiermacher’ figured for him as ‘the threshold of an integral hermeneutics.’²⁹⁵

While Henry Corbin arrived at Marburg University well after Heidegger himself departed for Freiburg, any doubt as to whether Corbin is acquainted with earlier Heideggerian *works* than those he translated for the Gallimard Edition is removed, when, continuing with the theme of hermeneutics, he commends Heidegger’s 1916 habilitation thesis on *Duns Scotus’ Theory of the Categories and of Meaning*²⁹⁶ to the reader’s attention, having himself found those of its pages concerned with the *significatio passiva* both ‘illuminating’ and, indeed, immediately useful upon being asked ‘to stand in for [his] dear departed friend Alexandre Koyré at the Section of Religious Sciences in the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes*’ from 1937-1939, and ‘discourse upon Lutheran hermeneutics’.²⁹⁷ E.g. (Heidegger):

The term modus significandi can be understood either as the modus significandi activus or the modus significandi passivus. The modus activus is the act of meaning as an accomplishment of consciousness. It is called this because the bestowal of meaning by the apprehending consciousness is “like an action”. The modus passivus means the result of the accomplishment, the objective correlate of the act, which Lotze designates as impression, immediate givenness to the extent it is conceived of in the measure of meaning, that is, is

²⁹³ G. Agamben, ‘What is a Commandment?’ lecture of 28 March 2011 at Kingston University; audio archived at <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/tag/agamben-giorgio/>

²⁹⁴ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”

²⁹⁵ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”

²⁹⁶ Prefaced with the following rather anti-Historical ‘Logo’ from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*: ‘...in looking back into the internal essence of philosophy there are neither precursors nor followers’²⁹⁶— M. Heidegger, *Duns Scotus’ Theory of the Categories and of Meaning*, University of Freiburg, 1916; trans. Harold Robbins, De Paul University, 1978, published by University Microfilms International, Michigan 1985

²⁹⁷ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhravardī”

informed. The modus activus is nothing else than the subjective side, the modus passivus being the objective side of meaning.²⁹⁸

For it is Corbin's conviction that the 'notion' of the *significatio passiva* 'dominates the hermeneutics of the young Luther', as in the following example:

Confronting the psalm verse "In justitia tua libera me" the young Luther asks: How can divine justice, the aspect of Righteousness opposed to that of Mercy, be the instrument of deliverance? There is no way out of this quandary so long as we consider this justice as an attribute that we confer upon God Himself. Everything changes, however, as soon as we consider it in its *significatio passiva*. By this we mean that justice by which we are made to be just.²⁹⁹

That is to say, 'the divine quality is only manifest to the extent that it is invested in the person'.³⁰⁰ Discursing of hermeneutic keys, the 'key of the *significatio passiva*' (which will prove indispensable to our imminent reading of "Corbin's Imaginal"), now serves to open a way, in the text of "From Heidegger to Suhrawardī", to the 'mystical philosophy' of Islam; in many of whose 'great tracts' Corbin says he has also 'run across this same hermeneutic situation', and whose 'specificity' he was able to recognise *as such*, thanks to his already having the "key" in question to hand.

A simple example: the advent of Being in this theosophy consists in putting Being in the imperative... That which is primary is neither the *ens* nor the *esse*, but the *esto*. "Be!" This imperative inaugurator of "Being", this is the divine imperative in its active aspect (*amr fi'lī*); but considered in the "being" that it makes "to be", the "being" that we are, none other than this same imperative, but in its *significatio passiva* (*amr maf'ūli*).³⁰¹

In this triple citation by Corbin, of Luther, Islamic theosophy and Heidegger's own habilitation thesis on Duns Scotus, we have our first intimation of what we might call Corbin's "vertical correlationism", that of/between *Be'ing* and *be'ing*, which, for him, intersects the "horizontal" correlation of *Dasein*, opening the "closed hermeneutic circle" to a creative infinitude.

Cf. also Giorgio Agamben—who in his lecture "What is a Commandment?" (ibid.) prefers to translate the biblical *en arkhē ēn ho Lógos* as 'in the *commandment* was the word', leaning, as it were, on this "side" of the term's etymological ambiguity, in emphatic recognition of this *Be!* as *the* original commandment and *Begin'ing*. Corbin's deliberately chosen, most *original* example of the *significatio passiva*, the very *arkhē*-type of all others, at work in Islamic philosophy as in all three of the Bookish monotheisms, when read in

²⁹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning* (ibid.), pp.132-3

²⁹⁹ Corbin continues: 'And so it is for the other divine attributes as well, which cannot be understood (*modus intelligendi*) except through their relation with us (our *modus essendi*). As such, for Corbin, these "divine attributes" 'should always be expressed with the adjunction of a suffix along the lines of "-fique'. The anonymous translator of the English version supplied by the *Amis de Corbin* breaks off at this point to note that 'the suffix "fique" ...has a much more widespread applicability in French than "icent" in English, as such the following French examples he cites do not all admit of an adequate translation: "l'unifique, le bénéfique, le vérifique, le sanctifique". These terms translated into English - the unifying, the beneficent, the veridical, the sanctifying - fail to illustrate the philosophical idea that Corbin is here concerned with: that the divine quality is only manifest to the extent that it is invested in the person.

³⁰⁰ Anonymous translator's note, this English version of "From Heidegger to Suhrawardī" provided by the *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin*. (<http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/propos.htm>)

³⁰¹ "From Heidegger to Suhrawardī"

parallel with Corbin's preceding Lutheran exposition of the *significatio passiva*—wherein human justice, or just-being is the outcome of the divine imperative *Justice*—i.e., *Be just!* in its *significatio passiva*—necessitates that beings, as creatures of the divine imperative *Be!* are thus to be understood not merely as created-beings, but as *be'ings* of *Be'ing* in *significatio passiva*, i.e., as *creative-creatures* of divine creativity—also illuminates Corbin's own reading of, “debt” and relation to Heidegger; whose own ‘conception of the history of being’ is defined, again according to Agamben, by the formulation, ‘intrinsic to our culture’, wherein ‘the *arkhē*, the origin [the beginning] is always already...the foundation that commands and rules’³⁰², as may certainly be seen at work even in Heidegger's impulse towards *Wiederholung*, driving the “violence” of his own *arkhē*-logy.

Where Heidegger touches on theological genesis in Part 4 of the Kant book, however, he does so in order to state that even were the “impossible possibility” of a rational proof of ‘a Being-created of man’ possible, then even by thus characterizing ‘man as an *ens creatum*’³⁰³ we would still ‘only prove once more the fact of his finitude’, precisely *as* a created-being, which we might understand in terms of the “dependency” of the created-being on being created; this however is still a rather useless proof for Heidegger's own agenda, as he says it would neither exhibit the *essence* of finitude, nor ‘determine this essence to be the basic constitution of the being of man’. For Heidegger, underlying the question of First Philosophy, that of “What is being as such?”, i.e., the “question of being”, lies the yet more original ‘Question of Being’, i.e., that of “What is Being as such?"; where Being, as the “Being of being”, is that which ‘generally determines the being as being’.³⁰⁴ Note, this is still a relation of dependency; wherein being is dependent on Being for/as that which determines its beingness.

Thus, while in “What is Metaphysics?”, however, Heidegger's whole proof of finitude hinges on Being's Creative-Being, i.e., on the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*, in Part 4 of the Kant book, the Heideggerian “Being of beings”, as that which *makes* beings beings, i.e., ‘that which determines beings as such’, appears to hold only a passing similarity to the *amr fi'li* (*Be'ing*) of what Corbin calls “mystical Islamic philosophy”, in relation to ‘the “being” that it makes “to be”, *amr maf'ûli*’.³⁰⁵ Here (in Part 4 of the Kant book) Heideggerian Being is not classed here as “creative”, but merely “determinant”, such that my paraphrastic resort, above, to the term “makes”, in describing Heideggerian Being as “that which *makes* beings beings”, appears imprecise and misleading.

The comparison of Corbin's theosophical “*Be'ing* and *be'ing*”, (i.e., *be'ing as Be'ing* in *significatio passiva*) with Heideggerian “Being and being” as set out in the Kantbook thus recalls Corbin's remark, in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî” that he is ‘left with the impression...formulated by a colleague’³⁰⁶ that ‘the Heideggerian hermeneutic gives the impression of a theology without theophany.’³⁰⁷

³⁰² G. Agamben, ‘What is a Commandment?’ (*ibid.*)

³⁰³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.154

³⁰⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.156

³⁰⁵ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî ”

³⁰⁶ Pierre Trotignon, as he recalls

³⁰⁷ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî ”

While for the duration of Heidegger's essay "What is Metaphysics?" Being is restored to its creative theological function as the *Summum Ens*, it is only so as to facilitate Heidegger's proof of the finitude of *Being* itself, per se, according to the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*. However, in its very dependency upon the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*, this proof, at once "outs" and implies a critique of the doctrine itself, as follows.

In the following passage from "What is Metaphysics?", Heidegger states that in contrast to 'ancient metaphysics', which, he says, 'conceives the nothing in the sense of nonbeing, that is, unformed matter, matter which cannot take form as an in-formed being that would offer an outward appearance or aspect (*eidōs*)':

Christian dogma denies the truth of the proposition *ex nihilo nihil fit* and thereby bestows on the nothing a transformed significance, the sense of the complete absence of beings apart from God: *ex nihilo fit—ens creatum*. Now the nothing becomes the counter-concept to being proper, the *summum ens*, Gods as *ens creatum*. ... no one is bothered by the difficulty that if God creates out of nothing precisely He must be able to relate Himself to the nothing. But if God is God he cannot know the nothing, assuming that the "Absolute" excludes nothingness.

Thus for Heidegger even this 'cursory historical review' 'awakens for the first time the proper formulation of the metaphysical question concerning the Being of beings', and problematizes the nothing, which may no longer remain as 'the indeterminate opposite of beings but reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings', i.e., it introduces limit, finitude, to the essence of Being itself; thus problematizing *creation ex nihilo*. (Unless I am missing something), it seems rather easy to see how the *significatio passiva* would solve this theological problem. If *be!ing* is *Be!ing*, simply another mode of *Be!ing*, then the nothing, the *nihilo*, has nothing to do with it.

Heidegger's intention here is not to solve the problem at all; instead he relentlessly *pushes* this traditional, dogmatic construction to auto-destruction; that is, to the destruction of Creative Being as Absolute, and thus down comes the whole edifice. At the same time, however, he relies on the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in "What is Metaphysics?" for his own proof of finitude, even while he is destroying the doctrine itself. He then takes his proof of finitude, so obtained, and as the saying goes, "runs with it", having just torn the *dogmatic* Christian Creator God "out of the sky", to be consumed by the *nihil*. The question remains whether Heidegger is really treating of "the numinous itself" here, or, rather, as in the essay's title, the *tradition* of metaphysics itself. God is only gone into nothingness if this—the dogma of *creation ex nihilo*, that is—is the only theological formulation available to you. Here, it seems to me, is a point where Corbin's putative left and right Heideggerianisms, anticipated in "From Heidegger to Suhrawardī", might diverge; one in which the death of God has just been effected, and the other in which it which the limitations of dogmatic Christian theology, and the traditional metaphysics grounded upon it, have just been rehearsed/announced.

If, when in “What is Metaphysics” Heidegger raises the traditional conception of God as the *Summum Ens* to allow, he says, for ‘the proper formulation of the metaphysical question concerning the Being of beings’,³⁰⁸ then in stating that ‘the nothing reveals itself as belonging to the Being of beings’, Heidegger has announced nothing less than the nihilation of God. Where God/the *Summum Ens* must figure as an Absolute, and where the Absolute must figure as that which is without dependency, without relation, this mere relationality *alone*, never mind that it is to the Nothing, is a(n)nihilation. As such, Heidegger’s canting recitation of the dual and exclusive concern of “scientific man”, as founded in the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo*, as ‘...beings only, and besides that—nothing; beings alone, and further—nothing; solely beings, and beyond that—nothing’³⁰⁹; as the “dependent” creature Dasein is dangled out into the void (cf. ‘Latin *dependere*, from *de-* ‘down’ + *pendere* ‘hang’³¹⁰) only seems to echo and ever amplify the nothing as absence of God; yet, it is in fact precisely and only a God, i.e., the conception of God as the *Summum Ens* which has been annihilated; the Absolute dissolving, by definition, into the finitude of its very “in relation to”. The potential for nihilism is clear, for those for whom the traditional metaphysical, i.e., the dogmatic theological construct of *creatio ex nihilo* is the whole and the only paradigm. Doubtless many have read Heidegger in this way, yet his working out of “Absolute Finitude” does not preclude the possibility of a *theos* absolutely. While Being persists, as it does throughout “What is Metaphysics?” precisely as the *Summum Ens* and in relation to the Nothing, as such it is neither Absolute, *nor theos*, according to Heidegger’s proof, above: that is, *if theos*, i.e., God as *Being/the Summum Ens*, is required to be Absolute. Thus, conversely, *theos/Absolute* is not Being. Thus the Absolute *Is* not; and round about here, as the verb “to be”, runs out of usefulness in relation to *theos/the Absolute*, in any further attempt to determine what *theos/the Absolute* might “be” if *theos/the Absolute* *is* not, we begin to approach the terrain of, e.g., Corbin’s late essay, “Apophantic Theology as an Antidote to Nihilism.”³¹¹ If, however, *Be/ing* and *be/ing* are (“vertically correlated”) modes of *the same* Creative Imperative *Be!* then the Absolute/*theos* may *be Be/ing*—note here not just the imperative, but also the gerund form—but “Is” “something” other than the Being of traditional metaphysics entirely—“something” that “is” not. Ineffably so.

Thus if Heidegger *is* announcing a “death” of God here, it is an inevitable death of God as conceived by, and intrinsic to the “playing out” of the same metaphysical tradition whose very “Whatness” (and “Whyness”, even as in “Why this conception of God and not another?”) is put into question here: implicitly, by Heidegger, through his merry destruction of it, and explicitly by Henry Corbin. It is a death of the *God as the Summum Ens* of traditional metaphysics, as informed by dogmatic Christian doctrine. “This and nothing more”.

Acknowledging Heidegger’s awareness of ‘the difficulty...which arises’ re the question of ‘the relation between the *Summum Ens* and the *non-ens*, the *nihil*, the nothingness, when we say that the *ens creatum* is

³⁰⁸ M. Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” in *Basic Writings*, Ed. David Farrell Krell p.107

³⁰⁹ M. Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?” in *Basic Writings*, Ed. David Farrell Krell p.95

³¹⁰ Oxford American English Dictionary, 2011

³¹¹ Presented in Teheran 20th October 1977 at a conference organized by the Iranian Centre for the Study of Civilization, entitled “Does the Impact of Western Thought Allow for the Possibility of Real Dialogue between Civilizations?”

archived online by *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin* <http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/anglaistextes.htm>

³¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.161

created *ex nihilo*, from nothingness, by the *Ens increatum*, Corbin states in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardī” that ‘Here we are touching upon a fundamental difficulty, so radical in fact, that it throws in question the very meaning of monotheism.’ In his opinion, the best “observation” of this difficulty has been carried out by ‘the Islamic “theosophers” whose unparalleled vigilance stems’, he believes, ‘from the fact that the horizon of Islamic thought and spirituality is dominated by the *tawhîd*, the affirmation of the Unique.’ And what’, he asks rhetorically, ‘is the nature of this “Unique”?’

In Islamic theosophy, Ibn ‘Arabi (XIIIth century) firmly established the difference between the theological *tawhîd* (*olûhî*) and the ontological *tawhîd* (*wojûdî*). The exoteric theological *tawhîd* effectively affirms the “Unicity” or Oneness of God as *Ens Supremum*, as the Existent which dominates all other existents. The esoteric ontological *tawhîd* affirms the transcendental “Unicity” or Oneness of Existence/Being. Existence/Being or the *Esse*, is essentially one and unique. The beings (existents) which Existence actualizes in their very act of being are essentially multiple. The one and unique Existence, and the one and unique Divine Existent, ineffable in the depths of its mystery, is the [*Deus*] *Absconditum* and can only be addressed from afar by an apophantic or negative theology. It cannot be positively known except in its theophanies: the Theophany itself is therefore essential for an affirmative theology to be possible.³¹²

Alas, says Corbin, even for many Sufis and thus many Orientalists after them, ‘a catastrophic confusion’ has been prone to arise ‘between the *Esse* or Existence/Being (*wojûd* in the Arabic) and the *Ens* or the Existent (*mawjûd* in the Arabic).’ And with that, Corbin states his firm conviction that ‘here, no question, we have not left Heidegger’s company’, though as to whether he means to imply here that Heidegger himself may have suffered such confusion, or rather that, in following his “working through” of this traditional “confusion” to its inevitable conclusions, some of Heidegger’s interpreters may have got snagged, and remained “confused”, Corbin remains politely oblique.

If the making ‘of God a *Summum Ens*, the *Ens unicum*, the unique existent being’ causes ‘all the other existent beings [to] fall into abysmal indifferentiation and nothingness’, as in Heidegger’s “What is Metaphysics”, then, the beings of a metaphysics suddenly bereft of God as Being, are alone with nothing *qua* nothing, pro-jected into the *nihil a quo nihil fit* of ‘nihilism plain and simple’.³¹³ Corbin’s pressing desire to find an ‘antidote’ to nihilism, to rescue ‘all other existent beings’ from this abyss, then the “death” of not only *this God*, but this dogmatic theology continues to appear not only inevitable, but quite necessary: clearing a way *not* for nihilism, however, but for an apophantic theology, in which “the nothing” may figure as the *nihil a quo omnia procedunt*; the nothing of the *Absconditum*, i.e., “the nothing from which everything proceeds”. Thus the destruction, or auto-destruction of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* as intrinsic to the whole paradigm of traditional metaphysics, which is proclaimed and witnessed, even set in motion by Heidegger in his “What is Metaphysics?” is a moment of great potential for Corbin.

³¹² H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardī”

³¹³ Paper presented in Teheran 20th October 1977 at a conference organized by the Iranian Centre for the Study of Civilization, entitled “Does the Impact of Western Thought Allow for the Possibility of Real Dialogue between Civilizations?” Archived online by *Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin* <http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/anglaistextes.htm>

Returning to where we left off in “From Heidegger to Suhraṣavardī”, and Corbin’s discourse on hermeneutics, Corbin’s exposition of the *significatio passiva* in Lutheran terms of divine and human Justice, e.g., serves to illustrate and conclude his case for ‘hermeneutics as *Verstehen*, meaning that that which we truly understand is never other than that by which we are tried, that which we undergo, which we suffer and toil with in our very being’. As such, says Corbin, hermeneutics ‘does not consist in deliberating upon concepts’. Rather, in a passage which makes the kinship, for Corbin, of this ‘hermeneutics as *Verstehen*’ (Protestant in origin) and the *ta’wil* of Corbin’s “mystic [Islamic] theosophers”, quite apparent; as will become clear in “Corbin’s Imaginal” , Corbin states that:

it is essentially the unveiling or revelation of that which is happening within us, the unveiling of that which causes us to emit such or such concept, vision, projection, when our passion becomes action; it is an active undergoing, a prophetic-poietic undertaking.³¹⁴

Moving on, in “From Heidegger to Suhraṣavardī”, Corbin recalls how, like so many others he awaited the imminent publication of a sequel to the first book of *Being and Time*, though with the special personal circumstance that, during his second, 1936 meeting with Heidegger over the Gallimard translation, Corbin states that Heidegger placed in his hands the now firmly *lost*, i.e., never published, whereabouts-unknown, effectively occulted manuscript of the second book of *Being and Time*, half joking that Corbin might heft the weight of it. For his part, though he has no more idea what may have come of this manuscript than anyone else, Corbin avows his certainty, and certainly his wish, that it would ‘have completed the ontological edifice of what we have referred to as the “historical’ in *Being and Time*’ (cf. Chapter 5, included in the Gallimard translation), but which without it, for Corbin, is ‘nought but an arch deprived of its spring’. Instead, we are left to “make do” with the Kant book, i.e., *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*.

Written up in ‘three weeks of uninterrupted work’³¹⁵ immediately following the *Davoser Hochschule* (March 17-April 6, 1929), the Kant book is said to have been based on Heidegger’s ‘preparatory work’ for his Davos lectures,³¹⁶ and the notorious disputation there with Ernst Cassirer on what the book’s English translator says were ‘some of [what were to become] the [Kant book’s] more controversial aspects’³¹⁷. In the preface to the First Edition, Heidegger states quite clearly that ‘This interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* arose in connection with a first working-out of Part Two of *Being and Time*’, and as such should serve as ‘a “historical” introduction of sorts to clarify the problematic treated in the first half of *Being and Time*’³¹⁸. On these grounds³¹⁹ Heidegger commends the Kant book to the reader as ‘a fitting

³¹⁴ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhraṣavardī”

³¹⁵ F.W von Hermann, in his Editor’s Afterword, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.220

³¹⁶ M. Heidegger, Preface to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) pp. xvii-iii

³¹⁷ A transcript of which disputation was included in the 1973 Fourth Edition, overseen by Heidegger R. Taft, Translator’s Introduction to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.xi

³¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.xix

³¹⁹ he also adds the precision that while in *Being and Time* ‘the theme of the following investigation was treated on the basis of a more comprehensive manner of questioning’ however ‘a more progressive interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was rejected there.’ (*ibid.*)

supplement to that book’,³²⁰ though the proffered “‘historical” introduction’ is an altogether different proposition than the *historical* “completion” Corbin was hoping for. Furthermore, unlike the essay “What is Metaphysics?” the emphasis and insistence on the horizon of finitude for Dasein in the Kant book’s conclusive, “ground-laying” Part 4— in which the “bridge” between the two projects of *Being and Time* and the Kant book is most explicitly outlined, and which is the only part of the Kant book included in the Gallimard translation —marks the point of, as it necessitates Corbin’s parting from Heidegger’s way. We should note again here that these two texts: “What is Metaphysics?” and Part 4 of the Kant book, appear consecutively, in that order, in Corbin’s 1938 Gallimard translation.

Heidegger introduces this fourth and final part of the Kant book, entitled “The Laying of the Ground of Metaphysics in a Retrieval”, by stating that if the result of investigation contained therein were “merely”, as it may have seemed thus far, only his finding for ‘the transcendental power of imagination as the ground for the inner possibility of ontological synthesis’, there would have been no need to do more than cite ‘the appropriate quotations’ from Kant’s Transcendental Deduction and Transcendental Schematism. So, then, he asks rhetorically, what *has* been the point of all this effort, i.e., ‘what else is the ground-laying to yield?’ The answer, he says, is a grounding of his own “fundamental ontology”, in light of revelations made in the Kant book’s three preceding Parts concerning the essential finitude of Dasein. For, he says, ‘What occurs in the Kantian ground-laying...[is] nothing less than...the grounding of the inner possibility of ontology as brought about as an unveiling of transcendence, i.e., [an unveiling] of the subjectivity of the human subject.’

According to Heidegger, the ‘more original form’ in which Kant, in ‘the Critique of Pure Reason’ brings to light that which was previously offered in Kant’s Anthropology, toward ‘the interpretation of knowledge and its two sources’, shows the Anthropology itself to be ‘[in]adequate for the transcendental problematic’. It is, he says, ‘not pure’; thus making the ‘demand for an adequate, i.e., a “philosophical anthropology” *for the purpose of* a laying of the ground of metaphysics even more pressing.’³²¹

The urgency and attraction of a new, “philosophical anthropology” for French philosophers of the late 1920s and 1930s has already been touched on in here in the chapter “From Paris to Teheran”. In his letter of July 15th to Gertrud Bing of the Warburg Library, 1933, Corbin refers to those ‘philosophemes’ which he says he is currently attempting to ‘systematize via philosophical anthropology, i.e., the crisis of historicism and phenomenological ontology!’³²² I cannot help but recall the high hopes Corbin professed to hold for the “other”, lost, second book of *Being and Time*. In Part 4 of the Kant book, however, the necessary constitution of such a new philosophical anthropology is not Heidegger’s main priority, and, as it, too, is shortly deemed inadequate—as not sufficiently ‘pure’, or fundamental as the *real* question at hand, it too is soon aside here³²³.

³²⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.xix

³²¹ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.144

³²² ...in relation to which, he says, he finds the oeuvre of Aby Warburg of especial interest and relevance (Corbin-Warburg correspondence, Warburg Institute Archive, London).

³²³ Cf. also Heidegger’s statement, in the transcript of the Davos disputation that while he can see how, from his having taken ‘the analytic of Dasein in *Being in Time*’ as ‘an investigation of man’, Ernst Cassirer could come to ‘pose the question of how...the

Extra to the three “fundamental” questions posed by Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as together uniting ‘all the interests of my reason, both speculative and practical’³²⁴—which Heidegger notes also correspond, or rather are ‘associated with the three divisions of authentic metaphysics as *Metaphysica Specialis*’, namely Cosmology, Psychology, and Theology—i.e., those of

1. What can I know?
2. What should I do?
3. What may I hope ?

Heidegger insists that (as per Kant’s development of the concept of ‘Philosophy in general’ in the Introduction to his lectures on Logic,³²⁵) a *fourth*, more “fundamentally fundamental” question must be asked here, to which he says the above three questions evidently refer, i.e.:

4. What is the human being?

By their reference to, i.e., their dependence upon, this fourth and more fundamental question of “philosophy in general”, a reversal is effected so that the fourth is ‘transformed into the first, which then discharges the remaining three from itself’. Heidegger characterises the first three questions by stating that in each case:

What is asked about is what can be placed in the expectation and what cannot. All expecting, however, needs a privation. If this neediness even arises in the innermost interests of human reason, then it attests to that reason as one which is essentially finite.

But human reason does not just disclose finitude in these questions; rather its innermost interest is with finitude itself. ...it is not a matter of doing away with the ability, duty, and allowing [to hope], in this way to extinguish finitude, but rather the reverse. It is precisely a question of becoming certain of this finitude in order to hold oneself in it.

Accordingly, finitude does not depend simply upon human reason but instead its finitude is perishing [*Verendlichung*] i.e., “Care” about the potentiality-to-be-finite.³²⁶

Thus, he continues, it is ‘because these three questions ask about this one [problem], finitude’, they not only “let themselves be related” to the fourth: What is a human being?, but precisely *in* their relation to it, insist upon the transformation of this fourth/first question *itself* into a question ‘about the finitude in human

understanding of culture and a cultural sphere is to be possible’ ‘on the grounds of this understanding of man’, he continues that however ‘all of these questions are inadequate’ to this ‘central problem’. M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., Edited and Translated by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.199-200

³²⁴ Kant in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p.145

³²⁵ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.145

³²⁶ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.152

beings³²⁷. Human reason is not finite because it poses the three questions, but quite the reverse: it poses these questions because it is finite.

In this way for Heidegger, the ‘laying of the ground for metaphysics’, in ‘a “disentangling” (analytic) of our knowledge, i.e., of finite knowledge, into its elements’ (which analytic Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* calls “a study of our inner nature”) insists that ‘the “inner nature” of “our” self as the finitude in human beings is made into a problem.’³²⁸

The next task at hand, for Heidegger is “The Problem of a Possible Determination of Finitude in Human Beings”, for, regardless of the fact that ‘the finitude of human beings [is] evident everywhere and always in a thousand different ways’³²⁹, it sufficing, for Heidegger, ‘to cite any of our imperfections’: as for ‘wherein the essence of this finitude exists’, however, and ‘how this finitude completely determines the human being from the ground up as the being that it is’, Heidegger finds any attempt to conceptualise the essence of human finitude *per se* by the method of aggregating ‘all human imperfections and abstracting what is common to them’ to be wholly unreliable, on the grounds of the possibility that such imperfections merely constitute ‘remote factual consequences of this essence of finitude and hence only become understandable through it.’ How then is the *essence* of human finitude to be determined? Heidegger takes the fact that the ‘present question’ arose ‘in the course of the task of the laying of the ground for metaphysics’ undertaken in Parts 1-3 of the Kant book, as ‘a fundamental question ...demanded by this task itself’ as indication that we may therefore look *back* to the ‘problematic of the laying of the ground of metaphysics’³³⁰ for guidance. If one wished to engage with this proof altogether thoroughly, on its own terms, it is made clear that a reading of Parts 1-3 would be advisable.

However, in order that the question at hand may ‘be determined on the basis of a more original retrieval of the laying of the ground of metaphysics’ than that undertaken thus far in Parts 1-3 of the Kant book, Heidegger declares his intention to ‘turn’ the question away from the ‘orientation’ toward ‘the fixed discipline and systematic of Scholastic metaphysics’ maintained by Kant, toward ‘the free field of the particular problematic’, while yet holding ‘the Aristotelean way’³³¹ of posing the question of “the being as such”, in ‘an admittedly obscure connection to the question concerning beings as a whole’³³² as “unfinished”, i.e., something to be developed further as a problem, in such a way that ‘the essential connection between Being as such (not the being) and the finitude in human beings must be brought to light’³³³.

Heidegger characterises this Aristotelean way of posing the question by its two “obscurely” connected ‘directions of questioning’ that together make up ‘the question of what the being in general and as such is’. He then awards precedence to the “direction of questioning” that asks about being *as such*, which he calls

³²⁷ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.152

³²⁸ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.152

³²⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.153

³³⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.154

³³¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.155

³³² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.154

³³³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.155

the Question of Being, since he says before we ask ‘What is the being?’ We must ask the ‘more original’ Question of Being i.e., that of ‘*What does Being mean, which is already understood in advance in every question?*’

In addressing the Question of Being, Heidegger now turns to address ‘something in ancient philosophy which [he says] has been accepted as all too self-evident’; i.e., the ‘what-Being’ of ‘the being which is manifest to us’, which philosophy calls ‘*essentia* (essence)’, with reference to which “what-Being”, we ‘determine and interrogate’ the being ‘in every relationship [we have] to it,’ as that which ‘makes a being possible in that which it is’. However, since ‘the [“mere”] appearing [Gk. *eidōs*]..of a being gives the same information to the question of what it is’, such that the essence, or ‘what-Being of the being is therefore [also] called [Gk. *idea*]’, the further question then ‘arises...whether it—the being with this determinate what-Being—might be, or rather might not be’, i.e., only *appearing* to be.

This calls for a further philosophical determination of “that-Being”, *existentia*; (actuality)’, which, for Heidegger, may be distinguished from the designation of *realitas* by the fact that while, like the designation ‘*possibilitas* (inner possibility)’, *realitas* stands for ‘the thingness of a thing’, i.e., for a thing’s being-possessed of “what-Being”; *existentia* vouches for a thing’s that-Being, i.e., for its *actual-Being* per se, i.e., for the fact *that it is*; which *realitas* does *not*. Conversely, it is important to note for our comparative reading of Corbin that the designation of *realitas* does not rule out a being possessed of that-Being, *actualitas*, either.³³⁴

Contemplating Corbin’s loaded plump for the term “*réalité*”, i.e., from “*realitas*”, with “-humaine” in order to translate “Dasein” for the Gallimard Edition, over e.g., “*l’existence*”, from *existentia*, or even just plain French “-*la*”; I note that, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, (in both the first and greatly revised second edition), Kant defines “reality” (*Realität*) ‘as a category or “pure concept of the understanding”’, as ‘that which corresponds to a sensation in general’ or that “the concept of which points to *being (in time)*” [my italics].³³⁵ Here, ‘the correspondence of the category of reality with sensation is accomplished by means of perception’, where ‘perception is not prior to the category of reality, underwriting it in some way, but requires that the category be given in order to take place’. As such, the correspondence implies that ‘the category of reality can thus only be applied as empirical reality *in space and time* [my italics]’.³³⁶ On this Kantian authority, Corbin’s “*réalité*”, might also be read as indicating Dasein’s horizontal situation within the Heideggerian *Weltanschauung*; then again, as we shall see, the above comparative definition of *realitas* vs. *existentia* which is found in Part 4 of the Kant book, also supports the “reality” of Corbin’s *imaginal*, as precisely that which, for Corbin, potentiates a liberation from that *Weltanschauung*, that “isle of Occidental exile”,³³⁷ via Corbin’s “vertical correlation” of *Be/ing* and *be/ing*, of which it is both the “place” and the medium. But we are getting ahead of ourselves here.

³³⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.156

³³⁵ I. Kant, CPR 1st. Ed p.143/2nd Ed.182 in H. Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* p.345

³³⁶ H. Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* p. 346

³³⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.43-4

In Part 4 of the Kant book, the crucial determinations here for Heidegger are “what-Being” and “that-Being”, i.e., essence and existence; possibility and actuality. In order to ascertain if the Being of what-Being and that-Being is the same or different in each case, however, says Heidegger we must ask again, ‘*what is Being as such?*’. From whence, he says, we are driven to asking the ‘still more original question’ of where exactly we might ‘stand’ (cf. *existentia*, ‘from Latin *existere* ‘come into being,’ from *ex-* ‘out’ + *sistere* ‘take a stand’³³⁸) in order that we might be able to ‘comprehend Being’, i.e., conceptualise ‘Being as such’ as that which ‘all of us as human beings already [i.e., *pre-conceptually*] and permanently understand’?

