

# Continental Philosophy

A contemporary introduction

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# Introduction: what is continental philosophy?

## I.1 The Wars of the Roses

Great lords and gentlemen, what means this silence?  
Dare no man answer in a case of truth?

*(The First Part of Henry the Sixth, II, iv, 1–2)*

Allow me to return once again to Shakespeare, in whom I have overindulged in the course of these lectures. But it sometimes seems to me that the whole of philosophy is only a meditation of Shakespeare.

*(Levinas, Time and the Other, 72)*

This book is a “contemporary introduction” to “continental philosophy.” Another book to be published in the same series will be a “contemporary introduction” to “Anglo-American philosophy.” The separation of these two topics accurately reflects a long-standing division between rival factions in philosophy departments in the US and UK. Originally, the Anglo-American/continental distinction was simply geographical, the term “continental” referring to contemporary or recent philosophical happenings on the European continent. But over the years the distinction has acquired metaphilosophical connotations, that is, it has come to be thought of as a distinction between competing conceptions of the philosophical enterprise itself. Today, *Anglo-American* philosophy is typically equated with *analytic* philosophy, since a majority of the members of Anglo-American philosophy departments describe themselves as working within the analytic “tradition.” Conversely, the label “continental” is applied not only to European philosophers, but to the significant minority of Anglo-American philosophers who see themselves as continuing the continental “tradition.” Each of these traditions has its own legacy: analytic philosophers address problems that have been bequeathed to them by thinkers such as Mill, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, and Davidson; while continental philosophers take up the inheritance of Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson, Husserl, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida. To identify oneself as a member of the House of

Analytic or the House of Continental is to ally oneself with one of these two branches of a common family tree. What makes the division between these two houses resemble the English Wars of the Roses is not only the fact that Anglo-American philosophers have used the analytic/continental distinction to divide *themselves* into two separate factions; but the fact that the division has taken the form of an institutional struggle over who has the right to inherit the title of Philosopher.

In making their respective claims to the British crown, both the House of Lancaster and the House of York were able to affirm true lineal descent from King Edward III. In the analytic/continental version of this scenario, the role of Edward III would be played by the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), the last common ancestor to whom each of the two factions proudly traces its genealogy. The fact that “it is not exactly the same Kant” to which the two houses appeal—as the non-partisan continental philosopher Paul Ricoeur has quipped (CC 50)—suggests that the analytic/continental division can be represented as a struggle over the Kantian legacy. Two non-partisan analytic philosophers, Richard Rorty and Michael Friedman, have separately tried to represent the division in just this way. They claim that the division has its roots in a distinction that Kant draws between two supposedly separable elements of human cognition, namely, “intuitions” and “concepts.”

According to Kant, intuitions are immediate representations of individual objects that are somehow given to us through a faculty of receptivity, while concepts are spontaneously generated forms of thought in terms of which we cognize such objects (CPR A19/B33, A320/B376–7). This fundamental distinction organizes all of Kant’s “critical” philosophy, eventually giving rise to a related distinction, namely that between “determining” and “reflective” judgments (CPJ 66–7). A determining judgment subsumes an object of intuition under a pre-given concept of the understanding (as in “This is a cat”), while a reflective judgment calls attention to our inability to subsume the form of an anomalous object under any concept that we possess (as in “Whatever this is, it is absolutely unique”). Kant associates the distinction between determining and reflective judgments with the difference between scientific cognition and aesthetics. The aim of science is to put forth determining judgments about that which is true or good, while the aim of aesthetic “taste” is to communicate to others our pleasurable encounters with objects that in some way resist conceptual determination.

In his 1981 essay, “Nineteenth-Century Idealism and Twentieth-Century Textualism,” Rorty observes that this way of thinking about the relationship between science and art gave rise to a nineteenth-century polemic between “positivists” and “Romantics” as to which of the two should be accorded primacy in our sense of ourselves and the world (COP 142–3). Rorty goes on to suggest that the twentieth-century split between analytic and continental philosophers is just an extension of this debate, with the two sides functioning as “public relations agencies” of “scientific” and “literary culture” respectively (COP 149). In his view, this polemic is based upon a false dichotomy for which Kant’s distinction between intuitions and concepts is to blame. By abandoning Kant’s way of thinking about experience, late-nineteenth-century pragmatists such as William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey (1859–1952)—as well as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), whom Rorty classifies with the pragmatists—were able to reveal deep affinities between science and art (COP 150, 161). Rorty recommends that analytic and continental philosophers cultivate the neglected insights of these thinkers.

In *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (2000), Friedman implicitly agrees with Rorty that the analytic/continental division concerns the relative importance of science and art, but instead of tracing the division between philosophy's "two cultures" (POTW ix, cf. COP 139) back to the split between positivists and Romantics, he locates it in the attempts made by rival schools of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century neo-Kantians to rid themselves of the intuition/concept dichotomy. In rejecting Kant's dualistic account of experience, his legateses found themselves torn between an account of human experience that gave primacy to the natural sciences (the view adopted by the Marburg School of neo-Kantianism) and one that privileged the *Geisteswissenschaften* or cultural sciences (the position of the Southwest School) (POTW 28, 155–6). Friedman goes on to show how an historically important debate between Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970) and Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)—two thinkers eventually regarded as standard-bearers of the analytic and continental traditions, respectively—arose out of this dilemma. In his 1932 essay, "The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language" (*Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache*), Carnap criticized Heidegger's reflections on the sentence "Nothingness itself nothings {*Das Nichts selbst nichtet*}," maintaining that, since it violated the laws of logic, this sentence was utterly meaningless (POTW 11).<sup>1</sup> For his part, Heidegger dismissed the mathematical logic on which Carnap based his entire philosophy as "mere 'calculation'" (POTW 151n). Friedman regards both of these positions as one-sided, and he traces the philosophical roots of the debate to a public "disputation" that Heidegger had with the neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) in Davos, Switzerland in 1929 (with Carnap in attendance) (POTW x, 7). This encounter was significant not only for the role it would eventually play in defining the analytic/continental distinction, but because it led to the eclipse of Cassirer's "synthetic and conciliatory" alternative, his so-called "philosophy of symbolic forms," which attempted to do justice to both the natural and the cultural sciences (POTW 159). Thus Cassirer emerges on Friedman's account—much as the pragmatists do for Rorty—as a neglected thinker, the study of whose works could help analytic and continental philosophers resolve their philosophical differences.

Though Rorty and Friedman agree that the analytic/continental division has something to do with the Kantian dichotomy between intuitions and concepts, it is noteworthy that Rorty blames the division on Kant's *introduction* of his dualism, while Friedman traces it to various attempts made to *eliminate* it. These two views are not necessarily incompatible, because it is possible that the dilemma faced by the neo-Kantians—as to whether philosophy should have its point of departure in logic and science or in the *Geisteswissenschaften*—resulted from their inability to rid themselves of a pernicious distinction. But what if the neo-Kantians' failure reflected not the residual effects of a false dichotomy but the persistence of a genuinely irreducible one? Or, put differently, what if it were impossible to eliminate Kant's dualism without giving rise to philosophical controversy?

In the following section I will show that Kant's principal motive for introducing the intuition/concept dualism in the first place was to put an end to all hitherto existing philosophical controversies. By insisting on the ineliminability of his dualism, Kant hoped to bring about perpetual philosophical peace. Attending to this aspect of his project

will show how exactly he came to play the role of the analytic/continental division's Edward III.

If Kant is our Edward III, then Rorty's characterization of the inaugural post-Kantian schism between Romanticism and positivism resembles Shakespeare's depiction—in *The Tragedy of King Richard the Second*—of the civil discord between the flamboyant Richard and the serious-minded Henry Bolingbroke, two of Edward's heirs. After the usurping Bolingbroke becomes King Henry IV, the conflict between the sobriety of determining judgment and the aesthetic license of reflective judgment is played out in the life of Henry's son, Prince Hal, who in *The First Part of Henry the Fourth* is torn between two ideals represented by the ambitious Hotspur and the life-loving Falstaff. The decisive moment of *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth* occurs when Hal, now King Henry V, banishes Falstaff. This event has its parallel in Rorty's account of the ascension of analytic philosophy to a position of institutional dominance in Anglo-American philosophy departments and the exiling of Romanticism to literary criticism. Henry V's subsequent efforts to unify his kingdom (portrayed in *The Life of Henry the Fifth*) can be likened to Rorty's attempts to overcome the analytic/continental division, but unlike Henry—who quelled civil dissension by conquering France—Rorty's approach has been to give up the Kantian pretension to constitute philosophy as a law-governed domain with borders that need to be defended or extended.

