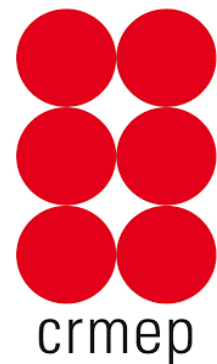


Kant and Clausewitz: A Philosophy of Actuality

Nathaniel Wooding

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This thesis aims to do two things. The first aim is to trace the precise manner in which Kant's thought is transmitted to Clausewitz through the intermediary of J. G. Kiesewetter (one Kant's preferred students). To do this it engages with numerous sources, the most important of which being Kiesewetter's lectures at the Berlin Military Academy, later published, with his own lecture notes, as *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik...*, and Clausewitz's early notes and drafts for an uncompleted text on the concepts of strategy and tactics, composed, according to Werner Hahlweg, between 1809-12 (published in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*). This latter text not only shows clear evidence of the Kantian and Kiesewettian influence on Clausewitz, visible in the latter's use of the Kantian notions of "formal and material truth", "*Sinn und Bedeutung*", it also allows to draw out, with a greater deal of confidence and precision, the philosophical aspects of Clausewitz's mature work, *Vom Kriege*. The second aim of this thesis, which develops out of the research undertaken for the first, is to attempt to understand and to pursue the implications of allowing the concept of actuality to be considered as prior to the concept of possibility. This philosophical position is the one held, this thesis contests, by the mature Clausewitz and signals at once the latter's fidelity and infidelity to the Kantian project, which, though often articulating and even seeming to rely upon this inversion, seeks elsewhere to withdraw from the consequences of such a position. The priority accorded to actuality, as Clausewitz understands it, entails a foregrounding of effects of friction (*Friktion*), of a world characterised by chance, uncertainty, and disturbed causal chains, and demands the development of a logic of strategy.

Introduction: A Philosophical Clausewitz

1: Actuality and Possibility

- 1.1 Philosophical Context
- 1.2 Aristotle's "*Energeia*" (and "*Entelecheia*")
- 1.3 Actuality and Possibility – Existence and Essence
- 1.4 Dasein and Ontology before the Critical Turn
- 1.5 Kant's Critical Ontology
- 1.6 Actuality and Existence (in the Critical Philosophy)
- 1.7 Refutation of Idealism

2: Kiesewetter's Transmission of the Kantian Legacy

- 2.1 Kiesewetter and the Externality of the Object
- 2.2 Theory and Praxis or *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst*
- 2.3 *Wissenschaft* and the Criteria of Formal and Material Truth
- 2.4 The Actuality of War (Combat as *Sinn und Bedeutung*)

3: War and the Limits of the Critical Philosophy

- 3.1 Kant and War
- 3.2 Violence, Law, and Freedom
- 3.3 The *a priori* Synthetic Judgement
- 3.4 Clausewitzian Synthesis
- 3.5 Architectonic Rhapsodies

4: Friction and Strategy

- 4.1 *Friktion*: a "Resistant medium"
- 4.2 Transcendental Truth and Strategy
- 4.3 The Unstable Ground of Philosophy

5: War and Politics: Continuation by Other Means

- 5.1 Continuation by Other Means (Regulative Proposition)
- 5.2 Continuation by Other Means (*Gefecht* as Origin)
- 5.3 Inversing Clausewitz

Conclusion – Strategic Idealism and a Philosophy of Actuality

Much of the literature on Clausewitz, especially in the anglophone reception of the latter's thought, is very cautious around the issue of his relation to philosophy, often preferring to suspend or to evade the question. For some commentators, Clausewitz's continuing relevance seems even to depend upon the removal or the neutralisation of the metaphysical elements in his thought. One of the introductions to the English translation of *On War* seeks to reassure the reader on this point by insisting that there is only a "slight infusion of metaphysics" in the text which "virtually disappears" after the first few pages.¹ The translation itself, done by Peter Paret and Michel Howard (the former, an intellectual historian and the latter, a military historian), might even be held accountable for diverting attention away from the philosophical aspects of Clausewitz's thought. This text, which has now come to be considered as the standard English translation, performs a certain banalisation of Clausewitz's lexicon. Even the words "*Philosophie*" and "*philosophischer*", philosophy and philosophical, which Clausewitz uses whilst discussing his own position, disappear, getting translated instead by "theory" and "scientific", respectively.² Further, the quite precise Kantian vocabulary which permeates *On War* suffers a similar fate and gets completely translated out of the English text.³

A Kantian influence on Clausewitz has long been suspected. However, despite the fairly well-known fact that Clausewitz was taught by one of Kant's preferred and more faithful students, J. G. Kiesewetter, this connection has not yet been fully developed. The general consensus regarding this question could for a long time be neatly summarised in the "prudent and banal" conclusion presented by the French philosopher Raymond Aron,

¹ The obvious problem with such a claim being that the first chapter of the first book was the only part of *On War* that Clausewitz considered finished, so any attempt to diminish its importance would first have to find a way around this. Bernard Brodie. 'The Continuing Relevance of *On War*' in M. Howard and P. Paret ed. *On War* (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), p.52.

² Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* trans. and ed. by M. Howard and P. Paret (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), p.69, p.80.

³ This thesis will hence use exclusively the original German text: Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (München: Cormoran, 2000). More generally, as the transmission of a precise conceptual vocabulary is here at stake, which, further, is not always respected in the various translations, this thesis will use, where possible, the original sources. Unless noted otherwise, all translations are my own.

according to which Clausewitz most likely only ever had indirect access to Kant's thought as something that was in the air at the time but was never seriously concerned with trying to rearticulate, to develop, or to critique any of the central themes of the critical philosophy.⁴ Only more recently has this consensus started to shift, notably in the works of Howard Caygill, Sibylle Scheipers, Youri Cormier, and Antulio J. Echevarria II. This thesis wishes to insist upon the fact that Clausewitz has a consistent philosophical position, one which, while being grounded in a firm understanding of Kant's thought, chooses to distort it and to put in question some of its fundamental presuppositions. To substantiate this claim, however, it is necessary to re-examine Kant's philosophical legacy.

The dominant account of the Kantian legacy passes through the German idealists. This intellectual movement was characterized by a rejection of Kant's articulation of an opposition between a "subject-independent world" which is given to us by means of intuition, and "a world that is conceived of as subject-dependent" in so far as it "is formed by conceptual tools or other 'thought-ingredients' stemming from some subjective activity or other."⁵ This opposition was seen to be ultimately untenable by the representatives of German idealism and the limits placed on the subject's activity by Kant were removed.

Against the more renowned wars of succession between Fichte, Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel, another tradition of post-Kantian thought can be traced, one which has received less scholarly attention. This tradition, which passes through J. G. Kieseewetter, whom Howard Caygill refers to as a "forgotten Kantian",⁶ and Clausewitz, seeks rather to maintain a relation to that which is outside of the concept. Rather than putting all the interpretative weight on the side of the subjective or conceptual activity, this version of the Kantian philosophy pursues

⁴ Raymond Aron. *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz: 1. L'âge européen* (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), p.368-9. Michael Howard voices exactly the same opinion, saying that 'there is no evidence' to suggest that Clausewitz actually read Kant. See: Michal Howard, *Clausewitz: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), p.14

⁵ Paul Guyer and Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Idealism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/idealism/>>. (accessed 19/04/2022)

⁶ Howard Caygill, "Clausewitz and Idealism" in *Force and Understanding* ed. S. Howard (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), p.415

the difficulties which follow from the externality of the given object. The importance of Kieseletter in this account is not so much as innovator. Kieseletter himself does not radically reinterpret the Kantian philosophy but should rather be understood as transmitting an unresolved and unexamined problematic. For Kieseletter, the externality of the object, or more precisely, the externality of actuality, is not seen to be incompatible with the claims to certitude and stability made by the critical philosophy. It is only once one reaches Clausewitz's thought that the consequences of the externality of actuality are fully examined.

As a thinker, Clausewitz continually engaged with the philosophical, literary, and scientific context of his time. He follows Kieseletter's lectures on the Kantian philosophy and had a significant, if not uncritical, appreciation for Fichte, whose "manner of reasoning... greatly pleased" Clausewitz and whose text *Addresses to the German Nation*, he says in a letter in 1808, awoke and reanimated his own tendencies to "speculative reasoning".⁷ In this same letter Clausewitz expresses the desire to follow one of Fichte's courses on philosophy but regrets that he does not have the time to do so.⁸ In 1809, he goes so far as to write an anonymous letter to Fichte regarding the latter's reading of Machiavelli. Clausewitz also showed a great interest for mathematics and the sciences. He attends Alexander von Humboldt's lectures in Berlin, the *Vorlesungen über physisikalische Geographie nebst Prolegomenen über die Stellung der Gestirne* also known as the *Kosmos-Vorträge*,⁹ and devotes much time to the study of mathematics.¹⁰ He, further, avidly reads Schiller and

⁷"[Fichte] hat eine Art des Raisonnements, die mir sehr gefällt, und alle Tendenz zum Spekulativen Rasonieren, die in mir ist, fühlte ich bei [die] Lektüre [Fichtes "Reden an die deutsche Nation"] aufgeweckt und von neuem angeregt". Karl von Clausewitz und Marie von Clausewitz "Den 15 April [1808]." in *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern* ed. K. Linnebach (Berlin: Warneck, 1916), p.155

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ See "Brief 111: Berlin den 24ten November 1827." in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, erster Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.534

¹⁰ See, the letter "Den 28. Februar." in Karl von Clausewitz und Marie von Clausewitz, *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, p.95

Goethe's correspondence,¹¹ and his writings and letters are littered with references to the literary works of German romanticism.

Despite this continual engagement with the philosophical and intellectual currents of his time, Clausewitz remains on the outskirts. His understanding of philosophy was too foreign to the dominant strains, his articulation of the fundamental problematic of philosophy, too incompatible with his contemporaries. While the critical attention of the German idealists was above all focused upon the complicated relation between law and freedom, and had a fundamental commitment to the conceptual, for Clausewitz, the problematic of philosophy articulates itself around the term "actuality", a term that he inherits from Kant. What interests Clausewitz is above all a *non-conceptual* and *non-ontological* actuality. This is the starting point of the Clausewitzian philosophy: the unavoidable relation to an actuality that can neither be reduced to a concept nor to being. What this means for Clausewitz is that actuality cannot simply be understood by means of possibility, it is not a mere actualisation of something previously possible. Clausewitz conceives of the critical gesture in terms of being inextricably bound to a field of actuality that one can never completely dominate. All philosophies which calmly step out of actuality into the realm of possibility or believe themselves entitled to take for granted the possession of concepts (or the Concept) are dismissed by Clausewitz as specious and emaciated.

Clausewitz's insistence on the primacy of actuality allows a re-opening of Kant's thought. Instead of becoming ensnared in the familiar and tortuous impasses of Kantian philosophy (the divided "I" which, as both subject and object cannot reconcile itself with itself, the difficulties surrounding the coexistence of law and freedom, etc.) Clausewitz and the problem of actuality allows Kantian thought to develop in a different direction. It is above

¹¹ Carl von Clausewitz, "Brief 118: Berlin den 24ten November 1827." in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, erster Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.550

all towards a philosophical thinking of *strategy* as that which negotiates with and intervenes in actuality.

If there is some truth in Agamben's contention that philosophy, at its most fundamental or most essential, is a firm revendication of potentiality, "the construction of an experience of the possible as such"; that what philosophy seeks above all not to forget, is not so much thought but rather the potentiality of thinking, not so much writing itself but the rather "the blank page";¹² then this thesis seeks to sketch out a less familiar side of the philosophical enterprise, that is, a philosophy that is anchored rather in actuality and the actual. At once more banal and less ambitious than a philosophy of possibility, it will be shown to be stranger and more unsettling.

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. The first, "Actuality and Possibility", will treat the history of the conceptual relation between these two concepts, looking specifically at the emergence of actuality in Aristotle's thought and the manner in which it was recoded as existence and subordinated to essence or possibility by the 17th and 18th century metaphysicians, Wolff and Baumgarten. The historico-conceptual analysis will provide a first basis for understanding how actuality could come to occupy a *non-conceptual* and *non-ontological* role in Kant's thought. Although Kant includes actuality amongst his pure concepts (it appears as *Dasein* in the table of categories and as *Wirklichkeit* in his principles), it is also used to name the empirical in general or the relation to that which is given ("given without being thought", according to an important definition of actuality found amongst Kant's notes on metaphysics). However, this is a very problematic move, since the empirical must first of all be *proved* to be conceptual. Indeed, this is one of the fundamental problematics of the critical philosophy: how can one be sure that experience will necessarily

¹² Giorgio Agamben. *Bartleby ou la création* trans. by C. Walter (Strasbourg: Circé, 2014), p. 28-9. "la philosophie est une ferme revendication de la puissance, la construction d'une expérience du possible en tant que tel. Non la pensée, mais la puissance de penser ; non l'écriture, mais la feuille blanche : voilà ce qu'elle ne veut oublier à aucun prix"

conform to our *a priori* concepts? The non-conceptual and non-ontological role that actuality comes to occupy in Kant's thought is most clearly articulated in the problem of the externality of the object in the refutation of idealism. This chapter will hence finish with a study of Kant's numerous attempts to rewrite this refutation.

The second chapter, "Kiesewetter's Transmission of the Kantian Legacy", shows how this non-conceptual actuality is transmitted to Clausewitz through Kiesewetter's teachings under the form of the externality of the object. Taking as its principal sources Kiesewetter's lectures and published texts, this chapter starts by outlining the reading of Kant's philosophy that Kiesewetter develops. Kiesewetter's understanding of Kant was greatly influenced by the problematic sketched out in the refutations of idealism (several of these refutations being written in his company and with his assistance). It is this which led Kiesewetter to insist upon the externality of the object (and hence also the externality of actuality). He does not, however, realise the incompatibility of this interpretation with the claims to stability, certitude, and purity that the critical philosophy makes. It is only in Clausewitz's philosophy that the consequences of this interpretative decision are finally drawn out. This chapter examines Clausewitz's attempt to use a Kantian terminology (in particular, the notions of "formal and material truth" and "sense and significance") as means for understanding war. It is the insufficiency of this technical vocabulary which leads Clausewitz to develop his own philosophical position, a position characterised above all by the non-coincidence of the actuality of war with the concept of war.

The third chapter, "War and the Limits of the Critical Philosophy", seeks to open up the question of what it means for philosophy to engage with a concept of war. It will, first of all, attempt to demonstrate that Kant's philosophy depends upon a form of warfare or violence which, at the same time, threatens to undermine the nature of his project. The analysis will examine, in particular, the question of whether it is possible to understand war from the perspective of peace, which Kant understands as the problem of thinking "law in a lawless

state”. In Kant’s philosophy, there are two ways in which the conformity of war to the interests of peace is explained: conformity by means of the application of violence, and conformity by means of voluntary capitulation. Both of these are, however, highly problematic and entail serious difficulties for the establishment of a peace conceived of as just, neutral, and perpetual. The second thing that this chapter will seek to do is to develop Clausewitz’s more consistent and rigorous thinking of war. It will be shown that it avoids the difficulties that Kant falls into only by sacrificing a great deal of ground to the empirical and hence by embracing a permanent instability.

The fourth chapter, “Friction and Strategy”, looks more closely at how Clausewitz conceives of the idea of touchstone. Clausewitz rejects the touchstone that Kant proposes for philosophy, that of “possible experience” since this presupposes the compatibility of actuality and possibility (that is, that actual experience will conform to possible experience). On the contrary, Clausewitz takes “actual experience” or, more precisely, *actuality* as that against which the claims of philosophy must be measured and judged. For Clausewitz, this passes through the notion of “friction” in so far as this concept describes precisely the inherent non-correspondence between actuality and possibility. An agreement between the actual and the possible can be produced or engineered, but it remains precarious and has only ever regional validity. It is the task of “strategy” to produce this correspondence which in many ways can be seen as replacing Kant’s transcendental activity.

The fifth chapter looks at the philosophical reception of Clausewitz, which historically has most frequently passed through an interpretation of the proposition “war is the continuation of politics by other means”. This chapter undertakes an interpretation of this proposition by resituating it in the context of Clausewitz’s thought. It will be shown that the context of this proposition and the manner in which it is implemented in *On War* indicate that it should be understood in a *regulative* sense rather than in a *constitutive* one (which seems to have been the general consensus). The interpretation of this proposition will be further

complicated through a consideration of the genealogical account of war which appears in Clausewitz's early notes and drafts. In this genealogical account, Clausewitz says that "Gefecht" (combat) must be said to be the origin of war (not politics). By means of these two perspectives, it will be shown that the Clausewitzian proposition must be understood as pointing to a double origin of war: an *ideal* origin (in politics) and a *real* origin (in combat).

1. Actuality and possibility

1.1 Philosophical Context

1.2 Aristotle's "Energeia" (and "Entelecheia")

1.3 Actuality and Possibility – Existence and Essence

1.4 Dasein and Ontology before the Critical Turn

1.5 Kant's Critical Ontology

1.6 Actuality and Existence (in the Critical Philosophy)

1.7 Refutation of Idealism

The principal aim of this chapter is to outline the nature and the functioning of “actuality” in Kant’s critical philosophy. Although Kant wishes to include it amongst his pure concepts (it appears as *Dasein* in the table of categories and as *Wirklichkeit* in his principles), it is also used to name the empirical in general or the relation to that which is given (“given without being thought”, to follow a crucial definition of actuality found amongst Kant’s notes). This ambivalence regarding the status of actuality results from a disjunction between what Kant wishes to accomplish with his critical intervention in philosophy and his actual concrete engagement with the problematic at hand. This problematic is explicitly formulated as follows: how can we ensure that experience conforms to our *a priori* concepts. However, in Kant’s concrete working through of this problematic, it gets reformulated as: how can we ensure that actuality corresponds to possibility.

Against the dominant philosophical tradition which subordinates actuality to being, what begins to take shape in Kant’s thought is a *non-ontological* and *non-conceptual* actuality. This development results from a complex conjunction of historical, linguistic, and conceptual elements. The most important of these elements are: the Aristotelian *energeia* (actuality) which is neither understood as being subordinated to *dunamis* (potentiality) nor as determined by a logic of actualisation; the Wolffian and Baumgartian ontology in which, on the one hand, being is identified with possibility (or essence) and, on the other, actuality is recoded as existence and relegated to the ontologically indifferent status of a mere *complement* of possibility (calqued on the conceptual relation between existence and essence); and Kant’s own radical restaging of ontology through the critical distinction between intuition (a passivity which receives the object) and understanding (an activity which determines the object).

In the working out of his own philosophical position Kant puts his ontology, which in many respects takes for granted the identification of being and possibility, in relation to that which exceeds its own limits: the object received (or, more precisely, that which is given). The problem of Kant's critical philosophy is that it must show that the not yet ontological (the given or the actual) necessarily agrees with the ontological forms. The very capacity to determine this non-conceptual and non-ontological actuality is the criterium of validity of the critical ontology. It is Kant's clumsy philosophical attempts to close the gap between the ontological and the non-ontological, that is, to cover over the fundamental incompatibility between possibility and actuality which fuels the idealist reading of Kant and the movement towards a logic of actualisation. Against this idealist reading, to which Kant never fully succumbs, a second reading presents itself, one which emphasises rather the non-ideality or the *externality* of the object. This reading comes more clearly to the fore in Kant's numerous attempts to refute (material) idealism. It is this second reading which is adopted by Kieseewetter and later radicalised by Clausewitz.

1.1 Philosophical context

The conceptual and linguistic history of what is referred to by the English term "actuality" is somewhat complex and it is, of course, not possible to outline in this thesis all the developments, displacements, and shifts in meaning that this concept has undergone since its inception as "*energeia*" in Aristotle's thought. Nonetheless, an outline of this history will help draw into focus some of the philosophical stakes of this thesis as well as clarify the specificity of the Kantian and Clausewitzian treatment of this concept.

In the context of 18th and 19th century Kantian and post-Kantian thought, "actuality" has as its primary point of reference the German term "*Wirklichkeit*". *Wirklichkeit* is used in a general way as a synonym of existence (*Existenz, Dasein*)¹³ and hence is implicated in a

¹³ "Wirklichkeit" in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/21, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB>>, accessed 21.03.2021.

certain form of ontology. It is also, however, etymologically bound up with the notion of “*Wirkung*” (effect) and the verb “*wirken*”, i.e., “to work” or “to produce effects” (from the verb “*werken*” to be active). One might even wish to insist that *Wirklichkeit*, in its etymological meaning, is closer to the Greek term *energeia* than to the Latin *actualitas*, which is the source of the English “actuality”, in so far as the former is derived from *ergon* “work” whereas the latter comes from *actus* and ultimately the verb *agere* meaning “to act” or “to do”.¹⁴ Moses Mendelssohn in his work, *Phaedon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1767), draws out both the “dynamic” and the “existential” meaning of *Wirklichkeit*: “being actual, through which one refers to existence, evokes the idea, not without reason, that everything that exists, is also actual, i.e., must do something”.¹⁵ Spinoza also presents this same idea in proposition XXXVI of the *Ethics*: “Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow”.¹⁶ The foundation of this affirmation seems, however, to be ultimately theological: anything that exists, as an expression of God’s power, must necessarily produce an effect.

While the English “actuality” implies a certain continuity in the conceptual history of this term, since the same term is used in the English translations of Aristotle’s *energeia*,¹⁷ Thomas of Aquinas’s *actus*,¹⁸ and Kant’s *Wirklichkeit*,¹⁹ there is less conceptual clarity in the German and French traditions. In these traditions different words are used to refer to what is uniformly referred to as *actuality* in English. *Energeia* in the French translations of Aristotle is rendered as “*acte*”, with the word “*actualité*” occasionally appearing in this context.²⁰ In

¹⁴ I wish to thank Dr. Joel White for drawing this to my attention.

¹⁵ “*Das Wort wirklich seyn, wodurch man das Daseyn andeutet, giebt nicht ohne Grund zu verstehen, daß alles, was da ist, auch wirklich seyn, d.i. etwas thun müsse*”. Moses Mendelssohn, *Phaedon oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele. In drey Gesprächen* ed. by Karl-Maria Goth (Berlin: Hofenbourg, 2017), p.124

¹⁶ “*Nihil existit, ex cuius naturâ aliquis effectus non sequatur.*” Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethique* trans. by B. Pautrat (Paris: Seuil, 2010), (IPXXXI + D), p.80

¹⁷ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* trans. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 2004), p.260

¹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, “Thomas Aquinas on the Principles of Nature” in G. Klima, F. Allhof, and A. J. Vaidya ed. *Medieval Philosophy: Essential readings with Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p.157

¹⁹ See, for example, Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Pure Reason* trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A145/B184; Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998). (Hereafter *KdrV*)

²⁰ See Aristote, *La Métaphysique: tome II* trad. and ed. by J. Tricot (Paris: Vrin, 1974), p.210n.3

the modern German translations, *energeia* appears as “Akt”²¹, or as “*Verwirklichung*” (“actualisation”).²²

In the French translations of Kant, on the other hand, “*wirklich*” and “*Wirklichkeit*” are often rendered by “*réel*” and “*réalité*”, respectively.²³ In the French secondary literature on Kant, the term “*réalité effective*” is sometimes used for “*Wirklichkeit*” in order to distinguish it from the French translation of the German “*Realität*” which is also translated rendered as “*réalité*”. From a general semantic perspective, *Realität* and *Wirklichkeit* can be seen as having quite distinct connotations in German. The former brings with it a greater sense of stability and neutrality. For Schopenhauer, the word, “*Realität*”, remains unable to capture the dynamic and constantly shifting nature of a reality composed of a nexus of causal relations. It is only “*Wirklichkeit*” that fully brings out the idea of a reality or materiality whose very being is its activity (“*Wirken*”).²⁴ As far as the Kantian philosophy is concerned, the distinction between these two terms is even more important. Aubenque notes this unfortunate amalgamation in the French translations of Kant²⁵ and points out that reality and actuality belong in fact to two different registers. “Reality is”, he writes, “a category of quality, that is, the mode of relation which unites the predicate with the subject in the affirmative judgement: its contrary is negation.”²⁶ “Existence (*Existenz, Dasein, Wirklichkeit*)”, on the contrary, “is a

²¹ D. Schületer, “Akt/Potenz” in J. Ritter, K. Gründer and G. Gabriel ed. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2007)

²² Aristoteles. *Metaphysik* trans. by Franz F. Schwarz (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1987), p.227

²³ Immanuel Kant. *Critique de la raison pure* trans. by A. Tremesaygues and B. Pacuad (Paris: PUF, 1980) p.200, p.204. *KdrV* A218/B266, A225/B272²⁴ “*Ursache und Wirkung ist also das ganze Wesen der Materie: ihr Sein ist ihr Wirken. Höchst treffend ist deshalb im Deutschen der Inbegriff alles Materiellen Wirklichkeit genannt, welches Wort viel bezeichnender ist als Realität*” Arthur Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (I S.10)* cited in Friedrich Nietzsche. *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), p.28

²⁴ “*Ursache und Wirkung ist also das ganze Wesen der Materie: ihr Sein ist ihr Wirken. Höchst treffend ist deshalb im Deutschen der Inbegriff alles Materiellen Wirklichkeit genannt, welches Wort viel bezeichnender ist als Realität*” Arthur Schopenhauer, *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (I S.10)* cited in Friedrich Nietzsche. *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), p.28

²⁵ In speaking about the translation of “*Hundert wirkliche Taler*” as “*cent thalers réels*” he says “*comment a-t-on pu comprendre que Kant se donne tant de peine pour montrer qu’il n’y a rien de plus dans cent thalers réels que dans cent thalers possibles, alors que ce qu’il veut montrer en vérité, c’est que cent thalers existants ne sont pas plus « réels » que cent thalers possibles, puisque le prédicat de l’existence n’ajoute rien à leur « réalité » ?*” Pierre Aubenque, “La thèse de Kant sur l’être et ses origines aristotéliennes” in *Problèmes Aristotéliens ; Philosophie Théorique* (Paris: Vrin, 2017), p.370

²⁶ “*En termes kantien : la réalité est une catégorie de la qualité, c’est-à-dire le mode de la liaison qui unit le prédicat au sujet dans le jugement affirmatif ; son contraire est la négation.*” Ibid, p.370-1

category of modality, that is the mode of relation to the object which is established in the assertoric judgement as positing of the object: its contrary is possibility”.²⁷

Put somewhat schematically, one can say that while “reality” refers to the relation between predicates (a relation internal to the judging subject), “actuality” refers to the relation between a subject and an object, that is, it implies a relation to that which is “outside” of the subject (though this “outside”, as shall be seen, is a complex and ambivalent term for Kant). It is above all for this reason that “*réalité*” is a problematic translation in a Kantian context, it collapses two quite opposed registers into one. If one of the central difficulties of the critical philosophy is that of explaining the necessary correspondence of an actuality external to the subject with the conceptual apparatus of the subject then identifying actuality with a concept which describes a relation that is entirely internal to the subject threatens to entirely deform the nature of the problematic.

Despite this not insignificant amalgamation of two quite different German concepts, the translation of “*Wirklichkeit*” as “*réalité*”, seems to be largely accepted as standard. “*Wirklichkeit*” is also often rendered as “*réalité*” or as “*réalité effective*” in translations of Heidegger and Hegel.²⁸ This leads to some confusion when “*réalité*” or “*réalité effective*”, used in a modern French philosophical context, is translated into English. One sees this, for example, in G. Burchell’s translation of Foucault’s *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*. The extended discussion of “*réalité*” in this text, which under numerous different forms (for example, “*un champ de forces réelles*” (“a field of actual forces”), the “*réalité de la population*” (“actuality of the population”), and “*la réalité du grain*” (“the actuality of

²⁷ “L’existence (*Existenz, Dasein, Wirklichkeit*) est une catégorie de la modalité, c’est-à-dire, le mode de relation à l’objet qui s’institue dans le jugement assertorique comme position de l’objet : son contraire est la possibilité”. *Ibid*, p.371

²⁸ *Wirklichkeit* is translated as “*réalité effective*” by Jean Hyppolite in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phénoménologie de l’esprit* trans J. Hyppolite (Paris: Aubier, 1941), p.20; and as “*réalité*” in Martin Heidegger, *Être et temps* trans. François Vezin (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p.42

grain”))²⁹ is consistently translated as “reality” or “real”.³⁰ Even the explicit reference to “*réalité effective*”,³¹ which should remove all doubt regarding the concept in question, gets translated as “effective reality”.³² This severs Foucault’s analysis from the concept of actuality and neutralises somewhat the “dynamic” character of the term (the English word, “reality”, belonging more to a discourse of veridicality and evoking less immediately a complex network of causes and effects).

More recently in the French literature, there has been a tendency to translate “*Wirklichkeit*” with “*effectivité*”.³³ While this brings out the idea of an “effect” or “effecting”, a meaning suggested by the associated German term “*Wirkung*”, it also introduces an idea of “efficacy”, which is not present in “*Wirklichkeit*” (efficacy being expressed rather by “*Wirksamkeit*”). This is not a benign introduction as it implies the idea of an external standard: something is only effective or efficacious in relation to something else (a projected ideal form of the activity in question). What seems implied is that actuality, by its very nature, brings with it the idea of an external criterium according to which it should be judged.

As the title of the present chapter suggests, actuality is often understood as being one term in a conceptual pair: actuality and possibility (or potentiality). The precise philosophical nature of this opposition (the manner in which the two terms interact, and the privilege accorded to one term rather than the other), has varied quite dramatically throughout their history. From a merely logical, or even ontological point of view, it might seem self-evident to place the notion of possibility before that of actuality, to consider that if something is

²⁹ Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, Territoire, Population* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), p.5, p.13, p.38

³⁰ Michel Foucault. *Security, Territory, Population* trans. by G. Burchell, ed. M. Senellart (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.3, p.11, p.36.

³¹ Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, p.48

³² Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p.47. It should also be noted that Foucault himself, in his translation of Kant’s *Anthropologie*, renders *Wirklichkeit* as *réalité*. Michel Foucault and Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique; Introduction à l’Anthropologie* trans. by Foucault (Paris: Vrin, 2019), p.128.

³³ This is the case for example in Emmanuel Martineau’s translation of *Sein und Zeit*: Martin Heidegger, *Être et temps* trans by Emmanuel Martineau, édition numérique hors-commerce (Paris: Authentica, 1985), §3; and Jean-Pierre Lefebvre’s translation of the *Phänomenologie*: G. W. F. Hegel *Phénoménologie de l’esprit* trans Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), p.71. See also, Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, “La «*Wirklichkeit*» ou réalité effective dans les «*Principes de la philosophie du droit*» de Hegel” in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, quatrième série, tome 103, n°3, 2005. pp. 347-363; p.348

actual, it is no doubt because it was previously possible and then, either by means of an external intervention or by means of its own internal force or striving, passed into act. This seemingly self-evident position must, however, be qualified by means of an important conceptual distinction, one which will be determining for the entirety of this project: the distinction between ‘actuality’ and ‘actualisation’. Whereas ‘actualisation’, on the one hand, refers precisely to this process of *passing into act* and hence is essentially determined by the implicit reference to something previously possible; ‘actuality’, on the other hand, does not *immediately* make reference to a prior state of possibility. As such, actuality leaves itself open to the thought of a certain conceptual independence. The confusion between (or conscious conflation of) these two terms (actualisation and actuality) will be one of the focal points of the present thesis.

The philosophical position that will be explored in this project is one which holds firmly to the idea that actuality should precisely not be reduced to the logic of actualisation, that is to say, to a pre-existing possibility that passes into act. While the actualisation of possibility undeniably plays a role in the understanding of an aspect of actuality, it does not exhaust the scope of this latter concept. On the contrary, it should rather be understood as a regional and secondary form of actuality. What follows is an attempt to draw out the philosophical consequences of the primacy of actuality in relation to possibility, that is to say, the thought of possibility as situated *within* actuality and as produced by it.

The priority of actuality over possibility is, as Heidegger points out,³⁴ a position already held by Aristotle, whom one often places at the origin of the conceptual history of the term “actuality”. Indeed, for Aristotle, the priority of actuality over potentiality is threefold: conceptual (according to *logos*), temporal, and substantial (according to *ousia*).³⁵ From the

³⁴ Martin Heidegger. *Vom Wesen und Begriff der φύσις in Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p.286 (Hereafter, *Vom Wesen und Begriff...*)

³⁵ Aristotle, *La Métaphysique: tome II*, ©, 8. See also, S. Marc Cohen and C. D. C. Reeve, "Aristotle's Metaphysics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>>. (Accessed 17/11/2021)

perspective of *logos*, actuality must be considered as primary since it is only through reference to actuality that potentiality is defined and understood: “it is because it can be actualised that that which is potential...is potential”.³⁶ From the perspective of temporality, although a possible being must be said to precede its own actualisation, this possible being is only ever actualised by a pre-existing actual being and this causality can be followed back to its limit i.e. to the pure actuality of the prime mover, the ultimate cause of all movement.³⁷ Finally, as far as the perspective of *ousia* is concerned, Aristotle justifies the priority of actuality in two ways. The first justification takes its argumentative force from the notion of final cause. For Aristotle, everything that is in becoming, directs itself towards an end.³⁸ What is posterior in so far as generation is concerned is anterior as regards the form or the substance (*ousia*), since it is a nearer realisation of its end. Actuality is the end towards potentiality tends and hence must in a certain manner precede the latter. The second justification, which Aristotle describes as being “more fundamental”, is as follows: eternal beings cannot be said to exist potentially because all potentiality is the potentiality of contrary states, and that which is merely possible is capable of not being actual. Aristotle translates this into the notion that that which is capable of existing is also capable of not existing and hence is perishable. Eternal beings are, as far as *ousia* is concerned, anterior to perishable beings since they can exist independently of the existence of the latter. Perishable beings on contrary depend on the existence of eternal beings. Actuality can hence be said to precede possibility.³⁹

According to Heidegger in *Vom Wesen und Begriff der φύσις*, however, the thinking of this priority is something which has been lost. Following a preferred schema of his, it is the

³⁶ “*c’est parce qu’il peut s’actualiser que ce qui est puissant est puissant*”. *La métaphysique : tome II*, p.508; Θ, 8, 1049b, 12-3.

³⁷ *La métaphysique : tome II*, p.514; Θ, 8, 1050b, 4-7.

³⁸ “*tout ce qui devient s’achemine vers un principe, c’est-à-dire une fin (puisque la cause finale d’une chose est son principe, et que le devenir est en vue de la fin)*”. Ibid. p.510; Θ, 8, 1050a, 6-9.

³⁹ “Aristotle’s Metaphysics”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/>>. (Accessed 17/11/2021)

catastrophic translation of the Greek ἐνέργεια into Latin that entailed an attrition of its original meaning and a semantic fall from grace:

Ἐνέργεια, standing-in-the-work in the sense of presencing into appearance, was translated by the Romans as *actus* and thus, with a single blow, the Greek world was overthrown and covered over; from *actus*, *agere*, ‘to effect’ [*wirken*] came *actualitas*, ‘actuality’ [*Wirklichkeit*].⁴⁰

Parallel to this, δύναμις was transformed into “*potentia*, the capacity [*Vermögen*] and the possibility, that something has”.⁴¹ The consequence that Heidegger draws from this transformation is a complete reversal of the Aristotelian position:

The claim that ‘actuality [*Wirklichkeit*] is evidently prior to possibility [*Möglichkeit*]’ subsequently appeared to be an error [*Irrtum*], since the inverse seems much more reasonable: for something to be ‘actual’ and to be able to be ‘actual’, it must surely first of all be possible.⁴²

This logic leads to the seemly self-evident position that “possibility is prior to actuality”.⁴³

Heidegger’s claim seems, at least in part, to be of a linguistic nature: what now seems to be an “error” is precisely that the modern concept of “*Wirklichkeit*” does not let itself be thought of as prior to “*Möglichkeit*”. This is why he proposes to retranslate the *energeia* and *dunamis* pair as “standing-in-the-work” (*Im-Werk-Stehen*) and “being appropriate for...” (*Eignung zu*), respectively. This, he believes allows him to recover the original meaning of these terms. Despite his claim, one finds this apparent “error” explicitly formulated in one of Kant’s notes on metaphysics: “possibility [*Möglichkeit*] is a concept derived from actuality

⁴⁰ “Ἐνέργεια, das *Im-Werk-Stehen* im Sinne der Anwesenung in das Aussehen, haben die Römer mit *actus* übersetzt, und mit einem Schlag war danach die griechische Welt verschüttet; aus *actus*, *agere*, *wirken* wurde *actualitas* – die »*Wirklichkeit*«.” Heidegger. *Vom Wesen und Begriff...*, p.286

⁴¹ “Aus δύναμις wird *potentia*, das *Vermögen* und die *Möglichkeit*, die etwas hat”. Ibid

⁴² “Die Aussage »offenbar ist die *Wirklichkeit* früher als die *Möglichkeit*« erscheint dann ersichtlich als *Irrtum*, denn das Gegenteil ist einleuchtender: damit etwas »wirklich« sei und »wirklich« soll sein können, muß es ja zuvor möglich sein.” Ibid

⁴³ “Also ist doch die *Möglichkeit* früher als die *Wirklichkeit*”. Ibid

[*Wirklichkeit*]”.⁴⁴ This is perhaps not the most famous of Kant’s theses, nor is he particularly known as a philosopher of actuality. Indeed, the critical philosophy more immediately evokes the idea of *possibility*, whether in the phrase, “the conditions of the *possibility* of experience” or by means of the concept of freedom.⁴⁵ Indeed, one of the ways of reading Kant’s critical project is as the attempt to neutralise the problem of the actuality of experience by securing the conditions of the *possibility* of experience. Once it is shown that the conditions of the possibility of experience (or the conditions of possible experience) reside in the subject, actual experience seems no longer to pose any problem. It is forced into a logic of actualisation and hence merely confirms that which was already contained within the subject.

It should be said, however, that this reading of Kant conforms more precisely to the *intention* of the critical project, that is, with what Kant believes he has achieved, or would like to have achieved, than with its actual enunciation (A12-3). Against the grain of this more triumphal narrative of actuality bowing down before the subject’s conditions, another reading presents itself, one which holds more closely to the argumentation and to the articulation of the problematic that Kant is responding to.

The task of this thesis is not to uncover a lost or forgotten sense of actuality or to quibble over an aspect of Aristotelian exegesis. When Kant puts actuality before possibility, it has quite a different meaning to when Aristotle does so. What is at state here is rather the attempt to develop a philosophy of actuality which takes root in the problematic that led Kant to suggest that possibility derives from actuality. Kant himself does not directly thematise this inversion, nor does he seek to draw out its consequences. For this, one must wait for the profane interpretation of the critical philosophy proposed by Clausewitz. The logic of this

⁴⁴ “*die Möglichkeit [ist] ein abgeleiteter Begriff... von der Wirklichkeit*”. Immanuel Kant. *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß, Band IV, Metaphysik, erster Theil*. (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1926), n.4247, p.480. (Hereafter, *Metaphysik, erster Theil*)

⁴⁵ Howard Caygill makes a strong case for the intimate relation between “freedom” and “possibility” in Kant’s thought. See, Howard Caygill, “Clausewitz and Idealism” and Howard Caygill, *On Resistance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

“error” (or perhaps, better, its “grammar”⁴⁶) is something that Clausewitz, throughout his work, cautiously and rigorously explores. It is above all by engaging with Clausewitz’s thought that a philosophy of actuality and its counterpart, an idealism of strategy, can be articulated. This problematic has its origin in a conjunction of historical and conceptual elements which find themselves clumsily and, with a certain degree of incoherence, articulated in Kant’s thought and more specifically in the notion of “*Wirklichkeit*”. A start can be made at disentangling these elements by reference to the usage of the word “*Wirklichkeit*” itself.

T. Trappe, in his entry on “*Wirklichkeit*” in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, situates this concept at the intersection of three different problematics: the certainty of knowledge, the existence of independent things, and a logic of actualisation. It is the two latter problematics which will receive most of the direct critical focus in the sections which follow. An engagement with the first of these three problematics is also of importance since it will continue to play a role throughout.

Kant’s modal categories are not simply a conceptual pair but are rather composed of three concepts: possibility, actuality, and *necessity*. The third term, necessity, is often presupposed or implicitly aligned with actuality or possibility in the various other manifestations of this conceptual opposition. For example, Aristotle’s pure *energeia*, precisely because of the fact that it contains nothing potential, is also in no way contingent. It is in no way subjected to the possibility of inexistence (which is implicit in all potentiality). Further, St. Thomas’s *actus purus* also describes the existence of a necessary being, that is, God.

