

# The Distinction of Human Being

**Thomas Kruger Caplan**



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**Dedicated**

To the Memory of my Father

Henry Caplan

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***An den Dichter: Laß die Sprache dir sein, was der Körper den Liebenden;  
er nur Ists, der die Wesen trennt und der die Wesen vereint.***

*(To Poets: May language be to you what the body is to lovers; it is alone  
what separates their beings and what unites them.)*

**- Schiller (NA I 302.85)**



# Acknowledgement

This study builds upon the research of my teacher, Heribert Boeder, whose conception of the totalities of world, history, and language, founded upon the terminological configuration of their ratios, is the result of a lifetime of scholarship dedicated to comprehending and articulating the legacy of Western philosophy in its entirety as well as the divagations of late modern thought in defiance of that tradition – an achievement that has hardly attained among professional and lay thinkers, even the best read among them, the recognition it deserves.

For this reason, I have tried to further develop Boeder's "logotectonic" analysis and show how the rationality it articulates addresses the needs of philosophical thinking today. It does so in two ways: firstly, by encouraging us to reprise the notion of *wisdom* as well as the question and the answer of wisdom's principle, ΛΟΓΟΣ (logos), which, traditionally at least, though "having come before, comes after" this inexplicable grant of insight that poets and prophets have always celebrated as "sacred" and secondly, by challenging us to reconsider the project of the revival of metaphysics in our own time, which, if it is to be, can only be now, again, what it formerly was – though of course renewed in accordance with the exigencies and conditions placed upon it by contemporary reflection – namely the exact study of pure reason, thought about thought.

*Philosophy*, the "love of wisdom," is, let's face it, a quaint, though no less indeterminate name these days and this in spite of – or perhaps even because of – its venerable etymology. Although it had once enjoyed the dignity of being considered the *first science*, possessing its very own topic, principle, and method, its status has always been tenuous, controversial. Yet who would dare deny that controversy has not only been good for philosophy, if not always for individual philosophers, but is, in fact, its very element?

These days, by turns grim, tending towards petulance, then suddenly giddy, lurching, contemporary philosophy would seem to want and to need some deep spring of refreshment if it is ever again to be esteemed for what it once was and achieved, for what it so completely comprehended as the divine destiny of thought that it, nonetheless, in spite of contemporary accusations to the contrary, never made so bold as to claim and defend for the sake of its own glory, if it is, I say, ever again, to be recognized as *inaugural*, taught in schools, consulted in industry, practiced in politics,

applied in work and in play, and, above all, enjoyed for its own sake, treasured as the most human of all our pleasures.

I believe it deserves to be. Surely Boeder's work has proven that a rigorous science of first principles in the traditional sense of *metaphysics*, as soon as its original project becomes clear to us, is still possible, necessary even. Boeder gives a very clear indication of what one has to be good at to excel as a friend of a friend of wisdom, a friend of wisdom once removed. Above all, what I have learned from my teacher and what he himself had learned from his, Martin Heidegger, is *Verhaltenheit* with regards to the accomplishments of thought and its purposes.

What does this word mean? *Discretion, restraint, modesty* come to mind and are terms which, to the more boisterous moods of our later thinkers, could connote a muted and subdued attitude of reserve. In fact, neither suppression nor reticence are meant. Rather, we are called to conceive of a virtue of intellectual temperance, an elegance that touches lightly its objects, holds in regard what it studies, is loath to cavil; we are called to cultivate a deferential erudition in ourselves (George Steiner often speaks of a *cortesia*) that tends to greet unfamiliar insights with hospitality (rather than suspicion) and familiar ones in delightful anticipation of rediscovery (rather than prejudice), practices a concerned impartiality towards ideas in an effort to collect them into wider and wider frameworks of reflection while according them their due recognition, placing each on its proper spot after determining where it belongs in relation to all its compeers; but isn't this attentive collecting and recollecting precisely what has always characterized a discerning mind engaged in the avocation of “ΛΟΓΟΣ?”

Boeder is always clear on this point – we strive to know and grasp *all* thought or ought to; each and every thinker's significant contribution deserves a place of honor in a pantheon of insight that we might all build upon and enjoy as a monument to the excellence we are heir to as thinkers, doers and, ultimately, as builders.

That is not to say that all thoughts are equally important or even that all are equally welcome. Yes, some gods, like Ares for example, we honor not because we will but because we must. But thought itself, even, and perhaps especially, in the perfidy and the permutations of perversion we often encounter in discourse counted philosophical these days, obliges us to recognize that, as the unsettled times of our lives unfold, ideas are indeed, and can never fail to be, at work, and that all of them, barring none, excluding none, are worthy of and rightly demand regard irrespective of what has become of them at the hand of Man.

Let us therefore take solace in the trust we nurture, even in the face of horror, that these ideas, though they be refined to a wisp of what they formerly were or else transmogrified into monstrosity, shall, in spite of themselves and us, like dark stars, not fail to guide our human being through whatever darkness has become the latest rage, to its own proper realm, the unadulterated realm of the mind, which will always remain otherworldly, unperturbed in the netherworld of our turbulent world, a cloistered home to those masks and shadows of our mothers and our fathers, those loved ones we perpetually lose and find again, alive, rejuvenated in a song.

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# Preface

The following investigation is devoted exclusively to the consideration of a human, perhaps even uniquely human, experience. It is an experience that we are all familiar with, arising for the most part in anguish, infinite pain, not jest. Think back and recall catastrophe! We encountered it on that day we were brought to nursery school for the first time and suddenly realized what was going on, namely that we would have to stay there alone for a while (or forever?) without our parents who, incredibly, were leaving us behind, a son or daughter, so long cradled in our embrace, who we now unceremoniously drop, drop off, for the first time; when we left for summer camp waving good-bye from the train pulling out of the station, goodbye to our lives, mom and dad, forever, waving goodbye to the departing train, pulling our baby away, out of our lives forever – three titanic hearts sinking severally but in unison; when we set out on that fateful day to seek our fortune, straying from our little town blues to wake up in the city that never sleeps. Yes, many have endured the trial of birth and parenthood beginning and, later, drawing gradually or abruptly to a close. Most will experience the death of a beloved parent; and surely all have known the loss of some illusion; we have, at least once in our lives, kicked a habit, doubted a rule, questioned a dogma in the dark night of the soul, and, from a heavy slumber, come to our senses in a dark wood midway upon the journey of our life; we have had to stand up to a bully, stand up for a principle, from our seat in the crowd and, standing tall for all eyes to see, speak up, speak out, speak wingéd words to a hostile audience; in one way or the other, all of us have had to plunge into battle, sword in hand and face the unknown outcome of sheer courage. Surely you remember having crouched in the starting blocks and holding your breath or succeeded after much hesitation at jumping from the ten-meter platform at the local swimming pool. Have we not encountered a stranger, have we not had to break ranks and go it alone, to go out on a limb, to forge an alliance, to make peace with an enemy, to swallow our pride, abdicate a throne, build a kingdom from scratch, tear down a wall brick by brick? We know what it means to quit a mood, express regret, to cut our losses and endure the embarrassment of failure, to begin anew, forgive a wrong, forgo an impulse to run away rather than stay put in the dentist's chair. It is distinctly human to have learned to break the ice, to quell a welling passion at the brim, to take *no* for an answer, to embrace the uncertainty of a venture, to send a customer to a competitor, to dispense with a formality, to knock on the door of the boss's office with a request for a raise. And then there was the last time you had to let go or give

leave, to leap before looking, to sit down and shut up, give up a lost cause, persevere against all odds, make an end, step up, take stock, start out, start over; you did what you had to do – lift a still, small voice in the shout of protest, disobey a direct order, defer a gratification, defy a dictator, exercise restraint; you have learned, perhaps the hard way, to trust, to yield, to confess, to concede, to sacrifice, to serve; at inspired moments, we have indeed shown patience, shown compassion, have taken on faith, hoped against hope, wished upon a star, lived on a prayer...

And everyone has had to, at least a couple of times in their lives, step back and scrutinize critically this morning the words or deeds of last night and from the remote vantage point of this pale and early light, returning to that living moment still so fresh in memory, come back again from that irrevocable past to this morning's face in the mirror to take note of a face, like a paradise, lost, the defacement of our face, in which now we read the inalterable discrepancy, perceive the original sin of deviation and sting of death, recognize, crestfallen, the thunderous "fall" reflected and resounding in those wrinkles:

"bababadalgharaghtakamarronnkonnbrownntonnerronntuonnthuuntrovarrhounawnskawntoohooorderenthurnuk!"

(Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, [FW] 3.15-16) that proclaims the discontented state of divergence between THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.

These are all practical examples of the experience so variously named and known and each individual could add to the list and, using the particulars of his or her own life, elaborate variations on a theme, the theme of this study, which is ***our experience of the distinction of human being***.

Although the *practice* illustrated above and the experience it entails are eminently human, the investigation of the distinction, the genius and excellence of human being we are about to undertake is not primarily about people at all and the trials and tribulations of their lives, nor about the fruits and failures of their actions, not at all an exercise in people-watching empiricism. Rather our study is about this distinction in its own right as a property and capacity, an inherent faculty and forte – a determination of our human being which is not merely efficacious through the often painful efforts we devote to its application. Above all, more than just an experience of risk, loss, doubt, death, in a word, our self-several *existence*, the distinction of human being is a principle, an idea, received, pursued, and, finally, a realization capable of rich elaboration as a complete *train of thought*. Thus as much as this idea is put into effect in our daily lives as a critical *activity*, it is also susceptible to conceptual development as an *insight*, as well as to dramatic presentation in the concrete particulars with

which art makes an ideal real, and thus envisioned as an object of deliberation we can take up as our cause. The distinction of human being is therefore neither merely thought, nor act, nor issue but rather all three in one, one *and* three. Our exceedingly rich experience of this distinguished being, perfectly familiar to all, is, due in particular to this ubiquity, not often enough explicitly considered and clearly delineated by thinkers and writers of nowadays who, enthralled by the shifting surface detail of urgent private matters or more public ones like those of state, society, and science, tend to neglect fundamental principles, those ideas that are simple, immense, deep, in other words, *natural, divine, human*.

And although anthropology is held to be the most encompassing theoretical science of mankind, in the study we now propose, the world human and its ways, human ingenuity and frailty, human society and industry, its ages and artifacts, are all headings that expatiate upon merely one sphere of interest in which the distinction of human being has attained material significance. Certainly, European tradition, specifically the Age of Enlightenment of this tradition, might have taught us how to speak about the experience of this distinction in terms of the endowment or *nature* of human being. And in this sense, *human* being distinguished as a subject, a person of the *idea of freedom* is, as post/modern thinkers are fond of assuring us, a rather late invention of “Western” culture, whereas, of course, “people” and “the family of man” as the topic of present-day anthropological discourse about our species, with its cultures and civilizations and the turmoil of its history, have been around since time immemorial.

But the point to be made here is that the *humanity of human being* of the Third Epoch is *not* the only vision and conception of the distinction of human being. In the Second Epoch, it was the *glory of the Christian Godhead* that defined this distinction in the event of the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Son of God. And then again in the First Epoch, neither humanity nor divinity were the determining principles of distinction but rather the *measured apportionment of destiny* that metes out to each what is due.

*Freedom, God, Destiny* – these three were the most formidable names known to the poets and thinkers of Western civilization for referring to the distinction of human being. For this reason, they are the three “classical” designations of our unique theme and as such, signature terms, like heirlooms that we have inherited from our forefathers and -mothers, for the determining principle, the starting point of the said *train of thought*, namely the first term in a sequence of three, which, when taken together, like the

epochs of the tradition they inaugurate, form particular relationships of ideas – artfully articulated into sequences or *ratios* of terms – and, in this way, uniquely define the distinction of human being in each respective epoch, as we shall see in the following investigation.

To call these three dignified designations “signature terms” is not to imply that their specific names are arbitrary. On the contrary. Even from a purely historical point of view, there are many reasons available to scholarship to explain why, for example, the Homeric *Hero* lamented the “doom of fate” whilst his Christian counterpart, the *Saint*, instead, celebrated in tears “the glory of the coming of the Lord.” It will be the task of our philosophical inquiry to demonstrate how and what each particular name for the determining principle, the *inaugural* term in the sequence, contributes to the whole of the train of thought in which it occurs, articulating in concert with the *mediating* and the *resultant* terms a complete and coherent vision of such reality, action, and conception as follows logically from that particular foundation which had been put forth in terms germane to a particular time and established in each Epoch as the decisive and definitive principle of all (and not merely *human, divine, or natural*) being, namely “Freedom,” “God,” “Destiny,” which are therefore actually the principal designations of three entirely different terminologies, each exhibiting its own proper logical framework and therefore constituting three different *languages*, three different but coherent ways of speaking about what it means to “make a difference.” Understanding the inherent consistency of these three Epochal languages and the logic of their relationship to each other is what we are after. Because, in fact, none of these terms name, in themselves, our topic; rather, they are significant and traditional denominations that, in the procession of Occidental civilization, have served the needs of speakers, whether thinkers, leaders, or poets, towards the better conception, prosecution, and presentation of that rich experience we now intend to study – neither *Destiny*, nor *God*, nor *Freedom*, not these terms of distinguished cognizance, and be they the most awe-inspiring, with their conventional, albeit “difficult” semantics, but rather this experience of difference itself is our one and only cause.

Thus right from the start, establishing as we have that our intention is to study a specific experience, we have assigned to the language in which this experience has been previously articulated the role of being not merely the instrument but also the terminological element of our investigation – this in keeping with the requirements that the well-known “linguistic turn” would impose upon critical reflection, though in ways surely unanticipated by its early and latter-day advocates. Consequently, many of the words we

shall use in what follows are borrowed from former times and places, ancient tongues long dead, remote and foreign speech – these old words, taken from old books that have by some freak chance escaped annihilation, demand the same sort of reverent circumspection from us that all unearthed relics from far away and long ago, shrouded as they are in the mystery of time, inspire in the archeologist. Perhaps it is here among the bones of the past, so to speak, that we are called for the first time to practice the greatly prized virtue of restraint with respect to and for what is truly alien, taking it for what it is and letting it be. All these old texts, they are doubtless, for most of us, extracurricular if not extraterrestrial, dare we suffer them to remain so for a bit?

So, what exactly is the distinction of human being and the mark of man? Consider a reading of civilization in accordance with which, for thousands of years, since the times of the ancient Greeks, this question had already been definitively answered, recorded, and passed down to us in scriptures, often deemed *sacred*, in terms hardly decipherable and yet oddly familiar, which are thought to be, for the purposes of the inquiry upon which we are about to embark, articulations of a single and yet self-several idea. How could that answer possibly still be valid, those texts still holy, that idea still accessible today? Consider how different life is nowadays, how much has changed – technology, the advances of science and medicine, the upheavals of history, the disasters and tragedies, natural as well as man-made, that have scarred human civilization, the myriad intermingling influences of cultures across the earth, the sublime accomplishments of art, the general loss of conventions and traditions, the darkness and the light of religion...how can the distinction of human being be one and the same as ever, be now as it was, have remained what it had been and nevertheless be the differential, and not only the unity, of our history?

How can it be one and the same in the Greek cosmos *and* in the Christian empire, one and the same as the Glory of God *and* as the Idea of Freedom, one and the same for the *Hero* on the battlefield *and* the *Saint*, the Saint prostrate before the altar *and* the proud *Citizen* of the *state* of the social contract? Do not the epochs themselves oppose such “totalitarian” impulses? How can liberty be reconciled with predetermination? How humanity with divinity?

In fact, they cannot. The distinction of human being cannot be and has never been one and the same; rather, this distinguished being is, always was, and always will be, must be, as we shall see, one *and* several and therein absolutely unique.

In reflection's supposedly "post-historical," i.e. *linguistic* age, it should come as no surprise that latter-day philosophers and reputed thinkers would, to put it mildly, tend to argue against human being in general as having a distinction, or each individual, with respect to this distinction, as having a *destiny*, be it one *or* several. It is very doubtful that there is even a single philosophy professor in any university in the world who is currently teaching a course the content of which could even remotely be characterized by such a title as *the distinction and the destiny of human being* that is not, in fact, just another seminar about classical or "canonical" *Occidental literature* and, more precisely, the archeology of the upstart and downfall, the folly and the arrogation, of Western ideas, chief among which is often said to be that of *reason* – and the disseminating imperialism, materialism, sexism, individualism of its "gridiron" technicality.<sup>1</sup>

Well, what about studies in reason these days? Is it not true that the esteem once enjoyed by the university, whose scope, whose universe, might well appear to be suffering the fate of just that negligence that has served as the most sweeping refutation of the distinction of human being, had always been linked to the interest and appreciation that humanity has taken in studying and reflecting upon a destiny to call its own, the authority and tradition of this devotion being the very definition of "liberal?" Or is that the definition of "conservative?" In any case, we refer to the nurturing appreciation of ideas that has long since devolved into recidivist ideology, the coin and currency of cross-cultural economically-oriented transaction and the alphabet of a public dogma periodically spelled out in the specious phrase-mongering of speakers in shows of talk, of entertainment, and of information diffusion, whose job it is to blow a few of these bubbles into the tub of our exhausted evenings and holidays, inflate balloons of issues in political campaigning, blast the patriotic horn as accompaniment to national calamities, and, in particular, to help us mitigate the stifling post/modern privacy of life, of birth, of death with the windy pomp and circumstance of a preferred mythology.

What does this state of affairs, the repeatedly diagnosed eclipse and ensuing abdication of reason, suggest to us about the distinction, the mark and the excellence of human being? Whatever this telltale sign of the mind is, it seems there is no longer any great need among the learned to expound

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger spoke of "das Gestell." *Die Technik und die Kehre*, pp. 19-21, 27-28, 37-47.

upon it, nor any great interest among the laity to attend lectures or read books on this topic, you yourself, dear reader, being the only exception.

Again, given the overwhelming evidence of academic preference to the contrary, what could possibly justify any *scientific* interest in reprising a question *and the answer* that have been, long before our time, at the Homeric dawn of Western civilization, already perfectly posed and provided, known and celebrated as *wisdom* and as *truth*? Hmpf! Now why did you have to go and bring them up? These words! Do we feel the urge to ask what does “truth,” what does “wisdom,” actually mean? Ah, if only we knew what these and a few other such “fancy words” – like *Freedom*, *God*, and *Destiny* for instance – meant, then everything would be as clear as day! Has not thousands of years of civilization taught us that words like these, far beyond merely “meaning” this, that, or the other, are, in fact, intended by thinkers, poets, and prophets to *make a distinction*? And that the insights that emerge, the actions that ensue, and the narratives that unfold as a result of these distinctions, make a difference, make all the difference in the world?

But honestly, merely to reaffirm, in one’s own words, in artful speech borne of one’s own unique time and place, in the rhythmic vernacular of the world of one’s peers, in the “quashed quotatoes” of a particular cultural setting, both high and low, both former and contemporary, in a latter-day tongue that is at times playful – but avoiding the flippancy of impudence, at times earnest – but skirting all somber solemnity, to forge in the smithy of a poor and nameless soul a new and a latest song about what has already been remarkably and definitively said and sung, in a then still richly vibrant idiom, by our predecessors, in a living language, in a wealth of languages long since spent, gone and dead – this could not possibly count for scholarship in most quarters of the knowledge industry and must be considered scandalous if not just downright foolishness. Surely what the world needs now is talk, sweet talk, talk about later, greater “visions,” fresh contributions to some scream about the *new world order*, not concise contemplation upon the oldest of the old. And if, as we, growing older but, alas, no wiser, though perhaps a bit sadder, come to suspect that the academic problems and controversies of philosophy are of the everlasting sort, then perhaps we really ought to offer a new hypothesis, some tentative approaches, at least a few, at least one *ansatz*, and not recur to the oldest of the old as the age-old answer *and the question*.

Is there no accounting for scholarly progress in the discourse about this sort of issue? What sort is that, anyway? Hmm. Topics in Humanities 101, perhaps? Or those emerging during a discussion in a “Great Books” course?

Indeed, everybody says these days that the “way is the goal,” that the search and the query itself, that puzzlement, so long as it is properly loquacious, are signs of the philosopher’s much fabled genuine piety? What would the sacrilege of heresy mean in this connection? What it has always meant to the pretense of the “pious,” and the “learned” namely a provocation and scandal. This insinuated profanation would celebrate the scandalous advocacy of that impossible love which, as Augustine famously said, seeks for the sake of finding and finds for the sake of seeking. For what, in truth, would justify a search for that which has been long found, for taking upon ourselves a task that has already been completed, for teaching what everybody already knows, pointing out what is self-evident, answering a question that has not been asked, posing the question anew with every answer proffered, invoking with names and recalling what is always already present wherever and whenever a speaker and a listener convene, drawing up plans to prepare the venue for an event that has already taken place, and building the house that we already inhabit?

Well, then there is no justification. And perhaps then, freed by the exquisite futility of this exercise in superfluity from the normal constraints of admirable academic sedulity, from the paradigms in good currency it promulgates, and from the conventions of its discourse they have spawned, in a rigorous leisure that comes as close as possible to solitude, if not utter seclusion, we, who are forlorn, tilting in our quixotic quest, may cultivate such an orphic love that makes stones cry, soothes savage beasts, and breathes new life into blessed souls thought long dead to the world and thus, impossibly, ringing the bell backwards – surely love’s greatest feat; only then may we, in this separate peace we have made, pursue our beloved theme with proper chivalry, trusting all the while that whatever is well wrought in words of song and sung o’er hill and dale in its goodly service will find the stray ear that has been listening so long, so intently, to silence that it has of late even come to suspect what it hears so clearly is actually nothing at all.



# Introduction

## 1. Our Theme in a Nutshell

Consider the following scene so familiar to moviegoers: At a dramatic juncture of the story when the protagonist, having been previously so engrossed in the rush and tumble of events that she had not had time to give a second thought to where her choices were taking her and now had, in fact, taken her, unexpectedly encounters her reflection in a mirror – suddenly, it is painfully clear to her, in a way that it was not just a moment before, what she has done or become. We look at our reflection and are compelled to admit to ourselves that, with regards to what we see in our image, THE WAY IT IS *is not* THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.

This experience of *critical self-reflection* is well-known to all; surely we have all faced this ordeal of thinking beings who, one day, inexplicably, step back from the immediacy of their lived experience and, as if adopting a standpoint “outside” of their lives, “opposite” their world, reflect upon themselves, their lives, and their world, with eyes transformed into those of a judge who stands apart, above, beyond – the purview of his sight is no longer limited to the horizon hitherto defined by a given set of circumstances and worldviews of a subject, but rather extends beyond the pale of these particulars, beyond the ken of this given person, place, and present, broadens, deepens to encompass the bigger picture, to comprehend the grand and the grandest narratives of what will be and what was, what could be, indeed, even what ought to be but, alas, often, is not. This is a distinguished standpoint; for here we enter upon a life, a world and a life “outside” of *my* life, “above, beyond, opposite” *my* world – clearly, here is where the career of religion's fancy words and “otherworldly” worlds begins....

The purpose of the following investigation is to study this very experience of the difference that thought makes and how poets and prophets, as well as philosophers, have always employed the poetic language of narrative, drama, and verse – as well as the celebratory expressions of metaphysics like *freedom* and *heaven*, *resurrection* and *beauty*, *justice* and *god*, *world* and *love* to convey in vivid, earth-shattering terms the element and dimensions of that experience that we have called the *distinction of human being*.

Now while your friendly neighborhood philosopher would seem to excel in the cultivation of recondite notions, the biggest challenge facing a student of the distinction of human being is not the obscurity of this

distinction but rather its apparent familiarity. Everybody knows what you are talking about when you give an example of this experience, of which there are countless many in our everyday lives. For this reason and precisely because of its being so utterly and completely evident to us, there would seem to be little more to say about it except to affirm that, yes, people, normally content to “go with the flow,” sometimes do indeed stop and step back to think things over.

But then why on earth was this experience of our capacity for critical reflection repeatedly celebrated as being of such monumental importance, as having such earth-shaking consequences that, of all possible objects of thought, it, i.e. critical thought itself, was held to be the one most worthy of reflection in its own right as if, by establishing thus a science of the distinction of human being as philosophers did, we were called upon to “step back” from every particular occasion of our “stepping back” and thereby gain a critical perspective on even this critical perspective such that, reflecting critically upon critical reflection, reflection itself came into view and, for the first time, thought took to thinking about thought. This is the old story of how *speculation* was born – not the journalist’s, nor the investor’s, but rather that of the thinker; it is the story of philosophy in the traditional sense of *metaphysics*, the science of *pure reason* – of that faculty of ours which has been known and celebrated since the days of the Greeks as the distinction of human being.

Metaphysical philosophers have always taught that people are endowed “by nature” with the capacity to step back and mind the gap between the IS and the OUGHT. It was considered to be *the* defining characteristic, the mark or seal, if you will, that identified all beings in general, so also *human* being, that they were distinguished not merely from every other being of the same kind, human from other sentient living beings, for example, but also that they were distinguished from *themselves*, namely from what a particular being was, in principle, meant, supposed, *to be*, according to the determination of its *nature*, its *destiny*.