There is much to be said for this anarchic ambition, but in section three I will argue that Rorty does not so much resolve the analytic/continental division as suppress the underlying motives for it. In this respect his approach is too amicable, like that of the ineffectual Henry VI. In an effort to accentuate the stakes of the rivalry, in section four I will suggest that Nietzsche—a crucial figure in the genealogy of the House of Continental—was not a pragmatist, as Rorty claims, but a polemicist who, by challenging the Socratic conception of philosophical dialectics, radicalized the Romantic critique of positivism. In order to highlight Nietzsche's importance to the analytic/continental division, in section five I will show that in his confrontation with Cassirer, Heidegger essentially repeated the main argument of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (though probably without realizing it). This parallel will enable me to expand upon Friedman's analysis of the "parting of the ways" at Davos. Finally, in section six, I will suggest that the analytic/continental division can be represented as a series of divergent appropriations of the four questions that Kant took to be fundamental to philosophy. This model will guide my discussion throughout the rest of this book.

In performance, the three parts of Shakespeare's *Henry the Sixth* plays are sometimes broken down into two, the first presenting events pertaining to the reign of the House of Lancaster and the second to the period during which the House of York ruled—though it is important to remember that each of the two factions claimed legitimacy throughout the entire period. Analogously, the main chapters of this book can be regarded as telling only one half of the full story, for it does not chronicle the conceptual history of the House of Analytic. For that, the reader must turn to Roger Gibson's *Anglo-American Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction*.<sup>2</sup> In the conclusion, I will offer a brief synopsis of how I would recount this other half of the story, and I will suggest that the analytic/continental division can be thought of as a controversy about the nature of philosophical controversies. The fact that this metaphilosophical conflict may be intrinsic to the philosophical enterprise (and not a mere by-product of the legacy of Kant) suggests that

we have always been in the midst of the Wars of the Roses. In this spirit, my conclusion, though a mere epilogue, aspires to the philosophical equivalent of Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Richard the Third*, that is, to a demonstration of the interminability of the winter of our discontent.

## I.2 Kant's attempt to secure perpetual philosophical peace

Civil dissension is a viperous worm  
That gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth.

(*The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, III, i, 72–3)

In the preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 1781; second edition 1787), Kant characterizes metaphysics as a “battlefield of...endless controversies” (CPR Aviii). So interminable do these battles appear to be that metaphysics is no longer regarded (as it once was) as “the **queen** of all the sciences” (CPR Aviii). The aim of critique is to restore the queen to her rightful place of dignity by constituting “a court of justice” before which all metaphysical controversies can be lawfully resolved once and for all (CPR Axi).

The queen's claim to the throne had been called under suspicion by the seventeenth-century English empiricist John Locke (1632–1704). Locke impugned the honor of the queen by purporting to trace her genealogy back “to the rabble of common experience,” that is, by claiming that the supposedly pure concepts of human understanding were actually derived from empirical intuitions (CPR Aix). Kant's metaphor of the falsely accused matron reappears in his 1783 book, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics that will be able to Come Forward as Science* (*Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können*), where he criticizes the Scottish empiricist David Hume (1711–1776) for having claimed that “reason was altogether deluded” in regarding the concept of causality “as one of her children” when it was actually just “a bastard of the imagination,... impregnated by experience” (PTAFM 55). Hume went even further than Locke in that he concluded from the queen's base origins that she was not fit to legislate over the rabble of sensibility. Against these slanderous claims, Kant promises to show that human understanding is equipped with genuinely “pure” concepts which arise from it alone, and that objects of experience are lawfully governed by them.

The empiricists are not the only ones to blame for the queen's misfortune. No less guilty are the “dogmatists,” under whose influence the queen's rule had become “despotic” (CPR Aviii—ix). In order to ensure that this will no longer be the case, Kant seeks not only to legitimate the queen's rule over the rabble but to show that she oversteps her proper limits whenever she attempts to legislate beyond the field of sensible experience. In this regard he acts toward his queen like a minister who tells his monarch what she can and cannot do.<sup>3</sup> Just as he criticizes Locke and Hume for alleging that the pure concepts of the understanding were derived from sensible intuitions, so he criticizes the rationalist philosophers Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and Christian Wolff

(1679–1754) for thinking that through the use of concepts alone it was possible to have “intellectual” (i.e., non-sensible) intuitions of objects of the understanding.

In different ways, both the empiricists and the dogmatic rationalists failed to recognize the fact that intuitions and concepts are completely different kinds of representations. The mistake made by Locke and Hume was to think of concepts as abstractions or copies of sensible intuitions. In their view, concepts differed from intuitions only in having a lesser degree of liveliness or vividness. The symmetrical mistake made by Leibniz and Wolff was to think of intuitions as confused concepts. For them, intuitions differed from concepts only in having a lesser degree of clarity and distinctness. Kant contrasts these complementary errors by asserting that “Leibniz intellectualized the appearances, just as Locke totally sensitivized the concepts of understanding” (CPR A271/B327).

The intuition/concept dichotomy gives rise to a further distinction between “a priori” and “a posteriori” sources of cognition. In the introduction to the *Critique*, Kant says that while all human experience begins with a posteriori (i.e., empirical) sensations which provide the “matter” for our intuitions of empirical objects, we provide a priori (non-empirical) “forms” to which the matter of sensation must conform in order to be apprehended by us (CPR A1–2/B1–2). The discovery of pure forms of experience gives rise to the idea of a “transcendental philosophy” that will put forth a complete “system” of “a priori concepts of objects in general” (CPR A11–12). The narrower aim of critique is to prepare the way for such a system by identifying the a priori forms of cognition and distinguishing their legitimate contribution to experience from their illegitimate extension beyond the bounds of possible experience.

In order to carry out this project, Kant begins by drawing a distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. A judgment of the form “A is B” is analytic if “the predicate B belongs to the subject A,” while a judgment is synthetic if the predicate “B lies entirely outside the concept A” (CPR A6/B10). Analytic judgments can be known to be true a priori (i.e., independently of experience) because they do nothing more than make explicit something that has already been implicitly thought in the concept of the subject. According to Kant, I can know that all bodies are extended without having to appeal to sensible intuitions at all, because the concept of extension is contained within the concept of a body. By contrast, in order to know whether all bodies are heavy I have to appeal to my empirical intuitions of physical objects, because only these can teach me if heaviness is correctly predicated of bodies or not (CPR A7/B11). Thus, whereas the judgment that all bodies are extended is both analytic and (therefore) knowable a priori, the judgment that all bodies have weight is both synthetic and a posteriori. Because synthetic judgments can only be confirmed by appealing to an intuition of some sort, it is tempting to conclude that they are all a posteriori, i.e., that they can be known to be true only on the basis of empirical experience. But according to Kant, some synthetic judgments can be known to be true a priori. Such is the case with mathematics. Judgments like  $7+5=12$  and *a straight line is the shortest distance between two points* are synthetic because their respective predicates (i.e., the concept of 12 and the concept of the shortest distance) are not contained in their subjects (the concept of the sum of 5 and 7, and the concept of a straight line) (CPR B16). Yet although they are synthetic, these judgments can somehow be known to be true a priori, that is, independently of the empirical content of experience.



Kant's discovery of the synthetic a priori character of arithmetic and geometry enables him to characterize critique as the project of surveying all of the different kinds of synthetic a priori judgments with an eye toward determining both their conditions of possibility and their scope of validity. In the case of mathematics, he argues in the section of the *Critique* entitled "Transcendental Aesthetic" that it is only because space and time are pure forms of human sensibility that we can know geometrical and arithmetical truths a priori. If space were something that we could have knowledge about only on the basis of empirical intuitions, then the judgments of geometry could only be known a posteriori (like the proposition that all bodies are heavy). But we know that geometrical truths are universally and necessarily valid for all possible objects in space, which is to say that we know them to be true a priori. Such knowledge cannot be arrived at analytically through the mere dissection of concepts, but only through an intuition of space. But since this intuition cannot be empirical, it follows that we must have an a priori intuition of space. Kant concludes that space itself is nothing more than a pure form of human sensibility, and that the actual objects which we intuit in space are only "appearances" and not "things in themselves." The same holds for time, the a priori intuition of which makes it possible for us to know arithmetical truths a priori. The difference between space and time is that space is the form of "outer" intuition, in which we represent objects (i.e., appearances) outside ourselves, while time is the form of "inner sense," by which each of us intuits our own representations (the appearance of oneself). To say that objects in space and time are just appearances is not to deny their "empirical reality," but it is to assert their "transcendental ideality" (CPR A28/B444, A35/B52). Because spatio-temporal properties pertain only to appearances and not to things in themselves, the validity of mathematics is restricted to the domain of objects of sensible intuition.