T. Trappe traces the *tripartite* distinction of the modal categories back to J. H. Lambert and claims that this modification of modal logic, which in its classical form contained only the double alternative: “possible-impossible [*possibile-impossibile*]” and

⁴⁶ See *Vom Kriege*, p.683, where Clausewitz affirms that war might be said to have its own grammar but not its own logic (“*[Krieg] hat freilich seine eigene Grammatik, aber nicht seine eigene Logik*”)

“necessary-contingent [*necessarium-contingens*]” entailed a certain confusion between two problematics, or rather, the superimposition of one upon the other: that of the certainty of knowledge (the proper domain of modal logic being a discourse regarding the truth and certainty of judgements) and that of the independence of externally existing things.⁴⁷ This development, he continues, explains the association between the two concepts “actuality” (“*Wirklichkeit*”) and “contingence” (“*Kontingenz*”) as well as a certain tendency to neglect the former concept for the sake of “possibility” (“*Möglichkeit*”) as that which has a more convincing claim to universality, hence also to “necessity” (“*Notwendigkeit*”). Possibility provides greater certitude since it is less subject to the effects of chance. One can certainly see this double perspective in Kant’s work where the existence of external objects is fundamentally bound up with the certainty of knowledge. This expresses itself, for example, in the ambiguity of the phrase “objective reality” (“*objektive Realität*”) which seems to oscillate between two different meanings: that of conceptual certitude and that of the relation to a nature in a certain respect “outside” or “independent” of the subject.⁴⁸ In so far as Kant’s philosophy pertains to an epistemology, *Wirklichkeit* or the corresponding judgement of modality, the “assertoric” judgement, is accorded less importance than possibility and necessity (or the problematic and apodictic judgements). Indeed, as the assertoric judgement indicates that something merely *is* the case,⁴⁹ it offers no sufficient defence against Hume’s scepticism (just because something is the case proves in no way that it could not be otherwise) and from a methodological point of view has little value for Kant.

In addition to these two meanings, T. Trappe highlights that the Aristotelian “*energeia*” (translated in modern German by “*Akt*” or by “*Verwirklichung*”⁵⁰ (lit. “actualisation”)) comes inevitably to play an important role in the conceptual functioning of

⁴⁷ T. Trappe, “*Wirklichkeit*” in J. Ritter, K. Gründer and G. Gabriel ed. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2007), p.27401-2 (Ebook). (Trappe cites: J. H. LAMBERT: *Neues Organon* 1 (1764), 89)

⁴⁸ Jean-François Courtine, “*Réalité*” in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), p.1065

⁴⁹ “*Assertorische, da es [d.h. das Urteil] als wirklich (wahr) betrachtet wird*” (A74-5/B100)

⁵⁰ See above.

Wirklichkeit. He points out that, technically speaking, the Aristotelian *energeia*, with its teleological understanding of actuality as the actualisation of an *eidos*, should have no place in a modal logic, since the latter deals primarily with the certitude of knowledge. Despite this, actuality as actualisation seems always somehow to find its way in. Trappe cites Hegel as a particularly explicit example of this.⁵¹ According to Trappe, then, in the modern concept of actuality three different problematics can be said to seep into one another: actuality as describing a modality of the certainty of knowledge, actuality as the reality of things, and finally actuality as actualisation.

Although the presence of the first two problematics is quite visible in Kant's writing, the third, "actuality as actualisation", is less evident. As shall be seen further on, however, it plays an important but unthematized role in the ontology that Kant inherited (that is, the Wolffian and Baumgartian ontology). Although the traces of a certain logic of actualisation can be found in Kant's thought, he must be seen as developing a philosophy which ultimately remains incompatible with this logic. Further, what Trappe presents as the Aristotelian influence on the concept of *Wirklichkeit*, is itself not uncomplicated and the concept of *energeia* can be seen as containing two possible readings. Already, Aristotle's thesis that actuality *precedes* possibility complicates the translation and interpretation of *energeia* as "*Verwirklichung*" ("actualisation").

1.2 Aristotle's "Energeia" (and "Entelecheia")

The conceptual origin of the concept of actuality can be found in Aristotle's writings under the form of "*energeia*" (ἐνέργεια), a term which, according to Reeve's translation of *De Anima*, Aristotle is to have coined.⁵² J. Tricot proposes "*ousia*" (οὐσία) – "essence or substance", "*eidos*" (εἶδος) – "idea or form", and "*logos*" (λόγος) as synonyms of *energeia* and opposes it to *dunamis* (δύναμις) – "potentiality or capacity" and *hylē* (ὑλη) – "matter",

⁵¹ Trappe, "Wirklichkeit". p.27401-2

⁵² Aristotle. *De Anima* trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2017), p.72n.7

“whose ambiguity *energeia* actualises and determines”.⁵³ Important for understanding Aristotle’s articulation of the relation between *energeia* and *dunamis* is that it is not at all based on model of divine creation. As D. Schületer points out,

Since Aristotle was not familiar with the biblical concept of creation out of nothing, for him the horizon of possible things does not pertain to realm of the divine intellect [*die Weite des göttlichen Denkens*] but rather to the domain of beings: all that becomes, becomes through something and from something; there must necessarily be some already actually existing ‘*from which*’ [*ein schon wirkliches «Woraus»*] that acts as material ground (*causa materialis*)⁵⁴

In Aristotle’s writings, *energeia* is often put into relation to a second similar term, ‘*entelecheia*’ (ἐντελέχεια). Aristotle himself says that the two terms always accompany each other and that they even tend towards a certain conceptual identity.⁵⁵ However, as Reeves points out, although *entelecheia* “is mostly used as a synonym of *energeia*”, it has “a slightly different connotation”.⁵⁶ According to Reeves “*energeia* is action, activity, and movement oriented; *entelecheia*—as the *tel-* suggests—is end or *telos* or completion (*enteles*) oriented (Δ 16 1021b24–30)”.⁵⁷ It is, hence, above all the idea of “telos” which separates *entelecheia* from *energeia*. While the concept of *energeia* puts a greater emphasis on the activity itself, the concept of *entelecheia* brings with it rather the idea of “static perfection”.⁵⁸ As such Reeves proposes to translate the phrase “*energeia of*” X as “the activation of” X and “*entelecheia of*” X as “the actualization of” X.⁵⁹

⁵³“dont elle [i.e. *energeia*] réalise et détermine l’ambiguïté”. J. Tricot, “Notes” in *La Métaphysique: tome I* trad. and ed. by J. Tricot (Paris: Vrin, 1974), p.209n.3

⁵⁴ “Da Aristoteles den biblischen Begriff der Schöpfung aus Nichts nicht kennt, ist ihm der Horizont des Möglichen nicht die Weite des göttlichen Denkens, sondern der Bereich des Seienden: Alles Gewordene wird durch etwas und «aus» etwas; es fordert unabdingbar ein schon wirkliches «Woraus» als Stoffgrund(*causa materialis*)”. D. Schületer, “Akt/Potenz”, p.335-6

⁵⁵ Aristote, *La Métaphysique: tome II*, p. 492; Θ, 3, 1047a, 30-2.

⁵⁶ C. D. C. Reaves. “Notes” in *Metaphysics* trans. and ed. by C. D. C. Reaves (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), p.449n.901

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tricot “Notes” in *La Métaphysique: tome II*

⁵⁹ Reaves. “Notes” in *Metaphysics*, p.449n.901

Despite the importance of the conceptual distinction between *energeia* as activity and *entelecheia* as static perfection, the two terms are often held to be identical in the history of the reception of Aristotle's thought. Indeed, the scholastic tradition translates *energeia* and *entelecheia* by the same term, “*actus*”, and in so doing, neutralises this opposition:⁶⁰ all actuality is seen as actualising an end.

The opposition between these two concepts is brought to the fore in a dispute between the later Schelling and Hegel. The details of this disagreement are outlined by Marcela García in his text “*Energeia vs Entelecheia: Schelling on Metaphysics Lambda and the Problem of the Pure Daß*”. According to García, it is above all the interpretation of Aristotle's pure *energeia* which is the site of this conflict. In García's text, *entelecheia* is conceptually aligned with “actualisation” and *energeia* with “actuality”. García argues that for Hegel pure *energeia* does not exclude *entelecheia* and hence must be understood as “an actuality that is also *actualization* of something potential”, including necessarily “a process which it culminates”.⁶¹ Indeed, when Hegel introduces the distinction between *energeia* and *entelecheia* in his his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, *entelecheia* is presented as a simply more determinate (“*noch bestimmter*”) version of its counterpart.⁶² *Entelecheia* is, Hegel says “in itself both *telos* and actualisation of *telos* [*in sich Zweck und Realisierung des Zweckes*].”⁶³

Schelling, on the contrary, holds more closely to the letter of the text and seeks to develop further Aristotle's claim that the pure *energeia* contains no potentiality whatsoever. For Schelling, it is an “*energeia* in the strict sense as an *activity* that is *not* movement” and

⁶⁰ See Hans Georg Reinhard, *Admirabilis transitus a potentia ad actum; Leibniz' Deutung des Aristotelischen Entelechiebegriffs* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), p.162 and p.162n.656. This conflation of *energeia* and *entelecheia* is also noted and criticised by Aubenque in his book *Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote*, Pierre Aubenque. *Le Problème de l'être chez Aristote : Essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne* 6th edition (Paris : PUF, 2013), p.440

⁶¹ García. “*Energeia vs Entelecheia: Schelling on Metaphysics Lambda and the Problem of the Pure Daß*” in *Tópicos, Revista de Filosofía*. 113. (July 2016), p.115. (Hereafter, “*Energeia vs Entelecheia...*”)

⁶² G. W. F. Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* zweites Buch (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2020), p.154

⁶³ *Ibid.*

hence “excludes any actualization of potentiality, any *process*.”⁶⁴ Schelling summarises this by saying “that in God no ‘what’, no essence leads the way, act [*Actus*] comes to take the place of essence, actuality precedes the concept, actuality precedes thought”.⁶⁵ It is for this reason that Schelling insists that it cannot be understood as *entelecheia*.

The thought of the externality of actuality leads Schelling to outline two philosophies: a negative and a positive philosophy. On the one hand, the negative philosophy is purely *a priori* and pertains to an absolutely necessary and logical development of reason: its object is formal and has no claim on existence. “Positive philosophy”, on the other hand, “is the *a posteriori* understanding that seeks to make sense of historical, contingent existence”.⁶⁶ It is in terms of a misunderstanding of the limit between the negative and the positive forms of philosophy that Schelling articulates his critique of Hegel: “The philosophy that Hegel presented is the negative driven beyond its limits: it does not exclude the positive, but thinks it has subdued it within itself”.⁶⁷ The critique pertains precisely to the *externality* of the actual. Actuality does not belong to the domain of the concept but remains indifferently outside of it. This opposition between Hegel’s claim that there is no actuality outside of the concept and the later Schelling’s insistence that “actuality precedes the concept” or, put otherwise, between actuality as actualisation and actuality as such (or as conditioned by a certain form of externality), neatly describes the problematic of this thesis.

The problematic of the relation between actuality and the concept has its roots in Kant’s thought,⁶⁸ although he never clearly articulates it and seems only ever to butt his head

⁶⁴ “*Energeia vs Entelecheia...*” p.119

⁶⁵ “*daß in Gott kein Was, kein Wesen vorausgeht, an die Stelle des Wesens der Actus tritt, die Wirklichkeit dem Begriff, dem Denken zuvorkommt*”. F. W. J. Schelling. *Philosophie der Mythologie; Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie* erster Band (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1966), p.588
Also quoted by García in “*Energeia vs Entelecheia*”, p.117n.5

⁶⁶ “*Energeia vs Entelecheia...*” p.116

⁶⁷ “*Energeia vs Entelecheia...*” p.116n.3

⁶⁸ When discussing his conception of pure actuality or the pure “that” (“*das reine Daß*”), Schelling explicitly references Kant’s existential proposition (*Existentialsatz*) which, as a synthetic judgment, must go out of the concept. However, he says that the existential proposition has absolutely no pertinence in the face of the pure *Daß* since the latter is completely liberated from all universality. See “*Energeia vs Entelecheia...*” p.127.

against it. Indeed, the opposition between what Schelling refers to as negative and positive philosophy is precisely something which Kant believes his “transcendental logic” has permitted him to overcome. In Kant’s vocabulary, this would be the opposition between the self-referential formal logic and an empiricism which has no other source of knowledge than experience. Kant presents the critical philosophy as providing the only possible way out of the impasse: the critical path alone is still open (“*Der kritische Weg ist allein noch offen*”) (A855/B883). As will be seen, the solution proposed by Kant is not entirely satisfactory and the externality of the actual, which he insists upon, proves highly problematic for the philosophical position he wishes to adopt, that is, one permitting an absolute certitude and stability. It is above all in the “Refutation of Idealism” where this problematic lets itself most clearly be seen.

The incompatibility between actuality and the concept is the key to understanding the philosophical importance of Carl von Clausewitz. It is what guides and fuels his reflections on war, which he considers to be the clearest example of the incoherence and inconsequence that introduces itself between the concept (possibility) and, what should be, *its* actuality, that is, the actuality *of* this concept. This will be discussed further in the second and fourth chapters of this thesis.

1.3 Actuality and Possibility – Existence and Essence

Before continuing, certain clarifications regarding the specificity of the problematic are necessary. It is important to resist the temptation to reduce the actuality/possibility opposition to the albeit related conceptual pair, being (or existence) and essence. This is precisely the conceptual reduction that Alexis Philonenko makes in his text *L’Œuvre de Kant : la philosophie critique*. In this important work, he translates *Wirklichkeit* as “*existence*”⁶⁹ and further insists that “possibility” must be understood as “essence”. According

⁶⁹ Alexis Philonenko, *L’œuvre de Kant ; La philosophie critique* (Paris: Vrin, 2003), p.225

to Philonenko, possibility cannot be a vague and insubstantial idea from which one might deduce the actual (“*réel*”). On the contrary, “possibility signifies essence”⁷⁰. Hence the question “How is pure mathematics possible?”, posed in the *Prolegomena*, gets recoded as “What is the *essence* of pure mathematics?”⁷¹ Further, since transcendental philosophy asks after the possibility of objective reality or the objectively actual (“*le réel objectif*”), one can, he says, formulate the question that it poses as “what is the essence of the actual [*le réel*]?”⁷² To some degree Heidegger might be said to do this in his reading of Kant insofar as the question of the possibility of metaphysics becomes the question regarding the *essence* of metaphysics (or of a concrete determination of its essence).⁷³ The problem of such an identification is that it immediately ontologises the problematic in a perhaps naïve and non-critical fashion. In doing so, it imposes a certain relation, over determined by the history of philosophy, on the terms in question. The opposition between being and essence (or existence and essence) threatens to subsume the relation between actuality and possibility.

The imbrication of these two conceptual pairs was for the most part standard for the scholastics, without doubt due to the underlying commitment to theology. Thomas of Aquinas takes the overlap of being/essence and actuality/potentiality for granted.⁷⁴ As Alain de Libera and Cyrille Michon put it, for Thomas of Aquinas, “being and essence differentiate from one another and combine with one another just like actuality [*l’acte*] and potentiality, which limits and determines actuality”.⁷⁵ This is also carried over into early modern philosophy, most clearly in the work of Leibniz. In his 1697 text, “*De la production originelle des choses prise*

⁷⁰ ‘*la possibilité ne désigne pas une idée en l’air, dont on pourrait déduire le réel. La possibilité signifie l’essence*’. Ibid, p.109

⁷¹ Ibid, (my emphasis).

⁷² ‘*quelle est l’essence du réel ?*’ Ibid.

⁷³ Martin Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* 7th edition (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2010), p.2 „*Umgrenzung und Auszeichnung der inneren Möglichkeit der Metaphysik, d.h. die konkrete Bestimmung ihres Wesens*“

⁷⁴ Aubenque, “La thèse de Kant sur l’être et ses origines aristotéliennes”, p.368

⁷⁵ “*L’être et l’essence se distinguent et se composent ... comme l’acte et la puissance qui limite et détermine l’acte*”. Alain de Libera and Cyrille Michon. *L’être et l’essence ; Le vocabulaire médiéval de l’ontologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1996)

à sa racine”, he uses the terms “essence” and “possibility” as synonyms⁷⁶ and later explicitly draws the parallel between the two conceptual pairs, saying: “just as possibility is the principle of essence, perfection or the degree of essence (defined by the maximum of compossibles) is the principle of existence”.⁷⁷ This overlaying of terminology determines quite precisely the nature of the relation between actuality and possibility. Possibility or essence is said “to tend” (“*tendere*”) of itself towards existence,⁷⁸ to demand or to have a claim on existence.⁷⁹ These essences themselves are said “to exist”, though this word is taken with a bit of precaution, in the realm of ideas, that is, in God.⁸⁰

However, certain key differences between these two conceptual pairs must be emphasised. An essence, because of its ultimately theological nature, seems not to require any further explanation. Possibility, on the contrary, does not have the same ontologically satisfying status as essence, as can be inferred from Philonenko’s remark (cited above). “Possibility” without the conceptual support offered by “essence” is a “floating and insubstantial idea” (“*une idée en l’air*”). To the affirmation that something is possible, the question that immediately presents itself is: “how is it possible?”, or to use a more Kantian formulation: “what are the conditions of its possibility?” In the scholastic theology, a completely perfect essence lets itself be thought of as cause of its own existence, a completely perfect possibility, on the contrary, does not necessarily bring with it the idea of existence.

Further, one can inverse the relation between essence and existence, as Sartre famously does, without necessarily inverting the relation between possibility and actuality.⁸¹

⁷⁶ “dans les choses possibles ou dans la possibilité même, c’est-à-dire dans l’essence” G. W. Leibniz “De la production originelle des choses prise à sa racine” in *Opuscules Philosophiques Choisis* trans. by P. Schrecker (Paris: Vrin, 1969), p.85

⁷⁷ “de même que la possibilité est le principe de l’essence, de même la perfection ou le degré de l’essence (défini par le maximum de compossibles) est le principe de l’existence”. Ibid, p.87

⁷⁸ “l’essence tend par elle-même à l’existence” Ibid, p.85 “*essentiam per se tendere ad existentiam*” Leibniz. *De rerum originatione radicali* https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/De_rerum_originatione_radicali (Accessed 25/01/2022)

⁷⁹ “il y a...dans l’essence, une certaine exigence d’existence..., une prétention à l’existence” Ibid, p.85

⁸⁰ “[les essences] existent, pour ainsi dire, dans une région des idées, à savoir en Dieu lui-même qui est la source de toute essence et de l’existence de tous les autres êtres” Ibid, p.87

⁸¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L’existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1966), p.17

“Existence” does not have the same dynamic connotations as actuality. It lets itself be thought as mute and immobile and as such can perfectly be reconciled with the notion of possibility (a vague indeterminate possibility of becoming something more determinate).

This is not to say that being and actuality bare no relation to each other. The conceptual histories of these two notions are, of course, closely bound together, one of the terms often being used in conjunction with the other, functioning as a synonym or as a means of explanation. For Aristotle, the pair actuality and potentiality is, of course, one of the ways in which being is understood.⁸² This tradition of understanding the modal pair as related to the status of being is continued throughout the scholastic period with Thomas of Aquinas, defining being as an ‘act’ or even as the ‘actuality of all acts’ (*esse est actualitas omnium actuum*).⁸³ Nearer the end of this period Suarez likewise insists that a ‘being’ properly so called is ‘an actual being’.⁸⁴ More recently, Heidegger in his text, *Kants Theses über das Sein*, applies this tradition to Kant’s thought and makes the claim that the categories of modality (possibility, actuality, and necessity) function merely as an explanation of “Being” and its different modes.⁸⁵

One can see traces of this tendency to conflate the terms, actuality, being, and existence in the terminological slippage in Kant’s treatment of actuality. There are three principal German terms used by Kant to designate or to refer to the concept of actuality (or at least a certain element of it): *Wirklichkeit*, *Dasein*, and *Existenz*. Kant also occasionally uses “*Sein*” (being) in the same manner, as in the famous critique of the ontological proof of the existence of God: “*Sein ist offenbar kein reales Prädikat*” (A598/B627), which translates

⁸² *Metaphysique* 1026a33-b2

⁸³ Thomas of Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia Dei*, Question VII, Article II <https://isidore.co/aquinas/QDdePotentia7.htm> (accessed online, 22/05/2021)

⁸⁴ Aubenque, “*La thèse de Kant sur l’être et ses origines aristotéliennes*”, p.368

⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger. *Kants These über das Sein in Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann GmbH, 1976), p.457

“Das Dasein ist gar kein Prädikat”⁸⁶ from Kant’s 1763 text *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*.⁸⁷ This proposition, which is key to understanding the place and meaning of actuality in Kant’s thought, will be returned to further on. Strictly speaking it is only ‘*Wirklichkeit*’ which should be translated by “actuality”, *Dasein* and *Existenz*, in the English translations of Kant’s philosophy at least, more usually being rendered by the term “existence”. Kant, however, often employs these terms interchangeably, opposing them in exactly the same manner to the concept of “possibility”. This fact is also noted by Pierre Aubenque in his essay “*La thèse de Kant sur l’être et ses origines aristotéliennes*” who writes that the three terms are used synonymously in echo of “a doctrine for which existence was the actualisation of essence”.⁸⁸ Aubenque is quite right to cite this influence, and, as shall be shown, the recoding of *Wirklichkeit* as existence which takes place during the 18th century plays an important role in subordinating *Wirklichkeit* to the concept of essence and hence also to a logic of actualisation. That said, Kant’s position cannot simply be reduced to this historical context and certain important fractures and discontinuities in his thought lead his philosophy elsewhere, away from a doctrine of actualisation. As shall be seen, however, the “actuality” articulated in Kant’s thought cannot be completely explained by means of ontology.

It is not immediately clear how to understand Kant’s use of *Wirklichkeit* in relation to the conceptual history of this term since this relation remains for a large part unthematized in Kant’s own thought. Whereas Hegel quite consciously inserts himself into this tradition by explicitly offering *Wirklichkeit* as a translation for *energeia* and *actus* in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*,⁸⁹ it is less clear how Kant relates to this tradition. Normally,

⁸⁶ Immanuel Kant. *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes in W. Weischedel ed. Vorkritische Schriften bis 1768*; 2 (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 1982) p.630. (Hereafter, *Der einzig mögliche...*)

⁸⁷ *Existenz* is used in exactly the same manner in one of Kant’s notes: “*Die existenz kann kein praedicat sein*”. Immanuel Kant, *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß, Band V, Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*. (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1928), n.3761, p.286 (Hereafter, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*).

⁸⁸ “*une doctrine pour qui l’existence était l’actualisation de l’essence*”. Aubenque, “*La thèse de Kant sur l’être et ses origines aristotéliennes*”, p.370

⁸⁹ Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* zweites Buch, p.154

in order to show the continuity of one his German terms with the larger philosophical tradition, Kant quotes the Latin concept in brackets. This is what he does for example with “*Empfindung* (*sensatio*)” (sensation) and with “*Anschauung oder Begriff* (*intuitus vel conceptus*)” (intuition or concept) (A320/B376). Kant, however, does not do this with *Wirklichkeit*, at least not in the critical philosophy.

It is only much later, in the *Opus Postumum*, that Kant explicitly proposes the link between *Wirklichkeit* and the Latin equivalent “*actualitas*”. Kant does this twice, once in the second and once in the seventh convolute.⁹⁰ It is the second of these instances which is of particular importance here, since Kant also distinguishes between *Wirklichkeit* and *Dasein*: “Existence [*Dasein*] and actuality (*existentia* and *actualitas* from *agere*) The thing exists [*ist da*] when and where it acts”.⁹¹ In this quotation, *Dasein* seems to be derived from actuality: a thing can be said to exist temporally and spatially in so far as it acts or works or produces effects (“*es wirkt*”).

In the first *Critique*, the fact that Kant calls his pure concepts of the understanding, in which actuality is included, “categories” and explicitly references Aristotle in doing so might lead to a thought of continuity. However, *energeia* is not one of Aristotle’s categories but is rather pre-categorical.⁹² Further, it must also be said that Kant’s reading of Aristotle is not the most attentive one, certain scholars even affirm that he had no direct knowledge of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.⁹³ During the discussion of the categories in the first *Critique*, Aristotle appears only briefly and is quickly rejected on methodological grounds: the fact that his investigations were not guided by a “principle [*Principium*]” meant that he gathered up the categories as

⁹⁰ “*Wirklichkeit* (*actualitas*)” Immanuel Kant. *Opus Postumum; erste Hälfte* ed. A. Buchenau (Berlin, Leibzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1936), p.226 (*II. Convolut, VIII. (Halb)Bogen, 1. Seite*), (hereafter, *Opus Postumum; erste Hälfte*); and Immanuel Kant. *Opus Postumum; zweite Hälfte* ed. A. Buchenau (Berlin, Leibzig: Walter de Gruyter, 1938), p.121 (*VII. Convolut, X. Bogen, 2. Seite*). (Hereafter, *Opus Postumum; zweite Hälfte*)

⁹¹ “*Das Daseyn und die Wirklichkeit* (*existentia u. actualitas von agere*) *Das Ding ist da wenn u. wo es wirkt.*” *Opus Postumum; zweite Hälfte*, p.121

⁹² Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.51

⁹³ “*il semble bien établi que Kant n’avait pas une connaissance directe du texte d’Aristote*”. Aubenque. “*La thèse de Kant sur l’être*”, p.365

they occurred to him and not in a systematic manner (A79-81/B105-7). Kant's relation to the philosophical tradition is mediated first and foremost through Wolff and Baumgarten. It is, hence, necessary to pass through these two metaphysicians to better understand how Kant's *Wirklichkeit* articulates itself within and against this tradition.

Etienne Gilson notes that during the 18th century there is a kind of sterilisation of the ontological object whereby all the complications which result from its actual existence are bracketed. As part of this process, ontology begins to acquire a scientific status and distance itself from natural theology.⁹⁴ According to Gilson, it is above all by means of the notion of *essence* that the study of being moves away from a consideration of that which actually exists. This he sees as represented in the movement away from the verb *ens* (being) towards the substantive *ens* (a being), that is, the transition from an action to an object or a thing.⁹⁵ This conceptual shift also allows the study of being to detach itself from natural theology (which considers the question of that which must necessarily exist).⁹⁶ Gilson attributes an important role in this development to Suarez who identifies the two concepts "being" and "essence" and is subsequently led to construct a science of being.⁹⁷ It is only once one reaches Wolff's philosophy, however, that one finally encounters "*an ontology without theology*, that is, a science of being taken abstractly in itself, independent of all questions regarding whether it exists or not".⁹⁸ Here, having had the path opened up for it by the concept of "essence", the concept of "possibility" comes to play a decisive role in ontology. According to its definitive formulation in Wolff's thought, ontology is precisely a science of the *possible*. In this conception, being is identified with the notion of possibility, as Wolff states quite clearly: what is possible, is a being ("*quod possibile est, ens est*").⁹⁹ Being, "*l'étant*" (*ens*), is now

⁹⁴ Etienne Gilson, *L'Être et L'essence* (Paris : Vrin, 2018), p.171-2 (Hereafter, *L'Être et L'essence*)

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.146-7

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.144

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "*C'est bien pourtant Wolff lui-même, qui, le premier, a constitué une ontologie sans théologie, c'est-à-dire une science de l'être pris abstraitement en soi, indépendamment de toute question de savoir s'il existe actuellement ou non*". Ibid, p.172

⁹⁹ Quoted in Gilson, *L'Être et L'essence*, p.173

defined as that which is *capable* of existing: “*Being* is that which can exist, consequently that which is not opposed to existence [En*s dicitur, quod existere potest, consequenter cui existentia non repugnant*]”.¹⁰⁰ *Ens, possibile, aliquid* are all, for Wolff, perfectly synonymous.¹⁰¹

What follows is a neutralisation and a displacement of the conceptual opposition between possibility and actuality (or existence). As Aubenque writes, since the thing (a being) is no longer defined as such with reference to the existence which actualises it but rather through its opposition to nothing, that is, to impossibility,¹⁰² “reality [*la réalité*]”, (here not in the sense of *Wirklichkeit* but rather in the sense of thingness, referring to the *res*), “gets definitively confused with possibility [*se confond décidément avec la possibilité*]”. Reality or “thingness”, no longer opposed to non-existence, now remains entirely indifferent to the opposition between the actual being of the existing thing and the non-actuality of the simply possible (“*l’être actuel (actuale) de l’existant et la non-actualité du simple possible*”).¹⁰³ The opposition between possibility (being) and nothingness (or impossibility) now takes precedence over the conceptual pair, possibility and actuality, which is no longer really thought of in terms of opposition. Indeed, in Wolff’s philosophy, existence has been reduced to a mere “complement of possibility”: *Hinc existentiam definio per complementum possibilitatis*. Baumgarten’s definition adds some nuance but essentially does not deviate from Wolff’s.

Existence (act cf. §210, actuality) is the collection of affections that are compossible in something; i.e. the complement of essence or of internal

¹⁰⁰ Christian Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia* (Francfort et Leipzig, 1730), (§134)

¹⁰¹ Gilson, *L’Être et L’essence*, p.173

¹⁰² “*La chose n’est donc pas définie comme ce qui est par référence à l’existence qui l’actualise, mais par son opposition au « rien » (nihil), c’est-à-dire à l’impossible*”. Aubenque, “*La thèse de Kant sur l’être*”, p.370

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

possibility, insofar as essence is considered only as a collection of determinations (§40).¹⁰⁴

Here, the elision between existence and actuality as well as the subordination of existence/actuality to essence/possibility is quite clear.¹⁰⁵

In this conception, existence is a mere *mode* of being and is not something that ontology as the science of being qua being is required to clarify. It is rather the task of other sciences to explain why certain things exist. Natural theology occupies itself with the sufficient reason of the existence of God and the universe; cosmology explains how the existence of contingent things is determined in the material world; and psychology treats the manner in which possibilities in human thought are actualised.¹⁰⁶ As far as ontology is concerned, however, existence loses all philosophical dignity.¹⁰⁷ It falls indifferently both within and without of the limits of ontology. This total denial of the ontological importance of “existence”, the partial exclusion of this term from the realm of ontology means that in the critical philosophy’s radical restaging of the problematic of truth, that is, in its putting in question of the self-evidence of the relation between concepts (conceived of as possibility) and given objects (conceived of as actuality), the latter (actuality) could come to adopt a non-ontological function.

For Gilson, it is thanks to the encounter or the reencounter with Hume that Kant was able to escape the metaphysics of possibility, according to which existence is a mere “*complementum possibilitis*”.¹⁰⁸ One need not wait for the critical turn, however, for Kant to

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Baumgarten. *Metaphysics* trans. and ed. by C. D. Fugate and J. Hymers (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), §55, p.110.

In Latin the text reads: “*Exsistentia (actus, cf. §210, actualitas) est complexus affectionum in aliquo compossibilium i.e. complementum essentiae sive possibilitis internaе, quatenus haec tantum, ut complexus determinationum spectatur*” Alexander Baumgarten. *Metaphysica* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963), §55, p.15

¹⁰⁵ Baumgarten in his *Metaphysica* also sometimes offers German equivalents of the Latin concepts. Here, however, there is a clear conflation between existence and actuality: “*actuale*” is rendered by “*wirklich*”¹⁰⁵ and “*Exsistentia*” by “*Wirklichkeit*”. Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, §54, p.15; §55, p.16

¹⁰⁶ Gilson, *L’Être et L’essence*, p.178

¹⁰⁷ I thank Isolda Mac Liam for her assistance and pertinent remarks regarding this question.

¹⁰⁸ Gilson, *L’Être et L’essence*, p.190

put in question the Wolffian and Baumgartian interpretation of existence. Already in *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*, 18 years before the first edition of the first *Critique*, Kant expresses his dissatisfaction with their respective positions. Here, Kant says that the Wolffian explanation of *Dasein* as a “complement of possibility” is “very indeterminate”,¹⁰⁹ and points out that if one does not already know what can be thought about possibility in a thing, Wolff’s definition does not help.¹¹⁰ As far as Baumgarten is concerned, Kant remarks that his definition of existence is more precise in so far as he adds the idea of “complete internal determination [*durchgängige innere Bestimmung*]” which is said to complement or complete (*ergänzen*) that which is left indeterminate by the predicates inhering or following from the essence. For Baumgarten, it is, further, the “complete internal determination” which in existence (“*Dasein*”) is more than in possibility.¹¹¹ This interpretation of *Dasein* is rejected by Kant on the grounds that, as he says elsewhere, “existence can be derived neither from the concept of complete determination nor from the concept of reality.”¹¹²

1.4 *Dasein* and Ontology before the Critical Turn

Kant’s relatively early text, *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund...*, discusses extensively the concept *Dasein*, however, it starts by offering several cautionary remarks regarding the attempt to define this term. Since, Kant says, formal definitions should be avoided when one is not sure to have correctly clarified a term, it is preferable to adopt the methodological approach of one who searches for a definition rather than starting with one. Kant writes:

I will proceed as one who looks for the definition and who first of all assures what one can say with certitude, either positively or negatively, of the object of the

¹⁰⁹ “*Die Wolffische Erklärung des Daseins, daß es eine Ergänzung der Möglichkeit sei, ist offenbar sehr unbestimmt*”. Kant, *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund...*, p.635.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² “*aus dem Begriffe weder der durchgängigen Bestimmung noch einer realitaet läßt sich aufs Daseyn nicht schliessen*.” Kant, *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.3533, p.39

explanation, even though no completely determinate concept of the object has yet been established.¹¹³

The example of “space” is cited as way of justifying this methodological approach:

I doubt that anyone has correctly explained what space is. Regardless, without getting into the attempt to clearly define it, I am certain that where there is space, there must be external relations, that it never has more than three dimensions etc.¹¹⁴

The ontological question (*Was ist Dasein?*) is, hence, in a sense deferred, Kant preferring to start by assembling elements pertaining to this concept.

According to Heidegger, in his reading of the critique of the ontological proof of God, Kant offers a positive and a negative claim regarding being.¹¹⁵ The former is that being is not a real predicate and the latter is that ‘being is the positing of a thing’ (*die Position eines Dinges*). The first claim appears in the well-known formulation: “*Dasein* is absolutely not a predicate or a determination of a thing”.¹¹⁶ For Kant it is completely vain to look for *Dasein* in the concept of the subject, since, he says, in the latter one finds only predicates of possibility (“*denn da findet man nur Prädikate der Möglichkeit*”). The positive definition comes later on: “*Dasein* is the absolute positing of a thing and differs in this way from all other predicates, which as such are always posited relative to some other thing.”¹¹⁷ *Dasein* is hence *absolute* positing and must be held apart from mere relative positing. This “concept of

¹¹³“*Ich werde so verfahren al seiner, der die Definition sucht, und sich zuvor von demjenigen versichert, was man mit Gewißheit bejahend oder verneinend von dem Gegenstande der Erklärung sagen kann, ob er gleich noch nicht ausmacht, worin der ausführlich bestimmte Begriff desselben bestehe*”. Kant. *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund...*, p.629

¹¹⁴“*Ich zweifle, daß einer jemals richtig erklärt habe, was der Raum sei. Allein ohne mich damit einzulassen, bin ich gewiß, daß wo er ist, äußere Beziehungen sein müssen, daß er nicht mehr als drei Abmessungen haben könne, u.s.w*” Ibid. p.630

¹¹⁵ Heidegger, *Kants These über das Sein*, p.448

¹¹⁶“*Das Dasein ist gar kein Prädikat oder Determination von irgend einem Dinge*” Kant. *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund...*, p.630

¹¹⁷“*Das Dasein ist die absolute Position eines Dinges und unterscheidet sich dadurch auch von jeglichem Prädikate, welches als solches jederzeit auf ein ander Ding gesetzt wird*”. Ibid. p.632

positing” is said to be “entirely simple and identical with the concept of being in general.”¹¹⁸ Far from being simple, however, the concept of positing seems to be identical to being in so far as they both are marked by the same ambiguity. Kant plays here with the double meaning of *Sein*, that is, the predicative and the existential sense, which correspond to two forms of positing (*Position* or *Setzung*) – absolute and relative positing. *Sein* as copula is a relative positing (*relative Position*) since it puts into relation a thing and a quality or a predicate (as in the proposition: *Subjekt ist Prädikat*). In this meaning, *Sein* is nothing other than the “connecting concept in a judgement [*Verbindungsbegriff in einer Urteil*]”.¹¹⁹ The absolute positing (*absolute Position*), on the contrary, is when the thing is posited in and for itself (“*an und vor sich selbst gesetzt*”), in this case *Sein* is existence (*Dasein*) – as in the proposition *Subjekt ist (da)*. This is as far as the analysis of this concept of *Dasein* gets.

Kant excuses the truncated nature of this analysis by citing the simplicity and self-evidence of this concept: “So simple is this concept, that one cannot say anything further by way of elaboration”. One can do little more than highlight the caution that must be exercised so as not to confuse it with “the relations that things have to their characteristics”.¹²⁰ Descartes does the same, insisting that existence in general is a simple abstract notion whose meaning is so immediately self-evident that any attempt to explain it could only render it more obscure.¹²¹ Kant, like Descartes, even seems to indicate that the immediate intuitive understanding of *Dasein* renders a greater discursive clarity unnecessary.

This must necessarily provoke a certain suspicion. Such a clumsy philosophical gesture makes one think of what Nietzsche refers to as the hermit’s judgement: “there is something arbitrary about the fact that [the philosopher] stopped here, looked back and around, that he [*sic*] dug here no deeper and put to one side the spade – there is also

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.632 “*Der Begriff der Position oder Setzung ist völlig einfach, und mit Sein überhaupt einerlei.*”

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.632

¹²⁰ “*So einfach ist dieser Begriff, daß man nichts zu seiner Auswicklung sagen kann, als nur die Behutsamkeit anzumerken, daß er nicht mit den Verhältnissen, die die Dinge zu ihren Merkmale haben, verwechselt werde.*” Ibid. p.632-3

¹²¹ Gilson. *L'être et l'essence*, p.159

something suspicious about it”.¹²² The “positive characterisation” of being or *Dasein* seems to have a philosophically unconvincing basis. As one sees in the enunciation of the positive definition it quickly resolves back into a merely negative characterisation: one is merely reminded that it is not a predicate and that one should not confuse it with relative positing.

The earlier suspicions regarding the pertinence of the ontological question in so far as *Dasein* is concerned (“*Was ist Dasein?*” being one of the questions that, according to Schopenhauer, Kant never directly poses)¹²³ seem confirmed and not because *Dasein* is so self-evident that it need not be defined. If the ontological question is not pertinent as far as *Dasein* is concerned, it is because, strictly speaking *Dasein* is not as such ontological. This is what one sees in Kant’s insistence on the necessity of distinguishing between *what* is posited (“*was da gesetzt sei*”) and *how* it is posited (“*wie es gesetzt sei*”).¹²⁴ He clarifies this by means of the distinction between existence and possibility. One can say that *in* an existing thing (“*in einem Existierenden*”) nothing more is posited than in a merely possible thing (“*in einem bloß Möglichen*”), since here it is only a question of the predicates of this thing. *Through* something existing (“*durch etwas Existierendes*”), on the other hand, one posits something more than through a mere possible, since it is here a question of the “absolute positing of the thing itself”.¹²⁵

Kant tries to reformulate the existential proposition so as to express better the non-predicative nature of *Dasein*. According to Kant, one should not say “God is an existing thing [*Gott ist ein existierend Ding*]” but rather “something existing is God [*Etwas Existierendes ist Gott*]”, i.e., the predicates which are denoted by the expression, “God”, are attributed to an

¹²² “*es ist etwas Willkürliches daran, dass er hier stehen blieb, zurückblickte, sich umblickte, dass er hier nicht mehr tiefer grub und den Spaten weglegte, — es ist auch etwas Misstrauisches daran.*” Friedrich Nietzsche. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, §289 <http://www.nietzschesource.org/#eKGWB/JGB> (accessed 26/01/2020)

¹²³ This question appears in a long list of questions that Schopenhauer claims Kant never poses, uncritically taking the answers to these questions for granted. Hermann Cohen cites this same list in *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* and responds ironically with the question “*Hat der Man die Kritik gelesen?*”. Hermann Cohen, *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (Berlin: Harrwitz und Gossmann, 1871), p.174. Although one can certainly sympathise with Cohen, the question “*Was ist Dasein?*” seems really not to have been rigorously posed by Kant.

¹²⁴ Kant. *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund...*, p.634

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.635

existing thing.¹²⁶ One can attribute predicates of possibility to existing things but not existence (*Dasein*) to a concept (as the unity of a set of possible predicates). There are two problems that follow on from this formulation. Firstly, *Dasein* must be presupposed. Secondly, the *Etwas* (in the “*Etwas Existierendes*” that is God)¹²⁷ seems already to include an ontological content (a “what”) which might be said to ensure the continuity between the predicates and that which exists (and hence also the application of the former to latter).

In Kant’s precritical philosophy, the shift in register implicit in the movement between relative and absolute positing, that is, the relation between concepts amongst themselves, on the one hand, and the relation between a concept and an (existing, actual) object on the other, can to a certain extent be overlooked. Once, however, the self-evidence of the correspondence between the conceptual and the actual has been cast in doubt, the incompatibility of the two meanings of *Setzung* takes on a greater importance.