So also as in our reflection in the mirror – the music crescendos and we not only recognize that painful discrepancy but also experience firsthand this very fact, namely *that* we are distinguished from ourselves “by nature;” here *I am* and *there*, that man in the mirror, is the image of what I have become – thus divided, we learn the hard way that by failing to live up to our own ideals, we are torn asunder within but also flung far above and beyond ourselves by them and, in this way, set apart in a “place” *without*; human being thus riven, thus “exiled,” is, as we might say, *self-several* and we all know that the self-severalty of our human being hurts, a lot, even as

we are, at the same time, by switching our standpoint from the being seen and condemned to that of the seeing being of unfettered, unbiased judgment, uplifted, ennobled by the difference that critical thought makes.

Our study seeks therefore to give this notion of the inner controversy of the human condition, the severance inherent in human identity, the rich development it demands and deserves and to show how our knowledge of and experience with this self-relative divergence has been preserved in the legacy of three different narratives, celebrated in three completely different but equally heart-rending accounts of the distinction of human being, namely, beginning with the First Epoch of our Occidental cultural tradition, the Greek Epoch, in the distinguished speech of **Homer, Hesiod, Solon**, who gave voice to the *knowledge of the Muses*, followed then by the Second Epoch of that tradition, that of Christianity, in the New Testament of the **Synoptic Narratives** (Mark, Luke, Matthew), the **Apostolic Letters of Paul**, and the **Gospel of John**, in which the *gift of Holy Spirit* was granted and received, and, concluding with the Third Epoch, the Age of Enlightenment, in three visions of poetic imagination, i.e. in the works of **Rousseau, Schiller** and **Hölderlin**, in which the *Ideal of Humanity* was realized. Comprehend this tradition in its entirety as a complete train of thought about thought, one that provides us with a unique insight into that original determination of human self-severalty that was subsequently conceptualized in the three unique Epochs of metaphysics, the science which, through the patient elucidation of the logic of each of these “sacred” languages, taught us to recognize in the difference that the terms *Destiny, God* and *Freedom* make in human perception, action, and invention, the three distinguished principles of *LOGOS* – a term still so richly evocative of our ancient cultural legacy as thinkers, doers, and builders – traditionally translated as *reason*.

## 2. “Endowed with LOGOS”

What is the distinction of human being? Traditionally at least, the answer is as clear as day. We find it in the ancient definition of this being as *animal rationale mortale* – a mortal living being “endowed with LOGOS” (ΑΟΦΟΝ ΕΧΩΝ<sup>2</sup>) is how the Greeks put it – giving rise to the further question of how we should translate *rationale* or ΑΟΦΟΣ. Is *reason* or, simply, *thought* the right word? Hmm. We hesitate. Maybe these days we would

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, Greek words and expressions will be written in upper case Greek letters and, along with other non-Latin alphabets, occasionally transliterated. All non-English source text citations will be provided with an adjacent translation.

prefer to say endowed with “language” or “speech” or “writing” or even “literature.” We hesitate here, in the beginning of our study. A bad sign? Entertaining the supposition for a minute that, in any case, one of them at least ought to be the right term for what distinguishes human being, we cannot help but wonder how *language* – somewhat arbitrarily choosing this designation for now – could make such a qualitative, categorical, such an *absolute* difference in the sense of what we mean by referring to the *distinction* of human being? What language are we actually talking about? After all, we are told that whales and dolphins have a tuneful language, bees seem to work their eloquence in a dance, and chimps are evidently adept at employing signs. These instrumental languages would seem to differ from that of *Man* only by degree. But what of a distinction in essence, in nature, borne of language? A distinguished “tongue of flame” that we might speak, a holy writ that we might study day and night, a language of wisdom in which we might take up abode?

If you are looking for the absolute distinction between human and divine or human and the merely living being of animals and even plants, at least in the Greek conception of it, you won't find it. They are all *beings* – human being shares reason with the gods and mortal life with the animals. Enjoying immortality, the gods are merely the more powerful, more blissful beings when compared with humans whose lives, when compared to that of the immortals, have been called – none too cheerily – “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short.” Thus when an ancient Greek admonished you with the far-famed inscription in the pronaos of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, namely ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ (gnōthi seauton) “to know your place,” you were to be reminded that, in contrast to the gods, *you* are mortal (as are all other earth-bound living beings) and in contrast to the animals, *you* are possessed of ΛΟΓΟΣ (as are the gods as well), hence, partaking of both mortal life *and* immortal sense, human being has its own proper place *in the middle* of the ΚΟΣΜΟΣ (cosmos), even as the earth itself is the middle and the common ground between the heights of Olympus and the shadowy depths of Tartarus; earth is the region where both human and divine being meet, the commons, one might call it, in a well-ordered hierarchy of places that each being is destined, but also entitled, to take, the limits of which are clearly demarcated and duly recognized by every member of that community as determining the mutual obligations and the rights of a given being with respect to all the others and, in this way, defining the complete ΛΟΓΟΣ, the relationship, of each and every being in the ΚΟΣΜΟΣ.

Thus in this brief preview of what, for a Greek, *human* being is, we have gained the first inkling of a profound insight into our topic, namely that, in

fact, the distinction of human being could not refer, as is often assumed, merely to our difference from animals as lacking reason, nor from the gods as possessing and enjoying the immortal life that was inexplicably denied us – which may seem to be a very odd point to make, for, these days, who in their right mind would actually *want* to live forever – nor, finally, from our compeers, with whom we also share the understanding that, regardless of our walk of life, the toilsome terminus of our approaching doom is inexorable.

Well, if not from animals, nor from the gods, nor from our fellow man, much less from inanimate objects – though even this difference has become a debatable issue today – from what being or beings is man properly distinguished? Incredibly, there is only one being that human being can truly and categorically be distinguished from and that is from *man* itself – *Human Being* is, can be, is destined to be, different from...human being – thus the initially puzzling thesis of this book.

Now is there any sense to be made in the strange notion that in “knowing our place” we are to know that it is the destiny of our human being to be unlike, other than, distinguished from, ourselves? With an appeal to simple, common sense logic, we might immediately ask, irritated: How can any being be different from itself? On the contrary, isn't something's “self,” its “identity,” the one and only thing (if it is indeed a “thing” at all) that something could possibly be the same as – you know, in the sense of  $a=a$  and so on? After all, haven't we learned by now that “*things thing*,” that the “*world worlds*,” that, to speak more generally, *it is what it is*, that *you are what you are*, and, indubitably, *I am what I am*, that *boys will be boys* and *a kiss is just a kiss*, that, triumphantly, *a rose is a rose is a rose*? And now you are saying that it is the distinction of our human being *not to be* what we are and to be what we are not? Hmm.

Consider for a moment what this would mean – if to be is not to be and not to be is to be *human* being, then it follows logically that the more man is what it is, the less it is what it is, and conversely, the less, the more, simply by virtue of being, in one, both what it is not *and* what it is...in a perpetually alternating succession of self-contradictory differences; for, not being what it is, it *is*, in fact, what it is! In commiseration with the predicament of such a being that we might call “humankind,” and the infinite anguish that being what human being is not and not being what it is, must entail, we posit this single trait as the unique and indelible mark of distinction, the defining character of an impossible being, that is, nevertheless, our very own *human* being. And now what if this self-severalty of human being actually

documented our experience with the life of ΛΟΓΟΣ, with the life and times of pure reason itself?

### 3. What is Pure Reason?

Pure reason? Let us say, for now, in all modesty, simply *thought*. Have you ever wondered what *thought* is? Not *a* thought, a particular thought, for example the idea you might call *freedom* or *God* or *Destiny*. Not any one of these specifically. Who would refuse to allow that, whatever else we should make of them, whatever else *happiness* or *beauty* or *justice* or *faith* may be, they are all, at the very least, ideas, thoughts? Along these lines (which we might as well call our very first line of reasoning, our first train of thought about thought), a *memory* of my childhood is surely something I think about, something thought; How about *fancies*, *dreams*, *hopes*, a certain dream or a certain hope, a misguided opinion? Thoughts all? Undoubtedly! Propositions, statements, sentences, words are signs and tokens of *ideas*, of *judgments*, formulating *theories*, airing *views* and *reviews*, sharing *insights*, are they not? Well, then these latter are thoughts, too. Here's a notion of mine – it is more or less thoughtful; here a belief – it is more or less far-fetched but thought and thoughts they most certainly must be; again, here is an argument, mathematical, biological, sociological, psychoanalytical, linguistic; it is, with respect to a particular audience and the issue in question, more or less cogent, more or less persuasive but remains, for all that, a train of thought, with other thoughts, fought for or against, failed or famed, soon forgotten or, rarely, forever young.

In a similar vein, surely the *goals* we pursue, the *will*, an *intention* we harbor, surely they are congenial notions – my *plan* to see a movie tonight is a thought and notion, though not a particularly remarkable one, is it not, as is my occasional *doubt* and wavering *indecision*? Indeed. The other day, for example, when undecided in my own mind, I was debating with my wife about going out in the evening, I tentatively proposed going to the movies. “That’s a thought,” she said, none too enthusiastically. On the other hand, when my daughter told me that she would complete her studies before getting married and having children, I said, perhaps a bit too enthusiastically, “that’s a great idea!”

Similarly, most people agree that the light bulb began as a great idea – if certainly not as great as the genius artist's conception of the painting of the ceiling of the Cappella Sistina, then all the more useful – and the modest paperclip, too, to say nothing of the other inventions that human ingenuity has conceived of for the sake of convenience and control...hmm, on second

thoughts and in the retrospective light of the consequences of their applications, some of these ideas were not so great after all.

Now putting together a collection of all the plans and memories, useful or beautiful inventions, flowing or ebbing brainwaves and sagacious or even inane propositions and opinions known to man or woman, now or ever in the past or even in the future would indeed be a monumental and never-ending task and might be called a comprehensive chronicle of ideas and thoughts, good and bad. But taking account of and recording all of these thoughts in their considerable variety and plenitude (perhaps the Internet is becoming such an archive) is still not the same as thinking about *thought* and asking the question: “What is thought *as such*, thought *in and of itself*?”

In fact, “thought” is also an idea and an interesting notion at that and it, too, you might argue, would find its place in the above catalogue. We would no doubt find it under the heading of *philosophy* in the subcategory *metaphysics*, the study of the theory, practice, and productivity of thought. Then thought itself would be just another thought, one more notion among many.

But even in this case, a study devoted to thought in its own right, to thought *as thought*, would remain, in such a catalogue of thoughts, an oddity among the collector's hoard, would be considered an extremely curious, if not to say unique, specimen, an anomaly of sorts on the list; for whereas with respect to all of the other issues and topics and matters, the sciences (which are a collection or system of thoughts) as well as their subsidiary ancillary thoughts, are different from their subject matter, the seeing from the seen, a particular issue or object, a problem to which thought has been addressed – whether in the form of memories, intents and purposes, experiences, analyses, summaries, hypotheses, or just some stray opinion bred in teeming brains, or else conserved in an entry in the ledger of some otherwise blank page or clean slate, duly registered, say, as an item to be enumerated in the methodology and industry of sciences or merely as the odds and ends of mankind's cultural history – in a word, while the *form* of thought, i.e. the actual thinking endeavor, is, in all of these cases, different from its *content*, i.e. what is being thought about, the science of metaphysics alone is thought turned towards thought itself, turned therefore to *memory* and *intention*, *experience* and *knowledge*, *insight* and *intellect*, *opinion* and *judgment* in their own right – a thesaurus would come in handy here in our search for further synonyms while at the same time facilitating the continuation of our long list of potential translations, good and bad, for and concomitant notions of that illustrious Greek word ΛΟΓΟΣ that we began with – as forms, kinds, sorts, types, or else as

examples, instances, modes, of *thought*, that is to say, thought in and of itself, apart from the particular items that this diversity of the mind's vessels and vehicles convey.

Taken in this light, taken namely as a study of the composite *light* of the mind itself as well as a study of this taking, the *grasp* of conception, rather than what is normally lit and grasped by it, i.e. *everything else*, be it an actual "thing" or no thing at all, it would seem that philosophy in the strict sense of metaphysics is a very peculiar occupation indeed, certainly tending towards paradox or just plain deadly dull. What could be less substantial, more academic than research devoted to thought all by itself, a sort of ivory tower atop an ivory tower, a circle in a circle and a wheel within a wheel? Indeed, unless it is broken, who would care to look at the *glass* of a picture window rather than at the prospect of the flower garden out back? And you might imagine that, in many circles, philosophers of this seemingly so myopic persuasion, to the extent that there are any such, are not welcomed by their brethren with wholehearted hospitality. These days many of their thinker peers would dismiss the entire enterprise as anachronistically preposterous, arid, empty, clearly implausible, probably contradictory, or, their most grievous epithet, *passé* and thus, ultimately, banal. Has not "philosophical" discourse, increasingly over the years, put "old school" metaphysics behind itself and moved forward to explore the blue horizons and fresh pastures green?

This is especially true of academic pronouncements with regards to metaphysics. The best philosophy departments can offer a young student's ponder is an opportunity to study the history of philosophy from, say, Descartes to Darwin (because it sounds right) or, less scientifically perhaps but more generously academic, from Plato to... well to whom? Hmm. To Nietzsche perhaps? Or to Marx? Or to Derrida? And what about thinkers and poets (poets?) before Plato, eh? Evidently, merely the beginning, the middle and the end of such a canon of philosophical output as well as its breadth and depth, namely whether it should include the "non-Western philosophies" or not and to what extent, is as yet still open to debate, and therefore subject to the inclinations of the individual philosopher-lecturer and the changing demands that research support and convention schedules as well as peer pressure among colleagues in this field place on budding scholars.

But obviously, studying the life and times and fabulous or merely puzzling opinions of famous philosophers like Kant or Socrates, culling, after much multi-inter-superdisciplinary hunting and gathering, what views of theirs have been tried and tested by time, and categorizing their thoughts into the

appropriate “ism” while accounting for “errors and limitations” and determining their continued relevance or utter irrelevance in philosophical discourse today, whether in appreciative, deferential tones or jocose and condescending ones, is not the same as *thought thinking thought*, not the same as what, in the old days, was called *speculation*.

#### 4. The Art of Speculation

On the other hand, the friendly-neighborhood free thinker, being energetic and not one to dither and quibble, might advocate a clean sweep approach to the impressive ballast of historical dry-as-dust scholarship with all its fragments and parchments and palimpsests and admonish us to just get down to it and start thinkin'! Honestly, do we, should we, really need a diploma from some acclaimed college to think about thought? You've got a mind, friend, and have, no doubt, been known to use it on occasion; at least your thoughts, if nothing else, are your own; they are not merely personal but even private, your very own closed sphere and castle and you are most certainly entitled to follow a train of thought if you care to, as much and as well as, hell, better than, any other thinker guy or gal past or present; for who's to stop you, who's to prevent you from thinking a little or even a whole lot, for minutes on end! And, in conclusion, since, as the story goes, thinking about life is every person's prerogative or should be, how could there be definitive answers, which, apparently, would solve all our problems and answer all our questions and thus, in one fell swoop, put an end to thought for good or evil in a flagrant bid to foreclose all thoughtfulness once and for all?

This particular attitude with regard to thought as being as inviolate as it is proximate, as much an innate right as it is an engendered talent, is widespread and, far from being merely a typical layman's conceit, is even a propitious bias in favor of our current endeavor, supposing, as such a predilection for the immediacy of the mind does, that learning how to think is akin to learning a particular ideology, strengthening, or at least finding, some obscure mind muscle, and undertaking the daunting challenge of attempting to reprogram, if not rewire, our brain-ware. For in fact, these perspectives regarding the mind, though flawed or rudimentary, suggest at least the affection folks seem to feel for the world of ideas – we are indeed apt to count ourselves experts in using our own heads, suspicious of anything smacking of an authoritative syllabus that purports to offer us schooling for our thought – are not grasp, taste, digestion (and indigestion!), assimilation – all the functions of ingestion and nourishment for belly, for body, sure, but also for brain – our very own unique and inalienable affair?

In fact, this point of view, though striving for the native vanity that only genuinely homespun ignorance can breed, merely demonstrates, in spite of itself, our natural affinity for speculation; we would never assume ourselves to be innately capable of making so much as a good shoe, of attaining excellence in any of the familiar crafts and arts without years, or at least a couple of weeks, of study or training and perhaps even some diligent practice in how to work the machines and the materials, without becoming a craftsman first, without, that is, learning the handiwork, joining the guild so to speak – but apparently everyone's a natural born thinker, has all the tools, the leather, the stone already at hand, needs no laboratory, neither Petri dish nor cyclotron, no apprenticeship, no council of master craftsmen and -women from which, after years of practice, permission to ply the trade is ceremoniously granted; we need await no appointment, no authorization, no degree to think. And this inevitable conclusion based as it is on the unshakable conviction we harbor regarding the mind's ultimate inaccessibility to every tyrant (and teacher), as rashly presumptuous as it is overly optimistic, has always been known and seen, yes, even celebrated, as a confirmation that human being is “naturally” called the “thinking” being, *animal rationale* conceived of, in the framework of all living things as belonging to the species of *Homo sapiens sapiens*.

But though, apparently, *wisdom*, i.e. *distinguished* thought, be our title, our nature and destiny, it is no less undeniable that in spite of our tongues and bellies being our own, taste is a pleasure, health a virtue, both studied, learned, as knowledge shared among the informed, and then diligently attended under the artisan's hand, the prestidigitation of which matures with assiduous application but withers from disuse, and from misuse “morphs” into an atrophied and stunted excrescence of perversion. Moreover, though we all might expect of ourselves as adults to have acquired the rational resources we need to face life's little problems and big problems by learning from our mistakes, showing goodwill, and, in general, adhering to the unspoken code of personal conduct that our “socialization” imbued us with, tempered, where all else fails, with a bit of plain common sense, the study of thought in its own right, of *impersonal* thought, prior to or beyond its utility in dealing with the ordinary objects and projects of private or common concern, is probably what the majority would call a truly and rightly rare event in the occupation of human being.

*Speculation* – who has ever heard of such a thing? You are saying that there was a time when respectable people once spiritedly engaged in it, became adept at it, even taught others the practice as a craft and art? Yes, truly. The history of philosophy is just such a record of noteworthy inventions,

achievements, discoveries – all three pertain to speculation, and this history also documents the periodic flourishing as well as decline of interest in thought for the sake of thought. In this way, the great philosophers of tradition, seen as pursuing and having attained a high level of excellence in just such an extraordinary endeavor as that of thought thinking thought, can teach us, who inexplicably desire to embark upon this venture ourselves, how this sort of thing is done – the art, the discipline, and the science of speculative thought. *This* sort of speculation shall be our object even though it be neither the stock broker's nor the news reporter's, *this* contemplation shall be our subject though it be neither that of the engineer's prediction nor the physician's prognosis, neither the soldier's stratagem nor the lover's reverie. For this reason then, though studying the thinkers and poets of our philosophical tradition and becoming conversant with their conceptions and epochs – less so participating in the scholarly debate that is its appendix – is obviously germane to our task, it is not at all the purpose of our investigation but just a means to a greater end which is, namely, the erudition of the intellect towards the perfect cognition of thought thinking thought – *self-knowing being* as it was once termed by the knowledgeable. For from these accomplished thinkers of old, we hope to learn the ways of metaphysical inquiry in action and their achievements will inspire our own efforts to grasp the what and the wherefore of the distinction of human being as well as to nurture the facility of word and deed that is its transfiguring *present*.

## 5. The First Designation of our Theme

We begin, therefore, by proposing as a working premise that not merely *thought* but rather, more specifically, *thought thinking thought* is the distinction of human being. More specifically? Put in these enigmatic terms, it may not seem that we have made much progress in pinning down our topic. Hence, we must assume at the outset that there is probably more to the notion of self-knowing being than meets the eye, in other words, that since we, philosophically speaking, cannot replace our eyes with fresh ones (or can we?), we need other words, fresh words that make greater sense, provide richer experience, than those hitherto employed. And that is indeed a reasonable demand encouraging us at this juncture to venture a step forward now, having begun by asserting that *thought, the Thinker of thought*, or simply the *Thinker*, is the first object of our current study as well as a concise characterization of the activity *we* are engaged in while doing what we are doing when we do philosophy, namely contemplating, or reflecting, or pondering, or speculating, or musing, upon thought – evidently there is no shortage of tenable terms – and in doing so, by taking

our first step forward we are, in fact, taking our first step back and recalling **Aristotle** who was the first philosopher of the Occident to explicitly seize upon *pure* thought as the object most worthy of conception and therefore, rightly considered to be the best *being*, most meriting the predicate *deity* (ΘΕΟΣ) “for then the mind thinks itself, if this is indeed what is best, and is thought thinking thought.” (Met. 1074B 34)

ΑΥΤΟΝ ΑΡΑ ΝΟΕΙ ΕΙΠΕΡ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΚΡΑΤΙΣΤΟΝ  
ΚΑΙ ΕΣΤΙΝ Η ΝΟΗΣΙΣ ΝΟΗΣΕΩΣ ΝΟΗΣΙΣ

*Deity*— in addition to this ultimate and most magnificent designation, our philosophical tradition has bestowed several other dignified and dignifying epithets upon thought, the Thinker, namely upon such thought as thinks thought and thought alone. Most famously perhaps it was called *pure reason* and as Kant affirms of its science, i.e. metaphysical thought or **philosophy** in the strict sense: “Pure reason is in fact exclusively concerned with itself and can have no other occupation.”

*Die reine Vernunft ist in der Tat mit nichts als sich selbst beschäftigt und kann kein anderes Geschäft haben. (Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft, III 448.22-23.)*

Why “pure?” Simply to make this point that thought thinking nothing that is not thought (and the *nothing* that is) is “uncommon” in just this way. Therefore, consider *pure* in the sense of the *noble* gases, the *fine* arts, *precious* gems, *illustrious* deeds, in a word, *exceptional* or shall we say, a bit quaintly to be sure but, for that, all the more venerably: *eternal*, *sublime*, or simply, following Aristotle, *divine* – all of these terms are intended to highlight this difference from the more pedestrian, more prosaic concerns of thought here and now after we have put philosophy safely aside for the day to address...well,... *something else*, whatever else it may be, whatever else there may be, namely, through efficient use of thought’s instrumental support, our chores and concerns, their objects and issues, in short, our occupation with *everything else* than with thought itself. Compared to this sort of generic thought, our plodding platitudinarian and handy factotum, who is so often rushed and stressed by matters of urgency, pure thought, the Thinker, namely thought thinking thought, might be imagined to be a more light-footed, light-hearted, lightly-living soul who inhabits a realm much removed from the one that harried handy gofer of ours has to do with. Thus, on the one hand, there is pure thought about thought and, on the other, everyday thinking about everything else and every other thought.

Again, **pure** reason is thus taken in the particular sense of *ingenious* and *exquisite*, of *rare*, of *splendid*, of *superb* thought, yes, thought by such celebratory denominations marked and therefore *remarkable*, therein *conspicuous* and therefore, in spite of first impressions to the contrary, *notable*, thought considered to be and therefore termed, quite simply, *special*, thought, in other words, thought as thought *extraordinaire*, thought thought *keen*, *quicken*ed. Now what on earth or in heaven could be curiuser than that, than simply considering the mind *at large* and – larger than the ho-hum career of its finite, everyday life – *infinite*, stranger than taking thought as utterly utterly, as, dare we utter the most august adjective of distinction, *holy*?

## 6. Thought, the Builder

*Entity, Deity, Humanity* – my, my, so many tremendous monikers! *Ingenious, exquisite, rare, superb, outstanding, remarkable, keen, conspicuous, distinguished,...* – goodness, so many distinguishing qualifiers for ΛΟΓΟΣ! All of the above as well as 99 other comparable designations and epithets – each more emphatic, each a more splendid title of elation than the next and further epithets of even more magnificent exaltation and grandeur might be added – have been put by thought to identify thought, to name it and, in this way to give it presence for the reader; it is high time that we, in these tender beginnings of our study, after having caught sight of our issue as an object of perceptive contemplation, thought *really seeing* thought, take now this *naming* of thought by thought into account in its own right. For this is the work of thought as well, not merely as a theoretical object of investigation, the cause and causa of the *Thinker*, but also as that of the *Builder*, highlighting the “poetic,” inventive, side of our enterprise, which is, succinctly put, to brilliantly distinguish, to recognize *and* signify, to comprehend *and* make visible, to *gain insight* into *and*, at the same time, to *bring* and to *body forth* the being, the vivid image of just such thought as is devoted to thought itself and to nothing else, thought, therefore, that is to be gloriously termed **consecrated**, and that means, determined at the outset to be absolutely and wholly distinct from the ordinary mundane and instrumental reasoning and its cognitive processes so easily confused by references made to a run-of-the-mill rationality, to its omnibus versatility, to the world-encompassing technical preoccupations of *applied* sciences, or simply, to more or less pressing purposes and, in light of these, therefore, to thoughts good or bad, thoughts about this or that, **a** thought.