In this way, ‘the question concerning the possibility of the concept of Being’ is ‘driven back’ yet again ‘to the question concerning the essence of the understanding of Being in general’, further refining the task of the ground-laying for metaphysics into that of ‘the elucidation of the inner possibility for the understanding of Being’. The next question for Heidegger is ‘whether and in what way the problem of Being by itself shows an inner relation to finitude in human beings.’ Our comportment toward *beings*, he says, is obvious; ‘the being is known to us—but Being?’

In light of the vertigo he insists must seize us if ever we should attempt ‘to determine such a thing, even if we should comprehend it properly’³³⁹, Heidegger asks rhetorically whether Being is ‘then not something like the Nothing [*das Nichts*]?’ adding that ‘no less a person than Hegel said: Pure Being and pure nothing are thus the same’. As such, he says, with the Question of Being we are ‘poised on the brink of complete obscurity’, yet which it is best not to attempt to ‘evade prematurely’ if we are to ‘bring the full peculiarity of the understanding of Being closer to us.’³⁴⁰ Here it is worth pausing to wonder if this Nothing, which here Heidegger, after Hegel, is *likening* to Being, is the same Nothing upon which, in “What Is Metaphysics?” Being has been determined to be *related*; dependent upon (in its *Creative-Being*), for its creating beings out *of* (the Nothing), thus not Absolute, and thus finite, upon which, for Heidegger, beings themselves are dangled out into Nothingness. If, that is, “we” must remain within the now-broken construct of traditional metaphysics, informed by the dogma of *creation ex nihilo*.

N.B., Heidegger’s invocation of Hegel at this point in the Kant book also recalls a remark of Howard Caygill’s that in a problem that ‘goes back to Hegel’, the absolute and the infinite are not the same; herein, says Caygill, lies an ‘ambiguity’ which has the potential to ‘upset a thinking of finitude such as Heidegger’s’³⁴¹. Add this to the fact that the very doctrine upon which his proof of the finitude of Being relies in “What is Metaphysics?” is tested to auto-destruction *by* the proof, and *that* thinking of finitude starts to look rather shaky. As for Part 4 of the Kant book, here too, dependency, as a kind of relation-to, is declared the mark and proof of finitude.

³³⁸ Oxford American English Dictionary 2011

³³⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.158

³⁴⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* pp.158-9

³⁴¹ Howard Caygill, by email 27th July 2011

Moving on with Part 4 of the Kant book, Heidegger states that even with all ‘all its constancy and breadth’, our innate preconceptual understanding of Being is ‘for the most part completely indeterminate’; ‘the Being of the being...is given as something completely beyond question’, such that ‘Being [*Sein*] as such comes into question so seldom that it appears if there “is” nothing of the sort’.

Even so, it is this very preconceptual, indeterminate understanding of Being that fundamentally determines ‘man’ as ‘the being which he is’, for Heidegger; without which “he” [sic] would *be* otherwise, ‘regardless of the wonderful faculties with which human beings have been equipped’ (including reason; so much for the *cogito*). Moreover, ‘man is a being in the midst of beings in such a way that [both] the being that he is himself and the being which he is not are always already manifest’, which ‘mode of the Being of human beings [Dasein] is only possible’ for Heidegger ‘on the grounds of the understanding of Being’ which ‘we call’ existence.³⁴²

The -thrownness and -thereness, i.e., ‘the existence of human beings’ amongst other beings which are here presumed *not* to have an awareness of Being *as* Being thus constitutes for Heidegger ‘an irruption into the totality of beings’ *of* such awareness; in human-being’s ‘surrendering’ to which—i.e., in its letting ‘the being as such *be*’, and in so doing, itself being ‘*delivered up as a being*’—it is that ‘the being in itself first becomes manifest, i.e., as being’. Thus, for Heidegger, existence—as the “irruption”, the ‘thrown being’ of human-beings, necessarily ‘means dependency’, because precisely in order to ‘*let* the being as such *be*...what and as it is...the existing being must already have projected that it is a being on the strength of what has been encountered’. Thus it is by the dependency of human-being, *as* Dasein, on the “already encountered” for its *being* Dasein, definitively aware of Being as Being, etc; —by which Heidegger characterises human “-*sein*’s” intrinsic *relation* to the “*Da-*”, “-*there*”. And, as dependency is the mark of finitude for Heidegger, it follows that the being of Dasein, i.e., *existence* ‘as a mode of Being’, is now declared as ‘in itself finitude’.³⁴³

Here again we are reminded of Henry Corbin’s insistence on the indispensability of the hyphen, or *trait d’union* in his translation of Dasein as *réalité-humaine*, which, here (the hyphen) in this context seems ever more intensely Heideggerian.

Returning to the Kant book, Heidegger states that:

Only because the understanding of Being is the most finitude in what is finite, can it also make possible the so-called “creative” capacities of the finite human creature. On the grounds of the understanding of Being, man is the there [*das Da*], with the Being of which occurs the opening irruption into the being so that it show itself as such for a self. *More original than man is the finitude of the Dasein in him.*³⁴⁴

³⁴² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.159

³⁴³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.160

³⁴⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.160

Thus, he continues, the question of ‘what man is’, even framed according to a philosophical anthropology, which *as* an anthropology, is already treating of “man as man”, is thus overtaken as ‘the necessary question for a laying of the ground for metaphysics’ by that ‘the metaphysics of Dasein’—note, *of* Dasein—whose ‘fate’, *as* ‘the metaphysics which occurs necessarily *as Dasein*...remains bound to the concealing occurring of metaphysics in Dasein itself’.

Thus, as Heidegger already hopes to have demonstrated during Parts 1-3 of the Kant book, he says, the ‘authentic, correctly understood outcome’ of ‘the Kantian effort lies precisely in the connectedness’ between ‘the question concerning the possibility of ontological synthesis and that of the unveiling of the finitude in human beings’, which he equates to ‘the demand for reflection concerning how a Metaphysics of Dasein is to be concretely realized.’³⁴⁵

Here, even as he demands reflection upon the *how* of such a ground-laying, Heidegger may already be seen to have begun construction; as the ‘question’ of Dasein’s finitude, already demonstrated by Heidegger on grounds of “dependency”, is built into the ground-laying’s very fundament in the next section, ‘the fundamental question of the laying of the ground for metaphysics’, i.e., ‘the problem of the inner possibility of the understanding of Being out of which all explicit questions of Being should be able to grow’. As such, says Heidegger, the Metaphysics of Dasein must unveil the inner constitution of Dasein as ‘the inner making-possible of the understanding of Being’—which, as ‘the unveiling of the constitution of Being is [called] Ontology’, and, ‘insofar as the ground for the possibility of metaphysics is found therein—the finitude of Dasein as its fundament—it is called Fundamental Ontology’.³⁴⁶

In “The Essence of Ground” (also included in Corbin’s 1938 Gallimard translation) Heidegger identifies transcendence—which he says here means “surpassing”³⁴⁷, defined as ‘a “relation” that passes “from” something “to” something’, to which ‘there thus belongs that *toward which* such surpassing occurs’ and ‘in each case *something* that is surpassed in this surpassing’³⁴⁸—as ‘belong[ing] to human Dasein as the *fundamental constitution of this being, one that occurs prior to all comportment*’, just as, along the same lines, to be a subject also ‘means to be a being in and as transcendence’³⁴⁹, in as much as *there is no* “subject” *existent prior to* those “objects” with which the subject exists as a subject *only in-relation-to*. This is not to say that the subject-object relation is *the same* as “surpassing”, which is no ‘theoretical grasping of objects.’³⁵⁰ No; neither, in *surpassing*, are ‘objects—the beings that are objectified—that *toward which* a surpassing occurs.’

What is surpassed is precisely and solely beings themselves, indeed every being that can be or become unconcealed for Dasein, thus including precisely that

³⁴⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.162

³⁴⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.163

³⁴⁷ *Überstieg*

³⁴⁸ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* Ed. William McNeill, Cambridge University Press 1996 p.107

³⁴⁹ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.108

³⁵⁰ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.109

being as which “it itself” exists. *In* this surpassing Dasein for the first time comes toward that being that *it* is, and comes toward it *as* “itself”.³⁵¹

In this way, ‘transcendence constitutes selfhood’, in that even as ‘the surpassing in each case intrinsically concerns also beings that Dasein “itself” is *not*’, it is at once ‘precisely, in and through this surpassing [that] it first becomes possible to ... decide who and in what way a “self” is, and what is not a “self”’.³⁵² What is fundamentally “unconcealed” in the surpassing is the Being of beings, including that of Dasein “itself”; and which itself *is* this surpassing, to the extent that Heidegger calls “transcendent Dasein” a tautological expression.

But while “beings themselves” may be that which is *surpassed*, and while the condition of Dasein’s being able to ‘comport “itself” toward beings’ is that of *already* having surpassed them; since ‘surpassing occurs as a whole’, Heidegger names not beings but ‘world as that *toward which* Dasein as such transcends’. He thus determines ‘transcendence as *being-in-the-world*’, where the concept of ‘world’ co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence’ and as co-constituent may itself ‘be called *transcendental*’.³⁵³ As such, “world” may well be considered in parallel with the *réalité-* of Corbin’s *réalité-humaine*.

From here it is no great leap to identify “transcendence as surpassing” with the kind of relationality that Heidegger calls “dependency”, and that has been ascertained to be signified by the “indispensable” hyphen in Corbin’s translation of Dasein as *réalité-humaine*. As we have seen, for Heidegger (though not for Corbin), as per both “What is Metaphysics?” and Part 4 of the Kant book, “dependency” signifies the finitude of both Being and being; from all which it would also appear to follow that, for Heidegger, transcendence itself must equate to finitude also. And this suggestion is indeed borne out during the following elaboration.

But exactly what does Heidegger mean here by “world”? How is it like and unlike to, say, *realitas*, or *existentia*? For Heidegger, ‘talk of being-in-the-world’ has a ‘twofold significance’. According to the first, factual definition, where world is merely ‘the term for everything that is, for totality as the unity that determines everything’, and “being-in-the-world” is taken to mean merely ‘belonging among the other beings’, then *all* beings must be supposed to be transcendent. If however ‘being-in-the-world’—*as* transcendence—is to be ‘attributed legitimately and exclusively to Dasein...as its essential constitution’³⁵⁴ (cf. “dependency” *qua* finitude) then we are left with ‘the problem of transcendence’. It follows that here both “world” and “being-in-the-world” must have an additional significance. Their determination as “not just arbitrary” demands of Heidegger the undertaking of a survey—albeit, he says, with ‘certain gaps’—of ‘the chief meanings that come to the fore in the history of the concept of world’.³⁵⁵ This entails quite a sprint through “ancient philosophy”, Heraclitus, St. Paul, St. John of the Gospel, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and, most extensively, Kant, before arrival at the following definition: Whereas for Kant, says

³⁵¹ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.108

³⁵² M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.108

³⁵³ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.109

³⁵⁴ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.110

³⁵⁵ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.111

Heidegger, for whom “world” is like to an *idea*, i.e., a pure, “inferred concept[.]”...of the form of a whole’, as distinct from a “reflective concept[.]” of the understanding’ where in, via ‘inferential activity, reason is concerned with attaining something unconditioned *in relation to* the conditions’, for Heidegger³⁵⁶

‘what is metaphysically essential in the ...meaning of [Gk.] *kosmos, mundus*, world, lies in the fact that it is directed toward an interpretation of human existence [Dasein] in its “relation to beings as a whole. Human Dasein...exists in such a way that beings are always manifest as a whole.”³⁵⁷

As such, ‘World belongs to a “relational structure distinctive of Dasein as such, a structure that we call being-in-the-world.’ Cf. yet again, the “indispensability” of Corbin’s hyphen. Again, also as per the “preconceptual understanding” of Being advanced in *Part 4* of the Kant book

it is not necessary that this wholeness be expressly conceptualized; its belonging to Dasein can be veiled, the expanse of this whole is changeable. This wholeness is understood without the whole of those beings that are manifest being explicitly grasped or indeed “completely” investigated in their specific connections, domains, and layers. Yet the understanding of this wholeness, an understanding that in each case reaches ahead and embraces it, is a surpassing in the direction of world.³⁵⁸

With this definition, Heidegger comes full circle to “pick up” three points he made near the start of his “historiographical survey” of the concept of world, in response to certain ‘hints’ gleaned from Heraclitus’ distinction between the ‘single and therefore common world’ of the wakeful, and the individuated—and by implication, *many* worlds of the dreamer, as follows:

- (1) World refers to a “*how*” of being of beings, rather than to these beings themselves
- (2) This “how” determines *beings as a whole*. In its grounds it is the possibility of every “how” in general in limit and measure
- (3) This “how” as a whole is in a certain manner *prior*
- (4) This prior “how as a whole is itself *relative to* human *Dasein*. The world thus belongs precisely to human Dasein, even though it embraces in its whole all beings, including Dasein.³⁵⁹

Thus “world” is neither a “that-”, a “what-”, but a “*how-Being*”. For Heidegger, ‘the essence of Dasein’s relation to world, i.e., ...the intrinsic possibility of being-in-the-world (transcendence)’ is that in ‘coming toward itself from out of the world Dasein gives rise to itself [*zeitigt sich*] as a *self*, i.e., as a being entrusted with having *to be*’. As such, ‘*world* shows itself to be that for the sake of which Dasein exists’; yet for Heidegger, since ‘Dasein is in such a way that it exists *for the sake of itself*’, i.e., for the sake of ‘*its potentiality for being*’,³⁶⁰ it follows that world must have ‘the fundamental character of the “for the sake of...’. Thus, it is in *this* way that ‘to selfhood belongs world; world is essentially related to Dasein.’ This

³⁵⁶ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.117

³⁵⁷ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.121

³⁵⁸ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.121

³⁵⁹ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.112

³⁶⁰ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.121

“belonging” does not mean, however, that world may be ‘declared as something purely “subjective,”’ “falling” as such ‘into the inner sphere of a “subjective” subject’; and nor ‘for the same reason’ may it be declared as something ‘merely objective either, if “objective” means: belonging among beings as objects.’³⁶¹ Rather, as ‘the originary projection of the possibilities of Dasein’, insofar as, in the midst of beings, it is to be able to comport itself toward such beings,’ ‘world is brought before Dasein through Dasein itself’. Dasein’s ‘projection of world also always *casts* the projected world *over* beings’, and it is precisely this prior, ‘projective casting-over [*Überwurf*]’, this ‘primordial history’ ‘in which the being of Dasein is temporalized’ [as]... being-in-the-world’, i.e., transcendence, which as such ‘first makes it possible for beings as such to manifest themselves’.

“Dasein transcends” means: in the essence of its being it is world-forming, “forming” in the multiple sense that it lets world occur, and through the world gives itself an original view (form [*Bild*]) that is not explicitly grasped, yet functions precisely as a paradigmatic form [*Vor-bild*] for all manifest beings, among which each respective Dasein belongs.³⁶²

World gives itself to Dasein in each case as the respective whole of its “for the sake of itself,” i.e., for the sake of a being that is equioriginally being alongside...what is present at hand, being with...the Dasein of others, and being toward...itself. Dasein is able to be in relation to itself as itself in this manner only if it surpasses “itself” in this “for the sake of” [*Umwillen*]. ... [Thus] all forms of comportment are rooted in transcendence’.³⁶³

Now returning to “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”; in a statement that recalls his description, in the “Biographical Post-Scriptum”, of his own annotation, in Arabic, of his student copy of *Being and Time*, Corbin informs us that of ‘the strange vocabulary that Heidegger puts before us’ (and which, he says, ‘made a rude trial of his first French translator’), direct equivalents of ‘all those terms designating the acts by which the modalities of the human-presence are revealed’ are also to be found ‘in the classical Arabic of the great visionary theosophers of Islam’. E.g:

“*zohûr*”, the manifestation, the act of a thing revealing itself, appearing;
“*izhâr*”, the act of making something appear, of making it manifest itself;
“*mozhir*”, that which causes such a thing to manifest itself... In Persian, there are terms such as *hast-kardan* “make-to-be”; *has-konandeh* “that which makes-to-be”.³⁶⁴

It is sufficient to note’, he continues, ‘that with these few terms we may already feel the entire phenomenological vocabulary entering into play.’³⁶⁵ As such, Corbin hopes that ‘the mutual benefit, for these two domains, that resides in knowledge of both the Islamic theosophical vocabulary and that of phenomenology’ should be self-evident. And neither should we be much surprised at this since, he says, the

³⁶¹ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.122

³⁶² M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* p.123

³⁶³ M. Heidegger, “The Essence of Ground”, *Pathmarks* pp. 125-6

³⁶⁴ “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”

³⁶⁵ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”

'bridge' between these 'domains' is not so very difficult to find, since e.g., 'as Etienne Gilson has shown us', the great Persian neo-Platonist 'Avicenna is a starting point for Duns Scot's thinking' and we have 'the historians of the Toledo school in the 12th century' to thank for 'a common Arabo-Latin philosophical vocabulary', he says, going on to list many examples. Yet despite the existence of such a bridge, or *bridges*, between these domains, Corbin is at pains to emphasise that a great disparity nonetheless exists 'between the intended *level or horizon* with which their investigations are concerned'.³⁶⁶ In *Being and Time*, for example:

the "Analytic" - which is the application of the Heideggerian Hermeneutic - already tacitly posits a fundamental philosophical choice, a conception of the world, a *Weltanschauung*...[which] announces itself at the horizon within which the "Analytic" of the Da of the Dasein is deployed.³⁶⁷

However, while Corbin himself rejects the Heideggerian *Weltanschauung*, he says, he is adamant that the Analytic itself may be usefully retained while giving 'the Da of the Dasein another situs, another dimension, than that given it in *Being and Time*'.³⁶⁸ Such a retention depends entirely on the fact that, for Corbin, Dasein's intrinsic "dependency" its "surpassing", i.e., its transcendence, does *not*, for Corbin, equate to absolute finitude.

Corbin goes on to say that his own encounter with Heidegger's writing on historicity was 'decisive' for him; it seems doubly so, at once initiating his own subsequent conviction that 'if there is a "meaning to History"', it lies not 'in the historicism of historical events', but rather in the 'secret, esoteric, existentiating roots of History and of the historical'³⁶⁹—and marking 'the moment in which, while following the example of the Heideggerian Analytic'—which he characterises as having 'the interesting virtue of bringing us to an understanding of the underlying motives that have lead the humanity of today to cling frantically to the historical as though it were the only "Reality"', according to 'a laicising of the idea of the Incarnation, in the wake of which even the theologians have been dragged into a generalized and omnipresent sociology'—Corbin was himself 'drawn to explore hermeneutical levels that his [Heidegger's] program had not yet envisioned', inspired by the knowledge that 'the contrast between historicity and historicism 'is already perfectly well known - albeit expressed in different terms - to the Gnostics and Cabalists of the Religions of the Book.'³⁷⁰ Here, then, is a clear "appropriation" of Heideggerian historiology, by Corbin, in the whole double sense of appropriation, as defined by Robert Scharff (*ibid.*), as being 'as much a matter of taking up and taking further as it is a matter of taking over and continuing what has already come to be'.³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ my italics. RB.

³⁶⁷ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi "

³⁶⁸ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi "

³⁶⁹ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi "

³⁷⁰ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi "

³⁷¹ Robert C. Scharff, "Heidegger's "Appropriation" of Dilthey before Being and Time", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Volume 35, Number 1, January 1997, p.113

Corbin feels it hardly necessary, he says, to identify the ‘starting point’ of this trajectory of his own research as lying in Heidegger’s ‘incomparable analysis’³⁷², (here, referring surely to Chapter Five of *Being in Time*, “Temporality and Historicity”)³⁷³ —

...showing the ontological roots of the Historical sciences, showing effectively that there is a more original, more primitive historicism than that which we call the “universal History”; the History of external events, the *Weltgeschichte*, or simply History in the ordinary everyday sense of the word.³⁷⁴

In his translator’s foreword to the 1938 Gallimard Edition, Corbin introduces his own retrieval of the archaic French term *historial* to translate the Heideggerian term *Geschehen*, in order to properly ‘distinguish between history as historical reality...and history as historical science’ yet in such a way as to ‘make the common roots of the two [Heideggerian] terms *Geschehen* and *Geschichte* discernable in French’.³⁷⁵ Macquarrie and Robinson, the two English translators of *Being and Time*, note that ‘while the verb *geschehen* ordinarily means to “happen” ... Heidegger stresses its etymological kinship to *Geschichte* or “history”’.³⁷⁶ Heidegger himself declares his use of the term *Geschehen* to designate the ‘elemental historicity of *Dasein*’, i.e., that ‘temporal kind of Being which *Dasein* itself possesses, regardless of whether or how *Dasein* is an entity ‘in time’, and which is ‘prior to what is called “history”’ i.e., *Geschichte*. As ‘the specific movement in which *Dasein* is stretched along and stretches itself along’ between birth and death, i.e., [as between being and nothing?] *Geschehen* is that which concerns the very ‘question of *Dasein*’s “connectedness”, i.e., the ‘ontological problem of *Dasein*’s historizing’.³⁷⁷ That the theme of the *historial* is so strongly in evidence in Corbin’s essay “The Concept of Comparative Philosophy”³⁷⁸, e.g., first delivered as a lecture in Teheran in 1974, testifies to the lasting impression of Heidegger’s “historial” discourse on Corbin.

Here Corbin goes on to say, that while, as previously indicated, he rejects the Heideggerian *Weltanschauung*, as an horizon of absolute finitude, he wishes to stress that since taking up the *clavis hermeneutica*, he has retained all he has learnt from Heidegger about ‘how it might be used and adapted,’ including, as before, ‘all the resources of an “Analytic” of this *Da-sein*’, of which Corbin insists ‘it is not at all necessary to adhere to ...[Heidegger’s] tacit *Weltanschauung* to make use of’.

The hermeneutic proceeds from the “act of presence” signified in the *Da* of the *Dasein*; its task is therefore to illuminate how, in understanding itself, the human *being-there* situates itself, circumscribes the *Da*, the *situs* of its presence and unveils the horizon which had up until then remained hidden.

³⁷² H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”

³⁷³ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* p.427

³⁷⁴ H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”

³⁷⁵ H. Corbin, *Qu’est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Paris, Gallimard 1938) p.16

³⁷⁶ The pair were therefore also moved to the coinage of an English term, “historize”, which they say ‘might be paraphrased as to “happen in a historical way”, such as is ‘characteristic of all historical entities and not the sort of thing that is done primarily by historians’. Macquarrie and Robinson, (Trans.) *Being and Time* p.41, footnote no. 1

³⁷⁷ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* p.427

³⁷⁸ H. Corbin, trans. Peter Russell as *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*. Ipswich Golgonooza Press, 1981; also trans. J. Pratt, *Spring Journal* 1980 (pp.1-20) as “The Question of Comparative Philosophy”.

Indeed, he says, it is the very *Weltanschauung* itself which ‘pre-existential philosophical choice...is *itself* constitutive of the *Da* of Dasein, of the act of Being-there present to the world and its variants’, whether for Heidegger, who ‘arranges...around this *situs* ... all the ambiguity of human finitude characterized as a “Being-toward-Death” (*Sein zum Tode*)’, or as for ‘a Mollâ Sadrâ, or an Ibn ‘Arabi’, for whom he says ‘the Presence as they experience it in this world - as it is unveiled by the “phenomenon of the world” lived by them - is not that Presence whose finality is death, a Being-towards-Death, but a “Being-towards-Beyond-Death”, let us say: *Sein zum Jenseits des Todes*’.

From hereon in, all that remains to be done is to hold and press this notion of Presence, as closely and as intently as possible. To what is this human presence, this Being-there, present?

Da-sein: being-there, this is understood. But being-there is essentially to be enacting a presence, enactment of that presence *by* which and *for* which meaning is revealed in the present. The modality of this human presence is thus to be revelatory, but in such a way that, in revealing the meaning, it reveals itself, and is that which is revealed.

Thus beyond the *Weltanschauung* of Heidegger, yet remaining with the hermeneutics of presence, Corbin recounts ‘the gnoseology of the Ishrâqiyûn’, who distinguish between ‘the common form of knowledge... a formal knowledge (*‘ilm sûrî*)’ that is ‘produced through the intermediary of a *re-presentation*, of a *species*, actualized in the soul’, and that which ‘they designate as a *presential* knowledge (*ilm hozuri*)’, which is ‘immediate presence, that by which the soul’s “act of presence” itself gives rise to the presence of things, and renders present to itself no longer objects but presences.’ This latter is typified by the Ishrâqiyûn ‘as “Oriental” knowledge (*‘ilm ishrâqî*)’, referring to an Orient not to be found ‘on any geographical maps,’ but rather

‘the dawning Light, a Light prior to all revealed things, to all presence, for it is that which reveals them, that by which the Presence *is*...at one and the same time the dawning of the Orient of Being upon the soul and the dawning of the matutinal illumination of the soul upon the things which it reveals and which it reveals to itself as co-presences.

Thus, Corbin continues:

it will make all the difference, when we pose the question as follows: which presences does the human presence, render present to itself, in enacting its own presence? In other words, with which constellations of presences does the *Da* of the *Dasein* surround itself when it reveals itself to itself? To which worlds is it being present in its being *there*[?]

Thus faced with the choice, as he saw it, of whether to ‘limit [him]self to the phenomenon of the world analyzed in *Sein und Zeit*’, or rather ‘intuit, accept and amplify [his] presence to all the worlds and “inter-worlds”, as they are discovered and revealed to [him] by the “Oriental” Presence of our Islamic Iranian “theosophers”?’; the grounds of Corbin’s own “resolute decision” announce his departure from Heidegger, or more precisely, his *Weltanschauung*, as follows:

On the one hand, we are made to hear the pathos-laden adage of the Heideggerian Analytic: to be *free for one's death*. On the other hand we have the firm invitation to a *freedom for the beyond of one's death*. Let us hold onto the word *Entschlossenheit*: the decision-resolute [*la decision résolue*]. Today this term is translated by decision without withdrawal [*decision sans retrait*]. This is even better. For it is a question of knowing whether and in what measure this resolution is not a movement of withdrawal, of retreat, before death, an impotent inability to be free for that which is beyond one's death, to render oneself present to, and for, that which is beyond death. I'm afraid that, having become the victims of widespread agnosticism, the humanity of today falters before the *freedom for that which is beyond death*. We have invested such a great measure of genius in building up all possible defences: psychoanalysis, sociology and dialectical materialism, linguistics, historicism, etc., everything has been put in place to prohibit all perspective on, concern for, and signification of *the beyond*. ...People tranquilize themselves by repeating: "death is a part of life". This is not true, unless one means to limit life to its biological expression. But biological life is itself derived from another life which is its independent source, and which is Life in its very essence. So long as the "resolute-decision" remains simply "freedom for one's death", death presents itself as a closure and not as an *exitus*. And so we will never take leave of this world. To be free *for that which is beyond death*, is to foresee and to bring about one's death as an *exitus*, a leave-taking of this world towards other worlds. But it is the living, and not the dead, which leave this world.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁹ H. Corbin, "From Heidegger to Suhrawardi"

Chapter Four: The Imagination in Heidegger's Kant book

For Heidegger, according to his own momentous purpose for Part 4 of the Kant book, the extraordinary *Wiederholung* undertaken in Parts 1-3 of the Kantbook of the role attributed to the imagination by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, and more particularly, in the *first* edition of that book, is after all, really “not all that”. Though it may thus far have seemed, he says, that his finding for ‘the transcendental power of imagination as the ground for the inner possibility of ontological synthesis’ would be the *conclusion* of his investigation of *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics* (the Kant book), should this have been so, says Heidegger, he need have done no more than cite ‘the appropriate quotations’.³⁸⁰

Instead, he now directs our attention to what *else* ‘occurs in the Kantian ground-laying’; i.e., ‘nothing less than...the grounding of the inner possibility of ontology as brought about as an unveiling of transcendence, i.e., of the subjectivity of the human subject.’³⁸¹ As we have seen in the previous chapter, transcendence, for Heidegger, equates to finitude; the point at which Corbin’s path diverges from his. Being however in no such haste as Heidegger, almost dismissive, in his rush to establish finitude, of the intricacies and “violence” of Parts 1-3 of the Kant book, as if a “mere” working out—for a comparative reading of Corbin, and of Corbin *as* the first French translator of Heidegger, the resonance for Corbin of a fundamental ontological role being accorded to the imagination is not to be passed over, notwithstanding that these Parts 1-3 did not appear in the Gallimard. This reading of Parts 1-3 of the Kant book is offered largely without commentary in this chapter. Its ramifications for our comparative reading of Corbin will be rehearsed in the conclusion.

Appended to this reading of Parts 1-3 of the Kant book is a gloss of the infamous debate between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer which concluded their Kant lectures at Davos (the ‘*Davoser Hochschule* course (March 17-April 6, 1929)’, immediately following which, the Kantbook is said to have been written up in ‘three weeks of uninterrupted work’³⁸² and ‘based on the preparatory work’ for those lectures.³⁸³ It is offered here in order to complete the reading of the Kant book, in the hope that it crystallizes some of what has gone before, and to provide philosophicohistorical context. I also find this transcript to offer compelling grounds for the undertaking of comparative research on Cassirer’s work on the symbolic and Corbin’s philosophy of the imaginal; though Corbin himself, to the best of my knowledge, while claiming to have discovered his own spiritual kinship with the Cambridge Platonists via Cassirer’s book *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, maintains silence on this point.

³⁸⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.144

³⁸¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.144

³⁸² F.W von Hermann, in his Editor’s Afterword, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.220

³⁸³ M. Heidegger, Preface to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) pp. xvii-iii

Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics

Preface to the Second Edition

Readers have taken constant offence at the violence of my interpretations.
Their allegation of violence can indeed be supported by this text.³⁸⁴

For Heidegger, there are two senses to ‘the expression “The Problem of Metaphysics”’. In the first sense, it refers to ‘the problem *for* Metaphysics’³⁸⁵, that is, ‘the question concerning beings as such in their totality’. In the second sense, it refers to the problem *of* Metaphysics per se, i.e., of Metaphysics *as* Metaphysics; for Heidegger, however, these two problems are essentially inextricable as it is the problem *for* Metaphysics which ‘allows Metaphysics as Metaphysics to become a problem’.³⁸⁶ *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* is Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* as ‘a laying of the ground for metaphysics’, in such a way as to place ‘the problem of metaphysics before us as a fundamental ontology’.³⁸⁷

The question, for Heidegger, is how such a ‘laying the ground for metaphysics’ ever came to be a critique of pure *reason* in the first place, to which he proposes to develop the answer ‘through a discussion of the following three questions:

- (1) Which concept of metaphysics is found in Kant?
- (2) What is the starting point for the laying of the ground for this traditional metaphysics?
- (3) Why is this ground-laying a critique of pure reason?³⁸⁸

This tripartite articulation of Heidegger’s initial question also nicely describes the movement of a *Wiederholung*, as, according to Heidegger’s definition, ‘the retrieval of a basic problem...through the working-out of which is transformed’³⁸⁹, in that the last of the three questions, that of ‘Why is this ground-laying a critique of pure reason?’, i.e., is a return to the initial, overarching question, only transformed and *informed* via the previous questions and answers.

As to the first question: “Which concept of metaphysics is found in Kant?” Heidegger finds that Kant’s initial traditional, Scholastic concept of metaphysics, as laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason* ‘may be characterized roughly’ by the definition given by Baumgarten in his *Metaphysica* (2nd Edition, 1743) thus: ‘Metaphysics is the science which comprises the first principles of human knowledge.’³⁹⁰ To which, Heidegger is moved to add the explanatory footnote: ‘Metaphysics is the first science in so far as it comprises the decisive grounds for what human knowing represents’;³⁹¹ continuing to add, back in the main

³⁸⁴ He continues: ‘Philosophicohistorical research is always correctly subject to this charge whenever it is directed against attempts to set in motion a thoughtful dialogue between thinkers’. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.3

³⁸⁵ [My italics] M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.xxi

³⁸⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.xxi

³⁸⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.1

³⁸⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.3

³⁸⁹ Introduction to Part Four, “The Laying of the Ground for Metaphysics in a Retrieval”, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.143

³⁹⁰ In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.3

³⁹¹ In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.3

body of the text, that for Baumgarten, ‘Ontology, cosmology, psychology, and natural theology [therefore] refer to metaphysics’.³⁹² For Heidegger, however, there is a ‘peculiar and at first a necessary ambiguity’ within the Scholastic conception of the “‘first principles of human knowledge’”,³⁹³ the sources of which appear to be threefold, as follows:

1). The first source of ambiguity for Heidegger lies in the fact that “*Metaphysics*” was originally simply a technical term for ‘those of Aristotle’s treatises that were arranged [sequentially] after those belonging to the *Physics*’, and only ‘later’ came to be understood as indicative of the philosophical character of the content of these treatises. In turn, says Heidegger, this later understanding came to ‘channel the interpretation of these treatises in a specific direction’³⁹⁴. Thus Kant himself insists that the name *Metaphysics* cannot be merely accidental, since, as *meta* (= trans-) + *physica*, it describes so perfectly what Kant himself understands metaphysics to be, i.e., ‘a science that is, so to speak, outside of the field of physics, which lies on the other side of it’.³⁹⁵ This “substantial” interpretation favoured by Kant, and the alternative, “accidental” possibility, therefore constitute the first source of ambiguity for Heidegger, making it necessary to ‘ask whether what is brought together in the Aristotelian *Metaphysics* is “metaphysics” at all’.