1.5 Kant’s Critical Ontology

That the relation of Kant’s critical philosophy to ontology is not one of mere rejection has already been extensively thematised by Heidegger (see, for example, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik, Kants Theses über das Sein...*). It is true that Kant seems to have a more complex relation to the question of ontology than would suggest the oft quoted demand that “the proud name” of ontology make room for the more modest “Analytic of the pure understanding”.¹²⁸ Even in regard to this quotation, however, it should be noted that Kant is here in fact critiquing only a certain kind of ontology. It is the proud name of an ontology that claims to provide *a priori* synthetic knowledge about things in general (“*Dinge überhaupt*”), without inquiring into how it might be in relation to these things in the first place, that must

¹²⁶ “*einem existierenden Dinge kommen diejenige Prädikate zu, die wir zusammen genommen durch den Ausdruck, Gott, bezeichnen*”. Ibid, p.634

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ *der stolze Name einer Ontologie, welche sich anmaßt, von Dingen überhaupt synthetische Erkenntnisse a priori in einer systematischen Doktrin zu geben...muss dem bescheidenen, einer bloßen Analytik des reinen Verstandes, Platz machen* (A247/B302)

be put in question. This finds confirmation in the text, *What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, where Kant defines ‘ontology’ precisely as the science consisting of the concepts and principles of the understanding only insofar as they refer to objects that can be given to the senses and thus confirmed by experience.¹²⁹ Further, according to Kant’s *Logik*, theoretical cognition, as that which states ‘what is’ (rather than, e.g. what ‘should be’), has ‘a being [*ein Sein*]’ as its object.¹³⁰

One of the most compelling attempts to draw out what this ‘Sein’ might mean for Kant, is to be found in Heidegger’s writings on the critical philosophy. However, although the ontological interpretation of Kant that he provides is forceful, it can perhaps in certain places be put in question. One might even say that the ‘radicality’ of Heidegger’s reading of ontology into the critical philosophy draws attention away from Kant’s own active treatment of the question and the coherence of his own position.

Formally, Kant’s ontology does not seem to differ greatly from Wolff’s and Baumgarten’s. It seems likewise to be an ontology of possibility. As he states quite clearly in the “Architectonic of pure reason”, “Ontologia” is the system of all concepts and principles which relate to objects in general (“*Gegenstände überhaupt*”), without taking into account objects (*Objekte*) that might be given (A845/B873). It is only the rational “physiology” which begins to include a “given” or *actual* content in so far as it has “nature”, that is, “the ensemble of given objects [*den Inbegriff gegebener Gegenstände*]” as its object (A845/B873). However, Kant imposes certain limits on ontology, which modify greatly its functioning and status. Most importantly, Kant introduces *an upper limit* in the concept of an object in general, (“*der*

¹²⁹ Immanuel Kant. *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* in Wilhelm Weischedel ed. *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik II* 14. Auflage (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 2017), p.590.

¹³⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Logik* in Wilhelm Weischedel ed. *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik II* 14. Auflage (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 2017), p.518 („*Denn theoretische Erkenntnisse sind solche, die da aussagen: nicht, was sein soll, aber was ist; - also kein Handeln, sondern ein Sein zu ihrem Objekt habe*“)

Begriff von einem Gegenstande überhaupt”), a lower limit in the concept of the thing in general (“*Der Begriff des Dinges überhaupt*”), and an internal limit in the concept of nothing.

Heidegger, in his reading of Kant, identifies completely the transcendental philosophy with ontology,¹³¹ however, this is highly contestable. Although this identification seems textually justifiable,¹³² certain qualifications should be made. Ontology in Kant’s thought seems to be a secondary or derivative category, one which presupposes a higher concept outside of its own limits. This is perhaps structurally comparable to what Pierre Aubenque calls ‘tinology’, a stoic schema which presents being and non-being as subsections of ‘something’.¹³³ Here, ‘*ti*’ (something), understood as determination in general,¹³⁴ is the highest genus and the ‘*on*’ (being) is just a species with a greater level of determination.¹³⁵ What this doctrine seeks to highlight is that “being”, despite its pretensions of universality, in reality contains “a considerable force of exclusion”.¹³⁶ This provided the stoics with a philosophical vocabulary sufficiently flexible so as to be able to speak of “incorporeal realities [*réalités incorporelles*]” i.e., “non-beings” which are nonetheless “something [*quelque chose*]”, like, for example, “place, emptiness, time” etc.¹³⁷

Kant seems to put forward a modified version of this doctrine.¹³⁸ Teachers of ontology, he says in *the Metaphysics of Morals*, begin with the concepts of “something” and “nothing” (*Etwas und Nichts*) without realising that these are, in fact, parts of a division for which the divided concept is missing. The higher concept is what Kant calls the concept of an object in general (“*der Begriff von einem Gegenstande überhaupt*”).¹³⁹ This idea appears also

¹³¹ Heidegger, *Kants These über das Sein*, p.462

¹³² See A845/B873

¹³³ Pierre Aubenque, “*Une Occasion manquée. La genèse avortée de la distinction entre l’« étant » et « quelque chose »*” in *Problèmes Aristotéliens ; Philosophie Théorique* (Paris: Vrin, 2017), p.320

¹³⁴ “*la détermination en général*”. Ibid, p.320

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.317

¹³⁶ “*L’être, qui devait être l’englobant, comporte en réalité une force considérable d’exclusion*”. Ibid, p.319

¹³⁷ Ibid. p.316.

¹³⁸ This has already been noted by Jan Aertsen. See, Jan Aertsen, “‘*Res*’ as transcendental in its introduction and significance” in G. F. Vescovini ed. *Le problème des transcendants du XIVe au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), p.153

¹³⁹ Immanuel Kant. *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* ed. W. Weischedel 18th edition (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 2017), p.323

in the first *Critique* at the end of the ‘transcendental analytic’. Here Kant overlays the division between “something” and “nothing” with the division between the “possible” and the “impossible”. All previous transcendental philosophies, Kant affirms, considered this division to be the “highest concept”. However, since “every division presupposes a concept that is to be divided”, Kant insists that there must be a still higher concept: “the concept of an object [*Gegenstande*] in general.” This is what he describes as the true starting point of the transcendental philosophy: that which is neither something nor nothing, neither possible nor impossible. Here Kant describes the role of the pure concepts of the understanding in a curious fashion. He says that since the categories are the only concepts that relate to objects in general (“*Gegenstände überhaupt*”), the distinguishing of an object (*Gegenstand*), the determining of whether it is something or nothing, takes place following the order and guidance of the categories (A290/B346).

The “table of the concept of nothing”, with which Kant draws to a close the transcendental analytic would hence describe the *internal* limits of a fully articulated ontology. Kant, in one of his notes on metaphysics (n.5270), details how the concepts of nothing permit a delimiting of ontological objects, a tracing of their contours. Kant proposes an analogy between the understanding, which is the faculty for thinking “reality” (*Realitaet*), and light. The negation of reality is conceived of as darkness (darkness or shadow being one of the examples given of the second kind of nothing: empty object of a concept (“*Leerer Gegenstand eines Begriffs*”), *nihil privativum* (A291/B347, A292/B248)).¹⁴⁰ Reality (*realitaet*), Kant says in this note, is the foundation and the sole universal. As such it can be thought of as a general luminosity. Darkness appears as a mere limitation of this general luminosity and individual things differentiate themselves from one another only through

¹⁴⁰ “Wenn ich mir den Verstand, der die Realitaet denkt, als Licht und, so fern er sie aufhebt, als Dunkelheit vorstelle”. Kant, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5270, p.139.

“shadows”.¹⁴¹ According to Kant, reality must necessarily proceed negation from a metaphysical point of view since one cannot think the latter without the former.¹⁴²

Similarly to the stoics, Kant seems to consider the pure forms of intuition, space and time, as being one of the forms of nothing (A291/B347) (the “incorporeal” or the “*quelque chose non étant*” in the stoic vocabulary).¹⁴³ They belong to the third form of nothing: empty intuition without object (*Leere Anschauung ohne Gegenstand*), *ens imaginarium* (A292/B348). Somewhat confusingly, however, and with what seems like a terminological slippage, Kant says that although the “mere form of intuition” is not in itself an object (*kein Gegenstand*), it is nonetheless “something” (*Etwas*) (A291/B347). Following Kant’s vocabulary, however, space and time are precisely not “something”, which pertains rather to the domain of the categories (Kant’s positive ontology).

Kant gives “noumena” as an example of the first category of nothing, “an empty concept without object”, an “*ens rationis*” (A290-2/B347-8), or as he says in his notes in earlier version of the table of the concept of nothing, a “thought entity” (*Gedankending*).¹⁴⁴ This means that the noumena, along with the infamous “thing in itself” (whose ontological status is comparable), is a *derivative* concept and not at all a starting point. It is produced as part of the *division* of the “concept of an object in general” into “something” and “nothing”, a division effectuated by the categories. Those who accuse Kant of presupposing or of starting with the thing in itself miss the target with their critique. When Kant is at his most rigorous, the concept of the thing in itself must rather be considered as a mere by-product of the activity of the categories.

In the overlaying of the two oppositions something/nothing and possible/impossible, possibility is accorded a seemingly clear ontological status: it is here presented as a synonym

¹⁴¹ “*die Finsternis als bloße Einschränkung des allgemeinen Lichts, und so unterscheiden sich die Dinge nur bloß durch die Schattern*”. Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ See Aubenque, “*Une Occasion manquée*”, p.316

¹⁴⁴ Kant. *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5552, p.219..

of something (*Etwas*). In one of Kant's notes, this identity is quite explicitly stated: "Something in the logical understanding is an object; in the transcendental understanding it is something or nothing, i.e., possible or impossible".¹⁴⁵ The ontological status of actuality is, however, not as clear. In this outline of his ontology, Kant passes over actuality in silence.

Despite the apparent privileging of possibility in Kant's ontology, there is an important difference between the Kantian and the Baumgartian/Wolffian positions. The validity of the Kantian ontology depends entirely upon its pertinence to that which exists outside of its boundaries (on the *Gegebene* or the *data*). Whereas Wolff and Baumgarten could in a certain respect take existence or actuality for granted since they treat it as mere actualisation, or as not belonging to an essentially different register, Kant cannot do so. As has been seen, for Kant, existence or actuality can in no way be derived from a concept or the mere possibility of a thing.

To respond to this relation to something that is technically outside of the concept, that is, that which exists, Kant has recourse to another concept: the concept of the thing in general ("*Der Begriff des Dinges überhaupt*").

The only concept that represents this empirical content of appearances is the concept of the thing in general and the synthetic *a priori* cognition of this [i.e., the thing in general] can never yield anything more than the mere rule of synthesis of that which perception may give *a posteriori*, but never the intuition of a real object *a priori* because this must necessarily be empirical (A720/B748)¹⁴⁶

If the concept of an object in general ("*der Begriff von einem Gegenstande überhaupt*") is ontology's upper limit, its lower limit might be seen as the "concept of the thing in general".

¹⁴⁵ "Etwas im logischen Verstande ist ein object; im transcendentalen ist es etwas oder nichts, d.h. Möglich oder Unmöglich." Kant. *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n. 5135, p.101

¹⁴⁶ "Der einzige Begriff, der a priori diesen empirischen Gehalt der Erscheinungen vorstellt, ist der Begriff des Dinges überhaupt, und die synthetische Erkenntnis vom demselben a priori kann nichts weiter, als die bloße Regel der Synthesis desjenigen, was die Wahrnehmung a posteriori geben mag, niemals aber die Anschauung des realen Gegenstandes a priori liefern, weil diese notwendig empirisch sein muß"

This latter is of course not to be confused with the “thing in itself” which, as seen above, is one of the four concepts of nothing and hence subordinated to the concept of the object in general.

Synthetic propositions are only transcendental in so far as they relate to “things in general”, the intuition of which absolutely cannot be given *a priori* (A720/B749).¹⁴⁷ For this very reason, transcendental synthetic propositions can never be a question of the construction of concepts as is the case for mathematics. Mathematics, since it is not concerned with the relation to the empirical, constructs its concepts completely *a priori* in pure intuition. As Kant says, since philosophy is concerned with the “relation... to something entirely contingent, namely possible experience” (A737/B765),¹⁴⁸ its transcendental synthetic propositions can only contain “the rule, according to which a certain synthetic unity of that which cannot be *a priori* intuitively [i.e., in intuition] represented, (perception,) should be empirically sought” (A720-1/B749-50).¹⁴⁹

The transcendental concepts do not indicate an empirical or a pure intuition but only the synthesis of empirical intuition (which cannot be given *a priori*). Since this synthesis is unable to advance *a priori* from the concept to the corresponding intuition, no determining (*bestimmender*) synthetic proposition can be made out of the transcendental concepts but merely a principle of the synthesis of *possible empirical* intuition (A722/B750).¹⁵⁰

The gap between the empirical and the conceptual begins to open up and there is a sudden discordance between what Kant wants to do and what he actually does. The attempt to develop an ontology that contains the conditions of the possibility of actual experience

¹⁴⁷ “Synthetische Sätze, die auf Dinge überhaupt, deren Anschauung sich *a priori* gar nicht geben läßt, gehen, sind *transzendental*.”

¹⁴⁸ “Beziehung... auf etwas ganz Zufälliges, nämlich mögliche Erfahrung”

¹⁴⁹ “Sie enthalten bloß die Regel, nach der eine gewisse synthetische Einheit desjenigen, was nicht *a priori* anschaulich vorgestellt werden kann, (der Wahrnehmung,) empirisch gesucht werden soll”

¹⁵⁰ “[Ein transzendente Begriff] bezeichnet...weder eine empirische, noch reine Anschauung, sondern lediglich die Synthesis der empirischen Anschauung (die also *a priori* nicht gegeben werden können), und es kann also aus ihm, weil die Synthesis nicht *a priori* zu der Anschauung, die ihm korrespondiert, hinausgehen kann, auch kein bestimmender synthetischer Satz, sondern nur ein Grundsatz, der Synthesis möglicher empirischer Anschauungen entspringen”

founders on the fact that this actuality is not thought on the model of actualisation. An actuality or a *Dasein* which comes from the outside cannot be fully determined. It is curious that it is at this moment, when the critical project starts to buckle under the weight of what it claims to be able to do, that Kant starts to use his ontological vocabulary very liberally. Here, Kant once again presents the idea that *Dasein* is matter, as that which is given in experience (A723/B751), yet he also starts to refer to it as “something [*Etwas*]” which, if one follows Kant’s own critical ontological lexicon, is an incorrect usage of this concept. “*Etwas*”, as seen above, is already a possible object (and explicitly *not* a given object in itself). The employment of the concept of “something” *presupposes* the conformity of matter with the faculty of cognition, presupposes a logic of actualisation that Kant’s philosophical position does not seem able to maintain. It is also curious that in the following passages, Kant begins to confuse *Dasein* and *Realität* (A714/B752), an amalgam which lets one believe that *Dasein* or the empirical might itself already be conceptual or at least essentially not incompatible with it. More generally the use of “*Sein*” as synonym of *Dasein* or “*das Wirkliche*”, as in the claim “*Sein ist offenbar kein reales Prädikat*”, adds to this ambiguity. *Sein* is at once the object of ontology which limits itself to possible objects (it abstracts from given objects) but also their actual existence. The coherence of the critical project seems to depend upon the non-rigorous extension of the ontological terms beyond their own limits. *Dasein* or the given can only become an “object” because it has already been surreptitiously characterized as “something”.

1.6 Actuality and Existence (in the Critical Philosophy)

In paragraph §76 of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Kant states that the opposition between possibility and actuality results from the peculiar nature of the subject and its faculties of cognition: “It is ineluctably necessary for the human understanding to differentiate between the possibility and actuality of things”.¹⁵¹ This necessity lies in the fact that the subject has

¹⁵¹ “*Es ist unumgänglich, Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit der Dinge zu unterscheiden*” Immanuel Kant. *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Berlin: Deutscher Klassikerverlag, 2009), 5:401, p.315 (Hereafter, *KdU*)

two completely heterogenous (“*zwei ganz heterogene*”) faculties of cognition: understanding for concepts and sensible intuition (space and time) for objects which correspond to these concepts.¹⁵² The concepts relate to the *possibility* of objects, whereas the sensible intuitions give us something (*Etwas*), without, however, being able to cognise it as an object.¹⁵³ If, however, the human understanding were intuitive, it would have no other objects than the actual itself.¹⁵⁴

In his notes on metaphysics, Kant develops further this association between space and time and actuality. He states quite clearly that the “difference between possibility and actuality is located in the connection [“*Verknüpfung*”] with space and time”. He continues by saying that space and time are to be considered “as in themselves necessary and hence as the foundations [“*Grundlagen*”] of all actuality”.¹⁵⁵ Possibility is defined as “a mere relation to our understanding”, the fact of having a concept for something. For Kant this means that “[n]othing is actual because it is merely possible, although everything that is possible can be actual.” Actuality, on the contrary, is said to be “either a connection [*Verknüpfung*] with our fundamental experience [*Grunderfahrung*] space and time, which contain a *primordial actuality* [*eine ursprüngliche Wirklichkeit* – my emphasis]”; or it implies a relation to “an infinite understanding; here, however, an existence is always presupposed.”¹⁵⁶ The second source of actuality, the relation to an infinite understanding, is something that can only be posited hypothetically and has the reassuring and ultimately conservative function of allowing one to entertain the possibility of an essential compatibility or even an identity between

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ “*sinnliche Anschauungen (welche uns etwas geben, ohne es dadurch doch als Gegenstand erkennen zu lassen)*”. Ibid, 5:402, p.315

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ “*Den Unterschied zwischen Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit setzen wir in der Verknüpfung mit Raum und Zeit, welche wir als an sich notwendig, mithin die Grundlagen aller Wirklichkeit ansehen*”. Kant. *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5723 p.335

¹⁵⁶ “*Nichts ist darum wirklich, weil es bloß möglich ist, obzwar alles, was möglich ist, wirklich seyn mag. Denn die Möglichkeit ist ein bloßes Verhältnis zu unserm Verstand, die Wirklichkeit entweder eine Verknüpfung mit unserer Grunderfahrung Raum und Zeit, welche eine ursprüngliche Wirklichkeit enthalten, oder eine Verknüpfung mit einem Unendlichen Verstande; hier wird aber immer eine Existenz vorausgesetzt*.” Kant *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5719, p.334

possibility and actuality. It is in the idea that the actuality of a possibility is secured by means of a “*Verknüpfung*” with space and time, which themselves contain an original or primordial actuality, that one sees all the radicality of Kant’s position. It is here where the critique of actualisation becomes visible, or more precisely, the problematic that leads elsewhere than to a philosophy governed by such a movement. There are no essences or possibilities which tend of themselves towards existence as in Leibniz. Nor is the schema a Hegelian one, where possibility actualises itself of its own accord since its truth is found precisely in its actualisation or concretisation. Kant’s articulation of the relation between actuality and possibility is not at all a question of actualisation but of “*Verknüpfung*”, that is, of linking or binding together.¹⁵⁷ In so far as the staging of the problematic is concerned, it should also be noted that the German for “actualisation”, i.e., “*Verwirklichung*”, is not at all a term that Kant employs. The earliest systematic usage of “*Verwirklichung*” cited by the *Deutsches Textarchiv* seems to be Hegel in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807).¹⁵⁸

But what then is actuality if it is not the actualisation of a concept? What is this original or primordial actuality (“*ursprüngliche Wirklichkeit*”) contained in space and time with which possibility must be bound up for it to become actual? One might think that further clarity regarding the nature of *Wirklichkeit* and the related concept of *Dasein* might be drawn from their systematic articulation in the transcendental analytic of the first *Critique*. However,

¹⁵⁷ See the *Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Verkn%C3%BCpfung> (accessed 27/03/2021) and „*Verknüpfung*“, in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, Erstbearbeitung (1854–1960), digitalisierte Version im Digitalen Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, <<https://www.dwds.de/wb/dwb/Verkn%C3%BCpfung>> (accessed 27/03/2021). Guyer and Wood translate this term as “connection” which covers over somewhat the heterogeneity implied by *Verknüpfung*. See, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, “Glossary” in *Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.764

¹⁵⁸ The sole cited example that precedes Hegel’s use is from a letter by Jean Paul in 1798. See, *Korpustreffer für “Verwirklichung”, aus dem DTA-Korpus des Digitalen Wörterbuchs der deutschen Sprache*, <https://www.dwds.de/r/?q=Verwirklichung&corpus=dt&date-start=1473&date-end=1927&genre=Belletristik&genre=Wissenschaft&genre=Gebrauchsliteratur&genre=Zeitung&format=full&sort=date_asc&limit=50> (accessed 27/03/2021)

Kant's deployment of these two concepts in this section, far from clarifying their nature leads him into certain difficulties.

In Kant's table of categories, the modal concepts are presented as three pairs: possibility – impossibility (*Möglichkeit – Unmöglichkeit*), existence – non-existence (*Dasein – Nichtsein*), and necessity – contingency (*Notwendigkeit – Zufälligkeit*). The spatial presentation, however, seems to accord a certain priority to the modal categories. Philonenko certainly takes this perspective and sees all the other categories as cumulating in the category of necessity which he considers as the “the highest category of the transcendental philosophy”.¹⁵⁹ A strong case could certainly be made for the centrality of the category of necessity; however, for Kant its importance is more of a methodological ideal. The necessity that Kant deploys is never an absolute necessity, only ever a conditioned or “hypothetical” necessity.¹⁶⁰

This spatial presentation of the categories is not, however, accompanied by a discursive explanation. Kant saves himself the trouble of providing the definitions of the categories, although he might very well possess them (he says: “*ob ich gleich im Besitz derselben [d.h. der Definitionen] sein möchte*” (A82/B108)). Since what he is proffering is not a system of pure reason but merely a critique of the latter, these definitions would, he says, distract from the central aspect of the project (A82/B108).¹⁶¹

It is only when one arrives at the “Analytic of Principles [*Grundsätze*]”, or, more precisely, “The postulates of empirical thinking in general”, that Kant explicitly proposes a content for the three concepts which now appear as: possibility (*Möglichkeit*), actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), and necessity (*Notwendigkeit*). This content is as follows:

¹⁵⁹ “*catégorie suprême de la philosophie transcendente*”. Philonenko. *L'Œuvre de Kant ; la philosophie critique*, p.115

¹⁶⁰ Kant, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5755

¹⁶¹ Later in *KdrV*, Kant explicitly says that it is not possible to define these concepts outside of their relation to intuition (A241/B300).

1. That which agrees with the formal conditions of experience (according to the intuition and the concepts) is possible.
2. That which hangs together with the material conditions of experience (sensation), is actual [*wirklich*].
3. That whose connection with the actual is determined according to general conditions of experience is (exists) necessarily (A218/B265-6).¹⁶²

First of all, it should perhaps be noted that, strictly speaking, the above proposition does not offer a definition of *Wirklichkeit* but of *wirklich*. The adjective *wirklich* seems quicker to attach itself to the idea of an “object” or a “something” (of which it would be the adjective), that is to say, to an ontological content, than the substantive *Wirklichkeit* does. An implicit “something”, then, is *wirklich* when it hangs together with the material conditions of experience, that is, with that which is given. Secondly, it might also be noted that the actual is not considered as being essentially in relation to the pure intuitions of space and time, an agreement with the latter is rather a characteristic of possibility.

Further, two problems follow on from these definitions. The first is that they are in a certain sense compromised. The three definitions provided here are entirely *internal* to the critical project, that is to say, they presuppose the success and the validity of this project. These definitions can be said to hold only in so far as the possibility of determining experience in advance by means of the categories can be said to have been proven, or, put otherwise, that a necessary coincidence of the formal and the material conditions of experience can be taken for granted. The second problem is that they do not necessarily clarify retroactively the categories they are supposed to be applying, or if they do so, only

¹⁶² 1. Was mit den formalen Bedingungen der Erfahrung (der Anschauung und den Begriffen nach) übereinkommt, ist möglich.
 2. Was mit den materialen Bedingungen der Erfahrung (der Erfindung) zusammenhängt, ist wirklich.
 3. Dessen Zusammenhang mit dem Wirklichen nach allgemeinen Bedingungen der Erfahrung bestimmt ist, ist (existiert) notwendig.

obscurely. Actuality is related to “the material conditions of experience” i.e., with sensation (“*Empfindung*”) or that which is given. *Wirklichkeit* seems hence bound up with matter. If the principles are supposed to involve the spatio-temporalisation of the categories, that is to say, to articulate the precise nature of their application to objects of experience, what does this mean for the conceptual content of the category “*Dasein*”?

Howard Caygill in his *Kant Dictionary* offers an inventive description of the relation between *Dasein* and *Wirklichkeit* according to which the relation between the two would be a re-inscription of the Aristotelian opposition between *dunamis* and *energeia*.¹⁶³ *Dasein* would be potentiality and *Wirklichkeit*, actuality. One can see the logic of such an interpretation in so far as the transition from the categories towards the principles entails a movement away from the more abstract towards a more concretely existing object. However, Kant repeatedly associates both *Dasein* and *Wirklichkeit* with matter. This reading of *Dasein* is supported by numerous remarks made by Kant: “In the mere concept of a thing, the character of its existence [*Daseins*] is not to be encountered”¹⁶⁴ (A225/B272), *Dasein* is rather “matter”, as that which is given in experience (A723/B751); or as he says in his notes on metaphysics: “we cognise the existence [*Dasein*] of things only through sensation”.¹⁶⁵ In this context, the decision to omit the definitions, at least insofar as *Dasein* is concerned, appears suddenly somewhat suspicious. The meaning of the concept of *Dasein*, far from being a secondary and dispensable detail lies rather at the heart of the critical project since one of the founding problems of the critical philosophy is that of explaining the agreement of objects in their actual existence with our *a priori* concepts. The question that immediately poses itself is the following: if *Dasein* is conceived of as matter or as passing through sensation, can one really say that *Dasein* is conceptual and, if not, by what subterfuge is it included amongst the pure concepts of the understanding?

¹⁶³ Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, p.183.

¹⁶⁴ “*In dem bloßen Begriffe eines Dinges kann gar kein Charakter seines Daseins angetroffen werden*”

¹⁶⁵ “*wir [erkennen] das Daseyn der Dinge durch Empfindung*“. Kant, *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.3761, p.286.

Sensation is for Kant non-conceptual and at almost every stage of his critical undertaking Kant is seen to abstract from the *matter* of experience. Indeed, one of the first conceptual moves he makes in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” is to distinguish between the form and the matter of appearances: “In appearance, I name that which corresponds to sensation, the matter of appearance”, on the contrary, “form” is “that which allows the manifold of appearance to be ordered into certain relations” (A20/B34)¹⁶⁶. This matter, as Kant says near the end of *KdrV* can *only* be given *a posteriori*: “The matter of appearances, through which things in space and time are given to us, can only be represented in perception hence *a posteriori*”¹⁶⁷ (A720/B748). Matter is conceded to experience.

The validity of the application of the distinction between matter and form to intuition is somewhat doubtful to say the least since it is borrowed from the end of the “Amphiboly” which treats the concepts of reflection. The question “*quid juris*” (by what right?) seems just as pertinent here as in the case of the categories, i.e., by what right do I have the concepts of matter and form and by what right do I apply them to appearances? Here, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, these questions are not posed, no schematism is proposed to explain the compatibility between these concepts and appearances. What is more, the opposition between matter and form has a pivotal role in the development of Kant’s argument. The subtle introduction of this conceptual distinction allows Kant to put to one side the *matter* of appearances, as that which is given only *a posteriori* (A20/B34),¹⁶⁸ and to focus instead on the form, i.e., the “pure forms of intuition” which are hence completely *a priori*. The importance of this philosophical move should not be underestimated since it also justifies the introduction of the conceptual distinction between possibility and actuality. The “pure forms of intuition” are also the possibility of appearances and the given matter, their actuality, which

¹⁶⁶ “*In der Erscheinung nenne ich das, was der Empfindung korrespondiert, die Materie derselben, dasjenige aber, welches macht, daß das Mannigfaltige der Erscheinung in gewissen Verhältnissen geordnet werden kann, nenne ich die Form der Erscheinung*”

¹⁶⁷ “*Die Materie der Erscheinungen, wodurch uns Dinge in Raume und der Zeit gegeben werden, kann nur in der Wahrnehmung, mithin a posteriori vorgestellt werden*”

¹⁶⁸ “*...so ist uns zwar die Materie aller Erscheinung nur a posteriori gegeben*”

amounts to an extra-categorial use of the concepts of actuality and possibility. Just as cognition is composed of “two heterogeneous parts [*zwei ganz heterogene Stücke*]”,¹⁶⁹ in appearances there are also “two parts [*zwei Stücke*]” (A723/B751): “the form of intuition (space and time), which can be completely cognised and determined *a priori*” as the first and “the matter (the physical), or the content, which signifies a something which is encountered in space and time, and which hence contains an existence [*ein Dasein*] and corresponds to sensation” as the second.¹⁷⁰

This doubling up of the opposition between possibility and actuality, which is at once presented as an opposition between concepts and intuitions and now seems to be repeated in the relation between pure forms of intuition and sensation, becomes explicit in Kant’s notes: “Space and time give nothing actual. Only sensation provides it”¹⁷¹; or “Pure space is merely potential relation and is represented before things but not as something actual.”¹⁷² Kant hence seems to employ two superimposed or overlapping schemas:

Concept	Intuition	(Matter)
1) Possibility	Actuality	X
2) Possibility	Possibility	Actuality

This fundamental gesture of separating form and matter in intuitions performs a double function for Kant: the isolation of form as pure possibility allows him to abstract from the contingency and instability of actual experience; at the same time, the assumed natural and uncomplicated relation between possibility and actuality, form and matter, allows the

¹⁶⁹ *KdU* 5:401, p.315

¹⁷⁰ “*die Form der Anschauung (Raum und Zeit), die völlig a priori erkannt und bestimmt werden kann, und die Materie (das Physische), oder der Gehalt, welcher ein Etwas bedeutet, das im Raum und Zeit angetroffen wird, mithin ein Dasein enthält and der Empfindung korrespondiert.*”

¹⁷¹ “*Raum und Zeit geben noch nichts wirkliches. Nur die Empfindung giebt an die Hand.*”. *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.4513, p.578

¹⁷² “*Der reine Raum ist blos die potentiale relation und wird vor den Dingen vorgestellt, aber nichts als etwas wirkliches.*”. *Ibid*, n.4512, p.578.

reintroduction of matter as that which conforms of its own account to form. The doubling up of this opposition is a necessity which ensues from the very problematic that Kant is dealing with, that is, the idea that the relation of actuality and possibility is not one of actualisation but rather the relation between two opposed registers. It is only by means of a subtle expansion and retraction of the limits of the opposition between actuality and possibility that Kant manages to simulate a logic of actualisation and hence relate to an actuality that is independent of the concept and yet conforms to it all the same.

In reality, however, as Gilson points out, “the two orders of the actual and the possible are incommensurable”.¹⁷³ It is only in Kant’s notes that one finds a clearly formulated definition of actuality, one not already determined by the subtle introduction of possibility. In note 4298 of Kant’s *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß*, the modal concepts are sketched out in their barest form:

Possibility: the agreement (*non repugnantia*) with a rule; actuality: positing as such; necessity: positing according to a rule.

Möglichkeit: die Uebereinstimmung (non repugnantia) mit einer Regel,

Wirklichkeit: die position schlechthin, Nothwendigkeit: die position nach einer Regel.

The first is thought, without being given. The second, given, without being thought. The third, given, through being thought.

*Das erste wird gedacht, ohne gegeben zu sein. Das zweyte Gegeben, ohne daß es gedacht wird. Das dritte dadurch gegeben, daß es gedacht wird.*¹⁷⁴

Here, with a great deal of philosophical caution and rigour, Kant defines actuality as that which is “given without being thought”. The ontological categories (*Etwas, Objekt,*

¹⁷³ “*les deux ordres du réel et du possible sont incommensurable*”. Gilson, *L’Être et L’essence*, p.10

¹⁷⁴ Kant. *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, p.499-500, n.4298

Gegenstand, and *Ding*¹⁷⁵) which continually find their way into the definitions of *Dasein* or *das Wirkliche* are no longer present. Further, *Wirklichkeit* is here diametrically opposed to possibility, the two are at their most incompatible. The first, given without being thought, is held up against its indifferent opposite, that which is thought without being given. The third category, necessity, presupposes the synthesis between the two: that which is given *in so far as it is thought*. Defined in this way, “necessity” becomes an ideal to which only intellectual intuition could correspond. Kant expands on this further in one of his notes by introducing the distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity. Only an “existence [*Dasein*]” that can be cognised absolutely *a priori* that can be called “absolutely necessary [*absolutnothwendig*]”, one which is cognised “only under a condition [*nur unter einer Bedingung*]” or “*secundum quid a priori*” is merely “hypothetically necessary [*hypothetisch nothwendig*]”.¹⁷⁶

Here one begins to see the limits of Heidegger’s ontological interpretation of Kant. Heidegger wishes to explain *Position* through “*Vorstellen*” i.e., “representation” (or “representing”). As he says: “in representing, we place something before us, so that it, as so placed (posited), stands against us as object.”¹⁷⁷ This allows him to elide the alterity of what is given. The mechanics of this elision are made explicit in Heidegger’s summary of the process of cognising an object. Here, Heidegger doubles up the moments of positing into, firstly, positing as something “being given” in intuition and, secondly, positing as synthesis of the object by the understanding, but he quickly glosses over the first. He starts with the “manifold of representations [*Mannigfaltige von Vorstellungen*]” which are given to us “in the affection through our senses [*in der Affektion durch unsere Sinne*]”. But little attention is accorded to the precise nature of this first moment and Heidegger immediately continues: for the “turmoil

¹⁷⁵ “*Ding*” as it appears in the aforementioned “*Begriff des Dinges überhaupt*”, is an undetermined ontological category whose content remains obscure.

¹⁷⁶ Kant, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5755, p.345.

¹⁷⁷ “*Im Vorstellen stellen wir etwas vor uns, daß es als so Gestelltes (Gesetztes) uns entgegen, als Gegenstand steht*”. Heidegger. *Kants These über Sein*, p.453

[*Gewühle*]” or “the flux of this manifold” to “come to a *standstill* [*zum Stehen kommt*]” and hence for an “object [*Gegenstand*]” to be able to show itself, “the manifold must be ordered, that is, connected up.”¹⁷⁸ Since this “connection”, however, can never be a product of the senses it must come from elsewhere. In Kant’s philosophy, Heidegger says, “all connecting has its origin in the power of representation called understanding and whose fundamental characteristic [*Grundzug*] is positing as synthesis.”¹⁷⁹

The argument here hinges on the application of the ontological category of “object”. For something to be an object at all, it must have a certain stability and coherence or “come to a halt” (“*zum Stehen kommen*”) as Heidegger says, playing on the “*Stand*” in “*Gegenstand*”. It is the presupposition of this formal (and ontological) necessity of stability and coherence which justifies the intervention of the understanding. The “flux of the manifold” is not seen as offering any resistance to the object-form, on the contrary, the basic ontological category of “object” (*Gegenstand*) is seen as having enough authority in itself to explain the conformity of the “flux of the manifold” to its formal requirements (stability and coherence etc.) and hence to justify its own application. Once one has entered the realm of objects (that is, of unity produced through the understanding) one has already imposed an ontological content and prepared the way for a discussion of positing as characterised by judgement. Indeed, this move allows Heidegger to take the propositional form of positing as the principal form: “Positing has the character of a proposition, i.e., of a judgement, through which something is posited before us as something, a predicate attributed to a subject by means of the ‘is’.”¹⁸⁰

From this he concludes that the modal predicates of being cannot come from the object but must rather, as ways of positing, have their origin in subjectivity.¹⁸¹ Yet, as has been seen,

¹⁷⁸ “*Damit das gegebene “Gewühle”, der Fluß dieses Mannigfaltigen, zum Stehen kommt und so ein Gegenstand sich zeigen kann, muß das Mannigfaltige geordnet, d.h. verbunden werden.*” Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ “*Die Verbindung kann jedoch niemals durch die Sinne kommen. Alles Verbinden stammt nach Kant aus derjenigen Vorstellungskraft, die Verstand heißt. Dessen Grundzug ist das Setzen als Synthesis.*” Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ “*Die Position hat den Charakter der Proposition, d.h. des Urteils, wodurch etwas als etwas vorgesetzt, ein Prädikat einem Subjekt durch das „ist“ zugesprochen wird*” Ibid, p.458

¹⁸¹ “*können die Seinsprädikate der Modalität nicht aus dem Objekt stammen, müssen vielmehr als Weisen der Position ihre Herkunft in der Subjektivität haben*”. Ibid, p.469.

actuality precisely does not have its origin in subjectivity, it is rather bound up with the givenness of the object, or as Kant says, “that which is given without being thought”. Heidegger’s claim that “positing and its modalities of existence are determined though thought”,¹⁸² hence, completely misconstrues the problematic at work in Kant’s thought. Heidegger’s reduction of Kant’s discussion of actuality to the title: “being and thought”,¹⁸³ has a conservative function. It reinscribes Kant’s philosophy into a tradition that Kant had begun to show a way out of. The link between “being” and “thought” can only be taken for granted in so far as, in the interpretation of *Sein*, relative positing predominates and covers over the obscure nature of *absolute* positing.

One can begin to see beyond the claim that “everything actual is possible [*Alles Wirkliche ist möglich*]” (A231/B283), that is, beyond the claim that actuality is nothing other than the mere actualisation of what was previously possible. Although Kant at certain points seems to want to follow a logic of actualisation, and indeed much of what Kant seeks to accomplish depends on an identification of actuality and possibility which subordinates the former to the latter, his philosophy in reality separates quite drastically the two notions. The famous example is that of the hundred Talers which appears in Kant’s critique of the ontological proof of the existence of God. Here Kant insists that a hundred actual Thalers do not contain the slightest bit more than a hundred possible Thalers. If the former (the object) were to contain something more than the latter (the concept), then, that would mean that the concept does not express the entire object and is in fact not the adequate concept of the object. Kant, far from closing the gap between the actual and the possible with the claim that “the actual contains nothing more than the mere possible [*das Wirkliche [enthält] nichts mehr als das bloß Mögliche*]”, actually renders it absolute. If one can speak of an identification between the two terms, it is at most an identification of indifference or an identification produced by the incapacity of possibility to represent actuality, as Gilson says: for Kant,

¹⁸² “*Die Position und ihre Modalitäten des Daseins bestimmen sich aus dem Denken*”. Ibid.

¹⁸³ “*Unausgesprochen schwingt so in Kants These über das Sein das Leitwort: Sein und Denken*” Ibid.

“existence is not representable by a concept, nor in the concept”.¹⁸⁴ “*Sein*” is here definitely *outside* of the concept (“*außerhalb meinem Begriffe*”) (A599/B628). One might also wish to point out in passing, as does Gilson, that, even if the conceptual content of actuality is identical to that of possibility, undeniably much changes with the move from a hundred possible Thalers that one can think *to* a hundred actual Thalers that one has in one’s pocket.¹⁸⁵

The ambivalence of the identification between actuality and possibility becomes clear in the following passage:

For the object is in actuality [*bei der Wirklichkeit*] not merely analytically contained in my concept, but rather is synthetically added to my concept. The imagined one hundred Thalers are, however, not increased in the slightest through this being [*Sein*] outside of my concept. (A599/B628)¹⁸⁶

For Kant there is no identity between actuality and possibility, as he says in one of his notes: “From the form of possibility one cannot deduce actuality, but rather from matter”.¹⁸⁷ It is not possibility that, in and of itself, leads necessarily to its own actualisation, its actuality must be secured from elsewhere, as if the two belonged in reality to two different registers: the conceptual and the material. Kant can here be seen as liberating actuality from the concept of possibility, from the logic of actualisation, against his own express intentions. No longer guided and determined in advance by possibility, actuality goes into exile.

Kant himself is not entirely faithful to his own conception of actuality, there is of course too much at stake: not only the certitude of his claims, the success of his project, but pure reason itself and the possibility of freedom seem to begin to tremble in the face of a

¹⁸⁴ “*l’existence n’est représentable ni par un concept, ni dans un concept*”. Gilson. *L’Être et L’essence* p.10

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Kant also remarks this in passing: “*Aber in meinem Vermögenszustande ist mehr bei hundert wirklichen Talern, als dem bloßen Begriffe derselben, (d.i. ihrer Möglichkeit)*” (A599/B627).

¹⁸⁶ “*Denn der Gegenstand ist bei der Wirklichkeit nicht bloß in meinem Begriffe analytisch enthalten, sondern kommt zu meinem Begriffe... synthetisch hinzu, ohne daß, durch dieses Sein außerhalb meinem Begriffe, diese gedachte hundert Taler selbst im mindesten vermehrt werden*”

¹⁸⁷ “*Von der Form der Möglichkeit läßt sich nicht auf die Wirklichkeit schließen, aber wohl von der Materie*” *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.3898, p.333

recalcitrant actuality. Nonetheless, it is in Kant's thought that one begins to see an adumbration of a pure or an independent actuality (an "original actuality" as he says in his notes).