Thought, the Builder, wields the celebratory word. And what a lot of words, nouns and adjectives, have just been brought to bear to highlight

distinguished thought from its commonplace application! Who has not taken note of the character of jubilation of the language so employed? Here words are being rhapsodically put to make a big deal out of something that otherwise, without them, might have seemed to the reader to be insignificant or even have gone completely unnoticed; “Hark,” say these designations, “we *could* think about thought if we care to! In fact, it is well worth it!” And that is the rapture of thought, the delight that is not mute but rather articulate. Apparently, thought “talks” to us even as we ourselves can talk, sing, about thought. If you thought that thought is just a thinker, then think again. For as much as *contemplation* is the original and keenest pleasure of the intellect, *invention* is the creative joy of imagination – contemplation and invention are, both of them, the works of thought; in this line of reasoning *intellect* refers to thought's insightful gaze, to the *knowledge* of thought, while the term *imagination* brings out its creative *power* to substantiate what it has learned and now knows. Thought, the Builder works the words, elaborates the details, substantiates.

For example, have you never wondered about the word *god*? In the hands of the Poet-Thinker, it is employed to make a distinction in excellence and importance. Originally of course, and that means in the language of the Greeks, this term ΘΕΟΣ (*theos*), *god*, like the term, *cosmos* or *being*, or even *man* or *house*, *horse* or *father* – all of the familiar “nouns” – were used as predicates to indicate substances, what a thing in question actually was and, more than that, what it was *supposed* to be, in other words, if what was identified by these predicates being applied to them really and truly deserved to be so named. Predicates were therefore distinctions of quality and, in this way, sentences of *judgment* regarding the thing's relationship to a particular determination of THE WAY IT SHOULD BE. Predication, the *WHAT* of it, was not merely a “neutral” attribution and a specification of the identity of a particular, the *THIS* of it – a subject, substance, or mere substantive; on the contrary, specification and identity – *predicate*, *attribute* and *adjective* – all refer to the property of the thing, but, again, its *property* not merely in the physical sense of a feature or a material attribute but especially in the sense of its *propriety* with regard to that defining identity as determined by its own proper “idea” (its ΕΙΔΟΣ) to which it owes the “honor” of being so named and thus recognized as a good one of its kind, such a one, in other words, that has been acknowledged as attaining to excellence through having fulfilled its appointed or “intended” nature, where *nature* refers not to the “natural environment” but rather to the *essence*, the idea of what a particular thing was meant to be...and *is* if it is truly good, fine, excellent, right. The name is a term of distinction and, as

such, a badge of distinction referring to a thing's virtue, value, to the idea of what it was meant to be. A name is ennobling. As we shall see, thought, the Builder, builds with names, having collected all the choicest, the most beautiful names, and orders them into a line of reasoning that makes sense.

Now if the calling of a name gives value and significance to the thing named, in other words, draws a mark of distinction upon it, setting it, as if by way of inflection, apart, if  $\Theta E O \Sigma$  is a predicate in just this axiological sense and, among all the predicates, uniquely superlative, we might expect that a great many things could, and perhaps even should, be so qualified when their importance or power or influence or excellence are addressed. And this is indeed the case. In the Greek world of speech, the term  $\Theta E O \Sigma$  is a remarkably liberally applied cognizance! Consider what was so named: Morning, Night, Fear, Love, Dream, Victory, Memory, Portion, Justice, Necessity were all called  $\Theta E O \Sigma$  in honor of their power and influence in the lives of human being, by virtue of their "natural," that is to say, their allotted, determined place in the scheme of things, in recognition of the fact that they inspired respect, even reverence, on the part of those touched by them; and even today we recognize and celebrate Victory when she approaches and might very well say, in a flight of delight and gratitude at the winning goal, the new world record, the volley won, as spectator or as athlete, hands in the air, face towards the sky, with a shout of glory, if not in so many words: *Ah, look! That is NIKH! Now Nike is "there!" Hail Nike!* – well, at least, in an ad for sports articles we would.

Is it not, well, a bit of an exaggeration to call things – an emotion, the sky, flowers, rivers, rumors, people, occasionally even certain animals – "*THEOS*" just because they are powerful, beautiful, significant, influential, because they make a difference in our lives? It is as if the process of signification, at least in Greek speech, actually brought forth its subject, that is to say, brought it brightly bodied to the fore where it might be attended as noteworthy! Precisely! This is the work of the Poet-Thinker who knows that the language of wisdom does not merely posit and manipulate arbitrary names. No, not at all. Instead, names draw a distinction and thus bring forth a determination; names invoke. Thought, the Builder, knows that, in a certain way, saying it *makes* it so. We will have to get to the bottom of this in the course of our study!

For now, suffice it to say that thought, the Poet-Thinker, has availed itself of language to make a point, i.e. to distinguish thought *from thought* and reason *from reason*; the one is as familiar as it is mundane, the other

momentous though easily missed, deserving note and regard though often disregarded. And it is easy to see why that is the case.

For, most of the time, thought is simply assumed to be our many-sided servant and our easy tool, our favorite friend for solving life's little problems and big problems. If our car breaks down, thought will guide us in taking action; faced with cataclysm we know what to do, namely *first things first*. Grab a hammer and build a house; seize a knife and save your life – we are often faced with difficult situations that call for a *quick take* and *understanding* of what is going on. *Savvy* or *sagacity* are familiar names for thought that nimbly guides our actions in dealing with the challenges we face in ever-changing circumstances. Run to catch the bus, wave your hand to draw attention, think before you speak, look before you leap, stay cool – are these tried and true precepts not helpful in getting by, making ends meet, learning the ropes, talking turkey? In all of these cases, thought is an all-arounder periscopically turned towards events and concerns that encroach forcibly, perhaps even threateningly, upon our lives and the preferred panacea for getting out of a jam, or else ingeniously making do, or else resolutely keeping on keeping on with the eyes on the prize. Here thought is busy trouble-shooting, is horse sense, smarts, guts, IQ.

Stop! Surely, reason cannot address and account for *itself* under these circumstances of duress; surely thought must be more than a knack! But in what other, more profound, more exalted, i.e. more distinguished way is thought to be understood as being *all-around*? What is thought alone when it is, in fact, altogether thought? What is thought on the whole and *thoroughly* thought, thought all told, all in, all over, all out? These are entirely different questions and just one question: What is thought to thought in its own right, thought *wholly* thought? Precisely! What is thought when it is holy? When it is taken as being *out and out, all in all* and precisely for this reason called *glorious*, another well-known term of distinction to build with and upon?

## 7. Thought in and of Itself

Moved to investigate this question, philosophers have often taught that *pure* thought in the preeminent, aforementioned sense of *speculation* cannot flourish where urgent needs of surfeit or dearth dominate the foreground of attention. Where thought is made useful towards attainment of a goal as the means to an end, it is obviously not concerned with itself; in this case, thought's end is not thought itself nor is it, at that moment, just thinking thought but rather taking care of business; clearly, if thought is dealing with the incident event, then it is thinking about this and not about

thought in its own right. That is, moreover, precisely why metaphysics was once celebrated for what it is so often decried today, namely for daring to recognize in pure thought the element, the subject, the object, and the activity of knowledge cherished for its own sake, for the superfluous *delight* inherent in the enterprise of thought thinking thought. According to Aristotle, as the history of sciences would seem to bear out, only after everything necessary to lead a “comfortable life” had been attained, the most pressing problems solved, and the ease of leisure attained, only then did *intellect* arise and begin to seek out this sort of knowledge, which is pursued not out of boredom or the fatigued spleen of idleness, “nor for the sake of any extraneous need” (ΟΥ ΧΡΗΣΕΩΣ ΤΙΝΟΣ ΕΝΕΚΕΝ - 982 b 21) but rather “alone for its own sake” (ΜΟΝΗ...ΕΑΥΤΗΣ ΕΝΕΚΕΝ - 982 b 27-28), and notable therefore as being the “only free one among all the different sorts of knowledge” (ΜΟΝΗΝ ΟΥΣΑΝΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΑΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ - 982 b 27), originating not in danger or in anger or in hunger and thus not at all in the subservience of utility with respect to these, but alone in seminal “wonder” (ΘΑΥΜΑΖΕΙΝ - 982 b 11-12) at the “way it all is” (...ΠΑΝΤΕΣ, ΕΙ ΟΥΤΩΣ ΕΧΕΙ - 983 a 13) and thus, in the desire to “escape ignorance” (ΤΟ ΦΕΥΓΕΙΝ ΤΟ ΑΓΝΟΕΙΝ - 982 b 19-20), with respect to the greatest and best of our thoughtful enterprises, i.e. the *sciences*, giving rise to the notion of the one science that is not only unburdened of the urgency of employment but also the “most precious for being the most divine” (Η ΓΑΡ ΘΕΙΟΤΑΤΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΜΙΟΤΑΤΗ - 983 a 5), on the one hand, because “possession of this knowledge best befits a god” (...ΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ ΑΝ ΘΕΟΣ ΕΞΟΙ - 983 a 6) and, on the other, because the most excellent science must needs have none other than the divine as its topic (ΕΙ ΤΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΘΕΙΩΝ ΕΙΗ - 983 a 7). In conclusion, we might therefore say: “More necessary is every science, better is none,” (Met. 983a 10-11).

ΑΝΑΓΚΑΙΟΤΕΡΑΙ ΜΕΝ ΟΥΝ ΠΙΑΣΑΙ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ,  
ΑΜΕΙΝΩΝ Δ' ΟΥΔΕΜΙΑ

Therefore it follows “logically” that this distinguished, and, in this sense, *divine* being of thought is “living, eternal, superlative” – *living* (ΖΩΩΝ), in other words, a completed reality as opposed to mere potentiality, whether it be the thought unspoken and unverified, the will unfulfilled, or every other innate possibility that is not yet in deed and in fact an actual, a *tried and true* being; *eternal* (ΑΙΔΙΩΝ), in other words, absolutely unique and distinguished not only from the beings of mere possibilities but also from those of the ephemeral realm of what is temporary, incidental, contingent, here today, gone tomorrow, trembling leaves of being that sprout and fall in

season only to be swept away by oblivious winds; and *superlative* (ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ), in other words, outstanding, first by virtue of its being, with respect to all other beings, autarkic and, second, because it is engaged in the best of all activities, namely contemplation, the uninterrupted contemplation of what is best, namely itself.

ΦΑΜΕΝ ΔΕ ΤΟΝ ΘΕΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΖΩΟΝ ΑΙΔΙΟΝ ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ, ΩΣΤΕ  
ΖΩΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΙΩΝ ΣΥΝΕΧΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΙΔΙΟΣ ΥΠΙΡΧΕΙ ΤΩΙ ΘΕΩΙ...  
(Aristotle Met. 1072 b 28-30)

We are saying then that deity is alive, eternal and superlative, and therefore life as well as autarkic being both perpetual and eternal are its very own...

Aristotle therefore draws the conclusion that follows “logically” from this train of thought by attributing to such a being as fulfils these conditions that our reasoning has determined as prerequisite the predicate most apt at making clear *what it is*. He concludes, “This is god.” (ΤΟΥΤΟ ΓΑΡ Ο ΘΕΟΣ – 30). Is there a more cogent argument in support of why the science of pure reason is originally to be thought of as theology and why pure reason must study pure reason, why thought, at its best, will and must think about thought?

### **8. Reason as Technological Rationality**

In contrast to pure reason, the autotelic being of thought, *technological thinking* is understood as strategic, i.e. as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. If we think about how *rationality* is normally understood, namely as the so-called *power* of rationality, we find that it comprises many of the qualities that are useful for facing and mastering the challenges of our lives. For example, reason allows us to abstract qualities from things, detach these things from the fleeting continuum of a fast-paced world, and then, from these objectified things in turn, abstract a mundane subject engaged in goal attainment behavior that appropriates them for particular consumption, whose know-how (before even knowing-why) is adept at determining, in accordance with the guidelines and standards of established and accepted specifications, and allocating – in accordance with the “rational” principle that demands for decreasing input (cost) the maximization of performance output (utility) for a given opportunity – scarce and limited natural resources, human as well as animal, vegetable, and mineral.

In a technological framework, “logical” reasoning refers to mechanical calculation of the sort duplicated by artificial intelligence – which is often set in stark contrast to the “emotional” intelligence of many human specimens – and is considered subordinated to the pragmatic principle which gives preference to *what works* based on the typically “binary logic” of expedience in the use of these resources. Clearly, at an individual level, *self-preservation* along with the *pleasure* and the *reality principle* are the most urgent directives that flow from the prime directive of practicability, commanding a complex mechanism of checks and balances, security and insurance, all of which, ultimately, are designed to maintain the homeostasis of the life-world ecosystem, that is to say, the preservation of the status quo by authorities empowered to facilitate economic growth and safeguard social stability – reason in this technological sense tends only to keep the particular, the most proximate, goal in mind and evaluates the success or failure of a means to achieve it without considering the more remote ends, to say nothing of terminal goals, those ultimate purposes that succeed at taking the “big picture” into account and even less the means themselves as goals, even though they are ends too, albeit intermediate ones in an ascending series of ever widening scope.

Technological thought as is practiced by the Homo oeconomicus of applied sciences has often come under fire and, as a consequence, has contributed to the discrediting of reason in some circles as the narrow-minded, regressive, self-centered mentality of a technocratic quidnunc who is immured in his area of specialization, devoted to the nuts and bolts, bits and bytes constructions of an ever more finely calibrated and therefore more comprehensively controllable world the operation of which is designed to be as trouble-free and as easy-care as humanly possible, consisting of material and information flows and manifold mechanisms which, though illustrious for the undeniable profit they have secured mankind, are apparently never free from the danger of becoming, in the wrong hands, oppressive and exploitative contraptions of automation, of panoptic surveillance, of bandwidth and broadcast, of clockwork, of bean count and body count, of extractions, reductions, and extrapolations, of blips on scans and screens that are the lens of our own superficiality in a world lacking all depth, where WYSIWYG, where “spirit” is taken neat, the truth naked, and the naked ape preferably the alpha-male in the herd.

Such insular, straitlaced, and thus “bounded” rationality, driving the technological progress of industry and lubricating the communicative practices of society, has always been contrasted to that of reason in the strict sense understood as being not merely an instrument but also a testament,

a testimony and a monument to thought attuned to thought as that of a distinguished being, remarkable in its properties, worthy of contemplation for its own sake, in that unique quality of accord that is demonstrated in its own self-relativity and considered to be the end and the aim of every desire that strives for *fulfilment*, a consummation devoutly to be wished, beyond every meanness and its preoccupation with the mean, with diurnal man's satiety and with mankind's clutching comforts and concerns. It is a spirit that comes to the fore in the celebration of thought in and of itself, as our younger thought, in being prior to its appointment of dispersive service in a panoply of thought patterns, models, and methods, and a fresher thought in its observant and pious exhilaration, knowing itself as being known, regarding and regarded, and now, in reverend remembrance of its youth, regretting the loss of that first spring, acutely critical of its clinical, cynical senility:

When I was young, it seemed that life was so wonderful,  
A miracle, oh it was beautiful, magical.  
And all the birds in the trees, well they'd be singing so happily,  
Joyfully, playfully watching me.  
But then they send me away to teach me how to be sensible,  
Logical, responsible, practical.  
And they showed me a world where I could be so dependable,  
Clinical, intellectual, cynical.<sup>3</sup>

The “grown-up” world, the world of sophistication and civilization, is seen as having spawned a thought bent on operational efficiency and managerial feasibility, that employs tools of subjugation complementing the devious use of ruse and ploy which resorts to cunning in lieu of confrontation and for whom the ghost in the machine, the ego, is just another, a new-fangled technique for playing the game and getting ahead, for winning friends and influencing people, for making a million before you are thirty without even trying.

### **9. Reason as the Neuro-physiological Activity of the Brain**

Thus *technical* reason, whatever its merits in the navigation, colonization, rationalization, domestication of worldly wildernesses is not the issue of our study. Nor is our theme and topic thought in the sense of some intricate electrical phenomena sparking in the functional regions of the cerebral

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<sup>3</sup> Lyrics by Roger Hodgson.

cortex that biologists, anatomists, or physicists, chemists or physicians purport to map and measure by tracing the ionic sparks and micro-currents of action potential conducting along threads of ganglia, up and down excitatory axon fibres and across synaptic clefts onto the post-synaptic dendrites that in turn transmit micro-chemical signals further on down and up the neural channel network that comprises the convoluted circuitry of the brain, the membranous grey matter supposed to be the mysteriously fugitive ego's hide-out in the citadel of the cranium as well as the seat of all spatio-temporal coordination of voluntary and involuntary motor reflex and activity, brain stem emotional arousal and sensory perception – comprising, in particular, visual processing, mood, volition, and their disorders, but also language, learning, and memory.

If the aim of neural science is to fathom the mind then “understanding” here must mean to be able to explain the *how* of the brain's wiring and firing – how is the brain organized and what processes are involved in producing the familiar phenomena of mentation such as perception, imagination, learning and remembering, the first causes of which are ultimately to be found on the level of molecular biology in a movement of reduction to primitives, *a savage thought* summarized by Lévi-Strauss, as proceeding from an “empirical diversity” and complexity to the attainment of their primal elemental component “invariants,” a movement that is considered to be the very pedigree of the so-called “natural and exact sciences,” which begin by “absorbing particular men into general Man” and complete their enterprise with the “reintegration of culture into nature and...life into the ensemble of its physico-chemical conditions.” This is the progression of “human sciences” in general that see their “ultimate goal...not in the constitution of Man but rather in its dissolution,” in other words “resolving the human into the non-human,” a train of thought that “despite its intentionally brutal turn of phrase” is not a bid to demean humanity but rather to honor inert material for its contributions in the composition of man; for “the day we succeed at comprehending life as a function of inert material, that will be the day we discover that the latter possesses properties that are very different from those we previously attributed to it.” (Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensé Sauvage*, 326-327)

par-delà la diversité empirique...l'analyse...veut atteindre des invariants...qui incombent aux sciences exactes et naturelles: réintégrer la culture dans la nature, et finalement, la vie dans l'ensemble de ses conditions physico-chimiques...le but dernier des sciences humaines n'est pas de constituer l'homme, mais de le dissoudre...la résolution de l'humain en non-humain...en

dépit du tour volontairement brutal donné à notre thèse...le jour où l'on parviendra à comprendre la vie comme une fonction de la matière inerte, ce sera pour découvrir que celle-ci possède des propriétés bien différentes des celles qu'on lui attribuait antérieurement.

From this perspective of atoms foreordained to achieve living, even mental greatness in the human mind, though the mind may be an epiphenomena of synaptic activity and finally biochemical process, these sciences, which give rise to the familiar entities of physics and biology, are themselves the fruits of scientific research, its methods and paradigms and therefore as much a “product” of thought processes as thought is their product.

If an idea comes from synergetic electrical cellular activity, so do the cells' ions, in turn, owe their being to a more primal, a more savage energy source; are not then the sun and the solar processes the ultimate source of thought? And every thought a spark of the sun thinking in us its own thoughts of which we claim ownership? But again, if we stop at the sun, the element of fire, we do so arbitrarily; we might still consider the cosmological order that gave rise to sunshine and the earthling's world, the gravity warping space and the levity of wavelengths permeating its emptiness – it is, apparently, all of these entities, and the subatomic politics of the particles that govern them, that are the “real” cause of thought and that have made science possible in the first place, a remarkable teleology which bestows upon lowly matter, both organic and inorganic the dignity of a human destiny!

Such trains of thought (or should we call them lattices of ideo-atomic, non-fissionable wavicles?) are often framed into a divisive debate arguing for the origin of thought in culture and culture in nature and nature being explicable in the familiar and not so familiar physical and chemical properties of matter. In this discourse the combatants are starkly drawn; what are thoughts if they come from man, aboriginal man from apes, apes descended from lower mammals, mammals from reptiles, reptiles from amphibians, these from fish and fish from plants and plants ultimately from coacervates that have agglomerated in the charged primal vegetable soup of proteins and minerals, to spawn our primogenitor genes, both selfish and empathetic. Those who find the thought repellent that lofty thought could originate in the base atom and the even baser ape could just as well interpret this bloodline as one not demeaning human being but rather as an ascent of matter to life's LUCA, cyanobacterial life to sentience and sentience to intelligence – is not the fate of a lonely atom, wandering in the empty immensity of space, a dust particle of neutrality destined to be drawn

into the bond of chemical matrimony and thence to join the intercourse of a molecular, a microbial community not nobly rendered as exhibiting at the end of its career remarkably human proclivities? Who would refuse to welcome the notion of natural forces, their checks and balances, the play of desire, the energy of difference, the micro-cosmos of the human drama itself as the symbol of more universal horizons and this universe in turn as living out its potential in the life of minds, the words and deeds of human beings? In this train of thought, chemistry keeps a record of the practice of thought as much as the fall of gravity; the latter might be subsumed in the category of mechanics and the former in that of inorganic physics the process of which in turn establishes the basis of organic physics i.e. mineral and vegetable nature and finally that of the animal organism which, in its generation, introduces the experience of death out of itself in which the particular animal as finite existence enters into the relationship of discrepancy with the abstract force of the general principle. "Its disproportion to universality is its original illness and its inborn germ of death," as Hegel explains in § 375 of his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, "the closure of this discrepancy is itself the execution of this fate. The individual mediates itself by assimilating its singularity to the general but attains in this way, as it is only an abstract and immediate being, only abstract objectivity in which its activity dulls, petrifies, its life becoming stagnant habituation so that it thus, in going out of itself, kills itself."

Seine Unangemessenheit zur Allgemeinheit ist seine ursprüngliche Krankheit und [der] angeborene Keim des Todes. Das Aufheben dieser Unangemessenheit ist selbst das Vollstrecken dieses Schicksals. Das Individuum hebt sie auf, indem es der Allgemeinheit seine Einzelheit einbildet, aber hiermit, insofern sie abstrakt und unmittelbar ist, nur eine abstrakte Objektivität erreicht, worin seine Tätigkeit sich abgestumpft [hat] verknöchert und das Leben zur prozeßlosen Gewohnheit geworden ist, so daß es sich so aus sich selbst tötet.<sup>4</sup>

This death, however, as well as the immediate reformation of the individual are affirmed as the being of the idea as spirit. Seen in this light, the lowly physical properties and processes merely offer Thought, the Thinker/Builder, the Builder/Thinker, one matter more in which to construe and with which to depict the distinction of human being.

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<sup>4</sup> cf. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, IX 535.

Therefore to the brutalizing ascertainment that the human mind is *nothing but* electricity, *nothing but* chemistry, we might ask who persists in saying “nothing but” and why? Perhaps ions are worthy of greater recognition than even their greatest advocates, the scientists of the natural and exact sciences, are wont to give. Even if particles cannot talk and tell us about their walk of life, their walk *to* holobiontic life, *to* mind even, the congregations, the communities they form in their configurations, their armies born in the dissonance of charged oppositions, the bodies they founded in the harmonic cooperation of gravitational force, the nations they have built striving for the light they are the source of, the revolving cosmos of their universe, the star of their birth in brilliance and, in spectacular stellar death, the utter blackness of the cold hole of an incomprehensible singularity they revert to in the wink of an eye but from whence they have since sprung again, renewed, in a bang or a whimper – there is a story to be told here, a cause to be taken up, an issue to consider, namely, at the very least, that of the virtue of patience and of modesty and that of a being beholden to what is greater than itself.

It is a good thing that in school children learn that many living beings have a brain, which is sometimes rudimentary, sometimes highly developed. We dissect the lowly worm to that end and learn about the function of its brain with a view to better understanding, eventually, the functions of the left and right hemispheres in the higher primates. This is biology. Less often do we teach our children that people are endowed with reason in relation to which we may distinguish ourselves or fail to do so and that just as surely as man comes from apes, though infinitely more deplorably, apes come from men.

### **10. Reason as the Cognitive Behavior of Man**

Neither as the exponentiation of the hand's proficiency, nor as the physiochemical basis of the brain's architecture are we studying the distinction of human being, nor yet as the cognitive behavior of man.

Anthropology and its retinue of sciences including such diversity as psychology, sociology, ethnology, archeology, and linguistics as well as other sciences of natural history all of which have offered their service and contribution to the inquiry of man by Man, though all important studies in their own right, considering as they do man's place in the world, man's customs and abilities, the sciences man has invented, the history of man's civilization and culture, the diversity of cultures of the world and their conflicts, the biological and genetic determination of individuals in conjunction with the influence of their environments, their achievements in the arts, the philosophical systems with their ideologies and religious

doctrines with their myths that the family of man has devised and how these ideations and man itself have changed and evolved over time, how they differ from place to place and race to race while at the same time manifesting remarkable affinities and similarities across races, regions, and ages – all of these areas of study and expertise define thought in terms of the empirical phenomenon called *mankind* which is taken to be perhaps the most comprehensive topic of modern scientific inquiry.

Now man does many things – sleep, work, play, talk, pray, read, write, eat, cook...and, what else....oh yes, *think*. Man's mental performance is the object of research in cognitive science, an “interdisciplinary” effort in which researchers with areas of interest as diverse as economics and psychology, microbiology and zoology, cybernetics and genetic engineering, semiology and mathematics, as well as many other fields of study – systematically empirical as well as non-empirical, whose specimens are human as well as non-human, natural as well as artificial, taken in Western as well as non-Western ethnical settings. Human behavior occurring individually or in groups offers a wide set of phenomena to investigate in particular through controlled experiments that are more or less invasively performed on subjects, often undergraduates, designed to test people's reactions, mental as well as physical, to stimuli with a view to a particular theoretical model of how cognition works.