2). The second source of ambiguity for Heidegger, from which, he says, the need for this subsequently over-interpreted, technical term of “metaphysics” ‘sprang forth’, is the fact, uncomfortable for the Scholastics, that ‘what Aristotle strove for’ in his *Metaphysics* ‘as authentic philosophy or philosophy of the highest order’, would not precisely fit into any ‘subsequent Scholastic...discipline or framework’. Thus for the Scholastics “metaphysics” was (and still is, for Heidegger, though on markedly different grounds) ‘the title of a fundamental philosophical difficulty’.

3). The third source of this ambiguity regarding the Scholastic definition of metaphysics as the “science of first principles” lies in ambiguity itself, i.e., in the ‘lack of clarity’ that Heidegger finds to lie in the very Aristotelian treatises known as the *Metaphysics*, for and from which “metaphysics” was named; wherein, he says, ‘a remarkable doubling [*Doppelung*] appears precisely in the determination of the essence of “First Philosophy”’ which, ‘to the extent that Aristotle himself has anything to say about this’ is ‘both “knowledge of beings as beings”³⁹⁶ and also ‘of the most remarkable region of beings out of which being as a whole determines itself’. In other words, First Philosophy, for Aristotle, is both a knowledge of beings and a knowledge of Being. Heidegger finds it neither possible nor even desirable to hastily reconcile this Aristotelian “doubling”, or ‘apparent disunity’, which he says does not even originate with Aristotle, but

³⁹¹ Richard Taft’s own translation (Heidegger gives the Latin only) in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.3 (footnote 3)

³⁹² Richard Taft’s own translation (Heidegger gives the Latin only) in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.3 (footnote 3)

³⁹³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.3

³⁹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.4

³⁹⁵ M. Heinze, *Vorlesungen Kants über Metaphysik aus drei Semestern*. Abhdlg. Der K Sächsisch. Ges. Der Wissenschaften. Volume IV, phil.-hist Kl. 1894 p.666 (Sep. S, 186). See also Kant, *Über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik seit Leibniz und Wolff*, werke, VIII, p. 301 ff (this citation, and the quotation it refers to, appear as footnote 5 on p.4 of the 5th Ed. of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid.).

³⁹⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.4

‘has prevailed since the beginnings of ancient philosophy’. For Heidegger the task in hand is rather to ‘illuminate the grounds for the apparent disunity and the manner in which both determinations belong together as the leading problem of a “first philosophy” of beings.’ Thus returning to ‘the essential determination of “Metaphysics” or “First Philosophy” as offered by Aristotle, Heidegger finds its only value to be that of ‘an announcement of the problem’, which itself in turn only raises more questions, as follows:

In what does the essence of the knowledge of Being by beings lie? To what extent does this necessarily open up into a knowledge of beings as a whole? Why does this point anew to a knowledge of the knowledge of Being? Thus, “Metaphysics” simply remains the title for the philosophical difficulty.³⁹⁷

According to Heidegger, the subsequent development of Western metaphysics has been characterised by ‘a lack of understanding concerning the questionable and open nature of the central problems left by Plato and Aristotle’.³⁹⁸ The Scholastic response to Aristotle’s “remarkable doubling”, i.e., his definition of “First Philosophy” as concerning both beings *and* Being, was to divide metaphysics into a) *Metaphysica Specialis*, concerned with beings as such, and b) *Metaphysica Generalis*, concerned with being in general (*ens commune*). In keeping with the Scholastics’ devout Christian ‘this world- and Dasein-consciousness [*Welt- und Daseinbewußtsein*]’,^a the “content” of *Metaphysica Specialis* was then assigned to principle divisions, or ‘spheres’, according to which God is allied with Theology, ‘(the object of which is the *summum ens*)’;³⁹⁹ Nature is allied with Cosmology; and Humanity, in turn, allied with Psychology. This, then, for Heidegger defines what he calls the “horizontal” character of Kant’s concept of metaphysics:⁴⁰⁰ i.e., that Kant begins his “critique of pure reason” *within the horizon* of this bounded, dualistic— and in the case of *Metaphysica Specialis*, further “spherically” divided—Scholastic conception of metaphysics.

On the necessity, for Kant, of a “Ground-Laying” in the sense of ‘an essential determination of metaphysics’⁴⁰¹ and how this became a *Critique of Pure Reason*, Heidegger explains that ‘the other theme that is essential for the development of the Scholastic concept of Metaphysics concerns its type of knowledge and its method’. Since the object of metaphysics is both “being in general” and *beings*, right up to the *Summum Ens*/God, for Kant it is therefore a ‘science of the highest dignity—no less than the “queen of sciences”’, and must therefore be ‘assimilated to an appropriate ideal for knowledge’ such as mathematics, which as it is ‘rational in the highest sense...a priori because it is independent of chance experiences’, may be called a ‘pure science of reason’. Regarding reason, as the Scholastics did, as the highest, “God-given”, human faculty, Kant accordingly declares metaphysics—*Generalis* and *Specialis* both—to be ‘a “science established on the basis of mere [i.e., “pure”] reason”’. However, in light of ‘the constant “miscarriage” of all undertakings’ to date in *Metaphysica Specialis*—which, for Kant is and must

³⁹⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.5

³⁹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.5

^a According to which ‘every being that is not divine is created: the Universum’, with human beings afforded ‘a special place among the created beings’ since ‘everything depends upon the salvation and...eternal existence...of the human soul’. In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.5

³⁹⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.5-6

⁴⁰⁰ At least, of that with (in) which he begins his *Critique of Pure Reason*

⁴⁰¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.6

be metaphysics in its highest form—Kant declares that ‘all attempts to extend the pure knowledge of reason must be held back’ until the ‘inner possibility’ of metaphysics *as* a science of pure reason has been clarified, and ‘thus arises the task of a ground-laying in the sense of an essential determination of metaphysics’.⁴⁰² For Heidegger, therefore, *this* is the task of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—this, and *not*, even while it *is* concerned with the inner *possibility* of metaphysical knowledge—any kind of a theory of knowledge as such.

But while the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not, for Heidegger, concerned with developing a theory of knowledge, there is still, he says, necessarily a question of method, or as Heidegger prefers, of “comportment”, since ‘in an exceptional sense’ metaphysics, as ‘pure, rational knowledge of what is common to all beings’ and of ‘the specific wholeness of its principle divisions’ must attempt ‘from time to time’ to “overstep” ‘what experience can offer’, and thus attempt to “grasp” supersensible being. And yet, lacking ‘binding proof’ for such supersensible “insights”^b as it wishes to claim for its own, how then *can* metaphysics do, and *be*, any such thing? Kant is thus effectively ‘forced back’, acc. Heidegger, by the force of his own reason, from any further undertaking in *Metaphysica Specialis* toward ‘the question concerning the essence of *Metaphysica Generalis*’⁴⁰⁴, i.e., the question of how beings might be known *as such*; i.e., how beings might be known *as* beings. Henceforth, Kant’s ‘ground-laying’ becomes necessarily ‘the elucidation of a comporting toward beings in which this essence shows itself in itself so that all assertions about it become provable on the basis of it’⁴⁰⁵. Here, then, for Heidegger, Kant is brought directly ‘into dialogue with Aristotle and Plato for the first time’, and, since knowledge of being in general (i.e., of beings *as* beings) may no longer be taken for granted in an indeterminate way, ‘the deepest shock wave strikes the structure of traditional metaphysics’.⁴⁰⁶

How, then, ought one to most properly, or as it were *reasonably* comport oneself toward the question of being? As for Kant, in the words of Heidegger, ‘what makes the comporting toward beings (ontic knowledge) possible is the preliminary understanding of the constitution of Being, ontological knowledge’,⁴⁰⁷ i.e., that kind of knowledge which falls under the purview of *Metaphysica Specialis*, the possibility of which, has, as we have seen, has thus far been problematized by and for Kant, to the point of impossibility. What Kant really wants to say here, according to Heidegger, is that ‘not “all knowledge” is ontic, and [even] where there is such [ontic] knowledge, it is only possible through ontological knowledge’.⁴⁰⁸ Hence, an apparent impasse.

Kant therefore looks to the “realisation” of the mathematical natural sciences, wherein as ‘reason has insight only into what it produces itself according to its own design [*Entwurf*]’ and must therefore

⁴⁰² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.6

^b As Heidegger puts it, what Kant wants to say here is that ‘not “all knowledge is ontic, and where there is such knowledge, it is only possible through ontological knowledge’. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

⁴⁰³ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd Ed., Meiners Philosophische Bibliothek, Ed. Raymond Schmidt 1926, xiiiif. (in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*ibid.*) p.7

⁴⁰⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

⁴⁰⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.6

⁴⁰⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

⁴⁰⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.6

⁴⁰⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

not allow itself to cling...to Nature's apron strings, but must lead the way with principles of its judgements according to permanent laws, and...constrain Nature to answer its own questions.⁴⁰⁹

The purely *reasonable* character of mathematical natural science thus provides Kant with his model for the 'fundamental connection between ontic experience and ontological knowledge'.⁴¹⁰ What Kant also wants to say here, according to Heidegger, is that we might get on a lot better with metaphysics if, 'rather than utilising "the "old" concept of truth"—the *adequatio*, i.e., according to which knowledge must correspond to *objects*—we should assume instead "that objects must conform to our (a priori) knowledge". For Heidegger, however, far from doing away with the *adequatio*, Kant's "Copernican Revolution" not only presupposes it, but 'indeed even grounds it for the first time' in ontology, since the correspondence of ontic knowledge to beings as "objects" now depends on the knowledge of beings *as* beings, i.e. on 'the unveiledness of the constitution of the Being of beings'.⁴¹¹

Now, because, for Kant, *ontological* truth, as 'that which makes ontic knowledge possible',⁴¹² requires a "stepping-beyond"; and since pure reason is supposed to supply the principles with which to know something entirely a priori, Kant's next step is to "reduce" the problem to a critique of pure reason itself, i.e., the inner possibility of 'a priori synthetic judgements'. Accordingly, 'ontological knowledge' is now characterised as 'a judging according to grounds (principles) which are not brought forth experientially',⁴¹³ i.e., what Kant calls a transcendental investigation. Heidegger wishes to emphasize that, for Kant, to philosophize transcendently, i.e., to enquire into the possibility of transcendental truth, or knowledge, is *not* a case of setting "a theory of knowledge"... in place of metaphysics' but rather a questioning of 'the inner possibility of ontology'.⁴¹⁴ And, since 'Nothing can be presupposed' here, 'least of all the *factum* of the natural sciences' (which, at the time Heidegger is writing, is being thoroughly destabilised (again), precisely by the science of quantum physics, e.g., the Heisenberg principle;) Kant must now 'pursue the a priori synthesis exclusively in itself...to the seed [*keim*] which provides it ground',⁴¹⁵ since, in Kant's own words, "'Critique requires knowledge of the sources, and Reason must know itself'"⁴¹⁶.

Yet despite this clearly stated requirement, according to Heidegger, 'previous interpretations'⁴¹⁷ of the Kant book have, he says, 'unduly neglected or interpreted...the preliminary and sufficient characterization of the *original dimension*' (my italics)—which Heidegger concedes may be attributable to the very fact that rather than entering into an explicit discussion of the original dimension or 'field of origin' of reason itself here, Kant himself instead 'takes th[is] for granted in the sense of "self-evident presuppositions"'.⁴¹⁸

⁴⁰⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd Ed., Meiners Philosophische Bibliothek, Ed. Raymond Schmidt 1926, xiiiif. (cited in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.7)

⁴¹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.6

⁴¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.8

⁴¹² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.6

⁴¹³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.9

⁴¹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.11

⁴¹⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* pp.11-2

⁴¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* 1st Edition p.146, 2nd Edition p.185, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.11

⁴¹⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.12

⁴¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.14

For Heidegger, however, since “‘In whatever manner and by whatever means a knowing [*eine Erkenntnis*] may relate to objects, *intuition* [defined as ‘receptivity for impressions’], is that through which it relates itself immediately to them, and upon which all thought as a means is directed”⁴¹⁹, it follows that *intuition* is necessarily *prior* to reason in human knowing. Sincerely wishing to hammer this into the reader, Heidegger therefore states clearly and often in this part of the Kant book that ‘knowing is primarily intuiting’⁴²⁰. This means that *thinking*, i.e., reason as judging, is *secondary* to intuition, and *serves* ‘that to which intuition is primarily and constantly directed’. Human knowing, for Heidegger, is therefore best described as ‘a thinking intuiting’,⁴²¹ and while ‘receptivity for impressions’ (intuition) and ‘spontaneity of concepts’ (thinking) are the ‘two basic sources [*Grundquellen*] of the mind’,⁴²² *neither of these alone is knowledge*. In fact the precise point that Heidegger makes here is that *intuition* alone is not knowledge; there is no point in his making the same claim for thinking alone, where thinking is defined as “reason as judging”, since it has already been established that without “an intuiting” to serve, thought alone, thus defined, would have nothing *to think*, nothing *to judge*. The occurrence of thinking, as such, is thus dependent upon the priority of intuition; in order that knowing, in turn, may occur as a consequence.

The ‘inherent relationship’ for Kant, between the faculty of intuition (i.e., “pure”, and not sensory sensibility), and the faculty of thinking is their ‘descendency from the same class (genus)’⁴²³ of *repraesentio*, i.e., that for both of them “‘*Representation in general (repraesentio)...is the species*’”.⁴²⁴ It is this conspecificity which allows for their eventual ‘unification’ in knowledge, as above. Even so, Heidegger observes that these two “stems” of the species of representation seem very different to one another, and if indeed they do have a common “root”, as the original source of their conspecificity, at this point in the *Critique of Pure Reason* it remains unknown.

Finite Reason

For Kant, says Heidegger, the finitude of human reason does not ‘consist only or primarily’ in its ‘instability, imprecision, or capacity for making errors’, but rather ‘in the essential structure of knowledge itself’.⁴²⁵ In keeping with the “traditional” (i.e., Scholastic) ‘this world- and Dasein-consciousness’, Kant defines finite human knowledge as such in contrast to the absolute, infinite, divine knowledge of God, which Kant calls *intuitus originarius*⁴²⁶, since *as* knowledge, divine knowledge also has the character of intuition. Unlike finite, human intuition, divine intuition never offers, or constitutes an “object” for divine *knowing*; there is no ‘being already at hand’ for divine knowing to “take the measure” of, i.e., to “think”; since if there *were* any ‘being already at hand’, i.e., *prior* to divine knowing, then, by definition, divine knowing would not be infinite or absolute.

⁴¹⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.19, 2nd Ed. p.33 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.15

⁴²⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.15

⁴²¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.14

⁴²² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.25

⁴²³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.15

⁴²⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.320, 2nd Ed. p.376 f, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.15

⁴²⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.15

⁴²⁶ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.19, 2nd Ed. p.33 as in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.17

For Kant, therefore, it is rather the case that in its ‘immediate representation’ of the ‘unique, singular being as a whole’, the *intuitus originarius* actually ‘brings this being into its Being’. And, as divine *originating* intuition knows ‘the being as a whole...immediately...seeing through it in advance’, it simply ‘cannot...require thinking’. Thinking is thus ‘the mark of finitude’,⁴²⁷ and finitude is thus the first intrinsic truth that human reason must know of itself.

Finite Intuition

Unlike divine intuition, for Kant, acc. Heidegger, human, finite intuition requires the existence of intuitable, i.e., “sensible” objects, thus the character of its finitude is to be ‘found in its receptivity’.⁴²⁸

For Kant, there are two kinds of sensible intuition in finite knowing:

1) Pure intuition of space and time. Heidegger acknowledges Kant’s attainment here of ‘a concept of sensibility which is ontological rather than sensualistic’, wherein ‘if empirically affective intuition of beings does not need to coincide with “sensibility”, the possibility of a non-empirical [i.e. “pure”] sensibility remains essentially open.’⁴²⁹

2) ““Empirical intuition of what is immediately represented, through sensation, as *actual in space and time*””⁴³⁰.

Veritative Synthesis

In order for it to *become* knowledge (that is, to become understandable and communicable to others), for Kant, finite intuiting requires that what is intuited be determined ‘as this and that’.⁴³¹ This is the role of thinking, by which the intuited is ‘further represented with a view to what it is in general’. Kant names this general representation of what an intuited being is in general *repraesentio per notas communes* (“representing in general”).⁴³² This “general” representation of the primarily intuited is then kept in view, that from this ‘viewpoint’ its *particularity* may be determined.⁴³³

This determinate representation, as ‘the assertion of something about something’, is called predication, or judgement. In representing what an intuited being is in *general*, a judgement is ‘a representing of the unifying unity of concepts in their character as predicates’. This ‘unifying representing’ is called ‘predicative synthesis’, and it is in this way the understanding (i.e., the faculty of judgement, or thinking) ‘helps to set forth the content of the object... as a comprehensively grasped unity’ which ‘applies to many’. The understanding is thus a *productive*⁴³⁴ faculty, but only in its producing the *form* of the concept, while the *content* of the concept, i.e., ‘the universal...in which the intuited comes to be conceptually

⁴²⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.17

⁴²⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.18

⁴²⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.19

⁴³⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd Ed. p.146 f, as in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.19

⁴³¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.19

⁴³² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. P68, 2nd Ed. p.93, as in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.19

⁴³³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.19

⁴³⁴ = from Latin *producere*, from *pro-* ‘forward’ + *ducere* ‘to lead.’ *New Oxford American Dictionary* 2010

represented...is derived from the intuitable'.⁴³⁵ This "production" of human, finite thinking is not, as divine intuition is, immediate *creation*, in other words, but a kind of "forming out of", a "fashioning". It is by this 'union (synthesis)' of intuition and thinking that 'thinking is mediately related to the object', by which the truth of the object's being is determined. This "union" of thinking with intuition is called the *veritative* synthesis, and it is, for Kant, in Heidegger's words, 'the essence of intuiting finite thinking'.

However, even while finite, human knowledge must necessarily be 'delivered over to the being which already is', note that it is "mediately related" to *the object*; the 'being as being in itself, i.e., not as object'⁴³⁶ can never be known to us *as such*. Thus for Kant "in the world of sense...however deeply we enquire into its objects... [we have] to do with nothing but appearances";⁴³⁷ therefore, continues Heidegger, 'for it's own [very] possibility', ontic knowledge, i.e., knowledge of beings *as* beings, *must* be grounded in ontological knowledge, that is, 'a knowing of the Being of beings prior to all receiving'.⁴³⁸

And since, continues Heidegger, when it comes to 'the knowing of Being' "prior to all receiving", *ibid.*, 'what should now be taken in stride...cannot be a being which is at hand and presents itself'.⁴³⁹ The knowledge of Being rather requires a 'pure representing', a 'pure intuition' which 'must give itself something capable of being represented'. It must therefore 'in a certain sense be "creative",⁴⁴⁰ and thus 'apparently nonfinite'. Suddenly, it appears that the finitude of finite knowledge is open to question after all, and with that 'the question of the possibility of ontology for a finite creature' has become a lot 'more complicated'.⁴⁴¹ What, then, is the constitution of the finite creature (humanity, Dasein) that makes such an a priori, pure intuition possible? In what is it "grounded"? If we wish to discover 'to what extent ontological knowledge can be the condition for the possibility of ontic knowledge', then for Heidegger, after Kant, its *own* possibility, its own origin must also be 'unveiled'.⁴⁴²

The Unveiling of the Origin

For Kant, as we have seen, the 'two stems of human knowledge...which perhaps spring forth from a common but to us unknown root'" are 'sensitivity and understanding'.⁴⁴³ For Heidegger, it is *precisely* this pointing to the "unknown root" that makes the *Critique of Pure Reason* 'a philosophizing laying of the ground of philosophy';⁴⁴⁴ and it is through the discovery of this "unknown root" that both the inner constitution of Dasein, and with that, the very possibility of ontological knowledge may come to be known.

How, then, is the unknown origin, the "fundamental source" [*Quellgrund*] of a priori, ontological synthesis to be revealed? According to the traditional, Scholastic divisions, since the "region of its "unveiling" is the

⁴³⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.21

⁴³⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.20

⁴³⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.45, 2nd Ed. p.62 f, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.24

⁴³⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.27

⁴³⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.31

⁴⁴⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.31

⁴⁴¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.28

⁴⁴² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.27

⁴⁴³ He continues "'Through the former, objects are given to us; through the latter, they are thought'" I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.15, 2nd Ed. p.29 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.25

⁴⁴⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.25

human mind, the problem would seem to be proper to the discipline of Psychology. Then again, because it also has to do with ‘an interpretation of knowledge’, the discipline of Logic would also seem to have some proper claim on the problem; however, says Heidegger, because of the ‘originality and uniqueness of what Kant sought’, neither discipline is suitable or sufficient for this “study of our inner nature”.⁴⁴⁵ Thus the method for the ‘unveiling’ of ‘the origin’, of that “ground” in which, for Heidegger, metaphysics ‘is rooted as a “haunting” [*Heimsuchung*, lit. “homeseeking”, often translated elsewhere as “visitation”⁴⁴⁶] of human nature’ must largely be left open. It may yet ‘be understood as “analytic” in the broadest sense’, says Heidegger, though not as a “breaking up”, but rather a “loosening of the seeds” [*Keim*] of ontology, to reveal its ‘essential structure’ and ‘the construction of the substructures [*Fundamente*] necessary to it’.⁴⁴⁷ And yet however it is to be understood, as Kant himself states in his letter to M. Herz of 1781, this problem ‘will always remain difficult’,⁴⁴⁸ because ‘it includes the metaphysics of metaphysics’.⁴⁴⁹

Before we come to the unknown root, however, the two “stems” of pure, *finite* knowledge –i.e., pure intuition and thinking— must be discussed, beginning with pure intuition.

Pure intuition, or an ‘*Elucidation of Space and Time as Pure Intuitions*’.

Kant’s definition of space and time as pure intuitions begins apophantically, i.e., with what they *are not*, thus: that which ‘is represented in pure intuition [i.e. space and time] is no being (no object [*Gegenstand*], i.e. no appearing being) but at the same time it is plainly not nothing’.⁴⁵⁰

Space is no “empirical representation”, and neither may it simply be ‘stripped off’ or abstracted from ‘many different things’; hence space is not a concept. Space is rather a ‘pure represented’ that must be represented ‘necessarily’ and ‘in advance’ as ‘that within which what is at hand can first be encountered’, in order that such encounters may “take place” at all. Space is that which makes “extensiveness” possible, and the ordering of things in terms of “above”, “below” and so on. Space *does* contain limitations, and thus, *parts*; but as its parts, its limitations, are *also* spatial, they’re all space as well. The “parts” of space are not unified “under” it, as they would be in the predicative synthesis of a concept; and for this reason also space is *not* a concept, for Kant, but a unique object. As to what space *is*—as ‘immediate representing of a unified particular [*repraesentio singularis*],’⁴⁵¹ in which ‘what is intuited...in a preliminary glimpse...stands without reference to a particular object and is unthematic as well’,⁴⁵² space gives ‘what is intuited immediately’, and ‘as a whole’.⁴⁵³ Space is thus defined as a pure intuition which gives ‘the totality of those relations according to which what is encountered in the senses would be ordered’.

⁴⁴⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.28

⁴⁴⁶ As noted by R. Taft, translator; M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.29

⁴⁴⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.29

⁴⁴⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.xx in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.29

⁴⁴⁹ I. Kant, his letter to M. Herz of 1781, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.29

⁴⁵⁰ In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.31

⁴⁵¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.32

⁴⁵² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.33

⁴⁵³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.32

There are, however, also ‘givens of the “inner sense” which indicate...no spatial references’,⁴⁵⁴ and these belong to *time*. Time, as ‘pure succession’, is *the form of our inner sense*; that which determines “the relation of representations in our inner state”⁴⁵⁵ while “having nothing to do with shape nor position.” Time does not determine “outer appearances”⁴⁵⁶ as such, except that in as much as all appearances are “inner” representations, it is “the a priori condition of all appearances whatsoever”.⁴⁵⁷ Heidegger goes on to add that ‘the more subjective time is, the more original and extensive is the expansiveness of the subject’.

Thus according to the ‘mediate within-time-ness’ of all representations, whether ‘determined through external sense’, or not,^{458b} time thus has ‘a preeminence over space’⁴⁵⁹ as the *universal* pure intuition, which, ‘in its ontological function’ as ‘essential bit of pure ontological knowledge’,⁴⁶⁰ must be considered as ‘the guiding and supporting essential element of...the transcendence that forms knowledge’.⁴⁶¹ The possibility of pure *intuition* having been established via these characterisations of space, and especially *time*, as such, Kant’s investigation now turns to pure *thought*.

The possibility of pure thinking (as a priori synthetic judgement)

The concept, as “product” of the faculty of *understanding* (thinking, i.e.), is formed by a process of “reflection”, which Heidegger describes as ‘the keeping-in-view of the one which applies to many’, that they may thus be ‘likened to one another’.⁴⁶² The possibility of *a priori* synthetic judgements—and thus of ontological knowledge, beyond the pure intuition of space and time—necessarily requires a ‘pure concept [*conceptus dati a priori*]’, that is, ‘a “reflected” representation’ whose content’ is ‘obtainable a priori’, and not ‘read from appearances’.⁴⁶³ But how can the understanding—thinking, i.e.— whose usual function in concept formation is only that of a forming-out-of, an ‘empty...binding-together’⁴⁶⁴ of a concept, whose *content*, however, is ‘derived from the intuitable’⁴⁶⁵ —here *itself* be ‘capable of giving a content’^{466?}

Following the pattern of concept formation, previously given, the answer that seems to suggest itself is that the content of a pure concept should surely rather be derived from pure intuition. For Kant, however, says Heidegger, the answer is given in terms of the a priori existence of ‘a manifold’ of the ‘pure unities of possible unification’,⁴⁶⁷ ‘in light of which a unifying in general [i.e., a pure conceptualisation] is possible’. Hence *more* than being just an empty “binding together”, the function of the understanding in pure concept formation is the *representation* of a priori unities, which, as *pure concepts have this form already and are*

⁴⁵⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁵⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.133, 2nd Ed. p.250, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁵⁶ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.33, 2nd Ed. p.49, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁵⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.34, 2nd Ed. p.50, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34.

⁴⁵⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.35

^b I.e., since ‘all representations, as states of representation, fall immediately in time, what is represented in representing belongs as such in time’. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.35

⁴⁵⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁶⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.35

⁴⁶¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁶² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.36

⁴⁶³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.37

⁴⁶⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.38

⁴⁶⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.21

⁴⁶⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.38

⁴⁶⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.39

thus their own content. Thus the *pure* concepts are not “reflected concepts”, but rather ‘concepts of reflection, or reflecting concepts’,⁴⁶⁸ which, for Kant ‘have the character of ontological predicates which have been called “categories” since ancient times’.⁴⁶⁹ There then follows some discussion, on Heidegger’s part, of the sufficiency of Kant’s investigation into the “essence” of the pure concepts, or categories;^d but suffice it to say for our purposes here that, *like* pure intuition,^e pure, a priori concepts are found to exist; thus a priori, transcendental knowledge is found to be possible.

Imagination as pure synthesis

The two “stems” of pure finite knowledge having duly been discovered, what of their mysterious “root”? Recalling that for both “stems” “*Representation...is the species*”⁴⁷⁰ it is perhaps not *such* a surprise when it is announced that ‘the essential construction of knowledge’, occurs by the pure, synthetic ‘power of the imagination’,⁴⁷¹ which ‘holds the central [mediating] position’⁴⁷² between them. For Heidegger, far from providing us with ‘the empty simplicity of an ultimate principle’; far from a facile “happy ending”, i.e., this revelation of the ‘essential unity of pure knowledge...as a multiform action which [as yet] remains obscure in its character,⁴⁷³ must instead be regarded as ‘the correct *beginning* of the laying of the ground for ontological knowledge’, of which, ‘because it [knowing] is an action’ the essence ‘can only become apparent to the extent that it is traced out in its springing-forth’⁴⁷⁴.

The formation of pure finite knowledge as Schematism (and Schema-Image).

For Kant, however, Heidegger informs us that it was very strange *indeed* to discover that the binding ‘medium’ of transcendental synthesis together should be the imagination, and he repeatedly stressed ‘the obscurity into which all discussions of the Transcendental Deduction must move’⁴⁷⁵ because of it (N.B., here Kant is using the term “deduction” in not a logical, but a juridical sense). Kant nonetheless continued to strive towards developing his elucidation of transcendence into what Heidegger calls ‘the systematic totality of a presentation’,⁴⁷⁶ most notably in the 11-page section entitled *On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding*,⁴⁷⁷ which Heidegger holds to be ‘the central core’ of this entire ‘voluminous work’. In order to continue with our *own* elucidation, we must therefore turn to Heidegger’s treatment of the Schematism, in particular his discussion of ‘Making-Sensible’.

⁴⁶⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.38 (I must say that while I am right there with the distinction between “a thinking intuiting” and “an intuiting thinking”, the difference between a reflected concept, and a reflecting concept is a little bit lost on me).

⁴⁶⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.39

^d Then, writes Heidegger, rather than ‘develop the manifold nature of the functions in judgement from the essence of the understanding’, instead Kant puts forward the Kantian Table of Judgements ‘organized according to the four “primary moments” of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Modality’, not as representing the entire “essence” of the categories but rather as ‘the guiding text for the discovery of all the concepts of understanding’. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.40

^e Of which space and time “contain a manifold”, and are at the same time “the conditions for the receptivity of our mind...under which alone it can receive representations of objects and which therefore must also always affect the concept of these objects”’. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. P.78, 2nd Ed. p.103, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.34

⁴⁷⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.320, 2nd Ed. p.376 f, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.15

⁴⁷¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.44

⁴⁷² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.45

⁴⁷³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.45-6

⁴⁷⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.46

⁴⁷⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.62

⁴⁷⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.62

⁴⁷⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. pp.137-147, 2nd Ed. pp.176-187 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.63

In order that a being might become its object, finite knowledge requires that there be a ‘turning-toward’ on the part of the finite creature, which turning-toward is at once an *offering*, of ‘the horizon of its possible encountering’, in which ‘the being might offer itself as such’. This ‘turning-toward’, or ‘letting-stand against’ which thus also has ‘the character of an offering’, must itself *also* have the character of ‘a preparatory bearing in mind of what is offerable in general’, that it –the offered—the offering-being, i.e., the *object*— may be ‘immediately...taken in stride in intuition’ in order that ‘the pure understanding’ may thus be ‘grounded in a pure intuition which guides it and sustains it’. Thus, in its turning-toward, the finite creature forms the “horizon” of its letting-stand-against in order that it might “form” a look of the offering [being] from out of itself.⁴⁷⁸

This forming of the horizon ‘as a free turning-toward’, which, *in* forming the horizon, also ‘in general...provides for something like an image’, is accomplished by ‘the pure power of imagination’. This is what Heidegger calls ‘the double-forming of the look’; at once the ‘making-sensible [i.e. intuitable] of the horizon’, and the letting-stand against’, understood as ‘a representing of unities as such which regulate all unification (pure concepts)’. Transcendence is thus ‘formed in the making-sensible of pure concepts’, and, for Kant, continues Heidegger, this ‘pure making-sensible occurs as a “Schematism”’.

As *intuition*, pure sensibility must ‘necessarily’ take ‘what is intuitable in-stride’, and, as it is *pure*, it must innately do so ‘prior to all empirical receiving’. What, then, *is* taken-in-stride and made-sensible here? As it is finite, even pure, finite intuition ‘cannot exactly *produce* [i.e., *create*] an intuitable being’⁴⁷⁹—thus its ‘pure making-sensible’ must be ‘the taking of something in stride *which indeed is formed first of all in the taking-in-stride itself*’,⁴⁸⁰ and this “something” is the “something *like* an image”, provided for by the power of the imagination. The qualifier, “something *like*-”, is essential here because the ‘pure making-sensible of pure concepts’ (ibid.) does not—indeed, cannot, offer an image *per se*, as represented in an ‘immediate look’ or ‘intuition’,⁴⁸¹ since as we have seen, ‘what representation represents in the manner of the concepts [is]... the “in general”, as a ‘unity applicable to several’. As ‘a represented universal’, the concept is *without* a particular, and thus ‘cannot be represented in a *repraesentio singularis*’. How, then, may ‘the look of its possible likenesses [be] shared?’⁴⁸²

Here Heidegger draws our attention to the three different ways he says Kant uses the word “image”, depending on what it is that ‘comes into view’, as follows:

1. ‘The look of a determinate being to the extent that it is manifest as something at hand. It offers the look’.
2. “A likeness taken”, i.e., ‘the look which takes a likeness of something at hand’.
3. Image ‘can also have the full range of meaning of look in general’, whether or not ‘a being or a non-being will be intuitable in this look’.