A precursor can be found for the idea of a non-ontological *Wirklichkeit*. According to the *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm* (hereafter, *Grimm*), it is only in the second half of the 17th century that "*Wirklichkeit*" started being used systematically as a synonym for "existence".¹⁸⁸ Here, it comes to mean "veritable existence, reality, perceptible existence, matter-of-factness [*tatsächliche existenz, realität, wahrnehmbares dasein, tatsächlichkeit*]"¹⁸⁹ The earliest example cited is Wolff in 1720 who writes that "the realisation [*erfüllung*] of something possible is just that which we call actuality [*wirklichkeit*]"¹⁹⁰

However, the introduction of "*Wirklichkeit*" as a conceptual term is not without certain difficulties. This, one sees quite clearly in Heinrich Köhler's 1720 translation of Leibniz's *Monadologie* (1714). When Köhler introduces the word "*Wirklichkeit*", the term (both in its substantive and adjectival form) does not seem to be entirely conceptually sufficient and almost always appears accompanied by other explanatory terms. For example, "*êtres*" (beings) is translated by "*Entia oder wirklichen Dinge*" (§8), "*existant*" by "*wirklich vorhanden*" (§32), "*rien d'existant*" by "*nichts wirkliches oder existierendes*" (§42), and "*l'Existence*" by "*die Wirklichkeit oder Existenz*" (§43).¹⁹¹

The concept "*Wirklichkeit*" has a history prior to its employment as a strict synonym of "*Existenz*". It seems first to have been developed as a concept in the context of German medieval mysticism. In the *Grimm*, Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) is cited as one of the earliest

¹⁸⁸ "*Wirklichkeit*" in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/21, <<https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB>>, accessed 21.03.2021.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ "*erfüllung des möglichen ist eben dasjenige, was wir wirklichkeit nennen*". *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ <http://12koerbe.de/phosphoros/leibniz.htm> (Accessed 02/01/2021)

to use this term,¹⁹² which appears in his writings as “*würklichkeit*”.¹⁹³ Indeed, Eckhart is often thought to have invented the term, using it as a way of translating the Latin concept *actualitas*.¹⁹⁴ Eckhart attributes a great deal of importance to *würklichkeit* as well as the corresponding verb (“*würken*” or “*werken*”).¹⁹⁵

Most importantly, Eckhart insists on the *würklichkeit* of God, as do the German mystics in general, saying that “the first cause” is “the utmost actual [*daz aller würklichest*]” in which there is no potentiality (*möglichkeit*), only actuality (*würklichkeit*).¹⁹⁶ In this context, “*Wirklichkeit*” indicates “activity” and above all “God as ‘pure activity’ (*actus purus*)”.¹⁹⁷ If God is pure actuality, then even the being and the remaining the same of things depends on a form of activity.¹⁹⁸ Although God is the cause of being, Eckhart argues that being cannot be attributed to God, that God is in fact above being.¹⁹⁹ He refers to God, who is “creator but not creatable”, rather as pure knowing or intellect which is not reducible to being nor is it a being.²⁰⁰ One of the arguments offered is that, “formally speaking”, nothing can be said to be both in the cause and in the effect produced (“*causato*” lit. “the caused”), if the cause is a

¹⁹² The passage cited comes from a text entitled *Traktat 2; Reden der Unterscheidung*, which according to Niklaus Largier was composed between 1294 and 1298. See Niklaus Largier. “*Kommentar*” in *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate* trans. by E. Benz, K. Christ, B. Decker, H. Fischer, B. Geyer, J. Koch, J. Quint, K. Weiß, A. Zimmerman and ed. by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), p.790

¹⁹³ “*Wirklichkeit*” in *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*.

¹⁹⁴ See, for example, Dieter Sturma, *Vernunft und Freiheit: Zur praktischen Philosophie von Julian Nida-Rümelin* (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), p.281 n.26.; V. Y. Popov, “Realitas vs wirklichkeit: the genesis of the two concepts of western metaphysics” in *Scientific and Theoretical Almanac Grani*, vol. 17 no. 3, (2014), p.16-22; and Udo Kern, *Liebe als Erkenntnis und Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit; „Erinnerung“ an ein stets aktuelles Erkenntnispotential* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), p.220.

¹⁹⁵ Possibility (“*mügelich*”) and actuality (“*würklichkeit*”) are said to be “two sons of reason [*>zwein sünen< der vernünftlichkeit*]”. Meister Eckhart. “*Predigt 37*” in *Werke I; Predigten* trans. by Josef Quint ed. by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), p.402

¹⁹⁶ “*In dem deutschen Mystik heißt die Erste Ursache... „daz aller würklichest“ in dem es keine „mügelichkeit“ (Potenz), nur „würklichkeit“ (Akt) gibt*”. Joseph Bernhart, *Die philosophische Mystik des Mittelalters* (München: Verlag Ernst Reinhart, 1922), p.65.

¹⁹⁷ “*wie das von der Mystik geprägte Wort »Wirklichkeit« meint, als Vorzeichen des Wirkenden, letztlich Gottes als »lauterem Wirken« (actus purus)*”. Dietmar Mieth, “*Einführung: Meister Eckhart – »Mystik« und Lebenskunst*” in *Meister Eckhart; Vom Atmen der Seele* (Reclam: Stuttgart, 2014), p.11

¹⁹⁸ “*Ist Gott... „dú einig wirkende kraft“, die reine würklichkeit (activitas, actualitas), so hängt auch das Sein und Bleiben der Dinge an dem ihnen gemäßen Tätigsein*”. Bernhart, *Die philosophische Mystik des Mittelalters*, p.69.

¹⁹⁹ “*Sic etiam dico quod deo non convenit esse nec est ens, sed est aliquid altius ente*”. Meister Eckhart, “*Quaestio Parisiensis*” in *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate* trans. by E. Benz, K. Christ, B. Decker, H. Fischer, B. Geyer, J. Koch, J. Quint, K. Weiß, A. Zimmerman and ed. by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2008), p.552. (Hereafter, *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate*).

²⁰⁰ “*deus, qui est creator et non creabilis, est intellectus et intelligere et non ens vel esse*”. Meister Eckhart, “*Quaestio Parisiensis*” in *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate*, p.544.

“true cause.” God is the cause of all being, therefore, it follows that, formally speaking, being is not in God.²⁰¹ To say that “God is a being” is false: “God is a being over being, a nothingness over being”.²⁰² God is, hence, a non-being but at the same time is an active cause or a form of activity (*werken*).

The recoding of *Wirklichkeit* as *Dasein* or *Existenz* is a way of expunging the traces of its use by the German mystics and making it conform to a logic of actualisation. At the time, as seen above in the discussion of Wolff and Baumgarten, existence was thoroughly determined by its relation to essence or possibility. It is only by recoding actuality as existence that it becomes compatible with an ontology of possibility. Even if, for Kant mysticism, is an “*Afterphilosophie*” or a “*Schwärmerei*” from which the critical standpoint should be held apart,²⁰³ he still inherits the overdetermined concept of *Wirklichkeit*.

Perhaps through the weight of this inherited concept, an important distinction between *Wirklichkeit* and *Dasein* (or *Sein*) begins to articulate itself in Kant’s thought, against his express intensions. *Dasein* is always the *Dasein eines Dinges* (the existence of a thing). *Wirklichkeit* lets itself be thought without an already determinate, that is to say, possible, object. It is the seemingly more abstract, but in reality, the utmost concrete, “givenness” or “that which is given”. While *Dasein* or being is “the positing of a thing [*die Position eines Dinges*]” and hence is in a certain way determinate, “actuality”, is given the more general title of “positing *per se* [*die position [sic] schlechthin*]”.²⁰⁴ Here, it is important to note that this “positing” is not at all related to a proposition or to the form of judgement but rather more precisely to that which is “given without being thought”. According to this reading, *Dasein* or

²⁰¹ “...in deo non est ens nec esse, quia nihil est formaliter in causa et causato, si causa site vera causa. Deus autem est causa omnis esse. Ergo esse formaliter non est in deo”. Meister Eckhart, “*Quaestio Parisiensis*” in *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate*, p.548.

²⁰² “*Sprich ich och: >Got ist ein wesen< - es ist nit war: Er ist ein vber swebende wesen vnd ein vberwesende nitheit*”. Meister Eckhart, “*Predigt 83*” in *Werke II; Predigten, Traktate*, p.190-1.

²⁰³ Rudolf Eisler, “*Mystik*” in *Kant-Lexikon* <https://www.textlog.de/32525.html> (Accessed online 15/12/2020). See also Immanuel Kant, “Vorrede zu Reinhold Bernhard Jachmanns Prüfung der Kantischen Religionsphilosophie” <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/kant/aa23/465.html> (Accessed 15/12/2020), (13:437)

²⁰⁴ *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.4298

being would be a determination of actuality and the latter would be understood as an indeterminate givenness (*Dasein* is at once more determinate but less immediately concrete). Such a conception of actuality is, however, a little obscure to say the least. Kant offers a further way of conceiving it in another note and at the same time begins to sketch out a way of rethinking the compatibility of actuality and possibility.

In this note, Kant suggests that “actuality” might be understood as a field in which all “things” are formed or as he says “*given [gegeben]*” by means of limitation.²⁰⁵ Kant elucidates his conception of the relation between actuality and the possibility of things given in it by means of the spatial representation of a triangle. The tracing of a triangle, Kant says, is only “possible through the actuality of space [*möglich durch die Wirklichkeit des Raumes*]” since it can only be drawn in so far as space is presupposed. The possibility of this triangle is to be found in the limitation of this space.²⁰⁶ While the possibility (the concept) of each limited thing precedes its actualisation, it does not precede actuality in general but rather presupposes it. Kant draws the conclusion that possibility must be understood as a “derivative concept [*abgeleiteter Begriff*]”. It is not, however, derived from the actuality of an individual thing (that is, being or *Dasein*), but from the larger notion of actuality, which provides the first “*data*” (Kant uses the Latin word meaning “given”) for “things in general [*Dingen überhaupt*]”.²⁰⁷ Notably, we see here the repetition of the concept of “things in general”, which occupies the role of the lower limit of Kant’s ontology. “Things in general” are here said to derive from this original actuality of which they would be mere limitations.

This note ends by pointing toward some kind of a deity: in all limited things, possibility (the concept of the thing) precedes its actuality. However, this is not the not the case for an original being (“*Urwesen*”) (which Kant seems to refer to as a limit-concept

²⁰⁵ *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.4247, p.480.

²⁰⁶ “*seine möglichkeit besteht darin, daß durch Beschränkungen er in diesem Raume leigt*”. Ibid.

²⁰⁷ “*der Wirklichkeit, welche die erste data zu Dingen überhaupt enthalt*”. Ibid.

“*conceptus terminator*”).²⁰⁸ However, Kant’s actuality which, as has been seen, is non-ontological, does not fall back into the domain of theology, which traditionally had existence or, more precisely, necessary existence as its object (showing how contingent existence must presuppose something that necessarily exists). For Kant, God is not actual since it cannot be given (as an object). Hence, actuality occupies a philosophical no man’s land: not theological, not ontological and yet, nonetheless, a necessary foundation for all philosophical thought. For the most part Kant avoids engaging directly with this problematic, the closest he comes is in his “Refutation of Idealism”. It is here that the problem of an actuality not already determined by concepts begins to raise its head.

1.7 Refutation of Idealism

The “Refutation of Idealism” (referred to hereafter as “Refutation”) is added to the second edition of the first *Critique*, introduced into the “Postulates of empirical thought in general” at the end of the section on actuality (B274-9). The placement of the Refutation is not insignificant and can be read as an indication that its content consists in an enlargement of the concept of actuality. This is also supported by the fact that in the various versions of the Refutation, the references to actuality proliferate, whether directly in “the actuality of outer objects [*die Wirklichkeit äußerer Gegenstände*]”, or in its adjectival form as in “actual things [*wirklicher Dinge*]” (B275) or “something actual [*etwas Wirkliches*]” (Bx1). Caygill laments the fact that more “interpretative energy” has been expended on the Refutation, which he refers to as a “polemical discussion”, than on the “systematic account of the postulates which underlies it”.²⁰⁹ The polemical nature of the Refutation, however, does not rule out the fact that something pertaining to the fundament of Kant’s thought can here be gleaned. Indeed, it

²⁰⁸ “*In allen beschränkten Dingen geht die Möglichkeit (ihr Begriff) vor der Wirklichkeit vorher...aber beym Urwesen nicht*”. Ibid.

Comparable to this note is Kant’s claim that *entelecheia* is the first substratum or “entelecheia, *das erste eigenthümliche substratum oder der durch den reinen Verstand zu erkennende Grund aller Erscheinungen. Das übrige ist substantia phaenomenon.*” Kant. *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5288, p.144

²⁰⁹ Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, p.326.

is precisely in the Refutation's restaging of the concepts of modality, that one sees a doubling up of actuality or an actuality which exceeds its own systematic use.

The importance of this section is perhaps already indicated by the fact that Kant, discontent with the form that the Refutation takes and with its somewhat unconvincing argument, obsessively rewrites it: no less than a dozen versions of the Refutation survive.²¹⁰ Indeed, so urgent was the need to reformulate the Refutation that Kant even starts to rewrite it in the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique* (BXL-BXLI n.1). It should also be noted that several of the attempts to rewrite the Refutation were completed in the presence of J. G. Kiesewetter, Clausewitz's teacher. In particular, the notes 6311–6317 are thought to result from Kant's discussions with Kiesewetter, which took place every other day between 11:00 and 12:00²¹¹ in September and October 1790.²¹²

According to Guyer, the argument of the Refutation is the transposition into “an epistemological key” of “an argument in ontology that Kant had made as early as 1755, namely that a substance cannot undergo any change unless acted upon by another substance”.²¹³ Guyer cites Kant's text, *Principiorum Priorum Cognitionis Metaphysicae Nova Dilucidatio* (*New Elucidations of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*), in particular, Proposition XII, (1:410), as the origin of this argument.²¹⁴ Although, as Guyer contends, the context of the Refutation seems to be largely epistemological, the argument, as it appears in the first *Critique* and in its subsequent versions, has nonetheless quite determinate ontological stakes. Indeed, in his argumentation, Kant oscillates between a

²¹⁰ These are the notes: 5653–4, 5709, 6311–16, 6319, 6323, and *Loses Blatt Leningrad I*. Paul Guyer, “Notes on Metaphysics” in *Notes and Fragments* ed. by P. Guyer and trans. by C. Bowman, P. Guyer and F. Rauscher (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), p.74. (Hereafter, Guyer, *Notes and Fragments*). An early version of the argument appears in the note 5348.

²¹¹ Frederick C. Beiser. *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism 1781-1801* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008), p.127

²¹² Ralf M. Bader, “The role of Kant's Refutation of Idealism” in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 94 (1), 53-73, (2012), p.3 n.5

²¹³ Guyer, “Notes on Metaphysics” in *Notes and Fragments*, p.74

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

relative outside derived from a capacity for representation (of space) and an absolute outside which is completely distinct from the subject. This section of the first *Critique* and the argumentation contained therein force Kant to develop further the interrelation between the two forms of intuition, space and time, as well as the relation of these forms to the intuited object (the given). One of the most important things that comes to light in the numerous versions of the “Refutation” is the precarious nature of the forms of intuition.

In the *KdrV*, the “Refutation” takes on what Kant refers to as “material idealism”. Material idealism must of course be understood in opposition to the “transcendental” (or “critical”, as Kant calls it in the *Prolegomena*)²¹⁵ idealism, outlined in the “Transcendental Aesthetic”. For the latter, which Kant presents as his own position, it is only the *forms* of intuition which are to be considered as the products of thought (of a thinking subject), not the matter itself, which is given. It is for this reason that the forms of intuition are said to be empirically real (i.e., to have objective validity in regard to all objects that can be given to the senses), and yet at the same time to be transcendently ideal (i.e., not to have “absolute reality”, to have reality only in so far they are considered to be the *subjective* conditions of sensible intuition) (A35-6/B52).

In the Refutation, material idealism is said to have two strains: the dogmatic and the problematic. The “dogmatic” strain of “material idealism”, which holds the existence of objects outside of us to be “false” and “impossible”, is quickly discarded as having been overcome in the “Transcendental Aesthetic”. The “problematic” variant of material idealism, which asserts only the *incapacity* of proving the existence (“*Dasein*”) of external objects through immediate experience, hence becomes the target of the Refutation. For “problematic” material idealism, the sole empirical affirmation that is considered to be indubitable is the “*Ich bin*”: that is to say, “I am immediately conscious of my own existence (in time)” (B274).

²¹⁵ Immanuel Kant. *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* in Wilhelm Weischedel ed. *Schriften zur Metaphysik und Logik I* 14. Auflage (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 2016), p.254

The existence of external things which seem to be experienced, however, can only be inferred with a great deal of uncertainty since the cause of the appearances of external things might very well reside in ourselves (B276). Kant seeks to refute problematic idealism by showing that the internal experience denoted by the “*Ich bin*” is only possible under the presupposition of external experience²¹⁶ or, as he says a bit further on, “the determination of my existence [*Dasein*] in time is only possible through the existence of actual things [*die Existenz wirklicher Dinge*], that I perceive outside of me”²¹⁷ (B276).

The foundation of the argument of the Refutation is a problem stemming from the nature of time. This is neatly summarised in a note (n.5348) that according to Guyer predates even the first edition of the *KdrV*.²¹⁸ Things at different times are not said to be different things, this is because without the identity or unity of these things, the different times could not be recognised as such. Something persisting must necessarily underlie all change, since it is only this continuity which allows us to compare the different states. If there were pure change no comparison would be possible, and the difference would be imperceptible. Hence, Kant concludes, “the persistence of things underlies temporal succession”.²¹⁹ At the tail end of the note, Kant draws a somewhat unconvincing conclusion: persistence is only possible in space; hence space is what persists. The conclusion is somewhat hasty. Just because space renders persistence possible this does not necessarily mean that space itself persists. The condition of a phenomenon is not to be identified with the phenomenon itself. The complications that this conclusion entails become immediately clear in the following line. Kant remarks that one can only perceive space by means of the things existing in it, hence it is necessarily by means of the *persistence of things* that I recognise space as persisting.²²⁰ The

²¹⁶ “selbst unsere innere, dem Cartesius unbezweifelte, Erfahrung [ist] nur unter Voraussetzung äußerer Erfahrung möglich” (B275)

²¹⁷ “die Bestimmung meines Daseins in der Zeit [ist] nur durch die Existenz wirklicher Dinge, die ich außer mir wahrnehme, möglich.”

²¹⁸ According to Guyer, this note was composed approximately between 1773-78. Guyer, *Notes and Fragments*, p.228

²¹⁹ “Die Beharrlichkeit der Dinge liegt der Zeitfolge zum Grunde”. *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5348, p.158

²²⁰ “Aber das ist immer nur im Raume möglich. Dieser beharrt; ihn aber selbst kan ich nur durch Dinge in ihm (die also auch beharren und an denen ich ihn (als) beharrlich erkenne) wahrnehmen”. *Ibid.*

persistence of space must be presupposed or assumed and, in reality, one is only ever directly concerned with the persistence of *things*.

The conclusion of this note is of the utmost importance, not because of the rigour of the reasoning, the argument does not hold up under closer inspection, but rather because it allows a clear staging of what is at stake in the Refutation, that is, the difficulty of making *possibility* coincide with *actuality*. Further, it is a conclusion to which Kant repeatedly returns and his reasons for doing so are immediately clear: space is not empirical. By locating persistence in the pure intuition of space, the bulwark of the Refutation is safely placed in the realm of the transcendental rather than on the moving ground of the empirical. One has passed through the actual things of experience as vanishing indications of the permanence of space, and arrived at a pure (i.e., *a priori*) form of intuition.

By the time the argument reaches the first *Critique*, it has undergone a few changes. In particular, the problem of representation has come to the fore. Here it runs as follows: I am conscious of my existence (*Dasein*) as determined in time. All time determination presupposes something persisting (*etwas Beharrliches*) in perception. In its first version, the argument continues: this persisting thing ("*dieses Beharrliches*" lit. "this persisting") cannot be something in me since my existence in time is itself determined by its relation to this permanence (that is, it would presuppose something that it is supposed to be the condition of). In the B preface, Kant proposes to rewrite this part of the argument saying that it remains a little obscure (BXXXIX). The section he replaces it with, reads as follows: the intuition of "*dieses Beharrliche*" cannot be encountered within me because all grounds of the determination of my existence which could be found within me are necessarily representations. The problem with this is that representations, as such, need something persistent distinct from them, since it is by means of the relation to this persisting (thing) that their change and hence also the subject's existence in time, within which they change, can be

determined (B275).²²¹ Therefore, and here the original text resumes, the perception of this persistence is possible only through a thing (“*ein Ding*”) outside of me and *not* through the mere *representation* of a thing outside of me (B275).²²²

This is clearly a problematic move and, as far as the critical philosophy is concerned, somewhat dangerous. To posit the relation to a “thing” outside of representation which is, further, qualified with the categorial determination of substance, i.e., as “persisting”,²²³ is most certainly to transgress Kant’s self-imposed critical limits (that is, it is an extra-categorial use of the categories). The only persisting thing, Kant says, that can be placed as intuition under the concept of substance is matter and here the persistence of matter (which is, as has been seen, another word for *Dasein*) is said not to be derived from outer experience but to be “presupposed” as “a necessary condition of all time determination” (B278). Philonenko interprets the “matter” which Kant wishes to consider as the intuition for the concept of substance as the “totality [*ensemble*] of appearances considered as a constant nature in conformity with laws”.²²⁴ However, as the totality of appearances cannot be experienced, Philonenko modifies accordingly his interpretation to “the totality of a system of appearances” or speaks of “relatively closed physical systems”.²²⁵

Here Philonenko misses what is at stake. What Kant wants, and what is necessary for the argument to be coherent, is something that is *really* (or *actually*) outside of us and not just represented as such by means of the pure intuition of space.²²⁶ He frequently repeats that, although some representation might be false or deceptive, i.e., might not relate to an actual

²²¹ “[*Vorstellungen*] bedürfen, als solche, selbst ein von ihnen unterschiedenes Beharrliches, worauf in Beziehung der Wechsel derselben, mithin mein *Dasein* in der Zeit, darin sie wechseln, bestimmt werden könne”

²²² “Also ist die Wahrnehmung dieses Beharrlichen nur durch ein *Ding* außer mir und nicht durch die bloße Vorstellung eines Dinges außer mir möglich”

²²³ See, for example, A144/B183, where Kant says: “Das Schema der Substanz ist die Beharrlichkeit des Realen in der Zeit”.

²²⁴ “ensemble des phénomènes considérés comme une nature constante d’après des lois”. Philonenko. *L’œuvre de Kant*, p.208

²²⁵ “l’ensemble d’un système des phénomènes”, “des systèmes physiques relativement clos”. Ibid. p.210, 209

²²⁶ Cf. Note 5653, where Kant says that the representation of persistence cannot be grounded on the mere illusion of something persistent outside of us (“[*die bloße*] *Einbildung* eines Beharrlichen ausser uns”) since “an illusion, for which no corresponding object can be given, is impossible [*eine Einbildung ist unmöglich, der kein correspondirender Gegenstand gegeben werden kan*]”. Kant, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5706, p.332.

object, as in “dreams” or “madness”, they must ultimately be derived from *the actuality of external objects*. Representations of things are said to come from outer perceptions which are “only possible through the actuality of outer objects” (B278).²²⁷

It should be noted that here the argument of the Refutation runs up against the claims of the *Erläuterung* (§7) of the Transcendental Aesthetic, which also responds to problematic material idealism (immediate certitude of one’s own inner experience, doubtful experience of outer objects). Here, Kant says quite explicitly that the objects of both inner and outer sense are merely appearances and, as such, it is only “their actuality as representations [*ihre Wirklichkeit als Vorstellungen*]” which is not to be disputed. This is because, in the Transcendental Aesthetic, it is important to establish the forms of intuition as stable and certain. In the Refutations of Idealism, however, it is precisely these forms which begin to appear as more precarious in nature.

Kant says at one point that the “representation” of persistence “cannot be inferred but must be original”.²²⁸ An original or primordial (*ursprünglich*) representation would seemingly allow Kant to refute idealism without extending beyond his own critical limits, however, this original representation presupposes itself the relation to an actual object. Ultimately, to escape the accusation of idealism, Kant seems to have need of what he calls an “original passivity” (“*Ursprüngliche Passivität*”).²²⁹ Yet this “original passivity” seems very dangerous for the stability of the critical project, since a real passivity would entail not being able to be certain of the agreement of the objects with the *a priori* form of time.

In some of the later versions of the Refutation, this gets translated into the question of the *construction* of time. Time is not something which is merely presupposed, a mute and stable form that given objects must simply conform to but rather must itself be produced in

²²⁷ “*welche...nur durch die Wirklichkeit äußerer Gegenstände möglich sind*”. See also, for example, *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil*, n.5653, p.307, p.310; n.5706, p.332; n.6312, p.613; n.6313, p.613 etc.

²²⁸ “*diese Vorstellung kan nicht geschlossen, sondern muß ursprünglich seyn*”. Ibid, n.5653, p.309.

²²⁹ Ibid, n.5653, p.307

relation to these objects. This is most visible in note 6312, written in the company of Kieseletter. Here Kant says: “We need space so as to construct time and we determine the latter by means of the former”.²³⁰ When Kant says space, however, what he means, more precisely, is *persistence* or the persistence of things: “[i]t is only in space that we can posit that which persists”. Time, on the contrary, is characterised by “ceaseless change.”²³¹ Since all representations are already caught up in this ceaseless change, it is only the things outside of us, which can offer the necessary resistance to ground the construction of time.

At one point during these refutations Kant states that “we only ever cognise our existence in time in *Commercio*”.²³² This is an important shift in his argument. With this claim he moves away from relation to some presupposed underlying substance and more towards the relation to the empirical or that which is given. “*Commercio*” is a reference to the category of “community”, and hence implies continual relations of mutual causality. Whereas the category of substance, acts as metaphysical unity, a stability that must be presupposed (can never be drawn from experience), the category of community seems to imply a descent into the empirical: it is only in so far one is constantly affected by external objects that it is possible to construct time.²³³

The problematic of the externality of the object is something which gets quickly resolved by the idealist reading of Kant. Once the interpretative weight has been put firmly on the side of the subjective or conceptual activity, the problem of the correspondence of the object (as given) with the concepts, loses all importance. This correspondence is orchestrated

²³⁰ “Wir brauchen den Raum, um die Zeit zu construiren, und bestimmen also die letztere vermittelst des ersteren” Ibid, n.6312, p.613

²³¹ “Denn im Raume allein setzen wir das Beharrliche, in der Zeit ist unaufhörlicher Wechsel”. Ibid, n.5653, p.307

²³² “hieraus scheint zu folgen, daß wir unser Dasein in der Zeit nur immer im *Commercio* erkennen”. Ibid, n.6311.

²³³ It is true that the two categories employ the term “substance” in their definitions, however, the two uses are quite incompatible. The “substance” in the first of the three categories of relation, “Inherence and Subsistence”, must necessarily be unique since there can only be one substance which persists as the same beneath all change and by means of which change is first of all perceived (two different states can only be put in relation and understood as implying change if there is an fundamental unity allowing comparison). The third category of relation, ‘Community’, posits numerous different substances which entertain relations of mutual causality with each other, which clearly contradicts the first use (A182/B224-A218/B265).

in advance by means of a primacy accorded to the subjective or the conceptual activity. For the idealist, the object is always already conceptual. Against this reading, Kant's perhaps overly faithful student, Kiesewetter, preserves the externality of the object in his articulation of the fundamental problematic of the critical philosophy. The following chapter examines more closely the reading of Kant that he develops. Although Kiesewetter does not cede to the idealist temptation of collapsing the object into the concept, he does not fully examine the consequences of not doing so. Rather, the problematic of the externality of the object is transmitted to Clausewitz, unthought. It is above all in the Kantian notions of "material truth", which Clausewitz inherits from Kiesewetter, and "*Sinn und Bedeutung*" (sense and significance), which might come from a direct familiarity with Kant's texts, that Clausewitz begins to encounter the problem of the externality of actuality.

Second Chapter: Kiesewetter's Transmission of the Kantian Legacy

2.1 Kiesewetter and the Externality of the Object

2.2 Theory and Praxis or *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst*

2.3 *Wissenschaft* and the Criteria of Formal and Material Truth

2.4 The Actuality of War (Combat as *Sinn und Bedeutung*)

It is above all by means of Kiesewetter's teachings that Clausewitz encounters Kant's thought. This chapter will hence examine in detail the particular interpretation of Kant's philosophy that appears in Kiesewetter's lectures and published texts. While seemingly remaining more faithful to Kant and the critical project than the more violent idealist interpretations, Kiesewetter commits his own act of betrayal. This act of betrayal remains, however, unthematized in his own thought. Greatly influenced by the problematic sketched out in the refutations of idealism, Kiesewetter insists upon the externality of the object (and hence also the externality of actuality) in his reading of Kant without realising the incompatibility of this interpretation with the claims to stability, certitude, and purity that the critical philosophy makes. It is only once one reaches Clausewitz's thought that one begins to see a drawing out of the consequences of this interpretative decision. This chapter will devote much time to Clausewitz's ultimately abandoned attempt to employ a Kantian terminology (in particular, the notions of "formal and material truth" and "sense and significance") as means for understanding war. This failure leads into Clausewitz's mature thought according to which the actuality of war cannot be reduced to the concept of war. This active thematization of a *non-conceptual* actuality completely changes the position from which philosophy is done.

2.1 Kieseewetter and the Externality of the Object

The importance and the precise nature of Kieseewetter's influence on Clausewitz remains largely unexplored.²³⁴ Although Kieseewetter is often mentioned as playing a role in Clausewitz's intellectual development, he is usually overshadowed by figures more important in the history of military thought (for example Gerhard von Scharnhorst). As a result, the importance of the version of Kant's critical philosophy that Kieseewetter is responsible for transmitting has not received a great deal of attention. As shall be seen, an investigation of his role in this transmission will show clearly that Clausewitz is occupied with a re-articulation of certain Kantian problematics and will allow greater precision regarding the manner in which he does so.

Originally Kieseewetter studied philosophy under L. H. Jakob and J. A. Eberhard at the university of Halle. Notably, one of Eberhard's texts, *Vorbereitung zur natürlichen Theologie* (1781), was a great source of inspiration for Kant, the latter annotating his own personal copy quite thoroughly.²³⁵ It was also with Eberhard that Kant later entered into dispute in the text *Über eine Entdeckung nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* (1790). Jakob wrote what is considered to be the first book on logic based on Kantian principles: *Grundriß der allgemeinen Logik und kritische Anfangsgründe der allgemeinen Metaphysik* (1788) (seemingly prefiguring Kieseewetter's own work) and translated Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. It was in Jakob's lectures that Kieseewetter first encountered the critical philosophy.²³⁶

²³⁴ Some of the few exceptions to this being: Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2007) and Howard Caygill, "Clausewitz and Idealism" and *On Resistance*.

²³⁵ These notes are collected in "6206-6310: *Bemerkungen Kants in seinem Handexemplar von Eberhards Vorbereitung zur natürlichen Theologie*" in *Metaphysik, zweiter Theil* p.489-606.

²³⁶ "Johann Gottfried Karl Christian Kieseewetter (1766-1819)" in *The Dictionary of Eighteenth Century German Philosophers*, 3 vols., edited by Manfred Kuehn and Heiner Klemme (London/New York: Continuum, 2010) <https://users.manchester.edu/FacStaff/SSNaragon/Kant/bio/fullbio/kieseewetterjgkc.html> (accessed October 20, 2020).

Kiesewetter, unlike certain other readers of Kant at the time, was not interested in pursuing a re-grounding of the critical philosophy. He saw his own role more as one of clarification and explanation. He even at times took it upon himself to defend publicly the Kantian philosophy against its critics, in particular, Herder.²³⁷ As a student, although he only studied in Königsberg for two semesters, he was very close to Kant and often acted as his amanuensis and proof-reader. For example, the first introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* was in his hand and it was also Kiesewetter who corrected the draft of the completed text. During his lifetime, he was best known for his vulgarisations of Kant's thought and his texts on general logic (also heavily inspired by Kant). The logical texts had a surprisingly large influence and numerous republications and reeditions of his works were demanded. Kiesewetter's logic even finds its way into Tolstoy's short story "The death of Ivan Ilyich".²³⁸

As Howard Caygill notes, Kiesewetter actively seeks to establish his legitimacy as a disciple of Kant. He dedicates one of his major works, *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen*, to Kant, whom he refers to as his "teacher and father [Lehrer und Vater]" and claims that the text was composed partially under Kant's supervision.²³⁹ The attempt at establishing legitimacy backfired somewhat and Kant considered his student's work to be too close to his own. Kiesewetter's *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* was heavily based upon Kant's lectures on logic, so much so that, in 1791 after the publication of this text, Kant even accused Kiesewetter of plagiarism.²⁴⁰ Kiesewetter writes to Kant in July 1791 to try and clarify the situation which he characterises as a mere "misunderstanding".²⁴¹

²³⁷ See, for example, J. G. Kiesewetter, *Prüfung der Herderschen Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin: bei C. Quen, 1977).

²³⁸ <https://users.manchester.edu/FacStaff/SSNaragon/Kant/bio/fullbio/kiesewetterjgkc.html>

²³⁹ Caygill, "Clausewitz and Idealism", p.415.

²⁴⁰ See Kiesewetter's letter on 3rd July 1791 (11:266-9) in *Briefwechsel* <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/kant/aa11/266.html> (Accessed 4th December 2020).

²⁴¹ *Ibid* (11:267). In this same letter, Kiesewetter details more precisely the origin of the *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* and the direct influence that Kant had upon it:

One of the most striking differences between Kiesewetter and the post-Kantians belonging to the tradition of German Idealism is that he does not commit as wholeheartedly to the idea of freedom. Kiesewetter does not of course completely reject this idea: the first text he published was on moral philosophy, *Ueber den ersten Grundsatz der Moralphilosophie*, and his other texts are occasionally punctuated by slightly dogmatic reflections on morality. He claims for instance that the “highest end of humankind [is] morality”²⁴² in his text on applied logic and in his *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung der wichtigsten Wahrheiten der kritischen Philosophie für Uneingeweihte*, he cites the moral feeling which manifests itself so strongly in everyone (“*das moralische Gefühl, was in jedem so stark spricht*”)²⁴³ as a valid counterargument against scepticism. Despite this early text and the occasional remarks which appear in his other works, Kiesewetter does not invest much energy in the development of the idea of freedom and he certainly does not let it occupy the theoretical centre of his work. His treatises on general logic remain just that and do not let themselves be guided by or subordinated to the movement of freedom, as is the case in Hegel’s thought, for example.

In his writings on Kant’s theoretical philosophy, there are no great innovations, though some perhaps unintentional deviations. Important for this thesis is that Kiesewetter’s understanding of the three concepts of modality does not stray too far from Kant’s own. This one sees in the second part of his *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* which treats of applied logic. Following quite exactly Kant’s description of the modal categories, Kiesewetter says: “[w]hen the understanding thinks an object according to the conditions of our cognition,

“Ich arbeitete noch in Königsberg den größten Theil der Hefte zu diesen logischen Vorlesungen aus, las Ihnen mehremal Stücke derselben zur Beurtheilung vor, und Sie waren so gütig, sich mit mir darüber zu unterhalten und meine Vorstellungen zu berichtigen, dis war z. B. der Fall bei der Eintheilung der Begriffe nach den Tafeln der Kategorien, bei der Eintheilung der Schlüsse in Verstandesschlüsse, in Schlüsse der Urtheilskraft und der Vernunft u.s.w., ja Sie waren so gütig mir Materialien zu einer Einleitung in die Logik zu dictiren.” (11: 267)

²⁴² The “*höchste Zweck der Menschlichkeit überhaupt*” is “*die Sittlichkeit*”. J. G. C. C. Kiesewetter, *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen: Zweiter Theil, welcher die angewandte allgemeine Logik enthält* (Berlin: F. T. Lagarde, 1806), (§23)

²⁴³ J. G. C. C. Kiesewetter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung der wichtigsten Wahrheiten der kritischen Philosophie für Uneingeweihte* (Berlin: Bei Wilhelm Oehmigke dem Jüngeren, 1803), p.23. (Hereafter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung...*)

then we cognise the object as possible; if the object is given in intuition, then it is actual.”²⁴⁴

An object and the cognition thereof are “necessary” when “its actuality is given through its possibility”.²⁴⁵

A result of Kieseewetter’s insistence on following Kant’s texts to the letter is that he remains impervious to the attempt to totally subordinate the category of actuality to the category of possibility, which, according to Howard Caygill, is one the central characteristics of the “idealist reading of Kant”.²⁴⁶ Caygill sees this reading, which he says starts with “Kant himself at certain moments” and then is further developed by Fichte, Schiller, and Hegel, as taking as its point of departure the “predicament of a relation to the world as the realm of possibilities”. This interpretation of Kant is above all guided by the problem of freedom, of a subject that is “ultimately free with respect to the sum of appearances”.²⁴⁷ For the idealists, these appearances “do not have to be, or remain, as we *find* them: they are not fixed and necessary but can be changed by our exercise of freedom that is but the other side of their being the realm of possibility”.²⁴⁸ This problematic remains foreign to Kieseewetter.

Caygill goes so far as to claim that in Kieseewetter’s exegesis of Kant one even finds a privileging of the category of actuality.²⁴⁹ The principal support cited for this reading is Kieseewetter’s repeated use of the term “*Aktus*” (“act”). Indeed, Caygill imputes a great deal of importance to the idea expressed in Kieseewetter’s *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen* that “concepts are brought forth by means of an act of the

²⁴⁴“Wenn der Verstand einen Gegenstand den Bedingungen unserer Erkenntnis gemäß denkt, so erkennen wir den Gegenstand als möglich; wird der Gegenstand nun in der Anschauung gegeben, so ist er wirklich”. J. G. C. C., Kieseewetter, *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen: Zweiter Theil, welcher die angewandte allgemeine Logik enthält* (Berlin: F. T. Lagarde, 1796), p.282

²⁴⁵ “Notwendig aber ist ein Gegenstand und seiner Erkenntnis, wenn die Wirklichkeit derselben durch die Möglichkeit gegeben wird”. Ibid, p.282-3.

²⁴⁶ Caygill, “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.413.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p.414.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p.414.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p.415.

understanding”.²⁵⁰ Through this act “a manifold is combined into a unity”.²⁵¹ Here, it should be noted that the “manifold” in question is not Kant’s “manifold of appearances”, which implies an actual or empirical content (A20/B34), but rather just a plurality of “characteristics”. Kieseewetter prays the reader to carefully distinguish between the modality of concepts and the modality of cognition,²⁵² for it is only in the latter where it is a question of actuality in the more conventional sense, that is, as involving a relation to an object given in intuition.²⁵³

Caygill reads this concept producing “act” as implying a doubling up of the concept of actuality since the three modal concepts, possibility, actuality, and necessity, seem also to presuppose this primary “act”: “*Aktus*”, Caygill affirms, is at once a “discrete concept – it is one of the modal concepts – and the condition of possibility of all concepts, including itself”.²⁵⁴ It should be noted, however, that Kieseewetter himself does not put any particular emphasis on this “*Aktus*”, which seems for him just to be an activity or function of the understanding. Kieseewetter also refers to it as a “*Handlung*” (“action”),²⁵⁵ which in German connotes less immediately the idea of actuality. Further, “*Schließen*” (to infer), through which one deduces the truth or the falsity of a judgement through others, is also described as an *Aktus*: it is, Kieseewetter says, “an act of autonomy [*ein Aktus der Selbsttätigkeit*]” or “an operation of the understanding [*eine Operation des Verstandes*]”.²⁵⁶ It is quite possible that the source of the idea that the concepts are produced by an “act” of the understanding is to be

²⁵⁰ “*Begriffe werden durch einen Aktus des Verstandes hervorgebracht*” J. G. C. C. Kieseewetter, *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen zum Gebrauch für Vorlesungen begleitet mit einer weitern Auseinandersetzung für diejenigen die keine Vorlesungen darüber hören können* (Frankfurt und Leipzig 1793), p. xxiv, §61. (Hereafter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793)). See, Caygill in “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.416.

²⁵¹ “[*Dieser Aktus verknüpft*] *Mannigfaltiges in eine Einheit*”. Kieseewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), p.56 (ad §60). Quoted by Caygill in “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.416.