A science of cognitive behavior examines the modularity of the mental faculties, whether innate or acquired, analyzes their computational and representational routines, magnetically scans and records how neural populations of the brain become aware of intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli, both inhibitory and excitatory, how children learn language and chimpanzees use languages, how memory traces are linked, stored, and accessed, maps how inferences are drawn; then, conceptual schemata and scripts, analogies, and visual and spatial representations are generated and applied to the “real world” and strategies of deductive reasoning selected. Debates abound about how to best test intelligence in people and other animals, theorize on how higher and lower primates go about making decisions and solving problems, whether rudimentary or advanced, and how their comparative levels of consciousness and awareness of their surroundings and of themselves are influenced by the reciprocity of natural and cultural forces.

Apparently, studies on human cognition seek to understand how the “mind/brain” does what it does as revealed by what people do; it is remarkable how important and mysterious this cause and effect correlation between the brain and human activity is – beginning with the behavior that

is the focus of her experiment, the cognitive scientist explores how the brain would have to function in order to contribute to the emergence of that behavior in the form in which it appeared.

Anthropology, one of the attendant sciences into which the cognitive sciences tap – though of course, for the anthropologist, it is the cognitive sciences that are attendant – inscribes the cerebral behavior of homo sapiens into the natural and cultural, physical and human geography of earth – as rich in regions, landscapes, and climates, as in the diversity of its societies and civilizations – and gathers its data, both emic and etic, across the changing times and places of our blue planet. What a wealth of objects of study this topic of people provides – *people*, the diachronic and synchronic variations in their physical make-up and appearance, their respective languages and societies, whether a nation of millions or a tribe of 30, their comparative histories as documented by the relics and artifacts that have survived to tell their curious tale to future generations.

But can we conceive of our human being not so much as possessing ideas but rather as being possessed of them, ourselves as being *their* property rather than they *ours* such that even as there are the infinitely many thoughts that *we have*, there are a very few, one in particular, *and* three, that *have us*, whom they, coming after, come before as the cause – we being their cause for the simple reason that they were ours first?

### **11. Reason as the Scheme of All Things Thought**

But to study language or behavior, society or the psyche as humanoid (as opposed to merely anthropoid) is not to study the distinction of human being, a study which is, rather, a *record* (in the sense of a *recordatio*) and in this sense an acknowledgement and a *recollection* of human experience and insight with regards to a determinative *principle* or *end*. What are principles and ends of regard? In the olden days, principles of regard took on the form of an overriding issue or topic that (1) struck a *Thinker* as worthy of being taken up, of being regarded, by a discerning mind with a view to deeper understanding and appreciation, that (2) required of a *Doer* the persevering service towards the fulfillment of an end that devotion had championed as a cause and (3) inspired a *Builder*, by skillful use of all the productive resources at his or her disposal, to give tangible, visible shape to that original insight and, in this way, found the dwelling of regard that is alone worthy of being inhabited by that principle's community.

Thus in contradistinction to the notion of reason as an instrument of technological ingenuity or as the electrochemical processes of the brain or

finally as the central locus of the cognitive behavior of man in the sociocultural and natural milieu that define Man's life-world continuum, we introduce the idea of pure reason as a *train of thought* that comprises three distinct elements – the *principle* (A), the *issue* (B), and the *insight* (C). We take these terms to be variables (hence the letters A, B, C) since different trains of thought found different orders (A), signify different issues (B), and discern different conceptions (C) of the distinction of human being, as we shall see later when we study in detail the principles and methods of our analysis, which we might call, provisionally, the *logotectonic of regard* in order to highlight that the occupation of pure reason, understood as the building of trains of thought, is, with a view to the objects it studies, both a celebratory acknowledgement of their merit as well as a systematic demonstration of their coherence.

Thus, the issue of this principle and the cause that drives our conceptual efforts with regards to it command us to take for the object of our study neither the network of the brain, nor the mechanisms of the brawn of our anthropological Man, but rather the comprehensive history of contemporary and traditional thought, more simply, *the scheme of all things thought*. Finally, as pertains to the determinative principles that are at issue in our investigation of the accomplishments of renowned poets and thinkers – for it is in their works that principles of thought have been articulated – our focus and driving purpose remains the better understanding and articulation of the experience of the *distinction of human being*. Taken as one complete line of reasoning, a *ratio* of the terms comprised by it, our investigation might be succinctly determined to consist of the following three main ideas:

*the logotectonic of regard (C) – the scheme of all things thought  
(B) – the distinction of human being (A)*

This ratio (C – B – A) may be presented in the form of a statement declaring the purpose of our investigation as follows:

*The demonstration of the coherence and the acknowledgement of the merit of the contributions of contemporary and traditional thought with a view towards the more profound experience and conception of the distinction of human being.*

It may also be expressed as a proposition as follows:

*The scheme of all things thought is the logotectonic articulation of the experience and the conception of the distinction of human being in the development of Occidental culture.*

Considering now briefly each of this proposition's three components in turn, namely the principle (A), the issue (B), and the cognizance (C) of our undertaking, we review first our experience with regards to **principles (A)** frequently encountered in the familiar form of *standards* suggesting to us a rich panorama of issues of valuation that often arise in this connection: *measures* found appraisal of rank and assessment of quality; *norms* provide criteria for the judgment of esteem and standing; *touchstones* and *milestones*, *benchmarks* and *yardsticks* gauge and check, assize and assay, try and test, and we are all familiar with the trials and tests that *rulers* and *rulings* afflict us with; *patterns* and *paragons* stamp the matter; the precedence of *types* and *models* rate our model-making; kings, princes, magistrates give *orders* that rank and grade our station on scales from, say, 1 to 10. Their *imperatives* and *precepts* prescribe purpose to action; *protocols* command; *codes* of honor mandate; *directives* are the proclamation of the *law* that poses and exacts our *obligation*, sets *mandates*, decrees *dictates* with the voice of *authority*, administering the *power* of the “*firsts*,” the *principals*, who embody the *ends* and the *origins* of all whose *destiny* it is to follow their *lead*.

The notion of the determining principle includes not only that of *measurement* and *definition* but also that of endeavor, the *command* of commitment of the will's decision, the *criterion* upon which the verdicts of judgment are based, the *reason* that drives it forwards, fixed and firm, towards the fulfillment of the objective; the first *cause* and causes of being, the *provenance* of transition, the *summons* to convene, the *government* to sanction, the *fundament* to build upon, the *point* to be made and well taken.

Determinative principles contain not merely *COMPULSION* as in the Sophistic *Antilogic* (Zenon, Gorgias, Protagoras), i.e. that of the force of *logic*, of *persuasion*, and of *politics*, *FOUNDATION* as in Milesian/Eleatic *Physiology* (Thales, Anaximenes, Xenophanes), i.e. that of *aquatic* nature, *psychic* nature, and *divine* nature, and *NECESSITY* as in Milesian/Ionian *Cosmology* (Anaximander, Pythagoras, Heraclitus), i.e. that of the *ordered* turn and return of the seasons, the *regularity* of the stars' revolutions, and the *governing* of transition in the relationship of the One's Other to the Other's One, but also *CAUSALITY* as in pluralist *Atomism* (Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus), i.e. that of the double *principles* of amity and

enmity, the vortical efficacy of *mind* upon matter, and that of *vacuity* in which swirling atoms may stick and scatter.<sup>5</sup>

From these few examples we might observe that the conception of a principle suggests a rendering in terms of authority and power as a result of the difference that it makes in establishing a scheme of all things thought within the particular framework that the principle defines, providing as end and origin the general conditions upon which an order of possibilities is determined, and to which there is subsequent accordance or subordination as to a law, category, or decree of which there is appointment, application, or realization as a model or paradigm of development as a result of which there is a collection or community of particulars as its correlative whole, its unity, is accomplished.

It is, of course, that Greek word par excellence, ΛΟΓΟΣ, that refers most specifically to the inaugural relationship of discrimination that the *perception of intellect (C)* achieves with regard to original principles. It is not easy for human being to affect indifference and plead ignorance when subject to the force of its determinative provenience. For at that point, once the distinction of human being has been drawn, it is already too late to be indifferent and henceforth ignorance must be studied if it is to be, however fragilely, maintained. Once the relationship of thought has been introduced into experience and insight has left its mark, the moment of truth has arrived; there is no way around it – the critical decision must be taken with respect to how this relationship to the determination of the principle will be regarded. In other words, this decision calls upon thought to recognize and thus to take up the cause that is the present of the principle.

The attentive regard that corresponds to that present was originally and most famously the insight of *THEORY* (ΘΕΟΡΙΑ), which was first conceived of by Thales as “perceptive *OBSERVATION*” (ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ), that discriminating (but not discriminatory) *ATTENDANCE* that, in noting the “*totality of all that has naturally come to light*” (ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΦΑΝΕΡΑ), grasps the issue of *aquatic nature*, which is the Thalesian principle, as the foundation of the foundation, the ground of terrestrial nature. Thus in the ancient Greek tradition. The Greek epoch is the historical locus of thought's regard as the *PERCEPTION of the senses* (ΑΙΣΘΗΣΕΩΝ) the most highly prized of which is

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<sup>5</sup> See H. Boeder's papers and lectures on pre-Socratic Greek philosophy in *Das Bauzeug der Geschichte*, ed. Gerald Meier, Würzburg 1994.

eyesight “because among the senses it provides us with the most insight and discrimination.” (Aristotle, *Met.* 980a 26-27)

ΑΙΤΙΟΝ Δ' ΟΤΙ ΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ ΠΟΙΕΙ ΓΝΩΡΙΖΕΙΝ ΗΜΑΣ ΑΥΤΗΤΩΝ  
ΑΙΣΘΗΣΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΛΑΣΔΗΛΟΙ ΔΙΑΦΟΡΑΣ

For the Greeks, perceptive seeing *is* knowing and, accordingly, the field of *science* ranged from *INSIGHT*'s simple and necessary being (Parmenides) to the necessarily limited *VIEW* (ΔΟΚΟΣ) of human knowledge (Xenophanes) and from the mere probability of extraneous *IMPRESSION* (Democritus) to the self-evidence of thought in the thetic art of dialectical *RATIONCINATION* (Zeno) over the *IDEA* of the Good (Plato) as the being *PRESENT* for and of insight, to distinguished *CONTEMPLATION*, *theory* in the strict sense of *PURE REASON* (ΝΟΥΣ) deduced as the best being of all thinking the best being of all (Aristotle).<sup>6</sup>

Thus to each of the distinct principles known to Greek conception, there stands a unique corresponding relationship of apperception – the cognitive term of discernment in each case specifies the particular character of thought under the postulate of the given principle. This character of thought regarding the principle attains complete determinacy in the form of the designation of thought's realization, which is the congruent issue at stake.

Accordingly, the other Greek term corresponding to ΛΟΓΟΣ, equally familiar and untranslatable, refers precisely to this *issue (B)*, the controversial topic, the moot point answering to perception's discrimination and its deeds of discernment that, since their origin in antiquity, have been celebrated as “classical thought,” namely *Being* (ON, ΟΥΣΙΑ). We encounter it first in *PHYSIS* (ΦΥΣΙΣ) as distinguished from the natural emergence of *PLURAL APPARITION* (ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΑ ΦΑΝΕΡΑ), followed by the integrity of the *COSMOS* (ΚΟΣΜΟΣ) in the transience of conflicting elemental substances, as the enduring *TOTALITY* (Anaximander), the *HARMONY* (Pythagoras), the *PROPORTIONALITY* of mutual contestation, i.e. the *One/All* (Heraclitus)<sup>7</sup> of their apparition and dissolution, the one balanced nature of these natures – a train of thought that ultimately goes beyond nature, the issue of thought, to the reasoning of this train of thought itself in the conception of ΟΥΣΙΑ (ousia), the

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. See in particular the essay “Was ist *Physis*?” pp. 70-94.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Boeder, *The Topologie der Metaphysik*, pp. 95-96.

substantial entity of insight (ΝΟΥΣ), i.e. *being* (ΟΝ) – whether as Parmenides' predicate of *PERFECTION*, as Plato's life of the good, i.e. the *WELL-BEING* of the dialectic soul, or as Aristotle's teleological *UNIVERSE*, turning about its cardinal point, namely pure reason as thought thinking thought.

## 12. Reason as the Latest Late/Modern Project?

Thus whereas anthropology studies *thought* as man's salient mental capacities, processes, and their proficiency, thereby providing an account of the great diversity of uses and abuses of people's minds and the behavior that ensues when they actively engage in the framing and settling of their everyday lives, in the study we propose, the discernment of cognition is conceived of as a train of thought and can be analysed as a relationship of three signature terms which specify within ever wider frameworks of conception, ultimately however in the scheme of all things thought, the principle (A), the issue (B), and the insight (C), in which our experience with pure reason resides.

What are we proposing? This: One experience and the entire cultural history of Western civilization that is made to serve as the framework, more, as the element of its articulation in which all of the terms we have been discussing, by way of example, in connection with Greek philosophy, find their unique and definite position. It is impossible to properly and completely understand this experience without following the line of reasoning that Greek thought has devoted to it. Moreover, the distinction of human being cannot be grasped without the inclusion of Christian thought and that of the modern and the post/modern age, the latter of which is being built as we speak. To comprehend this experience we must study all three Epochs, the First, the Second, *and* the Third as well as the Post/Modern era that serves as our death-defying jumping-off point.

In the scheme and the logotectonic of all things thought, each thinker's accomplishment is acknowledged for the difference she or he made in the whole, for the distinction that his or her insight has contributed to the entirety. Not one is excluded. Not one. For our job is to put each contribution into perspective and that means to place each thought in relationship to every thought that has ever been thought and recorded in history. Of course, some thoughts have been lost or nearly so – in that case we must reconstruct the train of thought as best we can with the pieces and hints that are still available to us; the great majority of contributions however, especially if we consider contemporary thinkers' output, have made no *distinctive*, no *principal* difference in terms of the scheme of all

things thought. They are merely derivative, epigonic and a particular thinker's popularity at a particular time or place is no guarantee of significance.

This should not be taken as a hurtful condemnation or even as a belittling dismissal of their efforts. There have, in fact, been very few thinkers and poets (again, poets?) that have succeeded in making a difference in the scheme of all things thought. Very, very few. So let us, without condescension, also applaud the philosophical *corps de ballet* and make an effort to find for each of its members a place in that scheme as well!

Minor thinkers of the world, let us not despair! Each of us has an acknowledged role to play in the forum of public discourse – our papers and speeches, our books and blogs, our lectures and our conversations with friends and family, with students, all do indeed do service to the enterprise of thought; our efforts have perhaps inspired some thoughtfulness here or there where oblivion is wont to reign, have sung praises for such liberal attitudes as favour lively discussion, have actively furthered critique that challenges pernicious dogma, have brought to light obscurity, have vied to focus distraction, have borne and sought to pass on the philosophical torch....

To this end, namely towards the fostering of a more exact *science* of thought, we propose the following three laws of reason's latest late/modern project to guide our research – call it a renewed, a logotectonic *philology* – namely first the acknowledged scientific ***precept of objectivity***. The need for this axiom is founded upon the observation that thinkers throughout the history of thought have tended to find fault in the thought of their precursors. It is a familiar exercise in traditional philosophical discourse that while a thinker introduces his or her views, those of other thinkers are subject to a critique intended to indicate where their progenitors have gone wrong and why they are mistaken.

One way you could carry out your refutation is to denounce an “obviously fallacious” view that is still being entertained “in some quarters” in deference to its honorary status as “traditional” or “classical” and then either to attack it as such or else to impute it to your opponent as a “central” thesis in the latter's thinking endeavour. We might call this the *beating-the-dead-horse* argument, while another well-known and related strategy would be to present the offending position in its weakest form and then show how it can be handily refuted as indicative of the fact that its weakness pertains not to this misrepresentation but rather to its own inherent insubstantiality.

Such an approach has often been called the *straw man* or the *Aunt Sally* argument.

The standpoint of objectivity appealed to by this first precept was first expressed by Hegel in part II of his *Science of Logic* i.e. *Subjective Logic or the Doctrine of Concept*. He said that a “genuine refutation must engage the opponent's force and position itself within the purview of his strength; attacking him from a point of view extraneous to that defining the domain of his project...does not serve the purpose.... The only proper refutation of a position...consists therefore in acknowledging that it is essential and necessary but that its standpoint is self-severally distinguished from itself when set within the scope of a wider framework” of reflection.

*Die wahrhafte Widerlegung muß in die Kraft des Gegners eingehen und sich in den Umkreis seiner Stärke stellen; ihn außerhalb seiner selbst anzugreifen...wo er nicht ist, fördert die Sache nicht. Die einzige Widerlegung... kann daher nur darin bestehen, sein Standpunkt zuerst als wesentlich und notwendig anerkannt werde, daß aber zweitens dieser Standpunkt aus sich selbst auf den höheren gehoben werde.*<sup>8</sup>

Contemporary thinkers trained in and adept at the “critical approach,” must deem this precept strikingly misguided. For this state of affairs of philosophical discourse would mean that the pre-eminent challenge facing the thinker is in fact neither to “disagree” nor to “agree” – as one critical thinker considering another thinker's doctrines would normally be expected to – with what has been proposed. But what else are we supposed to do? How else are we supposed to actively participate in a thinker's reasoning if the principle of objectivity enjoins us to refrain both from attacking and from defending that thinker's doctrines and conclusions, invalidating or perpetuating theories, unearthing assumptions thought senseless or celebrating supposedly plausible ones while either innovating the verbal repertoire of one's own idioms to accommodate an approved doctrine or else roundly flouting the patent nonsense and insignificant speech that former philosophers, even the very best names among them, inexplicably fell prey to.

Does not this consequence seem preposterous? Certainly the philosophers of old were avid in their attack of other thinkers' proposals.

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Hegel, *Die Wissenschaft der Logik* [Die Lehre vom Begriff (1816)], p. 10, lines 16-20.

Consider Aristotle's rejection of Plato's ideas; Socrates' rejection of the sophists; Gorgias' refutation of Parmenides, the Eleatics challenge to the cosmologists. And of course Heraclitus even dared to criticize Homer, the teacher of the Greeks – every great teacher falls at the patricidal hands of a great pupil. And does not Christian religion mark the death of Greek philosophy, the Humanity of Human Being contradict the glory of the Godhead's Trinity?

Here is the crux: Are not thoughts and ideas essentially exclusionary? In principle, you cannot reasonably maintain two without subjugating, assimilating, one to the other in an anesthetizing synthesis or confounding symmetrization – you have to get off the fence, friend, and decide, commit, take a stance, make a statement, raise a banner and defend with aplomb (if not a bomb) your position against those opposed to your gang and guild, declare yourself as friend or foe to fellow friends and foes.

Ideas don't blend or mend. And as Hölderlin sings in the hymn *Das Einzige* (The Sole and Only One), from his *Vaterländischen Gesänge* (Hymns of Fatherland), "...serving one I miss the other."

...dien ich einem, mir/Das andere fehlet.<sup>9</sup>

For does not *grace* contradict nature and *nature* grace? Does not *fate* contradict freedom, *freedom* liberty, *liberty* justice, *justice* mercy, and again does not *faith* gainsay knowledge, *religion* overthrow science, *morality* drub conception? Do we not see the *good* clobber the right, the *right* smite might, *beauty* trump truth and *fact* fiction, *possibility* whip reality, *practice* theory and vice versa? Does not selfish *ipseity* lick identity and necessity, and *unity* discontinuity, *physis* upset nomos and *culture* nature, the *ear* best the eye and, then again, the *eye* worst the ear, the Greek trounce the *Jew*, the *Jew* the *Greek*, the *Union* defeat the Family and the *Family* of the individual come before the government of the Union? Is not, has not been, will not be the *Christian* and the *Muslim* fashions of piety, forever locked in deadly fratricidal hate, each perpetually, principally vanquished by and vanquishing the other? And what of the so-called post/moderns – have they not "unmasked," "debunked," "deflated," named and shamed, traditional philosophical thought as Euro-eschato-helio-historico-onto-logo-topo-techno-teleo-theo-ethno-anthropo-semanto-phono-ocular-phallogocentrism? With a view to the strife between orthodoxy and heresy, scholastic schisms, crusades and inquisitions, sectarian altercation and the latter-day battle of

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<sup>9</sup> Hölderlin, *Große Stuttgarter Hölderlin-Ausgabe* [GSA], II.1, p.158, lines 48-49.

the sexes and the cultures, not to mention the perennial iconoclasm of youth and the young at heart – how could both sides even entertain the notion that their conflict is a quibble over designations, over cognomens for their pets, over scarfs, foreskin, and food, relic bones and poems, battles pitched over ceremonial plots of dirt on the earth, mats, planks with contests in sitting, kneeling, and squatting thereupon, a quarrel about cups and knives of animal, of human sacrifice, of tall tales, high white-washed walls or daubed, stained in blood blues and red of self-slaughter, a quarrel about the size of spired erections and, therein, a squabbling about ritualistic words that, in the over-eagerness of their zealots, are mindlessly mumbled or else with a warning shriek ejaculated as the expense of spirit in a waste of shame?

Yes, and what about the march of scientific advancement? What about that supposedly benignant progress from primitive notions to the clarity of the concept, from the velvet pillow and the silver platter of solemn conservatism to the lacerating edge of avant-garde modernity?

Do we not want to take sides, join and then seize the club? Or else rebel and reject, deplore and demolish? For we are saying not only that there is no cause for essential dissent, there is, moreover, no *reasoned* license or allowance of the true believer's, the acolyte's, obsequies towards one principle in exclusion of all others. There is just the occupation of reason with reason or not, but not right or wrong reason and reasons. Is it true that if we commit to such a precept, we are forced to surrender our ease of a particular standpoint with regards to a favorite ideology, a preferred dogma, a commodious community of initiates? Why, how dreadfully dull and rational it all must be, how terribly "scientific," how solemnly subdued and sober, how...well,...square! Indeed, the ascetic virtues of yore, especially that of sobriety and temperance, even celibacy, with their quaintly antiquated air, might be invigorated here, in this context, with this philology, by marshaling their cardinal forces under the banner of a new maxim, i.e. resist the sweet surrender of thought's native chastity to promiscuous congress with any one worldview, language, or religion.

Let this precept of objectivity be the sacrament of purity for *our* nun and monk: the mortification of their flesh is to love no particular thought more than another and none more than thought itself – for thought's sake to love, to the extent we are able, all thoughts equally in their community and to hate none, fostering thus their anthology, watering this garden of delight, every root and bud, with recognition and appreciation for how each flower and each fruit, each in its own way, makes (or at least has tried to make) a worthy contribution in the on-going endeavor of distinguishing the destiny

of human being. For this distinction is the *last* thought of all...as well as the very first; it is, moreover the end and the origin of every thought on sanctity, on religion, on civilization, on culture. For as Schiller assures us in his introductory essay *Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie* (The Use of the Chorus in Tragedy) to the play *Die Braut von Messina* (The Bride from Messina): “under the mantle of all religions lies “religion” itself, the idea of a distinguished being that poetic thought, the Builder, ought to be permitted to express in terms which are, with respect to the particular case, the most convenient and the most suitable.”

*Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee eines Göttlichen, und es muß dem Dichter erlaubt sein, dieses auszusprechen, in welcher Form er jedesmal am bequemsten und am treffendsten findet.*<sup>10</sup>

For imagine just such a “sanctity,” “religion,” “culture” the first precept of which posits that it is the capacity and the destiny of human being to step back from every *particular* thought, to review objectively every sanctity, every religion, every culture and, from this standpoint of “unbelonging” and exile, in complete detachment and abstraction, even while inhabiting the desert of this quintessential ΕΠΟΧΗ (epoch), to judge their merits *objectively* with regards to a given principle, measuring them against the criteria of pure reason, such reason namely as is always and permanently distinct from any given, accepted, or established sanctity, religion, or culture, from every name of renown and denomination. What sort of “culture” would that be, a culture “without” all culture? Where if not in this transcendent *general* could we worldly corporals hope to find the captain of true judicious tolerance that is neither indulgent, nor negligent? No, ideas don't bend or blend...but perhaps we can therefore all the better build with them and raise a monumental edifice that is resplendent in their tessellate patterns in which each thought is a unique stone and each stone a gem of brilliance.