In the "Transcendental Analytic," Kant argues that just as our sensible intuitions of objects must conform to space and time as the a priori forms of human sensibility, so these same objects must conform to pure concepts which serve as the a priori forms of human understanding. These concepts are the "categories" which Locke and Hume (following Aristotle) had mistakenly tried to derive from empirical intuitions. By examining the logical structure of all acts of human judgment, Kant identifies twelve categories which he groups in threes under the four headings of "quantity," "quality," "relation," and "modality" (CPR A80/B106). To each category corresponds a particular synthetic a priori cognition by which something about experience can be known to be true, regardless of what the particular content of our empirical intuitions happens to be. Kant calls these a priori rules of experience "principles of pure understanding" (CPR A148/B187). To the headings of quantity, quality, relation, and modality, there correspond, respectively, "axioms of intuition," "anticipations of perception," "analogies of experience," and "postulates of empirical thinking in general" (CPR A161/B200). The axioms assert that every object of intuition must have an "extensive magnitude," that is, a spatial or temporal extent (CPR A161/B202). Likewise, the anticipations assert that every sensation must have an "intensive magnitude," that is, a degree of felt intensity that attests to a corresponding degree of reality (or force) in the sensed object itself (CPR A166/B207). The analogies tell us that objects of experience are necessarily governed by the relational categories of inherence (substance and accident), dependence (cause and effect), and concurrence (reciprocal causality between distinct substances) (CPR A182/B224, A189/B232, A2H/B256). Finally, the postulates explain how the modal

categories of possibility, existence, and necessity specify the different ways in which an object of experience can stand in relation to the thinking subject (CPR A218/B265–6).

The crucial argument of the Transcendental Analytic is the one that Kant presents as a “transcendental deduction” of the pure concepts of the understanding. In the first (“A”) edition version of the deduction, Kant identifies “a threefold synthesis” involving the “apprehension” of a manifold of sensation in one intuition, the “reproduction” of this manifold in the imagination, and the conceptual “recognition” of the unitary object that is given to us thereby (CPR A97–103). The aim of this analysis—as well as of the second (“B”) edition version of the deduction—is to show, first, that intuitable appearances in space and time are necessarily governed by the principles of pure understanding, and, second, that these principles are valid only in relation to appearances and not to things in themselves. Both of these conclusions are based on the idea that the categories derive their meaning solely through their reference to the spatio-temporal conditions of possible experience. To each of the pure concepts of the understanding there corresponds a “transcendental schema” by which the faculty of imagination relates that concept, through an act of synthesis, to a “time-determination” of a particular sort (CPR A138/B177). For example, to the category of substance there corresponds the schema of “the persistence of the real in time”; to the category of causality, “succession of the manifold insofar as it is subject to a rule”; and so on (CPR A144/B183). Apart from the schematism, the categories have a purely logical “function” but no sense.

Insofar as appearances are subject to categorial determination, Kant calls them “phenomena,” the empirical study of which is reserved for the natural sciences. In order to mark the gap separating phenomena from things in themselves, he introduces the wholly negative concept of “noumena,” a term that derives from the Greek word *nous*, which is often translated as “mind” or “understanding” (CPR A248–9/B306). Assuming we could know that such things exist (which we cannot), noumena would be the purely intelligible objects of thought that Leibniz and Wolff posited.

So long as the use of the categories is restricted to the “immanent” conditions of possible experience (and so barred from any “transcendent” employment), the understanding remains within its proper sphere of jurisdiction. But over and above the faculty of understanding we possess a faculty of reason which actively bids the understanding to transgress its limits (CPR A295–6/B352). In the “Transcendental Dialectic,” Kant seeks to explain both why it is that reason does this, and why the synthetic a priori judgments to which it gives rise inevitably lead to “illusion” and not to truth (CPR A61–2/B86).

Kant characterizes reason as the capacity to draw inferences from premises. Accordingly, just as the categories of the understanding could be derived from the logical structure of judgments, so the pure “ideas” of reason can be deduced from the logical structure of syllogisms. Every syllogism has a major premise that is supplied by the understanding. Like all judgments, this premise must relate its concepts to one another categorically (*S* is *P*), hypothetically (if *X* then *Y*, where *X* and *Y* are themselves judgments), or disjunctively (either *X* or *Y* or *Z*). Depending on what this relation is, the syllogism itself will be categorical, hypothetical, or disjunctive in form.

In the Transcendental Analytic, Kant derived the categories of substance, causality, and community from the three types of relational judgments. To each of these categories there corresponded an analogy of experience by which the understanding bid itself to

seek an empirical “condition” for something “conditioned.” For example, the synthetic a priori principle that every event has a cause prompts the understanding to seek the actual cause of any particular event that happens to occur. This iterable procedure gives rise to a manifold of judgments. In order to bring unity to this manifold, reason posits the existence of an *unconditioned* condition for every series of conditions which the understanding posits. This is equivalent to demanding that rational demonstrations be grounded not merely in principles but in first principles. For each of the basic types of syllogism, reason generates a priori the idea of an object that could serve as the subject of such a (synthetic a priori) principle. Corresponding to the relational categories of substance, causality, and community are the ideas of the soul, the world (as totality), and God. The idea of the soul is the idea of the thinking subject as the absolutely unconditioned condition of all its representations; the idea of the world is the idea of the totality of appearances; and the idea of God is the idea of the unconditioned condition of all possibilities (CPR A334/B39D).

Unlike the categories, whose employment is restricted to the conditions of possible experience, the ideas of reason refer the understanding to transcendent objects that can never be given in sensible intuitions. By appearing to extend human cognition in this way, reason seems to offer us the hope of purely rational—i.e., non-empirical—sciences of psychology (doctrine of the soul), cosmology (doctrine of the world-totality), and theology (doctrine of God) (CPR A334–5/B391–2). These hopes turn out to be in vain, because although the ideas are subjectively useful insofar as they direct the understanding to aspire to a standard of completeness which it can never actually attain, they have no objective employment whatsoever. The negative task of the Transcendental Dialectic is to prevent us from succumbing to the “transcendental illusions” of reason (CPR A295/B352). The supposed proofs in rational psychology of the substantiality, simplicity, and personal identity of the soul—as well as of the empirical ideality of objects in space—are only so many “paralogisms” (i.e., badly formed syllogisms). Likewise, rational cosmology can only generate “antinomies,” apparent conflicts of reason with itself. Finally, the supposed proofs in rational theology for the existence of God can do no more than posit an “ideal” to which no actual object corresponds.

Of the three different types of fallacious dialectical inferences, the antinomies have a special status. Unlike the paralogisms and ideal—which give rise to “one-sided” illusions concerning the existence of the soul and God (CPR A406/B433)—the antinomies make it seem possible for reason both to prove *and* to disprove the existence of an unconditioned condition of appearances. In a 1798 letter to the German philosopher Christian Garve (1742–1798), Kant said that it was his discovery of the antinomies that first set him on the path of critique because he found it distressing to think that human reason might actually be in conflict with itself.<sup>4</sup> Were it impossible to discover the illusion that sustains the antinomies, it would be necessary to give up all hope of ever achieving perpetual philosophical peace. In the preface to the *Critique*, Kant blamed the dogmatists and empiricists for causing metaphysics to fall into disgrace, but in the chapter on the antinomies, he argues that the conflict between these two factions is rooted in human reason itself (CPR A466/B494). Each of the antinomies is presented as a conflict between a dogmatic metaphysical “thesis” and an empiricist “antithesis.” For each of the instances in which the understanding posits a series of conditions of appearances, reason is able to complete the series in one of two ways. The dogmatic metaphysical strategy pursued in

each of the theses is to posit a first term in the series that would serve as the unconditioned condition of all the other terms. By contrast, the empiricist strategy adopted by the antitheses is to deny the existence of such first terms by treating the entire series itself as the unconditioned (CPR A417/B445). What makes each of these conflicts so formidable is that reason appears to have perfectly sound arguments on both sides.

Kant identifies four antinomies of pure reason, one for each of the main headings of the principles of the understanding. The first antinomy concerns the existence or non-existence of a beginning of the world in time and an outer boundary of the world in space (CPR A426–7/B454–5). If such boundaries did not exist, an infinite number of events would already have occurred and an infinite number of things would co-exist simultaneously. But according to Kant both of these things would require the complete synthesis of an infinite number of terms, which is impossible. Thus it seems that the thesis of the first antinomy—“The world has a beginning in time, and in space it is also enclosed in boundaries”—must be true (CPR A426/B454). However, if we assume that the thesis is true, then there would have to exist an empty time and space in which the world was bounded. But this too is contradictory, for there would then be no sufficient reason why the world began *when* it did or existed *where* it did. Hence it appears that the antithesis must be true: “The world has no beginning and no bounds in space, but is infinite with regard to both time and space” (CPR A427/B455).