⁴⁷⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.63-4

⁴⁷⁹ [My italics] M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.64

⁴⁸⁰ [Again, my italics] M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.65

⁴⁸¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.65

⁴⁸² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.66

To illustrate these image-kinds, Heidegger offers the successive examples of a corpse, its death mask, and a photograph of its death mask, drawing our attention to that fact that, extra to appearing as the image of a particular corpse/death mask/photograph, each image-kind also serves as an example of what it is “in general”, with the death mask as a likeness-image, and the photograph as an image of a likeness-image, offering successively more of these “in general” image “layers”; so that where the corpse offers the look of “a corpse in general”, the death mask offers both the look of “a death mask in general”, and also, as it is a likeness-image, it offers the look of “a corpse in general”. The photograph offers—and so on.⁴⁸³

For in order to understand this “something *like* an image” that is provided for by the power of the imagination (as before), we must consider the question of *what the “in general” look of something would be*, but *without the particular* look of either a being at hand or a likeness—without, in fact, a *look* at all. In short, this “something like an image” which regulates the specific ‘making-sensible’⁴⁸⁴ of the intuitable, is not a “what”, but, rather a “how” of representation which Kant calls ‘the schema of this concept’⁴⁸⁵; whose ‘formation in its fulfilment as the manner of making the concept sensible’ Kant calls schematism, and which occurs ‘primarily in the power of imagination’.⁴⁸⁶ Thus while ‘the representing of the rule is [called] the schema’, since it is ‘related to something like an image, i.e., [since] the image character belongs necessarily to the schema’, the “general form”, or *product* of schematism, may be called the *schema-image*.

The *concept* itself ‘is nothing’ beyond the ‘regulative unity’ of the schema, in which it is ‘grounded’ and to which it immediately refers, and the schema, in turn, ‘necessarily remains relative to possible schema-images, of which no uniqueness can be demanded’. Thus e.g., when the concept of “dog” comes to mind, says Heidegger, ‘my power of imagination can specify the form [Gestalt] of a four-footed animal in general, without being limited to any particular form’.⁴⁸⁷ As such, in Kant’s own words: ‘it is not images {immediate looks} of the objects which lie at the foundation of our pure sensible concepts, but rather the schemata’. The schematism is thus the essence of conceptual representing, and thus of ‘all finite knowing’.⁴⁸⁸

Thus, continues Heidegger, ‘If the Schematism belonging to the essence of finite knowledge and finitude is centred in transcendence then the occurrence of transcendence is at its innermost a schematism’. Thus, he continues, if Kant ‘is to bring to light ‘the ground for the inner possibility of transcendence’ it follows that he must ‘necessarily’ come across ‘a “transcendental schematism”’⁴⁸⁹—and so he does.

Transcendental Schematism

⁴⁸³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.65

⁴⁸⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.67

⁴⁸⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.141, 2nd Ed. p.180 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.68

⁴⁸⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.68

⁴⁸⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.69

⁴⁸⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.71. It is with this in mind, e.g., that Richard Taft, the English translator of this edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, chooses to translate Heidegger’s term *Vorblick* (commonly “foresight”, lit. “preview”) for “the offering of the horizon of possible objectivity” as ‘schematizing premonition’.

⁴⁸⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.71

Of course, the *pure* concepts, as pre-presenting the ‘rules in which objectivity in general as preliminary horizon for the encountering of all objects is formed’ cannot be brought into the *same* ‘kinds of schema-images’ as those into which ‘the schemata of empirical and mathematical concepts’ are brought. Instead, the pure concepts are brought into what Kant calls the “pure image”—into *time*, that is, which, as ‘pure intuition, (for Kant, the pure succession of the sequence of nows)... is such as to procure a look prior to all experience’; a ‘pure look, which gives itself in such pure intuition’.⁴⁹⁰ As such, *time* is thus ‘the pure image of the schemata of the pure concepts of the understanding’;⁴⁹¹ and as the schemata of pure concepts refer ‘essentially and necessarily to time’;⁴⁹² it follows that the regulating unities they represent necessarily regulate the pure concepts of the understanding *in time*, which, as pure *intuition*, is also ‘their sole pure possibility of having a certain look’ *at all*. Thus ‘through internal self-regulation in time as pure look, the schemata of pure concepts... articulate the unique pure possibility of having a certain look into a variety of pure images’. In this way, the schemata of pure concepts are “‘nothing but a priori *determinations of time* according to rules’”, or “‘transcendental determinations of time’”. As such, they are themselves, for Kant, ‘a transcendental product of the power of imagination.’⁴⁹³ This, then is the *Transcendental Schematism*, the very ‘ground for the inner possibility of ontological knowledge’.⁴⁹⁴

Transcendental Schematism as Determination of Time

Heidegger now pauses to outline what he describes as Kant’s ‘lapidary presentation’ of ‘the complete unity of the pure concepts of the understanding’, extracted ‘from the Table of Judgements’; also his ‘definitions of the schemata of the individual, pure concepts of the understanding of the Table of Notions’,⁴⁹⁵ and, according to ‘the four moments of the division of the categories (Quantity, Quality, Relation, Modality)’, the ‘four possibilities of formability’ which ‘the pure look of time must exhibit’ as ‘time-series, time-content, time-order, and time-inclusiveness’. While Heidegger concedes there is a certain point to all this, to the extent that ‘the more clearly the essential structure of...all that belongs to the whole of transcendence is brought to light’ the better we shall be able to ‘find our way in the darkness of these most original structures’,⁴⁹⁶ for Heidegger it would have been better still if instead Kant had rather ‘developed’ this characterization ‘systematically through analysis’⁴⁹⁷ as he did, above, in ‘the Transcendental Schematism’, which Heidegger says he intends to prove is ‘no baroque theory but...created out of the phenomena themselves’.⁴⁹⁸ As proof, Heidegger offers an ‘admittedly...short and rough’ interpretation of the transcendental schema of the category of substance, which yields a number of further insights into the nature of time, as follows.

⁴⁹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.73

⁴⁹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* pp.73-4

⁴⁹² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.73

⁴⁹³ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.145, 2nd Ed. p.184 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.73

⁴⁹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.76

⁴⁹⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.74

⁴⁹⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.75

⁴⁹⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.74

⁴⁹⁸ Here Heidegger informs us that Kant, for his part, was short on elucidatory zeal here, stating that he preferred to present the pure concepts “‘according to the order of the categories’” so as not to be delayed further by a “‘dry and tedious dissection’”. In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.75

Time, he says, as ‘pure sequence of nows, is always now’ and ‘thus shows its own permanence’.⁴⁹⁹ Time is ‘not one thing among others which lasts’—things may last, and change, and pass “in time” but time itself—“immutable and lasting”⁵⁰⁰—*does not pass*.^c Time simultaneously ‘gives the pure look of something like lasting in general’, and ‘at the same time’, ‘the image of pure change in what lasts’, and as such, it ‘presents that which forms the ground in pure intuition’,⁵⁰¹ since it is “in this preliminary view of the pure image of persistence a being which as such is unalterable in the change can show itself for experience” (i.e., Being-at-hand). Thus time, ‘given as a priori’ in the Transcendental Schematism, not only ‘bestows upon the horizon of transcendence the character of the perceivable offer’, but also, ‘as the unique pure, universal image...gives a preliminary enclosedness to the horizon of transcendence’, within which any given being ‘can have this or that particular, revealed, indeed ontic horizon’.⁵⁰² Thus, in summary, as Kant puts it,

[there] is but one quintessence [*Inbegriff*] in which all our representations are contained, namely, the inner sense and its a priori form, time. The synthesis of the representations rests on the power of imagination, but their synthetic unity (which is required for judgement) [rests] on the unity of apperception.⁵⁰³

Finite Transcendence as Creativity

At once a ‘going-out-to’, a turning-towards which in the ‘standing-out-from’ at once ‘forms and therein holds before itself—a horizon’⁵⁰⁴, the “ecstatic-horizonal” forming of transcendence is at once the forming of the possibility of experience. To the question of: ‘Does not the finite creature become infinite through this creative behaviour?’ the answer in Kant, for Heidegger, is ‘absolutely not’—not, at least, in the sense of *intuitus originarius*. Not only does ontological knowledge not *create beings*, it does not even ‘relate itself at all, thematically or directly to the being’, but rather to what Kant variously refers to as ‘the nonempirical object = “X”’; a ‘Something = X of which we know nothing...’ and a ‘Nothing [which] means: not a being, but nevertheless “Something”’, which Nothing-thing Heidegger defines ‘according to its essence...[as] pure horizon’.⁵⁰⁵

Thus, as before, the apparent “creativity” of ontological knowledge, which lies in its “forming” of transcendence, ‘is nothing other than the holding-open of the horizon within which the Being of the being becomes discernable in a preliminary way’.⁵⁰⁶ Thus, writes Heidegger ‘if knowledge means: apprehending of beings’, then ‘ontological knowledge is no knowledge’ at all. However, says Heidegger, if *truth*, as the second condition for finite knowledge (the first being the very possibility of experience⁵⁰⁷) be taken to mean ‘unconcealment of’ [*aletheia*], rather than, e.g., “adequacy to”, as in the *adequatio*⁵⁰⁸) then while the ‘original truth’, or “unconcealment” of transcendence ‘must bifurcate into the unveiledness of Being and

⁴⁹⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.75

⁵⁰⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.144, 2nd Ed. p.183, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.75

^c Heidegger adds the following footnote: See I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.41, 2nd Ed. p.58: “time itself is not changed, but rather, something which is in time”. In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.76.

⁵⁰¹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.144, 2nd Ed. p.183 in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.76.

⁵⁰² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.76

⁵⁰³ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.155, 2nd Ed. p.194, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.82

⁵⁰⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.84

⁵⁰⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.86

⁵⁰⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.87

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.83

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. e.g., M. Heidegger, trans. Thomas Sheehan, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, in M. Heidegger *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998 pp. 155-182

the openness [*Offenbarkeit*] of beings' as above, since Kant has no other "use" here for ontological knowledge beyond that it 'serves for the making-possible of finite knowledge', let it simply be said that the truth of ontological knowledge lies in its 'letting the being be encountered within the horizon'.

Nonetheless, for Heidegger,

it must at least remain open as to whether this "creative" knowledge, which is always only ontological and never ontic, bursts the finitude of transcendence asunder, or whether it does not just "plant" the finite "subject" in its authentic finitude.⁵⁰⁹

The Imagination

So we come to the third section of the Kant book, and its 'explicit characterization' of the pure, synthetic 'power of imagination', as 'the formative centre of ontological knowledge', as the 'holding-open of the horizon which is discernable in advance through the pure schemata', which themselves also "'spring-forth" as the "transcendental product"⁵¹⁰ of the transcendental power of the imagination'. Thus, as a spontaneous "'forming"' of the horizon which is 'simultaneously' receptive, i.e., 'takes things in stride',⁵¹¹ the power of the imagination appears as a 'faculty of forming [*Vermögen des Bildens*] in a peculiar double sense', which "falls between" 'both of the Kantian faculties of knowledge', i.e., intuition and thinking, or sensibility and understanding. For Heidegger, it is precisely this "falling between" which gives the power of imagination its 'remarkably iridescent character'.

But what exactly does he mean by this; how exactly is this pure, spontaneous, double-forming, *synthetic* power of the imagination to be understood?

For Kant, says Heidegger, the power of imagination is, in general, 'a faculty of comparing, shaping, combining, distinguishing and in general of binding-together (synthesis).'⁵¹² While, for Kant, as he makes clear in his 1798 *Anthropology*, e.g., 'not all productive power of imagination is pure'^b, his *Critique of Pure Reason* is concerned only with the *pure* power of imagination; which, 'to the extent that it forms transcendence', says Heidegger, 'is rightly called the transcendental power of imagination', and which is regarded by Kant as the 'third basic faculty'⁵¹³ of the mind, where faculty means a 'basic ability of the

⁵⁰⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.87

⁵¹⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.142, 2nd Ed. p.181, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.90

⁵¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.90

⁵¹² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.91

^b Here Heidegger embarks upon a brief comparative discussion of the characterization of the power of the imagination set forth in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to that given ten years later in his *Anthropology* (1798). Both texts agree that while its "without strings" composition of 'the outward appearance of an object' is, without doubt, the "original" presentation of a "look" (*exhibito originaria*), this apparent "creativity" is not that of the *intuitus originarius*, and thus, again, according to both texts, the 'creative "essence" of the imagination' is not an ontic creativity. This is where the texts diverge, however, since according to the later *Anthropology*, the creativity of the imagination lies solely in its 'free forming of images', i.e., 'the looks of empirically possible, or rather, impossible objects', and even these are not formed 'simply from out of the nothing, i.e., from that which has never before and nowhere been experienced,' as evidenced by the fact that "'the stuff [i.e., source] of that same"' can always be "'pointed out.'" Thus, for Heidegger, far from going beyond that which has 'already' been 'set forth' in the *Critique*, the *Anthropology* seems rather to stop far short. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. pp.91-2 (see especially footnote 182)

⁵¹³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.93

human soul to do something'; which "something", in the case of the transcendental power of the imagination, is the forming of 'the basis for all knowledge a priori'.⁵¹⁴

However, notes Heidegger, while Kant consistently characterizes 'the essential unity of ontological knowledge' as being comprised of the *three* elements of 'pure intuition (time), pure synthesis by means of the imagination, and the pure concepts of apperception'; and while, in the Transcendental Deduction, Kant refers to the "'three original sources of the *soul*'", he makes it explicitly clear *elsewhere* in the text, that our mind, or 'power of knowledge' itself has only *two* 'basic sources', i.e., the two "stems" of pure sensibility and pure understanding. Moreover, observes Heidegger, the whole text is in fact structured, overall, according to this "two sources" thesis, i.e., in a way 'corresponding to the bifurcation of the whole transcendental investigation into a Transcendental Aesthetic [pertaining to intuition/sensibility] and a Transcendental Logic [pertaining to the understanding/thinking]'.

Thus, for Heidegger, as it is *untreated* in the Aesthetic where, he says, 'as a "faculty of intuition", it properly belongs', and treated instead in the Logic, where, 'strictly speaking' it may never properly belong 'as long as logic remains confined to thought', the transcendental power of imagination is effectively, left 'homeless'.⁵¹⁵

We are thus called to revisit Heidegger's opening characterization of the "origin", or ground, in which metaphysics is rooted as a haunting, or visitation—literally, a "home seeking" [*Heimsuchung*—of human nature; recalling, too the "unknownness" of the "common root" to which the two stems of 'pure intuition and pure thinking lead back'—and which, in its turn, in "binding-together", it "forms" and "lets spring-forth"^d—which, while it yet retains a great deal of "unknownness", we may now clearly identify as the "homeless" third faculty, itself, i.e., the transcendental power of imagination.⁵¹⁶

Strange root in a strange ground

Even following the revelation of its structural "homelessness" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, the question nonetheless remains, of in *what* the "unknown root" may be rooted. Heidegger's subsequent characterisation of 'the transcendental power of imagination as 'in general the origin of all that is "synthetic"', that is, 'the "syn" of the totality of space and time'⁵¹⁷ adds nothing to our knowledge of *its* "ground", or "origin", which thus remains unknown, since all we have seen of its "rooting" so far is comprised of its binding-together of "stems", as yet, it remains homeless. And, even as he commits himself to venture no further in his original unveiling of 'the specific way in which the pure power of the imagination, pure intuition, and pure thinking hang together...than the Kantian ground-laying itself contains

⁵¹⁴ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.78f, 2nd Ed. P.104, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.95

⁵¹⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.95

^d This is not to say that these two stems or faculties are products of the imagination—rather that its double-forming, synthetic power is such that 'the latter can "imagine" something for the first time only in structural unity with those two'. In response to the troubling question of 'whether what is formed in the transcendental power of imagination is 'mere appearance in the sense of "mere imagination"', Heidegger remarks that it is 'Rather in general...the horizon of objects formed in the transcendental power of imagination—the understanding of Being—which first makes possible something like a distinction between ontic truth and ontic appearance ("mere imagination")'. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.97

⁵¹⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.97

⁵¹⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.100

indications of it', Heidegger now warns us that 'the strangeness of the previously laid ground' will only increase 'with the growing originality' of his own interpretation.

For Heidegger, Kant's use of the term "original" in his description of space and time as 'original representations...is not to be understood...ontically or psychologically', but rather as characterizing 'the way according to which these representations are represented', i.e., in their "springing-forth" and "being let spring forth". In other words, the pure intuitions of space and time *originate* in the transcendental power of the imagination to *let* them "spring forth"; and so they do, at once "pro-posing" and taking-in-stride 'the look of space and time as totalities which are in themselves manifold', *as* such (in what Kant calls the Synopsis of pure intuition), in a 'taking-in-stride' which is 'the formative self-giving of that which gives itself'.⁵¹⁸ *This* is what is meant by their being so "rooted".

Thus, just as the faculty of intuition is let-spring-forth, and thus able to "self-give" that which it "takes in stride" as object of intuition, i.e., *ens imaginarium*, by the transcendental power of the imagination; it is also by the transcendental power of the imagination that pure intuition gives *itself* such a look as it might catch sight of in advance, and thus by which the pure intuitions of time and space, *as* manifold totalities, are made intuitable as such. However, while Kant is clear that that which is 'intuited in pure intuition as such is an *ens imaginarium*', he is equally clear that time and space are not *objects* as such, but rather "'forms to be intuited'", which are themselves "'the formal condition of ...appearance'"⁵¹⁹.

'Pure space and time' are *not* beings at hand, for Kant, i.e., they are no-thing. And yet, as we have seen, as 'possible forms of the Nothing,'⁵²⁰ they are still 'Something'⁵²¹ intuitable; and, even as 'intuitions without things', they must 'nevertheless have what is intuited in them.' As Heidegger states that 'on the grounds of its essence, pure intuiting is pure imagination'.⁵²²

In this way, writes Heidegger, 'the transcendental character of transcendental intuition is first clarified', and 'the effort by the Marburg School...to apprehend space and time as "categories" in the logical sense and to absorb the Transcendental Aesthetic into the Logic' is rendered 'untenable', save perhaps for the possible 'insight', suggested but 'admittedly not clarified' as a motive for this attempt, 'that the Transcendental Aesthetic, taken by itself, cannot itself constitute the whole of what lies closed up in it as a possibility. However', he continues, the 'interpretation' of 'the peculiar "syn"-character of pure intuition' leads *not* to 'the belonging-together of pure intuition with the synthesis of the understanding' but rather, to its origin in the transcendental power of imagination', in which, for Heidegger 'pure thinking' is clearly *also* rooted.

Pure Thinking as Pure Imagination

⁵¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.99

⁵¹⁹ Reflexionen II, p.402 Kants handschriftlicher Nachlaß, vol. V, no. 5315. In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.101

⁵²⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.101

⁵²¹ Reflexionen II, p.402 Kants handschriftlicher Nachlaß, vol. V, no. 5315. In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.101

⁵²² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.101

If pursued, this ‘interpretation’—according to which pure *reason* is found to originate in, i.e., to-be-formed-and-let-spring forth-by the ‘essentially sensible’ and thus, traditionally, ‘lower and inferior faculty’⁵²³ of pure imagination—must lead inexorably to nothing less than the “fall” of pure reason from its traditional position as the *highest* faculty— a prospect for many in Heidegger’s day, as in Kant’s, much like the canopy of the sky being torn asunder, as Heidegger was well aware. He is thus quick here to reassure the reader that

...it is not a question here of the empirical, explanatory derivation of a higher faculty of the soul from an inferior one. Provided that the consideration of the ground-laying the faculties of the soul are not substituted for the subject of the discussion in any way, then the order of precedence as to “lower” and “higher,” which grows out of such an arrangement of the faculties of the soul, likewise cannot guide us—not even for the purposes of an objection.⁵²⁴

The grounds for his reassurance are that, as we have seen, by no means every intuition ‘must already be sentient, empirical’, and therefore the supposedly “more inferior” of the affections of the corporeally conditioned senses do not belong to the essence of sensibility’. Pure sensibility is a *transcendental* faculty. Its character of sensibility is no ground, therefore, for assigning ‘the transcendental power of the imagination’ to ‘the class of inferior faculties of the soul, especially not if, as transcendental, it is to be the condition for the possibility of all faculties’.

Thus, now that ‘the most difficult (because it is the most “natural”) objection to a possible origin of pure thinking in the transcendental power of imagination has fallen’, he continues, ‘Reason can now no longer be claimed as “higher”’. And, in case it seems unpalatable to accept that pure thinking ‘springs forth from the transcendental power of imagination as a faculty’, Heidegger reminds us that the claim is “rooted” in the fact that, like intuition, thinking also belongs ‘to the same genus of pre-presenting [*des Vorstellens*]’,⁵²⁵ i.e., as we have seen, for both of them, “representation is the species”. More precisely, for Heidegger, that which essentially ‘characterizes the Being-understanding of the understanding’ lies in its ‘Being-dependent’ ‘upon intuition...in the pure synthesis of the pure power of imagination’, wherein lies ‘the origin of thinking in the power of the imagination’.

Heidegger finds evidence for this “Being-dependent” of thinking in Kant’s own interpretation, in both ‘the Transcendental Deduction and in the Doctrine of the Schematism’, e.g., in which, he says, ‘the functions of judgment’ and ‘also the pure concepts as notions’ are presented as ‘*artificially* isolated elements of the pure synthesis [my italics]’, arguing that however Kant might appear to constantly orient himself with respect to formal logic ‘as if with respect to an “Absolute”, Kant’s ‘absorption’ of formal logic ‘into what he calls Transcendental Logic, which has the transcendental imagination as its theme’ shows a clear ‘rejection of [the independence of] traditional logic’⁵²⁶ as in the following statement (2nd edition):

⁵²³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.102

⁵²⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.103

⁵²⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.103

⁵²⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.104

And so the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which we must ascribe all employment of the understanding, even the whole of logic, and in conformity with it, transcendental philosophy. Indeed, this faculty is the understanding itself.⁵²⁷

Thus, continues Heidegger, former ‘preconceptions’⁵²⁸ of the independence of thinking as logic, suggested ‘through the tactical existence of what was [note the past tense] apparently the highest and irreducible discipline of formal knowledge’ can no longer stand. Instead, the investigation of the ‘original essence of understanding’ must begin with just this essence, and while ‘the characterization of thinking as judging is indeed [still] appropriate’, for Heidegger its ‘designation’⁵²⁹ by Kant as ‘faculty of rules’ already ‘comes closer’,⁵³⁰ ‘because from there a way leads out’ to its ‘basic determination’⁵³¹ as ‘pure apperception.’⁵³²

These are such “rules”, or ‘represented unities’, that, held out in advance, thus ‘give direction to every possible unification that is represented’, and whose ‘proper affinity’ ‘must itself also be grasped...in advance in a lasting unity through a still more anticipatory pro-posing of them’. This pro-posing is none other than ‘the basic impulse of the letting stand-against-of’, a ‘proposing [*vorstellenden*] self-orienting toward’ in which the “self” is at once “thrown out” with it’. In this (“ecstatic-horizonal”) way, ‘the “I” of this “self” is necessarily apparent’, and always “goes with” in ‘the pure self-orientating’. This “I propose” which “accompanies” all representing’ is the “I think”, as an “I propose”—and always an “I think [something]”, e.g., “I think substance”, “I think causality”—or rather, ‘always already [an] “it means”’.⁵³³ Thus ‘to the extent that in its preliminary self-orienting toward’, the “I” ‘brings’ the categories ‘to a point...from which, as represented, regulative unities, they can unify’, it is thus ‘the “vehicle” of the categories’. As ‘a pre-forming of the horizon of unity’ which “represents from out of itself”, ‘the pure understanding’ ‘does not bring forth’ these ‘pure schemata’ (which, as representations of unities, are rather, “a transcendental product of the imagination”) but, rather, “works with them”, and it is precisely in this ‘working-with’, which, as ‘pure schematism...grounded in the transcendental power of imagination’, that constitutes ‘the original Being [-dependent] of the understanding’. Thus it is, also, that ‘as representing which forms spontaneously, the apparent achievement of the pure understanding is a pure basic act of the transcendental power of imagination’.⁵³⁴

Now, if ‘this pure, self-orienting, self-relating-to’, is what is called “our thought” [*unseren Gedanken*]’ by Kant, ‘then “this thought” [*Gedankens*] is no longer called judging, but is thinking in the sense of the free forming, and projecting (though not arbitrary) “conceiving” [*Sichdenkens*] of something’; and for Heidegger, such ‘original “thinking” is also pure imagining’.

Even so, on the grounds of its essence as ‘the “I think”’, ‘the pure understanding...must [still] have the character of a “faculty of Ideas”, i.e. of reason’, without which we would have “no coherent employment

⁵²⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd Ed. p.33, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.104

⁵²⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.104

⁵²⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.105

⁵³⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.126, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.104

⁵³¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.105

⁵³² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.343, 2nd Ed. P.401, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.105

⁵³³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.105

⁵³⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.106

of the understanding.” Since ‘Ideas “contain a certain completeness” [since] they represent the “form of a whole”, for Heidegger it is thus due to its character as a “faculty of Ideas”⁵³⁵ that ‘Kant calls the pure understanding a “closed unity.” Now, since Kant makes it very clear, in his ‘unfolding of the Transcendental Ideal, which “must serve...as rule and archetype” that it ‘acts completely differently’ with regards to “creations of the power of imagination...of the kind which painters and physiognomists profess to have in their heads”⁵³⁶, it might seem that the ‘connection between the Ideas of pure reason and those of the imagination has been expressly denied’. However, says Heidegger, what this essential determination of the Transcendental Ideal actually comes down to, is ‘simply’ that it “must always rest on determinate concepts,” and can be no arbitrary and blurred sketch of the *empirical*, productive power of imagination’, which determination in no way ‘rules out those “determinate concepts” possible only in the transcendental power of imagination’.

Imagination/Pure Synthesis as Structural Possibility

Now, just as, ‘on the grounds of its purity’, pure, receptive *intuition*, having been shown to have ‘its essence in the transcendental power of imagination’, ‘the original unity of receptivity and spontaneity’, has thus also been shown, as such, to have been shown to have the character of *spontaneity* also, self-giving, as ‘pure spontaneous receptivity’, by the transcendental power of imagination, that which it takes-in-stride; thus, continues Heidegger (for whom Kant’s equation of ‘the understanding and reason...with spontaneity’ can no more exclude ‘a receptivity of understanding’ than his ‘equation of sensibility—finite intuition—with receptivity’ turned out, ‘in the end’, to exclude ‘a corresponding spontaneity’ of intuition), surely if it, too, is to have its essence in the transcendental power of imagination, (‘the original unity of receptivity and spontaneity’, *ibid.*) pure spontaneous *thinking* must also surely be found to ‘exhibit the character of a pure receptivity.’⁵³⁷ And so it does, according to Heidegger, since

If something, such as a ruling rule, is only there in the letting-be-ruled which takes things in stride, then the “Idea” as representation of the rule can only be represented in the manner of something which takes things in stride. In this sense, pure thinking itself, not after the fact, is capable of taking things in stride: i.e., it is pure intuition. This structural, coherent, receptive spontaneity must, accordingly, spring forth from the transcendental power of imagination in order to be what it is.⁵³⁸

Thus the essential receptivity of pure thinking, already belied as such by the earlier characterization of its productivity as a “working with”, is found to lie in the “syn-” character of the transcendental power of imagination, the original *unity*, or root, in which *both* faculties, or “stems” originate, and which, ‘in its making possible of transcendence as the essence of the finite self’, ‘reveals itself more and more as structural possibility’. In this light, Heidegger finds that *freedom*, ‘insofar as this means placing oneself under a self-given necessity’, ‘lies in the essence of pure understanding, i.e., [in]...pure theoretical reason’;

⁵³⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.651, 2nd Ed. p. 679, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.107

⁵³⁶ M. Heidegger, citing I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.570, 2nd Ed. p. 598, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.107.

⁵³⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.107

⁵³⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.108

not because pure reason is spontaneous in character, but rather ‘because this spontaneity is a receptive spontaneity, i.e., because it is the transcendental imagination’.⁵³⁹

And since, according to Kant “‘everything which is possible through freedom is practical’”⁵⁴⁰, Heidegger also finds the essence of *practical* reason to lie therein also, thus finding, in the Kantian “feeling”, of practical reason—which is after all always ‘having-a-feeling *for*’, and which therefore ‘feels itself herein’—an innate receptivity, e.g. in the “feeling” of ‘respect before the law’, which, as respect, for Kant, “‘is always directed towards persons, never toward things’”⁵⁴¹, is therefore ‘respect before oneself’. If, in freedom, I ‘subordinate myself to the law’, the law is *self-given*; I freely receive the law from myself, and thus my respect before the law is submission ‘to *myself* as pure reason’. And this, writes Heidegger, this ‘submitting, self-projecting onto the entire basic possibility of what authentically exists...is the essence of the acting Being-itself, i.e., of practical reason’—*this* is the authentic ‘Being-itself of the I’.⁵⁴²

The “Shrinking Back”

Having come this far with his own interpretation, Heidegger now describes what he discerns as Kant’s own “*shrinking back*”, in between the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, from his own further discovery of the “unknown root” of ‘the original, essential constitution of human kind [as] “rooted” in the transcendental power of the imagination’ (I note that here the imagination is clearly defined as *that in which the “unknown root” is rooted*, whereas earlier it has often rather been defined as the root itself). In the second edition, Heidegger finds Kant “thrusting” ‘the more original interpretation of the transcendental power of imagination’ that is to be found in the first edition aside, to offer, instead, ‘a new interpretation—favouring the understanding’.⁵⁴³

But for what reason?

Heidegger’s best guess is that Kant suffered a bout of conservative vertigo at the brink of the “abyss” to which his original discovery of the “unknown root” had thus far been pushed to (as per its nature, since, as Heidegger, puts it, ‘the unknown is not that of which we simply know nothing. Rather it is what pushes against us [as] something disquieting in what is known’⁵⁴⁴), into which abyss, he feared that if ‘the primacy of Logic’ were to fall, ‘the lowest’ were ‘to take the place of the highest’, then the whole ‘venerable tradition’ of metaphysics, must surely follow; not to mention the whole ‘architectonic’ of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, (i.e., its ‘division into Transcendental Aesthetic and Logic, etc) which would thus also have ‘deprived itself of its own theme’.⁵⁴⁵

⁵³⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.109

⁵⁴⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.800, 2nd Ed. p.828, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.109

⁵⁴¹ Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, Part I, Book 1, Division 3, Werke, vol. V, p.79ff. [Meiner edition, ed. Vorlander (Hamburg 1974) p. 86ff. Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, 1978) p. 76ff.] in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.109

⁵⁴² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.109

⁵⁴³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.112

⁵⁴⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.113

⁵⁴⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.117

Some pages on Heidegger relents a little, finding Kant's motivation to lie not only in said fear *per se* but also in his own increasing fondness for reason, which Heidegger finds to have drawn Kant increasingly 'under its spell' (a strange way to describe the attraction of reason)⁵⁴⁶. Having thus outlined Kant's "shrinking back", Heidegger's further comparative discussion of the two editions does not much concern us here, beyond *that which Heidegger finds to be consistent between them*, i.e., the fact that 'the finitude of pure knowledge' has 'beset the problem from the beginning', and inevitably so, as because 'metaphysics', as the ground-laying of the problem to which the *Critique of Pure Reason* refers, 'belongs to "human nature"', which is finite; thus human finitude is inevitably 'decisive for the laying of the ground of metaphysics'.

The real question here, for Heidegger, is whether 'the previously laid ground' of 'the transcendental power of the imagination' is 'solid enough to determine originally, i.e., cohesively and as a whole, the finite essence' of the subjectivity of the human subject?' Without *this* question having being 'decided', he says, even 'the more original interpretation' of the first edition must remain 'necessarily incomplete'—and thus he "picks up" where Kant left off, as follows.

Finite-Being and Time

As we have seen, says Heidegger, if 'the transcendental power of imagination is to be the original ground [i.e., "root", or origin] for the possibility of human subjectivity... it must make possible something like a pure, sensible reason'. Therefore, since the 'universal meaning' or metaphysical character of 'pure sensibility', (i.e., intuition) is *time*, and as pure reason is found to 'stand in an original unity with pure sensibility, it stands to reason that the "I think" of pure apperception', should 'stand in an original unity' with time. Therefore, 'the pure I', which he says Kant is *generally* understood to have 'placed outside of all temporality and all time'—should rather, in fact 'be taken as "temporal"'. And, although it has not been seen in this light before, since pure sensibility has been found to have its origin in the transcendental imagination, *time* itself (as inner sense) is also 'proven' to thus 'spring forth'.⁵⁴⁷

Exactly *how* is time so "grounded"?

As we have seen, for Kant, time is the pure, sequential succession of nows; self-given and taken-in-stride as such by pure intuition. As such, the taking-in-stride is not confined to that of the "now" which is present, since if it were, the pure intuition would intuit neither 'the sequence of nows' *as* a sequence, nor 'the horizon formed' of time's sequentiality. And, insofar as the "look" of the now is necessarily intuited as having 'an essentially continuous extension in its having-just-arrived and its coming-at-any minute', neither is it possible to "single out" any single now *as* such from the succession. Thus, it follows, for Heidegger, that what is intuited in pure intuition 'is not related to something which is only a presence and is related least of all to a being which is at hand'. What with its 'free moving character', it must surely follow, he continues, that "at bottom", pure intuition *of, and as* time 'is the pure power of imagination'.