Thus, complementing the dictum of objectivity that prohibits our cohabitation with any particular school of thought or thinker to the exclusion of another or others, we posit the precept of the ***topology of principles*** which imposes upon us the requirement to presume that every thinker's argument is essentially cogent when placed into the wider framework of reasoning to which it belongs and understood with regards to

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<sup>10</sup> Schiller, *National Ausgabe* [NA], X.15.224-27.

the overall principle upon which this framework is based as well as on the immediate principle governing that particular train of thought wherein it occurs. Our task is therefore to determine what that principle is and how, given this principle, the issue at stake requires the position and justifies the argument advocated by the thinker in accordance with it. No thinker whose work the philosophical tradition has bequeathed to our care and regard can be *essentially* mistaken, not, at least, if we consider the *whole* story of thought with regards to its principles, which is not the same as giving an account of “the history of philosophy without any gaps.”<sup>11</sup>

Salient evidence of the application of this maxim for the better apprehension of ideas is the doctrine of the Three Epochs of our philosophical tradition – the *Greek*, the *Christian* and that of Enlightenment which, together with the tradition-critical animus peculiar to mundane Modernity and its latter day linguistic turn in the conceits of Post/modern persuasion, form the overall framework of Occidental thinking that Boeder has conceptualized as constituted by the totalities of *Tradition* (Geschichte), *World* (Welt), and *Language* (Sprache).<sup>12</sup>

Every thought of every thinker can be located within this framework; each of these three totalities consists of three triads of thinkers conceived of as accomplishing together the elaboration of the particular principle that occasioned their individual projects and as giving rise to the train of thought that can be concatenated of each thinker's main ideas constituting a unique position within the line of reasoning that ensued in consequence of the task assigned to thought by the principle and forming thus an association of

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<sup>11</sup> In his podcast series of this name, Peter Adamson has undertaken to examine “the ideas, lives and historical context of the major philosophers as well as the lesser-known figures of the tradition.” See <http://www.historyofphilosophy.net/>

<sup>12</sup> Boeder began with the conception of the Western philosophical tradition by delineating a topology of metaphysical thought (*Topologie der Metaphysik*, Freiburg/München 1980), proceeded then to explicate the orders of Modernity in *Die Vernunftgefüge der Modernen* (Freiburg/München 1988), and completed his topological project with a treatment of post/modern thinking in *Die Installationen der Submoderne* (Würzburg 2006). For an elucidation of the aforementioned terms of totality, namely of *Tradition*, *World*, and *Language* and a demonstration of how they facilitate the elaboration of a scheme of all things thought, see the collection of his essays and lectures on this topic in *Seditious*, ed. Marcus Brainard, New York 1997.

ideas that is not a brainstorm's psychological cluster but rather a logical figure of deduction in a sense that we will explore later.

Hence, thinkers always articulate a position, *their* position within a larger framework of thought that is not *theirs* at all but rather one to which they, unbeknownst to themselves, contribute towards the completion of; in this collaboration, each associate received his or her own appointed task in accordance with the exigencies that previous thoughts tend to place upon subsequent thoughts. A distinction once made cannot be undone and every distinction is uniquely determined and thus only decidable within the framework of the other distinctions made within that association that is itself located in a further system of distinctions in which a particular epoch of thought has been defined.

Thus our investigation cannot begin by addressing any of the familiar philosophical problems and controversies that have been abstracted from philosophical discourse in the past and then posited as general recurring unresolved issues foremost of which are surely the so-called one/many, mind/body, free will/determinism, form/matter, objectivity/subjectivity, name/thing dichotomies which seem to be at the heart of a great many other debates like those pertaining to rationalism and empiricism, realism and nominalism, positivism and relativism, to name just a few, all of which group various doctrines and views regarding such problems into categories of solutions that can be then studied in their own right, thoughts about thoughts, for the sake of a tidier labelling and ordering of schools and styles some of which have gained the status of "science" like epistemology, logic, ontology, the philosophies of science, of language, of the mind, of law or religion, or at least the secondary prestige of an academically sanctioned school promulgating its very own worldview, ideology, and concomitant methodology, like skepticism or idealism, pragmatism or phenomenology, existentialism or analytical philosophy.

Now obviously there is nothing wrong with being an existentialist or a phenomenologist, advocating pragmatism over idealism, singing accolades to skepticism, preferring to read books on ethics to those written on logic, disparaging studies devoted to the mind while appreciating those that investigate politics. It is only natural that some folks prefer to think about *beauty* in art, some about *God* and/or the *gods* of religion; some are intrigued by the notion of *justice* others by that of *being*. How about doing research on what a *society* is or a *business organization*? Or analyzing the concept of *culture*. Become a historian if you like *history*, an epistemologist if you seek to know more about *knowledge* and dabble in a little bit of everything, in other words, take up *literature theory*, if you, in your salad

days, wanted to study *truth*, only to discover at the crust end of your ways that, unfortunately or happily, there is, in fact, *for the reader*, no truth, no human or any other kind of being, no world, and *truth* least of all, but rather just....text? Now that is indeed a thought! And, yes, even this result has its proper place of honor in the scheme of all things thought!

Thus the precept of the topology of principles would, for example, dissuade us from contenting ourselves with the investigation of the views held by noteworthy philosophers concerning the mind/body issue or to venture to explode it as a myth, as a ghost in a machine, say, or, alternatively, to arbitrate a reunification of estranged issues, perhaps forging a coalition between opposing schools of thought.

And don't you dare ask, supposedly following in Socrates' footsteps, such questions as: "What is *Virtue*?" "What is *Justice*?" Don't you dare ask "What is *Freedom*?" "What is *God*?" "What is *Spirit*?" "What is *Truth*?" Are you looking for the definition of word? Try a dictionary, friend. For we cannot assume a continuity of meaning from Homer till today with regards to the translation of names, of any names, across the barrier of time or language. We are advised not to assume (at the risk of making an *ass* of *u* and *me*) that Plato was talking about the same thing when he said "*ΙΔΕΑ*" or "*ΦΥΣΙΣ*" as when Hegel said "*Idee*," or "*Natur*" although we might translate both with the English words "*idea*," and "*nature*" respectively or that the difference between these terms would be accessible to some all-encompassing program of hermeneutics that seeks to reactivate ancient ideas in modern terms in the hope of making them palatable and salubrious for a modern audience.

This leads us to the third axiom that we posit, namely the precept of the ***primacy of insight*** which stipulates that our starting point is and must be what we know; we begin not with a question or questions but rather with an answer and an insight into a principle that has been known and articulated again and again for thousands of years; founding thus a tradition upon the diligent recollection of these answers and the unique answer corresponding to that self-several principle in richly evocative terms that reflect the depth and breadth of human experience with regards to it – that is the business of philosophy for us, for a science we will call, in a new sense the details of which have yet to be clarified, *philology*, the discerning, fostering love of these ancient languages of thought.

Indeed, reading works of poetic and philosophical literature through the eyes of such a philology is a unique experience in that we are required to know *before* we begin to read what has always already been spoken in what

is going to be said, perhaps for the first time, in that particular way by that particular author in that particular moment of history. In other words, with regards to the works of philosophy and poetry we will study in the following, we must know the principle (A) before we can consider the topic (B) and the topic before we can appreciate the arguments (C). And in order to do justice to a single argument in a thinker's train of thought, we must have previously comprehended every principle known to the Occidental history of thought in its entirety from its remotest origins till now, today. Is this insane, or merely impossible? Let us begin to find out.

We must start with what we know. We must start with what we know and then, upon the certainty and clarity of this insight, build a monument to our sudden or gradually dawning realization and delight that thought, in its perfect simplicity and utter immensity, is, in fact, quite beyond anything we have ever known.

# The First Part

## The Topology of Principles

### I. The Self-Severalty of Pure Reason

#### A. The Principle of Drawing a Distinction

##### 13. Reason Distinguished in itself and from itself

*Pure reason*, then, as it seems, has become our topic now, if we decide to give the issue in question, our cause and theme, namely the *distinction of human being*, that preliminary name – though, of course, “distinction of human being” is also a name, neither better, nor worse than the term “ΛΟΓΟΣ,” however you prefer to translate it, whether as *language, speech, writing*, or even *literature* – and run the risk of misleading the reader at the outset. For “reason” though but a name, is an elucidative one, rich in connotations, rich with history, goading prejudices, inviting as well as challenging preconceptions, misconceptions.

In spite of these dire risks, we will put it nonetheless – misnomer, pseudonym though it may appear to be to many – provisionally at least, for the distinctive sign and signature of human being, of which it has traditionally and regularly been predicated. It remains for the time being our term of choice for concisely designating the train of thought about thought that thought itself *is* the topology of which we intend now to investigate in detail, principle by principle.

For in keeping with this science's logotectonic methodology, which we will exam in due course, in truth, any term will do – whether it has been garnered from our philosophical tradition (as the term “reason” has”) or else borrowed from literature and poetry and even occasionally from so-called contemporary pop-culture to the extent that the inventions of its speech practice might provide us with a felicitous turn of word or phrase of suitable richness and colour to vividly highlight aspects of the distinction in question with regards to the principles upon which our newfangled “philological” science is based.

Whatever its drawbacks, at least the appellation “*pure thought*” or “*pure reason*,” clearly distinguishes it, as we have seen, from *mere* cognition, from sundry mental, biological, or merely physical (electrical) phenomena of the central nervous system, in other words, from thought as a specimen of the so-called physical sciences, but also from those sciences concerned more generally with diverse human or social phenomena in which thinking and ideas play a prominent role in connection with issues and quarrels and puzzles so familiar to philosophical and epistemological schools of thought, studies and theories regarding the human race, the human mind, human psychology, human ethnology, in a word – all sciences under the aegis of an all-encompassing natural history of man, i.e. anthropology. All of these sciences, whatever their merit, fertility, and application, are not the science of pure reason.

Thus, our study of the distinction of human being as *pure* reason is distinguished not only from the latter-day sciences of the origin, the function, and the products of man's mental industry, of which these sciences themselves are the self-sustaining, the “autopoetic,” objects of inquiry, but all the more from the *instrumental* reason of technology, business, and politics, the particular sense of thought that, as we have said, is not directed at apprehending thought in and of itself, but rather such thought as tends to be preoccupied with everything else besides thought, in particular with the urgent real-life situations that emerge on a daily basis in an effort to make sense out of them, mustering and mastering them, finding to a given set of ends the most efficient means.

Finally, putting modern science, technical rationality, and their world aside and considering the achievements of reason in our occidental philosophical tradition, as Boeder has shown, the philological study of pure reason we are contemplating must also learn to distinguish it from its *natural* and *mundane* counterparts.<sup>13</sup> Natural reason studies thought as the workings of the human mind turned questioningly to the visible world, the unity of which is the proud achievement of its very own light, thereby establishing *science* in the first place with a view towards better apprehending the finitude of the human condition and human understanding with respect to the order of that universe, its beings as opposed to appearances, its external truth as opposed to the mere inward figment of the fantasy, the indivisible natural intellect as opposed to infinite

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<sup>13</sup> For the difference between *Natural* and *Mundane* reason see Boeder's article “The Distinction of Reason” in *Seditions*, pp. 101-109.

divisible corporality, in *my* reflection of which knowledge *I* can perhaps, with some luck and good faith and cultivation, map out the realm of *my own* modest certainty; such natural reason can also be distinguished from mundane reason which purports to teach men in the flesh to become better men by attending to the cosmos of elemental contention, encouraging their accordance with the rational constitution of its order that determines the bearings of a dispassionate soul, and liberating them thus from the sphere of strife among individuals in the secluded retreat of a secure garden of their own choosing, ultimately, their own founding, as obedient subjects in the corporate body of a commonwealth that secures by coercive power their enduring peace – for thus is the difference between Physiological and Cosmological, Stoic and Epicurean, Cartesian and Hobbesian reason.

Hence, following Boeder, we again emphasize that pure thought is a topology of principles and not just one, an entire array of reasons and a configuration of these arrays comprising ratios of rationality, not just one conception, not just a single generic reason or one fixed idea, though there is, of course, the totalitarian reason of the one-track, monomaniacal mind as well, only too glad to assimilate all thought to its regime, to make of several reasons and different principles but a single one, its own. In the course of this study, we will hear of its device and take note of its empire, too, though a treatment of the *perversion* of reason must be reserved for a future enterprise. For now, we propose that “reason” is an excellent first name for the distinction of human being because it is, like this being, distinguished in itself and from itself.

#### 14. The Entity of Identity

To the philosophies of *natural* and *mundane* reason, Boeder opposed philosophy in the strict sense of *philo-sophia*, which is the science of pure reason. For in contrast to their stance of dissent and rejection or else preemption and replacement regarding the present of an anterior insight and the recognition due precedent knowledge, *conceptual* reason or *metaphysics* has always fostered an enduring nearness to and acknowledgement of precisely just such a priority, which was called distinguished knowledge or *wisdom* (ΣΟΦΙΑ - sophia) – knowledge before all knowledge, the origin of knowledge. In accordance with the doctrine of the three Epochs of philosophical thought, metaphysics received and affirmed three principles, namely *Destiny – God – Freedom* as its three unique objects of speculation the conception of which led to the logical,

moral, and aesthetic realization of pure reason as *thought thinking thought*.<sup>14</sup>

In what way does the admittedly odd, though eminently “philosophical” expression *thought thinking thought* provide us with an initial concept of our experience with the distinction of human being, the profound knowledge of which has been termed ΣΟΦΙΑ and through the reception of which reason acquired its purity in the first place, namely as that of the *Muses*, that of the *Holy Spirit* and that of the *Humanity of Human Being*? Similarly, we might ask in what way was Aristotle inspired by Homer, Augustine by the Apostle Paul, Kant by Rousseau – the one inspired to grasp freedom as the *autonomous law of self-respect*, the other the crucifixion of the Son of God as the *admonition of repentance in the humility of Christ*, and the third the apportionment of the Olympian kingdom as the *universe of distinguished beings* each abiding within the limits of their own determination under the first and best being of all, Zeus, *Nous* (the contemplative sight and insight of reason).

Let us therefore embark upon and participate in the intricate age-old endeavor of thought considering thought in the looking-glass of its own speculative gaze and, while taking into account the simple fact of such a thing as this, thought, which is, obviously, no thing at all, note, first of all, the most obvious property that it immediately presents to our intuition namely the peculiar twist of reflection's circularity.

Now circles, far from indicating a breakdown in our line of reasoning, offer us a useful model for indicating the literally *preposterous* relationship that presents itself when we consider what thought thinking thought entails. In his *Foundation of the Doctrine of Science in its Entirety* (1794), Fichte formulated its activity thus:

The First Person posits itself and exists by virtue of simply positing itself through itself; and conversely: the First Person exists, and posits its being by virtue of simply being. It is, at the same time, the actor and the product of the action; the activity and that which is produced through the activity; act and fact are one and the same; and therefore this *I-am* is the expression of self-enacting being.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Boeder's article “Privilege of Presence,” p. 90 and “Is Totalizing Thinking Totalitarian?” p. 254, *Ibid*.

*Das Ich setzt sich selbst, und es ist, vermöge dieses bloßen Setzens durch sich selbst; und umgekehrt: das Ich ist, und es setzt sein Seyn, vermöge seines bloßen Seyns. - Es ist zugleich das Handelnde, und das Produkt der Handlung; das Thätige, und das, was durch die Thätigkeit hervorgebracht wird; Handlung und That sind Eins und ebendasselbe; und daher ist das: Ich bin, Ausdruck einer Thathandlung. (Fichte, Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, I p.96)*

As this train of thought makes evident, thought thinking about thought is not an exercise in “retrospection” in which we try to get at the contents of our psyche by thinking about our thoughts with a view to uncovering or becoming better attuned to our unspoken emotions, needs, and desires. It is the self-relative relationship of reflection itself that is at issue. Thought thinking thought is productive, it brings forth its own being and is, in this sense, *causa sui*. Think about it. How can anything, even “God,” be the cause of itself?

Either it exists already before it begins with its production, meaning that something else must have been its cause (if indeed it has a cause, which it may not – it could, of course, have always been) and then it wouldn't be the cause of itself, or it cannot originate at all since, nothing to begin with prior to production, it would be nothing first and then have to bring itself forth into being afterwards. Clearly, it must *be* already in order to produce and if it is not there yet, it cannot bring itself into being by itself. But, again, how else could it be a product if it was not previously the producer and again how producer if it had not been previously produced? Is this train of thought logical? Something must *be* in order to *produce* and it must *produce* in order to *be*; without being, it cannot produce; without producing, it cannot be. In fact, there is but a single thing that could have this property. And it is no “thing” at all, nor is it “God.” If we take Fichte’s word for it, it is the only truly undecidable object, impossible *and* real – in one, the forming of being *and* the being formed.

Thought thinking thought requires that thought, the thinker, be both the thinking subject and the thought object, in other words, that the thinker be both inside and outside the train of thought, the train as well as the conductor, the conductor as well as the voyager, the voyage *and* the vehicle, the way *and* the end, the outcome of thought as well as the activity of thought from which thought first emerges being simultaneously the egg before the chicken and the chicken before the egg.

In the Third Epoch, the distinction of human being is conceived of specifically in terms of *self-knowing being* (Selbstbewußtsein) – in the train of thought that articulates this idea, self-relativity refers to the *nature* of human being, namely to such being that, by adopting the standpoint of absolute freedom and acting in accordance with it as the principle of pure reason, can perform this miracle of bringing forth its own self-determinate being. This being is what an *I* is and what we, as human beings, are destined to be. But isn't/aren't I always already an *R*? How can this singular *First Person*, the unique person that *I AM/IS*, be a destiny to myself? Am I not always already simply myself and the I who I am/is? A good question – Fichte's answer might come as a surprise. For he reminds us that “most people could more easily be led to believe that they are a piece of lava on the moon than a First Person.”

*Die meisten Menschen würden leichter dahin zu bringen seyn,  
sich für ein Stück Lava im Monde, als für ein Ich zu halten. (Ibid.  
p. 175, footnote)*

Apparently, there is more to the idea of our First Person than meets the untrained *I* of our everyday ego, looking out for number 1 and seeing nothing that is not itself but not the “*nothing*” that *is*, i.e. its *other* self, its better *Self*. And who, what is that?

The autonomy of humanity seems to be a principle predestined for self-relativity. After all, what if not our own self-knowing being could be properly called an entity of identity with which, thinking, we enter into a relationship with that greater SELF, and in accordance with which, building, as it were, we bring our *self* forth as the self-determined and self-determining being of freedom that I AM/IS?

But what about in the Second Epoch? Where could we find the self-relative entity of identity in an epoch devoted not to the self-knowing being of human nature but rather to the *glory of the Christian Godhead*? It must have something to do with the fact that this God is a *Trinity* of Persons. No deity in any culture, not even the Hebrew God of the Tanakh or the Islamic God of the Qur'ān, both of which are often indiscriminately identified with the Christian God, has been conceived of as being *triune*. This fact should make us thoughtful and spark discernment to mark differences rather than superficial similarities.

In the Augustinian Trinity we recognize this self-relationship in the relationship of nearness of the Son to the Father. Both are *God* and, at the same time, two unique *Persons*, unique in their connection to the procession of the Mission (we will consider these terms and how to build

with them later). The first person is the begetter, the other is the begotten; the one is the engendering God, the being that brought forth God, the other is the being that God engendered. This relationship itself is the third *Person* of the Trinity, the Spirit, the Spirit of Love, where the term “love” expresses the intimacy of the relationship between the other two persons, the *self*-relationship of filiality and paternity between the Father and Son who are one in Love (ΑΓΑΠΗ - *agapē*), in *dilectio*, which is the “Spirit” of the self-relationship as it is defined in the triune being of God, a unique being that consists entirely in the spirit of *giving*, the loving gift (*caritas*) of his own “self-knowledge,” his self-approbation, in the form of his Word, his own glory imaged in the Son.

In this way the indivisibility of thought thinking thought can be rendered as the perfect accord of a shared knowledge, a shared blood, a shared heart, the third among three as the relationship of two that are, in it, nevertheless one, one and nevertheless three, one God and three persons, which, in their relationship show the entity of identity in a new light, namely in terms of consanguinity and affiliation, recreating thus the self-relativity that we have just become acquainted with in the productive principle of humanity, of My absolute freedom with respect to which *I* am/is the autonomous subject of and to Myself, in that of the practical principle of divine glory revealed in the act of the Son's self-subjugation under the will of his self-giving Father.

Finally, in the First Epoch, we turn with Parmenides to the conception of perfect being, namely to such being as “*is to be*,” (ΕΣΤΙ ΓΑΡ ΕΙΝΑΙ - 28 B 6.1)<sup>15</sup>, in other words, *is* as it was destined or determined *to be*. In terms of the freedom of humanity and the glory of the triune God, the entity of identity is “personified,” i.e. rendered as a personal relationship, a relationship of persons, the self-relativity of My “personality,” namely Me, Myself, and I, on the one hand, and that of the personality of the Trinity, namely the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, on the other. Greek conception shows us, however, that the self-relativity of the principle need not be taken personally. The logical form of the entity of identity is rendered most simply as the relationship of *being*, which is the distinction between THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, the identity inherent in difference.

Plato teaches how every being is defined with regards to its determination, to “what it is.” A being's self-several *identity* in difference determines precisely what it is “meant” or “supposed” to be. This determination is

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<sup>15</sup> *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels/W. Kranz [DK], Berlin 1961.

known, is an object of prior insight and recognition, hence, the principle's "idea." Bringing out this non-entropic identity in its most familiar "philosophical" form of a question, we might ask for example, as does Grönemeyer in his well-known song *Männer*, "When is a man a man?"

Wann ist ein Mann ein Mann?

Clearly, in this question, the word "man" has two different meanings and it is the status of the relationship of these meanings that is being called into question. The first term refers to a particular man, an individual that the second term is predicated of. The second term therefore refers to the idea of what a man should be. In other words, the question asks, "when is a particular man not just any sort of man but, specifically, a *good* man, a *real* man, a *true* man, a man the way he was supposed, destined, to be or when is a man a perfect man? And the answer? The philosophical answer is: When he is a *MAN*. In other words, when this man standing before us corresponds to the image or the model, the paradigm or the pattern, the *idea* of the man. Then we have a *MAN* in the self-several determinacy of excellence that emerges when a being conforms to what it was destined to be, its nature, i.e. its ΦΥΣΙΣ (physis). In general, Greek thought always answers this question regarding why a thing is the way it is as Plato famously did (Greater Hippias 287c):

ΤΑ ΚΑΛΑ ΤΩΙ ΚΑΛΑ ΚΑΛΑ (Ta kala tōi kala kala)

*The (particular) beautiful (being) is beautiful  
through (the idea of) Beauty (in which it participates).*

The Greeks considered the identity of a thing, its nature, as that which determines what it should be and then measured each individual, each particular thing, against this *specific* entity of identity, the *chair*, the *man*, any being, with respect to itself (its self-several *SELF*, but now that of the *Third Person* and not that of the *First Person*), i.e. to its essence, to its idea, its "true" being of which it is *indicative*, in a very rich sense, i.e. in the ancient Greek, the Homeric sense, of this word that we will consider later as that of ΔΙΚΗ (dikē), the dictate of the determinative principle in Greek thought, namely ΘΕΜΙΣ (themis), which two terms together refer to the predetermined apportionment that all beings – mortal *and* immortal – have already received, always already "know," and subsequently must evince compliance with in the studied excellence of word and deed.

These three visions of the self-relationship, the *self-determination of human being*, the *Holy Spirit of divine being*, the *perfection of just being* were uniquely known and explored in the Third, the Second, and the First

Epochs respectively. They place the entity of identity in difference we are considering into the scheme of all things thought wherein it attains the historical determinacy of an epochal principle, couching the experience of the distinctive character of human being in the element of a particular logico-poetic, a “mythological,” form that presents the concept of thought thinking thought as the issue at stake within that epoch.

As the three visions of the self-several *entity of identity*, our Verum and our *T*, suggest, the experience of the distinction of human being they present is one of completion, reciprocity, and symmetry. The two terms of the relationship  $a = a$  are perfectly congruous in a way that only their self-relationship can guarantee. After all, what could be more completely in accord with *a*, whatever it may be, than *a itself*? For this reason, this relationship of self-relativity has always been seen as paradigmatic, a model or image of how two can be most perfectly one, namely when they are the same, not merely qualitatively but also numerically.

If *truth* has often been defined as a state of correspondence between the thought and the thing, then, apparently, there can be no perfect truth except when the thing thought and the thinking are essentially one. The image and vision of this perfect state in which *verity* is *certainty* and *certainty* is *verity* must be that of the entity of identity ( $a = a$ ); precisely this is the self-relationship of contemplative reason, thought thinking thought, our first conception of the experience we have termed the distinction of human being, and the principle at issue in metaphysics from Parmenides' precept that “the same is to be thought and to be...”

TO...AYTO NOEIN EΣTIN TE KAI EINAI (DK 28 B3)

...to Hegel's famous diptych in the preface of his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Principles of the Philosophy of Right):<sup>16</sup>

Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich;  
und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig

(*what is rational is real; what is real is rational*)

In this entity alone do we find knowledge and being to be one and the same, that is to say in the *immediacy* of their self-relationship. Thus, in the *theoretical* sense, pure reason is the object of study *and* the thinking act, i.e. the insight of contemplation. And it is for this reason that thought is thought to be the only object that we can truly, completely, and immediately *know*,

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, VII p. 11.