²⁵² “*Ich bitte den Leser, was über die Modalität der Begriffe gesagt wird, nicht mit der Modalität der Erkenntnis zu verwechseln*”. Kieseewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), p.56-7, ad §60.

²⁵³ He says that “cognition becomes actual when the representation corresponds to an object, i.e., when the concept is represented in an intuition” (“*eine Erkenntnis*] *wird wirklich, wenn der Vorstellung ein Gegenstand entspricht, d.h. wenn der Begriff in einer Anschauung dargestellt wird*”). Kieseewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), p.57, ad §60

²⁵⁴ Caygill “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.416.

²⁵⁵ *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), §89, p.xxxv

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* §101, p.xl

found in a section in the first *Critique*. Here, Kant claims that “the principles of modality say nothing of a concept but the action [*Handlung*] of the faculty of cognition through which it is generated” (A234/B287).²⁵⁷

In his lecture notes Kiesewetter clarifies the understanding’s act of unifying by means of the law of non-contradiction: “A concept is possible if its characteristics can be combined in the unity of consciousness, if the characteristics that should be linked, do not contradict one another.”²⁵⁸ Further, he does not explicitly formulate the relation between *Aktus* and modal categories as being a doubling up of the category of actuality. Indeed, the three concepts of modality, in the context of a discussion of *logic*, seem rather to be understood as meta-concepts, as modalities of this *Aktus* itself, and not necessarily as produced by this *Aktus*. As Caygill himself shows, this “act” is said to be either possible, actual, or necessary: “The understanding can undertake such an act, has undertaken it or must undertake it”.²⁵⁹

The major difficulty in the attempt to read Kiesewetter’s “*Aktus*” as leading to a privileging of actuality, is that, although it might be said to bring forth the concepts, it does not produce the *understanding* itself: it is an act *of* the understanding. It hence remains subordinated to a faculty or capacity (*Vermögen*) which, conceptually, is bound up with an idea of possibility or potentiality (to have a capacity means to be *able* to do something). Kant himself explicitly draws a parallel between capacity and potentiality in one of his notes on metaphysics (n.3584), where he offers “capacity” as a possible translation of “*potentia*”.²⁶⁰ Further, this “act” is subordinated not just to any faculty but the faculty of *possibility* itself. In

²⁵⁷ “Die Grundsätze der Modalität also sagen von einem Begriffe nichts anders, als die Handlung des Erkenntnisvermögens, dadurch er erzeugt wird.”

²⁵⁸ “Ein Begriff ist möglich, wenn seine Merkmale sich in einer Einheit des Bewußtseins vereinigen lassen, die Merkmale, die verknüpft werden sollen, sich nicht widersprechen”. Kiesewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), p.57, (ad §62)

²⁵⁹ “Der Verstand kann einen solchen Aktus vornehmen, oder hat ihn vorgenommen, oder muß ihn vornehmen” Kiesewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), xxiv, (§61). Quoted by Caygill in “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.416.

²⁶⁰ “*Vermögen und Kraft, Potentia – actus.*

Die Kraft handelt, das Vermögen nicht“ Kant, *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.3584 p.72

this sense, the claim that, in Kieseewetter's thought, the "predicament of actuality" precedes the problem of possibility, becomes less convincing.

It is this interpretation of Kieseewetter which underlies Caygill's stronger claim that there is an "idealism" of actuality in Clausewitz's thought.²⁶¹ Yet the concept of *Aktus* does not at all seem to be in agreement with Kant's more fundamental description of actuality as "that which is given". The latter cannot at all be reduced to a form of possibility. As has been seen, for Kant actuality was the last bulwark against material idealism and names precisely the externality of the object. Nonetheless, the idea that there is in fact a form of idealism in Clausewitz's thought is not false, but it is to be found elsewhere than in the modal concept of actuality. As shall be shown further on, it is *strategic* idealism which is ultimately proposed by Clausewitz as being more capable of securing and determining the relation to actuality than the transcendental (or critical) variant developed by Kant.

Kieseewetter himself does not sketch out a philosophy of actuality as such, this term remains largely unthematized in his work. However, one of the things that he does insist upon, and in this he differs quite dramatically from the radically idealist interpretations of Kant at the time, is the stark distinction between sensibility and understanding. For the idealists the division between sensibility and understanding cannot hold since a purely passive non-conceptual sensibility, which allows something to be given, seems to bring with it the problematic and non-critical idea of the thing in itself as the cause of appearances.²⁶² Fichte rejects Kant's receptivity and his concept of the thing in itself at the same time. He sees the subject's spontaneity, that is, its "conceptual faculty", as going deep into the faculty of "receptivity", so much so that for Fichte, "receptivity can receive nothing that does not have something like a conceptual formation already in it".²⁶³ Similarly for Hegel, sensation is just

²⁶¹ Caygill, "Clausewitz and Idealism", p.412-3

²⁶² Beiser. *German Idealism*, p.244

²⁶³ Terry Pinkard, "Fichtean Idealism" in M. N. Forster and K. Gjesdal ed. *The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.237

an abstract concept, the most abstract universal.²⁶⁴ One of the consequences of this critique of Kant is that actuality gets reinscribed as definitively conceptual.

For Kieseewetter this distinction is of the utmost importance and precisely because it brings with it the relation to something *exterior*. Further, one sees in Kieseewetter's formulation of this division traces of the refutation of idealism. This appears quite clearly in his description of cognition. "Cognition," he says, "only takes place when representation is related to an actual object".²⁶⁵ The relating of a representation to an object, he describes as

the representation of something, which is both distinct from the human itself (from the one who represents, the subject of representation) as well from the representation which belongs to and is found within [the subject]²⁶⁶

Whereas this problematic remained to a large degree unresolved in Kant's thought, Kieseewetter seems to take for granted that cognition relates to an object *distinct* from representation. For Kieseewetter, it is above all by means of a form of passivity or even impuissance in relation to certain representations that let us know that they cannot be derived from the subject. Kieseewetter writes that, "[i]n the case of a representation"

where I become conscious, that I can neither bring it forth nor modify it at will, I look for the ground of this representation not merely in me, but rather I derive it from something outside of me, from an object. Therefore, I affirm that through such a representation, I obtain knowledge of the object.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p.82, p.92

²⁶⁵ "Erkenntnis...findet nur statt, wo die Vorstellung auf einen wirklichen Gegenstand bezogen wird". Kieseewetter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung*, p.32.

²⁶⁶ "die Vorstellung von Etwas, was so wohl von ihm [d.h. vom Mensch] selbst, (dem Vorstellenden, Subjekt der Vorstellung) als von seiner Vorstellung, die ihm angehört, in ihm sich findet, unterschieden ist". Ibid, p.32.

²⁶⁷ "Bei den Vorstellungen..., wo ich mir bewusst [sic] werde, dass ich sie weder durch meine Willkühr [sic] hervorbringen noch abändern kann, suche ich den Grund zu dieser Vorstellung nicht blos [sic] in mir, sondern ich leite sie von Etwas außer mir, von einem Gegenstand ab, und daher behaupte ich auch, durch eine solche Vorstellung, Erkenntnis des Gegenstandes zu erhalten." Kieseewetter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung*, p.33

It is precisely the idea that the representation is not completely at the disposal of the will of the subject that permits the deduction that it has an external origin. A representation that does not let itself be created and modified as pleases the subject, which, in a certain respect, imposes its own independent necessity and rhythm, must have its origin in an object outside of the subject.

The independence and externality of the object is identified by Kiesewetter in the existence of things in themselves (“*das Dasein der Dinge an sich*”). Although, he says “we must admit the existence of things in themselves as internal grounds of objects, we can say nothing positive about them.” As far as they are concerned, “we know quite well *that something* exists, but not *what* exists.”²⁶⁸

The thesis of the externality of the object plays an important part in Kiesewetter’s understanding of the two principal faculties involved in cognition, understanding and sensibility. Although his presentation of the distinction between concepts and intuitions does not in itself diverge greatly from Kant’s own,²⁶⁹ Kiesewetter’s description of the how intuition functions is, on the other hand, a little more controversial. He says that “[o]bjects provide actual cognition, when they imprint themselves on our sensibility, when we intuit them and through our understanding elevate the intuition by means of a concept to cognition”.²⁷⁰ Objects come from the outside and “imprint” themselves on sensibility (“*auf unsere Sinnlichkeit einen Eindruck machen*”). Kiesewetter further explicates the nature of this “imprint” or “impression” in a way which draws out the subtle but disastrous, at least as far as the

²⁶⁸“*Ob wir gleich das Dasein der Dinge an sich als die innern objektiven Gründe zu gestehen müssen, so können wir doch von diesen Dingen nichts positives aussagen*” wir wissen wohl daß etwas existire, aber nicht was existirt”. Ibid., p.151

²⁶⁹ Intuition is said to be “immediate” and “singular”: it relates immediately to an object and can only represent *one* object. The concept, on the contrary, is “mediate” and “general”: its representations relate to objects only by means of intuition and they represent many objects at the same time. Kiesewetter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung*, p.39-40

²⁷⁰ “[*Gegenstände*] geben wirkliche Erkenntnisse, wenn sie auf unsere Sinnlichkeit einen Eindruck machen, wenn wir sie anschauen, und durch unsern Verstand die Anschauung vermittelst eines Begriffs zur Erkenntnis erheben” Kiesewetter, *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung*, ad §159 und §160, p.410

intentions of the critical project are concerned, deviation of his position from Kant's own.

“An imprint [*Abdruck*]”, he says,

is the product of the sealing wax and the signet, both have participated [*mitgewirkt*] towards it; in a similar way our perceptions are products of the senses and the active object, both participate in them.²⁷¹

Here, time and space (or the senses) are quite clearly both *active* and *passive* at the same time, which is of course an unfaithful but not unjustified interpretation of Kant. That is to say, it is unfaithful to Kant's intentions, to what Kant wants space and time to do. It seems, however, to follow more closely what they *actually* do. Perceptions are said to be a product both of the senses and of the acting object (“*einwirkenden Gegenstandes*”), both are said to participate or to work together (*mitwirken*). This seems further to introduce into the process a concept of resistance between the object and the forms imposed upon it. The metaphor chosen, which seems to be a variation of the Aristotelian metaphor,²⁷² leans in this direction as well. It is only the resistance of the sealing wax which allows it to take on the form of the signet.

Kiesewetter's interpretation draws light to the absurdity of the position that Kant wants to hold. Kant would like both the matter and the forms of intuition to be passive. The passivity of the forms of intuition permits an *immediate* relation to that which is given, this means that Kant is not obliged to cut the link with the outside of the subject (further, it is this desire which fuelled his ceaseless attempts to refute idealism). The passivity of matter means that that which is given merely receives the forms imposed upon it without offering any kind

²⁷¹ “*Der Abdruck ist das Produkt aus dem Siegelack und Petschaft, beide haben dazu mitgewirkt; auf ähnliche Weise sind unsre Wahrnehmungen Produkte des Sinns und des einwirkenden Gegenstandes, und beide haben dazu mitgewirkt.*” Ibid, p.45

²⁷² Aristote, *De l'âme* trans. R. Bodéüs (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), II, 12

of resistance. In a certain sense the passivity of matter in Aristotle's thought is a little more coherent in so far as he conceives of matter as pure potentiality. Matter for Kant, however, is as has been seen *actuality*. In so far as it is understood as "that which is given", actuality does not couple itself easily with a notion of passivity. The "given" ("*das Gegebene*") or the fact of *being given* already implies a form of activity or action (an act).

What Kiesewetter ultimately transmits to Clausewitz is the idea of the *externality* of the object, or more precisely, *the externality of that which is actual*. However, the consequences of the idea of this externality are not rigorously thought through in his own philosophy. For Kiesewetter, the externality of actuality is still absolutely compatible with the claims and intentions of the critical philosophy. As shall be seen, it is above all in the notion of material truth that Kiesewetter transmits this unresolved problematic.

2.2 Theory and Praxis or *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst*

It is between 1801 and 1804 at the Berlin military academy for young officers, where Kiesewetter was lecturing on logic and mathematics, that Clausewitz first encounters Kant's thought. So enthralled was Clausewitz by Kiesewetter's teaching that he decided deepen his study of Kant by additionally following Kiesewetter's lectures on the critical philosophy at the *Pépinière*, a Prussian academy for army surgeons, also located in Berlin.²⁷³ Werner Hahlweg also mentions that Clausewitz followed Kiesewetter's lectures after the war against France in 1806/7.²⁷⁴ The importance of Kiesewetter for Clausewitz, although somewhat unclear in the secondary literature which treats of this question, is indicated by Clausewitz himself. In 1819 he calls Kiesewetter an exceptional teacher ("*dieser vortreffliche Lehrer*")

²⁷³ Sibylle Scheipers, *On Small War: Carl von Clausewitz and People's War* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2018), p.17

²⁷⁴ Werner Hahlweg "*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“; Vorbemerkung*" in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, erster Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.18.

and claims that he is responsible for the development of the younger generation's capacity to think (“*die Entwicklung [des] Denkvermögens [der jungen Leuthe]*”).²⁷⁵

The most explicit example of Kieseewetter's influence on Clausewitz can be seen in the latter's notes and drafts for an uncompleted text on the concepts of strategy and tactics composed between 1809-12. These notes and drafts were collected, edited, and published by Werner Hahlweg in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe: Zweiter Band*. Here we see quite clearly the attempt to employ a Kantian vocabulary in order to approach his object of study, war. These early notes and drafts offer quite a different vision of Clausewitz than the one commonly received, that is, as a military theoretician, only marginally concerned with philosophy. They show a thinker rigorously working through philosophical problems, finding their limits, and attempting to reformulate their content and their scope. Functioning as a theoretical basis for Clausewitz's thought, they also allow one to trace with greater confidence the philosophical aspects of his mature work, *Vom Kriege*. Despite the significance of these early notes and drafts, they have unfortunately received very little critical attention. Hahlweg, the editor of the two volume *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*, in which they appear, is one of the few to have written on them. Although Hahlweg is quite conscious of the importance of these early texts, saying that they are one of the most important contributions to Clausewitz-studies that his volume makes,²⁷⁶ his reading of them remains somewhat reserved or unambitious.

What these early texts show, according to Hahlweg, is nothing other than the application of a philosophical method to the domain of war studies. As he puts it, Clausewitz attempts, “with the help of a philosophical method of thinking, to produce the unity of representation and reality [*Wirklichkeit*]” in the military theory.²⁷⁷ Hence, any advancement or

²⁷⁵ “*Denkschrift über die Reform der Allgemeinen Kriegsschule zu Berlin. Berlin, 21. März 1819*” in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teilband* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.1161

²⁷⁶ “*gehören vielleicht zu den belangreichsten des zweiten Bandes der Clausewitz-Edition*”. Hahlweg, “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“; Vorbemerkung*”, p.17

²⁷⁷ “*mit Hilfe der philosophischen Denkmethode die Einheit von Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit in [Militärtheorie] herzustellen*”. Werner Hahlweg, “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*” in *Freiheit ohne Krieg* (Bonn:

novelty detectable in these texts would not be philosophical in nature but rather disciplinarily restricted to the field of war studies. Without explicitly ruling out the possibility of a philosophical Clausewitz, Hahlweg does, however, prefer to focus his attention on certain quasi-ethical considerations for war studies that can be drawn out from these early writings. A reading of these texts, he says, would provide a necessary counterweight to the increasing emphasis on “superficial pragmatism, mere practicality and pure *Technokratentum*,” which “in more or less all the domains of modern warfare is becoming increasingly prevalent,” a tendency which threatens to “lose itself almost completely in the endless abstractions of a technological perfectionism.”²⁷⁸

Hahlweg’s essay, however, seems to display a certain degree of confusion regarding the philosophical elements at play in these notes and he seems even to allow a conflation of the various problematics at stake. A disentangling of the different albeit intersecting problematics at work in these early notes, coupled with an exploration of the specific difficulties that they produce for the young Clausewitz will not only permit a more accurate evaluation of the philosophical worth of these texts but will also open up the possibility of reading Clausewitz’s mature work as a response to these very same problematics.

For Hahlweg, the main thing at stake in these texts is the relation between theory and praxis (*das Theorie-Praxis-Verhältnis*),²⁷⁹ which he understands as “the fundamental question of how a theory should be constituted so that in it, representation and actuality are in agreement”.²⁸⁰ Here, however, one might wish to insist that Hahlweg conflates what are strictly speaking two separate problems, which further necessitate two different levels of

Dümmers Verlag, 1980), p.328; see also “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“; Vorbemerkung*”, p.18

²⁷⁸ “*vordergründigem Pragmatismus, bloßem Praktizismus und reinem Technokratentum, wie dies im modernen Militärwesen in mehr oder weniger allen Bereichen immer sichtbarer in Erscheinung tritt und sich letztlich in fast unüberschaubaren Abstraktionen eines technologischen Perfektionismus verliert*”. “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.332

²⁷⁹ “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.325

²⁸⁰ “*die grundsätzliche Frage, wie eine Theorie beschaffen sein müsste, in welche Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit übereinstimmen würden*”. Ibid.

analysis. Whereas the first seems to pose the question of the relation between two more or less independent domains, i.e. that of knowledge and that of action, and pertains to the applicability of a theory to the ‘real world’, the second seems rather to be concerned with an epistemological problem (i.e. does my representation relate to an object?). In addition to this, Hahlweg claims that the problem that interested another of Clausewitz’s teachers, Scharnhorst, that of the influence of the process of cognition on the absolute is reducible to the “*die Theorie-Praxis-Problematik*”²⁸¹, which is, to say the least, debatable.

Both the epistemological and the practical question are present in these early notes and drafts, the former appearing in the extensive discussion of the notion of truth²⁸² and the latter in the concern that theory should be usable for “Praxis”, Clausewitz even insisting that it is for the sake of praxis that theory is there (“*die Theorie ist ja um der Praxis willen da*”).²⁸³ What one sees in these early texts is the complex articulation of these two problems, an articulation which responds to the oscillation of Clausewitz’s conception of warfare between two paradigms, that of *Wissenschaft* (science) and that of *Kunst* (art). This distinction between *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst* plays an important conceptual role in his attempt to define and understand precisely what war is and where its limits lie. Despite having a certain bias towards *Kunst*, Clausewitz seems ultimately unable to settle on one or the other and tries to draw characteristics from both in order to sketch out the nature of war. It is only in *On War* that the tension between these two conceptions of warfare is to a certain degree resolved, or at least reformulated, by means of the affirmation that “war is an act of human interaction” (“*Der Krieg ist ein Akt des menschlichen Verkehrs*”).²⁸⁴ By working through this opposition in Clausewitz’s notes and drafts as well as in several completed but unpublished texts on aesthetics, and by examining the philosophical problems which permeate various discussions

²⁸¹ “*ob sich das ‘Absolut’ durch den Erkenntnisprozess verändere*”. “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.326

²⁸² Carl von Clausewitz, “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*” in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, erster Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.33-4

²⁸³ *Ibid.* p.55

²⁸⁴ *Vom Kriege*, p.121

of this question, what is at stake in the solution proposed by the later Clausewitz will become more evident.

The formal distinction between *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst* is outlined in an early text on aesthetics entitled “*Über Kunst und Kunsttheorie*”. Here, Clausewitz describes *Kunst* as a capacity or an aptitude (*Vermögen*, *Fertigkeit*, *Fähigkeit* seem to be used interchangeably) for a certain activity (*Tätigkeit*) and opposes it to an idea of *Wissenschaft* as a collection of cognitions systematically ordered according to an idea.²⁸⁵ Clausewitz hence understands this distinction in terms of the general philosophical opposition between *technē* and *epistēmē*, or as he formulates it later in *On War*, “*Können*” and “*Wissen*”.²⁸⁶ This opposition is sketched out in exactly the same terms by Kant in the third *Critique*²⁸⁷ and is reproduced almost word for word in Kiesewetter’s vulgarisation of this text.²⁸⁸ The examples (in particular, chemistry and medicine) that Clausewitz uses to illustrate this distinction suggest that he was likely more familiar with Kiesewetter’s version.²⁸⁹

According to Clausewitz, the clarity of this distinction is only disturbed by a slightly unfortunate conflation of *Kunst* and *Kunsttheorie* (theory of art) in the writings on this subject, whereby, the word *Kunst* has come to mean both a learnt skill (“*erlernten Fertigkeit*”) and the collection of representations which allow one to acquire this skill.²⁹⁰ Clausewitz then goes on to distinguish more precisely *Wissenschaft* and *Kunsttheorie* with reference to the end

²⁸⁵ “*Wissenschaft ist eine nach einer Idee (systematisch) geordnete Sammlung von Erkenntnissen*”. Clausewitz, Carl von Clausewitz, “*Über Kunst und Kunsttheorie*” in *Kleine Schriften: Geist und Tat - Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 1941), p.121. This definition seems to have a Kantian origin cf. Kant, *KdV*, (A835/B863): „Niemand versucht es, eine Wissenschaft zu Stande zu bringen, ohne dass ihm eine Idee zum Grunde liege“; and Kiesewetter, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1802), §269, where he says that “*Wissenschaft ist eine systematische Erkenntnis*”, that is, a cognition (*Erkenntnis*) in which the “*vorkommenden Sätze nach einem Prinzip (der Idee eines Ganzen) geordnet sind, und daher notwendige Einheit haben.*”

²⁸⁶ Clausewitz. *Vom Kriege*, p.120

²⁸⁷ Kant, *KdU*, 5:303: “*Kunst als Geschicklichkeit des Menschen wird auch von der Wissenschaft unterschieden (Können vom Wissen), als praktisches vom theoretischen Vermögen, als Technik von der Theorie*”.

²⁸⁸ See “*Von der Kunst überhaupt*” in J. G. Kiesewetter, *J. Kant’s Kritik der Urtheilskraft* (Berlin: Bei Wilhelm Oehmigke dem Jüngeren, 1804), p.388.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.389 and Clausewitz “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*” p.123

²⁹⁰ “*die Sammlung von Vorstellungen..., welche dazu dienen, jene Fertigkeit zu erlangen*”. Clausewitz, “*Über Kunst und Kunsttheorie*”, p.121

or purpose (“*Zweck*”) of each. The cognitions contained in *Wissenschaft* have their end in themselves and should do nothing other than expand our knowledge.²⁹¹ The cognitions which are collected in *Kunsttheorie*, on the other hand, have as end the development of an aptitude (*Fähigkeit*).²⁹² It is more in this manner that Clausewitz approaches the theory-praxis problematic, by means of the relation between *Kunsttheorie* and *Kunst*. Rather than being a question of whether or not a representation relates to its object as Hahlweg seems to understand it, Clausewitz sees the theory-praxis problem as concerning the production of aptitudes. Here it is important to note that, in the Clausewitzian metaphysics, “*Fähigkeit*” (aptitude) seems to be preferred to “*Vermögen*” (capacity). Whereas “*Vermögen*” brings with it an idea of abstract metaphysical stability, “*Fähigkeit*” entertains a more intimate and changeable relation to the activity that it permits. “*Fähigkeit*” lets itself be thought as developed and modified in relation to its use and to various external circumstances.

The reason why *Kunst* ultimately proves insufficient for a discussion of war is because it puts too great an emphasis on aptitude, one which even threatens to fall back into the paradigm of the relation between capacity (that is, abstract possibility) and free will, which actualises the capacity. One sees this quite clearly in one of Clausewitz’s texts on aesthetics where he says that “[u]nderlying art is an innate aptitude which is cultivated (or developed) through the free will”.²⁹³ War must above all be understood as an act (*Akt*) and all aptitudes that can be said to be pertinent in war must be derived from the latter’s actuality. It is in *On War* that Clausewitz most clearly rejects the paradigm of art.²⁹⁴ Here he says that war is not an activity that acts on “dead matter [*toten Stoff*]” like the “mechanical arts [*mechanischen Künste*]”, nor does it act on a “living but passive object that offers itself up”,²⁹⁵ as in the

²⁹¹ Ibid. p.122. “*Die Erkenntnisse, welche in der Wissenschaft aufbewahrt werden, tragen ihren Zweck in sich selbst, sie sollen unsere Erkenntnis bereichern*”

²⁹² Ibid. “*Die Erkenntnisse, welche wir in der Kunst(theorie) gesammelt finden, haben den Zweck, eine Fähigkeit in uns auszubilden*”

²⁹³ “*Der Kunst liegt eine angeborene Fähigkeit zugrunde, diese ist durch den freien Willen ausgebildet worden*” “*Über Kunst und Kunsttheorie*”, p.121

²⁹⁴ *Vom Kriege*, p.122

²⁹⁵ “*einen lebendigen, aber doch leidenden, sich hingebenden Gegenstand*”. Ibid

“ideal arts [*idealen Künsten*]”. On the contrary, it has a “living and reacting [*lebendigen, reagierenden*]” object.²⁹⁶ Aptitudes must, hence, be continually formed and deformed, created and destroyed, in the face of the chance, uncertainty, and animosity of an actuality that one can never fully master.

The paradigm of science also ultimately proves inadequate for the theory of war. Clausewitz works through this paradigm most thoroughly in his early notes under the form of the epistemological problem of the relation between representation and actuality, or concept and object, by examining the notion of truth.

2.3 *Wissenschaft* and the Criteria of Formal and Material Truth

Clausewitz starts his early draft on the concept of war by expressing the wish to analyse the theory of “strategy” and “tactics” from the perspective of *Wissenschaft* and seeks to facilitate his discussion of these terms by borrowing a criterium from *Wissenschaft*, that of truth. In this case, the truth in question can ultimately be traced back to Kant and it has two modulations: formal and material. Clausewitz states at the beginning of the text that his aim is to present the essential properties of a theory of strategy and tactics and to divide them into sciences.²⁹⁷ The pressing need for such an approach is, according to Clausewitz, due to the fact that the theory of the art of war (*Theorie der Kriegskunst*), as Clausewitz then encountered it, was principally characterised by internal inconsistency and incoherency. Indeed, one of Clausewitz’s main preoccupations in these early texts is the deplorable state of the theory of the art of war, which he says suffers from “the lack of all philosophical spirit [*der Mangel alles philosophischen Geistes*]”.²⁹⁸ In a language which seems to echo the preface of the first edition of *KdrV*, Clausewitz laments this fact:

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ “Unser Zweck ist die wesentlichen Eigenschaften einer Theorie d[er] Strategie und Taktik aufzustellen und zu dem Ende in Wissenschaften einzutheilen”. “Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“”, p.32-3.

²⁹⁸ “Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“”, p.25

Here, [i.e. in the *Theorie der Kriegskunst*] the greatest anarchy and discordance of opinion rules; here, one finds completely opposed points of view; here, one is not even in agreement regarding the fundamental concepts; here, one encounters no known general principle.²⁹⁹

Just as in Kant's preface to *KdrV*, what is here at stake are the 'principles' (*Grundsätze*) which need to be secured or subjected to certain criteria to ensure their validity (Avii-i). However, unlike Kant, Clausewitz insists that as far as the theory of the art of war is concerned, one has not even come to an agreement regarding the *Grundbegriffe*, that is, the fundamental concepts.

Although it is nowhere explicitly stated, one is tempted to conclude that Clausewitz wishes to put the theory of the art of war on "the secure course of a science [*den sicheren Weg der Wissenschaft*]" (BIX) as Kant tried to do for metaphysics. Support for this idea can be found in Clausewitz's insistence that it is only by adhering to the correct form, ("*Beobachtung der richtigen Form*"), (i.e. by not infringing the laws of formal truth) in the joining up of representations, that one follows "a secure course [*einen sicheren Weg*]" in the development of theory.³⁰⁰ However, in reality the question is slightly more complex and although Clausewitz seems tempted by the paradigm of science as a model for the theory of the art of war, he ultimately considers it to be inadequate. The reasons for Clausewitz's rejection of this paradigm permit greater insight into his critique and development of the Kantian philosophy.

To bring order to the theory of the art of war, it is first of all towards Kiesewetter that Clausewitz turns. Relying on the Kantian distinction between formal and material truth, which he most likely draws, as Hahlweg demonstrates, directly from Kiesewetter's lectures on logic,³⁰¹ Clausewitz attempts to establish certain criteria (a formal criterium and a material

²⁹⁹ "Hier herrscht die größte Anarchie und Verschiedenheit der Meinungen, hier sind ganz entgegengesetzte Gesichtspunkte, hier hat man sich noch nicht über die ersten Grundbegriffe verständigt, hier giebt es keinen allgemein erkannten Grundsatz." *Ibid.* p.35 Cf. (AVII-IX)

³⁰⁰ "Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“, p.28

³⁰¹ See, e.g., the comparison of passages in "*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*", p.329-30

criterium) in order to judge the pertinence and validity of a theory of war. Formal truth, as “every educated man knows” is “the *conditio sine qua non* of all truth” and “consists simply in correct form”. Any infringement of the dictates of correct form would hence mean that the statement in question would be incoherent. As Kant would say, formal truth is the “negative condition of all truth”.³⁰² Regarding the precise nature of formal truth, it is to be understood, as Clausewitz states, as the “agreement of the connection of representations with the laws of thought”³⁰³ which, as Hahlweg points out, is almost identical to Kiesewetter’s formulation.³⁰⁴ Kant has a very similar understanding of formal truth which he expresses in *KdrV* as “the agreement of knowledge with the general and formal laws of the understanding and of reason” (A59-60/B84)³⁰⁵. In his lectures on logic, Kant repeats this description³⁰⁶ and adds the clarifying remark that this agreement of knowledge (“*Erkenntnis*”) with itself involves the complete abstraction “from all objects in general”.³⁰⁷

Here one might briefly put in question one of the claims made by Cormier in his text *War as Paradox*. Cormier seeks to use this reference to formal truth as support for the claim that Clausewitz may have read Kant directly. He says that Clausewitz’s employment of the phrase “the agreement of a concept” as well as his use of “the concept of ‘universality’ which is implied in...[the] mention of ‘all humanity’”, neither of which appear in Kiesewetter’s definition, suggest that he was rather working directly with Kant’s version. He even goes so far as to say that these details suggest that Clausewitz “understood the argument better – or at least summarized it better – than Kiesewetter had.”³⁰⁸ Firstly, the idea of “universality” is

³⁰² „Jeder gebildete Mann weiß, dass die formale Wahrheit *conditio sine qua non* aller Wahrheit ist und dass sie bloß in der richtigen Form besteht und also wohl mit ihr verletzt werden muss“, p.28-9. Cf. Kant: “*die conditio sine qua non, mithin die negative Bedingung aller Wahrheit*” (A59-60/B84)

³⁰³ “*Uebereinstimmung in Verbindung der Vorstellungen mit den Gesetzen des Denkens.*” “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*” p.34

³⁰⁴ “*Die Uebereinstimmung einer Vorstellung mit den Gesetzen des Denkens*” *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1802) §64, cited by Hahlweg in “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.330

³⁰⁵ “*die Übereinstimmung einer Erkenntnis mit den allgemeinen und formalen Gesetzen des Verstandes und der Vernunft*”

³⁰⁶ Kant, *Logik*, p.477-8

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.477

³⁰⁸ Youri Cormier, *War as Paradox: Clausewitz and Hegel on Fighting Doctrines and Ethics* (Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen’s university press, 2016), p.79-80.

already implicit in the expression “the laws of thought” (*Gesetzen des Denkens*) used by Kiesewetter. The latter makes this abundantly clear at the beginning of his *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* by saying that logic is the science of the “universal and necessary laws of thought” (*allgemeinen und nothwendigen Gesetzen des Denkens*).³⁰⁹ Secondly, “concept” is here mistranslated,³¹⁰ the more precise term is “representation” (*Vorstellung*), and it is used by both Kiesewetter and Clausewitz. Kant on the contrary employs the term “knowledge” or, to follow the standard English translation, “cognition” (*Erkenntnis*). Although the conceptual differences between the terms in question are here not so important,³¹¹ the lexical choice supports rather in this case the direct influence of Kiesewetter.

Formal truth, hence, pertains simply to the internal coherence of knowledge and is completely detached from the question of the adequation with an object. The two formal criteria of truth in logic are, according to Kant, the law of non-contradiction (*der Satz des Widerspruchs*) and the principle of sufficient reason (*der Satz des zureichenden Grundes*). The first ensures the logical possibility (*logische Möglichkeit*) of an affirmation, the second, the logical actuality (*logische Wirklichkeit*). According to the first, a cognition (“*Erkenntnis*”) does not contradict itself, according to the second, it is logically grounded, that is, it has grounds (“*Gründe*”) and no false consequences (“*falsche Folgen*”).³¹²

In the theory of the art of war, the concatenation of ideas must, according to the young Clausewitz, be in accordance with the dictates of formal logic, if one wishes to avoid false opinions and errors of all sort (“*falsche Ansichten und Irrthümer aller Art*”) which proliferate in the writings in this domain.³¹³ As Kant says, however, although these “formal, universal criteria” allow a certain order and internal consistency to be introduced into a theory, they are, however, not sufficient to secure the relation to an object i.e. to guarantee the objective or

³⁰⁹ Kiesewetter. *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1802), §5

³¹⁰ Cormier’s source for this translation is: Echevarria II, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, p.22

³¹¹ For these differences see *KdrV* (A320/B376), where *Vorstellung* is said to be the most general term (the genus) and *Erkenntnis* and *Begriff* are said to be subcategories of *Vorstellung*.

³¹² Kant, *Logik*, p.478

³¹³ “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.29

material truth (“*materielle (objektive) Wahrheit*”) (A60/B85) of a theory.³¹⁴ Formal truth is a necessary but insufficient condition of the objective validity of a theory. Clausewitz even insists in *On War* that formal truth by itself can be deceptive and lead to false conclusions,³¹⁵ hence a second criterium is necessary, that of material truth. This latter, in contrast to formal truth, pertains to the content of knowledge and involves a claim regarding the relation of a theory to a reality external to it. Clausewitz, again following Kiesewetter and Kant quite exactly, describes material truth as “the agreement of the representation with the object that it represents”.³¹⁶

In his discussion of material truth in *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik*, an explicit treatment of ontological questions is quite consciously avoided by Kiesewetter who claims that this would be to overstep the limits of a pure logic. As a result, there is no real questioning regarding the (ontological) status of the object with which the representation must be in agreement. He even says at one point that he is taking the term “object” (*Gegenstand*) in its merely logical sense, that is, as identical to “representation” (*Vorstellung*) which of course completely dissolves the problematic.³¹⁷ In his *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung*, where he does discuss in more detail the relation between representation and the object (as seen above), the question of material truth is not explicitly treated. This question, however, is one of the central problematics of the critical philosophy. It appears, although not explicitly named, in the famous letter to Marcus Herz (21st Feb. 1772) where Kant presents the first outline of what will become the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Here, however, it is precisely the relation

³¹⁴ Kant, *Logik* p.478

³¹⁵ Clausewitz speaks of having to warn of the errors that a truth which is merely formal might lead to (“*Abweg..., den eine bloß formelle Wahrheit veranlassen könnte*”). *Vom Kriege*, p.215

³¹⁶ “*die Uebereinstimmung der Vorstellung mit dem Gegenstand, den sie vorstellt*”. “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.33. Kiesewetter’s formulation: “*die Uebereinstimmung einer Vorstellung mit den vorgestellten Gegenständen*”, *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1802) §64, cited by Hahlweg in “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.330. Here one may quickly remark that one cannot, *stricto sensu*, speak of the agreement between formal and material truth, let alone use this agreement as a criterium to judge the validity of a theory, as Hahlweg proposes. Formal truth is agreement of a concept (or theory) with itself and material truth is the agreement of a concept (or theory) with its object, the former however ever is a necessary condition of the latter and so if something materially true it is necessarily already formally true (see Hahlweg, “*Philosophie und Theorie bei Clausewitz*”, p.331)

³¹⁷ *Grundriß... reine allgemeine Logik* (1793), (ad §98, p.100)

between the representation and the object which must be put in question. Kant deemed it necessary to ask himself: “What is the ground of the relation of that in us which we call ‘representation’ to the object [*auf welchem Grunde beruhet die Beziehung desienigen, was man in uns Vorstellung nennt, auf den Gegenstand*]?”³¹⁸ The problem that Kant confesses to have passed over in silence in his 1770 *Dissertation* is as follows: if the representation of an object is neither passive i.e. produced by the object (as in empiricism), nor active i.e. itself the cause of the object (as one imagines to be the case with divine cognition [*“die Göttliche Erkenntnisse”*]), “*woher komst die Übereinstimmung*”, where does the agreement that it has with an object come from?³¹⁹ Kant finds himself drawn between two poles: the first being the need for the representation to be *a priori*, i.e. not derived from or even influenced by experience (it is only in this way that one can have absolute certitude regarding its validity and necessity: it is to this end that Kant insists in the first *Critique* on the purity of the categories, on the fact that they must have an entirely different origin); the second being the need to determine at the same time the objects of experience and not merely to agree with itself (as is the case in formal truth).

The transcendental philosophy must satisfy simultaneously these two contrary requirements. It must offer the necessity of an *a priori* system while at the same time demonstrating its objective validity by maintaining a relation to something irreducibly external, that is, without slipping into a dogmatic or a problematic idealism, where the relation to an external object is compromised, that is, either completely severed or entirely uncertain. The very independence of the representation in relation to the object which it nonetheless determines renders the possibility of this representation difficult to conceive.³²⁰ To respond to this problem, Kant is obliged to ascribe two faculties to the thinking subject, sensibility and understanding: the former, passive, allowing an immediate relation to the object; the latter,

³¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Briefwechsel*, 10:130 <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/kant/aa10/130.html> (Accessed September 19, 2020)

³¹⁹ *Ibid*, 10:130-1

³²⁰ *Ibid*, 10:130-1

active, allowing the determination of the object. Then he is obliged to add a third faculty, imagination, in order to explain the relation between the two (this leads Hegel to accuse Kant of rummaging around in the sack of the soul to see what capacities he can find).³²¹

This difficulty is one of the points of departure for Hegel's critique of Kant. It is in the *Science of Logic* that Hegel attempts to show the limits of Kant's conception of material (or objective) truth. Here, he defines the "Idea" as the objectively true ("*das objektive Wahre*") or as the adequate concept ("*der adäquate Begriff*"). Whereas Kant prefers to retain the notion of agreement found in the traditional definition of truth: *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, a definition that, according to Heidegger, Kant holds fast to,³²² Hegel, criticising this tradition as a whole and more directly Kant as a representative thereof, chooses to replace the idea of "*Übereinstimmung*" (agreement) with that of "*Einheit*" (unity). The idea as "the objectively true" becomes hence the unity of the Concept and reality ("*die Einheit des Begriffs und der Realität*") and insofar as this is the case, one can say, according to Hegel, that being has attained the meaning of truth ("*Sein hat die Bedeutung der Wahrheit erreicht*").³²³ It is important to note here the conceptual shift that has taken place: while *Übereinstimmung* involves the relation between two opposed and to a certain degree independent things or states, *Einheit* refers to a relation between parts of one and the same thing.

The basis of Hegel's argument is his insistence that the traditional conception of truth adopts a false or imperfect criterium. That which is supposed to be external to the concept, the reality ("*Realität*") which does not already correspond to the concept ("*dem Begriffe nicht entspricht*"), and which is held up to the concept as criterium, can only be mere *appearance* ("*bloße Erscheinung*") i.e. the untrue being of the objective world ("*das unwahre Sein der*

³²¹ G. W. F. Hegel. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), p.351

³²² Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), p.214

³²³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, drittes Buch (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam Jun., 1963), p.256

objektiven Welt”). It is the subjective, the accidental, the arbitrary (“*das Subjektive, Zufällige, Willkürliche*”), in short, precisely that which is not truth (“*das nicht die Wahrheit ist*”).³²⁴ Hegel cannot even imagine what such an actuality (“*ein Wirkliche*”), that is, an actuality that does not already contain its own concept within itself (“*nicht sein Begriff in ihm [hat]*”) and whose objectivity is in no way measured against this concept (“*[dessen] Objektivität diesem Begriffe gar nicht angemessen ist*”), what such a such an actuality is supposed to be (“*wahrhaft sein sollte*”).³²⁵ Hegel even goes so far as to say that it is not to be said (“*es ist nicht zu sagen*”) what such a thing would be, for it would be Nothing (“*denn es wäre das Nichts*”).³²⁶

One might wish to claim that Hegel is too quick to disregard the problematic ontological status of a non-conceptual actuality in reducing it to nothing, especially as it is precisely in these terms that Kant seeks to define it. As seen in the first chapter, one of Kant’s working definitions of actuality is that which is “given without being thought”³²⁷. As such, actuality is precisely that which cannot be reduced to a concept.