The second antinomy pertains to the existence or non-existence of simple parts of composite substances (CPR A434–5/B462–3). According to the thesis, such parts must exist because, otherwise, appearances would consist of nothing substantial at all. But according to the antithesis, such simple parts cannot exist, for if they did, they would have to be in space; but everything in space is divisible and so composite rather than simple.

The third antinomy involves a conflict about the concept of freedom. According to the thesis, there must be such a thing as freedom, for otherwise there would be no beginning to causal chains in nature (CPR A444–5/B472–3). According to the antithesis, there cannot be such a thing as freedom, for every event in time must be determined in accordance with a natural law from which it follows.

Finally, the fourth antinomy both affirms and denies the existence of “an absolutely necessary being.” According to the thesis, there must be such a being in the world, for if there were not, the laws of nature would lack necessity—a conclusion that would contradict the results of the *Transcendental Analytic*. By contrast, the antithesis maintains that there cannot be an absolutely necessary being, for if there were, it would lack a cause of its existence—a conclusion that seems to contradict the principle that everything that exists in time depends upon the existence of something else (CPR A452–3/B480–1).

Kant characterizes the first two antinomies as “mathematical” in that—like the corresponding principles of the understanding with which they are associated—they pertain exclusively to the spatio-temporal character of phenomena. By contrast, the third and fourth antinomies are “dynamical” in that (again like their corresponding principles) they pertain to the existence of objects in nature.

Kant resolves all four of the antinomies by appealing to his distinction between appearances and things in themselves. The mathematical antinomies arise when space and time are mistakenly treated as transcendently real. Once it is recognized that they are transcendently ideal—though empirically real—it turns out that there neither is nor

is not a beginning of the world in time or an outer boundary of space. Likewise, there are no indivisible parts of substances, but neither is anything composed of infinitely many parts. Kant resolves the dynamical antinomies in a different way, namely, by arguing that, while their antitheses are demonstrably true insofar as they deny the existence of freedom or a necessary being in (phenomenal) nature, their theses may also be true insofar as they posit the existence of these objects in the noumenal order of things in themselves. Without in any way extending human cognition, the theses vouchsafe for reason a “problematic” use of two of its cosmological ideas. Kant draws a similar conclusion with regard to the psychological idea of the soul and the theological idea of God (which he arrives at by connecting the idea of a necessary being with the idea of a “highest being”). Though the three ideas of soul, freedom, and God have only a “regulative” role to play in experience, they take on transcendent significance once they are considered from the moral point of view of “practical” (as opposed to “speculative”) reason—an argument that Kant develops in his second *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, 1788).

Because the antinomies can only be resolved if objects in space and time are appearances and not things in themselves, Kant regards them as providing corroborating support for the argument presented in the Transcendental Aesthetic: “one can...draw from this antinomy a true utility, not dogmatic but critical and doctrinal utility, namely that of thereby proving indirectly the transcendental ideality of appearances, if perhaps someone did not have enough in the direct proof in the Transcendental Aesthetic” (CPR A506/B534). Kant reiterates this point in a marginal comment inserted in his own copy of the first edition of the *Critique*: “In the case of each antinomy, it must be shown that if objects of the senses are assumed as things in themselves, no resolution of this conflict would be possible. Consequently if the proposition were not proved above, it could be inferred from this” (inserted at CPR A476/B504). These remarks are important because nineteenth-century developments in pure and applied mathematics encouraged Kant’s successors to reject his account of the synthetic a priori character of both mathematics and natural science. This was the main motivation for the neo-Kantians’ rejection of both the intuition/concept dichotomy and the transcendental ideality thesis. But the question that Kant proleptically asks his legatees is: Without these doctrines, how will you resolve the antinomies?

Kant claimed that the antinomies could only be resolved *if* the transcendental ideality thesis was true. As Touchstone, the clown in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, puts it: “Your If is the only peacemaker; much virtue in If” (V, iv, 102–3). Since Kant’s successors refused his “If,” the obvious question to ask is whether all of the post-Kantian controversies—positivism versus Romanticism, Marburg versus Southwest neo-Kantianism, analytic versus continental philosophy—can be said to represent so many recapitulations of the “precritical” conflict between the dogmatists and the empiricists. Alternatively, we can ask if instead it represents a “postcritical” conflict about how to avoid Kant’s “If.” As we have seen, Kant’s “If” (i.e., the transcendental ideality thesis) involves two interrelated dualisms: the intuition/concept dichotomy and the phenomena/noumena dichotomy. The question is whether these dualisms can be avoided without giving rise to a new conflict of some sort.

The analytic philosopher of mind David Armstrong has observed that “Nobody, or at any rate no systematic thinker, really likes a Dualism. It offends against the spirit of

intellectual economy.”<sup>5</sup> In an appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant traces this attitude to “the principle of homogeneity” by which human reason demands a higher unity for every multiplicity (CPR A658/B686). This principle gives rise to the idea that the division between sensibility and understanding must be rooted in a single underlying faculty of representations—a position defended by Kant’s contemporary Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1757–1823). In the introduction to the first *Critique*, Kant alludes to the existence of such a “common but to us unknown root,” but he explicitly denies that we can have any insight into its nature (CPR A15/B29; cf. AFPPV 53). In the first draft of his introduction to the third *Critique*, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790), Kant criticizes those who seek to reduce the two stems of human cognition to a single faculty, claiming that “this attempt to bring unity into the multiplicity of faculties, although undertaken in a genuinely philosophical spirit, is futile” because “the powers of the mind constitute an **aggregate** and not a system” (CPJ 11). Kant expands on this point in section 76 of the third *Critique*, suggesting that the gulf between sensibility and understanding attests to the fact that, for us, there is an irreducible difference between the *actual* (which we intuit) and the merely *possible* (which we think). Conversely, the idea of a being for whom sensibility and understanding would not be distinct faculties is the idea of a being for whom possibility and actuality would coincide, which is to say that, for such a being, nothing would exist but the necessary. Thus we can only ascribe intellectual intuition (such as we are capable of thinking it at all) to a being whose own existence would have to be cognized as necessary (CPJ 272–3). In other words, we can only ascribe it to a divine knower.

Despite this cautionary remark, Kant’s immediate successors—notably Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854)—took intellectual intuition to be attainable for human cognition. This idea was taken up by German Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) (1772–1801), for whom intellectual intuition manifested itself in the creation and reception of works of art. Though critical of the idea of intellectual intuition, Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831), in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807), continued this line of thought by arguing that the intuition/concept dichotomy gives rise to dialectical conflicts that can only be resolved from the standpoint of “absolute knowing” (in which thinking and intuiting somehow coincide). Just as Hegel and his fellow German idealists thereby rehabilitated Leibniz’s intellectualization of appearances, so an entirely different post-Kantian tradition—exemplified in thinkers such as Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)—rejected the idea of intellectual intuition in favor of Locke and Hume’s sensualization of concepts. Just as the Romantics took intellectual intuition to be embodied in works of art, so Comte—the founder of positivism—took empirical science to be the true foundation of a genuinely critical philosophy. By taking these two divergent paths, Kant’s successors did not simply rekindle the precritical debate between rationalism and empiricism. Instead, they opened up that postcritical conflict which Rorty detected between determining and reflective judgment as paradigms of philosophical reflection. Once again, the queen had fallen on hard times.

### I.3 Rorty's attempt to restore the peace

Then if you speak, you must not show your face,  
Or if you show your face, you must not speak.

(*Measure for Measure*, I, iv, 12–13)

Instead of defending the honor of Kant's queen, Rorty characterizes the search for absolute truth as a futile enterprise that we would do well to forsake altogether. Hence Kant would have classified him neither with the dogmatists nor with the empiricists but with the "indifferentists," for whom "all paths...have been tried in vain" (CPR Ax). For his part, Rorty blames Kant not only for failing to bring about perpetual philosophical peace but for fomenting the analytic/continental division. In his 1979 book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty suggests that Kant's characterization of the history of philosophy as a struggle between those who would reduce concepts to intuitions and those who would reduce intuitions to concepts only makes sense if one is already convinced that human cognition consists of a synthesis of two different kinds of representations. But since Kant acknowledges that we have no direct awareness of pre-schematized intuitions, the very distinction between intuitions and concepts is merely theoretical and thus optional (PMN 154–5). Rather than characterizing human cognition as a synthesis of hypothetically separable components, Kant could simply have noted that to make a judgment is to hold a particular proposition to be true. He could then have cast the empiricism/rationalism dispute not as a conflict between rival reductionist strategies but as a disagreement about whether judgments about "secondary qualities" (i.e., empirical judgments) could be reduced to judgments about "primary qualities" (i.e., judgments that seem to depend upon reason alone):

Had Kant instead said that the rationalists wanted to find a way of replacing propositions about secondary qualities with propositions which somehow did the same job but were known with certainty, and that the empiricists opposed this project, the next two centuries of philosophical thought might have been very different.