*human being* the only being whose nature is perfectly transparent to reason, which is the sign and the seal of human being, *humanity*, in the epoch of freedom; similarly *perfect being* is transparent to *intellect* (ΝΟΥΣ), being one with it, the *Son of God* alone completely and perfectly known by and knowing the *Father*; for in the immediacy of thought alone are knowing and being, the open skies and the hospitable earth, a perfectly contiguous firmament, the latter bringing forth the former as its own sheltering semblance, as Hesiod in his *Theogony* (126-7) taught of Gaia (mother earth) and Ouranos (the celestial vault) – the two fundaments of immortal dwelling.

ΓΑΙΑ ΔΕ ΤΟΙ ΠΙΡΩΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΕΦΕΙΝΑΤΟ ΙΣΟΝ ΕΩΥΤΗ  
ΟΥΡΑΝΟΝ ΑΣΤΕΡΟΕΝΘ' ΙΝΑ ΜΙΝ ΠΙΕΡΙ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΚΑΛΥΠΤΟΙ

(Gaia first brought forth her equal, starry Uranus, that he might  
nestle her opulence.)

This is what the *intuition* of intellect is, namely distinguished sight, the transparence to thought of thought itself, which, with respect to the natural world and the boundless earth that grounds everything else *not* thought, is above and beyond, unearthly, supernatural, extra-terrestrial, celestial or else interior, secluded, subterranean, substantial, the inward core and hidden inner heart beneath the skin and bone facade of flesh, of the mortal coil, of the iridescent play of appearances, and of transient elemental materiality.

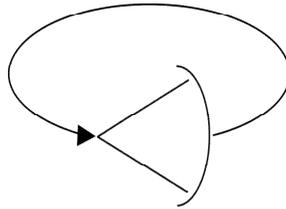
Thus far we have considered the entity of identity as the completely intelligible being of contemplation, the being of ΘΕΟΠΙΑ, the being seen and seeing. But the image of thought thinking thought is not only a *theoretical* entity, namely the vision of an accord between the thing and the thought – *the thing* with respect to its nature and destiny, to what it was supposed to be, *the thought* with respect to the perfect penetration of intuitive intellect into that nature and essence – but also a practical one, a *practical* ideal and model or aim for action. For the identity  $a = a$  also represents the fulfillment of a principle and, through the ensuing process of development, the completion of the determination that had arisen as a result of the initial discrepancy between THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.

In the sphere of practical judgment, this initial discrepancy is, then, through action, resolved into complete and perfect agreement. What better image can we propose for the unity, the correspondence, the probity of the alignment ultimately attained, than that of identity in difference, the self-

relationship of reason? For consider action and the causality of the will that posits a vision of its objective as the goal towards which it strives. The state of discrepancy in hunger or thirst, for example, compels the drive of action towards the regaining of the previous tranquil state of satisfaction that had been disrupted when the breach between the IS and the OUGHT emerged. And here in this vision of *precedent* self-accord and agreement characterizing the prior state, we recognize the *subsequent* objective as a destiny to be fulfilled, the lost Paradise now past but subsequently remembered as the envisioned and projected advent of the Heaven hereafter in the transformation of an indeterminate actuality. The principle is no longer merely the theoretical object of insight and intellect, a *nature*; it is now moreover a practical object, an objective that is to be *put into effect* in a transforming act of realization, the reaching of a *destination*, the fulfilment of a *destiny*. Thus the entity of identity is not merely the concept of a being and a seeing, thought, the **Thinker** as well as the object of thought, but also the conception of an action and a striving, practical thought, the **Actor** of the will as well as the objective of action, the goal, the *ideal*. Yes, there is indeed a very clear difference between the contemplation of the perfection of being and that of the accomplishment of desire, and though they both may be sought and found, a very marked distinction between the *truth* of what is *one and complete in itself* and that of what is *good*, between *recognition* and *return*, *comprehension* and *achievement*, between a *notion* and a *plan*, a *concept* and a *purpose*, *insight* and *fulfillment*, *conformity* and *reconciliation*, *entirety* and *contract*, *ratiocination* and *perdurance*, between what something *is to be*, its *nature* and what something *is to do*, its *mission*. In each of these pairs of designations, the former is the *logical* truth, the latter the *moral* one.

Reviewing the signature terms in which our concept of thought's self-relativity has thus far been articulated, one might easily jump to the conclusion that the distinction of human being is the experience of a remarkable equanimity, even unanimity. Surely, the relationship of identity is the very image of concurrence and two who are, in their relationship with one another, identical, would form the most perfect union, the unity of which is a symbol of what is one and a whole yet distinguished in itself. We have beheld the three traditional visions of this, our experience of pure thought's *tautology* ( $\top$ ), its perfect intelligibility and transparency to itself, taken as an image of peace and quiet – which is oftentimes, but ought not be, reduced to the self-referential of awareness of personal introspection – i.e. either the certitude of self-knowing being, namely that of me with respect to Myself, my best Self, my humanity, or that of the shared knowledge of the Christian Godhead and the Spirit of the filial, the paternal

love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, in both versions or renditions of this experience achieving therein, the consistency of proof *and* the accord of agreement, intuition *and* realization, possession *and* destination, a home *and* a home-coming. In an attempt to evoke this diversity of experience in the concision of one designation, let us represent the self-relativity of the entity of identity, the curved space of our unanimous soul, in the following diagram, our *Figure 1*:



**Figure 1: The Entity of Identity (T)**

It depicts the identity of pure reason's self-relativity in the form of a self-seeing being, an eye the gaze of which, in a turn and return, reflects back upon itself, arriving at its own recognition, performing, in one complete circuit its, own realization, a seeing eye to I. Thus we might perceive in the redounding bend and swerve of its curve the end point of one revolution that is thought's, the Thinker's, the Actor's, and the Builder's, the happy ending of their shared enterprise in which the mind, returning to itself, in the theory and the practice of thought, concludes its constitutional in comprehension and in the fulfillment of purpose and takes repose in the threefold reaffirmation of pure reason's unique, and uniquely poetic, self-possession. This is the sense of the arrowhead of thought's reaching, and reach for, truth, culminating in the "touch" – THIGĒIN (thigein) as Aristotle calls it (Met. 1051b 24) – the contiguity of what is utterly indivisible and immediate and yet still distinguished in itself in our experience of it, the propinquity of thought to thought, the continuity of intellect with regards to the intelligible.

So much to the endpoint in serenity. But what now of the leaping point of departure that marks the origin of the arc that is thought's flight? For, our experience of the mark of human being is not merely the making of an end and a consummation of its measured course, it is also inaugural, the experience of a start, even a shock, unanticipated, unconditional. It is the prior and the original principle of thought, the principle as *absolute* that sets reasoning on its way in the first place. For the issue at stake when talking

about principles with regard to the distinction of human being is, sad to say, not so much soulful contentment as it is the animus of contention, namely the experience of a crisis, which is the initial discontinuity prevailing between THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE.

Thus far, in our considerations pertaining to the entity of identity, we have failed to account for the obvious fact that, at least for the most part in our lives, thought thinking thought, the concept of the experience of the mark of human being, is an *ideal*, we might even go so far to say in our discontent, *just* an idea, a vision – if not a mirage – the *being* that we place ourselves in relationship to, in theory and in practice, as indicative of THE WAY IT SHOULD BE *in contrast to* THE WAY IT IS. For as we all know, first, beings conform more or less, and mostly less, to their being, to the idea of *what they are*, theoretically, *supposed to be* and, second, they tend to run awry of practical principles, the morals of action. Alas, *nothing is perfect* we sigh in bitter disappointment or in resigned relief in response to the anguish we experience when we mind the gap between the IS and the OUGHT, rather than ignoring it, in our surroundings and in the general state of affairs, in the condition and situation of things, animal, vegetable, and mineral, in other words, when we pose the question of the propriety of words and deeds, both our own and others', in a world and then conclude *nothing is perfect*.

Have we not all, on occasion, missed the boat, flubbed the dub, fell from slip of tongue or toe, had too much, arrived too late, done too little, left too soon, and have had to deal with all manner of misses that shortage and excess might impose – too hot, too cold; too young, too old; too low, too high; too far, too nigh; yes, it is hard to get it just right and the list of what can go wrong is surely longer than long.

This state of affairs of fault and deficiency, of failure and infirmity, of damage and deformity, so familiar to us all, precariously founded, as it is, not on the congruity but rather on the divergence of THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, gives rise to the notion of an *impossible* entity that stands not in harmony but rather in conflict with itself, the self-relativity of which is not one of *coincidence* ( $a=a$ ) but rather *disparity* ( $a\neq a$ ) or, even more vividly put, to bring out its essential “absurdity,” self-dissimilar *paradox* ( $a = \neg a$ ).

Now, I ask you, friends of coherence, consider this aporia of the impossible, the famously “contaminated” being of a “hyper-reflection:” how could anything be different than itself? Look out of the window, each thing that you see out there is different from each other thing, even two

trees are different from each other and even here inside, though the four chairs placed around the dinner table are the same, they are nevertheless different from each other. But how could they be different from themselves? A particular chair from itself and a particular tree, that one right over there, different from itself?

And what of ourselves? Are you not indubitably you, a pure object in the eyes of your cat? Is there any way imaginable that you could not be you or I conceivably not be me or anything somehow not be itself, whatever else you or I or it, in any possible world, are not, am not, is not? It doesn't seem likely, does it? And yet the question of the distinctive character, the letter, of human being, has arisen, though now no longer regarding the experience of the entity of identity, our *Verum*, but rather regarding that of its disparity, the *Falsum* ( $\perp$ ), which is, moreover, according to Joyce (FW 170.4-5), "the first riddle of the universe: asking

*when is a man not a man?"*

And do I not often say, sing, perhaps when I am sad or glad, or in some other state of mind that, despite the apparent improbability of it, "I'm not myself tonight?"

This then is the issue: The mark of human being is not only the experience of the coherence of thought's gaze in seeking out and finding thought, immediate, complete, and perfect in the well-rounded self-relativity of its identity, an experience of unity, but also the experience of a breach and a discontinuity, which is in fact, as we shall see, the very source and origin of thought – the **0**, Frege's famous contradictory function "*different from itself*," as the first term in the sequence, the null prefiguring the **1**, which is the unity that follows from it.<sup>17</sup> For the contemplation and speculation of

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<sup>17</sup> So Frege: "Null ist die Anzahl, welche dem Begriffe 'sich selbst ungleich' zukommt." *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik. Eine logische-mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl*, §74. This null is what we will refer to with the slashed zero glyph (actually the sign for the empty set); as an interpretation of the event of drawing the first distinction, this aboriginal *O* is thought to stand for the empty indeterminacy of the "Outside," an idea much made of in post/modern discourse on alterity, for example in the works of Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille, and Foucault, to name only a few of its most prominent authors, whose "passion for what is Without" (*la passion du Dehors*), is revealed by the emphasis they place on notions connoting *excess*, viz. what is *supererogatory*, *out of play*, and, in general, *beyond the horizon* of previously established determinations and priorities – *hors d'oeuvre*, *hors de jeu*, *hors de l'horizon*, etc. More on this later.

pure reason or thought thinking thought, the “slashed zero” reveals the principle of thought's start, too, and not only its end, which is the entity of identity, our won being, our **1** thought; thought thinking thought is, originally, the concept of the experience of *critical self-reflection* and the travail, the slash, of *self-severalty*, our lost being, our lost cause, our  $\emptyset$  and our **0**.

### 15. The Experience of Self-Severalty

What do we see when we contemplate the first principle and the determination of thought as our cause and issue? What primordial experience is thought's inception? This: We see that reason lifts and drops a question on our plate, leaves a mark, its tell-tale sign, on the forehead of our lives. Thought makes a difference *to*, and more generally, *in* human being, inscribing upon this and every being a seal of distinction that distinguishes not merely one being from many of a kind by discerning differences of feature, but moreover distinguishes each being *in kind*, that is to say, in the recognition of differences with regards to the provenance of the principle that determines its identity. And what distinction may this be? A distinction in the meanings or uses of words? A distinction based on variations in the sensory perception of tones or colors? Discrimination in taste? In the description of phenomena? The differentiations of points in time, in space? No. The logogram of human being is not a question of definition or semantics. The principle that makes all the difference in the world for human being is the experience of you not being YOU and me not being ME, not being namely the being you and I were meant to be, the experience of our divergence ( $\perp$ ), not from each other in the flesh, but from our own being in the determinacy of a destiny – for the principle of thought thinking thought is not only that well-rounded theoretical being of contemplation, seen and known, but also the practical being of action, due and done, a being of distinction, whose works make marks and leave traces in the otherwise blank continuity and homogenous uniformity of human all too human life and all other indiscriminate being; specifically, as human, this distinction is the critical act of self-reflection through which we, first, *step back* from THE WAY IT IS, gaining our footing in this standpoint to, second, *take note* of difference, *minding the gap* between THE WAY IT IS and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, in order to, finally, realize the inaugural principle in the deeds and words of wisdom, *making the dream come true*, that self-relative entity of identity as the original present that pure reason has set before all philosophy as the distinction of human being.

This foundational experience of rationality as the enactment of *self-severalty* is older than science, *doing*, older than *seeing*, wisdom older than philosophy. As we shall discover in due course, the idea that the distinction of human being can be characterized as the faculty for self-critical reflection is the oldest thought in Occidental history, the very first thought, the thought *before* all thought, going back to the insight of the father of gods and men, Zeus, who, confronted with a theogony of oppression and revolt, grasped the pre-determined principle of just apportionment upon which he was to found his kingdom, the divine civil order of Olympus. And Kant himself recurred to this principle as fundamental in the project of his critiques. In the beginning of the third section of his *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* (*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*), he writes: "Now human being finds in itself, in effect, a faculty through which it distinguishes itself from every other thing, indeed even from itself...and that is reason."

*Nun findet der Mensch in sich wirklich ein Vermögen, dadurch er sich von allen anderen Dingen, ja von sich selbst...unterscheidet, und das ist die Vernunft. (Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, IV p.452 7-9.)*

Thus, long before ideas are given a specific, tangible form by being rendered in the concrete details of everyday experience that language provides to our persuasive efforts of explanation and illustration – the *poetic* work of thought, the *Builder* – and prior to the *Actor's* *practical* attainment of desire's keen objectives or to the *theoretical* comprehension of objects as they present themselves to the *Thinker's* curiosity, prior even to their compelling impact upon our undivided attention as orders of insight in the scheme of all things thought, we acknowledge this principle in its own right, namely the uniquely centrifugal movement of *extrication* which is reason's inaugural feat of note that discloses the critical discontinuity of human being – and is now to be taken as the specific content of the term ***abstraction***.

With the attribution of this new *term*, a poor one perhaps, to our cause, have we, nevertheless, taken a further, though small step towards clarification of what we mean by the "distinction of human being?" How, if at all, does this expression help? It seems so little, does it not, one lemma in the dictionary, one single lexeme in the lexicon of a language, merely one word and nevertheless rich with numerous denotations, connotations, and associations; perhaps these concrete meanings could provide the logotectonic art and craft of thought, the Builder, with building blocks, or at least building material? What sort of buildings can we build with words?

For in fact, notwithstanding their individual properties of sound and sense, their inflections and syntactical features, the etymology of their constituent morphemes, and the semantic fields they access, it is only in their specific usage in a *sentence*, which means for us, in *trains of thoughts*, that we can determine the specific sense of an expression and, by establishing its unique position within those sequences or *ratios* of reasoning, put what we know into words and articulate a scheme in accordance with a given principle, thereby enriching our experience, our knowledge, and ultimately our appreciation of the distinction of human being that is our cognizance.

Thus, in preparation for the employment of the designation *abstraction* in a particular train of thought, we first note its familiar meanings and connotations which serve as the background with respect to which we then may highlight those among them that appear to be the most significant for the purposes of the intended denomination and, in this way, convey perspectives and shed light upon the experience of self-severalty.

Proceeding now with our analysis of this candidate term, the most obvious problem with the notion of *abstraction* is that, for many, it connotes shades of grey and the dry-as-dust fastidiousness that overly nice philosophers are harshly defamed for. What lacks relish, verve, flesh, in short, that vivacity of something living is not vivid or interesting to normal folks; it is formal and impractical; it is lackluster; it is mincing; it is bloodless; it is dead; it is *abstract*. And this is the sense of the word that we associate with what is “just” theory as being academic, immaterial, trivial (quadrivial even); apparently, abstraction is a process of devastation and diversion, in which a wealth of living detail pertaining to a being is suppressed and impoverished with a view to facilitating its pigeonholing based on some adduced invariant that has been extracted like a tooth from nature's smile or a noble hart poached, torn from the wild only to be stuffed and displayed in a case behind glass, drained of life's juices, stolen, detached, arcane, just a thought, just a possibility, *abstract*.

Tsk, tsk, tsk! Now it is not abstraction in this sense that we mean. Though, as a matter of fact, it might very well be, if that is how you, gentle reader, are wont to construe it; yes, even this understanding of abstraction has its reasons; we will see in more detail, when we turn to the Greek Epoch of philosophy, how the workings of theoretical thought by which we penetrate to the heart of the matter, to the core and substance, which is the general principle governing the being in question, is not a reduction of beings at all, though it can be and was understood and denounced as such, namely as a journey to the darkness and seclusion of the netherworld of thought – this

time the place of distinction is not above or beyond but rather beneath our shiny surface world in living Technicolor, clearly a trip enjoyed only by those who, like Juliet, for their sweetheart's sake, are "in love with night and pay no worship to the garish sun." (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii)

Indeed, accusations of abstrusity are not new to thinkers about thought. Of course, the principle, the abstract *general*, attains, returns to reality in the government of the particulars which, in turn, through their compliance – and even in their disobedience – carry out the rule of its law in their own element. This abstraction from particulars with a view to determining their cause is the theoretical work of thought, the Thinker, and we might say, therefore, that reason, in this view, is not just the practical act of abstraction in the sense of stepping back from concrete particulars but also the theoretical act of insight and intelligence; perceptive knowledge, having already attained the critical distance of science inherent in inaugural wonder and taken note of THE WAY IT IS, turns now to study the reasons why it is so; for reason explains, as Aristotle says, *why it should be so*, the necessity, as the *cause* and *principle*, the OUGHT behind the IS.

The self-severalty of *being* becomes thus no less the issue of theoretical reason than of practice, no less the issue of thought, the Thinker, than that of the Doer striving to fulfill the appointed mission and we can conceive of *abstraction* in the sense of the seeing and the seen of *insight*. But this term, when attributed to the distinction of human being, also has a practical application that we noted already in passing in connection with the wonder of theory. For consider the act of reason by which we are not only contemplating reason and reasons but, instead, actually "doing" the deed of self-disjuncture, i.e. drawing or stepping back, abstracting ourselves, from unthinking confluence with the immediacy and continuity of being in the act of critical self-reflection and then, from this Archimedean coign of vantage, given to minding the gap between the IS and the OUGHT, all the while striving to close it.

Now we might very well frown upon this sense of abstraction as well, this movement of self-severalty as an act of alienation or the discomposure of what might have been well enough left alone in the mindless simplicity and careless innocence of untroubled, one-dimensional occupation even as Shakespeare's Othello did, in the grip of the earth-shattering doubt that dawning knowledge bred, exclaiming (III. iii):

*I had been happy, if the general camp,  
Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,  
So I had nothing known. O now, for ever*

*Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!  
 Farewell the plumed troops and the big wars  
 That makes ambition virtue! O, farewell!  
 Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,  
 The spirit-stirring drum, th' ear-piercing fife,  
 The royal banner, and all quality,  
 Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!  
 And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats  
 Th' immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit,  
 Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone.*

In fact, the discomfiture, the anguish, arising from critical reflection can be, as we shall see, a beneficial agitation (though not for Othello's passion) in that it initiates a radical refreshment of the mind (once called *METANOEIN*), that opens eyes to new purposes and courses of development and invigorates the impetus of voluntary change, the transformation of thought through the enactment of a principle, which is the work of a Seeker, not so much in the *theoretical* sense of an explorer with a question, a discoverer of distinguished beings, but rather in the *practical* sense of a wayfarer with a quest, embracing the way of renewal of being in pursuit of and in eventual accordance with the image of transcendent excellence in a being of absolute distinction, which is the most potent sign of the principle of self-severalty, the one that inaugurates agonizing experience of the Falsum ( $\perp$ ) in our own.

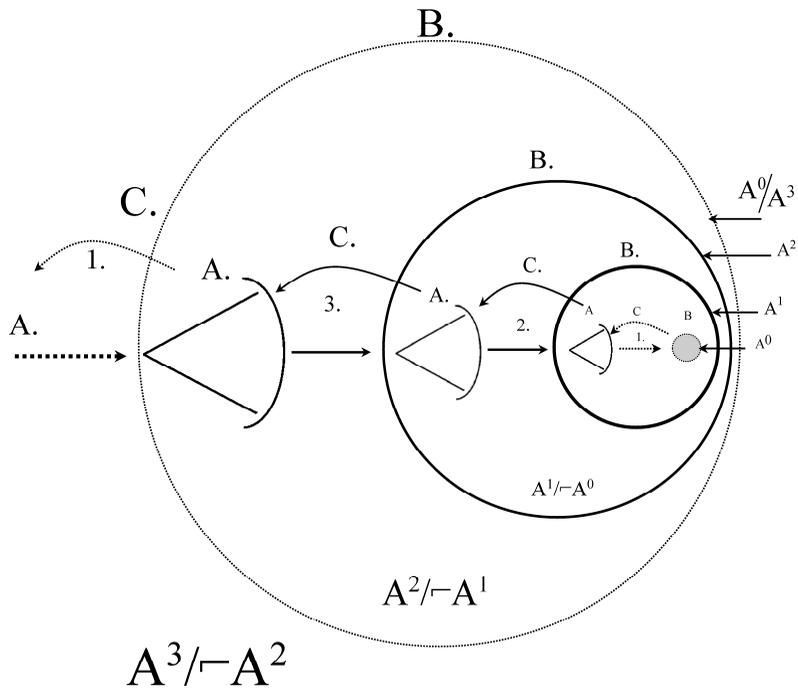
To a conservative inertia prone to resisting or minimizing the impulse from abroad that impinges and luminously, not merely ominously, infringes upon the maintenance of its set stasis, it is clear that the discord sown by critical reflection is upsetting and embarrassing, throwing into disarray what has been orderly, frustrating what has been convenient, routing what has been regular, damaging what has been wholesome and overthrowing what has been long and ever so comfortably, ever so self-assuredly enthroned. The practical experience of human self-severalty – the anguish of its inception and the glory of its resolution – has been rendered most dramatically in the vision of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ to which we shall turn when treating the language and the logic of wisdom in terms of the Second Epoch.

## 16. The Logic of Self-disjuncture

Imagine that we wanted to show the event of our self-severalty actually taking place, and observe pure reason, as the distinction of human being,

in action! Now we all know what it means to call into question and step back from our lives, regarding our life, its orders and certainties, its truths and entrenchments, critically, from *without*, as it were, as we would a tableau while minding the gap between the IS and the OUGHT, giving an account to ourselves of their divergence, and enduring the mortifying humiliation in the face of the complacency, the vanity, and the arrogance of our previously enjoyed delusions of perfection and control.

If we are to render this experience of our *Falsum* faithfully in spite of the fact that self-severalty is something we do and that gazing upon our practice of critical self-reflection is not the same as actually being engaged in its performance, we must somehow capture this movement of turn and return, the experience of our original disengagement as well as the subsequent repossession in an alternating series of successions, in which the critical distinction of thought reproduces itself, in a progression of achievements that might be conceived of as a collection and an integration – but not a unification – of distinctions beginning, on the one hand, with the active abstraction and extrication of thought “tearing itself free from itself (von sich selbst sich Losreissen des Gedankens),” as Fichte puts it, i.e. the inaugural act of *stepping back*, the part departing from the empty whole of immediate continuity, the division and separation from a blanket uniformity, which is the very mark of reason, our faculty for critical reflection, and ending, on the other hand, with the reaffirmation and the realization of the original tautology, and therefore giving rise to an experience that is both earlier and later than the principle of reflection, of thought thinking thought, that dissymmetric entity of identity, that is both the chiral object of thought's practical commitment and dedication as well as the well-rounded sphere of thought's completion, the acquiescence and tranquility of self-knowledge. The self-knowing self-several being of thought, cognition seen and recognized for what it is *and* does, viz. thought seen seeing and therein attaining the coign of vantage of sight; thought in action noted and noting thought as an object of beatific contemplation, a work of distinguished abstraction – this self-several being *and* doing could be rendered in some manner of form as in *Figure 2*.



**Figure 2: The Differentiating Reiteration of Critical Reflection (⊥)**

Well, perhaps *beatific* is a bit of an exaggeration regarding this figure. On the other hand, maybe a bit of exaggeration in the sense of magnification of what otherwise might have gone unnoticed or, if noticed, then not sufficiently savored, is just what, in such distracted times as ours, thought, the *philological* Doctor, ordered. It is as if the acknowledgement of gratitude and the enthusiasm of delight, far from being an accoutrement and an afterthought to our experience of the distinction of human being, are, in fact, constitutive of its concept, a concept that does not just comprehend an arrangement of constituent notions as its subordinate terms, but moreover recognizes in their relationship an order of succession as the three epochs and stages of its career, seasons of its life, offices or departments in the administration of its mission.