Kant, rather than dogmatically affirming the traditional definition of truth, is in fact acutely aware of its problematic nature. In his lectures on logic, for example, he draws out the problematic nature of this definition by exposing it to be irredeemably circular. Kant explains it thus: to know whether a cognition agrees with an object (“*Objekt*”) one must be able to compare the two, however, one can only compare the object with one’s cognition insofar as one cognises the said object. “For since the object is outside of me and my cognition within me, I can only ever pass judgement on whether my cognition of the object agrees with my cognition of the object”.³²⁸ Kant shifts the focus from the question “What is truth [*Was ist Wahrheit*]?” to “Whether and to what degree there exists a certain, universal, and practically

³²⁴ Ibid., p.255

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Kant. *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, p.499-500. Cf. *KdU* 5: 402

³²⁸ “Denn da das Objekt außer mir und die Erkenntnis in mir ist: so kann ich immer doch nur beurteilen: ob meine Erkenntnis vom Objekt mit meiner Erkenntnis vom Objekt übereinstimme.” Kant. *Logik*, p.476 (A 70)

usable criterium of truth.”³²⁹ This also leads to certain complications, however, and Kant ends up admitting that “a universal material criterium of truth is not possible [*Ein allgemeines materiales Kriterium der Wahrheit ist nicht möglich*]”.³³⁰

In the first *Critique*, the solution that Kant proposes to this problem is that of the synthetic *a priori* judgement. Unlike the analytic judgement which articulates the elements already thought (albeit, confusedly) within a concept without posing the question of the possibility (or the real possibility (BXXVIIn.1)) of this concept, that is, whether or not it might relate to an object, the synthetic *a priori* judgement precisely oversteps the limits of the concept in order to consider it in relation to something entirely other than what is already thought in it. It is precisely this “amplification” which justifies the “real possibility” of this concept. However, the synthetic *a priori* judgement cannot rely upon actual experience, since this would of course open it to the critiques of empiricism, and it would lose all claims to necessity.

When Clausewitz attempts to introduce the idea of material truth as criterium for the theory of war, the agreement between the representation and the object is not immediately posed as problematic. The problem of *Übereinstimmung* is, indeed, circumvented in that this relation is presented in terms of identity (*gleich sein*). Clausewitz explains it thus: ten people who represent the same object must, if the representation is to be said to correspond to the object (i.e. to be true), all have the same representation, just as two magnitudes which are both equal to a third must be equal to each other.³³¹ Clausewitz adds that the subject (“*Subject*”), here clearly understood in the philosophical sense of that which is in opposition to the object, in possession of a true representation does not alter this representation in any way.³³² Just as in Kiesewetter’s description of a representation which relates to an object (cited above), the

³²⁹ “*Ob und in wie fern es ein sicheres, allgemeines und in der Anwendung brauchbares Kriterium der Wahrheit gebe?*” Ibid.

³³⁰ Kant, *Logik*. p.476-7

³³¹ “*Wie zwey Größen, die einer 3ten gleich sind sich unter einander gleich seyn müssen*”. “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.34.

³³² Ibid.

true representation of an object is not dependent upon the will of the subject. Its nature is rather determined by the necessity of the object itself. It is in this fashion that the relation to the object functions as a manner of unifying the theory of war, as an objective standard which holds in check the excesses and extravagances on the side of theory. The relation to the object is here, as Hahlweg points out, the question of the relation between representation and actuality and in this context the object or actuality in question is that of war. However, as will be seen, this relation is in no sense straightforward and, far from providing a coherent and useable criterium for judging the validity of a theory, in reality causes Clausewitz certain problems.

2.4 The Actuality of War (Combat as *Sinn und Bedeutung*)

As the early draft on the notions of strategy and tactics progresses, Clausewitz begins to put in question the possibility of relating to war as a whole at all and the criterium of material truth begins to break down. He posits several clear reasons for this difficulty. Firstly, one can only ever relate to a part of the object at any one time and a part of the object that does not necessarily represent the whole. The participation in a single battle gives no insight regarding the structure of war as a whole nor even regarding the nature of the battle in general. Secondly, there is no neutral position from which one can observe war: very rarely in war does the opportunity present itself to watch the unfolding of events from a position of security.³³³ As spectator one is always somehow implicated in the action. The ever-present danger undercuts the possibility of a secure or stable standpoint and requires that one constantly responds to what takes place. Hence, Clausewitz seems to insist that one can relate to war only from within war and, in a certain sense, only by being at war.

Clausewitz's attempt to analyse the concept of war in these early notes is also particularly telling. Here, this analysis circles in particular around the notion of combat

³³³ “*die Gelegenheit aber Gefechte gehörig zu beobachten bietet sich selbst im Kriege nicht so häufig dar*”. Ibid. p.27

(*Gefecht*) which Clausewitz sees as being at the heart of war, he even goes so far as to say that the combat is the foundation (*Grundlage*) or fundamental unity (*Grundeinheit*) of war.³³⁴ Such a statement might seem a little surprising to those more familiar with *Vom Kriege* where it is rather politics which provides unity to war. In continuity with his attempt to use the criterium of material truth, Clausewitz in the same text deploys a second related Kantian notion: “*Sinn und Bedeutung*” (sense and significance). He says that “the combat does not constitute the totality of military activity, it is, however, its foundation and gives it sense and significance.”³³⁵ In the critical philosophy, what secures the “sense and significance” or the “objective validity” (A156/B195) of the pure concepts of the understanding is their relation to a corresponding object in intuition. As Kant says, it is only “our sensible and empirical intuition [*[u]nsere sinnliche und empirische Anschauung*]” that can provide concepts with “*Sinn und Bedeutung*” and without this relation one cannot be sure whether these concepts are possible or not (B148-9), one cannot even provide the slightest definition for any of them (A241).³³⁶ In the schematism section of the first *Critique* Kant gives as synonym for “significance” (“*Bedeutung*”): “a relation to an object” (“*eine Beziehung auf Objekte*”) (A146/B185).³³⁷ Kant clarifies this idea at the end of the “Phenomena and Noumena” section: here he says that concepts only have meaning or significance (*Bedeutung*) once they have been made sensible, i.e., once the corresponding object (“*das ihm korrespondierende Objekt*”) has been presented in intuition.³³⁸ Without this relation, the concept would remain completely

³³⁴ Ibid. p.64, p.67

³³⁵ “*Das Gefecht macht zwar nicht die ganze Summe kriegerischer Thätigkeit aus, allein es liegt jeder derselben zum Grunde und gibt ihr Sinn und Bedeutung.*” “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.65n.1₁

³³⁶ In the A edition Kant says that we cannot define any single one of the categories if abstraction is made from this relation. In the B edition however, he says that we cannot “*real definieren*” which he clarifies as “*die Möglichkeit ihres Objekts verständlich machen*” (A241/B300).

See also (A139/B178), where Kant says that our concepts are completely impossible “*ganz unmöglich*” if an object is not given to them by sensibility.

For another use of “*Sinn und Bedeutung*” in Kant’s work see, for example: *Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?* (8: 133) <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/kant/aa08/133.html> (Accessed 1st November 2020)

³³⁷ See also (B300)

³³⁸ Kant says: “*Daher erfordert man ..., einen abgesonderten Begriff sinnlich zu machen, d.i. das ihm korrespondierende Objekt in der Anschauung darzulegen*” (A240)

“without sense i.e. without significance”.³³⁹ Here, what is clearly at stake is the Kantian notion of material truth since it is a question of the relation to a corresponding object.

Kiesewetter does not seem to accord too much importance to the phrase, “*Sinn und Bedeutung*”, and there appears to be only one use of it in his work. He employs it in his response to Herder, *Prüfung der Herderschen Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, where he says that the categories and the schema receive “sense and significance” only through being applied to an empirical intuition.³⁴⁰ It does not appear, as such, in his *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* nor in his *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung...*, although the latter contains the idea in essence.³⁴¹ Hence, the attention that Clausewitz accords to this phrase, which he uses in these 1809-12 drafts three times, the second time being only a partial use,³⁴² suggests perhaps a familiarity with Kant’s texts. It should be noted, however, that the three times that Clausewitz uses the phrase “*Sinn und Bedeutung*”, it appears crossed out.³⁴³ The first time it appears is at the climax of a long crossed out passage on the combat. The third time it appears as an explication of the proposition that the combat consists in the fundamental unity (“*Grundeinheit*”) of war.

The first usage is particularly telling for this essay. Clausewitz clarifies his understanding of the phrase “*Sinn und Bedeutung*” by saying: “Everything that is undertaken in war, every step taken by either side, is grounded upon actual or possible combats.”³⁴⁴ However, as becomes clear, war is ultimately grounded upon *actual* combat and this for two reasons. The first of which Clausewitz outlines in a discussion of strategy which appears later on in the same text. Here he says that if the highest degree of strategic perfection would

³³⁹ “*der Begriff... ohne Sinn, d.i. ohne Bedeutung bleiben würde*” (A240)

³⁴⁰ J. G. Kiesewetter. *Prüfung der Herderschen Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft* p.273

³⁴¹ See, for example, J. G. Kiesewetter. *Versuch einer faßlichen Darstellung...* p.160, where he says that Categories have “*Bedeutung*” only for objects of the senses (“*Gegenstände der Sinne*”)

³⁴² “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.65n.l₁, p.67n.b₂

³⁴³ The second truncated use cuts off after: “*gibt ihm Sinn und*” Ibid., p.65n.l₁, p.67n.b₂

³⁴⁴ “*Alles was unternommen wird im Kriege, jeder Schritt der von der einen oder der andern Seite geschieht, gründen sich auf wirkliche oder mögliche Gefechte...*”. “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.65n.l₁

consist in putting one's adversary in such a position that "it is completely impossible for them to engage in combat...this degree is however only ever imaginary and as soon as it occurs war itself becomes entirely impossible."³⁴⁵ *Actual* combat is, hence, a condition of the possibility of war.³⁴⁶

The second and more profound reason, which is to be found in the early drafts of the *Vom Kriege*, and which later appears unchanged in the final version of the text, is the idea that the possibility ("Möglichkeit") of combat should be considered as reality ("Realität") or as "an actual thing [*ein wirkliches Ding*]."³⁴⁷ This passage is simply added by Marie von Clausewitz to the first chapter of the third book ("Of Strategy in General") of *Vom Kriege* following the instructions left by Clausewitz, the projected reworking of this chapter never having taken place. Here, what becomes visible is Clausewitz's criterium for actuality, which seems to be related to the fact of producing an effect (*Wirkung*). He says that possible combats can be considered as "actual [*wirkliche*]" or as belonging to "the order of actual things [*die Reihe der wirklichen Dinge*]" through their effects and "these effects, whatever they might be, can never fail to occur."³⁴⁸ Here, Clausewitz takes up and to a certain degree radicalises a more general notion of actuality, that is, an actuality in which the fact of existing and the fact of producing effects are firmly bound together (as seen in the first chapter of this thesis). Indeed, this conception of actuality seems to echo the one expressed by Kant in the *Opus Postumum* according to which something exists only in so far as it produces effects.

Far from a neutral 'being there', or a mute and passive existence, that which is actual is immediately caught up in the complex chains of causality, as the very condition of its

³⁴⁵ "es ihm ganz unmöglich wäre ein Gefecht zu liefern,... allein dieser Grad ist auch nur imaginär und sobald er eintritt d[er] Krieg ganz unmöglich." "Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“", p.69.

³⁴⁶ Here, Clausewitz's thought enters into direct conflict with Deleuze and Guattari's claim in *Mille Plateaux* that "war does not necessarily have the battle [or the combat] as its object [*la guerre n'a pas nécessairement pour objet la Bataille*]". Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Mille Plateaux; Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), p.518

³⁴⁷ *Vom Kriege*. 3,1, p.161. See also "Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“", p.637.

³⁴⁸ "Sie wird es [d.i. wirklich] durch ihre Folgen, und diese Wirkungen, welche sie auch sein mögen, können niemals fehlen." *Vom Kriege*. 3,1, p.162

actuality. Even possibility itself is subject to this criterium and cannot be thought outside its implication in the actual world. In Clausewitz's thought, possibility is deliriously folded back into actuality: the possible is not only situated within actuality, it is itself acting and actual. This is Clausewitz's somewhat brutal but nonetheless coherent response to the obscure ontological status of possibility. As Sartre formulates it in *L'Être et le Néant*, one has the greatest difficulty in understanding the being of possibility: on the one hand possibility is understood as preceding being in so far as it is precisely the possibility of being; and yet on the other, it must itself *be* (or exist) in a certain respect, otherwise one could not say that "it is possible that x happens".³⁴⁹

Clausewitz has little time for the ambivalent and self-referential ontological status of possibility and completely cuts through this problematic. Not dissimilarly to Kant's note on the derivative nature of possibility discussed in the first chapter,³⁵⁰ possibility precedes actuality only in a relative sense, that is to say, the possibility of an object precedes the actuality of this same object, but itself presupposes a more general actuality containing the first givenness ("data") of things in general.³⁵¹ However, unlike in Kant's conception, in *On War*, possibility does not have a clear or stable character. According to Clausewitz, it is even difficult to analytically separate, for example, by means of abstraction, the concept of possibility from that of actuality.

The following chapter examines what it means for philosophy to think the actuality of war. Taking Kant as an example, it will be shown that the attempt to think war from the perspective of peace (that is, war as a derivative phenomenon used simply as means of attaining peace) leads to numerous contradictions and incoherencies. War can only be subsumed under the concept of peace by means of a philosophical sleight of hand. Much

³⁴⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant ; Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p.135: "on a la plus grande difficulté à comprendre son être, car il se donne comme antérieur à l'être dont il est la pure possibilité et pourtant, en tant que possible du moins, il faut bien qu'il ait l'être. Ne dit-on pas : « il est possible qu'il vienne » ?" Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Kant, *Metaphysik, erster Theil*, n.4247

³⁵¹ Ibid: a "Wirklichkeit, welche die erste data zu Dingen überhaupt enthalt"

attention will be accorded to Kant's discussion of the movement from the state of war to a state of peace, that is, a state determined by laws rather than the relation of forces. Against the incoherencies that follow on from the reduction of war to the peace, the following chapter will begin to sketch out Clausewitz's more rigorous attempt to think through a philosophy of the actuality of war.

3: War and the Limits of the Critical Philosophy

3.1 Kant and War

3.2 Violence, Law, and Freedom

3.3 The *a priori* Synthetic Judgement

3.4 Clausewitzian Synthesis

3.5 Architectonic Rhapsodies

This chapter attempts to outline the importance and the pertinence of Clausewitz's philosophical reflections on war. In addition to the detailed presentation of the historical and textual evidence for considering Clausewitz as a significant, albeit mostly neglected, successor to Kant's critical philosophy (the subject of the second chapter of this thesis), it seems wise to indicate the philosophical interest and importance of such a study. This chapter intends to do this in two ways: firstly, by demonstrating that Kant's philosophy in fact necessarily relies upon a form of warfare or violence which, however, at the same time threatens to undermine the nature of his project; and secondly, by developing Clausewitz's more rigorous thinking of war and showing how it avoids the difficulties that Kant falls into. The analysis will focus on the question of whether it is possible to think war from the perspective of peace, which is the presupposition that Kant takes for granted. Ultimately, as shall be seen, the conformity of war to the interests of peace is explained in two different but equally problematic ways by Kant: conformity by means of the application of violence, and conformity by means of voluntary capitulation. Both of these, however, entail difficulties for the installation of peace, especially for a peace that wishes to be conceived of as just, neutral, and perpetual.

Despite Kant's often discussed predilection for court rooms, for rights and laws, and for justice, his thought maintains an intimate and complicated relation to warfare. In his texts, he incessantly returns to the notion of war. However, as becomes clear, he does so unwillingly and with a great ambivalence. The notion of war, although largely unthematized and even to some extent covered over, plays an essential role in the functioning of the critical philosophy. The peace of a legal order, and with it, law in general, is arrived at and maintained only through a certain kind of warfare or violence. Kant at times even indicates that these latter terms (war and violence) let themselves be thought of as a sort of necessary medium for law. This dependence on a form of warfare, however, poses a significant philosophical problem to Kant's thought. A territory occupied by means of force and violence can in no sense offer the

kind of eternal and unquestionable security that Kant wants for his philosophy. As will be shown, the security of the critical philosophy is both ensured and undermined through a necessary reliance on war and violence. This problem is, from Kant's position at least, as inescapable as it is irresolvable. It is from out of this aporia that Clausewitz's thoughts on strategy and the "strategic judgement" develop.

The present chapter will be divided into five parts. The first section, by examining the manner in which Kant deploys the notion of war, will draw out the centrality of this term in his philosophy. The second section will focus on the problem of violence (as forming a certain continuity with warfare) in Kant's thought, showing how he incessantly returns to this term when trying to conceive of the logical compatibility of law and unrestricted freedom or lawlessness. The third section will pursue these difficulties into the mechanism of the critical philosophy itself in order to show that, despite Kant's claims to the contrary, the functioning of the synthetic *a priori* judgement is both dependent upon and endangered by a necessary use of violence. Finally, the fourth and fifth sections will begin to sketch out Clausewitz's response to these problems in Kant's philosophy by analysing one of the former's texts on aesthetics. This analysis will further prepare the ground for an extended discussion of the "strategic judgement" as Clausewitz's critical development of the synthetic *a priori* judgement.

3.1: Kant and War

At first sight, the notion of war in Kant's texts appears to have two principle uses. The first of these, which conceives of war as a politico-economic phenomenon, is treated extensively by Kant in his less strictly philosophical writings. It is most often discussed in his interventions in the realm of politics and in his analyses and speculations regarding the nature and origin of human history. Curiously, however, there is a certain ambivalence in the manner in which this notion of war is portrayed. While sometimes appearing as the origin of all evil and the source of all moral corruption, at other times it is said to be a necessary means for

advancing human society (and even for escaping the “state of nature” in general).³⁵² The second way that warfare appears in Kant’s thought is as a repeated metaphor. Notably in the explicitly philosophical writings, Kant often has recourse to war in order to describe the state of philosophy prior to his own critical intervention. It is even sometimes used, despite a certain reluctance, to describe the nature of this critical intervention itself. The inconsistencies in the use of this analogy are of particular interest here. Rather than simply being evidence of the inability to master an extended metaphor, they seem to indicate a deeper coherence. Indeed, the use of the military metaphor appears to be subjected to a careful (although, no doubt, unthematized) logic of deployment and withdrawal. A logic which, further, ultimately functions to preclude the possibility of response and contestation, that is, to secure the critical philosophy from any future attack. The present section will attempt to pursue this logic throughout Kant’s writings.

One must not forget, it is with war that the *Critique of Pure Reason* starts. The preface to the A edition orients the reader as well as the text itself by the describing the state of chaos and confusion that reason finds itself in. According to Kant, “human reason” continually provokes itself into overstepping (“*übersteigen*”) its own capacity (“*Vermögen*”). In posing itself questions which, though prescribed by its very nature, it is unable to answer, reason finds itself obliged to seek refuge in principles (“*Grundsätzen*”) which extend beyond all possible use in experience. However, by this very gesture, human reason “precipitates itself into darkness and contradiction.” Without the “touchstone of experience [*Probierstein der Erfahrung*]”, there is no way of finding and eradicating the “hidden errors” that afflict and distort reason.

The philosophical scene is hence presented as a site of conflict in which the various philosophical positions are as many different armies, all animated by the struggle for ascendancy. Indeed, “metaphysics” itself is said to be the “battlefield” (*Kampfplatz*) of these

³⁵² Rudolf Eisler, *Kant-Lexicon*, I P. Osmo and A.-D. Balmès trans. (Paris: Gallimard, 2011), p. 468-9

“endless controversies” (Aviii).³⁵³ Kant then immediately superimposes upon this initial description another metaphor, one which is, however, not entirely compatible with the first. Moving into the context of a state, metaphysics is now personified as a dethroned and outcast monarch. Formally “Queen of all the sciences”, metaphysics now finds itself dispossessed of its territory and power and forced to share Hecuba’s lament: “just recently the greatest of all things, powerful both through my origin and my [many] sons, I am now dragged off, a miserable and wretched exile” (Aix; *my trans.*).³⁵⁴

It is important to note that the parallel drawn with Hecuba, the once queen of Troy, reintroduces the theme of war much more violently than before (though, perhaps as hyperbole). In the above citation, Hecuba is bemoaning the misfortunes inflicted upon her by the Greeks, the victors of the Trojan war. For Hecuba, the end of the ten-year long siege of Troy, brought about by Odysseus’ most celebrated ruse (allowing the fortified city to be infiltrated and destroyed from the inside), entailed complete annihilation. Her home is destroyed, almost all the men of her family are killed, and the women, including Hecuba herself, are dragged off into slavery (it is none other than the cunning Odysseus who claims Hecuba as his slave).³⁵⁵ Here, in Kant’s description it is implicitly by means of cunning that metaphysics is dethroned.

To further complicate matters, this second metaphor doubles up on itself. Not only is there a certain community of sciences, of which metaphysics was once the ruler, but metaphysics is itself an internally organised social structure i.e. a “civil society”. The

³⁵³ Though Kant repeats the comparison of metaphysics to a ‘battlefield’ in the preface to the second edition of *KdrV*, the focus has somewhat shifted. Rather than opening the text and orienting the discussion, it appears only after several pages have been devoted to the various other bodies of knowledge already on ‘the secure course of a science’ (Bvii-xv). The B-edition of text has already covered over the problematic implications of an intervention in a field of war and the ‘battlefield’ of metaphysics is now little more than a stage for ‘mock combats [*Spielgefechte*]’ (Bxv).

³⁵⁴ *modo maxima rerum, tot generis natisque potens – nunc trahor exul, inops*. The Guyer and Wood translation of the *KdrV*, render this quotation: ‘Greatest of all by race and birth, I now am cast out, powerless’ (Aix note d; p.99). A slight confusion between ‘nātus’ m. (*genitive* ‘nātūs’): ‘birth, age, years...’, and ‘nātus’ m. (*genitive* ‘natī’): ‘son’. Only the second of the two words features ‘natis’ in its declension (as its ablative plural). ‘Genus’ can certainly mean ‘race’, however, in the given context it seems not entirely appropriate.

³⁵⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* trans. M. M. Innes (London: Penguin, 1955), p.298-9

“battlefield” is now specified as the site of civil war. One might even be tempted to suggest that Kant, rather than simply contradicting himself, has here subtly nuanced the analogy. Metaphysics would hence be an imperial power whose internal discord results in a weakening of its rule and revolt in its colonies. The Norman Kemp Smith translation certainly encourages such a reading by introducing the word “empire”, not present in the German text (it is metaphysics’ “empire” which falls into anarchy) (Aix). Kant develops his metaphor further by sketching out Metaphysics’ fall from power. At first, under the administration (“*Verwaltung*”) of the dogmatists, Metaphysics’ rule (“*Herrschaft*”) over the other sciences was despotic. This rule, however, could not be maintained: the legislation, vitiated by the trace of ancient barbarism, provoked discord and internal wars (“*innere Kriege*”) and metaphysics collapsed into complete anarchy (“*völlige Anarchie*”). This state of confusion is then aggravated by the continual forays perpetrated by the nomadic sceptics, breaking up “all civil society [*bürgerliche Vereinigung*]”. The protracted struggle between the sceptics, who despise ‘all settled modes of life’ (or more literally “all cultivation of the earth [*alle Anbau des Bodens*]”), and dogmatists, who ceaselessly attempt to rebuild civil society (although without “a uniform and consistent plan”), is the principal conflict that the *Critique* must resolve.

Before examining the nature of the proposed solution, it is useful to pass through Kant’s 1786 essay, “Conjectural beginning of human history”, where this schema is repeated quite precisely, though in a different context. One is even inclined to suggest that the description of the conflict between the nomadic sceptics and the town dwelling dogmatists, rather than simply being repeated in this 1786 essay has in fact been removed from the critical philosophy and relocated here. The similarity between the two accounts and the fact that Kant excludes the description of this conflict when he rewrites the preface for the second edition of the first critique (1787) certainly suggest such a possibility.

In “Conjectural beginning of human history”, Kant offers a speculative account of humanity’s unrecorded past, using “*Genesis*, chapter 2 through chapter 6” as his “map” (*als Karte*). This account stretches from humanity’s most basic state (where the highest social unity is the family) up to its “unification in society [*Vereinigung in Gesellschaft*]”.³⁵⁶ It is during the period just prior to this final unification that the tension between the nomadic sceptic and the dogmatist attempting to establish a civil society reappears. This time, however, the positions are occupied by the “shepherd” (or “*pastoral life*”) and the “farmer” (or “*Agriculture*”), respectively. The conflict between the two results from the essential incompatibility of their different ways of living (“*Lebensart*”) and the opposed principles that each represent. The shepherd, benefiting from a bounteous and uninhabited land, could wander continuously, always sure to find fodder for his/her animals. As such, this manner of living seems to embody the principle of limitless freedom. The farmer, on the contrary, represents private property and law since agriculture requires both that one possesses and governs over the land that is to be cultivated and that one has a fixed dwelling within the vicinity of this land. This act of claiming land as one’s own (giving oneself the right to its possession) and determining the conduct permissible within its borders is quite clearly a belligerent act (even perhaps a declaration of war) since it imposes limits on the shepherd’s freedom. Indeed, Kant says that a certain amount of violence (“*Gewalt*”) must be employed in order to protect the property. This need to defend against the “hordes of roaming herdsmen” and their violent refusal to see their freedom limited is what ultimately causes the scattered families to come together and “erect villages”.

Thanks to the initial, if somewhat crude, social construction, humankind could start to multiply (“*sich vermehren*”) and to expand, like a beehive (“*wie Bienenstöcke*”), by sending out, from a central point, preformed colonists (“*schon gebildeter Kolonisten*”). The bee has a certain privilege in Kant’s repertoire of analogies and is often the preferred image for

³⁵⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/kant/aa08/107.html> (accessed online 06/05/2020), (8: 118)

describing the social organisation of the human species. In Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, for example, the beehive (“hive [*Stock*]”) is the exemplar of a “civil society [*bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*]”.³⁵⁷ Elsewhere, the bee also seems to take on the characteristics of the industrious worker who produces complex objects (“the regularly constructed honeycombs”) by obeying solely its own nature or instinct (as opposed to acting through freedom “i.e. through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason”). The products of the bees are mere effects (“*Wirkung*”), and their manner of operating little more than mechanical (*KdU* 5: 303).³⁵⁸ Although this connection is not explicitly made, the beehive is perhaps the clearest illustration of the kind of social “mechanism” desired by Kant in “What is Enlightenment?” as necessary for the successful pursuit of the interests of the commonwealth.³⁵⁹

Here, however, in contrast to the description in *KdrV*, the conflict between the settled life of the town dwellers and the hordes of roaming herdsmen is not at all negative in its effect. Quite to the contrary, this ‘continual war’ (or at least the ‘danger’ thereof) in fact allows the two opposing sides to ‘rejoice internally in the priceless good of freedom’. Kant justifies this claim, which he insists is still valid ‘today’, by explaining that ‘the danger of war’ is the only thing which ‘moderates despotism’ since the wealth required for ‘a state to be a might’ can only be produced by the freedom of its citizens.³⁶⁰ It is the persistence of an external element which necessitates a certain internal flexibility. In the end, however, no mediating intervention is needed to resolve this conflict since the nomadic shepherds voluntarily renounce their combative stance. The “increasing luxury [*Luxus*] of the town dwellers” as well as their “art of pleasing [*Kunst zu gefallen*]”, ultimately prove too great a

³⁵⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), p.268

³⁵⁸ The honeycomb might only be considered a work of art in so far as it is ascribed to the bees’ creator (‘*Schöpfer*’), who presumably would be freely acting by means of these insects (*KdU* 5: 303).

³⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, “*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*” in W. Weischedel *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik I* 18th edition (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2017), p.55. (Hereafter, “*Was ist Aufklärung?*”)

³⁶⁰ Kant, *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (8: 120)

“lure” for the shepherds, who “let themselves be drawn into the glittering misery of the towns”.³⁶¹ This theme of voluntary capitulation reappears quite frequently in Kant’s discussions of the resolution of conflict. The contexts in which it is used and the difficulties it provokes will be examined later on.

Despite orienting itself by means of a state of war, the *Critique* seems unwilling to understand the nature of its own intervention as directly participating in this state. The *KdrV* does not present itself, not openly at least, as a declaration of war. In fact, Kant almost systematically shifts register when treating the nature of the critical intervention, preferring instead to locate it in a legal context. The critique is not so much a combatant on the battlefield of metaphysics as a court of justice (“*Gerichtshof*”) allowing reason to secure its rightful claims (“*gerechten Ansprüchen*”) by means of its own eternal and immutable laws (Axii). When, however, the theme of war is less easy to disperse and lingers uncomfortably in the background, the critique seems to take on the guise of a peace treaty i.e. as an outline of the necessary conditions for peace in philosophy. After all, it is the critical philosophy which will put an end to the ceaseless controversies, the continual skirmishes provoked by scepticism, and the “intestine wars” to which reason is subjected (A751/B779). And, as Kant says, it is only critique which is able to do so: the “*critical path alone is still open*” (A856/B884). In a later essay, entitled “*Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*”, published in 1796, Kant makes this thematic explicit. The acceptance of the conditions of possible experience as outlined by the critical philosophy, the acceptance of the limitation of knowledge to the realm of appearances, would result in a perpetual peace in philosophy. Kant sees this conclusion as both inevitable and immanent.³⁶² However, the gesture of composing (that is, determining the contents of) a

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² ‘Proclamation of the imminent conclusion of a treaty of perpetual peace in philosophy’ in H. Allison and P. Heath ed. *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781* trans. by P. Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8: 419, p. 457. ‘*Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*’ in *Was ist Aufklärung?* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1999), p. 84.

peace treaty which one's opponents must sign is not entirely unimplicated in certain species of violence or of domination. A brief detour through the thought of Carl von Clausewitz will allow a clearer articulation of some of these problematic elements.

For Clausewitz, peace is never a neutral state. On the contrary, it is rather the successful imposition of a structure of domination. One of the principal ends (*Zweck*) of a war of domination or conquest is precisely to impose *one's own* peace onto the enemy. In his early notes on strategy, Clausewitz suggests that there are two aims of war: "either to destroy the enemy, to abolish its existence *qua* state [*seine Staatexistenz aufzuheben*], or to dictate to the enemy the conditions of peace".³⁶³ Both have exactly the same intention: to paralyse ("zu lähmen") the enemy forces.³⁶⁴ As Clausewitz says later in *On War*, it is above all the conqueror that is fond of peace: "The conqueror is always peace loving (as Bonaparte always affirmed), he would quite gladly march into our state without disturbance".³⁶⁵ Hence, for Clausewitz, peace is not at all incompatible with a certain kind of warfare (that is, the kind of warfare whose end is domination) but rather appears as its ultimate manifestation. One might even suggest, to borrow a schema from Nietzsche, that the will to peace is only able to raise itself up thanks to the more fundamental will to war, and it does so not as the "opposite" of the latter but rather as its "refinement".³⁶⁶

The ambivalent nature of peace is quite visible in the afore mentioned essay by Kant, "*Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*". The composition and implementation of a peace treaty by the critical philosophy is in no way incompatible with its inclination to a certain kind of war, that is, the

³⁶³ (My translation): „Entweder den Gegner ganz zu vernichten, seine Staatexistenz aufzuheben, oder ihm beim Frieden Bedingungen vorzuschreiben.“ Carl von Clausewitz. *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804 mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809 in Verstreute kleine Schriften* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979), p.20.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ "Der Eroberer ist immer friedliebend (wie Bonaparte auch stets behauptet hat), er zöge ganz gern ruhig in unseren Staat ein". *Vom Kriege*, p.385

³⁶⁶ Nietzsche's aphorism originally deals with 'the will to knowledge' and 'the will to not know'. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil in Beyond Good and Evil/On the Genealogy of Morality* trans. by A. Del Caro (California: Stanford University Press, 2014), §24

war of conquest. Kant makes this quite clear: “*Critical philosophy*”, he says, “is that which sets out to conquer [*Kritische Philosophie ist diejenige, welche... Eroberung zu machen anfängt*].”³⁶⁷ It attempts neither to build nor to destroy systems (as the dogmatists and the sceptics, respectively), still less does it try to satisfy the demands of both at once by setting up “temporary shelter” (like “moderatism”). Rather, the critical philosophy’s war of conquest is supported by an examination of the terrain, that is, an investigation into the *capacity*³⁶⁸ of human reason (“*Untersuchung der Vermögen der menschlichen Vernunft*”) (8: 416; p.80). This inclination to war lets itself be seen again at the end of the *KdrV*. Immediately after revealing that only the critical path is left open, the reader is invited to partake in developing it further, or, as Kant specifies, in making what is at present only a footpath (“*Fußsteig*”) into a military road (“*Heeresstraße*”)³⁶⁹ (A856/B884). Here it is also important to note that the purpose of the *Heeresstraße* is to ensure the successful imposition of peace on occupied territory by facilitating the movement of military force.³⁷⁰

3.2 Violence, Law, and Freedom

One of the logical consequences that Clausewitz draws from the continuity between warfare and the state of peace, is that peace itself is never absolute, never perpetual. For Clausewitz, the conditions which support and render possible this act of domination can always be undermined or disrupted, be it through counter-strategy or the workings of chance. In this context, the transition from the military metaphor to a legislative one (the movement from the battlefield of metaphysics to “the tribunal of reason”) takes on a greater significance.

³⁶⁷ “*Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*”. 8: 416, p. 455/p. 80

³⁶⁸ Or ‘power’ according P. Heath translation (8: 416).

³⁶⁹ Both Norman Kemp Smith and Guyer and Wood opt for very neutral translations of this word, the former choosing “high-road”, the latter, “highway”. However, the military connotations of “*Heeresstraße*” are quite strong (“*Heer*” meaning of course “army” in German). The German dictionary, *Duden*, makes these connotations clear, defining “*Heeresstraße*” as: “*breite Straße, die besonders für den Durchzug von Truppen geeignet ist*” (“a wide road particularly suited to the movement of troops” (my trans.))

<https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Heerstrasse> [accessed 10 May 2018]

³⁷⁰ See Carl von Clausewitz, “*Ueber die militärischen Rücksichten bei Anlegung von Straßen*” in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990).

What is at stake in this transition and the difficulties it produces become clearer when Kant picks up this theme at the end of the *KdrV*.

The critique of pure reason can be regarded as the true tribunal for all disputes of pure reason; for it is not involved in these disputes...but is directed to the determining and estimating of the rights of reason in general (A751/B779).

It is precisely this change in register which diverts attention from the implications of an intervention in a state of war (indeed, it is even claimed that the critique does not directly intervene at all: “it is not involved [*nicht mit verwickelt*: not mixed up or implicated] in these disputes”). The focus is shifted away from the precise manner in which the critique asserts itself towards the disastrous consequences that would follow its failure to do so. If such a critique were not there to “secure...the peace of a legal order”, “reason” would find itself “in the state of nature,” and would only be able to “establish its assertions and claims...through war” (A751/B779). Curiously, Kant presents these two states (characterised by the absence or the presence of critique) almost as alternatives that one might freely choose between. It is, however, a choice in which one of the options has been (or must/should be) ruled out in advance. The first state is that of endless war, punctuated only occasionally by moments of “uncertain peace [*unsicherer Friede* (trans. mod.)].” The second state, by contrast, brings an end to all disputes by striking³⁷¹ “at the very root of the conflicts” and hence, has as consequence a perpetual peace (“*ewigen Frieden*”).

On the battlefield, the attempt to dictate laws is continually opposed, both by the warring factions as well as by the effects of chance. In the tribunal, on the contrary, the laws are already in place and one is concerned only with judging in accordance with them. At worst, the critique will have to perform a function comparable to that of “the police” whose main business (“*Hauptgeschäfte*”) is to put a stop to the violence (“*Gewalttätigkeit*”) that

³⁷¹ Kant uses the verb *treffen* (‘trifft’)

citizens fear from each other (“*welche Bürger von Bürgern zu besorgen haben*”), so that all may go about their own affairs “in peace and security [*ruhig und sicher*]” (B xxv). Curiously, however, in ‘What is Enlightenment?’, this same function is said to be performed by an army. Frederik II can say: “*Argue as much as you will and about what you will; only obey!*”, solely because, in addition to being “himself enlightened” (and unafraid of “phantoms [*Schatten*]”), he has at the same time a well-disciplined and numerous army (“*ein wohldiszipliniertes zahlreiches Heer*”) ready at hand (“*zur Hand*”) to guarantee public peace (“*zum Bürgen der öffentlichen Ruhe*”) (8: 42). Indeed, the solution to the conflict between freedom and law proposed in Kant’s essay on Enlightenment shows a certain structural similarity to the one found in the critical philosophy.³⁷²

The “mechanical laws” of nature, the causal chain (“*Kausalverbindung*”) which only ever descends (*KdU* 5: 387, 373), permitting no intervention or interruption, is reconciled with the demands of freedom by a splitting of the subject, philosophically justified in the doctrine of “transcendental idealism”. According to this latter, “sufficiently proved in the Transcendental Aesthetic”, everything “intuited in space and time, and therefore all objects of any possible experience to us”, are nothing other than “appearances” or “representations” (A490-1/B518-9). Space and time, as pure intuitions, are but the necessary conditions for objects to appear (or to be given) “to us” in general. They cannot be said to apply to objects independent from the manner in which the latter affect us (that is, to things in themselves) and nor do they “exist outside our mind” (A492/B520). For the “I” to be an object of knowledge, it must be given in intuition and subjected the laws of the possibility of experience, and hence also must be determined by a cause. Yet, since intuition only deals with appearances and not with the things in themselves, this same “I”, insofar as it is purely intelligible in character and

³⁷² This is something that Foucault insists on, even suggesting that Kantian criticism (in its ‘transcendental-critical’ aspect) announces an imperative that parallels the one of Frederick the great: ‘Reason as much as you want, but do you really know up to what point you can reason without it becoming dangerous?’ Michel Foucault. “What is Critique?” in S. Lotringer ed. *The Politics of Truth* trans. L. Hochroth and C. Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 50

thus not given in intuition, might be considered as free from the “chain of naturel causes” (A554/B582). Hence, according to Kant, “both may exist, independently of one another and without interfering with each other” (A557/B585).

A similar gesture is performed in “Enlightenment?”, however, this time the separation between the two domains, freedom and obedience, is maintained by violence (or the threat thereof), that is, by the presence of a numerous and well-disciplined army. So as not to interrupt the “mechanism...necessary” for the “many affairs conducted in the interests of a commonwealth”, any disagreement regarding the efficacy or justice of an order must be suspended. Obedience must be immediate and thus the private use of reason must be kept in check, the failure to do so potentially resulting in “general insubordination [*allgemeine Widersetzlichkeiten*].” The critique, however, may be subsequently submitted to a reading public (“*Publikum der Leserwelt*”) for its appraisal. That is, insofar as each member is a part of the machine (“*Teil der Maschine*”), s/he should behave merely “passively”; insofar as the citizen considers him/herself as a member of the reading public, s/he has the freedom to dispute without limits. According to Kant, a lesser degree of civil freedom (“*bürgerlicher Freiheit*”) is in fact more compatible with the people’s freedom of the *spirit* (“*Freiheit des Geistes des Volks*”), since it opens a space in which the latter might develop to its full capacity (“*Vermögen*”).³⁷³

Despite the similarities between “Enlightenment?” and *KdrV*, the question as to whether, in the critical philosophy, the installing and maintaining of law requires a certain form of violence is less easy to answer. However, Kant’s reference to Hobbes in the description of the movement out the state of nature of philosophy into a legal order provokes a certain suspicion. The reference even seems to be used to justify this movement: “As

³⁷³ Kant, “*Was ist Aufklärung?*”, p.61

Hobbes maintains, the state of nature is a state of injustice and violence, and we have no option save to abandon it and submit ourselves to the constraint of law” (A752/B780).

This imposition of a fixed legal structure, whose “authority...no one can question”, certainly “limits our freedom” but only so that “it may be consistent with the freedom of others and with the common good of all” (A751-2/B779-80). For Hobbes, however, this submission to the constraint of law (which is at the same time the submission to the incontestable authority of a single will, that is, a sovereign power) is inextricable from the employment of violence. It is only because of a continual “fear of punishment” that the laws of the commonwealth (or “covenants”) are adhered to, since these latter, “without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all”.³⁷⁴ Further, for the founding of a commonwealth, Hobbes gives only two options. Either the sovereign power sets out to conquer and “by war subdueth his enemies to his will”, or “men agree amongst themselves to submit to one man...voluntarily”.³⁷⁵ These two options, violence and voluntary submission, however, are both problematic for a philosophy wishing to establish eternal and incontestable “rights”, since the former founds itself on an arbitrary act of injustice and the latter presupposes external agreement (rather than proving the necessity of it).