⁵⁴⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.118

⁵⁴⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.121

As we have seen, according to the “previously-laid ground,” ‘the forming [*Bilden*] of the “imagination” is *in itself* relative [i.e., receptive] to time’. As such, according to its character as *spontaneous* receptive unity, ‘*pure* imagining’ must first of all form’ the ‘fabric [*Gebilde*]’ of time ‘from out of itself’. Heidegger now refers us to the ‘threefold, trinitarian character of forming in the imagining of the power of the imagination’ given by Kant in ‘his lectures on Metaphysics, namely in the Rational Psychology’, in which the faculty of forming, or “forming power” [*bildende Kraft*]’ is divided into three further faculties:

Facultus formandi, the faculty of “taking a likeness” [*Abbildung*], or representing the present time

Facultus imaginandi, the faculty of reproduction [*Nachbildung*], as representation, of a past time

Facultus praevidenti, the faculty of prefiguration, as representation, of a future time⁵⁴⁸

The *full* concept of time given here, ‘for the first time’, by Heidegger, is that ‘Time as pure intuition is the forming intuiting of what it intuits *in one*’, i.e., at once. The forming of ‘the pure succession of the sequence of nows as such’ by the pure intuition is possible because the pure intuition is ‘in itself a likeness-forming, prefiguring, and reproducing power of the imagination’. The ‘sequence of nows’, in itself, is therefore by no means ‘time in its originality’—original time is rather the ‘letting spring forth’ of time, *as* ‘sequence of nows’—of the spontaneous, receptive power of transcendental imagination. Thus time, i.e., pure intuition i.e., the “inner sense”, is “within” us. Having so far “sifted” this ‘wide-ranging interpretation’ out from a ‘few intimations’⁵⁴⁹ of Kant’s found in another text, Heidegger now returns to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and sets about trying to ground this interpretation more securely, beginning with an enquiry into the inner temporal character of the transcendental imagination. Since Kant describes the power of imagination as that of “synthesis in general”⁵⁵⁰, Heidegger returns to the Transcendental Deduction, in which Kant elucidates the three “modes” of synthesis corresponding with the *three* elements of knowledge (pure intuition, pure imagination, and pure understanding), as follows:

Synthesis as apprehending (which corresponds to intuition)

Synthesis as reproducing (which corresponds to imagination)

Synthesis as recognizing^a (which corresponds to understanding)⁵⁵¹

For Kant, all of ‘our representations’—i.e., all that we apprehend, reproduce, recognize—are fundamentally ‘subject to time’.⁵⁵² In any ‘empirical intuition...of a “this here”, a manifold is always revealed’⁵⁵³, wherein it is only because our mind distinguishes time, by ‘saying constantly and in advance “now and now and now”’ that we are able to ‘encounter “now this” and “now that” and “now all this in particular”’. Thus intuition, *as* apprehension, is *itself* synthetic, in its “taking in” of the manifold as a *repraesentio singularis*,

⁵⁴⁸ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.122

⁵⁴⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.123

⁵⁵⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.800, 2nd Ed. p.828, in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.123

^a Which is also constitutive

⁵⁵¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.123

⁵⁵² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.98-100 M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.125

⁵⁵³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.125

and, at once, in its time-forming, from out of itself, the sequence of nows that it apprehends as such. Thus the faculty of pure intuition, as apprehending mode of synthesis, forms the now.

As a mode, the second, reproductive mode of synthesis, [*Einbildung*], is *not* found to be identical with the *transcendental* power of imagination [*transzendentalen Einbildungskraft*], the character of which is that of “synthesis in general” (and which the modes of synthesis are therefore modes *of*);⁵⁵⁴ the second mode is rather the synthetic mode of *empirical* representing, in which the mind can *re-present* “the being” as object, *with or without the actual presence of the being*. And since, for Kant, says Heidegger, there is a certain *ideality* to such representations, i.e., since ‘Such imagination presupposes’ the possibility that the mind may, in ‘bringing forth again representationally the being represented earlier’, ‘represent it in a more actual unity with the being directly perceived from time to time’, in unifying, bringing forth which is only possible if the once-represented being is not “lost from thought”, i.e. *forgotten*. This not-losing-from thought, i.e., successful memory and recall, requires the mind to differentiate time in order to identify as such ‘the being experienced earlier’. The retention and unification of ‘the no longer now as such’ and its unifying with ‘the specific now’ which is required a priori ‘occurs in pure reproduction as a mode of pure synthesis of the pure power of imagination’.

What *is* produced in this *apparently* “productive reproduction” (which for Heidegger makes as much sense as ‘a square circle’) of ‘pure synthesis in the mode of reproduction’, is ‘having-been-ness [*Gewesenheit*] as such’, i.e., ‘the horizon of the earlier’, which it ‘brings into view’ and ‘holds open as such in advance’; and, as such, is *time* forming. Thus, is called reproductive *not* because it attends to a being experienced earlier as such, *but* because, in doing so, it ‘forms the possibility of reproduction in general’.⁵⁵⁵

It thus follows, for Heidegger, that as the original unity of these *modes*, the transcendental power of imagination ‘can also be the origin of time (as unity of present and having-been-ness)’, without which original unity, “the purest and first grounding representations of space and time could not spring forth even once”.⁵⁵⁶ Kant’s presentation of the third mode of synthesis (in which we might reasonably expect to find the time-forming of the future) begins with ‘a character of empirical recognition’,⁵⁵⁷ and, just as empirical recognition is the ‘synthesis of the same, i.e., the holding of the being before us as one which is the same,’ pure recognition is also unifying recognition, constitutive of the “sameness” of *time*, as that which beings are encountered as having ‘presence in sameness’—and hence *as if* being-present *in* the “sameness”, or “substance”, of time, *almost as if* in the “where” of now. Pure recognition thus gives the “manifold” of time its continuity, i.e., it gives the timeness of time, presently experienced as the now-here. The importance of the third mode of synthesis lies, in Kant’s own words, in the fact that:

⁵⁵⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.126

⁵⁵⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.127

⁵⁵⁶ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.102, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.128

⁵⁵⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.129

Without consciousness of the fact that what we are thinking is the same as what we thought in an instant before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain.⁵⁵⁸

It thus emerges that the so-called “third” mode of synthesis is, in fact, the *first* and *most original*, ‘which in the first place directs the other two’; occurring necessarily ‘in advance of them’, and whose “advance unifying recognition”,⁵⁵⁹ Kant calls a reconnoitering, a ‘watching out for’⁵⁶⁰. As reconnaissance, this mode of synthesis explores ‘the horizon of being-able-to-hold-something-before-us [*Vorhaltbarkeit*] in general’, and ‘as pure, its exploring is the original forming of this preliminary [potential for “fore-holding”^b] i.e., the future’—which pure “fore-holding” is ‘an act of the pure power of the imagination’.⁵⁶¹

And thus, for Heidegger, since ‘the most original essence of time’ is developed from the fore-holding of the “same” of pure recognition, as a modal power of the pure synthesis of the transcendental imagination, it surely follows that ‘the transcendental power of imagination is original time’.⁵⁶² That is to say, time is pure, self-activating self-affection, and ‘only pure intuition to the extent that it prepares the look of succession from out of itself...as the formative taking in stride [and]... without the aid of experience.’

Finite-Being as Time

Thus time, as self activating, self-affection is ‘precisely what in general forms something like the “from-out-of-itself-toward-there”’ ‘so that the upon-which looks back and into the previously named toward-there’,⁵⁶³ and such, precisely that which ‘forms the essential structure of subjectivity’.⁵⁶⁴ The “it” against which the “turning-toward” of the taking-in-stride lets-stand-against in pure self affection is none other than the “I” of pure apperception, and it is in the letting-stand-against of pure self affection that ‘finite selfhood is formed in an original way...so that the self can be something like self consciousness.’ Thus, pure self-affection ‘determines the innermost essence of transcendence’,⁵⁶⁵ and, as such is what characterises the finitude of knowledge, which is thus ‘drawn to centre stage’,⁵⁶⁶ as the ‘temporal character of finite selfhood’ is revealed’. Time is not “in the mind” “*along with*” pure apperception’—rather it ‘already lies within pure apperception’ ‘as the grounds for the possibility of selfhood’, ‘and so it [is that which] first makes the mind into a mind’. What all this comes down to, for Heidegger, is that

‘Time and the I think...are the same.’⁵⁶⁷

Returning again to certain passages in the *Transcendental Deduction* and the *Schematism*, Heidegger now finds a striking similarity between Kant’s description of the I of pure apperception—as ‘fixed and

⁵⁵⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.103, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.129

⁵⁵⁹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.130

⁵⁶⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.126, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.130

^b This is a deviation from Richard Taft’s rendering of *Vorhaften* as ‘attaching’, here, which seems to make little sense in this context—I make no claim of superior, counter-translation, instead I have simply derived ‘fore-holding’ from his immediately previous translation of *Vorhaltenbarkeit*, also used in this context

⁵⁶¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.130

⁵⁶² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.131

⁵⁶³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.133

⁵⁶⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.132

⁵⁶⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.134

⁵⁶⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.133

⁵⁶⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.134

perduring...the correlate of all our representation'⁵⁶⁸—and his description of time—as ‘unchanging and perduring...Time does not elapse’⁵⁶⁹—in which similarity, says Heidegger, the ‘transcendental essence of time comes to light’. With regard to the I, however, says Heidegger, the question must arise of whether this correlative perdurance of the “pure I of apperception” does not indicate ‘that the I is not temporal?’

On the contrary, for Heidegger, it is rather that ‘the I is so “temporal” that it is time itself, and that [it is] only as time itself, according to its ownmost essence’,⁵⁷⁰ that the I becomes possible. Thus Kant’s “fixed” and “perduring” are found not to be ‘ontic assertions about the I, but rather transcendental determinations’ according to which the I of pure apperception is the fixed “point” within ‘the horizon...within which what is objective becomes experienceable’, i.e. within the ‘horizon of selfhood’, which is formed in the fore-holding—i.e. the letting-standing-against-itself—of ‘something like fixedness and perduring in general’. In no sense, for Heidegger, did Kant mean that there was ‘something like a mental substance’, or that the I of apperception ‘in a certain sense is infinite and eternal’.⁵⁷¹

No, for Heidegger, it is

Precisely because in its innermost essence the self is originally time itself, the I cannot be grasped as “temporal”, i.e., as within time. Pure sensibility (time) and pure reason are not just of the same type; rather they belong together in the unity of the same essence, which makes possible the finitude of human subjectivity in its wholeness’.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.123, in In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.134

⁵⁶⁹ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1st Ed. p.143, 2nd Ed. p.183, in In M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.134

⁵⁷⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.134

⁵⁷¹ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.135

⁵⁷² M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, ibid. p.136

The Disputation at Davos

Since Heidegger's *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics* was written up in 'three weeks of uninterrupted work'⁵⁷³, immediately following his 'Davoser Hochschule' course (March 17-April 6, 1929), based on the preparatory work' for those lectures⁵⁷⁴ and his notorious disputation with Cassirer, it is only proper that for the fourth and final German edition of the Kant book, along with his own summary notes of three lectures he gave there, Heidegger also appended a transcript of the disputation, which is not word for word but rather, in Heidegger's own words, 'a 'subsequent elaboration... compiled by O.F. Bollnow and J. Ritter who were participants in the Davos course...based on notes taken at the time.'⁵⁷⁵ It is Bollnow and Ritter's "elaboration" I will discuss here.

In opening the disputation, Ernst Cassirer asks Heidegger to clarify what it is exactly that he understands by neo-Kantianism, which appears—unfairly, to Cassirer—to have become 'the whipping boy of the newer philosophy'.⁵⁷⁶

Heidegger replies succinctly and in detail, naming names. The common origin of these neo-Kantianisms, for Heidegger, is their response to the predicament of philosophy 'since about 1850', wherein the 'totality of beings', i.e., 'the totality of what is knowable', had been 'divided up' between 'the human and natural sciences'; the predicament thus being that of 'what still *remains* of Philosophy'; i.e., of what *sort* of knowledge might be proper to it.

The defining neo-Kantian response was to cast Kant, retrospectively, 'as a theoretician of the mathematico-physical theory of knowledge'—and in so doing, to align Kantian theory with the prevailing ideal of knowledge, in much the same way that, in the Kant book, Heidegger describes Kant himself as having aligned the *methodology* for his own metaphysics.⁵⁷⁷ For Heidegger, however, that which 'came to be extracted here as theory of [philosophy as] science was nonessential for Kant'. What Kant really wanted to do, acc. Heidegger, was to 'point out the problematic of metaphysics, which is to say the problematic of ontology'. Here then is the fundamental point of divergence between his own interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and those he characterizes as neo-Kantian, which he further differentiates by stating the need to apprehend 'the problem of reason' as a positive problem, as per his own interpretation, rather than in the negative form in which it first appears in the Transcendental Logic, *and* in such a way that the way in which 'appearance necessarily belongs to the nature of human beings' may be grasped, i.e., taken hold of, 'from the beginning', rather than just stated as 'a matter of fact'.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷³ F.W von Hermann, in his Editor's Afterword, M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) p.220

⁵⁷⁴ M. Heidegger, Preface to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) pp. xvii-iii

⁵⁷⁵ M. Heidegger, Preface to the Fourth Edition, reproduced in M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., transl./edited by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997) pp. xvii-iii

⁵⁷⁶ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.193

⁵⁷⁷ Just as we have argued that Corbin to have aligned and inflected his own 1938 Gallimard translation of Heidegger with the then philosophical avant-garde, particularly his translation of the term *Dasein*.

⁵⁷⁸ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.194

Cassirer responds by saying that while of course he himself recognizes ‘the position of mathematical natural science’, so ‘much else has emerged’, that it could only ‘serve as a paradigm and not as the whole of the problem’. He then goes on to what he identifies as ‘Heidegger’s basic systematic problem’⁵⁷⁹, i.e., that of the power of imagination in relation to human finitude, and the finitude of finite knowledge. Starting from what he says is their *one* point of agreement, i.e., that ‘the productive power of imagination appears in fact to have a central meaning for Kant’, Cassirer says that it was from this point which he himself was ‘led through’ his ‘work on the symbolic’, which thus cannot be “unravelling” ‘without referring it to the faculty of the productive power of imagination’ as ‘the connection of all thought to the intuition’, which Kant has named as ‘*Synthesis Speciosa*’. While Cassirer also grants his agreement that for Kant synthesis is indeed ‘the basic power [*Grundkraft*] of pure thinking’, on which it depends, he wishes to add, however, that—as its Kant-given name implies—the synthesis upon which pure thinking ‘primarily’ depends is that which ‘serves the species’. It is this ‘problem’ in particular, i.e., that of the “species” which is served by pure synthesis—which has led Cassirer to what, for him, is ‘the core of the concept of image, the concept of symbol’, and thus toward his own philosophy of symbolic forms.

For himself, however, Cassirer says he has always found ‘Kant’s main problem’ to be the problem of finitude and transcendence in relation to the *ethical*, wherein, according to the Kantian ethics [*Ethik*], the condition of the law set up according to the Categorical Imperative is that it must not be ‘valid by chance just for human beings, but for all rational entities [*Vernunftwesen*] in general’. Thus, he continues, with the ‘falling away’ of ‘restrictedness to a determinate sphere’, a remarkable transition is effected whereby ‘the ethical [*das Sittliche*] as such leads beyond the world of appearances’. This “transition” is ‘so decisively metaphysical’, according to Cassirer, that what follows must be characterised as a ‘breakthrough’ to ‘the *mundus intelligibilis*’, wherein ‘an Absolute’ is ‘set in place’ which ‘cannot be illuminated historically’. That Kant characterised this transition *as* such a breakthrough is uncontested, says Cassirer; and while, he says, he does not wish to *deny* that ‘Kant fled from Heidegger’s problem’, i.e., the “shrinking-back”; for himself, he would rather draw attention to this ethical Absolute, upon which ‘sphere’, he says, Kant continues to expand throughout the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

For Cassirer, he says, the reason that Kant ‘forbids’ the schematising of the ethical, offering instead a *Typic* of *Practical Reason*, is that ‘our concepts of freedom, etc, are insights (not bits of knowledge) which no longer permit schematizing’; insights, it is implied, into the *mundus intelligibilis*, and which refer to the Absolutes, such as e.g., “Absolute Freedom”, which inhere therein. For Cassirer, this is where Heidegger’s interpretation starts to go all wrong, and continues to do so, as follows. For while Heidegger rightly emphasizes the finitude of human knowledge, and thus in due course the question of how a ‘finite creature in general’ may ‘come to have knowledge, to have reason, to have truth’, says Cassirer, Heidegger’s own response to this question—paraphrased by Cassirer as being that ‘there can be no truths in themselves, nor can there be any external truths at all’, adding that ‘Rather, in so far as they occur in general, truths are relative to Dasein’—is, for Cassirer, to mistake or *ignore* the fact that for Kant, according to Cassirer, the problem was *rather* that of how, ‘without prejudice’ to human finitude ‘there can ‘nevertheless...be

⁵⁷⁹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.194

necessary and universal truths'.⁵⁸⁰ 'Does Heidegger', he asks, 'want to renounce' entirely 'this Objectivity, this form of absoluteness'?'⁵⁸¹ Does he *really*, implies Cassirer, wish to read Kant *against Kant*?

Heidegger response is that, first of all, for Kant 'the being of Nature' 'never signifies: object of mathematical natural science', but rather 'a being in the sense of what is at hand'. What Kant sought to give in the Doctrine of Principles, he says, was thus 'a theory of beings in general, without assuming Objects [as]...given', and 'without assuming a determinate region of beings (either psychic or physical)' —so much for the Objectivity of Absolute truth. As for the problem of 'the power of imagination' says Heidegger, 'Cassirer wants to show that finitude becomes transcendent in the ethical writings'. For Heidegger, he says, it is precisely 'the concept of the Imperative as such' which 'shows the inner reference to a finite creature,' wherein we are mistaken, according to Heidegger, if in our approach to the Kantian ethics 'we orient ourselves too much towards 'that to which ethical action conforms [i.e. serves] and see too little of the inner function of the law itself for Dasein'. Heidegger adds the observation that in any case, for Kant, this 'going-beyond to something higher is always just a going-beyond to the finite creature, to one which is created (angel)', and as such even 'this transcendence still remains within the sphere of creatureliness and finitude'.⁵⁸² While, says Heidegger, he does not deny that 'something which goes beyond sensibility lies before the law', the question nevertheless remains, he says, of whether the 'inner structure of Dasein itself is 'finite or infinite'? Thus, even the question of human finitude is to be problematised, for Heidegger, and not just stated as a given. As far as 'the possibility of finitude in general' is concerned, he says, it can be 'formally argued simply' that in order to 'determine the finite as finite, I must already have an idea of infinitude', which reasoning offers 'this character of infinitude as [idea]...constituent of finitude'. Now reversing a syntactical device of Cassirer's, Heidegger offers another interpretation of pure synthesis, i.e., the transcendental power of imagination as described by Kant in the Schematism as *exhibito originaria*, i.e., an 'originality' in which, however, as it is 'an *exhibito* of the presentation of the free self-giving', there nonetheless 'lies a dependency upon a taking-in-stride'. Thus, while 'in a certain sense this originality is indeed there as creative faculty', and to this extent the human being as finite creature might be said to have 'a certain infinitude in the ontological', its infinitude is never absolute, i.e. *ontic*; it is ontological, rather, 'in the sense of the understanding of Being'.

Thus for Heidegger; since, for Kant, ontological understanding is only possible 'within the inner experience of beings', the 'infinitude of the ontological' is so essentially bound to finite, 'ontic experience', even as 'the index of finitude', that, for Heidegger, this infinitude which breaks out in the power of imagination is precisely the strongest argument for [the] finitude [of Dasein]'.⁵⁸³ Turning now to Cassirer's 'counter-question with reference to the concept of truth', which he finds to have now been 'elevated in importance', Heidegger states that 'We are a being which holds itself in the unconcealedness of beings'. 'To hold

⁵⁸⁰ This, for Cassirer, is the core of Kant's problem: How might 'synthetic a priori judgements...which are not simply finite in their content, but...necessarily universal' be possible? And wherein, for Cassirer lies the reason for Kant's exemplification of mathematics, which, as that in which 'finite knowledge places itself in a relationship to truth which does not develop an "only", might provide a model for how 'this finite creature' might 'come to a determination of objects which as such are not bound to finitude'. In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.195

⁵⁸¹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.195

⁵⁸² M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.196

⁵⁸³ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.197

oneself' thus, Heidegger calls 'Being-in-Truth'; thus, for Heidegger, 'truth itself is unified with the structure of transcendence on the most intimate level in order for Dasein to be a being open to others and to itself'. Here, again Heidegger's approach is more inclined toward "the inner function of Truth itself for Dasein", than to "that to which Truth conforms", wherein the Truth is (only) "out there" to the extent to which to "Be-in-truth" is to 'hold oneself in the openness of beings'.^d This recalls Heidegger's preference, in the Kant book, for the sense of "truth" as *aleitheia*, "unconcealedness", over truth as *adequatio*.

As for Cassirer's last question, that of whether Heidegger would really be content to settle for what Cassirer has taken for an absolute relativism—in a bad sense—over absolute, universal, *external* truths, Heidegger replies that his statement that 'truth is relative to Dasein...is no ontic assertion of the sort where I say: the true is always only what the individual human being thinks'.⁵⁸⁵ He continues 'If Dasein does not exist, there is no truth, and then there is nothing at all. But with the existence of something like Dasein, truth first comes in Dasein itself'. For Heidegger, the 'truth-content' of knowledge, i.e., that which may be "redeemed" as "objective", is that which has the character of saying 'something about the being', i.e., 'according to the respective, factual, individual existence'. Thus, for Heidegger it is a poor interpretation of the 'peculiar validity of which [Kant] spoke', i.e., of truth-value, 'if we say: In contrast to the flow of experience there is a permanence, the eternal, the sense and concept'. What, after all, asks Heidegger, does 'the eternal actually mean here?' What, and from where, do we know of it? Rather than something to be understood in *contrast* to experience, he asks, is 'eternality not just that which is possible on the grounds of an inner transcendence of time itself', in which 'something like the permanence of the substance is constituted for the first time'?

'Since antiquity' says Heidegger, 'the problem of Being' has been 'interpreted on the basis of time in a wholly incomprehensible sense and that time always announced the subject'. Thus, he continues, this clarification of 'the temporality of Dasein', has been necessary so that the 'question concerning human Dasein' might be 'posed' 'in a wholly determined problematic'⁵⁸⁶—according to which we are not *in* time, or even eternity as "the subject", but, rather, the very possibility of eternity is "grounded" in the inner transcendence of Dasein. Thus if the possibility of the understanding of Being, and of transcendence, and of the 'formative comporting toward beings and of the historical happening in the world history of man' is to be possible, once 'this possibility has been grounded in an understanding of Being, and if this ontological understanding has been oriented...with respect to time'—the task in hand is 'to bring out the temporality of Dasein with reference to the possibility of the understanding of Being'.

Heidegger adds that while he can see how, from his taking 'the analytic of Dasein in *Being in Time*' as 'an investigation of man', Cassirer could then come to 'pose the question of how' 'the understanding of culture

^d There is also, for that matter, a 'Being-in-untruth,' which also 'belongs to the innermost core of the structure of Dasein', and in which Heidegger believes 'to have found for the first time the root upon which Kant's metaphysical "appearance" is metaphysically grounded. M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* pp.197

⁵⁸⁵ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* pp.197-8

⁵⁸⁶ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.198

and a cultural sphere is to be possible' 'on the grounds of this understanding of man'⁵⁸⁷, he continues that however 'all of these questions are inadequate' to his (Heidegger's) 'central problem'⁵⁸⁸.

Heidegger then proceeds with an "adequate" laying out of the core of his analytic of Dasein, and, when he has done so, he poses three questions for Cassirer, as follows:

1. What path does man have to infinitude? And what is the manner in which man can participate in infinity?
2. Is infinitude to be attained as privative determination of finitude, or is infinitude a region in its own right?
3. To what extent does philosophy have as its task to be allowed to become free from anxiety? Or does it not have as its task to surrender man, even radically, to anxiety?⁵⁸⁹

As to the first question, Cassirer replies that man can participate in, and has access to infinity 'in no way other than through' the medium of form'; the 'function' of which, for Cassirer, being that through which, while "he" 'changes the form of his Dasein', "man" transposes 'everything in him which is lived experience into some objective shape in which he [too] is objectified in such a way...that he does not thereby become radically free from the finitude of the point of departure' (i.e., that of 'his particular finitude'). For Cassirer is not that man may 'make the leap from his own proper finitude' into 'a realistic infinitude', but rather that, while remaining 'connected to his 'particular finitude', man has, in the 'function of form', or forming, the "metabasis" which 'leads finitude out into something new'—i.e., from 'the immediacy of his existence' into the 'immanent infinitude' of 'the region of pure form'. This, for Cassirer, is the *sole* form in which man 'possesses his infinity', and from which 'spiritual realm', or "region", 'infinity flows to him'. This is not, for Cassirer, 'a metaphysical spiritual realm', but rather 'just the spiritual world created from himself. That he could create it is the seal of his infinitude'.

2. To Heidegger's second question, Cassirer replies that infinitude is 'not just a private determination'. Neither is it 'obtained in a purely negative way in addition to the finite'; 'instead', for Cassirer, it is an altogether stranger sphere', and, 'in a certain sense...just the totality, the fulfilment of finitude itself'—but which 'fulfilment [itself] exactly constitutes infinitude'. Here, Cassirer quotes Goethe, saying "'If you want to step into infinitude, just go in all directions into the finite'". Thus, he continues, 'as it goes in all directions', finitude 'steps out into infinitude', becoming 'the opposite of privation...the perfect filling-out of finitude itself'.⁵⁹⁰

3. Cassirer finds Heidegger's third question to be quite radical, and only answerable, he says, 'with a kind of confession'. To the extent to which 'man can just become free', says Cassirer, philosophy 'frees man—to be sure, in a certain radical sense—from anxiety as mere disposition'. 'Freedom, he continues, 'can properly be found along the path of progressive freeing'—an interpretation, he says, with which he believes

⁵⁸⁷ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.199

⁵⁸⁸ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.199-200

⁵⁸⁹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.200

⁵⁹⁰ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.201

that Heidegger ‘can agree’, notwithstanding ‘that the most difficult problem is to be found here’. Then, in what I take to be a further move toward reconciliation, Cassirer adds that he ‘would like the sense, the goal, in fact the freeing, to be taken in this sense [again quoting Goethe]: “Anxiety throws the earthly from you.” That’, he says, ‘is the position of idealism which I have always been acquainted’⁵⁹¹.

The discussion is now punctuated by an interjection from Hendrik J. Pos (a Dutch philologist who, according to Peter Eli Gordon, had ‘strong leanings toward Cassirer’⁵⁹²), who offers the ‘philological remark’ that as the two disputants speak completely different languages, the task falls to the audience of ‘extracting something common’⁵⁹³. Cassirer having, in Pos view, made his own attempt at “translation”, Pos requests that Heidegger acknowledge such translation to be possible.

Heidegger, however, determined to maintain ‘rigour’ and the ‘clarity’ of the problem, is thus against any such ‘process of levelling’,⁵⁹⁴ adding that what he calls Dasein ‘does not allow translation into a concept of Cassirer’s.’ Cassirer replies that while he too is ‘opposed to levelling’, he nonetheless feels that ‘a common centre’ *must* be sought, and indeed may be found, in no other than ‘the primal phenomenon of language’, as that which allows individuals to communicate without, he says, ever superseding their difference, or overriding the fact that ‘each of us speaks his own language’. Just as for Heidegger, says Cassirer, there appears to be something transcendent like *time*, for Cassirer, ‘there is something like *the* language’, i.e., ‘something like a unity which is higher than the infinitude of the various ways of speaking’. Thus, for Cassirer, translation *is* possible, through ‘the world of the objective [*objektiven*] spirit’, or ‘forms’; through which, and only through which, he says, is a ‘way from Dasein to Dasein’.

Cassirer continues that according to his understanding, ‘what Kant called the Copernican turn’ in no way “did away” with ‘the question of Being’,⁵⁹⁵ but rather ushered in a new metaphysics in which Being is ‘no longer the Being of a substance’, as per, he says, ancient metaphysics, ‘but rather the Being which starts from a variety of functional determinations and meanings’; i.e., in each case, from the *factum*. What, he asks, makes ‘the language of the factum’ possible? How is ‘this, about which we are able to come to an understanding, thinkable from Dasein to Dasein in this medium?’⁵⁹⁶

Heidegger, in response, says that while ‘Plato’s question’ (i.e., that of ‘what is the being?’)⁵⁹⁷ ‘must be retrieved’, ‘this cannot mean that we retreat to the Greeks’ answer’. For his part, he says, he is ‘anxious to establish’ the ‘sense of Being in general’ in order that, ‘based on the idea of Being’, ‘the inner multiplicity of the ways of Being’ might be come to be understood. His investigation has been concerned only with the need ‘to attain the horizon for the question concerning Being, its structure and multiplicity’. ‘Mere mediating’, for Heidegger, ‘will never amount to anything productive’, whereas while previously philosophy has been ‘confined within the finitude of human beings as something which is not a creative

⁵⁹¹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.201

⁵⁹² Peter Eli Gordon, *Continental Divide*: (ibid.) p.245

⁵⁹³ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.201

⁵⁹⁴ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.204

⁵⁹⁵ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.205

⁵⁹⁶ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.206

⁵⁹⁷ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.205

human achievement', once it is understood that 'philosophy opens out onto the totality and what is highest in man, finitude must appear in philosophy in a completely radical way'. Finally—and one gets the distinct feeling that here Heidegger is addressing those 'youngest' amongst the audience, for whose 'powers' he holds such strong hopes⁵⁹⁸—Heidegger says that the one thing 'you' should take 'with you from our debate', is the feeling that 'we are on the way toward once again getting down to business with the central question of metaphysics'—on top of which, he says, he would like to add that while the 'freeing of itself [i.e., of philosophy] from the difference of positions and standpoints', is essential 'in the debate with the history of philosophy', it is also essential, he concludes, to see 'precisely how the differentiation of standpoints is the root of the philosophical endeavour'.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁸ Martin Heidegger and Elisabeth Blochmann, *Briefwechsel, 1918–1969*, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach am Neckar, 1989), p. 30, in Peter Eli Gordon: *Continental Divide*: (ibid) p.228

⁵⁹⁹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.207

Chapter Five: Corbin's Imaginal

The esoteric terrain described in Henry Corbin's paper "Mundus Imaginalis, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal" is so extraordinary that it might appear remarkable to find, in the closing paragraph, a statement which so clearly identifies this "later Corbin" as the early translator of Heidegger; as he concludes that

in the sense that they break the reciprocal isolation of consciousness and its object, of thought and being, phenomenology is now an ontology. Undoubtedly, this is the postulate implied in the teaching of our authors concerning the *imaginal*.⁶⁰⁰

Yet upon close reading this is no incongruity, rather a tying-off of threads that run throughout the text, drawing their pattern into taut coherence.

To begin, though, at the beginning, where Corbin states his intention to treat of 'a precise order of reality corresponding to a precise mode of perception': for which, in his vocation and profession as 'interpreter of Arabic and Persian texts'⁶⁰¹ he has, of necessity, coined the term *imaginal*, which, just as *origo* (from *oriro*, 'to rise'⁶⁰²) gives us *original*, is derived from the Latin *imago*. Corbin resorts here to Latin, he says, as 'a technical and fixed point of reference' by which the term and its 'various more-or-less irresolute equivalents' in 'our modern Western languages' may be compared. The term *imaginal* is most importantly defined *against* its close cousin, *imaginary*: of which Corbin states that regardless of the efforts of those 'trying together to reevaluate it in a positive sense', 'the term *imaginary*, in common usage that is not deliberate' cannot be prevented 'from being equivalent to signifying unreal, something that is and remains outside of existence—in brief, something *utopian*',⁶⁰³ which inevitable *signification* Corbin diagnoses to 'contain the symptom of something',⁶⁰⁴ and against which term (utopia), Corbin's *Mundus Imaginalis*, his newly minted Latin rendition of the Persian term *Na-koja-Abad* is defined: itself to the best of Corbin's knowledge, a the 12th century coinage of Suhrawardī, the 'reviver of the theosophy of ancient Persia'.⁶⁰⁵ The very need for *this* Latin coinage—that of "*Mundus Imaginalis*"— may at first appear curious, says Corbin, since *Na-koja-Abad*, lit. "No-where land", is the 'linguistic calque'⁶⁰⁶ of Thomas More's term *utopia*: coined, by More, 'as an abstract noun to designate the absence of any localization, of any given *situs* in a space that is discoverable by the experience of our senses'⁶⁰⁷, i.e., somewhere unreal, and *imaginary*. Which is precisely where their signification differs, as the term *Na-koja-Abad* signifies, rather, an 'order of reality' perceived by the suprasensory "organ" of 'the imaginative consciousness, the *cognitive Imagination*'⁶⁰⁸ (which "organ" we will come to examine): i.e., the *imaginal*. Hence, *Mundus Imaginalis* is to *Utopia* what *imaginal* is to *imaginary*.