(PMN 148)

Rorty concludes that, if Kant had said that the empiricist/rationalist debate was not about "putative *components* of propositions" but about "the degree of certainty attaching to them," the analytic/continental rift might never have opened up (PMN 149). Instead of distinguishing between determining and reflective judgments—i.e., between two different ways in which intuitions and concepts can be related to each other—a more pragmatically minded Kant would have contrasted the act of describing things in a conventional vocabulary with the creative effort to articulate a new vocabulary. Rorty characterizes this as the difference between "systematic" and "edifying" philosophy.

Systematic philosophers are those who provide useful descriptions of the world, while edifying philosophers are those who challenge our current ways of describing ourselves. Far from being in conflict with each other, these two activities are complementary (PMN 365ff.).

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), Rorty highlights the role that irony plays within edifying discourses. An ironist is someone who refuses to accept any “final vocabulary” as absolute. We are all forced to speak a particular idiom that commits us to a particular view of ourselves and the world, but ironists are always prepared to challenge the idiom that they presently use (CIS 73). Just as the Romantics wanted to make their lives works of art, so ironists seek to recreate themselves by inventing new vocabularies. Rorty goes on to suggest that continental philosophers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida are ironists who aim not at truth—as do their analytic or systematic counterparts—but at self-transformation. This is an exemplary activity provided that it remains within its proper bounds. Invoking a classical liberal distinction between what one does in private and what one does in public, Rorty argues that an individual’s efforts at self-creation should be carried out in such a way that they do not interfere with anyone else. Thus irony has its proper place in private, not in public (CIS 100). In public, what we need is a sense of solidarity which reflects our shared commitment to a particular way of describing ourselves and the world around us. For this, systematic philosophers are more helpful than ironists.

Edifying philosophers have nothing to contribute—as edifying philosophers—to the public domain because they are “useless”: “Nietzsche, Derrida, and Foucault seem to me invaluable in our attempt to form a private self-image, but pretty much useless when it comes to politics” (CIS 83). Rorty also expresses concern about the “antiliberalism” of Nietzsche, who “often speaks as though he had a social mission, as if he had views relevant to public action” (CIS 99). But although Nietzsche’s antiliberalism should be rejected, it is separable from his aesthetic conception of “self-knowledge as self-creation” (CIS 27). “Self-overcoming” is a merely private affair that has nothing to do with participation in the public domain: “For Proust and Nietzsche... there is *nothing* more powerful or important than self-redescription” (CIS 29, 99; Rorty’s italics). Accordingly, Rorty distinguishes “Nietzsche the perspectivalist” (who wants to give himself a unique perspective on the world) from “Nietzsche the theorist of the will to power” (CIS 106).

In suggesting that systematic and edifying philosophers have complementary roles to play in a liberal society, Rorty purports to resolve the analytic/continental division. But his solution assumes that edifying—i.e., continental—philosophers should be happy about being relegated to the private domain. It is in this respect that he resembles King Henry VI. Henry thought that he could put an end to the Wars of the Roses by asking his rival Richard Plantagenet to settle for a mere dukedom—or perhaps for the right to call himself a king in private. This solution proved to be ineffectual because the House of York would not settle for anything less than the English throne. Analogously, the very thinkers whom Rorty regards as edifying philosophers have not thought of themselves as merely seeking private grandeur at all; on the contrary, their principal claim has been on the public realm itself.

We might also wonder whether Rorty’s redescription of the analytic/ continental division is as far removed from Kant as he suggests that it is. Translated back into a Kantian vocabulary, ironists are thinkers who do not regard their determining judgments



as definitive; they maintain a distance between themselves and the things they say by persisting in an attitude of reflective judging. Conversely, systematic philosophers are those who aim at making definitive determining judgments; for them, reflection is merely a means to an end. Thus the idea that ironists and systematic philosophers need one another is a way of asserting the complementarity of determining and reflective judgment. While it is true that the intuition/concept dichotomy disappears in Rorty's redescription, it is in a sense replaced by his reification of the public/private dichotomy. Kant also drew a sharp distinction between the public and the private realms, one that determined his conception of the proper role of philosophers within the body politic. The fact that Rorty can "overcome" the analytic/continental divide only by reverting to *this* Kantian dichotomy suggests that he has not resolved it but simply displaced it. This suspicion finds confirmation in the fact that, for both Nietzsche and the other continental philosophers whom Rorty regards as ironists, self-creation is an *essentially* public activity.

#### I.4 Nietzsche's clue to the persistence of the analytic/ continental division

War, war, no peace! Peace is to me a war.

(*The Life and Death of King John*, III, i, 113)

In one of his earliest essays, "Homer on Competition" (*Homers Wettkampf*, written in 1872), Nietzsche claims that for the ancient Greeks, the process of self-creation was inseparable from struggle with others and so could only be carried out in public. Without a good type of *Eris*, or discord, neither the individual nor the state could have flourished (HOC 190). Hence instead of consigning "selfishness" to the private domain, the Greeks regarded it as the principal virtue to be displayed in public: "without envy, jealousy and competitive ambition, the Hellenic state, like Hellenic man, deteriorates" (HOC 194). This attitude is echoed in *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (*Ecce Homo: Wie man wird, was man ist*, 1889; first published in 1908), in which Nietzsche proclaims: "I am warlike by nature. Attacking is one of my instincts" (EH 231). The very style in which *Ecce Homo* is written—a "testimony" to "*who I am*" (EH 217)—suggests a competition in which Nietzsche boasts about "why I am so wise," "why I am so clever," "why I write such good books," and "why I am a destiny."

If Nietzsche was in competition with anyone, it was with Socrates, the first of the Greeks to forswear "envy, jealousy, and competitive ambition." In the midst of the flourishing Greeks, he was an enigma, for while they affirmed life, he condemned it as a sickness from which death alone could provide a cure (TOTI 12). In a section of his book, *Twilight of the Idols* (*Götzendämmerung*, 1889), entitled "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche suggests that Socrates suffered from the sickness of "decadence." Unable to compete in the Greek manner, he sought revenge, using the art of philosophical dialectics to get his fellow citizens to question the value of their lives. Irony was his weapon of choice (TOTI 15). Thus, far from embracing Socratic irony—as Rorty

implies—Nietzsche repudiates it in order to revive the Greek spirit of competition. To attack the Socratic “will to truth,” the unconditional impulse to value truth above life, is not to adopt an ironic stance toward one’s own beliefs but, on the contrary, to affirm one’s “own” truths. Contending that life requires unconditional dogmas, Nietzsche raises a genealogical question, namely, how did Socrates succeed in converting the Greeks to a life of critical reflection?

In *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872), Nietzsche suggests that pre-Socratic Greek art was governed by two competing “drives,” the Apollonian and the Dionysian (BOT 14). The Apollonian impulse expressed itself in beautiful images, while the Dionysian manifested itself in imageless music and in the sublime experience of intoxication associated with it. Drawing on the work of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Nietzsche characterizes Apollo as the god of the “*principium individuationis*,” the principle according to which sensible objects are distinguished from one another. Lurking beneath the calm of Apollonian appearance is the chaos of Dionysus in which nothing can be distinguished from anything else. To gaze into the Dionysian abyss is to be filled with both “blissful ecstasy” and “horror” (BOT 17). The Apollonian and Dionysian principles came together in Greek tragedy, in which the chorus presented “a self-mirroring of Dionysiac man” (BOT 42). Through its identification with the chorus, the Greek spectators were able to lift the Apollonian veil of illusion in a communal affirmation of the Dionysian essence of life.

But suddenly a new form of dramatic art appeared, one that Nietzsche finds exemplified in the work of Euripides. Unlike Sophocles and Aeschylus, who were able to maintain an essential tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, Euripides provided the basis for “a non-Dionysiac art, morality, and view of the world” (BOT 59). His didactic dramas were intended to please a spectator who claimed the audacity to *judge* the tragic spectacle. This spectator was Socrates, in whom a “logical drive” (BOT 67) first came to the fore. The shift from tragedy to dialectics coincided with the formation of a new alliance, namely, that between Apollo and Socrates: “Here art becomes overgrown with *philosophical thought* which forces it to cling tightly to the trunk of dialectics. The *Apolline* tendency has disguised itself as logical schematism” (BOT 69).