Elsewhere, Kant shows himself quite conscious of the problems posed by the movement from war to a legal order. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, during a discussion of warring nations (that is, nations in “a state of nature”), Kant admits that “it is difficult even to form a concept [*Begriff*] of [right during a war]”. Amongst the arms of war, the laws are silent (“*inter arma silent leges*”).³⁷⁶ However, the problem here is above all a logical one: that of thinking “law in this lawless state [*ein Gesetz in diesem Gesetzlose Zustande*] without contradicting oneself”.³⁷⁷ In this text, Kant presents no satisfactory resolution to this

³⁷⁴ Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth editions, 2014), p. 132

³⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 135

³⁷⁶ Kant. *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, 6: 347

³⁷⁷ Ibid

difficulty. Rather, in the lines which follow, he merely affirms that law should (already) be there as *possibility*: wars should be waged in accordance with principles (“*Grundsätzen*”) “that leave open the possibility of leaving the state of nature among states [*nach welchen es immer noch möglich bleibt, aus jenem Naturzustande der Staaten... herauszugehen*]”.³⁷⁸ That is to say, the logical contradiction is only avoided because the ‘state of nature’ is not, strictly speaking, “a state of nature”. It has, on the contrary, with the agreement of the warring factions involved, already been prepared in advance by the spectre of law.

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant tries to think war itself as a means of leaving “the state of nature”. However, as becomes clear, it can only do so with the aid of certain very problematic presuppositions. Not only is the war in question very restricted in nature (the war waged by an imperialist desire for expansion), but it has also been commandeered in advance by “Providence”. Nonetheless, an analysis of how Kant understands this process will allow an accentuation of some of the persisting problems that the movement from warfare to legality involve.

According to Kant, the human is meant to belong to a “hive, like the bee”, and the “simplest” and “least artificial” form of social unity is to have “one leader in this hive (monarchy)”³⁷⁹. The internal structure being no source of contention, war only comes about when, just as with bees when many hives are positioned next to one another, different social unities find themselves in proximity. Kant, however, is forced to drop the comparison when discussing the manner in which these wars are conducted. While the bee employs cunning or violence (“*List oder Gewalt*”) only to profit from the industry of others, the human wages war so as to strengthen (“*verstärken*”) its own group by uniting (“*durch Vereinigung*”) it with others. “Therefore”, Kant concludes, “civil and foreign war in our species” is in fact a driving force (“*Triebfeder*”) compelling the passage from the “crude state of nature” to “the *civil*

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p.268

state”. As such, one can even regard war as a “mechanical device of Providence [*Maschinenwesen der Vorsehung*]”. Here it seems that the drive towards unification or universal peace, present in both parties (as ultimately belonging to the same species), is what justifies war and violence.

This description of war as the instrument of Providence is then followed by an articulation of the necessary interrelation of violence, law, and liberty for the successful functioning of civil society (that is, for the state of nature to be finally overcome). Freedom and law (the latter being that through “which freedom is limited”) are “the two pivots around which civil legislation turns”. However, for law to be effective (“*von Wirkung*”), a middle term (“*ein Mittleres*”) is needed, which Kant identifies as violence (“*Gewalt*”).³⁸⁰ If this violence is in accordance with freedom, it can also be said to secure the success of the principles of law. Violence, “by analogy with the *medius terminus* in a syllogism”, is what holds the two contrary impulses together and renders them compatible. Though Kant does not explicit the nature of the quasi-syllogism that he has in mind, one can speculatively suggest the following:

Law requires violence to be effective.

Violence can be employed in accordance with the principles of freedom.

Therefore, law and freedom are compatible.

Here it seems that violence or, more precisely (since it is guided by a certain conception of freedom), the *calculated* use of violence is what allows the co-existence of law and lawlessness (or limitless freedom).

The logical problem that Kant is circling around reappears in the discussion of “subsumption” in the critical philosophy. Subsumption involves the subordination of an

³⁸⁰ This term could, of course, also be translated by ‘power’ or ‘force’.

object to a concept (or, in *KdU* a “particular” to a “universal” (*KdU* 5: 179)). It is subsumption which describes the process by which an object conforms (or is made to conform) to the laws of the understanding. For this to take place there must be a certain homogeneity between the two elements involved: “the concept must contain something which is represented in the object to be subsumed under it” (A137/B176). However, as has been seen in the first chapter, in the *KdrV* the activity of subsumption encounters certain difficulties. In this text, Kant insists upon the radical separation between the faculty of intuition, by means of which an object is given, and the faculty of understanding, by means of which an object is thought. Indeed, this disjunction is absolutely necessary for these two heterogenous functions to be performed. Hence, for subsumption to be possible Kant must find a way to bring them back together without, however, sacrificing any of the spontaneity of the pure concepts of the understanding or compromising the passivity of the intuitions. In the first *Critique*, Kant posits the “*transcendental schema*” as the solution to this problem. Kant understands the schema as what he calls a “transcendental determination of time”, that is, the organisation of appearances in time in accordance with the rules for synthesis provided by the categories. The schema acts as the middle term allowing subsumption to take place since it shares qualities with the two heterogenous elements to be brought into relation. On the one hand it is “homogenous with the category (which constitutes its unity) insofar as it is universal and rests on a rule *a priori*” and on the other, is homogenous with appearances “insofar as time is contained in every empirical representation of the manifold” (A138-9/B177-8).

Insofar as the schema “mediates” between the concepts and the intuitions and allows the latter to be subsumed under the former, it is also that which permits the thinking of law in a lawless state without contradiction. However, in light of the preceding analysis, the simplicity of this solution and the ease with which it is arrived at, might strike one as somewhat suspicious. As has been attested the numerous examples above, Kant continuously and seemingly inevitably has recourse to a certain form of violence or a certain notion of war

in order to render law and lawlessness compatible. Violence seems even to be considered by Kant as a *logical* necessity for the unity of these two terms to be thought. By means of a close analysis of the conceptual apparatus which renders possible and justifies the non-violent mediation of the schematism, it will be shown that Kant does not escape the need for a certain calculated use of violence. In the first *Critique* this violence gets displaced or covered over by means of a logical slippage in Kant's argumentation, however, as will be shown, it resurfaces (though without being thematised) in the third *Critique* as part of the "Analytic of the Sublime".

3.3 The *a priori* Synthetic Judgement

The *KdrV* seeks to substantiate its claims to have the right to dictate the conditions of peace in philosophy, by demonstrating the possibility (and the necessity) of "the *a priori* synthetic judgement." Indeed, the whole critique is precisely undertaken because of the difficulty ("*Bedenklichkeit*") that these judgements present (A13-4). A successful proof of their possibility would prevent any further challenges to the authority of metaphysics and would bring to an end all internal wars. The task of bringing peace without being implicated in the conflicts falls, hence, to the synthetic *a priori* judgement.

Kant clarifies the nature and the functioning of the synthetic *a priori* judgement by opposing it to the analytic *a priori* judgement. With this latter kind, one stays within a given concept in order to discern something about it. Answering only to the "principle of contradiction", the analytic judgement articulates the elements already thought (albeit, confusedly) within a concept. Its function is principally that of clarification (A7/B11). It does not, however, pose the question of the *possibility* of this concept, that is, whether or not it might relate to an object (A258/B314). The synthetic *a priori* judgement, on the other hand, is precisely concerned with securing this possibility, and hence must evidently move beyond the given concept. It oversteps the limits of the concept in order to consider it in relation ("*Verhältnis*") to something entirely other than what is already thought in it. Or as Kant says

later in the first *Critique*: “if one is to judge synthetically from a concept, then it is necessary to go out of the concept and into intuition, in which it is given” (A721/B749).³⁸¹ In consequence, says Kant, this relation is never one of “identity or of contradiction” and the “truth” or the “falsity” of the judgement which affirms it, can never be discerned from the judgement alone (A154-5/B193-4).

A certain precarity thus attaches itself to the copula of the synthetic *a priori* judgement. In excluding a relation of identity or contradiction, the “is” cannot announce the complete assimilation of the external element, nor, however, can this latter element be determined, strictly speaking, as external. In addition, the affirmation effectuated in a certain sense no longer takes place within the judgement itself, but rather is obliged to have recourse to something else to demonstrate its truth (an unknown “X” on which the understanding supports itself (“X, worauf sich der Verstand stützt” (A9)). If it is admitted that one must go beyond a given concept in order to compare it synthetically with another, “then a Third is necessary in which the synthesis of the two concepts can originate [*so ist ein Drittes nötig, worin allein die Synthesis zweener Begriffe entstehen kann*]” (A155/B194)). This Third is at once origin (suggested by the verb “*entstehen*”), “medium”, and support of the synthetic *a priori* judgements. Kant identifies it with the ensemble (“*Inbegriff*”) “in which all our representations are contained, namely, inner sense and its *a priori* form, time”³⁸² (A155/B194). Although, for Kant, the imagination and the transcendental unity of apperception are still without doubt essential (the former, for synthesising the representations, and the latter, for providing this synthesis with unity) they now find themselves located in and dependent upon the medium of inner sense. This “*Inbegriff* of all our representations”, however, poses certain difficulties to interpretation and finds itself torn between the

³⁸¹ “Wenn man von einem Begriffe synthetisch urteilen soll, so muß man aus diesem Begriffe hinausgehen, und zwar zur Anschauung, in welcher er gegeben ist”

³⁸² This particular passage in the *KdV* is subject to a certain degree of editorial disagreement. However, the original German text is as follows: ‘Was ist nun aber dieses Dritte, als das Medium aller synthetischen Urteile? Es ist nur ein Inbegriff, darin alle unsre Vorstellungen enthalten sind, nämlich der innre Sinn, und die Form desselben a priori, die Zeit.’

conflictual functions that it is supposed to be the site of. To articulate this conflict, it is necessary to examine more closely the place of “intuition” in the *Critique* as a whole.

Despite the brevity of the treatment it receives, the “Transcendental Aesthetic” is supposed to perform an essential role in the functioning of the *Critique*. It is the passivity of intuition which permits an “immediate” relation to objects. This relation is ultimately what allows Kant to make claims regarding the objective reality of the concepts of the understanding. Throughout the first *Critique*, the realm of intuition is presented as a realm of certainty and security. It is sensibility which, in restricting the understanding, also allows it to be realised (“*Sinnlichkeit, die den Verstand realisiert, indem sie ihn zugleich restringiert*” (A147/B187)). To leave sensibility behind means to pass into the insecure territory (“*unsicheren Boden*”) of “pure and even transcendental concepts” (A725-6/B753-4). However, as seen in the end of the first chapter, one has reason to question the security of the realm of sensibility. Space and time, as the *a priori* forms of intuitions, are given the task of passively organising or co-ordinating the matter received through sensation (as opposed to the spontaneous understanding which seeks to subsume it under a concept). Yet, as Howard Caygill points out, there is a “fundamental difficulty” with the assertion that “the mind” is at once “receptive to the givenness of objects” while also “co-ordinating them in definite relations”. A pure receptivity would leave no room for such a “co-ordinating activity.”³⁸³

Kant, in fact, lets the problem of the necessary activity of intuition be seen in his description of the synthetic *a priori* judgements. In a moment of lexical imprecision, Kant asserts that space and time are pure (“*rein*”) concepts (“*Begriffe*”) (A156/B195). This claim, however, is much more than an accidental slippage in terminology, it is rather the manifestation of a logical slippage. Kant makes this clear in what follows. He continues:

³⁸³ Caygill. *A Kant Dictionary*, p.374

indeed, ...[the] representation [of space and time] is a mere schema [*bloßes Schema*] which is always related to the reproductive imagination that calls forth the objects of experience (A156/B195)

In this passage, space and time are given not only the name but also the function of concepts: they provide rules for synthesis (schemas). In imputing activity to the intuitions, Kant must sacrifice the pure passivity of the mind and reconceive the relation to something external.³⁸⁴ Kant hence finds himself obliged either to espouse an idealism whereby all objects are mere products of the mind, or to philosophise with and amongst objects which are not simply passively given but instead, in their externality, resist the understanding.

Kant's discussion near the end of the first *Critique* of the insecure territory of the pure or transcendental use of concepts allows a deepened understanding of the state of chaos and confusion signalled by the metaphor of war at the beginning of the *KdrV*. In this later discussion, Kant once again has recourse to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to illustrate his philosophical position. Here, the territory beyond the limits of sensibility is said to be able to provide neither ground that can be stood on, nor water that can be swum in ("*instabilis tellus, inabilis unda*") (A725-6/B753-4). This time Kant is drawing an image from Ovid's opening description of "Chaos". In Ovid's text, the world has its origin in Chaos, a confused mass of unstable and transitory forms all colliding with and destroying one another. In this original state, all the contrary elements (cold and hot, moist and dry, light and heavy...) are mixed together in a single body and are said to fight continually ("*pugnabant*") with one another. This conflict ("*litem*") is only brought to an end ("*diremit*") when some anonymous god, the architect of the world ("*mundi fabricator*"), separates out these elements.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁴ Caygill. *A Kant Dictionary*, p.374

³⁸⁵ Ovid *Metamorphōseōn librī*, (I.15-25, 57) <http://bcs.fltr.ucl.ac.be/METAM/Met01/M01-001-252.html> [accessed 10 may 2018]

That Kant conceives of his own philosophical intervention in a similar manner, can be discerned from the passage at the end of “Amphiboly” in *KdrV*, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Here, Kant takes as his philosophical starting point “the concept of an object in general, taken problematically, without its having been decided whether it is something or nothing”.³⁸⁶ This “object in general”, which, as has been seen, is neither possible nor impossible, neither something nor nothing, is only separated out and organised through the work of categories (A290/B346). However, since intuition is also implicated in this activity of separation, that is, objects (or more precisely actuality) are *received*, the distinguishing between something and nothing becomes more problematic. The incontestable authority of the architect of the world, who identifies the contrary elements to be distinguished from one another, begins to look questionable.

When Kant speaks of the ensemble (“*Inbegriff*”) of all our representations as being “the inner sense and its *a priori* form, time”, these two terms do not let themselves be thought together (either as synonymous or as forming a unity) without complication. One of the things that the “Analytic of the Sublime” brings out is precisely the disjunction between inner sense and its own form (time), a disjunction which is present even under normal conditions of synthesis and can only be overcome through the employment of “violence [*Gewalt*]”. In this section, Kant outlines the precise manner in which the “comprehension” of multiplicity (“*Vielheit*”) in the unity (“*Einheit*”) of intuition functions. Kant’s elaboration of the process of “comprehension” in *KdU* seems in fact to be a development and a complication of what was called “the synthesis of apprehension” in the first *Critique*. In the latter, the imagination, without encountering any apparent resistance, runs through intuition in order to hold it together in the “absolute unity” of a single moment (A99). However, in the *KdU* it precisely the movement of unifying in a single moment which poses certain problems to the imagination. The imagination, which rushes through the different elements to be synthesized,

³⁸⁶ „der Begriff von einem Gegenstande überhaupt (problematisch genommen, und unausgemacht, ob er Etwas oder Nichts sei)“

always apprehends them successively, according to what Kant, in one of his refutations of idealism, refers to as the “unceasing change”³⁸⁷ of the inner sense. For this unceasing change (or, perhaps, even this pure flux) to be separated out into moments of simultaneous things, that is, for “simultaneity” to be “intuitable” at all, the imagination must do a certain “violence” to the inner sense. This violence causes the inner sense to fold back on itself and hence “cancels [*Aufhebt*]” the progression of the imagination (*KdU* 5:258-9). Without this act of violence, however, it is not clear how time as it is understood in the “Transcendental Aesthetic” (that which makes simultaneity and succession intuitable) might relate to objects.

Once outside the judicial limits of the critical philosophy Kant is willing to pursue this logic more rigorously. In the *Opus Postumum*, Kant says that “[w]orld is the complex [*Inbegriff*] (*complexus*) of things in one space and one time; thus, since neither are given objectively, in appearance.” However, he insists that “[m]oving forces... (e.g. attraction and repulsion)” must be “inserted in [the world]”, since without such an intervention “there would be no perceptions; but only what is formal.”³⁸⁸ In opposition to the absolute unity provided by the eternal and immutable laws of the understanding, the organisation of appearances by means of attractive and repulsive forces suggests rather a precarious unity. In the *Opus Postumum*, unity is produced only through a continual tension between opposing forces, one which seems open to change and reconfiguration. However, while still within the boundaries of the critical philosophy, Kant must search for a way around this problem. Another attempt at justifying the establishment of law can be seen in Kant’s “judgement of the beautiful”, which is said to belong to the category of *a priori* synthetic judgements in general (*KdU* 5:289).

Although the introduction of *KdU* claims that the book’s main intention is to find a way of reuniting the sensible and the supersensible (so that lawfulness of nature might at least

³⁸⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments* ed. and trans. by P. Guyer (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), n.5653; 18:307).

³⁸⁸ Immanuel Kant. *Opus Postumum* ed. by E. Förster, trans. by E. Förster and M. Rosen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 21:24.

be *thought* as compatible with the ends of freedom) (*KdU* 5: 176), the text in fact undertakes some of the work left unfinished by the first *Critique*. As Kant announces later on in the text, the judgement of the beautiful is actually part of his response to “the general problem of transcendental philosophy: How are synthetic *a priori* judgements possible?” (*KdU* 5: 289). The importance of the role that the judgement of the beautiful plays in securing this possibility should not be underestimated. Kant articulates this quite clearly in one of his notes: “[b]eautiful things indicate that the human being belongs in the world and even his intuition of things is in agreement with the laws of his [sic] intuition”.³⁸⁹ It quite clearly responds to the problem of the relation between intuited things and the forms of intuition.

Against the contradiction of thinking law in a lawless state, the judgement of the beautiful appears as lawfulness without law (“*Gesetzmäßigkeit ohne Gesetz*”) (5: 241). Taste is itself revealed to operate by means of a “principle of subsumption [*Prinzip der Subsumtion*]”, but not of intuitions under concepts. It is rather of “the faculty of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) [*Vermögens der Anschauungen oder Darstellungen (d. i. der Einbildungskraft)*]” that is subsumed under “the faculty of concepts (i.e. the understanding) [*das Vermögen der Begriffe (d. i. den Verstand)*]”.³⁹⁰ This subsumption is only performed insofar as the first in its freedom (“*Freiheit*”) is in harmony (“*zusammenstimmt*”) with the second in its lawfulness (5: 287). Since all subsumption is effectuated by the imagination, the imagination must be thought of as freely subsuming itself under the understanding. It is in this circular and highly problematic manner that Kant proposes to resolve the problem of subsumption, that is, by having intuition, here identified with imagination, subsume itself under the understanding.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, n.1820a; 16:127.

³⁹⁰ By sleight of hand, Kant has identified intuition with imagination and in so doing has neutralised the relation to an outside of representation (that is, the problem of the externality of the object).

³⁹¹ The judgement of the beautiful is hence not a case of resistance to the concept. It is rather an idealised relation of the non-conceptual to the conceptual where the former is seen as conforming of its own accord to the latter. The judgement of the beautiful points to the supersession of the distinction between concepts and intuitions, between possibility and actuality.

The fact that the judgement of the beautiful involves a harmony not determined by concepts produces a certain difficulty (one which Kant seems a little reluctant to deal with): one can never be certain that one has judged correctly concerning the feeling of the beautiful. Kant admits that the aesthetic judgement is subjected to “unavoidable difficulties” precisely because it does not have access to the proof that a subsumption under concepts provides. Since the subsumption is only “under a relation that is merely a matter of sensation, that of the imagination and the understanding reciprocally attuned to each other in the represented form of the object” the “subsumption can easily be deceptive” (*KdU* 5:291). This problem cannot be eradicated since it is entailed by the very nature of the judgement. Pure pleasure resulting from harmonious play of the faculties cannot be kept apart from less pure (that is, empirical) sources of pleasure. Beauty is always tormented by the possibility of deception. The right to demand universality which the judgement of the beautiful is supposed to permit is hence essentially contestable. Ultimately the sole proof that Kant can offer for the judgement of the beautiful is that the *actuality* of the beauties of nature lies open to experience (“*die Wirklichkeit der Naturschönheiten der Erfahrung offen liegt*”) (*KdU* 5: 291).

3.4 Clausewitzian Synthesis

Clausewitz, like Kant, also understands his own philosophical position in terms of synthetic knowledge and criticises the lack of pertinence of those theories of war which restrict themselves to mere analysis.³⁹² All theory which obtains results by means of abstraction and simplification can be considered as advances in the domain of truth (“*Fortschritte in dem Gebiet der Wahrheit*”) only insofar as the analytic part (“*analytischen Teil*”) of knowledge is concerned. For the synthetic part (“*synthetischen Teil*”), however, their rules (“*Regeln*”) and prescriptions (“*Vorschriften*”) are entirely useless. The application of theory in its analytic use (and Clausewitz, against Kant, includes geometry in this latter) to

³⁹² This connection is made by Caygill in “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.411.

experience cannot be done “without doing violence to the truth [*ohne die Wahrheit zu verletzen*]”.³⁹³

However, there is already a slight deviation from the Kantian schema. Rather than having the abstract notion of “experience” (or mere “possible experience”) as its touchstone, theory is instead judged by its ability to relate to *actual life* (“*wirkliche Leben*”). Hence, for Clausewitz, any fixed formula (“*Formel*”) is said to be a limitation (“*Beschränkung*”) entirely untenable against the force of actual life (“*gegen die Macht des wirklichen Lebens*”). And the kind of theory which prescribes manoeuvres based upon reasoning of a purely geometrical nature remains blind to the matter at hand and is ultimately unable to govern actual life (“*das wirkliche Leben zu beherrschen*”).³⁹⁴

This has long been a preoccupation of Clausewitz’s and can be seen in his earlier notes on strategy (taken in the years 1804, 1808, and 1809). Though a great admirer of mathematics,³⁹⁵ Clausewitz totally denies its synthetic nature and hence also its pertinence to a theory that wants to take actual experience (or actuality) as its object. Responding to the question “Should a commander know much mathematics?”, Clausewitz, without denying a certain utility for the “development of the intellect [*seinen Geist zu bilden*]”, ultimately concludes: “Mathematics has just about as much to do with the veritable art of war as with a sermon”.³⁹⁶ Clausewitz thematises this through a discussion of the incompatibility of the *example* and the *fixed formula*.

The “example” and the “formula”, he says, are completely different in nature: “[t]he *example* is the living case, the *formula*, the abstraction.” When nothing belonging to the matter in question is lost through the process of abstraction, as is the case with mathematics

³⁹³ *Vom Kriege*, p.70

³⁹⁴ *Vom Kriege*, p.69-70

³⁹⁵ See, the letter “*Den 28. Februar.*” in Karl von Clausewitz und Marie von Clausewitz, *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, p.95

³⁹⁶ “*Mit der eigentlichen Kriegskunst hat die Mathematik grade so viel zu schaffen wie mit einer Predigt*”. Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804 mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809*, p.6.

(since its object is already abstract), then the formula is entirely sufficient. When, however, it is necessary to continually turn away from the “living” so as to be able to hold onto that which is the easiest to abstract, “the dead form”, one ends up with a “dry skeleton of bland truths and commonplaces, forced into received form”.³⁹⁷ He goes on to say that it is truly remarkable that so many of those who write on war devote their time and energy to the development of just such ossified forms. That which is the most important in war and in strategy, namely “the particularities, specificities, and localities”, lends itself with the least willingness to “abstractions and scientific systems”.³⁹⁸ It is for this reason that Clausewitz says that books on war have always “come too late”, and have only ever offered up “dead form [*tote Manier*]” as their content.³⁹⁹ This is not, however, the “too late” of the Hegelian philosophy, which signifies the agreement or rather the identity of *Wirklichkeit* with the ideal. For Hegel, philosophy is not needed to express how the world *should* be, since *Wirklichkeit* in its *Bildungsprozeß* takes on the ideal form itself. This identity is ensured through the presupposition of a logic of actualisation.⁴⁰⁰ For Clausewitz, on the contrary, it is the rather the inherent incompatibility between a fixed form and actuality which means that the former always arrives too late. In these early notes on strategy, Clausewitz proposes “a reasoning [*Raisonnement*] about the true spirit of war”, so as to leave behind “from time-to-time the mannerisms into which all art so easily regresses” since, he says, “the spirit disappears more easily than the forms”.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ “Aber Exempel und Formel sind ganz verschiedener Natur. Das Exempel ist der lebendige Fall, die Formel die Abstraktion. Da, wo bei der Abstraktion nichts zur Sache gehöriges verloren geht, wie in der Mathematik, erreicht sie ihren Zweck vollkommen. Aber wo sie unaufhörlich das Lebendige fallen lassen muß, um sich an das zu halten, was freilich am leichtesten zu abstrahieren ist, die tote Form, wird sie am Ende ein trockenes Gerippe von faden Wahrheiten und Gemeinplätzen, in eine Schulform gezwängt”. Ibid, p.60. Many thanks to Isolda Mac Liam with help translating this passage.

³⁹⁸ “das, was im Kriege und in der Strategie vorzüglich das wichtigste ist, nämlich die größten Besonderheiten, Eigentümlichkeiten und Lokalitäten, sich den Abstraktionen und wissenschaftlichen Systemen am ärgsten entziehen”. Ibid, p.60-1.

³⁹⁹ “Immer sind die Kriegsbücher zu spät gekommen, und zu allen Zeiten haben sie tote Manier dargestellt”. Ibid, p.47.

⁴⁰⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1979), p.17

⁴⁰¹ “ein Raisonnement über den wahren Geist des Krieges, damit man von Zeit zu Zeit von dem Manirierten zurückkomme, worin jede Kunst leicht verfällt, weil der Geist leichter entflieht, als die Formen”. Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahre 1804 mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809*, p.46.

The need to reflect upon the *spirit* of war rather than on the ossified forms is something that guides Clausewitz's early thinking. It is in these terms that Clausewitz formulates his own position in the somewhat critical letter he wrote to Fichte in 1809. One should not, like Machiavelli, hold fast to an old ideal form that one seeks to emulate with ever greater precision⁴⁰² but rather one should seek to recover the true spirit of war ("*sondern einzig suchen, den wahren Geist des Kriegs wiederherzustellen*"). This is, for Clausewitz, the true starting point of philosophical reflection on war: "One should hence start not with the form but rather with the spirit and expect the latter to destroy the old forms and to work them into something more pertinent".⁴⁰³ The imperative to start with that which cannot be reduced to an ossified form is something which Clausewitz incorporates into his interpretation of Kant, in particular, in his critical restaging of the judgement of the beautiful. This is most visible in a short text on aesthetics entitled "Architectonic Rhapsodies [*Architektonische Rhapsodien*]" (composed between 1809-12 according to Werner Hahlweg).⁴⁰⁴

3.5 Architectonic Rhapsodies

In this text, Clausewitz responds to the Kantian synthetic judgement(s) and begins to sketch out a radical and incisive challenge to the critical philosophy. Raymond Aron, in his two-volume study of Clausewitz, dismisses the influence of Kant on the former's understanding of aesthetics. However, Aron's refusal is far too abrupt and lacks adequate textual support. He does not progress much further than the bold assertion that "even in matters of aesthetics, Clausewitz's notes do not suggest a reading of the *Critique of the*

⁴⁰² Carl von Clausewitz, "Ein ungenannter Militär an Fichte, als Verfasser des Aufsatzes über Machiavell im ersten Bande der »Vesta«." in *Kleine Schriften: Geist und Tat - Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 1941), p.67. "man [soll] nicht wie Machiavell an eine schon dagewesene bessere Manier sich halten und sich diesen oder jenen Formen wieder nähern".

⁴⁰³ "Man soll also nicht mit der Form, sondern mit dem Geist anfangen und sicher erwarten, daß dieser die alten Formen selbst zerstören und in angemessenem wirken werde". Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ This hypothesis seems all the more probable considering the notes the other notes on philosophy left from this period. See: Werner Hahlweg. 'Einleitung' in W. Hahlweg ed. *Verstreute kleine Schriften* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979), p. XIX

Faculty of Judgement’’.⁴⁰⁵ Against Aron’s claim, one might also note that his own work on Clausewitz shows a distinct lack of engagement with the latter’s thoughts on aesthetics, and of the two volumes dedicated to the military thinker only two pages explicitly treat this subject.⁴⁰⁶ Further, the treatment itself remains highly superficial and mostly restricts itself to providing a general summary of the ideas contained or suggested in the four texts, adding occasional indications of how some of the ideas might relate to Clausewitz’s understanding of war.⁴⁰⁷

Even a cursory reading of “Architectonic Rhapsodies”, however, seems to belie Aron’s claim. Clausewitz’s text is characterised by a clear and consistent use of Kantian vocabulary as well as an engagement with a distinctly Kantian logic. However, Clausewitz, just like all the other thinkers writing in the wake of Kant, offers a particular interpretation of the critical philosophy and at the same time expresses a certain dissatisfaction with how it claims to hold itself together. The title itself seems to be a wry and critical reference to Kant’s much feared “rhapsody of perceptions [*Rhapsodie von Wahrnehmungen*]” and although the text does not explicitly detail what is to be thought under the term “architectonic rhapsody”, it suggests a way of conceiving it.

Using the architect as his example, Clausewitz begins to sketch his own version of the Kantian synthesis. Against Kant’s privileging of synthesis directed downwards (one which starts from an abstract and absolute unity which must be imposed on a multiplicity, on the model of the schematism), Clausewitz tries to think a synthesis which moves in the opposite direction. In this short text, however, the fairly strict adherence to the conceptual apparatus of the critical philosophy (despite certain contestations and infidelities) in fact limits the development of Clausewitz’s reflections.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘*Même en matière d’esthétique, les notations de Clausewitz n’impliquent pas une lecture de la Critique du jugement*’. Aron. *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz : 1*, p. 436

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p. 452-3

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The text opens with a claim clearly bearing the trace of the *KdU*: “Beautiful form lets itself be cognised by the understanding just as little as beautiful tone and beautiful colour do”.⁴⁰⁸ However, against Kant’s ultimately untenable wish for a purely *a priori* notion of beauty, Clausewitz insists rather bluntly that “the element of beauty is given only in mere intuition”.⁴⁰⁹ Beauty is determinately external and the tools of the understanding cannot be used to make it any more comprehensible (“*begreiflicher*”). Hence, the only way the architect can only take hold of (“*erhaschen*”) this element is by continually calling up the intuition in the soul (“*wenn er sich die Anschauung in die Seele ruft*”).⁴¹⁰

It is only once a composite out of the elements (of intuition) has been formed that “thought” and “clear consciousness [*deutliches Bewußtsein*]” are set to work. These latter organise and join together the simple forms (“*einfachen Formen*”) in accordance with the end and the meaning (“*nach Zweck und Bedeutung*”) of the work. For Clausewitz, this activity of composition (“*Zusammensetzung*”) also announces the reign of the understanding and with it the reign of law.⁴¹¹ It is also only here that the objective judgement (“*objectives Urteil*”) becomes possible (“*möglich*”). This latter judgement is that which decides, in the act of composing, what is to be kept and what discarded (“*was recht und was verwerflich sei*”).

The beautiful artwork produced by the architect is hence composed (“*zusammengesetzt*”) out of the elements, intuition and understanding. However, Clausewitz adds, it is an error to think that the understanding is accorded a larger field since, seemingly, as soon as the first compositions are made, the intuition is no longer needed in the process of construction. On the contrary, the element of beauty, its original simplicity (“*urprünglichen Einfachheit*”) must be continually returned to with each new act of composing. The beautiful intuited element is even said to be the touchstone (“*Probierstein*”) to which the composed

⁴⁰⁸ “*Schöne Form läßt sich so wenig wie schöner Ton und schöne Farbe mit dem Verstande erkennen*”. Carl von Clausewitz, “*Architektonische Rhapsodien*” in Werner Hahlweg ed. *Verstreute kleine Schriften* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979), p.149

⁴⁰⁹ „...das Element des Schönen in der bloßen Anschauung gegeben ist“ p.149

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ „*das Reich des Verstandes und mit ihm das Reich des Gesetzes*“. *Ibid.*

(“*Zusammengesetzte*”) is continually subjected (“*unterworfen*”). The continual movement between the beautiful intuited element and the structure as a whole is perhaps that which renders all architecture (and by extension all that claims to be ‘architectonic’) rhapsodic. The beautiful element remains unassimilated. Clausewitz ends the text with the somewhat wry: “So much for our philosophy [*Soweit unsere Philosophie*]”.

Against Aron’s suggestion that Clausewitz’s description of the analytic and the synthetic parts of theory is at best an inexact remembrance of Kant’s opposition between analytic and synthetic judgements,⁴¹² one is now in a position to insist that it is rather a critical reformulation of the latter. Clausewitz is trying to think synthesis in a context where everything is indeterminate (“*alles unbestimmt ist*”) and calculations must be made on the basis of shifting magnitudes (“*veränderlichen Größen*”).⁴¹³ Just as the *external* element of beauty functions as “touchstone” for artistic creation, for the mature Clausewitz it is actuality, itself understood as a form of externality (above all an externality to the concept), which acts as touchstone.

Kant refuses categorically the possibility of knowledge within the realm ‘actual life’ and of the organised being, declaring that there will never be a Newton able to understand the blade of grass purely through natural laws (*KdU* 5: 400). Clausewitz repeats but at the same time subtly critiques this claim: “Life with its rich teaching will never bring forth a Newton or a Euler, but it may well produce the higher calculation of a *Condé* or a *Friedrich II*”.⁴¹⁴ Insofar as one is confronted with ‘actual life’ (or as will be seen later on, ‘actuality’ in general), the absolute laws of Newtonian science and Eulerian mathematics will find little purchase. Strategy, however, *is* at work in the field of actuality. It is in this context that

⁴¹² Aron, *Penser la guerre, Clausewitz : 1*, p.368n.5

⁴¹³ *Vom Kriege*, p.70

⁴¹⁴ “*Das Leben mit seiner reichen Belehrung wird niemals einen Newton oder Euler hervorbringen, wohl aber den höheren Kalkül eines Condé oder Friedrich*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.79

Clausewitz replaces the synthetic *a priori* judgement with the strategic judgement (*strategisches Urteil*).⁴¹⁵

The problem that Clausewitz here confronts is also the problem of what Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne, in *Les ruses de l'intelligence*, refer to as “*mètis*”, the Greek term for cunning or ruse. “Metis”, they affirm, “is most certainly a form of intelligence and of thought, a mode of cognising”⁴¹⁶ but one which is “applied to transient, moving, disconcerting and ambiguous realities [*réalités*], which do not lend themselves either to precise measurement, exact calculation, or rigorous reasoning.”⁴¹⁷ Once one is faced with a mutable and uncertain externality, the application of fixed forms is no longer an appropriate schema, one must be just as flexible as the reality that one is faced with. Vernant and Detienne describe it thus:

The individual endowed with metis, ...when confronted with a multiple, changing reality, whose illimited capacity of polymorphism renders almost completely ungraspable, can only dominate it, that is, enclose it within the limits of a fixed form, on which the individual has a hold, in being itself more multiple, more mobile, more polyvalent than its adversary.⁴¹⁸

For Clausewitz, it is strategy and the calculated use of violence which allows actuality to be determined. The strategist must undergo a process of constant change so as not to be left behind by an actuality which is itself unstable and constantly shifting.

To understand the functioning of strategy, it is necessary to examine in detail the medium within which it acts. For the mature Clausewitz, this medium is above all

⁴¹⁵ *Vom Kriege*, p.540

⁴¹⁶ “*La mètis est bien une forme d'intelligence et de pensée, un mode du connaître*”. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Les ruses de l'intelligence ; La mètis des Grecs* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), p.10

⁴¹⁷ “*elle s'applique à des réalités fugaces, mouvantes, déconcertantes et ambiguës, qui ne se prêtent ni à la mesure précise, ni au calcul exact, ni au raisonnement rigoureux*”. Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ “*L'individu doué de mètis... lorsqu'il est confronté à une réalité multiple, changeante, que son pouvoir illimité de polymorphie rend presque insaisissable, ne peut la dominer, c'est-à-dire l'enclore dans la limite d'une forme fixe, sur laquelle il a prise, qu'en se montrant lui-même plus multiple, plus mobile, plus polyvalent encore que son adversaire.*” *Les ruses de l'intelligence*, p.11.

characterised by “friction” (*Friktion*). It is this term which he uses to describe the continual introduction of chaos into all action that takes place in the field of actuality. The following chapter will explore the origins of the concept of friction in Clausewitz’s early texts and show how it comes to occupy a central role in his later work. As shall be shown, it is by means of the concept of friction that Clausewitz pursues and radicalises the idea of the externality of actuality, inherited from Kieseewetter.

4: Friction and Strategy

4.1 *Friktion*: a “Resistant Medium”

4.2 Transcendental Truth and Strategy

4.3 The Unstable Ground of Philosophy

This chapter seeks to elaborate the nature of the “criterium” or “touchstone” that Clausewitz holds up against the claims of philosophy. For Clausewitz in his mature work, it is above all actuality as friction (*Friktion*) which fills this role. It is, hence, by means of the “concept” of friction that Clausewitz articulates his critique of Kant as well as of all philosophies which succumb to a logic of actualisation. For Clausewitz, Kant’s use of

“experience” as the touchstone for philosophy involves a slight of hand whereby actual experience is surreptitiously replaced by *possible* experience. What Kant seeks to secure are the conditions of *possible* experience, yet the empirical is above all a question of the *actual* and not the *possible*. For Clausewitz, “friction” describes precisely the inherent non-correspondence between actuality and possibility. This correspondence between actuality and possibility can be produced or engineered but it remains precarious and has only ever regional validity. The production of this correspondence implies a different form of intellectual activity than the one outlined by Kant. It will be shown that from a Clausewitzian perspective, “strategy” comes to replace Kant’s “transcendental”.

4.1 Friktion: a “Resistant Medium”

For Clausewitz, the sole concept (*Begriff*) that corresponds to the difference between actual and possible war is friction (*Friktion*).⁴¹⁹ It is, hence, friction which Clausewitz uses to describe the inadequacy of the concept and the irrelevance of a logic of actualisation. In a sense, it is the concept of friction which replaces Kant’s ontologically compromised “concept of the thing in general” or “things in general” (A720/B748). Like Kant’s concept, friction refers to the empirical or the empirically given, unlike Kant’s concept, however, the conformity of the empirical with the conceptual is not presupposed. As early as in his *Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg* (1810/11), Clausewitz states clearly that his concept of “*Friktion*” (or as he says, “the friction of the entire machine [*die Friktion der ganzen Maschine*]”), “just like every other *friction* [*wie jede andere friction*]”, can only be known in experience (“[*läßt*] *sich... nur in der Erfahrung erkennen*”).⁴²⁰ The empirical nature of friction

⁴¹⁹ “*Friktion ist der einzige Begriff, welcher dem ziemlich allgemein entspricht, was den wirklichen Krieg von dem auf dem Papier unterscheidet.*” *Vom Kriege*, p.86

⁴²⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg in Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe in Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe. Erster Band* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), p.445. An earlier usage of the term “*Friktion*” appears in a letter to Marie von Clausewitz in 1806. Here, however, it is used in a laudatory description of Scharnhorst merely as a metaphor to refer to the manner in which the effects of talent are limited (“*gelähmt*”) by the obstacles of propriety (“*Hindernissen der Konvenienz*”) and the opinions of others (“*fremder Meinungen*”). Clausewitz uses a formulation of which he is particularly fond in his theoretical writings: “*ceaseless friction* [*unaufhörliche Friktion*]”. See, Karl von Clausewitz und Marie von Clausewitz, *Ein*

is something that Clausewitz also repeatedly insists upon in *On War*. Clausewitz argues that friction, and the accumulation of difficulties that hinder movement, can never be correctly represented by those who have not experienced war.⁴²¹ It is even said to be antithetical to theory: Clausewitz insists that one will never totally comprehend friction merely theoretically (“*Man wird [die Friktion]... theoretisch nie kennenlernen*”), and even if this were possible, the refinement of judgement known as tact would be lacking (“*so würde jene Übung des Urteils immer noch fehlen, die man Takt nennt*”), which can only really be exercised and developed in a field full of infinitely small and manifold objects (“*in einem Felde voll unendlich kleiner und mannigfaltiger Gegenstände*”).⁴²² What becomes apparent in Clausewitz’s thought is that the concept of friction describes precisely the *non-conformity* of the empirical with the conceptual.

The most extended discussion of this concept appears in the seventh chapter of the first book of *On War*, “Friction in War”. An earlier sketch of the ideas present in this chapter appears in Clausewitz’s *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, a text in which Werner Hahlweg refers to as a “military historical study” and whose manuscript was completed around 1823.⁴²³ This text, which Hahlweg describes as “a strategical study in form and at the same time a critical examination of Napoleon’s art of generalship” combining both theory and Clausewitz’s personal experiences of war,⁴²⁴ is an important source for understanding the process of intellectual development leading to *On War*.⁴²⁵ The section in which one sees these ideas first sketched out is quite short in length, however, the wording bears very close

Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern, p.65. Peter Paret notes this usage as the first one. See Peter Paret, “The genesis of *On War*” in M. Howard and P. Paret ed. *On War* (New York: Everyman’s Library, 1993), p.17.

⁴²¹ “Schwierigkeiten häufen sich und bringen eine Friktion hervor, die sich niemand richtig vorstellt, der den Krieg nicht gesehen hat”. *Vom Kriege*, p.86.