And it is precisely this succession inherent in the self-severalty of thought that is most clearly brought to light in *Figure 2*, a succession based on *negation*, which is the active determinative principle initiating and perpetuating the distinction of human being and unfolding the dimensions

of pure reason as that of thought thinking thought, namely its works and days, its life and times, its organization and development.

This primary property of pure thought, namely its *negativity*, which is properly comprehended neither by the notion of annihilation, nor by that of “dialectical” opposition, and least of all as mere scepticism or pessimism or nihilism, though often mistaken in these and other ways, this divisive force of reason, has always been difficult to render clearly in familiar terms even though the outstanding being that we discern in our experience of “stepping back” or “stepping forward,” “stepping out” or “stepping up,” is entirely familiar to everyone who has had to reflect upon themselves, their words, their actions, their situation, from a critical coign of vantage with a view towards distinguishing THE WAY IT IS from THE WAY IT SHOULD BE by saying “the way it is *is not* the way it should be” or simply “*not* so!”

Reason has often been conceived of as a movement hither and beyond – transcendent, leaving behind, departing from; in this sense the negativity of thought refers not only to a place beyond or hereafter, a *Never-* and a *No-man's-land* beyond, beside, beneath, before this *land at hand*, i.e. a distinguished place, (a “place” or *place* or PLACE or ~~place~~ – evidently, we can also use graphical elements to mark this distinction) but rather, also, the otherwise undefined hiatus in the continuity of being, human or otherwise. It is invoked by the figure of the attainment of impartiality that manifests itself as a perpetual departure from every given, every established and, in this way, every predisposed frame of reference; this *nothing* ( $\emptyset$ ) or slashed zero ( $\textcircled{\emptyset}$ ) of what is *before*, *without*, is not a negation in the manner of the antithesis of some position, the *opposite* being merely an opposing position, but rather the tertiary term, the limiting boundary or border between every conflicting dualism, though marking nothing but their interval, being neither the one nor the other, in itself no longer the one, having left it behind, nor yet the other, which is the ensuing resolution and return to come; no, permanently *over yonder* with respect to every determinacy, dislocated, it is not and never “in itself,” not a place (hence a distinguished place, a ~~place~~), not this one and not that one, at all – precisely between the endpoints, after the end of one position's reign and before the beginning of the other's and as such the infinitesimally (but also magnificently) fine line, the line of the distinction marking the span and the tension of the limit determining their rapport of discontinuity. We want to direct our attention precisely towards this distinguished point of separation between them that makes of each the other's other, the salient point that is itself not a point or a place, just another place between two places, but rather simply the interruption, or more dramatically, the *eruption* and

*irruption* of difference in the continuity of any being that has been definitively established and determined to be on the one side *or* the other – the mark of distinction is their disjuncture.

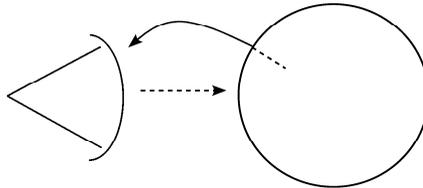
“Stepping back” is the expression we have been using – and a rather picturesque one at that – for this practice of *abstraction*, which is itself, as we noted, a somewhat nondescript designation all too rounded by centuries of fumbling and tumbling in the ebb and flow of philosophical discourse, for the dramatic, transforming, anguishing act of self-severalty we intend to refer to by it, one considered perhaps no less weak than its all too colloquial predecessor, *stepping back*, not only due to its pejorative associations but also on account of being, well, too abstract. For this reason, we might be tempted to cast about in the lexicon for other, richer, more evocative names.

We could say, for instance, that to step or pull back, stand apart, aloof or aside and detach ourselves from circumstances or conventions or prejudices – for undergoing or undertaking the experience inherent in the self-severalty of critical reflection must mean something like that – is to withdraw or retreat from them as from a world that we have decided to henceforth forsake in order to live in splendid exile, far from the maddening crowd of continental contention, as monks or nuns – a line of reasoning that conducts us to the figure we know as thought, the Anchorite and the life of austerity, of abnegation, of solitude and, to use the most exquisite term, of *death*. This intuition of self-disjuncture as immolation articulates a very ambiguous vision of our experience with the distinction of human being. For the notion of *sequestration* we have just considered, understood as *retirement* into the seclusion of a quiet cove or that of the bee-loud glade in a clearing we happen upon while hiking, having left our little town blues behind for an outing, might be embraced as desirable and pleasant; other attributions of withdrawal are decidedly less so as when stepping back is seen as drawing back into *isolation*, as the waning and fading of *regression*, the desertion of *abandonment* and the exclusion of *segregation*, the loss of *bereavement*, the oblation of *sacrifice* – all of which are ideas that are governed by the notion of thought's *negativity* – using this term at our peril – the essential attribute of the distinction of self-several being, as our analysis will show.

Evidently, the *separation* implicit in the drawing of distinctions is expressed not only in favourable terms of sanction (but this term is itself admirably ambiguous!) but also in the more denunciatory ones of adversity and dissension, a duplicity of sense we have already encountered in the notion of *abstraction*. The experience of human being with the

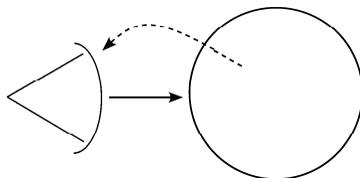
determinative principle is both pleasant and unpleasant and our own disposition with regards to this contrariety is appropriately rendered in expressions of dissidence or endorsement. Thus the designation *divorce* when put for the experience of our self-severance is a term of censure given its connotations of *dissolution* and *estrangement* even as the terms *abnormality* and *eccentricity* are expressions of rejection of and even abhorrence for the distinguished act of stepping back and minding the gap in critical self-reflection.

Consider now the spectacle of this distinguished act as represented in *Figure 2*. The series of pure reason's perpetual abstractions consists of three periods of which the subsequent distinguishes itself from the preceding one by attaining critical detachment from that former position of thought through the negation of that previously established continuity whence it emerged. With respect to the procession of distinctions as a whole, each period is a transient epoch, an instant of thought in the life and times of reason's entire career, one life consisting of several lives and one time consisting of several times in the circle of turn and return, the *turn* of reason here indicated by the **arrow of separation** (pointing left) which depicts thought in the act of stepping back envisioned as the negativity of abstraction from the closed sphere of a currently prevailing and thus self-indeterminate order of ensconced continuity as shown in *Figure 3*.



**Figure 3: The Negativity of Abstraction**

In *Figure 4*, the *return* of reason, depicted in terms of an **arrow of realization** (pointing right) – the completion of a train of thought having begun upon the drawing of the first and original distinction in the negation of an established continuity of being – is achieved in the renewed encounter of what previously had be assimilated unto itself and therefore unknown to itself. In the refreshed encounter with what was taken for granted as conforming to it, thought regains sight of its own distinction as the unique self-several being that is different from itself. This being is both the prior cause and the object of its recognition.



**Figure 4: The Animadversion of Recognition**

In *Figure 2* each circle represents thus a closed domain under the jurisdiction of the principle that has determined its scope. We have noted four precincts,  $A^0$  to  $A^3$ , or orders of being, though, in fact, the first ( $A^0$ ) and the last ( $A^3$ ) are identical in accordance with the self-relative principle of the entity of identity, the relationship of thought thinking thought. And it is as a result of this relationship that each distinction contains and is contained in itself,  $A^1$  contained in  $A^2$  and  $A^2$  in  $A^3$  which is, in turn, contained in  $A^0$ , the whole contained in the part and each part contained in and containing the whole. In this precise sense of self-relativity and the corresponding action of abstraction that is its animating spirit – the procession of thought's distinction consisting of distinctions, its several *spirits*,  $A^1$  being the horizon of the negation distinguishing  $A^0$ ,  $A^2$  that of the distinction of  $A^1$  and  $A^3$  that of  $A^2$  – pure reason is said to be *infinite*.

This infinite procession of its distinctions is nevertheless a bounded sequence of signature terms of which there are three, turning and returning much like the three colors of the patriotic barber pole and for which the subsequent terms, in spite of the negativity in the distinction each makes with respect to its predecessor, contains and collects, the former, even while transcending it, namely the term of *principle* (A) defining the distinction of *perfect being* and the *theory* of its truth, the term of *insight* (C) defining the distinction of *absolute being* and the transforming *practice* of its truth in action, and the term for what is here at stake, nothing less than the *issue* (B) of the distinction of *human being* and the craft and *art* of invention dedicated to the realization of its truth. This traditionally distinguished and acknowledged, self-several, threefold being – perfect, absolute, human – is widely contested these days and as such, inexplicably, has become our cause to consider, pursue, and celebrate.

Finally, as regards the specific steps of stepping back, the moments of critical self-reflection distinguished in the procession of severance depicted in *Figure 2* – what we might call the negative, or more elaborately, the enantiomorphic ingemination of thought – we offer the familiar narrative

relating the start and the dawn of reason as it emerges out of the dusk and the twilight of its default or “latent” status ( $A^0$ ) and its enfeebled state of languor in which thought is taken for granted as an instrument of technical ingenuity, of cognitive behaviors within the life-world continuum, and of the empowerment of vital instinct. Such reason is an empty function of man’s urgency awaiting arguments, operating tacitly in accordance with the dictates and statutes that arise out of particular circumstances, engaged in calculations with a view to maximizing short-term outcomes, minimizing costs, and maintaining the overall order arising temporarily and consecutively from the purposes and intentions of significant individuals to the devices of whom thought has been appropriated.

In this domain, the critical relationship of reason, ΛΟΓΟΣ, has not attained salience but rather remains the, as yet undifferentiated, “principle” (A) – which we, saving this word for bigger and better things, would prefer to call simply an over-riding *urge* or *motive* – namely a purblind force and anonymous power that governs implicitly in the pressing business, control, and intercourse of man’s understandings and undertakings. And the closure of this horizon is further maintained and hardened by the inkling intervention of myopic awareness ( $A^0$ ) regarding problems and obstacles that hinder the chaotic flow of operations and the need to take into account discrepancies that tend to arise between the conflicting demands of various interested parties, the stakeholders. This self-consciousness of thought (1.), though showing signs of distinction, is still merely a further technique in the economy and commerce of inter-subjective, even inter-corporeal, governance.

The second order of thought marks the advent of its critical relationship attained through the transcending abstraction of the self-severance of pure reason (C.) that steps back (2.) from the dominant state of affairs inaugurating thus the emergency and the crisis of conscience that characterizes thought’s revival from its former latency. In this dominion of doubt, previously immediate life-world dynamics are now called into question with regards to the difference that has become evident to critically invigorated insight undertaking the recognition of the abyss, widening and deepening with growing comprehension, that has been torn between the IS of immediacy and the OUGHT of thought, in particular in the insight that THE WAY IT IS *is not* THE WAY IT SHOULD BE – the *irrationality* of being – and that THE WAY IT SHOULD BE *is not* THE WAY IT IS – the *immateriality* of ideas.

Minding this gap, thought is thus inspired to act and to bring forth a reality that better corresponds to the vision that the above distinction made manifest to it, the issue (B.) of the principle through which thought now stands in relationship to thought (3.) and strives to realize as its own idea and concept of itself, namely the entity of identity, our *Verum* (T). This is not a relapse into the configuration of continuity whence it departed but rather a figure of pleasure and completion, the result of this development and the fulfillment of the inaugural principle of difference, the distinguished vision of which set thought originally on its course. The peace and continuity of this being, in all the brilliance and clarity of the realization it has achieved, becomes eventually, nevertheless, dulled in our eyes, falls into disregard and negligence, is sadly, slowly forgotten. For after the weekend and the holiday of thought thinking thought in which we celebrate the completion of reflections project, our work week resumes, bringing new distinctions, new gaps to mind, i.e. new problems, wanting new solutions and applications of expertise, instilling new habits into routines. At some point, it is inevitable that we are tired and close our philosophy book, hanging our head on the hook, so to speak, clinging to the last thought for a bit afterwards, as long as possible, while pursuing the routines of the evening until, at the end of the day, we lie down, done though unfinished; then we let our minds, appeased for now, wander until oblivion possesses us again – completing that grand narrative that is all history (and *her* story, too, for that matter), even as Muta teaches:

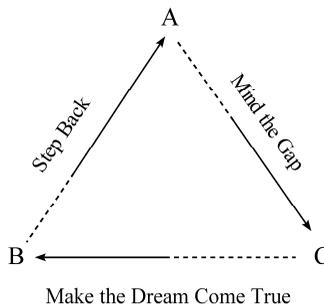
“So that when we shall have acquired unification we shall pass on to diversity and when we shall have passed on to diversity we shall have acquired the instinct to combat and when we shall have acquired the instinct of combat we shall pass back to the spirit of appeasement.” (Joyce, *FW*, 610.23-27.)

### 17. The Negativity of Reason

For the sake of illustration of this “hyper”-logic of self-relativity and the negativity of thought that drives it, let us take the painter whose working process encompasses two phases. The first phase is the one in which the painter is engrossed in the actual act of applying colors to the canvas, whereas in the second phase, the painter steps back from the canvas and regains a standpoint that takes in the whole of what has been painted. The touches of color here and there that were collected on the canvas over the course of the sitting today but also during previous work in past days are evaluated with a view to the totality of their effect. “Is it the way it should be? Is that color, is that form, that line, what I want?” Thus our painter will

ask herself or himself at this critical juncture, having attained to sight and judgment both of which were latent in the painter's previous state of engrossment while actually involved in painting this detail and that detail and that line and this blue.

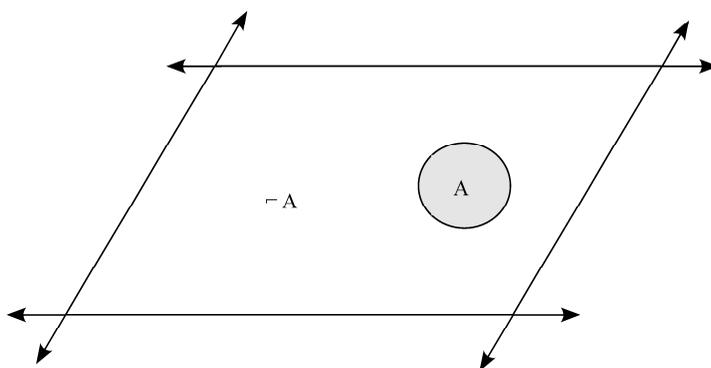
The *discrepancy* ( $\perp$ ) between these two states of mind of the painter – on the one hand, his absorption in the material immediacy of the actual task of painting, on the other hand, the artist's “prophetic” ascendancy to the far-sight, the foresight, of an overview that surveys what has been hitherto accomplished and what is yet to come, meant to come – and neither the one nor the other is what we refer to as the movement of distinction and the detachment of abstraction that subsequently brings the painter, now poised upon the coign of vantage, into a relationship of contemplation and judgment; noting the continued gap between the IS of her canvas and OUGHT of her muse – and minding it – she is inspired to renewed application to close that gap in the hopes of achieving greater and greater correspondence between them until the work is complete. This complete train of thought might be visualized as one period, out and back, of critical reflection as in *Figure 5*.



**Figure 5: The Practice of Critical Reflection**

It is this break with the absorbed immediacy and continuity of the living intent that is thought's original start, the inception of reason; it is to this originary event of departure and to the critical spirit of negativity that sets its stage, to this *being without* and, with regards to the resumed assimilation of engrossed occupation that is its further shore and boundary, i.e. the *being between*, that we now turn and return and ask, further, how this divisive negativity can be seen and better grasped, as the determinative principle of pure reason?

Consider again the illustration of the abstraction of pure reason as the act of stepping back or disengaging from the confluence inherent in the persistence of habit that has become deep-rooted in the culture of an individual or a society. Imagine the effort required of one thus encumbered by convention to *step back* from the dominant rule of rote, adapting a vantage point outside of that channelled groove in which we typically run. A critical perspective with respect to these established mores would place the individual outside of the mainstream in an indeterminate location, a position of disentanglement that is not defined except as the negation of that groovy – and therefore very ungroovy – status quo from which he or she departed. Let us picture this revolt in *Figure 6*.



**Figure 6: Being without the Zone of Comfort**

The extraneous position ( $\neg A$ ), which is, in fact, no position at all but rather the *negation* of position, namely that of the given standpoint ( $A$ ), and therefore not the former's opposite but rather its *point of departure*, can be designated as the *being without*, being, as it is, beyond the demarcations of what has been previously defined, set, and established as the circle of familiarity. The outer regions surrounding the homely world of determinate certainty can only be called indeterminate and uncertain, undefined, inhospitable – a vast infinite expanse of outer space receding in all directions from that minute enclosure of content, threatening, with its sheer immensity, at any moment, to suddenly engulf or slowly erode that colony of comfort and consolidation into elemental nothingness. To those who people the habits and the orbits of such an oasis settlement, the environmental void is an ocean and a desert of wasteland emptiness just waiting to reclaim their supposedly so safe spot and reassert the prerogative

of entropy. From this perspective, the negativity of that distinction that is our signature and sign, the specific mark of the human mind, must indeed be a frightening prospect tantamount to the overthrow of civilization, a walkabout in the outback, a wild thought.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, this *outward* sense of abstraction, whether in terms of abhorrence in the intuition of which the spirit of negativity is perceived to be all that is unearthly, abnormal, and amorphous, or in terms of appreciation according to which the infinity of thought is an exalting and sublime departure into the more luminous regions of experience, is just one vision of critical self-reflection.

For the great divide that distinguishes our human being can be rendered just as well as the experience of transcendence *within* the given framework of an established order and as the drawing of an *inward* distinction. For this reason we might represent it not only as the locus of *latitude*, the emergence of headroom and the elbowroom abroad, as it were, beyond and above the fixed dimensions, cramped quarters, the girdle of narrow-minded circumscription, but also as *aperture* within the smooth, flat membrane of superficiality, a twist of incongruity and irregularity in the curvaceous expanse of space, a black hole and singularity in the blank vacuousness of continuity, a nick of time in the velvety velum of insignificant perduration.

Consequently, we now note two forms of disclosure; with respect to the envelop of blanket indifference, both can be thought of as the broach of a well-defined scope – a clearing, a lightening; in the first case, the infinite distinction of pure reason is its *ascendant abstraction*, the *infinity* above and beyond, *without*, the bounds of confinement, whereas in the second case, *infinity* can only refer to glabrous indeterminacy that is then distinguished, inflected, marked, pierced by *keen acumen* – for that is the determined distinction of pure reason when it turns *within* to peer *beneath* and *behind* the fleshy flashiness of appearances, *through* the phantasmagoric façade; a deep blue universe comes into view when the

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<sup>18</sup> This is the role that Foucault assigns to all fiction, namely to make visible the utter nothingness of the “space” we need – and therefore depend upon – to really *see* things in the first place or, as he puts it in *La pensée du dehors* (the thought without), “fiction does not make the invisible visible but rather makes visible just how invisible the invisibility of what is visible truly is. “La fiction consiste donc non pas à faire voir l’invisible, mais à faire voir combien est invisible l’invisibilité du visible.” (p. 24).

shifting surface spectral phenomena are plumbed and sounded to their core, those roaming myriorama fathomed, and the inward traveler, seeking to get the bottom of the matter, finally finds surcease of perception in attaining the peerless particular of an insight that has made all the difference in that world of shine.

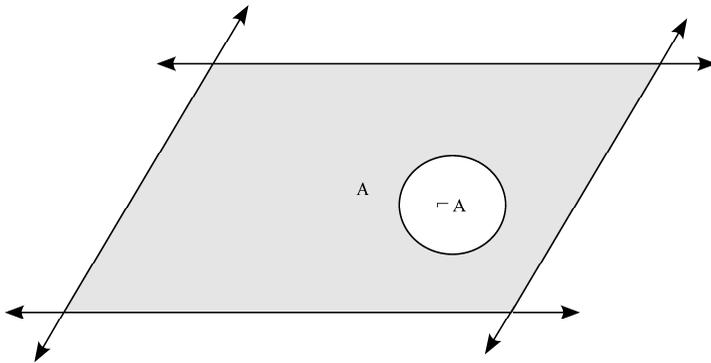
Whereas, again, the negativity of thought is presented in the first case as the ever larger *whole* that encompasses and surpasses the limited horizon of a firmly fixed purview, in its *extension*, the latter negativity is the signature mark, the incisive cognizance of distinction, its incursion, even its invasion, and the timely *hole* left in the aftermath of its *intention* in an otherwise undifferentiated, previously unmarked space that, in thought's good time, had finally been...

..."provoked" by a fork, of a grave Professor; at the é's Break – fast - table; acutely professionally *piqué*, to introduce a notion of time (upon a plane (?) surface) by punching holes (sic) in iSpace?! (Joyce, *FW*, 124.9-12.)

...provoked by a fork of a grave professor at his breakfast table, acutely [and] professionally piqued to introduce a notion of time upon a plane surface by punching holes in a space.

A maidenhead tablet of wax hitherto unscathed has been, through the point that critical thought makes, uniquely scratched, pierced, revealing both the primal state of confluent immediacy, now lost, as well as the subsequent emergent character now indelibly inscribed on that background and therein, in *Figure 7*, pointed out for all eyes to see, an effect that Hegel, quoting Schelling, described in his *Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie) as “the lightning bolt of the ideal striking the real and constituting itself as the point.”

...*einschlagende Blitz des Ideellen in das Reelle und sein Sich-selbst-Konstituieren als Punkt.* (Hegel, *Werke*, II p. 111.)



**Figure 7: The Inscription of Difference**

This figure of the *punctus interrogativus* illustrates the complement concept of thought as being **inward** bound – the mind's descent and concentration.

For indeed the moving line of the mind, seen as a *journey to the center of the earth* entails as much an experience of departure as it does a *flight to the sun*; but whereas the imagery of the latter is bright-eyed *lucidity*, the former is couched in the darkened hues of *depth* and penetration. And this makes sense: a good mind or *intellect* is both brilliant and profound, excels in the flight of speculation as well as in the ponder of contemplation, and both refer to the power of perception to draw distinctions – thus does critical thought, our experience of its crisis as immolation and renunciation, if we dare employ such powerful terms, leave the immediate world behind, departing from both its glitz and its gore by going down and going up; nevertheless, pure reason is but a single abstract sphere, both its nadir and its zenith, abyss and pinnacle, the pit and tip of self-several chirality, our netherworld and our heaven, the *vault* and the *spring* of human being.

Thus when we draw a distinction, we mark a difference that indicates the start of thought taken unawares at first, as it were, and now, as it is, roused from antecedent torpor, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, recollecting the salient features of what has just transpired in what was, before, in the offing and off-stage, absent, the full impact of which is now, in a narrative of conception, progressively brought home to us in all its significance and ramifications, brought ashore to the presence of mind.

In founding its origin in a field of oblivion, thought, having only just started, is already in the thick of things, late by one wink of an eye, playing

catch-up and in a rush to complete its account; taking note all the while of its prior infancy and final maturity, thought discovers two opposing versions of what has come to pass. These two events both pertain to the negativity of thought – for thought seen as the act of distinction in the passage from **A to –A** is the accomplishment of gaining high ground, getting to the heart of the matter; thought, understanding, throws into relief the way things stand, marks this recognition as a moment of surprise, the break of day, the fall of night, the exception to the rule, the admission of doubt, but also as the obedience to law, the upholding of hope – pure negativity defined only with regards to the *difference* it makes to some mean of immediacy, to some measure of predominance, to some set framework, official outlook or playbook, to some all-inclusive package – and there is no last and final distinction; we are never done with thought nor should be. It is always possible, and when the time is right, necessary, to draw a new distinction, that is to say, we never come permanently to rest in the framework of the regime we have founded upon previous distinctions because thought is, precisely, this relentless restlessness, the animated spirit of self-severalty that controverts every construction or program; the tell-tale sign of human being is an *open* scope, an *outer* space and a *disclosed* clearing – either a gap and resonate interval that is *in* A or else a latitude and expanse thither and yon that A is *in*, on the one hand *depth*, on the other *breadth*. But being displacements rather than defined places, neither are proper regions nor are they, for all that, merely an empty space, null and void, but rather, in their chiasmus, defined by and defining that inaugural mark of distinction, a silence, but sounding and resounding, eloquent, in its silence, like the sighing of the wind in the leaves, the murmur of the brook in the shadows – a mode of silence, yes, but not an inscrutable mutter, ramble, or stammer that negligence makes of an unfamiliar language, but rather a quiet song, and gentle, of lament, soft, not faint, not a whisper, being both less and more, a sigh and yet articulate, a breath of speech, a solitary voice, a sole word.

And if the term “–A” is misleading because the negativity is in danger of being too much defined by what it negates (A), then we might simply posit the negative sign alone (–) as the one and only cognizance of distinction. Or, put another way, *Figure 8* suggests that the velvety plane, in its infinite uniformity (A) is *either within* the efficacy of its correlative distinction (–) and thus curved into finitude by dint of its limitation, as depicted in *Figure 8a* or the correlative distinction (–) is a critical incident *within* the homogeneous empire that unexpectedly opens a disturbing window of

opportunity in the white-wash of a wall thought otherwise closed as envisioned in *Figure 8b*.