Nietzsche’s use of the word “schematism” in this context recalls that of Kant, who characterized the schematism as a “hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty” (CPR A141/B180–1). Insofar as it makes possible the subsumption of objects of intuition under concepts—that is, insofar as it makes determining judgments possible—Kant’s productive imagination remains subordinate to the understanding, but it is freed from this constraint in the encounter with the beautiful or sublime. Nietzsche’s account of the transformation of Apollonian figuration into logical schematism inverts this model, showing how an originally free imagination came to be subordinated to the understanding. More precisely, he shows how an original alliance between sensibility and imagination (Dionysus and Apollo) gave way to one between imagination and understanding (Apollo and Socrates). Support for this reading can be found in Nietzsche’s posthumously published “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense” (*Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, written in 1873), in which he explicitly characterizes concepts as congealed images: “Everything which distinguishes human

beings from animals depends on this ability to sublimate sensuous metaphors into a schema, in other words, to dissolve an image into a concept” (OTL 146). Instead of serving as a mere vehicle for the subsumption of objects under concepts, the productive imagination transforms intuited images into concepts.

In his 1886 “An Attempt at Self-Criticism,” a preface to the reissue of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche retracts his earlier construal of Dionysian intoxication as a form of metaphysical communion, but he congratulates himself for having “dared...to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life” (BOT 5). In a sense, Kant did the exact opposite. In the third *Critique*, he considers the “feeling of life” through the prism or lens of art, and art through the lens of science (CPJ 90). He subordinates art to science by making the “free lawfulness” of the imagination in reflective judgment secondary with respect to the serious labor that the imagination performs in the service of the determining judgments of both the understanding (in science) and reason (in morality) (CPJ 124). The fact that Kant thereby “makes room for taste” in his critical philosophy does not settle Nietzsche’s dispute with Socrates any more than Rorty does in reserving a private enclave for reflective judging. On the contrary, the very concept of taste as Kant conceives it—the capacity to recognize certain forms as beautiful—reflects the fundamental change introduced by Euripides when he conceived of a non-Dionysian artform. The closest that Kant comes to Dionysus is in his description of the feeling of the sublime. This feeling is prompted by an encounter with the formlessness of raw nature—i.e., with that which does not conform to the *principium individuationis* (CPJ 128). But here Kant recoils, or rather he describes the feeling of sublimity precisely as a recoiling from the “horrible” aspect of nature to an inner satisfaction in our moral vocation as rational beings (CPJ 129). Nietzsche refused to recoil: “I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus; I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint” (EH 217).

### I.5 Heidegger’s confirmation of Nietzsche’s clue

The truth appears so naked on my side  
That any purblind eye may find it  
out.

(*The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, II, iv, 20–1)

In his encounter with Cassirer at Davos, Heidegger criticized the dominant neo-Kantian interpretation of Kant as an epistemologist, maintaining that he should instead be read as a thinker of being who came remarkably close to articulating the ideas about human existence that Heidegger himself had put forth in his 1927 book, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*). Heidegger pursues this line of thought further in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (*Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 1929). Prior to Kant, rationalists such as Wolff and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762) drew a distinction between “special” metaphysics—i.e., rational psychology, cosmology, and theology—and “general” metaphysics, or ontology. In his critiques of the paralogisms, antinomies, and ideal of pure reason, Kant showed that each of the celebrated branches of special

metaphysics was a mere pseudoscience that could never establish the validity of its claims on behalf of pure reason. As for ontology, Kant regarded the Transcendental Analytic as supplanting it: “the proud name of an ontology, which presumes to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general...must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of the pure understanding” (CPR A247/B303). The neo-Kantians interpreted this claim as Kant’s way of turning away from metaphysics to epistemology. But according to Heidegger, Kant’s whole motivation in writing the *Critique* was to “lay the ground of metaphysics.” To inquire into the transcendental conditions of possible experience is to identify the “ontological” grounds to which all empirical or “ontic” truths must conform: “Ontic truth, then, must necessarily conform to ontological truth. This is the correct interpretation of the meaning of the ‘Copernican revolution’” (KAPOM 22). Unfortunately, Kant retreated from his deepest insights in a way that allowed the neo-Kantians to misconstrue the true nature of transcendental philosophy. The aim of Heidegger’s book is to show exactly where Kant renege on his attempt to lay the ground of metaphysics and to explain why he did so.

Heidegger breaks with the epistemological construal of transcendental philosophy by claiming that the primary locus of knowledge for Kant lies not in judgment but in intuition: “to interpret knowledge as judgment (thought) does violence to the decisive sense of the Kantian problem.... Knowledge is primarily intuition” (KAPOM 28, 32). This is not to deny the role that Kant accords to the understanding in empirical cognition, but to emphasize the fact that in his account of the schematism—the primordial synthesis by which the imagination relates the pure concepts of the understanding to pure determinations of time—he subordinates the understanding to sensibility: “It is only insofar as the pure understanding as understanding is the servant of pure intuition that it can remain the master of empirical intuition” (KAPOM 80). In other words, the fact that truth *can* pertain to determining judgments pre-supposes a prior schematization by which the categories are first “sensitized.” Thus, for Heidegger, the significance of Kant’s treatment of the schematism lies in the privilege that it grants to the receptive dimension of human cognition.

Much of Heidegger’s argument rests on his assessment of the A Deduction account of the three-fold synthesis by which the sensory manifold is apprehended in a single intuition, reproduced in the imagination, and conceptually recognized by the understanding. According to Heidegger, Kant accords the faculty of imagination a “central position” in this analysis not because it mediates between two wholly distinct faculties—i.e., sensibility and understanding—but rather because it is the “common but to us unknown root” from which these two faculties originally stem (KAPOM 67, 41; CPR A15/B29). Insofar as the imagination is the original source of both the receptive and spontaneous dimensions of human experience, it manifests itself as both a “spontaneous receptivity” (in pure sensibility) and as a “receptive spontaneity” (in pure understanding) (KAPOM 160, 162).<sup>6</sup> These two stems are not on an equal footing, however, because—as the analysis of the schematism shows—the understanding remains subordinate to sensibility. For Heidegger this implies that the imagination is fundamentally a faculty of receptivity: “The imagination is also and above all a faculty of intuition, i.e., receptivity” (KAPOM 159). Thus the imagination is first and foremost a kind of spontaneous receptivity, and only secondarily—and on this basis—a kind of receptive spontaneity.

Heidegger notes that, in his lectures on metaphysics from the mid-1770s—i.e., from the period when he was working out the details of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—Kant identifies three distinct capacities of the faculty of imagination, each with its own temporal modality: (1) the capacity to form images in the present, (2) to reproduce the past, and (3) to anticipate the future (LOM-K 53, KAPOM 180). Heidegger argues that this three-fold analysis undergirds the three-fold synthesis of the A Deduction, so that the syntheses of pure apprehension, reproduction and recognition turn out to be structurally unified moments of a single synthesis by which the imagination constitutes, respectively, a pure present, a pure past, and a pure future (KAPOM 183ff.). On this interpretation, the imagination represents the primordial temporality of human existence. Heidegger suggests that Kant implicitly acknowledges as much when he cryptically asserts, in his lectures on logic, that the three questions posed in the first *Critique*—“What can I know?,” “What should I do?,” and “What may I hope?”—all point toward the more fundamental question: “What is man?” (KAPOM 213). Unfortunately, Kant “recoiled” (or “shrank back”) from his discovery. Not only did he fail to provide the kind of “existential analytic” of human existence that Heidegger himself develops in *Being and Time*, but in the second edition of the *Critique*, he subordinated the function of synthesis—previously ascribed to the transcendental imagination—to the understanding. According to Heidegger, Kant did this because he remained under the spell of the rationalist conception of the subject as responsible for its judgments and actions (KAPOM 174). By delivering the imagination over to a legislative understanding, Kant prepared the way for German idealism. Thus Hegel—in an early work entitled *Faith and Knowledge (Glauben und Wissen, 1802)*—characterizes the productive imagination as the common root of the two stems of human cognition, but by this he means a faculty of intellectual intuition (i.e., receptive spontaneity) rather than the primordial temporality of human existence (i.e., spontaneous receptivity) (KAPOM 202, 252–3; FAK 73).

By opposing the B Deduction alliance between the imagination and the understanding to the more primordial alliance between the imagination and sensibility, Heidegger implicitly recapitulates Nietzsche’s account of the shift from Aeschylean tragedy to Euripidean drama. For Nietzsche, Apollo was originally allied with Dionysus but later became subordinate to the Socratic will to truth. Analogously, for Heidegger, the Kantian imagination was originally allied with sensibility but was later made subordinate to the understanding. In both cases, what is being described is the transition from a fundamentally “aesthetic” orientation toward the world to the advent of an epistemic subject for whom knowledge is a matter of passing judgment on appearances. Though Heidegger does not make the connection explicit, his account of the manner in which Kant recoiled from his discovery of the hidden root of the two stems of human cognition clearly parallels Nietzsche’s characterization of Socrates as recoiling from the horrors of the Dionysian. For Nietzsche, Apollonian figuration in Greek tragedy brought about a kind of synthesis between Dionysus and the spectators, one that did not simply bring together separate terms but that reunited that which it had first divided by introducing the *principium individuationis* into experience. These two stems are not on equal footing, for the spectatorial capacity of the spectator is itself rooted in the Dionysian, with the consequence that in the tragic work of art the spectator rediscovers its essential nature. Replacing the spontaneous receptivity of the tragic spectacle with the sovereign point of

view of a receptive spontaneity, Socrates enslaves Apollo, forcing him to obey the dictates of reason. Henceforth the Euripidean work of art takes on a morally didactic character (a criticism that Heidegger implicitly levels at Kant as well), Dionysus disappears (the equivalent of what Heidegger refers to as the forgetting of Being), and Apollo becomes the agent of the scientific (merely ontic) determination of beings.