⁶⁰⁰ H. Corbin, trans. Leonard Fox, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, Swedenborg Foundation 1999 p.32

⁶⁰¹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.1

⁶⁰² Oxford American English Dictionary 2011

⁶⁰³ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.1

⁶⁰⁴ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.2

⁶⁰⁵ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.1

⁶⁰⁶ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.2

⁶⁰⁷ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.4

⁶⁰⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.2

[This differentiation] is even a matter of indispensable precision if we are to understand the meaning and the real implication of manifold information concerning the topographies explored in the visionary state, the state intermediate between waking and sleep—information that, for example, among the spiritual individuals of Shi'ite Islam, concerns the “land of the hidden Imam”.⁶⁰⁹

By way of illustration, Corbin now acquaints us with three tales, in which ‘the visionary’, upon encountering a ‘supernatural figure of great beauty’, asks him “the question that must be asked”, i.e., that of ‘*who* he is and from *where* he comes’; a narrative schema which for Corbin describes ‘the experience of the gnostic, lived as the personal history of the Stranger, the captive who aspires to return home’.⁶¹⁰ The first tale, as told by Suhrawardī, entitled “The Crimson Archangel”, tells of ‘the captive, who has just escaped the surveillance of his jailers’—that is, says Corbin, he ‘has temporarily left the world of sensory experience’—to find himself ‘in the desert’ in the presence of a beautiful, crimson-clothed youth. Upon hailing the youth: “O Youth! where do you come from?” the Youth replies “What? I am the first-born of the children of the Creator (in gnostic terms [notes Corbin], the *Protoktistos*, the First-Created) and you call me a youth?” The ‘mystery of the crimson colour that clothes his appearance’ is thus revealed by ‘this origin’ as ‘that of a being of pure Light whose splendour the sensory world reduces to the crimson of twilight’.⁶¹¹ Cf. Colossians 1:15-17:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn [Gk. *prototokos*] of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.⁶¹²

If we bring the doctrine of the *significatio passiva*⁶¹³ to bear on this encounter, we are, it would seem, in the presence of the first *Bel'ing* of Creation *personified*. As for his provenance, the Youth replies that he comes ‘from beyond the mountain of Qaf’. As for how he has come to be there, and by what road, the Youth answers that “No matter how long you walk, it is at the point of departure that you arrive there again”, [Corbin adds] like the point of the compass returning to the same place’. And yet:

Between the two, a great event will have changed everything; the *self* that is found there is the one that is beyond the mountain of Qaf a superior *self*; a self “in the second person.” It will have been necessary, like Khezr, (or *Khadir*, the mysterious prophet, the eternal wanderer, Elijah, or one like him) to bathe in the Spring of Life. [For] “He who has found the meaning of True Reality has arrived at that Spring. When he has emerged from that Spring, he has achieved the Aptitude that makes him like a balm, a drop of which you distill in the hollow of your hand by holding it facing the sun, and which then passes through to the back of your hand. If you are Khezr, you also may pass without difficulty through the mountain of Qaf.”⁶¹⁴

⁶⁰⁹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.3

⁶¹⁰ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.2

⁶¹¹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.3

⁶¹² *King James Bible*, Oxford Authorized Version 1769

⁶¹³ Upon whose importance Corbin insists in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardī”; cf. my chapter “Corbin’s Debt to Heidegger”

⁶¹⁴ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.3

Curiouser, one might well say, and still curiouser, as by way of explication of *this* mystical tale, Corbin offers two more: firstly, “The Rustling of Gabriel’s Wings,” in which the Youth, when asked ‘the question that must be asked’, names his provenance “beyond the mountain of Qaf” as *Na-koja-Abad*, and *in* so doing, for Corbin, ‘marks the transformation’ of the mountain of Qaf ‘from [the] cosmic mountain’ in the “The Crimson Archangel”, ‘constituted from summit to summit, valley to valley, by the celestial Spheres that are enclosed one inside the other’⁶¹⁵, to ‘*psychocosmic* mountain’, in this second tale, marking ‘the transition of the physical cosmos to what constitutes the first level of the spiritual universe.’ And, when in the third tale ‘entitled “Vade Mecum of the Faithful in Love” (*Mu’nis al-oshshaq*)’, the “question that must be asked”, is asked, this time in the form of “What horizon did you penetrate to come here?”; it is answered in just the same way (this time by the persona of Sadness, as part of a ‘cosmogonic triad’ along with Beauty and Love): “I come from *Na-koja-Abad*”⁶¹⁶ —which *place*, says Corbin—albeit *No-where-*, *Na-koja-*, ‘does not designate something like unextended being, in the dimensionless state’.⁶¹⁷ It is rather that, upon crossing its boundary, ‘the question “*where?*” (*ubi, koja*) loses its meaning, at least the meaning in which it is asked in the space of our sensory experience’.⁶¹⁸

Topographically [Suhrawardī] states precisely that this region begins “on the convex surface” of the Ninth Sphere, the Sphere of Spheres, or the Sphere that includes the whole of the cosmos. this means that it begins at the exact moment when one leaves the supreme Sphere, which defines all possible orientation in our world...the “Sphere” to which the celestial cardinal points refer.⁶¹⁹

As symbolised by the passage of the “drop of balm” in “The Crimson Archangel”, says Corbin, departing the “where” of the ‘supreme Sphere’, i.e., the ‘category of *ubi*’, for *Na-koja-abad* requires a ‘passing into the interior’ in order to find oneself ‘paradoxically, *outside*’, i.e., ““ on the convex surface” of the Ninth Sphere’; passing as from the realm of the exoteric, Arabic *zahir*, for the esoteric, *batin*; whereupon this “interior” reality ‘is revealed to be enveloping, surrounding, containing what was first of all external and visible’.⁶²⁰ As if—to attempt a spatial metaphor—upon penetrating such a sphere, its interior transforms into the surface of a torus.

Henceforth, it is spiritual reality that envelops, surrounds the reality called material. That is why spiritual reality is not “in the where.” It is the “where that is in it. Or rather, it is itself the “where” of all things; ...it does not fall under the category *ubi* referring to a place in sensory space. Its place (its *abad*) in relation to this is *Na-koja* (No-where), because its *ubi* in relation to what is *in* sensory space is an *ubique* (everywhere).⁶²¹

This “envelopment”, of the *ubi* by the *ubique*, and the corresponding, apparently paradoxical journey into and through the “inside” to the “outside” conforms to ‘a schema on which all of our mystical theosophers

⁶¹⁵ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.3

⁶¹⁶ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.4

⁶¹⁷ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.5

⁶¹⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.6

⁶¹⁹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.5

⁶²⁰ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.6

⁶²¹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 pp.6-7

agree'⁶²², says Corbin, at once cosmological and gnoseological, 'that articulates three universes, or, rather, three categories of universe', to which correspond 'three organs of knowledge: the senses, the imagination and the intellect' to which, in turn 'corresponds the triad of anthropology: body, soul, spirit',⁶²³ which 'regulates the triple growth of man, extending from this world to the resurrections in the other worlds'. Thus, albeit conducted in an entirely different register—that of “Oriental” theosophy, whose strangeness often threatens to obscure—with the introduction of the “three organs of knowledge”, certain consonances with Heidegger, and the Kant book in particular, nonetheless begin to emerge in the text at hand.

As for what is meant here by “resurrection”—‘from Old French, from late Latin *resurrectio*(n-), from the verb *resurgere* ‘rise again’ (cf. “origin”, from Latin *oriri* ‘to rise’)—⁶²⁴; all thoughts of *fleshly* resurrection, as per Stanley Spencer’s *The Resurrection at Cookham* (cf. p.119), e.g., should be put out of mind, in favour of e.g., any of the plates included Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Noli me Tangere*,⁶²⁵ such as, e.g., Durer’s thirty-second woodblock from *The Small Passion* (cf. p.120). Here Corbin, in the company of “our mystic theosophers”, diverges sharply from ecclesiastical Christian orthodoxy. In Mollâ Sadrâ, e.g., as ‘a pure spiritual faculty’, the active Imagination, the “organ” that allows “penetration” into the imaginal, is considered ‘independent of the physical organism’, and ‘consequently able to subsist after the disappearance of the latter’.⁶²⁶ The nature of this “organ”, after separation from the physical body—after physical *death*, i.e.—is as ‘a single *synaesthesia* (*hiss moshtarik*)’⁶²⁷; no longer dispersed ‘at the various thresholds’ of the five senses, its ‘acts of posthumous imaginative perception’ are now like to ‘a sensory perception of the suprasensory’, wherein ‘consciousness and its object are here ontologically inseparable’, so that in perceiving ‘concrete objects’ it ‘*eo ipso*’ constitutes their ‘concrete existence’, thus ‘finally’ proving its ‘essential superiority over sensory perception’.⁶²⁸ Just as the active Imagination is understood to continue, changed—freed, as it were,—awoken—after the “disappearance” of the physical body, so the *jism mithali*, “imaginal body” which as ‘the “subtle body” that penetrates into the “eighth climate”, continues, awoken/arisen as the “resurrection body”. We are thus far indeed from the “being-toward-death” of Heidegger: we are, in fact, perpendicular. Human finitude may thus be inherent in this “world”; but for Corbin, after our “mystic theosophers” it is not *absolute*.

⁶²² H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.8

⁶²³ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.8

⁶²⁴ Oxford American English Dictionary, 2011

⁶²⁵ which book suggests a fruitful comparative reading on this theme of the “resurrection body” as discussed in both this “Mundus Imaginalis” text, and Corbin’s book, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi* (ibid.)

⁶²⁶ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.15

⁶²⁷ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.16

⁶²⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.15



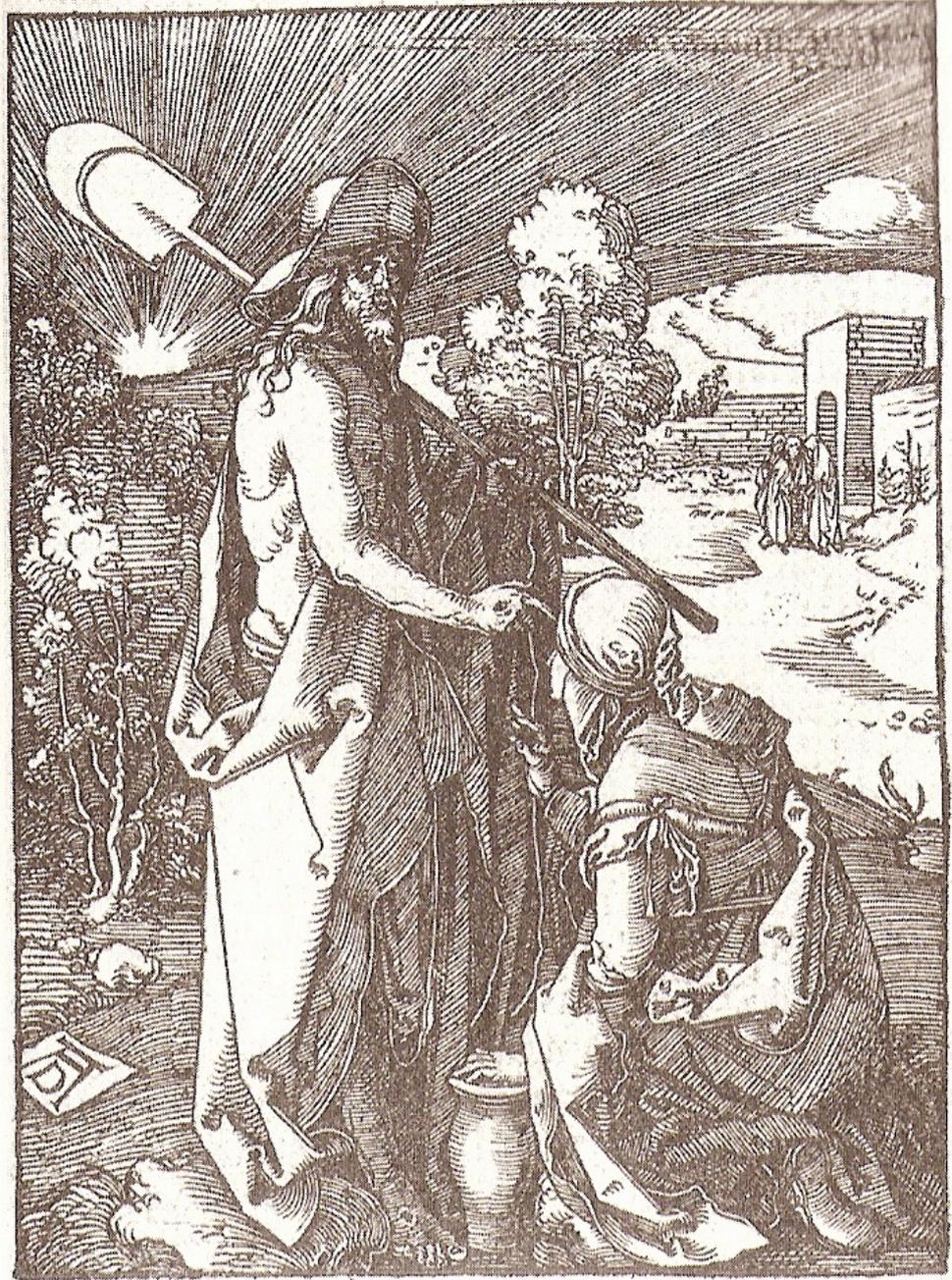


Fig. 2. Albrecht Dürer, thirty-second block in the woodcut *The Small Passion*.

Here, as Corbin acknowledges, if we are to exclude ‘the visionary perceptions of our spiritual individuals’, and indeed the resurrection of the “imaginal body”, from ‘everything that our modern vocabulary subsumes under the pejorative sense of creations, imaginings, even *utopian* madness’,⁶²⁹ a recognition of the *reality* of experiences “beyond the mountain of Qaf”, is dependent upon the availability of ‘a cosmology of such a kind’ as the ‘traditional cosmology’ of Islamic theosophy, whose

worlds and interworlds ...beyond the physical universes, are arranged in levels intelligible only for an existence in which the *act of being* is in accordance with its *presence* in those worlds, for reciprocally, it is in accordance with this act of being that these worlds are present to it.

This ‘act of being’, in other words, itself *is*—or is ‘to become in the course of its future rebirths’—‘the *place* of those worlds that are outside the place of our natural space’. Situated between ‘the physical sensory world...the world of phenomena (*molk*)’, to which correspond the senses and the body; and ‘the world of abstract understanding’, which our theosophers understand as ‘the universe of pure archangelic Intelligences’⁶³⁰ and to which correspond intellect and spirit; mediating between thought and extension, mind and matter; the reasonable and the sensible—the intermediate, ‘suprasensory world of the Soul or Angel-Souls, the *Malakut*...which (as before), begins “on the convex surface of the Ninth Sphere”⁶³¹, and to which correspond the soul and the imagination:

[This is the] ‘*alam al-mithal*, ‘the world of the image, *mundus imaginalis*: a world as ontologically real as the world of the senses and the world of the intellect, a world that requires a faculty of perception belonging to it, a faculty that is a cognitive function, a *noetic* value, as fully real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition. This faculty is the imaginative power [not to be confused with] the imagination that modern man identifies with “fantasy” and that, according to him, produces only the “imaginary”’.⁶³²

Another technical definition of the *mundus imaginalis* offered by ‘Suhravardī and his school’ is that of ‘the world of “Images in suspense”, (Arabic *mothol mo’allaqa*) by which is meant, says Corbin, ‘a mode of being proper to the realities of that intermediate world, which we designate as *Imaginalia*’, the ‘forms and shapes’ of which ‘do not subsist in the same manner as empirical realities in the physical world’, such that ‘anyone might perceive them’, but whose ‘ontological status’⁶³³ rather relies upon, i.e., is “bound together”⁶³⁴ in correlation with the ‘visionary spiritual experiences’⁶³⁵ in which they are perceived—cf. again, the integral significance of the French *trait d’union*, German *bindestrich*, Greek *hyphen* to Corbin’s *réalité-humaine* as representing precisely that which, as per my opening quotation from the “Mundus Imaginalis”, belies ‘the reciprocal isolation of consciousness and its object, of thought and being’ (ibid.) i.e., this too is a “correlationism.” In *this* context, the correlation of the *Imaginalia* to ‘visionary spiritual experiences’ is thus precisely that which constitutes their ontological reality, as, if they were only to

⁶²⁹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.- [online version p.4]

⁶³⁰ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.8

⁶³¹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.8

⁶³² H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.9

⁶³³ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.10

⁶³⁴ (rely = ‘from Old French *relier* ‘bind together’ Oxford American English Dictionary, 2011

⁶³⁵ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.10

‘subsist in the pure intelligible world’, having ‘only our thought as a substratum’, that would make them ‘unreal, nothing’. As it is, continues Corbin, they rather possess that ‘extension and dimension’, that “‘immaterial materiality’” that belongs to the *ubique*; ‘their own “corporeality” and spatiality,’⁶³⁶ for which, especially as it is set out in the work of the Persian Platonist Mollâ Sadrâ of Shiraz, Corbin suggests we might seek a Western equivalent in the Cambridge Platonist Henry More’s term *spissitudo*⁶³⁷ *spiritualis*. In his book *The Platonic Renaissance In England*, Cassirer describes how for More it is precisely the self-similarity, homogeneity, indestructibility, omnipresence and thus infinitude of space (so far very much as defined by Heidegger, after Kant, in the Kant book, though More adds the determination ‘uncreated’) which, as determinations, shared *with* space, of ‘the Godhead itself’ and certainly *not* attributable to ‘any sensible, material thing’, thus determine space, for More, as like to spiritual, and not ‘corporeal nature’. For More, this is grounds for strongest case *against* a purely mechanistic, Cartesian account *of* nature, divorced from ‘intelligible being’—in which account, writes Cassirer, as a casualty of Descartes’ failure to ‘draw a sufficiently sharp distinction’ between space as it is ‘presented to the imagination by the senses and the pure substance of space which we can grasp only in thought’, *and* Descartes’ exception of ‘thinking substances’ from the ‘absolutely general axiom’ that ‘all being is somewhere’, ‘spirit’ has no legitimate “place”, and is thus ‘relegate[d] to a mere nowhere’—and *for* a ‘bond between nature and God’,⁶³⁸ since, for More, as ‘nature is to be found in space and is extended in space’, which for More is *spiritual* in nature. More goes further still, to claim, according to Cassirer, that ‘it is only through being in space that God can embrace and affect the being of all things.’⁶³⁹

More also makes a comparative appearance in *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*⁶⁴⁰ where, in relation to the Norman philosopher Nicholas Oresme’s ‘intuition of genius’— wherein Oresme considers⁶⁴¹ the corporeal quality as being made up of ‘a double corporeality’, one ‘resulting from the extension of the subject in the three dimensions of space’, and

another which is only *imaged (imaginée)* and which results from the intensity of the quality multiplied by the multiplicity of surfaces which one can detect in the inner nature of a subject

Corbin states that

it is just this imaginal world of the subtle body which Henry More...designated as the *quarto dimensio*...[and] which the metaphysic of Imagination,

⁶³⁶ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.10

⁶³⁷ *Spissitudo*: ‘thickness, density, consistency’. (*A Latin Dictionary* Founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary, revised, enlarged, and in great part rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis, Ph.D. and Charles Short, LL.D. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1879).

⁶³⁸ E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, pp. 148-9

⁶³⁹ E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* 1953 p.150

⁶⁴⁰ H. Corbin, trans. Peter Russell, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*, Golgonooza Press Ipswich 1981 p.23

⁶⁴¹ Corbin notes that Oresme’s “intuition of genius” regarding the doubling of corporeality was born out of an initial effort to represent a great number of *qualitative* intensifications geometrically, a project whose ‘point of departure’ was the *theological* question of ‘whether charity could increase or decrease in a man’, and which then passed just as “naturally” through such questions as ‘Just what, qualitatively the intensification of a sound or a colour consisted in...whether the assent given to a proposition or a belief could be intensified or attenuated. What then did growth and diminution consist in?’

Thus Corbin remarks, rather wryly, that ‘theology...is thus to be found at the origin of a problem on which the “physicists” (*physiciens*) of the University of Paris exerted themselves throughout the XIV century’. (H. Corbin, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy* *ibid.* p.23) I am reminded of the ‘beautiful mind’ of Corbin’s great friend the historian of science Alexandre Koyré, who Corbin says ‘many imagined’ to be ‘a great mystical theosopher’ (H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî”, *ibid.*).

transmuted in the thought of Mollâ Sadrâ of Shirâz into a purely spiritual faculty, postulates and explores. Here too Mollâ Sadrâ satisfies the same postulate of a corporeality which is not complete in the empirical world of the three-dimensional.⁶⁴²

Here, Corbin offers the example of ‘an earthly temple’, whose “double corporeality”, according to ‘the motif of archetypal celestial temples’ (as developed in the work of the 12th century Iranian philosopher Qâzi Sa’id Qommî, e.g.,) entails that a temple’s construction in three-dimensional space’ can only be ‘completed in its totality...in the invisible which one can only imagine,’⁶⁴³ cf. More’s *quarto dimensio*. This *doubling* of the corporeal quality, into at once a three-dimensional, material body *and* a correlative, fourth-dimensional, subtle, intense, imaginal, body also implies, conversely, apropos of Corbin’s “earthly temple”, that *Imaginalia* may also *take place* i.e., be embodied, in the *material* world; in Corbin’s book on Ibn ‘Arabi, with the English surtitle *Alone with the Alone*⁶⁴⁴ we find that such “taking place” is indeed said to occur, by means of “symbolizing with”; though is only available as such to the symbolic perception of those whose mode of being is such that they *are*-there *to* it. As such, the “law” of correlation that pertains to *Imaginalia* entails such “taking place” may just as well, or better be understood as a “making place”.

Described variously by Corbin as both “a world”, and ‘the *place* of those worlds that are outside the place of our natural space’(ibid.), the *Mundus Imaginalis* is at once “a world” and “the world in which worlds world” (Cf. also Derrida’s term *chora*, taken from Plato’s *Timaeus*, to describe ‘the spacing that is the condition for everything to take place, for everything to be inscribed’⁶⁴⁵). Passage between the worlds, or levels, is effected by, and “in” the Active Imagination; *by* and “in” which, “worlds world”; according to the formula *Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*. This “worlding”, this very being-*the-there*, is surely our creative *Be!ing* in *significatio passiva*, to which Corbin draws our attention in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî?”. This is why the Active Imagination is also called the theophanic imagination; and as we shall see, for Corbin, the ultimate form of theophany is an angelophany. The angel is at once that of God we *can* see, as ever according to the formula, *Talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*; and conversely, for “our philosophers”, the angel of one’s *Be!ing* is at once that God knows of God’ “self”, through and according to each being’s capacity: as per the hadith: “Allâh said: “I was a Hidden Treasure, and I loved to be known.” As we have seen, the great importance of the existence of the *mundus imaginalis*, this intermediary “world” of ‘subtle bodies’ to which ‘the cognitive function of the imagination is ordered’, ‘whose ontological level is above the world of the senses and below the pure intelligible world’, for ‘all our mystic theosophers’⁶⁴⁶, lies in the fact that upon it depends

the validity of dreams, symbolic rituals, the reality of places formed by intense meditation, the reality of inspired imaginative visions, cosmogonies and theogonies, and thus, in the first place, the truth of the spiritual sense perceived in the imaginative data of prophetic revelations.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴² H. Corbin, trans. Peter Russell, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*, (ibid) p.23

⁶⁴³ H. Corbin, trans. Peter Russell, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*, (ibid) p.24

⁶⁴⁴ By “surtitle”, I mean that this phrase was imposed before the straightforward translation of the original French title, (*L’Imagination créatrice dans le Soufisme d’Ibn ‘Arabi*) of the 2nd English edition.

⁶⁴⁵ J. Derrida and P. Eisenman, *Chora L Works*, Monacelli Press, New York 1997, p 3

⁶⁴⁶ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.11

⁶⁴⁷ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.10

Its existence, i.e., its ontological reality—which, as we have seen, is equally dependent upon its correlation to *them*, i.e., to the visionaries in question—is thus ‘indispensable’, says Corbin, ‘if one wishes to describe a link between the pure spirit and the material body’⁶⁴⁸, and in so doing, check the ‘agnostic reflex’,⁶⁴⁹ which Corbin diagnoses as having originated in ‘Western man[’s]’ consent ‘to the divorce between thought and being’⁶⁵⁰. Corbin’s term “agnostic” is no doubt employed here in its fullest and most precise sense here, signifying not only ‘a person who claims neither faith nor disbelief in God’, but ‘a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God or of anything beyond material phenomena’⁶⁵¹. One who is therefore, by definition a-gnostic, and for whom “God” and “anything beyond...”, may just as well *be* nothing (although the same could be said, in *sensu strictu*, of our apophantic theosophers, as per my chapter “Corbin’s Debt to Heidegger”).⁶⁵² This void, for Corbin, as for Nicolas of Cusa, may—and for Corbin, *must*—be bridged by the symbolic thinking that is proper to the imaginal, as per this extended passage on Cusa from Ernst Cassirer’s book *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, published in 1932, the year after Corbin attended Cassirer at the French National Library, and which I have reproduced in full here; in part because it is so elegantly put that any gloss would fail to do it justice; also as an opportunity to demonstrate why it was *this* area of Cassirer’s work that proved so influential upon Corbin, and which (or whom), as per the “Biographical Post-Scriptum”, he thus encountered with a sense of spiritual kinship, and “family reunion”; and also because it points the way toward Corbin’s book on Ibn ‘Arabi.

The view that all finite thought and understanding are by nature symbolical, that they move in the circle of mere names and signs, and that no name can comprehend divine essence, constitutes a new point of departure in religion. It opens the way for that conception of faith which receives its finest and most universal expression in Cusa’s work *De Pace Fidei*. Cusa does not infer the sheer importance of the symbol and symbolic knowledge from the fact that everything transitory is but a symbol. On the contrary, he endows the symbol with new content and value. The symbol cannot be adequate for knowledge, for dogmatic ‘precision’; it is confined within the limits of ‘otherness’ and ‘conjecture’. But, in so far as absolute being and absolute unity are knowable at all, it is in just this way that they can be truly known; ‘*cognoscitur inattingibilis veritatis unitas is alteritate conjecturali*’ (the unattainable unity of truth is known in conjectural otherness). Since no name can apprehend the divine, or exhaust its meaning, it can therefore be conceded, on the other hand, that all names, in so far as they proceed from a genuine religious conviction and are conscious of their limit and mediate capacity, may be assured of a certain relationship to the divine. Thus apparent scepticism first opens the way to variety, freedom and scope in moral and religious ways of life, and transfers the centre of religious ‘truth’ from dogma to the ways of life themselves. Henceforth, neither variety nor contradiction in religion need give offence. The danger of heterodoxy is not overcome by the establishment of one valid system of thought and doctrine binding for all, but by a fundamental insight into the

⁶⁴⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.11

⁶⁴⁹ (to which my own baulking at the “reality” of Mollâ Sadrâ’s “resurrection body”, my instinct toward “psychologizing” the “resurrection body” of Jesus in Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Noli me tangere*, amply attest)

⁶⁵⁰ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.11

⁶⁵¹ Oxford American English Dictionary 2011

⁶⁵² a variety of nihilism for which Corbin finds apophantic theology to offer a necessary antidote (H. Corbin, “Apophantic Theology as Antidote to Nihilism”, *ibid.*)

limits of [Gk.] *doxa* (opinion) as such, into its necessary incommensurability with absolute being.⁶⁵³

In the “Mundus Imaginalis”, Corbin dates the point at which he says the Western imagination was loosed ‘to wander and become profligate...to cease fulfilling its function, which is to perceive or generate symbols leading to the internal sense’— leading to the disappearance, in the West, of ‘the *mundus imaginalis*, the proper domain of the *Malakut*, the world of the Soul’—to ‘the time when Averroism rejected Avicennian cosmology, with its intermediate angelic hierarchy of the *Animae* or *Angeli caelestes*...below the *Angeli intellectuales*’, which had ‘the privilege of the imagination in its pure state’.⁶⁵⁴ Whereas ‘for a short time in the West, and in Iran down to our own day’, writes Corbin,

Avicennism tended to be productive of mystical life, ... Latin Averroism culminated in the political Averroism of Jean de Jandun and Marsilio of Padua (fourteenth century CE). Viewed in this light, the names of Avicenna and Averroes could be taken as the symbols of the spiritual destinies which awaited the East and West respectively, without imputing their differences to Averroism alone.⁶⁵⁵

Certainly, in light of ‘Averroes asseveration “O men! I do not say that the knowledge which you call divine science is false; what I am saying is that I have knowledge of human science”’, of which, says Corbin, it has been said that it ‘sums him up completely’, and that ‘the new humanity that blossomed in the Renaissance had its origin in these words’; we might begin to see how Averroism may be said to have influenced ‘the metaphysical secularization which led to the separation of theology as such from philosophy’, albeit ‘this separation’—not known in Iran’, where, says Corbin, ‘philosophical meditation still had a long career before it’— ‘was effected in the West by Scholasticism itself.’

For ‘our philosophers’, however, continues Corbin—i.e., those of Eastern Islam, and especially Iran, less concerned with ‘an ethical conception arising out of a social norm [as per Latin political Averroism] than the idea of a spiritual perfection’, attainable by the individual ‘not by following the *horizontal* direction of political and social matters, but by following the *vertical* direction which connects him to the transcendent hierarchies, the supreme guarantors of his personal destiny’⁶⁵⁶—the ‘Image or Form’ of ‘the archetypal world’; ‘the world of “subtle bodies”’, i.e., ‘is itself its own “matter”’. As such, its mode of being or subsistence ‘is independent of any substratum in which it would be immanent in the manner of an accident’ (such as the way in which the colour black subsists in a black object, e.g.) and rather like to ‘the mode of appearance and subsistence of Images “in suspense” in a mirror’, wherein the ‘material substance of the mirror... is not the substance of the image’, but rather ‘simply the “place of its appearance”’⁶⁵⁷. Their ‘preeminent *mirror*’ is the active imagination, ‘the epiphanic place of the Images of the archetypal world.’ The active imagination is thus at once a medium whose function, or *activity* is intermediary.

⁶⁵³ E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, 1953

⁶⁵⁴ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.17

⁶⁵⁵ H. Corbin, citing Qadri, in *The History of Islamic Philosophy* p.250

⁶⁵⁶ H. Corbin, *The History of Islamic Philosophy* p.250

⁶⁵⁷ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.10

that is why the theory of the *mundus imaginalis* is bound up with a theory of imaginative knowledge and imaginative function—a function truly central and mediatory because of the median and mediatory position of the *mundus imaginalis*. It is a function that permits all the universes to *symbolize with one another*... It is the cognitive function of the Imagination that permits the establishment of a rigorous *analogical knowledge*, escaping the dilemma of current rationalism.⁶⁵⁸

We are thus no longer forced to choose, he continues, between ‘either “matter” or “spirit,”’ nor—in what for Corbin is a ‘no less fatal’ substitution, effected by ‘the “socialization” of consciousness’—between ‘either “history” of “myth”’.⁶⁵⁹

What is meant here by a “rigorous analogical knowledge”? Corbin writes that—against ‘the current attitude’, which ‘oppose[s] the real to the imaginary as though to the unreal, the utopian’, as it ‘confuse[s] symbol with allegory’—the ‘exegesis of the *spiritual sense*’⁶⁶⁰ must *not* be confused with ‘an allegorical interpretation; since while an allegory is ‘a sheathing, or rather, a disguising of something’ that may be known otherwise,

the appearance of an Image having the quality of a symbol is a primary phenomenon (*Urphänomenon*), unconditional and irreducible, the appearance of something that cannot manifest itself otherwise to the world where we are’.⁶⁶¹

As for the *manner* of such manifestations, Corbin writes that just as

The imagination is...firmly *balanced* between two other cognitive functions: its own world *symbolizes with* the world to which the two other functions (sensory knowledge and intellectual knowledge) respectively correspond.⁶⁶²

Let us be very clear when we speak of this. It is the organ that permits the transmutation of internal spiritual states into external states, into vision-events symbolizing with those external states.⁶⁶³

Here it is necessary to stress the fact that, for Corbin, as for “our mystic theologians”, while such manifestations may *appear* to occur in the material, sensory world of phenomena, they actually *take place* “in” the active Imagination, the ‘preeminent mediator’, ‘the organ that permits penetration into the *mundus imaginalis*’, as that “world” or “interworld” ‘at the boundary where there is an inversion of the relation of interiority expressed by the preposition *in* or *within*, “in the interior of”’,⁶⁶⁴ as following this inversion of

⁶⁵⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.12

⁶⁵⁹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.12

⁶⁶⁰ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.17

⁶⁶¹ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.18. This passage also provides the key to the way in which Corbin uses the term “archetypal” here. cf. “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”, where Corbin states that ‘For my part, I was friends with Jung, but I was never a Jungian.’ Corbin also states that ‘On the comic side, Jung [himself also] vigorously defended himself against charges of his being a “Jungian”’. H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”, (ibid.)