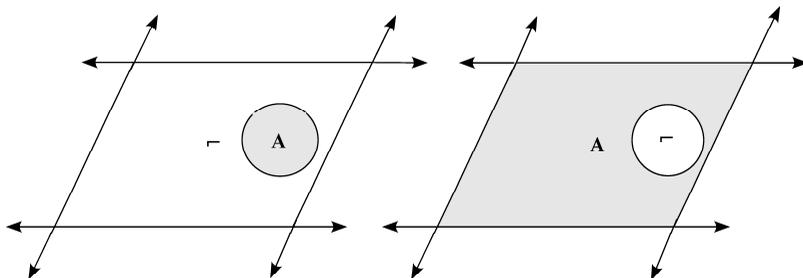


Figure 8a: Encompassing Comprehension

Figure 8b: Penetrating Insight

**Figure 8: The Fertile Figure/Ground of the Mind's *Ma* (間)**

Perhaps these ratios of liminality, depicting, as they are meant to do, the fallow fields of being as the backdrop of a distinction's mark, are simply too static to capture the animated spirit of negativity we are attempting to describe. In that case we might simply show, as in *Figure 9*, the movement of negation involved in the distinction that what is IN makes with respect to what is OUT and, vice versa what OUT makes with respect to IN – the passage and the transience of negativity from determinacy to indeterminacy and from indeterminacy to determinacy, the former being the moment of abstraction for which the distinction is a centrifugal force and the *levity* of thought away from the solemn gravity of centralization as in *Figure 9a*, the latter being the moment of penetration for which the distinction is a centripetal force and the *transparency* of thought's inspired drive towards the disclosure of the essential nature of an otherwise opaque and superficial being as illustrated in *Figure 9b*.

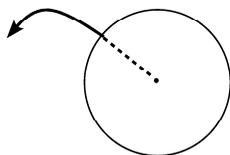


Figure 9a: Ethereality

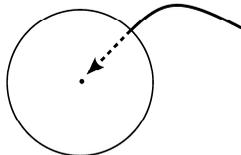


Figure 9b: Profundity

**Figure 9: The Distinguished Difference**

It is interesting to note that the terms *determinacy* and *indeterminacy* have a different sense in each case. For when we understand self-severalty as the act of stepping back, we are leaving an *obstinate* and a *rigid* determination behind, fleeing from a gilded cage to the indeterminacy of objective light and the fresh air of impartiality. Contrariwise, when we grasp the distinction as a journey of discovery into seclusion, indeterminacy is the name for the immediate and inchoate condition of superficiality that, through the negativity of the distinction drawn upon it, attains the determination of a profound principle. Similarly, *light* in the first sense is sought as brilliant and illuminating, in the second, fled as garish and blinding as opposed to *darkness* which is oppressive in the first case and sheltering in the second. Of course, even this rendition is still all too specific, too contrived, too elaborate, to represent the utter simplicity of the distinction that is here at issue – the talk of light and darkness, of determinacy and indeterminacy, circles and arrows and fanciful parallelograms, a capital letter *A* pulled out of the hat – who needs ‘em! Simply inscribe the sign of difference, draw a distinction, all by itself on a blank sheet of paper and what have you got?

The paper will serve our purpose well enough as an excellent specimen of tangible continuity, and let us comprehend the character of this diacritical in the two senses we have distinguished as significant – the inward negation, namely that of the identifying mark of determination, the pierce of paper, on the previously indeterminate piece of paper and then again the outward negation, namely that of the whole of the blank sheet so identified as having given its trace a place to come home and actually *take* place:



Indeed, taken by itself, the intaglio of difference, this trait alone, already succeeds in recording the seal and stigma of distinction, but, of course, the particular sign we choose to do the job is entirely arbitrary; obviously, any other mark might have been taken to make the point of the character of thought, to brand the X that marks the spot of significance that is the venue of the event of thought, our buried treasure, and indicative of where we are, namely here and now, weary, resting, having traveled, having made a difference, taking note of this unique place, here, as Joyce concludes in the "Ithaca" episode of Ulysses (chapter 17) at the end of his intrepid hero's day:

*Where?*

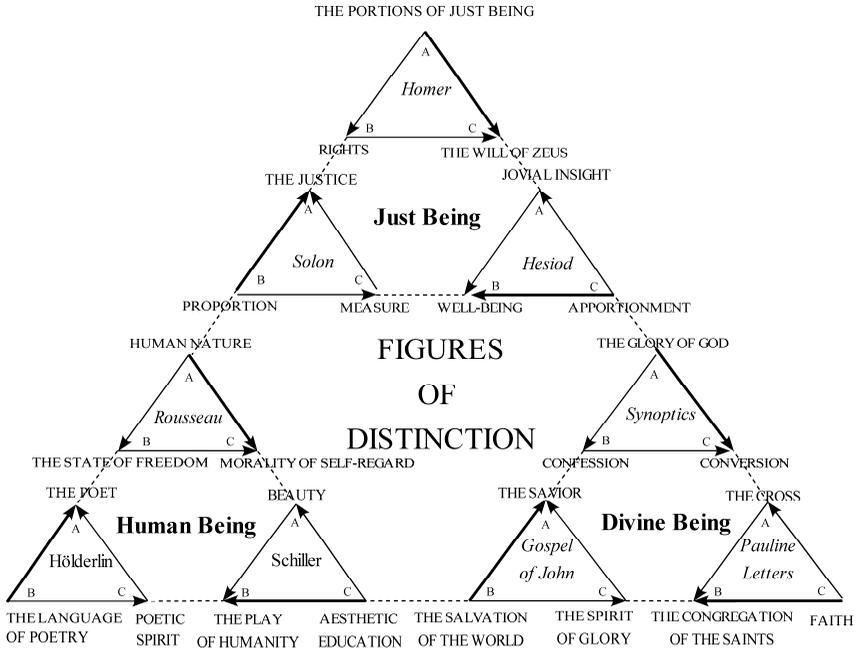


This sign of achievement, this *insignia* of thought, marks the distinction in the *temporal* or sequential sense; for in this sense, the void and the plain expanse of plane that had extended blankly, insipidly, before experience and its salt inscribed it with thought's articulate blaze of pain is seen as *prior* to the state of distinction that has just emerged through the delimitation of that length and stretch of otherwise homogenous uniformity. The reference to it made by such a distinction is as to what is always already retained, *time past*, or, should the diversity recognized by this character of discernment be again liquidated, permanently postponed and anticipated, *time future*. Thus the indiscriminate void of pristine vacancy is never contiguous with the marked state, but rather always remembered or projected; the distinction originally drawn is an indelible stigma that remains permanently prior or posterior to the account that critical self-reflection gives of that fabulous plainness prior to the entry of thought's own brand of severalty upon that sleek scene – with respect to that unmarked state of oceanic dissipation, it is perfect continence, making the difference in which our human being may take place as self-relative.

### **18. The Chiral Rhythm of Distinction**

As we have seen, in contrast to its *diachronic* conception in the order of succession – in terms of *before* and *after* the fact of thought's entry upon the scene – the distinction might also be designated, though somewhat clumsily, in a planar framework, *synchronically*, by taking our first sign, i.e. the accent of negation (–), and enlarging it to represent the two sides of a rectangle as in *Figure 10*, distinguishing in this way the *inside* and the *outside* of its boundary, with the distinction taken as "outside" when referring to the passage *from the inside to the outside* of the enclosure or

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**Figure 108: A Plurality of Principles, Not One**

And thus, as well, do we gain an overview of the totality of differences that the languages of wisdom have articulated regarding the distinction of human being in the person of the Poet of Nature, the Savior of the World, and the Statesman of Justice. Each was engaged in a work of distinction – the poet of nature celebrated and served the ideal of *Beauty* that nature represented; the Savior took upon himself the transforming ordeal of the *Cross*, the “X” that marks the precise spot where Heaven and earth, human being and divine, touch; the Statesman recognized and defended the invisible measure of apportionment upon which all community is based, namely upon *Zeus’s insight* into how much more the half is than the whole. Each language offered us a vision, a mythology of the fulfillment of the respective principle in which its subjects dwell – in *Olympus*, in the *Kingdom of God*, in *Fatherland*. The inhabitants of these places, these ~~places~~ *places*), are thought to be the children of that distinction – outstanding mortal beings of immortal renown, children of glory born of flesh *and* of spirit, builders of a humanity that is both natural *and* moral. Is this not what people are, thus divided in themselves – burdened, crushed but also uplifted, transformed by a self-several destiny?

Three languages, three principles and not just one language and one principle. None of them can be reduced to the other or all three to some overarching concept except in a misguided bid, whether incidentally or purposefully, whether maliciously or benignly, to preempt one in lieu of the others, highlight one at the expense of the others.

Thus, *God* is not “greater” than *Freedom* except in the particular conception of freedom that obtained in the Second Epoch, namely in the sense of the freedom of choice (*liberum arbitrium*), which is an entirely different notion than the ideal of freedom as the autonomy of human being. Nor is this human being of self-determination identical with the one known in the Greek world, the superlative being of excellence in word and deed.

In the knowledge of the Muses, a human being was one being among many of the same as well as different kinds, Greek as well as Persian, mortal as well as immortal, rational as well as instinctual, follower as well as leader, parent as well as child, woman as well as man, king as well subject, baker as well as physician – each had, in accordance with his or her nature, his or her craft or art, his or her excellence, a rightful place in the ordered whole of all being. Similarly, all the familiar notions that are a philosopher's daily bread have their own proper place in a train of thought thinking thought. For this reason, whenever someone speaks of *right*, *beauty*, *God*, *Man*, etc. our first question must always be: “which *right*?” “which *beauty*?” “which *God*?” “which *Man*?” If there is one thing that we can learn from the tradition of philosophical thought it is that we must begin by acknowledging the incommensurable orders of the distinctions that were made. Trains of thought, ideas, are discrete – severance rather than continuity is their empire, the sheer scope of which, therefore, is both finite *and* infinite.

### 161. A Cosmos of Words

Du glaubst also im Ernste, das Ideal des Wissens könnte wohl in irgend einer bestimmten Zeit in irgend einem Systeme dargestellt erscheinen, das alle ahndeten, die Wenigsten durchaus erkannten? Du glaubst sogar, dies Ideal sei jetzt schon wirklich geworden, und es fehle zum Jupiter Olympius nichts mehr als das Piedestal? Vielleicht! (Hölderlin, GSA IV 213.2-6)

*So you seriously believe that the ideal of knowledge could be rendered at a given point in time in a particular system that all have caught sight of, few have gained insight into? In fact, you even believe that the ideal is already real and that the only thing*

*still lacking in the completion of Jupiter's Olympus is the pedestal? Maybe!*

The scheme of all things thought is a harmonious whole of distinctions founded upon a triumvirate of principles. We have examined such a system in this study. Is freedom real? Does God exist? Is the soul immortal? To ask these questions is to place yourself outside of their conception. Where are you? What is your standpoint? Do we know what we are asking if we have departed from the sphere where these questions have been asked and answered once and for all time, *their* time? What do you mean by *reality*, by *existence*, by *being*? Why do you ask? Who wants to know? Or are we just “doing” philosophy? Is asking these questions what philosophers do? Perhaps the study we have conducted suggests, if nothing else, that philosophy can be, philosophers can do, something else, too.

The scheme of all things thought is a work of collection and recollection; it is, as well, the vision of a community, a comity of thoughts, like individuals distinguished in the pride and dignity of their own accomplishments and yet united by the love for what they share, which is, though nothing “general,” nevertheless distinct from them in particular – this common, uncommon love that our philology seeks to foster, inherits from tradition a notion of dwelling founded upon a legacy of regard, where all contribute, each in a unique way, to the beauty and the longevity of the monument they unfold and where all those fine and noble names like *truth*, *virtue*, *reason*, *spirit*, *justice*, *eternity*, *divinity*, *humanity*, *courage*, *sacrifice*, *piety*, *modesty*, *beneficence*, *determination* – all 99 of them – find their proper place in a cosmos of words. Is it not our own destiny winking at us, us latter-day thinkers and doers, that we can ask this very question regarding a community, an organization of principles previously thought to be mutually exclusive and even internecine?

In our buildings, is it not strange how we have relentlessly subtracted the “sense” of the words from their assumed meaning and thus the self-several sign from the referent in order to clothe with these words the idea or concept in an illuminating raiment of tangibility? Just in the way that Schiller recommended for the art of beauty that the form be distinguished from the content, the language of Homer, of Paul, of Hölderlin provides us with terms in which to render our experience with those principles, the premise being that if we can find a completely different language to represent the same meaning, we have grasped that principle *poetically*, we would say, today, *philologically*, in terms of that language.

We have, in effect, consecrated all the words of the language to the rendering of this one self-several experience, one *and* three, three *and* nine, nine *and* twenty-seven; and then, in turn, a given world of words – those myths of poetic thought we have studied – is devoted to the service of the reality of this experience. How else could we put the matter, when things, i.e. names of things, like the “sky” and the “stars” and the “rivers,” less often but occasionally the names of man-made things, too, and, in general, names for all the phenomena that touch upon the human condition, have always been borrowed by thought, the Builder, to articulate the experience of human being with the distinction we have termed *pure reason*. Even this term has been taken from traditional and contemporary discourse to name the experience or some aspect of it that we have intended to draw the reader's attention to. Whether or not this name is a good name or not, it is a *possible* name among a vast collection of candidates, many of which we have also considered and many of which are clearly better in some trains of thought than in others; or is there any other reason why we should nominate a principle *God* or *Zeus*, *freedom* or *perfection*, *destiny* or *justice* than one word's better suitability in one line of reasoning than another? For this reason alone do we err should we speak of “creator” *gods* or of a “perfect” *human being* because, logically, in the sense of the logic, the language of Christian thought, only *God* is the creator of heaven and earth and, in the language of *humanity*, human nature is not perfect but free, whereas every being is perfect insofar it has reached its maturity and taken its rightful place in the well-ordered scheme of all beings from the least to the greatest of them all, to Zeus, who nevertheless is subject to the precedence of what has already been decided and determined, namely the portions and the proportions of THE WAY IT SHOULD BE, the *Moirai* of the MOIPAI.

Only God can *create* being; all beings, *human* being included, always already *are*; only human *being*, our humanity, can, through the hard work of education issuing in beauty, its resolution, bring itself forth and thus realize its own freedom. But the distinction of human nature is not created by God, rather, in the Second Epoch, it is engendered in Christ as the Son of God of whose progeniture, life, and death we partake through faith. Therefore it is wrong to say that God is a figment of the imagination and, worse, that imaginative folks have invented God, just because, in the Third Epoch, “God” is an idea of pure reason, an indispensable idea if freedom's moral imperative is to be actually realized and THE WAY IT SHOULD BE is to be THE WAY IT IS and not “just” a thought, just another ideal in a world that is far from ideal and, mostly sunk in a selfishness that knows no other ideal than itself.

What a simple notion, this thought we have termed *the distinction of human being!* And how richly it has presented itself in the course of Western civilization! But simplicity and intricacy go hand in hand, joining forces to thwart us. For, as we have often noted, what could be more hidden from view and mysterious than what is completely obvious; a never-setting sun illuminates all else, water moistens the soil but what brings the light of day to the light of day and makes water wet and fire dry? For we might direct attention not merely to the things but to the elements that they consist of – what is the earth of the earth, the cause of the cause, the origin of the origin? What sort of thing is this thing once removed and, removed once again and again and then again – the beginning and the origin of the beginning and the principle of the origin of the beginning and the initial source of the principle of the origin of the beginning? There is no end to this infinite “regression” not through lack of insight and principle on the part of the thinker but rather because we are never (and should never be!) finished with the practical endeavor of critical reflection; every settlement is the basis for a new reflection and serves as the potential for a new perfection, the foundation of a new generation – the drama of practice is not the dwelling but rather the striving and the building. For this is thought, too – the restless, the hungry heart for whom it is turtles all the way down.

But even this *unfinishedness* is not the end of the story; the epoch of the infinity of the will is itself inherent in the larger framework of thought that marks the measure of completion as well as origin, the latter as the resolution, the former as the commencement, of infinity. For the resolution of the drive of thought is its presence and perfection as thought, the Builder, and the inhabitant of the dwelling, the reconciliation of the real with the ideal and the ideal with the real; as much as the enduring fulfillment of thought is beyond the reach of our dedicated will to achieve, it is nevertheless the fruit of poetic thought, our free imagination, which diligently creates of itself beyond itself the object that most corresponds to it and in subsequent contemplation of which, all yearning, all tears subside, at least for a little while.

If the post/modern mentality has established language as its final frontier after the closure and the departure of our philosophical tradition and the critical world that was left in its wake, we are left with discourse and ultimately with key words that speakers and writers may avail themselves of for their own reasons, for their own good or ill or that of others. What is a thinker’s reason for seizing the word? What is the essential topic of that thinker’s insight? What is his or her driving impulse? We mean these questions, however, not in a biographical but rather in a philological sense:

What is the principle (A) of discernment (C) that determines the cause and issue (B) taken up by a particular thinker in light of the scheme of all things thought?

Thus, in preparing the curriculum and the school of philological philosophy of the distinction of human being, one would do well not to begin with some pledge of allegiance or with a song and anthem. Pure reason is our only true homeland and fatherland, our only city by the sea, but its patriots ought to be careful when hoisting a star-spangled banner of providence to the survivors of the great civil war that is Man's self-several battle against Man – we know now that this battle rages, perpetually, within our own heart, broken and mended, each time again transformed, each time renewed, and yet the scars incurred along the way remain, i.e. in the heart of those cut, cut again and again by the self-several destiny of our human being, who were born to be at odds with our human being, Mine against me and Yours against you, and Its against it; is the heart itself not the collection and the recollection of these wounds *and* these scars of distinctions that, though long healed, have left their indelible mark? Through language, these scars offer to tell the story, become signs, dramatic reminders and monuments to what has been achieved.

The first lesson in our school of thought teaches us to take up a cause that knows neither spilled blood, nor wrought iron, neither the history that the latter girded, nor the soil in which the former seeped. Servant neither to brain nor to brawn, pure reason has no king to bow down to, no earthly surrogate on which to feed. Serving pure reason, we speak no catechism, wear no uniform, form no tribe of zealots.<sup>86</sup> For thought is none of these things and we ourselves in our daily lives have learned by heart the post/modern lesson that we are all entirely indeterminate in the flow of mere being – you and I and ours and all we are and ever will be and were but a wrinkle briefly arising on the plain plane of eternity and all too soon smoothed away to continuity; yes, but then again, even for this reason, are we not all the more susceptible to the determination of principles that exhibit the undeniable proclivity to leave their mark in the otherwise unmarked, unremarkable space of our lived experience, yours and mine. Such is the beginning of our study of philosophy – a distinction that strikes

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<sup>86</sup> As Wittgenstein reminds us in his Zettel: “Der Philosoph ist nicht Bürger einer Denkgemeinde. Das ist, was ihn zum Philosophen macht.” The philosopher is not a citizen of any parish of thought. That is precisely what makes him or her a philosopher.” Wittgenstein, *Gesamte Werkausgabe*, Vol. 5, p. 380, §455.

and strikes a chord, awakens us, arouses wonder, raises questions, breaks the familiar chains of beings and of being. For thought is not merely a conceit of its thinkers; thought is not merely the forms, expressions, actions, compartments, and attitudes of the pious and even less is it their boasting, a promiscuity of names dropped, the thrust and parry of words and ideas, even less still the arrogance of the rogue, the libertine, the maverick and marauding mind, wilding, out for a kill.

Where is the glamor in thought thinking about thought? Where's the shudder, the horror, the mystery in our experience of pure reason? Being our everyday companion, she has aged with us but in contrast to us, has remained fresh, true to herself in her every age and happy to wait for the evening when the tasks of the day are done, or until the weekend, or for the holiday time when we, for once not exhausted or distracted, become restless for reflection; and even on busy days she occasionally interrupts our bustle or, more likely, retires into our nights, haunts our dreams, is but a tweak or a momentary cringe, a furtive, fleeting tear that overtakes us unexpectedly in the flow and rush of our dealings. Where is the drama in supporting what is best, especially in cases, the majority of them in this life, when the best is less than the good? In addressing our needs, serving our purposes, poor old reason is neither a secret weapon, the strongman in our pocket, nor brainware that will calculate our delight to the ounce or the inch.

Well then, what is thought?

*Thought* is the age-old name for the story of our experience with the human capacity for adopting a critical standpoint, assuming the perspective of a being without – and even this critical standpoint, so easily twisted into extremism, is subject to the critique of reflection and thus self-subdued. In this way, resignation in all the old dogmas and even in the latest (the ~~dogmas~~) of skepticism, nihilism, or anarchism can be challenged, namely by their tasting of themselves.

What is thought? Thought is completion without stagnation, conclusive without being exclusive; thought is the remark of rapt (but not rapacious) attention, the acuity of substantial insight, penetrating, yes, but neither intrusion nor pervasion; thought is foresight that accounts for consequences, recollection that gathers and recalls the principles. *Thought* names our relationship to and our experience with thought and is, therefore, self-knowing, reflective perception that need not be limited to that of personal awareness or the introspection of one's own mental and emotional states – in fact, thought is above all your realizing that it is not

always about *you* and *your* salvation, friend; think about that! Thought is, thus, looking at and looking into; it is looking out, looking over; it is the outlook of an overview and it is even to overlook when doing so circumvents gratuitous embarrassment. And then, thought is the result of thought. For thought is positive as realization, thought is negative as abstraction, thought is both separation *and* approach – the reception, the affirmation of obedience *and* the refusal to obey, to conform, to defer to a principle; it is, as well, therefore, neither positive nor negative and as such the difference, that resonate interval, that marks the gap between them, but it does not follow that thought is, therefore, negligent or neuter. Thought is neutrality only in the sense of being objective and unbiased judgment. And negligence? Harried, we who care about the wrong things will lift our voice to the impossible god of making distinctions and join in T.S. Eliot's famous prayer of renunciation spoken by those whose

wings are no longer wings to fly but merely vans to beat the air,  
 the air which is now thoroughly small and dry, smaller and dryer  
 than the will: Teach us to care and not to care, teach us to sit  
 still.<sup>87</sup>

For the last time: For those who, rejoicing, have “to construct something upon which to rejoice,” what is pure thought? It is, in any case, not just an OUGHT without an IS; thought is AUGHT unless *taught* (A), *sought* (C), *wrought* (B), unless contemplated in the wisdom of ancient writings, told in song, celebrated in words and deeds, put into action and into the practice of a patient human endeavor, our own, here, today, now. You are thought's only hope. Who? You. It's up to you to make good on this our queenly, our kingly inkling.

Indeed, after having devoted much effort to becoming adept in the language of thought, we may now more confidently go about finding those memorable words and phrases that best fit to the exigencies of place, seizing the right moment, a day in the life, a glory night. Every catchword and locution, all our familiar sayings and slogans can, then, be a reminder of our home away from every home we have ever had and loved, far away from friends and family, those lost, those who remain to us. Then we find pure reason in the song, that cosmos of words that exhorts, that celebrates a true friend's fortitude in heart-rending battle – it is the strife that making a distinction means to the heightened heart of human life; gaze up, again, and yet again, at those stars of thought we have visited and visit still that

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<sup>87</sup> T.S. Eliot, “Ash-Wednesday” in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 61.

spangle on the banner, themselves, in their separate heaven, a self-several civilization and a family of beings and of being to which we, the latest citizens, belong, the dwelling we live and die for daily in distinguishing ourselves before the tribune of reason, our own eye that is our I and our final aye of assent to beauty's beckoning beyond all reasoning and seeming.

Surely we will find there that fine felicity in a turn of words or phrase and then, for the briefest of moments, taste all the glory of a victor's life lived in pure reason's cause but who mostly sups on failure in the wrestle with the idioms, the vernacular of distempered pros of wit rather than of the eloquence of a true master builder and artificer who, in encountering for the millionth billionth time the reality of human experience, forges poetry anew in tongues of flame, collecting all the choicest words for thought that stand, unshakable, touching, exhilarating and that will suffice a day for a song of praise, a hymn that is, moreover, a teaching held fast to the heart, like the loved ones long since departed and so easily forgotten, not so easily forgotten.



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# Note on the Author

For 18 years Thomas Kruger Caplan has been an instructor for business English at the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences in Lower Saxony, Germany. During this time, he has also lectured in the areas of rhetoric, cultural history, and philosophy while pursuing his investigation into the triad of philological totalities as proposed by H. Boeder, namely the testaments of distinguished speech celebrated as wisdom, the Occidental tradition of metaphysical reflection upon their grant, and the critical animus of mundane post/modernity that delimits the closure of this legacy. In the future he hopes to further explore Boeder's hypothesis that it is only in the changing ratios of these three terms, i.e. *language – history – world*, that the distinction of our human being can become completely intelligible to contemplation heightened and deepened by the terminological philology of thought, the Builder, the methods and precepts of which have underlain and guided this study.

Thomas Kruger Caplan is currently looking for opportunities to teach the *poetic performance*, the *theory*, and the *practice* of pure reason as the self-several destiny of human being.

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