In his 1935 lecture, “The Origin of the Work of Art” (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*)—a title that tacitly recalls that of *The Birth of Tragedy*—Heidegger develops his own conception of what it means to say that truth is something that happens in works of art. The following year he devoted the first of a series of lecture courses on Nietzsche to the topic, “The Will to Power as Art” (1936–1937). Instead of focusing on *The Birth of Tragedy*, he concentrates on Nietzsche’s later works, especially the posthumously published fragments that supposedly were to have comprised a magnum opus with the title *The Will to Power*. Heidegger suggests that Nietzsche failed to “overturn Platonism” because instead of opening up the question of being in a new way, he contented himself with inverting the Platonic subordination of the sensible to the intelligible. In a 1943 lecture entitled, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead’” (*Nietzsches Wort ‘Gott ist tot’*), Heidegger suggests that Nietzsche completes metaphysics by installing the spontaneous will of the subject as the true ground of being—thereby unwittingly completing the Socratic turn. In an attempt to revive the other thought that he attributes to Nietzsche—that we must seek anew the god whom we have killed—Heidegger attempts to go back to a conception of man as a kind of spontaneous receptivity (i.e., as a being to whom the gift of being calls forth gratitude) rather than as a kind of receptive spontaneity (exemplified in the history that stretches from the Socratic will to truth to the Nietzschean “will to will”). By hearkening to those poets who speak of the flight of the gods, we open ourselves up to a new way in which being might disclose itself. Thus it is only by returning to the primal power of great works of art that we can begin to loosen the hold which the reign of “modern technology”—i.e., determining judgment—has on us.

In 1929, Heidegger had not yet formulated this rearticulation of the basic argument of *The Birth of Tragedy*. But he did see that to adhere to the neo-Kantian construal of the schematism—as Cassirer did—was to persist in the forgetting of the question of being. In *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, Shakespeare traces the origin of the Wars of the Roses to a confrontation in a garden in which red and white roses were first plucked as the respective emblems of the House of Lancaster and the House of York. Historically speaking, there probably never was such a rose-plucking episode. Nor, perhaps, did one take place at Davos. But both make good dramatic sense.

### I.6 Kant’s questions as taken up in the House of Continental

Come, let us four to dinner. I dare say This quarrel will drink blood another day.

(*The First Part of Henry the Sixth*, II, iv, 132–3)

In a chapter of the first *Critique* entitled “The Canon of Pure Reason,” Kant claims that “All interest of my reason...is united” in three fundamental questions, namely:

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

(CPR A804–5/B832–3)

In his lectures on logic, Kant adds to this list a fourth question—“What is man?”—suggesting (as we have seen Heidegger note) that, in some sense, it subsumes the other three (“At bottom all this could be reckoned to be anthropology, because the first three questions are related to the last”) (L 29). The first question is speculative; the second practical; the third both speculative and practical in that it asks what I am entitled to believe in light of my practical interests (CPR A805/B833). Just as Kant claimed in the first *Critique* to have surveyed all of the antinomies that could possibly arise in attempting to respond to the first question, so in the second *Critique* he purports to resolve the only antinomy that can arise with respect to the second question. Likewise, all conflicts concerning the third question are resolved in Kant’s third *Critique* and in his writings on rational theology, while those pertaining to the fourth (though less explicitly articulated) are addressed in his writings on philosophical anthropology.

Because Kant believed that he had resolved all of the fundamental philosophical controversies that could arise with respect to all of the fundamental philosophical questions, he would have expected that the analytic/ continental division could be quickly dispatched. But if the House of Continental and the House of Analytic were simply putting forth different answers to shared Kantian questions, they would be able to recognize themselves as engaged in a common—albeit antagonistic—pursuit. Instead what has prevailed is a widespread sense of “mutual unintelligibility,”<sup>7</sup> with each side failing to understand how the other could regard itself as responding to serious philosophical questions at all. This predicament suggests that rather than giving different answers to Kantian questions, the two houses have divided by modifying these questions. In fact, each of Kant’s questions pre-supposes an underlying dualism that analytic and continental philosophers have tried to undercut in diametrically opposed ways. As a result, they have been led to prioritize completely different questions of their own. Such, at any rate, will be the conceit guiding the rest of this book.

I So long as the receptivity of sensibility and the spontaneity of thought are kept apart, the question “What can I know?” signifies: “What can I, insofar as I am a spontaneous thinker, know about a world that can only be given to me as appearance in space and time?” This question has two parts: first, “Can I be certain that the pure concepts of my faculty of understanding necessarily determine objects of experience?”; and second, “Do these concepts have any applicability to things in themselves?” By abandoning the transcendental ideality thesis, Kant’s successors made the second question superfluous. By undercutting the intuition/concept dichotomy, they modified the first. In tracing the two stems of human cognition back to a primordial “spontaneous receptivity,” Nietzsche and Heidegger reduced knowledge to the aesthetic encounter with phenomena conceived not as “mere” appearances of underlying things in themselves but as disclosive manifestations of being itself. Hence Kant’s question, “What can I know?,” became subordinated to the more fundamental question: “How is truth disclosed aesthetically?”

Conversely, for those who characterized cognition as a kind of “receptive spontaneity,” knowledge became identified with the logical demonstration of propositional truths. Thus in the analytic tradition, the question, “What can I know?,” became less pressing than the question, “What can be known on the basis of logical analysis alone?” Because these two questions—“How is truth disclosed aesthetically?” and “What can be known on the basis of logical analysis alone?”—derived their sense of urgency from the diametrically opposed “ordered confluences” on which they rested, neither of the two post-Kantian factions could understand why the other party’s questions seemed so important to it. For the phenomenologists, logic was just the pale distillation of the discourse in which phenomenal givenness was disclosed; while, for their analytic counterparts, givenness was at best another name for logically analyzed truth.

2 Just as Kant’s account of human cognition presupposed the intuition/concept dualism, so his account of moral obligation rests upon a sharp dichotomy between incentives of the will and pure practical reason. According to Kant, as finite rational agents we are all aware of a pure moral law (the “categorical imperative”) that obliges us to act “autonomously” rather than “heteronomously.” To act heteronomously is to allow one’s will to be determined by incentives of some sort, while to act autonomously is to subordinate these incentives to the dictates of pure practical reason alone. Insofar as moral autonomy involves the subsumption of objects of the will under practical rules, it is the correlate of the spontaneity of the understanding, which subsumes objects of intuition under speculative rules. Thus the distinction between autonomy and heteronomy can be thought of as the practical analogue of the speculative distinction between spontaneity and receptivity. Kant characterizes the categorical imperative as an objective practical principle to which there corresponds the *pure* (i.e., non-sensuous or “non-pathological”) incentive of “respect.” Without the feeling of respect, the categorical imperative would be inefficacious; while, without the guidance of the categorical imperative, the incentive of respect would be “blind.” Thus the dichotomy between moral incentives and moral principles is crucial to Kant’s account of the phenomenon of obligation. But just as analytic and continental philosophers have divided over whether to conceive of human cognition as spontaneous receptivity or as receptive spontaneity, so they have divided over whether to conceive of moral obligation as autonomous heteronomy or as heteronomous autonomy. By “autonomous heteronomy” I mean a conception of obligation that subordinates moral principles to moral incentives. This construal of obligation has prevailed among phenomenologists (for whom respect is the practical analogue of givenness) and continental philosophers influenced by psychoanalysis. Instead of prioritizing the question, “What should I do?” (or “What ought I do?”), these philosophers have posed the genealogical question, “To what does the feeling of respect attest?” By contrast, analytic ethicists have conceived of obligation as “heteronomous autonomy,” that is, as reducible to the responsibility to acknowledge moral principles. Hence instead of inquiring into the nature of moral incentives per se, they have been guided by the question, “What is the force of moral prescriptives?”