⁶⁶² H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 pp.16-7

⁶⁶³ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.12

⁶⁶⁴ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.12

the relation of interiority, ‘Spiritual bodies or spiritual entities are no longer *in* a world...it is their world that is *in* them.’⁶⁶⁵

By his own account, Ibn ‘Arabi personally encountered the great Aristotlean commentator Averroes on a total of three occasions, though only the first and the last of these meetings took *place* ‘in the sensible, physical world’⁶⁶⁶; and the last was at Averroes’ own funeral. Within these threefold meetings, Corbin discerns ‘three exemplary elements or traits’, which, seeming ‘most eminently to attract and to constellate the very themes which it is necessary to interrelate’ here, assume for Corbin ‘the character of [three ‘polarizing...’] symbols for the characterology of Ibn ‘Arabi’⁶⁶⁷:

[He whom his] ‘disciples traditionally salute... as Muhyi’d-Din, “Animator of the Religion”, but whom so many doctors of the Law in Islam have attacked, diverting his honorific surname into its antithesis” Mahi’d-Din, “he who abolishes the religion,” or Mumituddin, “he who kills the religion”’.⁶⁶⁸

The first ‘extraordinary episode’ of their ‘threefold meeting’⁶⁶⁹ was occasioned by Averroes,⁶⁷⁰ who upon hearing of ‘the revelations that God had accorded [the young Ibn ‘Arabi]’ and making ‘no secret of his astonishment at what he had been told’, Averroes, aslo a friend of Ibn ‘Arabi’s father, ‘expressed the desire to meet [the youth] personally’. Thus on the pretext of ‘some sort of errand’ or other, Ibn ‘Arabi, then ‘still a beardless youth’, was sent by his father to the home of ‘the master’ so that Averroes might ‘have a talk’⁶⁷¹ with him. After embracing the youth, having received him with ‘signal marks of friendship and consideration’, Averroes initiated the following conversation, as recounted here with commentary by Ibn ‘Arabi.

Then he said ‘Yes.’ and I in turn said; ‘Yes.’ His joy was great at noting that I had understood. But then taking cognizance of what had called forth his joy, I added: ‘No.’ Immediately Averroes winced, the colour went out of his cheeks, he seemed to doubt his own thought. He asked me this question: “What manner of solution have you found through divine illumination and inspiration? Is it identical with that which we obtain from speculative reflection?” I replied: ‘Yes and no. Between the yes and the no, spirits take flight from their matter, and heads are separated from their bodies’. Averroes

⁶⁶⁵ Here Corbin also offers another example of a mystical tale, whereupon asking of a personage apparently in, and thus *of*, the *Mundus Imaginalis*, not where that personage hails from, but where they themselves *are*, now, to be told that they are already “back” in this world, close to their earthly point of departure. H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.12.

⁶⁶⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone*, pp. 41 (Henry Corbin’s own footnote no.14 states ‘Cf. Asin Palacios, *En Islam Cristianizado*, pp. 39-40; *Futuhat*, 1, 155-54)

⁶⁶⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.38

⁶⁶⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.76

⁶⁶⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.43

⁶⁷⁰ As an aside, I note that while Ibn ‘Arabi would, of course, have met “Averroes” as *Ibn Rushd*; yet throughout this book, as elsewhere, Corbin consistently uses the Latinate “Averroes” (Corbin is similarly consistent in his use of the Latinate “Avicenna” for “Ibn Sina”). We have already seen how, for Corbin, ‘the names of Avicenna and Averroes could be taken as the symbols of the spiritual destinies which awaited the East and West respectively’ (*ibid.*); whereupon Corbin further differentiates between the philosophy of Averroes, and “Latin Averroism”. It could thus perhaps be also argued that a differential use of e.g., “Ibn Rushd” and “Averroes” could be useful in distinguishing between the respective appearances, Oriental and Occidental, of the two historical figures of one historical person; Corbin is certainly no stranger to such nice distinctions, as per his discussion (to follow) of the archetypal personage(s) of Khidr/Elijah, but I suppose in this case it might result in a kind of unwanted doubling. In any case, I have no doubt that Corbin’s usage is entirely deliberate and considered.

⁶⁷¹ *ibid.* p.41

turned pale, I saw him tremble; he murmured the ritual phrase ‘There is no power save in God’—for he had understood my allusion.⁶⁷²

From our reading of the “Mundus Imaginalis”, with reference to the *History of Islamic Philosophy*, we might already begin to guess at the “between” in question; though in accordance with Ibn ‘Arabi’s own teaching on how to ‘meditate the facts of his autobiography’—whereby life-events ‘take on the appearance of autobiographical data, charged with a transhistoric meaning’, in so far as they offer ‘exemplary elements or traits’ which assume the character of symbols and ‘function to throw an anticipatory light on that twofold dimension of the human person, of which the active Imagination, investing the person with his “theophanic function,” will subsequently give us a glimpse⁶⁷³— we should note, however, that no *entirely* adequate explanation may be forthcoming, since for Corbin⁶⁷⁴:

The symbol is both key and silence; it speaks and it does not speak. It can never be explained once and for all. It expands to the degree that each consciousness is progressively summoned by it to unfold—that is to say, to the degree that each consciousness makes the symbol the key to its own transmutation.⁶⁷⁵

Thus, symbolic “meaning”, considered as a “truth”, is thus not the truth of the *adequatio* as this is usually understood; here it is not the “object of truth” to which “the truth” must be adequate, in order to be true; rather, the extent of its revelation or “unconcealedness” depends, according to our favourite formula, upon the “subject’s” capacity *to* “see”, to “capture”. Symbolic truth is thus a truth of *correlation*; reminiscent of Corbin’s statement, in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardī”, wherein:

The phenomenon of meaning, that is fundamental in the metaphysics of *Being and Time* is the link between the signifier and the signified. But what makes this link, without which signifier and signified would simply remain objects for theoretical consideration?

This link is the subject, and this subject is the *presence*, presence of the mode of being *to* the mode of understanding. Pre-sence, *Da-sein*.⁶⁷⁶

Rather than e.g., affixing precise significations to the “Yes”, “No”, and “...between”, etc, instead Corbin discerns here ‘the dominant trait of Ibn ‘Arabi’s character’; that which ‘made him not only, like most of the Sufis, a disciple of human masters, but above all and essentially the “disciple of Khidr”⁶⁷⁷, ‘he who does not owe his knowledge of spiritual experience to human teaching, who bears witness’.⁶⁷⁸ Thus already, for Corbin, ‘with the symbol of Ibn ‘Arabi as the disciple of Khidr we have reached the center which dominates the co-ordinates of our spiritual topography’⁶⁷⁹.

So what does it mean, to *be* a “disciple of Khidr”?

⁶⁷² *ibid.* p.41-2

⁶⁷³ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.43

⁶⁷⁴ As for Nicolas of Cusa for whom Ernst Cassirer states e.g. ‘the symbol[ic] cannot be adequate for knowledge, for dogmatic “precision”’ E. Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* p. 14

⁶⁷⁵ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.173

⁶⁷⁶ “From Heidegger to Suhrawardī”, (*ibid.*)

⁶⁷⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.99

⁶⁷⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.43

⁶⁷⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.35

Before we elaborate further upon this “first and greatest” symbol of the characterology of Ibn ‘Arabi, however, for now let us follow Corbin in completing his exposition of Ibn ‘Arabi’s characterological “all”, as it becomes apparent at the level of his three meetings with Averroes.

The first of their encounters having been initiated at the desire of Averroes, the second occurs when, ‘by God’s Mercy’, Ibn ‘Arabi’s own wish ‘for another interview with Averroes’ is fulfilled by God’s causing Averroes to appear to Ibn ‘Arabi, in his own words: ‘in an ecstasy (*waqi’a*) in such a form that between his person and myself there was a light veil’, through which, while *seen* to be present, the vision of Averroes, absorbed in his own meditation, fails to see or acknowledge the presence of Ibn ‘Arabi, who thus concludes that ‘His thought does not guide him to the place where I myself am’.⁶⁸⁰ His thought, i.e., which for Corbin *et al*, is by the absence, nay, the destruction, and subsequent *lack* of ‘the *Animae caelestes*, the *malakut*’, i.e., ‘as the whole *ishraqi* tradition stresses—the world of autonomous Images perceived in their own right by the active Imagination.’⁶⁸¹ Cf. also this definition of symbolic perception from Corbin’s *History of Islamic Philosophy* (in the context of Ismaili gnosis).

Symbolic perception affects a transmutation of the immediate data (the sensible and literal data), and renders them transparent. In the absence of the transparency brought about in this manner, it is impossible to pass from one level to another. Equally, without a plurality of universes rising above each other in an ascending perspective, symbolic exegesis perishes for lack of function and meaning. ... Such an exegesis therefore presupposes a theosophy in which the worlds symbolize with each other: the supra-sensible and spiritual universes, the macrocosm or *Homo maximus (insan kabir)* and the microcosm.
682

Here then for Corbin, in this second encounter, lies the characterological symbol of Ibn ‘Arabi as the ‘author of the “Book of Theophanies”’; he who, *unlike* Averroes, ‘has full access to the intermediate supersensory world, *alam mithal*, where the Active Imagination perceives events, figures, presences directly, unaided by the senses’.⁶⁸³ Of Averroes, Corbin writes that, aiming ‘to reaffirm a cosmology in purely Aristotelian terms’:

What motivates [Averroes’] critique of [‘Avicenna’s triadic schema, which situated the *Anima caelestis* between the pure separate Intelligence and the celestial orb’]...is the adoption of an attitude which is fundamentally opposed to Avicennan emanationism—to the idea of a successive procession of Intelligence from the One—for the simple reason that the idea of emanation is still allied with the idea of creation. Such an idea of creation is unintelligible for a strict Peripatetic, for whom there is no creative cause.⁶⁸⁴

For Averroes, it is rather the case that “that which is understood” (intelligized) is the cause of “that which understands it”—that is to say, as the final [and not the creative] cause’. As such, it follows that each “final

⁶⁸⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.42

⁶⁸¹ H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.246

⁶⁸² H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.12-13 Cf. Corbin’s stated interest in Fritz Saxl’s work on the microcosm, as per the Corbin-Warburg correspondence (as per my chapter here “From Paris to Tehran”).

⁶⁸³ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.43

⁶⁸⁴ H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* pp.246-7

cause” may be ‘the cause of several beings’; from which it further follows, for Averroes, that ‘the *Primum movens* can be such a cause’. ‘The strict principle of *Ex Uno non fit nisi Unum* which governs Avicenna's neo-Platonic schema’, is thus ‘abolished as superfluous’, thus the Avicennan ‘plurality of universes rising above each other in an ascending perspective’ (ibid.), which Corbin deems necessary for symbolic perception to occur, i.e., for symbolic exegesis to have ‘function and meaning’ (ibid.), are lost.

Averroes [also] rejected the Avicennan idea of the active Intelligence as the *Dator formarum*. For him, forms are not ideal realities, extrinsic to their matter. They are not placed in matter by an agent; matter itself contains in potentiality its innumerable forms, which are inherent in it (a position which is diametrically opposed to that of al-Suhrawardi).⁶⁸⁵

The omission of ‘the second hierarchy of Avicennan angelology, the hierarchy of the *Angeli or Animae caelestes...the malakut*’⁶⁸⁶ from Averroes cosmology was thus inevitable. No surprise, then, that Averroes was not *there* for Ibn ‘Arabi’s second encounter with him, since for Averroes, there was no there to be. Of his third encounter with Averroes, Ibn ‘Arabi recalls:

I had no further occasion to meet him until his death, which occurred in the year 595 of the Hegira [1198] in Marakesh. His remains were taken to Cordova, where his tomb is. When the coffin containing his ashes was loaded on the flank of a beast of burden, his works were placed on the other side to counterbalance it.

The image was not lost on Ibn ‘Arabi and his friend Abu’l Hakkam, with whom Ibn ‘Arabi observed ‘On one side the master, on the other his works’, adding, ‘Ah! How I wish I knew whether his hopes have been fulfilled’.⁶⁸⁷ Cf. Corbin’s *History of Islamic Philosophy* in which he writes that while Averroes ‘rejected the idea that the potential human intelligence was a simple disposition connected with the organic constitution’ and ‘held to the idea of a separate Intelligence’, yet he also insisted that, ‘this potential human intelligence is still not that of the personal individual’.⁶⁸⁸

Whereas, for example, Mulla Sadra Shirazi, an Avicennan *ishraqi*, demonstrated forcefully that the principle of individuation is present in form, Averroes accepts matter as the principle of individuation. Thus the individual is identified with the corruptible, and immortality can only be generic. All one can say is that there is eternity within the individual, but what is ‘eternizable’ in him belongs wholly to the active Intelligence alone, not to the individual.⁶⁸⁹

For Corbin, this is best explained via Averroes’ *ta’wil* (roughly speaking, exegesis⁶⁹⁰) of the Quranic verse 7:143⁶⁹¹, ‘in which Moses asks God to reveal himself to him’. God replies: ‘You will never see Me. However, behold this mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then— only then—will you see Me.’ The verse continues: ‘But when God revealed His glory to the mountain, He reduced it to dust; and Moses fell

⁶⁸⁵ H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.247

⁶⁸⁶ H. Corbin *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.246

⁶⁸⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.43, footnote no.14: Cf. Asin Palacios, *En Islam Cristianizado*, pp. 39-40; *Futuhat*, 1, 155-54)

⁶⁸⁸ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.247

⁶⁸⁹ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, p.248

⁶⁹⁰ It should be noted that Averroes had his own kind of *ta’wil* not identical to that of “our philosophers”

⁶⁹¹ ‘as explained by Moses of Narbonne in his commentary on the Hebrew version of the treatise on the possibility of union with the active Intelligence’ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*. ibid.

down in a swoon'. Averroes interprets this verse as demonstrating that in order to perceive the active Intelligence, (i.e., as per the verse, to “see God”), ‘Man’s hylic intellect ... must first become intellect *in actu*’.

But in this union, finally [for Averroes], it is the active Intelligence which perceives itself by particularizing itself for a moment in a human soul, as light is particularized. This union marks the obliteration of the passive intellect (like Moses’ mountain)—it is not the gage and guarantee of individual survival. This takes us very far from Avicennism, in which the inalienable guarantee of spiritual individuality is this very awareness of itself that it succeeds in attaining through union with the active Intelligence.⁶⁹²

Thus, for Corbin, at the symbolic heart of this ‘last homage to the master whose essential work has been to restore integral Aristotelianism in all its purity’,⁶⁹³ is the fact that it should be none other than Ibn ‘Arabi—in whom, even as he becomes a “pilgrim to the [spiritual] Orient at the call of his “Holy Spirit””,⁶⁹⁴ according to the very ‘principle at the heart of Avicennan anthropology: the homology between the *Anima caelestis* and the *anima humana*’⁶⁹⁵—Corbin discerns ‘a living exemplification of Suhrawardī’s “Recital of Occidental Exile”, who as ‘witness to Averroes’ funeral’ is moved here to this ‘melancholy question’.⁶⁹⁶

For Corbin, the question of what it means to be a disciple of Khidr, and that of who Khidr *is*—or, rather more pertinently and precisely, of who *is* Khidr—shed existential light upon one another.⁶⁹⁷

Corbin writes that while Ibn ‘Arabi ‘had many and met many’ masters, ‘his numerous journeys and peregrinations’ having ‘brought him into contact with almost all the Sufi masters of his day’; yet ‘essentially he never had more than one’, ‘an invisible master’ whose historical coordinates may not be established, *nor* may he be situated ‘at any particular moment in the succession of the human generations’; ‘a mysterious prophet figure to whom a number of traditions, both significant and obscure, lend features which relate him, or tend to identify him with Elijah, with Saint George, and still others’,⁶⁹⁸ this “invisible master” is Khidr.

While, he says, a ‘complete answer’ to the question ‘Who is Khidr?’ would require the compilation of ‘a very considerable mass of material from very divergent sources: prophetology, folklore, alchemy, etc.’; here Corbin advises that we ‘consider him essentially as the invisible spiritual master, reserved for those who are called to a direct unmediated relationship with the divine world’. We may thus ‘confine ourselves to certain essential points: his appearance in the Koran, the meaning of his name, his connection with the prophet Elijah, and in turn the connection between Elijah and the Imam of Shi’ism’. While a ‘thorough study’ of the

⁶⁹² H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, pp.248-9

⁶⁹³ But who had suffered public ignominy towards the end of his life, when after falling out of favour with his erstwhile patron, the Muwahhid sovereign Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur, he had been ‘put under house arrest in Lucena (Elisana), near Cordoba [to where his ashes were being returned], where he was subjected to the insults, satire and attacks of the ‘orthodox’ theologians and the people’ (H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.243).

⁶⁹⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.43

⁶⁹⁵ as [ctd]... ‘between the relations *History of Islamic Philosophy* of each *Anima caelestis* with the Intelligence towards which it is moved by its desire’ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 247

⁶⁹⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.43-4

⁶⁹⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.54

⁶⁹⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.32

mysterious Koranic episode (Sura XVIII, vv. 59-81) in which Khidr figures as the initiatic guide of Moses ‘would require an exhaustive confrontation with the earliest Koranic commentaries’, Corbin finds it sufficient for our purposes here to summarize the episode in the following manner:

He [Khidr is represented as Moses’ guide, who initiates Moses “into the science of predestination.” Thus he reveals himself to be the repository of an inspired divine science, superior to the law (*shari’a*); thus Khidr is superior to Moses in so far as Moses is a prophet invested with a mission of revealing a *shari’a*. He reveals to Moses precisely the secret, mystic truth (*haqiqa*) that transcends the *shari’a*, and this explains why the spirituality inaugurated by Khidr is free from the servitude of the literal religion.⁶⁹⁹

Here Corbin also notes that although ‘according to certain traditions’, Khidr-Elijah is identified with the historical personage of a ‘descendant of Noah in the fifth generation’, an identification which would indeed appear to situate him at a ‘particular moment in the succession of the human generations’⁷⁰⁰ we are still ‘far from the chronological dimension of historical time’, since we ‘shall never find a rational justification of the Koranic episode in which Khidr-Elijah meets Moses as if they were contemporaries’—unless, that is, we are to ‘situate these events in the *alam al-mithal*.’ And, just as his being a disciple of Khidr is, for Corbin, the dominant symbolic trait of Ibn ‘Arabi’s character, Corbin, in turn, finds ‘the most characteristic episode of Khidr’s career’ to be his having ‘attained the source of life...drunk of the water of immortality’. Knowing ‘neither old age or death. He is the “Eternal Youth”’—which for Corbin renders “objective” historical methods’ inapplicable here. For this same reason, Corbin prefers to follow his own professor, Louis Massignon, in discarding ‘the usual vocalizations of his name (Persian *Khezr*, Arabic *Khidr*), in favour of *Khadir*’⁷⁰¹, which Massignon translates as “the Verdant one”. Corbin adds that while Khidr ‘is indeed associated with every aspect of Nature’s greenness’, it would however be ‘meaningless’ to ‘interpret him as a “vegetation myth”...unless we presupposed the special mode of perception implied by the presence of Khadir,⁷⁰² i.e., the mode of symbolic perception, as of events occurring in the *alam al-mithal*. Indeed, Corbin continues, this special mode of perception *is* inevitably involved here, ‘bound up with the extraordinary pre-eminence...accorded to the color green in Islam’.⁷⁰³ Returning to the identification of Khidr with the biblical prophet Elijah, Corbin observes that at times these two are ‘associated to form a pair’, and at others, they are ‘associated [i.e., identified] with one another’. Of these traditional “associations”, the one which chiefly concerns Corbin here ‘in connection with the person of Khidr-Elijah as initiator of the mystic truth which emancipates one from literal religion, is the bond with the person of the Imam which these traditions establish’,⁷⁰⁴ as in one of ‘the homilies attributed to the First Imam’, Ali

⁶⁹⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.55

⁷⁰⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.32

⁷⁰¹ my italics

⁷⁰² H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.56

⁷⁰³ The ‘spiritual, liturgical color of Islam’, green is also ‘the color of the ‘Alids’, the descendants of Ali Ibn Abi Talib (husband of the prophet Muhammad’s daughter Fatima), who Shi’ites acknowledge as the first Imam, while for Twelver Shi’ites, ‘the twelfth, “hidden Imam”, the “lord of this Time”’, (Muhammad al-Mahdi, 15th Sha’aban AH – Occultation), is known to dwell ‘on the Green Island in the middle of the Sea of Whiteness’. Corbin also notes that ‘in the ‘subtile physiology’ inaugurated by ‘the great Sufi Semnani (14th C)...whose *centers* [sic] are typified by “the seven prophets of thy being”, each having ‘its specific color’, while ‘the subtile center of the arcanum, the “Jesus of thy being” has luminous black (*aswad nurani*, “black light”) as its color, the color of the supreme center, the “mystery of mysteries,” the “Muhammad of thy being”, is [also] green’ (H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.57)

⁷⁰⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.57

Ibn Abi Talib,⁷⁰⁵ in which ‘the Imam utters the names under which he has been successively known by all nations, those who have a revealed Book (*ahl al-Kitab*) and those who have none’ we discover that ‘To the Christians, he says: I am he whose name in the Gospel is Elijah’.⁷⁰⁶ For Corbin, this amounts to nothing less than ‘Shi’ism in the person of the Imam proclaim[ing] itself to be the witness to the Transfiguration, the metamorphosis’⁷⁰⁷. Variousy recounted in Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36, the Transfiguration raises the question, amongst those disciples present, of what it means, exactly to be “risen from the dead”. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* states that ‘some critics have suggested that it is a misplaced Resurrection appearance’⁷⁰⁸. Here, Corbin identifies this ‘colloquy between Moses and Elijah (that is the Imam) on Mount Tabor’ as the biblical counterpart of ‘Moses’ meeting with Elijah as his initiand in the eighteenth sura’ of the Quran, as above. He continues:

This typology is extremely eloquent as to the intentions of the Shi-ite mind...Ismailian esoterism has another homily in which the Imam proclaims: “I am the Christ who cures the blind and the lepers [i.e., the “second Christ”, we read in a gloss]⁷⁰⁹. I am he and he is I”. And if elsewhere the Imam is designated as Melchizedek, we easily discern the connection between this imamology and the christology of the Melchizedekian Christians who saw in this supernatural person the true “Son of God”, the Holy Spirit’.⁷¹⁰

Extra to the Melchizedekian “heresy” that Melchizedek was Christ, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* lists a number of further “heresies”, ‘condemned as such by the [Church] Fathers’, e.g., Saint Epiphanius’ claim that Melchizedek was ‘a power of God superior to Christ’; St Ambrose’ claim that Melchizedek was the Holy Spirit, and the claim that Melchizedek was an incarnation of the Logos, made by Mark the Hermit.⁷¹¹

Ultimately for Corbin, ‘our only hope of a significant result’ in pursuit of an answer to the question of “Who is Khidr?”, ‘a Figure that dissolves so many associations and undergoes so many metamorphoses, lies in the phenomenological method’.⁷¹² Thus, when considering Khidr as ‘the invisible spiritual master of a mystic [such as Ibn ‘Arabi], subordinated to the teaching of no earthly master, and of no collectivity’, Corbin finds the equivalent question, phenomenologically speaking, to be “What does it mean to be the disciple of Khidr?” To what act of self-awareness does the fact of recognizing oneself to be the disciple of

⁷⁰⁵ In which for Corbin, the very essence of Shi’ism is to be found, in ‘the incomparable power in its [Shi’ism’s] incantation of the prophetic Word, its flashing lyricism...its power to encompass the meaning of all Revelations’. H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.57

⁷⁰⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.57-8

⁷⁰⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.58, footnote no. 23

⁷⁰⁸ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* p.1648

⁷⁰⁹ Corbin’s own square parentheses

⁷¹⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.58

⁷¹¹ *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* p.1074. Mentioned in Gen.14: 18 as ‘The King of Salem’ and ‘Priest of the Most High God (El Elron) who offered Abraham bread and wine as he was returning from his defeat of the four kings’. In Ps. 110:4, King David refers to the Lord [Messiah] as ‘a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. The OxDCC continues ‘both passages were used by the author of Epistles to the Hebrews to prove the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, prefigured by Melchizedek over that of Aaron of the Levites [from whom all priests must be descended, according to the Jewish tradition, as appointed by Yahweh (Exodus 28& 29, Numbers 8 & 18); he alone offered incense in the Holy of Holies and mediated between God and the people (Exodus 28)]. In the Dead Sea Scrolls there are specific traditions about Melchizedek as a heavenly being who will judge the world.’ OxDCC goes on: ‘From the time of Clement of Alexandria onwards his [Melchizedek’s] offering [to Abraham] has been regarded as a type of Eucharist, especially in the West’ so that e.g. ‘Cyprian argued from it the necessity of using wine, not merely water. ... the name of Melchizedek was introduced into the Roman Canon of the Mass, where his offering is mentioned together with those of Abel and Abraham as an acceptable sacrifice typifying that of Christ on the Cross’. Also, ‘In the first antiphon of the Second Vespers of Corpus Christi, where Christ is called in the words of Ps.110 *sacerdos in aeternum...secundum ordinem Melchisedech*’ (OxDCC 1074).

⁷¹² H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.58

Khidr correspond?’⁷¹³ Formulated as such, the question also frees us from being forced to choose between Khidr as archetype or as person; and happily so, for Corbin, since either answer taken alone would involve a great loss, neither being ‘adequate to the phenomenon of Khidr’s person’. Taken as archetype only, as from ‘the standpoint of analytical psychology...he will seem to lose his reality and become a figment of the imagination, if not of the intellect’, whereas if Khidr is taken as ‘a real person’, it is made impossible ‘to characterise the difference in structure between Khidr’s relationship with his disciple and the relationship that any other *shaikh* on this earth can have with his’, as while ‘Khidr, numerically one faces a plurality of disciples in a relationship which is hardly compatible with the one consorting with the one’, it is precisely ‘the fervent sentiment of the one consorting with the one’ with which this relationship is experienced by each of his disciples. that ‘In short’, continues Corbin, ‘these answers are not adequate to the phenomenon of Khidr’s person’. This being so, Corbin suggests that there is perhaps however ‘another path’ to ‘an understanding of the phenomenon as it occurs among our Sufis’, a path opened up by Suhrawardi ‘in an intention’ which Corbin finds ‘quite consonant with that of Ibn ‘Arabi’. ⁷¹⁴ In *The [Crimson] Archangel*, where the angel urges the initiate to “Put on the sandals of Khidr”,⁷¹⁵ it is *this* assimilative act of self-identification—whereby in “putting on the sandals of Khidr” one endeavours to *be Khidr*—which, for Corbin ‘suggests what it means to be the disciple of Khidr’.⁷¹⁶ Corbin continues:

[Suhrawardi’s] Recital of Occidental Exile describes the journey leading to the summit of Mount Qaf, at the foot of the emerald rock, the mystic Sinai, where resides the Holy Spirit, the Angel of mankind, whom the philosopher in this same recital identifies as the “Active Intelligence” and situates at the base of the hierarchy of the cherubic Intelligences. The essence of this answer is to be sought in the words: *If you are Khidr*.⁷¹⁷

Thus, returning to the question of “Who is Khidr?”, Corbin now explains that as the presence of Khidr’s person ‘is experienced in a relationship which transforms it into an archetype’, phenomenologically speaking, ‘Khidr is experienced simultaneously as a person-archetype.’ As archetype, ‘the unity and identity of Khidr’s person is compatible with the plurality of his exemplifications in those [persons] who *are* by turn Khidr. ...Khidr is the master of all those who are masterless, because he *shows* all those whose master he is how to *be* what he himself is: he who has attained the Spring of Life, the Eternal Youth...he who has attained *haqiqa*, the mystic, esoteric truth which dominates the Law and frees us from the literal religion’.⁷¹⁸ Thus the disciples of Khidr are freed ‘from any legalistic or authoritarian servitude’⁷¹⁹. Master of the masterless, Khidr’s ‘relationship with each one is the relationship of the exemplar or the exemplified with him who exemplifies it...he exemplifies himself as many times as he has disciples, and his role is to reveal each disciple to himself’, leading each disciple *not* ‘to one theophany identical for all’ but ‘to his own theophany’, that which ‘corresponds to his “inner heaven, to the form of his own being, to his eternal individuality (*ayn thabita*)’, that ‘which, in Ibn ‘Arabi’s words, is that one of the divine Names which is

⁷¹³ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.58-9

⁷¹⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.59

⁷¹⁵ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.59-60

⁷¹⁶ and which “putting on”, as we shall see, fits precisely for Corbin with an, e.g., Ibn ‘Arabi’s, ‘investiture with the “mantle” of Khidr, a happening whose... effect indeed is to identify the *spiritual* state of him who receives the investiture with the spiritual state of him who confers it upon him’ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.60

⁷¹⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.59-60

⁷¹⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.60

⁷¹⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.62

invested in him, the name by which he knows his God and by which his God knows him'. Thus 'is the interdependence between *rabb* and *marbubb*, between the lord of love and his vassal'. Thus attaining to 'the "Khidr of your being" is to attain to the "prophet of your being," in which 'inner depth springs the Water of Life at the foot of the mystic Sinai, pole of the microcosm, centre of the world, etc'.⁷²⁰ Thus 'to become Khidr is to have attained an aptitude for theophanic vision...for the encounter with the divine Alter Ego, for the ineffable dialogue which the genius of Ibn 'Arabi will nonetheless succeed in recounting'.⁷²¹

Koranic revelation identifies 'the Angel of knowledge and revelation, that is to say the Holy Spirit' with 'the Angel Gabriel, the Angel of the Annunciation', but whereas 'just as every prophet perceives the spirit of his own prophecy in the form of an Angel Gabriel', 'every Spiritual hears the inspiration of his own Holy Spirit... in the voice of Khidr'.⁷²² 'Each individual's solution to this "problem" of the Angel thus 'has existential implications...insofar as [it]...defines the status of his spirituality', since to attain to "the Khidr of one's being" is to attain '*haqiqa*, the mystic esoteric Truth which dominates the law and frees us from the literal religion', from 'any legalistic or authoritarian servitude'. We should hardly then be surprised, continues Corbin, by 'the panic aroused by Latin Avicennism among the orthodox believers of the West by an Avicennan noetics and angelology which led to an exaltation of the angel which was utterly shocking to orthodox scholasticism'—once it is regarded in this context as "Fear of the Angel", i.e., 'fear of having to recognise the individual ministry of Khidr',⁷²³ since as "'If you are *Khidr*..." you can indeed do what Khidr *does*,' meaning, says Corbin, that 'he...who is the disciple of Khidr possesses sufficient inner strength to seek freely the teachings of all masters'.⁷²⁴

Thus far from simply 'a messenger transmitting orders, nor the usual "guardian angel..."', here the figure of "the angel" is rather 'bound up with the idea that the Form under which each of the Spirituals knows God is also the form under which God reveals Himself to Himself in that man'.⁷²⁵

For Ibn 'Arabi, the Angel represents the essential correlation between the form of a theophany and the form of him to whom it is disclosed. He is the "part allotted to each Spiritual, his absolute individuality the divine Name invested in him. He is the essential theophanism, every theophany has the form of an angelophany because it is determined by this correlation; and precisely in this essential determination without which the divine Being would remain unknown and inaccessible, lies the significance of the Angel."⁷²⁶

Corbin continues that once this is understood, 'the way in which Ibn 'Arabi as a disciple of Khidr [my emphasis]' meditates the philoxeny of Abraham leads to the very heart of his theosophy and mystic experience, to a secret which is also that of the Cherubic Wanderer of Angelus Silesius, which to the mystic means: to feed the Angel from one's own substance'.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.61

⁷²¹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.62

⁷²² H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.61

⁷²³ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.62

⁷²⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.67

⁷²⁵ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.62

⁷²⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.62-3

⁷²⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* pp.63

Cf Corbin's conclusion of the "Mundus Imaginalis" text, with reference to what he calls 'an extraordinary text' by Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, *L'Annonciateur*; which has a great deal to "say", here; and which brings us back around to that "point of the compass" where this chapter began, though I hope, quite transfigured.

Angels", he writes, "*are not*, in substance, except in the free sublimity of the absolute Heavens, where reality is unified with the ideal... They only externalize themselves in the ecstasy they cause and which forms a part of themselves." Those last words, *an ecstasy*. . . *which forms part of themselves*, seem to me to possess a prophetic clarity, for they have the quality of piercing even the granite of doubt, of paralyzing the "agnostic reflex," in the sense that they break the reciprocal isolation of the consciousness and its object, of thought and being; phenomenology is now an ontology. Undoubtedly this is the postulate implied in the teaching of our authors concerning the *imaginal*. For there is no external criterion for the manifestation of the Angel, other than the manifestation itself. The Angel is itself the *ekstasis*, the "displacement" or the departure from ourselves that is a "change of state" from our state. That is why these words also suggest to us the secret of the supernatural being of the "Hidden Imam" and of his Appearances for the Shi'ite consciousness: the Imam is the *ekstasis* itself of that consciousness. One who is not in the same spiritual state cannot see him.

This is what Suhrawardī alluded to in his tale of "The Crimson Archangel" by his words that we cited at the beginning: "If you are Khezr, you also may pass without difficulty through the mountain of Qaf."⁷²⁸

For Corbin, that which is manifest in the very phenomenon of Sufism itself, understood as 'an esoteric interpretation of Islam', is 'the act of mystic consciousness disclosing to itself the inner hidden meaning of a prophetic revelation'. Moreover, 'the characteristic situation of the mystic is a confrontation with a prophetic message and revelation'.⁷²⁹

With the proviso that 'what we shall have to say here can be no more than a sketch', 'the phenomenology of Sufism, as such, in its essence'⁷³⁰ is now set forth. For Corbin, the 'interpenetration of mystic religion and prophetic religion' so characteristic of Sufism is only conceivable 'in an Ahl al-Kitab, a "people of the book...[i.e.,] whose religion is grounded on a book revealed by a prophet, for the existence of a celestial Book imposes the task of fathoming its *true meaning*'.⁷³¹

The conviction that to everything that is apparent, literal, external, exoteric (*zahir*) there corresponds something hidden, spiritual, internal, esoteric (*batin*) is the scriptural principle...at the very foundation of Shi'ism as a religious phenomenon. It is the central postulate of esoterism and of esoteric

⁷²⁸ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.32

⁷²⁹ Thus the image of the mausoleum and *madrasa* built over Ibn 'Arabi's tomb in Damascus, 'the honours and popular cult devoted to this man whose disciples traditionally salute him as Muhyi-din – the Animator of the Religion', yet whom 'so many Doctors of the Law have attacked as Mahi-d Din "he who abolishes the religion", or Mumituddin, he who kills the religion"⁷²⁹, strikes Corbin as a 'paradoxical triumph', akin to that of 'Swedenborg's tomb in the cathedral of Uppsala', together forming 'a mental diptych attesting the existence of an *Ecclesia spiritualis* reuniting all its own in the triumphant force of a single paradox' H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.78, p.76-7

⁷³⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.77

⁷³¹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.78. For this reason, Corbin argues that such notable similarities as may be seen to exist between Sufism and Buddhism e.g., are really not so considerable when compared with those that exist between the mysticisms of the Ahl al-Kitab.

hermeneutics (*ta'wil*)...[and, as such] the basis of the fundamental kinship between Shi'ism and Sufism'.⁷³²

This is not to doubt that the prophet Muhammad is “the seal of prophets and of prophecy”; the cycle of prophetic religion is closed, no new shari'a, or religious Law is awaited. But the literal and apparent text of this ultimate Revelation offers something which is still a potency', something which 'calls for the actions of persons who will transform it into act'.⁷³³

This is the 'initiatic mission' of 'the Imam and his companions'; 'its function is to initiate into the *ta'wil*', marking 'spiritual birth'. Thus, while there is no doubt among the mystics that 'prophetic Revelation is closed', the 'continued openness of prophetic hermeneutics, of the *ta'wil*, or *intelligentia spiritualis*',⁷³⁴ that which 'brings about the union', or 'interpenetration' 'between prophetic religion and mystic religion', is assumed.

From this 'complex', continues Corbin, 'there derives a threefold preoccupation with the *method*, *organ*, and *source* of this hermeneutics', *ta'wil*.

The word *ta'wil*, together with the word *tanzil*, constitute a pair of terms and concepts which are complementary and contrasting. Properly speaking, *tanzil* designates positive religion, the letter of the Revelation dictated by the Angel to the Prophet. It means *to cause this Revelation to descend* from the higher world. Conversely, *ta'wil* means *to cause to return*, to lead back to the origin, and thus to return to the true and original meaning of a written text. 'It is to *cause something to arrive* at its origin. He who practices *ta'wil*, therefore, is someone who diverts what is proclaimed from its external appearance (its exoteric aspect or *zahir*), and makes it revert to its truth, its *haqiqah*' (cf. *Kalam-i Pir*). ...Exegesis of a text goes hand in hand with *exegesis* of the soul, a practice known in Ismaili gnosis as the science of the Balance (*mizan*).⁷³⁵

Method.

Corbin begins his consideration of the *method* of *ta'wil* by 'by drawing a careful distinction between symbol and allegory',⁷³⁶ as follows:

Allegory is a rational operation implying no transition either to a new plane of being or to a new depth of consciousness; it is a figuration, at an identical level of consciousness of what might very well be known in a different way, but calls for ever new execution. The symbol announces a plane of consciousness distinct from that of rational evidence, it is the "cipher" of a mystery, the only means of saying something that cannot be apprehended in any other way; a symbol is never "explained" once and for all, but must be deciphered over and over again, just as a musical score is never deciphered once and for all, but calls for ever new execution.⁷³⁷

The *method* of the *ta'wil*, as 'essential symbolic understanding', is therefore 'the transmutation of everything visible into symbols, the intuition of an essence or person in an Image which partakes neither of

⁷³² H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.78

⁷³³ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.79

⁷³⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.79

⁷³⁵ *History of Islamic Philosophy* p.14. This technical discussion goes on at some length, and is extremely precise and beautiful.

⁷³⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.79

⁷³⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.149

universal logic nor of sense perception, and which is the only means of signifying what is to be signified'.⁷³⁸

Organ

Corbin begins here by noting 'the importance accorded to this organ by the Avicennans in their noetics'⁷³⁹ — by "this organ", meaning

the contemplative intellect in its higher form, designated as holy intellect or holy spirit...the organ common to the perfect Sage and to the prophet⁷⁴⁰, the vehicle of a perception whose object is no longer the logical concept or universal, but presents itself in the form of a typification.⁷⁴¹

Whereas 'common knowledge' is 'effected by a penetration of the sense impressions of the outside world into the interior of the soul, writes Corbin, the work of prophetic inspiration', is, vice versa, 'a projection of the inner soul upon the outside world'. In guiding, anticipating, and moulding sense perception', the active Imagination may thus 'transmute[] sensory data into symbols'—cf. "symbolizing with". For the Burning Bush to be more than any old burning bush to Moses, e.g.; 'in short, in order that there may be a theophany—an organ of trans-sensory perception'⁷⁴² (and, as above, projection), is *called for*, in order that the 'thing', or sensory datum, in this case the burning bush, may become a symbol 'of the thing signified *with which* it symbolizes'⁷⁴³. This is none other than 'the organ of the theophanic Imagination', capable at all times 'of transmuting sensory data into symbols and external events into symbolic histories'; all 'accomplished in the *alam-al-mithal*'.⁷⁴⁴

Source.

Here, in order that we might 'follow the connecting lines leading from Avicennan or Suhrawardian noetics to Shi'ite and Sufi esoterism' with regard to 'the figure of the Active Intelligence as Holy Spirit, Angel of knowledge and of Revelation', as the *source* of the *ta'wil*, Corbin notes the following essential correspondences:

[In Ismaili Gnosis] 'the Imam is the terrestrial pole of the Tenth Intelligence, corresponding functionally to the Angel Holy-Spirit of the Avicennan or Suhrawardian philosophers.

[While in Duodeciman Shi'ism] the "hidden Imam", hidden between Heaven and earth in the *alam-al-mithal*, assumes a similar function, acting on what Mulla Sadra calls the treasure of celestial origin, the Imamate concealed within every being'⁷⁴⁵

⁷³⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.13

⁷³⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.79.

⁷⁴⁰ Note that while the organ of the *ta'wil* is identical with that of the *tanzil*, prophetic revelation.

⁷⁴¹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.80

⁷⁴² H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.80

⁷⁴³ *History of Islamic Philosophy* pp.12-3

⁷⁴⁴ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.80

⁷⁴⁵ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.81

He adds that ‘other parallels will shortly present themselves...notably in respect of the Holy Spirit, the divine Face of every being’.⁷⁴⁶

Going search of an equivalent phenomenon of esoterism in Christianity, Corbin finds that, while there *are* parallels indicated between e.g., those texts of Christian Gnosis which embody ‘the secret teachings which Jesus, in his body of light, dispensed to his disciples after his resurrection’ and ‘the Shi’ite idea of the esoteric meaning of Koranic revelation, whose initiator is the Imam’, starting with ‘the condemnation of the Montanist movement in the second century, any possibility of a new prophetic revelation dispensed by the Angels, or of a prophetic hermeneutics was cut off, at least for and by the Great Church’,⁷⁴⁷ which from that time on, ‘substituted itself for individual prophetic inspiration’, legitimizing ‘the existence of a dogmatic magistry’, whose dogma ‘states everything that can or should be said’, thus leaving no place for “‘the disciples of Khidr’”, at least, *within* the church; for just as ‘the very phenomena of “orthodoxy” presupposes the end of prophecy...the coming of dogma puts an end to prophetism’.

And ‘concomitant with the formation of a dogmatic consciousness’, writes Corbin, ‘the coming of historical consciousness’, i.e., the conception of a latitudinal ‘expansion in history’, in relation to ‘the idea of a “past”, issuing from the fundamental dogma of Christianity’, i.e., ‘that of the Incarnation’, according to ‘the official form given to it by the definitions of the Councils’: the ‘unique and irreversible fact’ that ‘God in person was incarnated at a moment in history; [that] this happened within a set chronology’—this being, for Corbin, ‘its most characteristic symptom’.⁷⁴⁸ For once God has been with us, Incarnate,

There is no more mystery, consequently esoterism is no longer necessary which is why all the resurrected Christ’s secret teachings to his disciples have been piously relegated to the Apocrypha along with the other Gnostic books; they had no connection with history.

In contrast, continues Corbin, whereas ‘The Incarnate God, in person, in empirical history is unknown to the traditional Orient—and so too is the historical consciousness which goes with it’, divine anthropomorphosis, i.e., ‘a divine Manifestation in human form’—*is* known to esoterism in Islam, but *not* as earthly Incarnation; rather as taking place “‘in heaven”, on the plane of the angelic universes’, and “‘only” ‘manifested on earth in theophanic figures which draw his followers, those who recognise him, toward their celestial assumption.’ Thus, while certain traits suggest ‘an affinity between Imamology and a Christology of the Ebionite or Gnostic type’, those same traits underlie ‘its remoteness from every variety of Pauline Christology’.⁷⁴⁹ ‘The theophanism of Ibn ‘Arabi will show us why no history, or philosophy of history can be made with theophanies’, and why ‘the fatidic cry “God is dead!”’ can never be regarded ‘as anything more than the pretension and delusion of people blind to the profound truth of the “docetism” that is so much ridiculed in our history books’.^{750*}

⁷⁴⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.81

⁷⁴⁷ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.82

⁷⁴⁸ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.84

⁷⁴⁹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.84

⁷⁵⁰ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.84-5

* Docetism, which the OxDCC describes as ‘a tendency... In the early Church...rather than a formulated and unified doctrine’ toward the belief or opinion that the humanity’ of Christ, as the OXDCC has it, i.e., Christ in fleshly body Incarnate—and thus his ‘sufferings’

Thus, while noting that ‘in both quarters’ there is to be found a discernible ‘hostility to the very postulate of esoterism’, as well as ‘minorities which adhere fervently to this same esoterism’, Corbin finds that Islamic and Christian esoterism differ in the following fundamental ways. While Islamic esoterism is situated ‘in relation to a pure prophetic religion, moving in the pure theophanic dimension (...in which Khidr-Elijah and Moses are contemporaries)’, Christian esoterism is situated rather ‘in relation to a religion of Incarnation involving all the implications of historical consciousness’. In Islam, ‘the demands of the *ta’wil* shake the stability of the Law, through preserving the letter as the foundation of its symbols’, while in Christianity, however, ‘the same demands shake the authority of the magistry in bond with the historicity which it establishes and from which it derives justification’.

Even taking these profound differences into account, Corbin finds that comparative phenomenological work may still be undertaken in order to discern what similarities there may be ‘between the implicit intentions expressed in both quarters by these positions’, whether ‘from the standpoint of a radically hostile mind or...that of an adept’.⁷⁵¹ Moreover, Corbin has great hopes for what such comparative work might yield.

Here I would turn to Corbin’s own conclusion to the introduction of his unparalleled *History of Islamic Philosophy*, in which he sets forth his hope and conviction that, should this ‘type of prophetic philosophy’ be called, as a ‘witness, into the witness-box’, by ‘our histories of philosophy’:

It could tell us why what happened in the West after the thirteenth century did not happen in Shi’ite Islam, even though it too is, as we pride ourselves on being, the product of the Bible and of Greek wisdom. A science which is capable of the unlimited conquest of the external world, but which exacts as a ransom the appalling crisis of all philosophy, the disappearance of the person and the acceptance of the void—can such a science, for this witness, weigh more heavily in the balance than ‘a bundle of books balancing a corpse’?⁷⁵²

and crucifixion should be considered as ‘apparent rather than real’. (Cross and Livingstone, *OxDCC* p.493). Docetism clearly also has profound ramifications for the professed resurrection of Christ, as for every Christian who lives and dies in the faithful hope of bodily resurrection, as in, ‘In my flesh shall I see God’ (Job 19:26). If the Incarnate body of Christ is “merely” apparent, or imaginal and not “real” as in fleshly-real, then what of the “second”, risen or resurrected Christ? Which returns us to question of those disciples who witnessed the Transfiguration scene—that of what, exactly might it mean to be “risen”.

⁷⁵¹ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.85

⁷⁵² H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (ibid.) p.252

Conclusion

Let us state once again that for Corbin *as* for Heidegger, the thrownness of Dasein, Dasein's –there being, i.e., it's being *the* there, is at once Dasein's being-there-*to*. As symbolised by Corbin's hyphen, Dasein consists of the *correlation* of (the) being- and (the)-there. As for Heidegger, in agreement with Kant, *every* there, every reality, or horizon, is formed for Corbin by the faculty of imagination. For Corbin however, as we have said, this is a theophanic faculty. It is theophanic *be!ing*, i.e., Creative *Be!ing* in *significatio passiva*: there are, it seems, potentially infinite, “ascending” theres *to which* being, as *be!ing*, as theophany, i.e., as *Be!ing* in *significatio passiva*, can *be!* present. As such, for Corbin, the hyphen may *also* be said to be the symbol of Dasein's creative infinitude, precisely *grace à* its *be!ing Be!ing* in *significatio passiva*. For Heidegger, however it is the finitude intrinsic to Dasein which determines the horizon of finitude *for* Dasein *as* such. Thus for Heidegger, all that may be known of Being, i.e., ontological truth, is that which may be revealed within the horizon of finitude, including the very fact of being's finitude. From a Corbinian perspective, all of this makes of it a very grim “there” to be. Thus Corbin: ‘ I could not avoid perceiving that beneath the sombre sky, the *Da* of *Dasein* was an isle of perdition, was precisely the Isle of “Occidental exile”⁷⁵³. As for the ‘so-called “creative” capacities of the finite human creature’,⁷⁵⁴ at once a ‘going-out-to’, a turning-towards which in the ‘standing-out-from’ at once ‘forms and therein holds before itself—a horizon’⁷⁵⁵, the “ecstatic-horizonal” forming of transcendence that is at once the forming of the possibility of experience: how, then is it for Heidegger, that the finite creature does *not* ‘become infinite through this creative behaviour?’ For Kant, according to Heidegger, it absolutely does not,—not, at least, in the sense of *intuitus originarius*. Not only does ontological knowledge not *create beings*, it does not even ‘relate itself at all, thematically or directly to the being’, but rather to what Kant variously refers to as ‘the nonempirical object = “X”’; a ‘Something = X of which we know nothing...’ and a ‘Nothing [which] means: not a being, but nevertheless “Something”’, which Nothing-thing *Heidegger* defines ‘according to its essence...[as] pure horizon’.⁷⁵⁶

Thus for Heidegger the apparent “creativity” of ontological knowledge, which lies in its “forming” of transcendence, ‘is nothing other than the holding-open of the horizon within which the Being of the being becomes discernable in a preliminary way’.⁷⁵⁷ Thus, writes Heidegger ‘if knowledge means: apprehending of beings’, then ‘ontological knowledge is no knowledge’ at all. However, says Heidegger, if *truth*, as the second condition for finite knowledge (the first being the very possibility of experience⁷⁵⁸) be taken to mean ‘unconcealment of’ [*aletheia*], rather than, e.g., “adequacy to”, as in the *adequatio*⁷⁵⁹, then while the ‘original truth’, or “unconcealment” of transcendence ‘must bifurcate into the unveiledness of Being and the openness [*Offenbarkeit*] of beings’ as above, since Kant has no other “use” here for ontological

⁷⁵³ Corbin, *From Heidegger to Suhrawardi*, *ibid.*

⁷⁵⁴ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.160

⁷⁵⁵ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.84

⁷⁵⁶ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.86

⁷⁵⁷ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.87

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.83

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. e.g., M. Heidegger, trans. Thomas Sheehan, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth”, in M. Heidegger *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 1998 pp. 155-182

knowledge beyond that it ‘serves for the making-possible of finite knowledge’, let it simply be said that the truth of ontological knowledge lies in its ‘letting the being be encountered within the horizon’.

Nonetheless, for Heidegger:

it must at least remain open as to whether this “creative” knowledge, which is always only ontological and never ontic, bursts the finitude of transcendence asunder, or whether it does not just “plant” the finite “subject” in its authentic finitude.⁷⁶⁰

Heidegger’s onward path leads him to “yes” here, Corbin’s to “(yes but) no”; this being the point of their divergence. The “hermeneutic key” here for Corbin, that which opens *his* way, as he diverges from Heidegger’s path to radical finitude, is the *significatio passiva*. Cf. Heidegger’s qualification, at Davos that ‘while the human being as finite creature might be said to have ‘a certain infinitude in the ontological’, its infinitude is never absolute, i.e. *ontic*; it is ontological, rather, ‘in the sense of the understanding of Being’. Thus, for Heidegger: since, for Kant, ontological understanding is only possible ‘within the inner experience of beings’, the ‘infinitude of the ontological’ is so essentially bound to finite, ‘ontic experience’, even as ‘the index of finitude’, that, for Heidegger, this infinitude which breaks out in the power of imagination is precisely the strongest argument for [the] finitude [of Dasein]’.⁷⁶¹ For Corbin, on the contrary, this “infinitude of the ontological” constitutes the vertical axis of (and between) *Be!ing* and *be!ing* as symbolized by the *significatio passiva*, which at once intersects with, irrupts into, i.e., “opens” and encapsulates the finite horizontal Heideggerian *Weltanschauung*, the inner becoming the outer, as it were.

For Corbin, the ontological knowledge that makes ontic knowledge, as finite thinking, or reasoning about beings *as* beings possible, is also that which makes them *be!* in a *different mode of the same* imperative-*Be!ing*. As *be!ing*-revealing, i.e., the revealing-*be!ing* of human (or really any other kind of) *be!ing*, by which *be!ings* are (and thus *Be!ing* is) revealed, *not* as objects, but as *be!ings*-present. This *presential* knowledge *is* creative, for Corbin; it *is* Creative *Be!ing*, (but) in the mode of the *significatio passiva*. Thus *as* the *be!ing* of *Be!ing* (the *Be!ing* of *be!ings*), *be!ing* is thus at once “horizontally” finite and “vertically” infinite, for Corbin. Again, the *significatio passiva* is the key here. Each “utterance”, each iteration of *be!ing*—i.e., of the *Be!ing* of *be!ings*—*is* the *intuitus originarius*, manifested as and by the Creative Imperative, *Be!* in *significatio passiva*. The *extent*, or intensity, or degree of transparency of the revelation of Being, i.e., of the *Be!ing* of *be!ings*, depends upon *be!ings*’ capacity to *be!* according to our refrain, *talem eum vidi qualem capere potui*. This is then, in a “receptive creativity”. Since *Be!ing* and *be!ing* are modes of the *same* creative imperative, *be!ing is! what it is receiving*, in *significatio passiva*. So *this* receptivity, this “dependency” of *be!ing* on *Be!ing* is *not* a qualification of finitude, at least, not in the “vertical” dimension, even though, the actual *be!ing* may be “horizontally finite”, and variously limited by and in its present capacity.

⁷⁶⁰ M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *ibid.* p.87

⁷⁶¹ In M. Heidegger, Appendix IV, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* p.197

Thus, whereas Dasein is revealed in and by the truth of its finitude for Heidegger, by its very knowledge of Being and the dependent manner in which this truth is obtained, i.e., in its relation to the always already encountered; for Corbin the truth of *Be!ing* is revealed in and by the theophanic –theres of *be!ings* according to their capacity to receive/reveal. Each *be!ing* may aspire, as it were, to make the most “joyful noise” they are able. Here too, is a ‘spontaneous receptivity’ like that of the Kant book; again, the Corbinian *leitmotif* of the *significatio passiva* makes all the difference, vs. the dogmatic theology of *creatio ex nihilo* which informs the paradigm of traditional metaphysics, and thus both Kant and Heidegger in both his appropriation of Kant in the Kant book, and on his own account, in “What is Metaphysics?”, and even while, as we hope to have shown here, Heidegger’s proof of finitude in What is Metaphysics? sets about testing *creatio ex nihilo* to auto-destruction.

The mutability of the “spontaneously receptive” capacity of *be!ings* for *Be!ing*, for Corbin, i.e., its potential-being for “refinement”, toward further transparency, greater capacity, may also be understood in terms of i.e., of *be!ings*’ relatively ascendant proximity to *Be!ing*, i.e., to the Orient of (one’s) Being—the *Esse* as the transcendental “Unicity” or Oneness of Existence/Being, as that which actualizes beings (existents) ‘in their very act of being [and which] are essentially multiple’—and thus perhaps *somehow* closer, in some ineffable way to ‘the one and unique Divine Existent, ineffable in the depths of its mystery’, i.e., the *Deus Absconditum* of Ibn ‘Arabi’s apophantic theology,⁷⁶² whose relation to *Be!ing and be!ing* is perhaps best summarized in the gnomic, *gnostic* hadith: “I was a hidden Treasure and I longed [or loved] to be known”. Though *this* knowing always (experientially and) mediately, through the theophanic mediation of *Be!ing*, and precisely according to one’s capacity.

Just so, in what we might as regard as a kind of fractal iteration of the relation of *be!ing* to *Be!ing*, the masterless disciples of Khidr strive to increase their individual proximity to Khidr, in his great proximity to the Orient of his Being; their aim is to *be!* (as) Khidr. The initiation rite of “putting on the mantle of Khidr” models this ideal proximity; ultimately to *be!* (as) Khidr, as one who is truly alone with the Alone, going “home” via an esoteric, experiential way even as it offends against the dogmatic, book-learnt truths of even a Holy Book. We also find, in the person-archetype of Khidr, and the initiatic rites and aspirations of his masterless disciples, something very close to Kantian freedom, and freedom as defined by Heidegger in the Kant book, to wit: Freedom, ‘insofar as this means placing oneself under a self-given necessity’, ‘lies in the essence of pure understanding, i.e., [in]...pure theoretical reason’; not because pure reason is spontaneous in character, but rather ‘because this spontaneity is a receptive spontaneity, i.e., because it is the transcendental imagination’. Further: ‘If, in freedom, I ‘subordinate myself to the law’, the law is self-given; I freely receive the law from myself, and thus my respect before the law is submission ‘to myself as pure reason’. And this, writes Heidegger, this ‘submitting, self-projecting onto the entire basic possibility of what authentically exists...is the essence of the acting Being-itself, i.e., of practical reason’—this is the authentic ‘Being-itself of the I’.⁷⁶³

⁷⁶² H. Corbin, “From Heidegger to Suhrawardi”

⁷⁶³ M. Heidegger, *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics*, p.109

In mystical narratives such as Suhrawardî's *The Crimson Archangel* (ibid.), as “the question that must be asked” of archetypal personages encountered (since according to the gnoseology of the Ishrâqîyûn, e.g., this is not a subjective, or objective, but a *presential* knowledge)⁷⁶⁴, the question of “Who...?” and the question “From where...?” form *one* question for Corbin: by the answer one receives there, one discovers one's own cosmic orientation. Increasing proximity to the divine/”home” is symbolised by one's ease of passage “beyond the Mountain of Qaf”, or in terms of spectral transparency, i.e., toward being as a drop of water.

In the *Crimson Archangel* e.g., the “low” chromatic frequency of the Archangel's crimson raiment—also the *Protoktistos*, the First-Created—reveals how *far* from home *he* has come from his origin to appear on the sensory plane; thus also something of what *there* to which the youth encountering the Archangel is present, i.e., where he is *at*, and how far *he* still has to go, since, as we have seen, this for Corbin, such tales describe ‘the experience of the gnostic, lived as the personal history of the Stranger, the captive who aspires to return home’.⁷⁶⁵ This aspiration is characterized by a kind of gilded sadness, such as that of a lover for the Beloved, as in the mystic poetry of Rumi.

These symbolic narratives take place in the imaginal realm, which however also constitutes the most actual, and ubiquitous “there” for Corbin; what is distinct about the imaginal is that it is also that plane upon which symbolic meanings, considered as truths of revelation, may be revealed, according to each *be!ing*'s capacity to ‘see’, and thus to ‘capture’. According to one's capacity, or proximity to the Orient of one's Being, in the Avicennan cosmology, one's “angel”, the archetype of one's soul-species, there are many (perhaps infinite?) ascending “planes” of meaning, or realities. As ‘that the Form under which each of the Spirituals knows God is also the form under which God reveals Himself to Himself in that man’,⁷⁶⁶ each *be!ing* is thus alone with the *Be!ing* of their *be!ing*, as in the English surtitle of Corbin's book on Ibn ‘Arabi, *Alone with the Alone*. At once alone, and—according to the key of the *significatio passiva*—all-one.

By comparison, for Corbin, Heidegger's Dasein is trapped in exile; a being created *from* nothing, with no *where* to go, no home outside the horizon of finitude Dasein's *unheimlich* state gives rise not to sadness so much as anxiety. Being ‘there discovered’,⁷⁶⁷ *in truth*, Dasein is revealed in its radical finitude, its freedom for death only.

As in “From Heidegger to Suhrawardî” Corbin notes that ‘the Heideggerian hermeneutic gives the impression of a theology without theophany’. For Corbin, however—who states consistently that he has no problem with the Analytic of Dasein, only the Heideggerian Weltanschauung— according to his logic of *Be!ing*, and with the hermeneutic key of the *significatio passiva* in hand, the potential for theophany may be read “back” into Heidegger; with Being figured here as *Be!ing*, Creation manifesting via and as the Creative Imperative: not the Creative Being of *creation ex nihilo*, but as the Logos of an apophantic *theos*,

⁷⁶⁴ (*ilm hozuri*), which is ‘immediate presence, that by which the soul's “act of presence” itself gives rise to the presence of things, and renders present to itself no longer objects but presences’⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶⁵ H. Corbin, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, 1999 p.2

⁷⁶⁶ H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone* p.62

⁷⁶⁷ Corbin's introduction to the 1938 Gallimard edition, ibid.

Deus Absconditum, the “God” that *Is* not, whose infinite longing to be known calls a knowing into *be!ing*, in its multiple (infinite?) iterations. And after all perhaps this is *still* a *creation ex nihilo*, *sensu stricto*, if the “God” that “speaks” “Is” not, i.e., is *No being*, *No-thing*; but of a very different *creatio ex nihilo* than that traditional, metaphysical doctrine that Heidegger throws into so much jeopardy in his “What is Metaphysics?”, even while his proof depends on it. An ontotheology in which Creation, and thus the infinite, as the unfinished, *n+1*, rather appears to irrupt into the “sphere” of the finite, which however it surrounds, disrupting its absoluteness. Here perhaps is something like the outline of one of Corbin’s hypothetical “right Heideggerianisms”. Indeed, quite near to the end of his own life, Henry Corbin concludes the interview with Philippe Nemo, wondering:

Only, would Heidegger have followed our lead in this operation that would tend to convert the Logos of his ontology into a theological Logos? ... And firstly, who must the Theos be? I have tried to express it. But our uncertainty as to his possible response is merely secondary. A Heideggerian “orthodoxy” is out of the question, and we simply have to pursue our task as we understand it. Perhaps one day we will find - within the mass of his unpublished work, or in some recorded interview - the indication of an answer. But it is also possible that he has taken his secret with him forever. That is why, today, I prefer simply to say, as we do in Arabic: *Rahmat Allāh ‘alay-hi*: May the divine Mercy be with him.⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁸ From Heidegger to Suhrawardī, (ibid.)

Bibliography

- Joseph Campbell, ed., *Man and Time, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Bollingen Series XXX, Vol. 3, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1957
- E. Cassirer, trans. J. Pettegrove *The Platonic Renaissance in England* Univ. Texas Press, Austin 1953
- H. Corbin, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* Editions Gallimard, Paris 1938
- H. Corbin, trans. Leonard Fox, *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, Swedenborg Foundation 1999
- H. Corbin, *The History of Islamic Philosophy* Trans. L. Sherrard, P. Sherrard; Kegan Paul International, London & New York in assoc. with The Institute of Ismaili Studies London 1993
- H. Corbin, trans. Peter Russell, *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy*, Golgonooza Press Ipswich 1981
- H. Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi*, Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press 1997
- J. Derrida and P. Eisenman, *Chora L Works*, Monacelli Press, New York 1997
- Jacques Derrida, trans. Alan Bass, *Margins of Philosophy* Chicago University Press 1984)
- J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, London, 1974
- S. Geroulanos, *An Atheism That is Not a Humanism Emerges in French Thought*, Stanford University Press, 2010
- M. Heidegger, *Duns Scotus' Theory of the Categories and of Meaning*, University of Freiburg, 1916; trans. Harold Robbins, De Paul University, 1978, published by University Microfilms International, Michigan 1985
- M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie & . Robinson, Blackwell, Oxford 1962
- M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th Ed., Edited and Translated by Richard Taft, (Indiana University Press 1990, 1997)
- M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings* 2nd. Edition, trans. D. Krell Harper Collins 1993
- Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927-1961* Cornell University Press Ithaca and London 2005
- J.-L. Nancy, *Noli me tangere* (trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale-Anne Brault, Michael Naas) Fordham University Press, New York 2008
- J. P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel A. Barnes Routledge Classics Oxford 2010
- D.P. Verene, *Symbol Myth and Culture, Essays & Lectures of Ernst Cassirer 1935-1945*, Ed. Donald Philip Verene, Yale University Press (1979)
- Francois Poirié, *Emmanuel Levinas: Qui êtes-vous?* Lyon, La Manufacture, 1987
- J.P. Sartre, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions*, Hermann 1995, Paris 1939
- J.P. Sartre, *Esquisse d'une théorie des émotions*, Livre de Poche, Hermann Paris 1995
- D. Shayegan, *Henry Corbin – Penseur de L'Islam Spirituel* Editions Albin Michel, 2011
- King James Bible*, Oxford Authorized Version 1769

Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church edited by F.L. Cross, 3rd. Edition rev. / edited by E.A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press; Oxford, New York 2005

A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrews' edition of Freund's Latin dictionary, revised, enlarged, and in great part rewritten by Charlton T. Lewis, Ph.D. and Charles Short, LL.D. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1879

Oxford American English Dictionary, Oxford University Press 2010

Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition Vol VII.1 Oxford University Press 1989

J.O. Urmson, *The Greek Philosophical Vocabulary*, Duckworth, London 1990

Journals

H. Corbin "Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?" *Bifur*, Issue 8, Editions Du Carrefour, Paris 1931

H. Corbin, "Pour l'anthropologie philosophique : un traité persan inédit de Suhrawardî d'Alep" *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol.I, (1932-1933), Boivin & co. Paris

H. Corbin, "La theologie dialectique et l'histoire" *Recherches Philosophiques* Vol.III (1933-1934), Boivin & co. Paris Vol. III (1933-4)

Peter Eli Gordon, "Continental Divide: Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger at Davos, 1929—An Allegory of Intellectual History" *Modern Intellectual History* 1, 2 Cambridge University Press (2004)

J. Rée, "The Translation of Philosophy" *New Literary History* Volume 32, Number 2, Spring 2001

J.P. Sartre, "La Transcendance de L'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique", *Recherches Philosophiques*, VI, 1936-37, Boivin & co. Paris

J.P. Sartre, "Légende de la vérité", ?" *Bifur*, Issue 8, Editions Du Carrefour, Paris 1931

Online

"From Heidegger to Suhrawardî", A Philosophical Interview with Phillipe Nemo;
Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin. (<http://www.amiscorbin.com/textes/propos.htm>)

"Biographical Post-Scriptum to From Heidegger to Suhrawardî"
www.amiscorbin.com/textes/anglais/interviewnemo.htm).

Dictionary of Art Historians, www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org

G. Agamben, "What is a Commandment?" lecture of 28 March 2011 at Kingston University; audio archived at <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/tag/agamben-giorgio/>

"What is Metaphysics?" M. Heidegger, <http://www.audio-theory.com/index.php>

Archival

Corbin-Warburg correspondence, September 1931 to June 1949, Warburg Institute Archive, London