3 Kant’s third question—“What may I hope?”—presupposes the dichotomy between immanence and transcendence. By restricting speculative reason to its immanent employment within the bounds of possible experience, Kant accorded a merely regulative status to the ideas of soul, freedom, and God. But he also argues that, from a practical point of view, reason reveals the transcendent—though inexplicable—fact of human



freedom. In order to meet our obligation to pursue “the highest good,” it is rationally necessary to believe not only that we are free, but that there is a God and that we have immortal souls. Thus the practical interests of reason entitle us to hope that the highest good is attainable. In the third *Critique*, Kant attempts to reconcile reason’s two different vantage-points by analyzing the structure of “aesthetic” and “teleological” judgments, each of which both sustains and bridges the gap separating the immanent realm of phenomena from the transcendent realm of noumenal agents.

By abandoning Kant’s transcendental ideality thesis, all of his successors were forced to give up the dichotomy between immanence and transcendence in favor of a conception of either transcendent immanence or immanent transcendence—but depending on whether they conceived of cognition as spontaneous receptivity or receptive spontaneity, they did so from either an aesthetic or a teleological point of view.<sup>8</sup> Kant claims that an object judged to be beautiful serves as an immanent symbol of the transcendent, while an idea judged to be sublime serves as a reminder of the gap separating our transcendent vocation as moral agents from our immanent existence in nature. Accordingly, those for whom cognition had become spontaneous receptivity—i.e., the aesthetic disclosure of truth—were torn between a conception of immanent transcendence as beautiful sublimity and a conception of transcendent immanence as sublime beauty. In Chapter 3, I associate these alternatives with, respectively, “critical theory” and “hermeneutics.”

As Kant formulates it, the question, “What may I hope?,” is eschatological in the sense that it is oriented toward the attainability of the highest good in a future life. But in the second essay of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*Der Streit der Fakultäten*, 1798), he articulates an historical variant of the hope question, namely, “Is the human race constantly progressing?” (COF 297). This question concerns not the personal destiny of individuals in a future life but the collective destiny of the human species in the future course of its history. By problematizing the dichotomy between beauty and sublimity, Kant’s continental successors have not only made it difficult to separate the eschatological and historical dimensions of hope to which works of art bear witness; they have also made it necessary to face the problem of whether art permits us to hope at all. To capture these two aspects of their shared concern, I have ascribed a common question to both critical theorists and hermeneuticians, namely, “Must we despair, or may we still hope?”

Analytic philosophers, for whom not the disclosure of phenomena but logically demonstrable truth had become the proper object of receptive spontaneity, could largely ignore the aesthetic dimension of the problem of immanence and transcendence in favor of its teleological dimension. The point of Kant’s critique of teleological judgment is to ask whether “objectively purposive” natural phenomena can be exhaustively understood from the standpoint of natural science alone. Analytic philosophers have followed Kant in raising this question, though in the wake of Darwin they have been less interested in the ontological status of “organized beings” in general than in that of human beings as purposive agents.<sup>9</sup> Having done away with the phenomena/noumena dichotomy, they too have the option of thinking in terms of transcendent immanence or immanent transcendence. In the analytic context, I take this to be the difference not between beauty and sublimity but between scientifically ascertainable facts and metaphysical problems. Thus Kant’s question, “What may I hope?,” gives way to the seemingly more pedestrian question, “Are metaphysical questions still meaningful?”

4 Last but not least, Kant's enigmatic fourth question presupposes the dichotomy between the empirical and transcendental dimensions of human experience. My contention here is that continental philosophers have rejected this dichotomy in favor of a conception of human existence as empirically transcendental, and that analytic philosophers have instead opted for a conception of human existence as transcendently empirical. By the former I mean the view that there is an important sense in which the natural world depends upon us; by the latter, the view that there is no feature of human existence that cannot be reduced to a manifestation of a nature that would continue to exist whether we were in it or not. But at issue is more than just two competing answers to Kant's question, "What is man?" By undoing the transcendental/empirical dichotomy, both continental and analytic philosophers have abandoned Kant's conception of philosophy as a strictly transcendental enterprise in favor of some other conception of philosophical methodology. In the House of Continental, this other conception is philosophical humanism; in the House of Analytic, philosophical naturalism. Both traditions have found themselves enmeshed in debates about the exact nature of these methodological commitments. In the continental tradition, it has especially been the existentialists and their critics who have raised the question, "What is the meaning of philosophical humanism?," while on the analytic side it has been the philosophers of science who have asked, "What is the meaning of philosophical naturalism?"

Such, in highly schematic form, are the different questions that I take to divide the two houses. After focusing on the continental variants in Chapters 1–4, I will briefly return to their analytic counterparts in Chapter 5. This will give me an opportunity to take up a fifth question also touched on by Kant, namely, "What is philosophizing good for and what is its ultimate end?" (L 27). As Jacques Derrida has noted, Kant's influence on the self-conception of professional philosophers runs so deep that it is difficult to question our Kantian inheritance:

For many of "us" ("us": the majority of my supposed readers and myself), the authority of Kantian discourse has inscribed its virtues of legitimation to such a depth in our philosophical training, culture, and constitution that we have difficulty performing the imaginary variation that would allow us to "figure" a different one.

(WAOP 49)

By going back to Kant's conception of the cosmopolitan ideal of the philosopher, I hope to be able to disturb both analytic and continental appropriations of the Kantian legacy.

Each of the narratives that I present aims at perspicuousness rather than truth per se. By "perspicuousness" I mean something like what John McCumber calls "Nobility": "the excellence of narrative linkage" (TITD 146). A system of notation is said to be "perspicuous" when it visually captures the relations that it is intended to represent. Through the art of the segue, I hope to make perspicuous how four different continental trajectories are related to an originating Kantian provocation. As already indicated, I associate the four problematics I have identified—though not exclusively—with (1) phenomenology, (2) psychoanalysis, (3) critical theory and hermeneutics, and (4) existentialism. Unlike the monolithic term "continental philosophy," these rubrics are indigenous to the historical trajectories that I am attempting to reconstruct. By situating

them with respect to Kant's four questions, I hope to be able to identify the various "points of heresy"<sup>10</sup> that continue to divide those who insist upon sporting either a white philosophical rose or a red. That task I leave for Chapter 5, where I will also attempt to "demarcate" the analytic/continental division in McCumber's sense of opening it up to an unforeseeable philosophical future.

Perhaps I should make explicit the fact that in no sense do I claim completeness for this project ("Can this cockpit hold/The vasty fields of France?" {*The Life of Henry the Fifth*, Prologue, 11–12}). Since my topic is in large part an Anglo-American disciplinary formation, I have focused on European thinkers whose work has figured prominently in English-speaking academic forums. Not only are there many "continental" philosophers who do not appear in these pages at all, but those who do make an appearance are portrayed rather perfunctorily. In associating a particular philosopher with one or another of the four questions I have identified, I do not mean to imply that he or she has nothing interesting to say about the others. Finally, I regret that for reasons of space, I have been unable to address any of the secondary literature, and that the narratives I present, though roughly chronological, are only thinly historical. Like Shakespeare's apologetic chorus, I can only entreat the reader to "sit and see,/Minding true things by what their mock'ries be" (IV, Chorus, 52–3).

### Notes

- 1 Cf. BW 103, where Heidegger's statement is rendered "The nothing itself nihilates."
- 2 Cf. J. Alberto Coffa's *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station* and Robert Hanna's *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*, two comparable books which offer contrasting assessments of early analytic reactions against Kant.
- 3 Kant characterizes the relationship between a husband (the de facto ruler in a marriage) and his wife (the nominal monarch) in precisely these terms (AFPPV 172–3).
- 4 Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence*, p. 252.
- 5 Armstrong, *The Mind/Body Problem*, p. 10.
- 6 It should be noted that Kant explicitly rejects the "common root" hypothesis: "Understanding and sensibility...join together spontaneously...as intimately as if one had its source in the other, or both originated from a common root. But this cannot be—at least we cannot conceive how heterogeneous things could sprout from one and the same root" (AFPPV 53).
- 7 Cf. Daniel Price's "Against the Mutual Intelligibility of Analytic and Continental Philosophy," in which Heidegger's conception of an event is contrasted with that of Davidson.
- 8 In the phenomenological tradition, the difference between transcendent immanence and immanent transcendence is exemplified, respectively, in Husserl's conception of the ego as a "transcendence *within* immanence" and Sartre's conception of the ego as constituted outside consciousness.
- 9 Strictly speaking, there is nothing in the Darwinian theory of evolution that contradicts Kant's *reflective* ascription of objective purposiveness to natural organisms, because, he argues, such a view is compatible with the fact that it is always possible to provide mechanistic explanations for any seemingly purposive natural phenomena.
- 10 I borrow this expression from Foucault, for whom points of heresy are symptomatic of deeper "epistemic" conditions (OT 182). Much of what I will have to say in Chapter 5 about the analytic/continental division is prefigured in Foucault's account of the struggle in modernity between "critique" and "commentary" (OT 81; cf. 207).