⁴²² *Vom Kriege*, p.88

⁴²³ Werner Hahlweg, “Kriegsgeschichtliche Arbeiten; Vorbemerkung” in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.726

⁴²⁴ “eine strategische Studie in Form zugleich einer kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit der Feldherrnkunst Napoleons, wobei es Clausewitz darum zu tun ist, Theorie und eigenes Erleben zweckvoll aufeinander abzustimmen”. *Ibid*, p.724-5

⁴²⁵ *Ibid*, p.725

resemblance to the chapter on friction in *On War*, and many of the central propositions are already articulated.⁴²⁶ Although it is clear that Clausewitz had been working with the idea of friction for quite some time, this short paragraph in *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland* seems to be the first articulation of his mature concept. Peter Paret claims that the major precursor of Clausewitz's chapter on friction in *On War* is an essay he addressed to the crown prince in 1812, entitled, *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens, zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichts bei Sr. Königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen*. The section on friction in this text was, according to Paret, the "basis", "both in wording and in content", of the chapter in *On War*.⁴²⁷ It is without doubt one of Clausewitz's earlier attempts to outline what will become a central concept in his mature thought. However, to say that "by 1812" Clausewitz had already "fully grasped... [the] theoretical implications [of friction]"⁴²⁸ is to misidentify the theoretical implications of friction.

Absent from this earlier account of friction are three decisive elements. The first is Clausewitz's reflection on friction as *medium* and with it the related metaphor of water. The second is the radicalisation of the distinction between his own concept of friction and that found in the mathematical sciences. These two seem to appear for the first time in the short paragraph in *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*,⁴²⁹ which was most likely worked up into the chapter on friction between 1823 and 1827. The third element that is missing from the various attempts to outline the concept of friction prior to its definitive formulation in *On War* is the explicit link with the notion of actuality. Clausewitz might be seen to begin to make this connection in *Feldzug von 1815*, where the effects of friction are associated with the

⁴²⁶ See Carl von Clausewitz, *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland in Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.865.

⁴²⁷ Paret, "The genesis of On War", p.17.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, p.17

⁴²⁹ "The war instrument resembles a machine with tremendous friction, a friction which cannot as in the case in mechanics be reduced to a few points but rather is everywhere in contact with a mass of contingencies. In addition, war is an activity in a resistant medium. A movement which takes place with ease in the air, becomes extremely difficult in water." ("Das Kriegs-Instrument gleicht einer Maschine mit ungeheurer Friktion, die nicht wie in der Mechanik auf ein Paar Punkte zurückgeführt werden kann sondern überall mit einem Heer von Zufällen im Contact ist. Außerdem ist der Krieg eine Tätigkeit im erschwerenden Mittel. Eine Bewegung die man in der Luft mit Leichtigkeit macht wird im Wasser sehr schwierig"). *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, p.865

“actuality of war [*Wirklichkeit des Krieges*]”. In this text, he describes how the “clarity and determinateness” of an undertaking can get lost in the “uncertainties and contradictions of appearances which are so common in the actuality of war”.⁴³⁰ However, no explicit link is made between the two terms, the concept *Friktion* not being mentioned by name at all in this text.

Clausewitz’s numerous but scattered usages of *Wirklichkeit* prior to the crystallisation of its meaning in *On War* remain for the most part consistent, despite showing a certain degree of variation. It is often associated with truth, experience, and reality (that which is really the case).⁴³¹ In a letter to his wife, Marie, in 1807, he speaks of having seen confirmed everywhere “in actuality [*in der Wirklichkeit*]” “the truth” of that which theory had taught him (the later Clausewitz becomes a bit more critical regarding the relation between theory and actuality).⁴³² In certain places, he opposes the two concepts of actuality and representation. In “*Die Deutschen und die Franzosen*” (1807), using a highly charged Kantian vocabulary, he speaks of the *agreement* (“*Übereinstimmung*”) of representations with actuality.⁴³³ Further, in another letter to Marie (July 1807), during a discussion of his disappointment regarding the conditions of peace imposed upon the Prussian army, he says: “the actuality is so utterly

⁴³⁰ “*die frühere Klarheit und Bestimmtheit seiner Aufgabe [verlieht] sich in die Ungewißheiten und Widersprüche der Erscheinungen..., die in der Wirklichkeit des Krieges so häufig sind.*” Carl von Clausewitz, *Kriegsgeschichtliche Arbeiten in Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, zweiter Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.1074

⁴³¹ For the latter, see, for example, the disjunction between a “*Vermuthung*” and the “*Wirklichkeit*” of a situation. *Der Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, p.813.

⁴³² “*überall aber habe ich in der Wirklichkeit die Wahrheit dessen erkannt, was die Theorie mich gelehrt hat, und überall mich von der Wirksamkeit ihrer Mittel überzeugt.*” *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*

⁴³³ While the intellect (*Verstand*) that Clausewitz associates with the French national character is said to rejoice simply at the discovery of “the agreement of its representations with actuality” and to be ceaselessly preoccupied with the external characteristics of things, the German intellect, on the other hand, is not satisfied with this state of knowledge. It follows with greater constancy a single thought, it delves deeper into the nature of things, becomes immediately abstract, and seeks to completely exhaust the object. “[*Der deutsche Verstand*] verfolgt einen gefasten Gedanken mit mehr Beständigkeit und also weiter, und anstatt wie der Franzose sogleich an der Übereinstimmung seiner Vorstellungen mit der Wirklichkeit sich zu erfreuen und unaufhörlich wie dieser von den äußeren Merkmalen der Dinge angezogen und festgehalten zu werden, vertieft er sich in ihre Natur, wird augenblicklich abstrakt und strebt, den Gegenstand ganz zu erschöpfen.” “*Die Deutschen und die Franzosen*” in *Politische Schriften und Briefe* ed. by Hans Rothfels (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), p.43

different from the mere representation, the outer appearance from the inner”.⁴³⁴ In one text, “*Der Feldzug von 1812 bis zum Waffenstillstand*”, Clausewitz seems even to use it according to the model of actualisation: “What followed showed that this did not remain mere speculation; in a few months the idea had stepped out into actuality”.⁴³⁵

These four kinds of uses of actuality can be summarized as follows: the confirmation of the truth of something (theory and actuality); the agreement between representations and actuality (also a question of truth); the non-coincidence of *mere* representation and actuality (deception or illusion); and the fact of becoming actual or entering actuality (mere speculation against actuality). What is consistent in these four uses is the idea of actuality as *criterium*, that is, as that in relation to which the value and the pertinence of things (theory, representations, ideas etc.) must be determined. In Clausewitz’s mature work actuality continues to occupy this same function of criterium or touchstone, however, he greatly develops his understanding of its nature. It is only once Clausewitz begins to explicitly think the notion of actuality together with his concept of friction that his understanding of the former takes on its most profound and philosophically radical form. Further, it is the conjunction of these two concepts that allows him to articulate his critique of actualisation and provides the basis of his own philosophy of actuality.

From the perspective of theory, Clausewitz says in *On War*, a logic of actualisation sounds quite convincing (“*Theoretisch klingt es ganz gut*”): a general or commander of an army receives an order which must then be realised; the instrument available to the commander is the battalion, which, through strict discipline, has been unified into a single

⁴³⁴ “*So verschieden ist die Wirklichkeit von der bloßen Vorstellung, die äußere Erscheinung der Dinge von der inneren*”. “*Soissons, den 31. Juli 1807*” in *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Tagebuchblättern*, p.131

⁴³⁵ “*Die Folge hat gelehrt daß diese keine leere Spekulation blieb; in wenig Monaten war die Idee in die Wirklichkeit hervorgetreten*”. Carl von Clausewitz, *Der Feldzug von 1812 bis zum Waffenstillstand in Der Feldzug von 1812 in Rußland, der Feldzug von 1813 bis zum Waffenstillstand und der Feldzug von 1814 in Frankreich* (Berlin: Ferdinand Dümmler, 1835), p.259.

entity; the commander, by force of character, directs the soldiers assigned to him or her towards the realisation of the telos.⁴³⁶ The whole thing should work the like a “beam” turning on an “iron pivot” with “little friction”.⁴³⁷ However, in actuality (“*in der Wirklichkeit*”) this is never the case.⁴³⁸ As Clausewitz says in his earlier text, *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens*: “waging war is comparable to the effect of a complex machine [*zusammengesetzten Maschine*] with tremendous friction”, combinations which one forms with ease in abstraction, can, in actuality, only be carried out with great exertion.⁴³⁹ It is precisely friction which shows up everything that is exaggerated and untrue in representation (“*alles, was die Vorstellung Übertreibenes und Unwahres hat*”).⁴⁴⁰ For Clausewitz, friction takes on the role of a criterium of truth, a touchstone for the pertinence of a theory or a representation. If Kant says in his lectures on logic that a “universal material criterium of truth is impossible”⁴⁴¹, it is perhaps because he did not want to pursue the consequences of passing through a criterium which involves the externality of the object. Friction as a criterium of truth entails a relinquishing or a destabilising of the standard concept of truth.

Friction is “an invisible and universally active factor [*unsichtbaren und überall wirksamen Faktor*]”,⁴⁴² which introduces chance and uncertainty into every action, every gesture. Everything that exists is subjected to its effects. The term originally comes from the mechanical sciences; however, Clausewitz distinguishes his own usage from the one found in the former. As seen in the above quotation from *Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg*,

⁴³⁶ *Vom Kriege*, p.86-7.

⁴³⁷ “*so dreht sich der Balken um einen eisernen Zapfen mit wenig Friktion*” *Vom Kriege*, p.87.

⁴³⁸ *Vom Kriege*, p.87

⁴³⁹ “*Das ganze Kriegführen gleicht der Wirkung einer zusammengesetzten Maschine mit ungeheurer Friktion, so daß Kombination die man mit Leichtigkeit auf dem Papier entwirft, sich nur mit großen Anstrengungen ausführen lassen.*” Carl von Clausewitz. *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens, zur Ergänzung meines Unterrichts bei Sr. Königlichen Hoheit dem Kronprinzen in Kleine Schriften: Geist und Tat - Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 1941), p.76 (Hereafter, *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens*)

⁴⁴⁰ *Vom Kriege*, p.87

⁴⁴¹ Kant, *Logik*. p.477

⁴⁴² *Vom Kriege*, p.86

Clausewitz distinguishes orthographically his own concept of “*Friktion*” from “all the other types of *friction*”, the latter being spelt with a “c” rather than a “k”. The two orthographs were present in German scientific literature at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, though “*Friction*” had a longer history in the mechanical sciences and more immediately evokes this context.

This distinction is clarified and rendered more precise in *On War*. The “enormous friction” which is characteristic of the actuality of war “cannot be reduced to a few points as is the case in mechanics”.⁴⁴³ It is only by means of a process of abstraction, and hence also of *distortion*, that the points of contact are reduced to a countable number. In actuality, the points of friction are seemingly infinite. “The military machine, the army and everything related to it” are not in themselves of a great complexity and they seem easy to use and to navigate.⁴⁴⁴ Yet no part of this mass is a single piece, on the contrary, everything is composed of individual bodies, each one of which is subject to friction on all its sides.⁴⁴⁵ This friction is both internal and external. It is not just the resistance of an external world to an act emanating from a unified and self-identical subject, it is also the internal resistance of any organised thing. Clausewitz seems here to follow Kant’s description in the “Amphiboly” of the realm of appearances. In this section Kant contends that there is no “pure internality, only ever relative internality, which itself is composed of external relations” (A277/B333).⁴⁴⁶ The very idea of an absolute internality of matter, as dreamt up by the pure understanding, is nothing but “an empty thought [*eine bloße Grille*]”. Kant adds, however, that one can speak of a “transcendental object”, which might very well be the ground of the appearance, referred to as

⁴⁴³ “*Diese entsetzliche Friktion... [lässt] sich nicht wie in der Mechanik auf wenig Punkte konzentrieren*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.87.

⁴⁴⁴ “*Die militärische Maschine, die Armee und alles, was dazu gehört, ist im Grunde sehr einfach und scheint deswegen leicht zu handhaben*.” *Vom Kriege*, p.86

⁴⁴⁵ “*alles [ist] aus Individuen zusammengesetzt..., deren jedes seine eigene Friktion nach allen Seiten hin behält*” *Vom Kriege*, p.86. I would like to thank Dr. J. H. M. White for his help regarding the translation of this crucial passage.

⁴⁴⁶ “*Ich habe also zwar nichts Schlechthin-, sondern lauter Komparativ-Innerliches, das selber wiederum aus äußeren Verhältnissen besteht*.”

matter, yet it is a “mere something [*Etwas*]” whose nature we would not understand even if someone were able to explain it to us (A277/B333).⁴⁴⁷ However, Clausewitz does not think the distinction between the inside and the outside as entirely arbitrary. The limits of a being or an individual is not merely a question of perspective as, for example, is the case for Spinoza in his *Ethics*.⁴⁴⁸ Rather, he has a dynamic conception of this difference. As shall be seen further on, it is above all the concept of the centre of gravity which allows him to negotiate the distinction between inside and outside.

For Clausewitz this continual and pervasive externality (everything is outside of everything else) means that friction is everywhere and at all times in contact with chance (“*Zufall*”) and brings forth appearances that can in no way be calculated.⁴⁴⁹ The non-localisable, in so far as it cannot be reduced to a few fixed points, internal and external resistance that every movement encounters means that there is a continual redirection of energy.

Clausewitz condenses his thoughts on friction in the thesis: “Action in war is movement in a resistant medium.”⁴⁵⁰ This should be understood in two senses. Firstly, as indicating that no action can take place without encountering resistance: there is no free movement in the field of actuality; and secondly, as a way of describing the extension and dispersion of the effects of each action. The critique of free movement is already clear in Clausewitz’s *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens*. Here, in the context of a discussion of friction, “the free will [*der freie Wille*]” (of the general) is said to find itself

⁴⁴⁷ “Allein, das schlechthin, dem reinen Verstande nach, Innerliche der Materie ist auch eine bloße Grille; denn diese ist überall kein Gegenstand für den reinen Verstand, das transzendente Objekt aber, welches der Grund dieser Erscheinung sein mag, die wir Materie nennen, ist ein bloßes Etwas, wovon wir nicht einmal verstehen würden, was es sei, wenn es uns auch jemand sagen könnte ”

⁴⁴⁸ Spinoza, *Ethique*, (III7S), p.132-4.

⁴⁴⁹ “[die Friktion] ist deswegen überall im Kontakt mit dem Zufall und bringt dann Erscheinungen hervor, die sich gar nicht berechnen lassen, eben weil sie zum großen Teil dem Zufall angehören”. *Vom Kriege*, p.87

⁴⁵⁰ “Das Handeln im Kriege ist eine Bewegung im erschwerenden Mittel”. *Vom Kriege*, p.87.

“continually and without pause hampered in all its movements”.⁴⁵¹ In this early text, Clausewitz continues by saying that a “remarkable force of soul and of understanding is necessary to overcome this resistance”. In *On War*, however, Clausewitz appears more critical regarding the possibility of surmounting this resistance: “A powerful iron will overcomes this friction, destroys the obstacles, but also inevitably the machine as well”.⁴⁵² The will that tends towards the ideal of a free, unhindered movement threatens to destroy itself.

Of particular importance for the characterisation of friction as a medium is the metaphor of “water”, which presents itself with a certain insistence. It is in the account of friction in *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, that Clausewitz starts to deploy this cardinal metaphor, expanding upon the mechanical metaphor of the “complex machine” (*zusammengesetzte Maschine*), which seems to have played an important role in Clausewitz’s thought at least since his *Vorlesungen über den kleinen Krieg* in 1810-11. The metaphor of water allows Clausewitz to make clearer and render more vivid the movement from abstraction to actuality. In *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, he articulates it thus: a “movement which takes place with ease in the air, becomes extremely difficult in water”.⁴⁵³ If Kant pictured philosophy as emblemised by the “light dove [*leichte Taube*]” in “free flight” through the air, dreaming of an empty space where it would no longer encounter any resistance (A5/B8-9), Clausewitz situates his own philosophy underwater.

⁴⁵¹ “So sieht sich der freie Wille, der Geist des Feldherrn in seinen Bewegungen alle Augenblick gehemmt, und es wird von der einen Seite eine eigene Kraft der Seele, des Verstandes erfordert, um diesen Widerstand zu überwinden. In dieser Friktion mancher gute Gedanke dennoch zu Grunde und man muß einfacher und schlichter einrichten was kombinierter eine größere Wirkung getan hätte.” *Die wichtigsten Grundsätze des Kriegführens*, p.76

⁴⁵² “Ein mächtiger eiserner Wille überwindet diese Friktion, er zermalmt die Hindernisse, aber freilich die Maschine mit”. *Vom Kriege*, p.86

⁴⁵³ “Eine Bewegung die man in der Luft mit Leichtigkeit macht wird im Wasser sehr schwierig”, *Feldzug von 1812 in Russland*, p.865

Kant, of course, points out that the resistance that the light dove experiences, far from hindering it, is a condition of the possibility of its flight and that no progress at all would be made in an empty space. In doing so he seems to incorporate a notion of resistance into his own philosophy. It is, further, precisely in these terms that he critiques Plato, who, according to Kant did not realise that he needed to encounter a “resisting force [*Widerhalt*]” to which he could apply his own forces (“*woran er seine Kräfte anwenden konnte*”) so as to set the understanding in motion (“*um den Verstand von der Stelle zu bringen*”) in the first place. However, the resistance of which Kant speaks is conceived of as already mastered, that is, as completely calculable in advance, and hence as strictly speaking a non-resistance. This is how Kant seems to understand resistance in his text *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis*. Here he says that those who think that the effects of friction render the theory of general mechanics untenable are completely misled. Kant remarks that one must merely add the “theory of friction” to one’s calculations for theory to completely coincide with praxis.⁴⁵⁴

One sees this ideal of a pseudo-resistance clearly articulated in Kant’s *Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie*. Here, he says that the critical philosophy is a “perpetually armed state” which must “ceaselessly accompany the activity of reason”⁴⁵⁵ and as such “it opens up the prospect of a perpetual peace amongst philosophers”.⁴⁵⁶ Kant’s armed peace has, he says, the additional benefit of keeping the

⁴⁵⁴ “Nun würde man den empirischen Maschinisten, welcher über die allgemeine Mechanik, oder den Artilleristen, welcher über die mathematische Lehre vom Bombenwurf so absprechen wollte, daß die Theorie davon zwar fein ausgedacht, in der Praxis aber gar nicht gültig sei, weil bei der Ausübung die Erfahrung ganz andere Resultate gebe als die Theorie, nur belachen (denn wenn zu der ersten noch die Theorie der Reibung, zur zweiten die des Widerstandes der Luft, mithin überhaupt nur noch mehr Theorie hinzu käme, so würden sie mit der Erfahrung gar wohl zusammen stimmen).” Immanuel Kant, *Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis* in W. Weischedel ed. *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik I* 18. Auflage (Berlin: Superkamp Verlag, 2017), p.128.

⁴⁵⁵ “Diese Philosophie [d. h., die kritische Philosophie]... [ist] ein immer... bewaffneter, eben dadurch auch die Vernunfttätigkeit unaufhörlich begleitender bewaffneter Zustand”. “Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie”, p.81

⁴⁵⁶ “[Die kritische Philosophie] ... eröffnet die Aussicht zu einem ewigen Frieden unter den Philosophen”. Ibid.

powers [*Kräfte*] of the subject continually animated by means of “attacks” which put the subject in “seeming danger”.⁴⁵⁷ In so doing, philosophy is in accord with nature’s intention of continually animating the subject and holding at bay the “sleep of death”.⁴⁵⁸ Kant concerns himself with conflict only in an attenuated form and for Clausewitz this resistance remains too abstract and too limited.

One should also note that the image of the dove is certainly not a neutral metaphor, or rather it is a metaphor for neutrality itself. It has long been used to symbolise peace. Further, in the biblical story of Noah, it is a dove that is sent out to find solid ground.⁴⁵⁹ Kant conceives of this resistance and this conflict as already put to the service of (that is as subsumed under) the project of peace and the securing of territory. In stark contrast to this, for Clausewitz, there is no solid ground. As one sees at the end of chapter on friction, the strategist is perpetually at sea, forever navigating uncharted waters.⁴⁶⁰

Clausewitz’s liquid friction, against Kant’s unidirectional resistance, is all englobing and essentially bound up with that which cannot be determined in advance. To navigate through this medium, it is necessary to continually rectify one’s movement in order to counterbalance its effects: “as little as one is capable of performing the simplest and most natural of all movements, mere walking, in water, so little can one meet the line of mediocrity using only ordinary forces.”⁴⁶¹ Friction produces a continual distortion of all movement, a continual loss or redirection of energy. What follows from this is quite the opposite of a strict

⁴⁵⁷ “zu einem Frieden, der überdem noch den Vorzug hat, die Kräfte des durch Angriffe in scheinbare Gefahr gesetzten Subjekts immer rege zu erhalten”. Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ “... und so auch die Absicht der Natur, zu kontinuierlicher Belebung desselben und Abwehrung des Todesschlafs, durch Philosophie zu befördern”. Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Once again, many thanks to Dr. Joel White for drawing these connotations to my attention.

⁴⁶⁰ *Vom Kriege*, p.88

⁴⁶¹ “Sowenig man imstande ist, im Wasser die natürlichste und einfachste Bewegung, das bloße Gehen, mit Leichtigkeit und Präzision zu tun, sowenig kann man im Kriege mit gewöhnlichen Kräften auch nur die Linie des Mittelmäßigen halten”. *Vom Kriege*, p.87

and rationally determinable causality as dreamt of by Kant. The effects of an action cannot be completely explained by the cause attributed to them and a discontinuity introduces itself between cause and effect. The field of actuality permits no absolute precision in the effects of one's actions⁴⁶² and a material or objective clumsiness attaches itself to every gesture. The problematic of the conjunction between necessity and freedom (the absolute necessity of the causal chain and the absolute freedom of the transcendental subject) is bypassed in Clausewitz's thought. The irreconcilability of these two ideals is no longer the central problematic to be negotiated by philosophical thought. Necessity and freedom are drowned in the dark waters of actuality.

The metaphor of water also takes up and extends the notion of "medium", it lets friction be understood from a *hydrodynamic* perspective. This is the second manner in which the thesis, "action in war is movement in a resistant medium", should be interpreted. Since "in war, as in the world more generally, everything that belongs to a whole is interconnected", every cause, no matter how small it might be, produces effects which extend out and influence all other parts.⁴⁶³ Following the metaphor of a liquid, effects let themselves be conceived of as ripples or waves which pass through the whole extent of the field of actuality. Since, as already seen, the relation between cause and effect is thoroughly troubled by the workings of chance, one can characterize Clausewitz's actuality as a plenum of disjointed causal relations.

The metaphor of water has certain limits, two of which should here be noted. Firstly, as has been seen, friction qua "resistant medium" permeates everything. It would hence be false to imagine things which produce effects in the realm of actuality as unified bodies

⁴⁶² Generals are said to need to be familiar with the notion of friction "so as not to expect a precision in the effects which, precisely because of this friction, is not possible [*um nicht eine Präzision in den Wirkungen zu erwarten, die eben wegen dieser Friktion nicht möglich ist*]". *Vom Kriege*, p.88

⁴⁶³ "Es steht aber im Kriege, wie überhaupt in der Welt, alles im Zusammenhange, was einem Ganzen angehört, und folglich muß jede Ursache, wie Klein es auch sei, in ihren Wirkungen sich bis ans Ende des kriegerischen Aktes erstrecken und das Endresultat, um ein wie Geringes es auch sein möge, modifizieren". *Vom Kriege*, p.132

floating in a viscous liquid. Friction as medium cuts through everything and profoundly troubles the unity of a thing. Secondly, it might lead to the idea of actuality as a static substance that *can* be moved, that is, that contains movement as an accident. However, Clausewitz suggests at no point that a static and stable being might be lying underneath, on the contrary, he carefully, avoids falling into a metaphysically complacent conception of actuality, one calqued on the notion of substance. Actuality has only an *effective* existence, it is nothing other than this continuous wave-like movement itself. At this point, one can perhaps allow oneself the luxury of isolating three propositions regarding the nature of actuality in Clausewitz's thought:

1. All that exists produces effects
2. Effects are not reducible to their causes (disjointed causal relations)
3. Everything is bound together in causal relations (causal plenum)

This qualification of actuality as friction should not, however, be understood as an idealism of actuality, as is suggested by Caygill in his short essay "Clausewitz and Idealism".⁴⁶⁴ The friction of actuality is derived from the *externality of the object* (or the externality of everything to everything else). Despite the fact that *Friktion* is so thoroughly bound up with the empirical, Clausewitz does not simply fall back into a precritical empiricism or scepticism and this for two reasons. Firstly, there is a radicalisation of the empirical in Clausewitz's thought: the actuality of experience is seen as intrinsically incompatible with the conceptual. It is not just the problem of the repeatability or the necessity of an experience (the experience of the sun which rises today in no way brings with it the necessity of its rising tomorrow), experience itself is inherently unstable. If, for Kant, the fundamental challenge to philosophy that empiricism offered pertained principally to the

⁴⁶⁴ Caygill, "Clausewitz and Idealism", p.412-3

apodictic judgement, that is, the statement that something *necessarily* is the case, Clausewitz's radically empirical notion of *Friktion* undermines the even assertoric judgement, the statement that something *merely* is the case. Secondly, for Clausewitz, it is possible to influence the form of experience in advance. In this sense, Clausewitz can be seen as trying to think a modulation of the transcendental activity under the notion of strategy. In its Clausewitzian variation, however, this transcendental activity is not totally determining, however, and hence implies a continual relation to something that it does not fully master.

4.2 Transcendental Truth and Strategy

Here, it is important to remark a certain lacuna in Clausewitz's engagement with the Kantian notion of truth. Although he discusses both the formal and material variant, Clausewitz at no moment speaks of transcendental truth, a third category of truth present in Kant's philosophy. Indeed, the word "transcendental" seems to be entirely absent from Clausewitz's texts. Kant presents the notion of "transcendental truth" at the end of the Schematism section. Here it does not seem to be directly a question of the relation of the concept to an object (as is the case in material truth) but rather that which permits this relation. Transcendental truth, he says, precedes and renders possible empirical truth and consists in the general relation to possible experience (A146/B185).⁴⁶⁵ Concepts are said to have transcendental truth when they express *a priori* the relations of perceptions in every experience, that is, the *form* that actuality must take (A221-2/B269). It is certainly possible to explain this oversight, that is, the exclusion of the category of "transcendental truth", through merely superficial or biographical reasons. Clausewitz seems to take Kiesewetter's *Grundriß einer reinen allgemeinen Logik* as his principal source, which itself was heavily based upon Kant's lectures on logic. In his lectures on logic, Kant speaks only of the distinction between

⁴⁶⁵ "In dem Ganzen aller möglichen Erfahrung liegen aber alle unsere Erkenntnisse, und in der allgemeinen Beziehung auf dieselbe besteht die transzendente Wahrheit, die vor aller empirischen vorhergeht, and sie möglich macht."

material and formal truth, hence this third category of truth is also absent from Kiesewetter's text. Indeed, the term "transcendental" is absent from almost all of Kiesewetter's texts (not appearing in his vulgarisations of the critical philosophy nor in his texts on morality). What seems to be the sole mention of the term appears in his *angewandte allgemeine Logik*. Here, the transcendental is defined as "everything that, while being *a priori*, also relates to objects [*alles das, was a priori ist, und auf Gegenstände sich bezieht*]".⁴⁶⁶ He does not linger on this term, however, and seems principally to introduce it in order to explain transcendental illusion.

Against this merely textual explanation, one can posit a more profound and, above all, *philosophical* reason for the absence of this third category. In this context, it should also be noted that although the term "transcendental" seems to be absent from his work, Clausewitz demonstrates that he is familiar with the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction. In his early drafts, he criticises the use of this distinction in a text by a Prussian military theorist, E. v. Bieberstein, who somewhat arbitrarily superimposes it onto the opposition between *Wissenschaft* and *Kunst*, saying that the former is systematic *a priori* knowledge and the latter systematic *a posteriori* knowledge.⁴⁶⁷ Then in "*Bemerkungen über die reine und angewandte Strategie des Herrn von Bülow oder Kritik der darin enthaltenen Ansichten*" Clausewitz puts in question Bülow's use of the term *rein* (pure) in the phrase "*die reine Strategie*" since, he says, "strategy is formed *out of a posteriori* cognition [*sie [d. h. die Strategie] aus Erkenntnissen a posteriori entspringt*]".⁴⁶⁸

In so far as the transcendental makes a claim on possible experience, and in so far as it implies a position outside of actuality, something which determines actuality without itself

⁴⁶⁶ Kiesewetter, *allgemeine angewandte Logik*, ad. §127, p.299

⁴⁶⁷ See: "*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*", p.101.

⁴⁶⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, "*Bemerkungen über die reine und angewandte Strategie des Herrn von Bülow oder Kritik der darin enthaltenen Ansichten*" in Werner Hahlweg ed. *Verstreute kleine Schriften* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979), p.73

being implicated in or affected by it, this notion is highly problematic from a Clausewitzian perspective. Though despite taking a certain critical distance, Clausewitz does not entirely abandon the transcendental. If for Clausewitz there “is no system, no apparatus of truth” there is, however, “a truth,” which is, he writes, “most often found only by means of a trained judgement and the tact of long experience.”⁴⁶⁹ What seems to take place in Clausewitz’s thought is rather a qualification and a relocation of the transcendental. After all, one of the things at stake in *Vom Kriege* is precisely the possibility of determining in advance the outcome of war. If war were total chaos, mere uncontrolled and uncontrollable bursts of violence, subject to no other law than that of chance, any discourse that attempted to outline its contours or determine how one might act within it would be futile. Victory, or the implementation of a structure of domination would be a mere accident that could in no way be influenced. One would be left with nothing other than the impotence of hoping, something which Clausewitz frequently criticises. It is rather under the “concept” of *strategy* that Clausewitz tries to think a form of transcendental activity. In the “realm of uncertainty” and “of chance” that is war,⁴⁷⁰ it is by means of strategy that one can influence the likelihood of success (“*auf die Wahrscheinlichkeit der Erfolge wirken*”).⁴⁷¹

Strategy does indeed act upon combat in advance: it determines the temporal and spatial characteristics of combat, when and where it takes place as well as the nature of the forces to be used. However, as Clausewitz insists: “[s]trategy can only limit the form of a combat, not determine it.”⁴⁷² This entails certain major alterations to the Kantian model. First of all, if the combat is the relation to the empirical, the transcendental activity cannot be completely *a priori*: here, the *a posteriori* is not something merely negligible as Kant’s

⁴⁶⁹ “*Wo es kein System, keinen Wahrheitsapparat gibt, da gibt es doch eine Wahrheit, und diese wird meistens nur durch ein geübtes Urteil und den Takt einer langen Erfahrung gefunden*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.582.

⁴⁷⁰ “*Krieg ist das Gebiet der Ungewißheit*”; “*Krieg ist das Gebiet des Zufalls*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.64

⁴⁷¹ *Vom Kriege*, p.50

⁴⁷² “*Die Strategie kann die Form des Gefechts beschränken, aber nicht bestimmen*.” “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*”, p.96

would like it to be,⁴⁷³ but rather an integral irreducible part of the process. For Clausewitz, it is the determination of the form itself which necessitates a passage through the empirical, i.e., a passage through that which is entirely unpredictable. Strategy's relation to the empirical is then complemented by tactics, which entails a violent application of force seeking to make the living and reacting object conform to the shape imposed upon it. In this sense tactics seem to take on the role of the schematism which works to prepare the intuitions for the concepts which are to be imposed upon them. Unlike the Kantian model, however, for Clausewitz this involves a determinate and conscious resistance on the part of the object.⁴⁷⁴

The influence of strategy on combat does not finish with the descent into the empirical: in reality the transcendental activity is doubled up in the workings of strategy. Strategy not only surprises the empirical by acting on it in advance through determining the time, the place, and the forces to be used, it also retroactively determines the value of the result, whether it be victory or defeat, by weaving it into the campaign as a whole: it is by means of an internal reorganisation of the structure and aims of the military machine that the result of the combat is incorporated. For Clausewitz, strategic activity is at once immanent and continual: "Strategy must enter into the field so as to order the singular *in situ* and to make the modifications for the whole which become absolutely necessary"⁴⁷⁵ and it can at no moment remove its hand from its work.⁴⁷⁶

For Clausewitz, it is the "strategic judgement"⁴⁷⁷ which comes to replace the synthetic *a priori* judgement. Since the strategic judgement unlike the *a priori* synthetic judgement, is unable to rely upon the abstract unity of *a priori* concepts to determine objects, Clausewitz has recourse to another principle of unity: the "centre of gravity" ("*Schwerpunkt*" or "*Centra*

⁴⁷³ In the transcendental Aesthetic, Kant seems to reduce the empirical content to a mere subjective idealism (see A29-30/B45).

⁴⁷⁴ *Vom Kriege*, p.122

⁴⁷⁵ "die Strategie mit ins Feld ziehen muß, um das Einzelne an Ort und Stelle anzuordnen und für das Ganze die Modifikationen zu treffen, die unaufhörlich erforderlich werden." *Vom Kriege*, p.157.

⁴⁷⁶ "Sie [d.h. Strategie] kann also ihre Hand in keinem Augenblick von dem Werke abziehen." Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ *Vom Kriege*, p.540

gravitatis”).⁴⁷⁸ Clausewitz even insists that whenever one speaks of unity, or more precisely internal coherence (“*Zusammenhang*”), it is the analogy of the centre of gravity which should be used.⁴⁷⁹ This term is of particular importance for understanding how Clausewitz conceives of the formation of organised beings in the field of actuality, that is, for understanding the form that ontology takes in Clausewitz’s thought.

The idea of a centre of gravity allows a degree of flexibility that a logical and abstract unity cannot provide. While a logical and abstract unity involves a determination of the parts which comes from the outside, indifferent to their independence, the centre of gravity implies a relation of mutual influence between the parts and the whole. The centre of gravity certainly exerts an influence on the movement and position of the parts, however, at the same time, it itself is only a product of the arrangement and the interaction of these same parts. A significant modification of the relations between the parts can hence change the position and intensity of the centre of gravity. This continual and reciprocal influence provides Clausewitz with the conceptual tools for describing the necessary flexibility and adaptability as well as the continued identity of an organised being in the field of actuality. A logically abstract unity would be unable to effectuate the necessary internal modifications of its nature so as to respond to a constantly changing actuality. Further, the centre of gravity provides a way of understanding the complex relation between the inside and the outside of an organised being. The centre of gravity does not clearly distinguish between what is internal and what is external to the organised being, as such, it can provide no straightforward ontological assertion regarding nature and the limits of the organised being. The latter has, rather, a *sphere of influence* which is constantly being permeated and vitiated by external elements. These external elements enter into this sphere, disrupt it, and are synthetically incorporated. Basing itself on this conception, the strategic judgement consists in a double movement. It must, on the one hand, identify, through reflection upon the living and reacting object before

⁴⁷⁸ *Vom Kriege*, p.539-40

⁴⁷⁹ “*wo aber Zusammenhang ist, da treten die Analogien des Schwerpunktes ein.*” *Vom Kriege*, p.539

it, the latter's centre of gravity. In doing so it seeks to pre-empt and, by means of the calculated use of violence, to limit the object's movements and shifts in position. On the other hand, it must also disguise its own centre of gravity by means of an internal reorganisation of its parts, so as to prevent the possibility of counterattack. This double movement functions to reduce the adversary's possibilities of transformation until there is only one left: capitulation. Here victory is understood as the imposition of a possibility on the adversary that the latter is obliged to actualise. The adversary's *actuality* becomes the *actualisation* of a possibility imposed upon it from the outside.

4.3 The Unstable Ground of Philosophy

Such a philosophical position seems to entail the putting in question of anything that claims to provide a stable point or a solid ground that might be used as foundation. Indeed, the claim to be able to find some solid ground is one of Clausewitz's central criticisms of German Idealism and of philosophy more generally. Schiller, in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, summarises much of what Clausewitz seeks to put in question and to undermine in the project of German Idealism as well as in certain aspects of the Kantian philosophy: "we strive after a solid ground of knowledge that nothing more might shake, and whoever dares not venture beyond actuality will never conquer truth".⁴⁸⁰ For many, it is precisely *possibility* that offers a means of escaping or transcending actuality.⁴⁸¹ One sees in Clausewitz's thought a radical inversion of this project. Clausewitz rejects outright this solid ground as being illusory. Further, for Clausewitz, the attempt to escape from the vicissitudes and uncertainties of an unstable actuality is far from being a mark of daring or courage (as Schiller's use of the verb '*herauswagen*' in the above quotation might

⁴⁸⁰"wir streben ja nach einem festen Grund der Erkenntniß, den nichts mehr erschüttern soll, und wer sich über die Wirklichkeit nicht hinauswagt, der wird nie die Wahrheit erobern." Friedrich Schiller. *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (Berlin: Hoffenberg, 2016), p.31, *Zehnter Brief*.

⁴⁸¹ See Caygill's reading of Schiller's *Aesthetic Education* where actuality and the violent relation of forces is transcended through the formation of an alliance between possibility and necessity (or freedom and law). "Clausewitz and Idealism", p.414-5.

suggest), but rather the sign of a cowardice without end. Courage for Clausewitz is, on the contrary, precisely bound up with a “relentless struggle with the unforeseen”,⁴⁸² and does not consist in a neutralisation of this struggle. In a sense, Kant’s “courage to know” (“*sapere aude*”) or the courage to use one’s own understanding (“*Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen!*”)⁴⁸³ is replaced by something more precarious. One has, according to Clausewitz, “an understanding [*Verstand*] that, even in the most profound darkness, is not without some traces of the inner light, which leads to truth” and with it, the “courage to follow this faint light”.⁴⁸⁴ The former he also refers to as the “*coup d’œil*” and the latter as “determination” (“*Entschlossenheit*”).⁴⁸⁵ While Kant’s conception seems based upon a binary opposition between dependence and independence, where the ideal of courage would seem to partake in the movement from the first state towards the second (or more literally, the going out (“*Ausgang*”) from the first state),⁴⁸⁶ Clausewitz presents more of a shifting scale between truth and uncertainty that one does not transcend. Courage here is rather immanent to state of “half-darkness”, to borrow an image from Clausewitz’s text “*Architektonische Rhapsodien*”⁴⁸⁷, not a transcending movement of emancipation.

In *Umtriebe*, Clausewitz criticises what he calls the “unfortunate longing for the realms of abstraction”, a tendency in German thought exacerbated by the intellectual movement associated with “*Naturphilosophie*”, a direct reference to Schelling.⁴⁸⁸ In his short unpublished and undated text entitled “*Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen*”, Clausewitz rearticulates this critique by accusing philosophy (“vain, wretched, despicable philosophy”!) of wishing “to place us on a standpoint high above the tumult of the

⁴⁸² Clausewitz, *On War* trans. and ed. by M. Howard and P. Paret, p.117. “*beständigen Streit mit dem Unerwarteten*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.64

⁴⁸³ Kant, “*Was ist Aufklärung?*”, p.53.

⁴⁸⁴ “*ein Verstand, der auch in dieser gesteigerten Dunkelheit nicht ohne einige Spuren des inneren Lichts ist, die ihn zur Wahrheit führen, und dann Mut, diesem schwachen Lichte zu folgen*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.64-5

⁴⁸⁵ *Vom Kriege*, p.65

⁴⁸⁶ “*Was ist Aufklärung?*” p.53

⁴⁸⁷ “*Halbdunkel*”. Clausewitz, “*Architektonische Rhapsodien*”, p.151

⁴⁸⁸ “*unglücklichen Sucht nach den abstrakten Regionen*”. Clausewitz says: “*naturphilosophischen Tendenz*”. Carl von Clausewitz. *Umtriebe in Politische Schriften und Briefe* (München: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921), p.180-1.

present” and, in so doing, abstracting from its pressure and extinguishing “the internal resistance within our breast”.⁴⁸⁹ This is what he considers to be one of the cardinal philosophical gestures, that is, the attempt to abstract from a tumultuous and uncertain actuality in order to lay claim to some higher standpoint. Clausewitz refuses outright the impotence and neutrality of a such position, insisting instead that one “is not there in order to observe the world but rather to be it”.⁴⁹⁰

In the critical philosophy the search for the conditions of possibility of experience (or the conditions of possible experience) is a means for Kant to secure the metaphysical foundation of the empirical and hence to circumnavigate the problems raised by scepticism while simultaneously demonstrating the pertinence of his own theoretical claims. Kant claims that this “possible experience” with which philosophy is bound up is “absolutely contingent [*ganz Zufällig*]” (A737/B765). However, from the Clausewitzian perspective, the talk of “possible experience” is a philosophical sleight of hand which seeks to neutralise all that is foreign or strange in actual experience. The securing of the conditions of possible experience is only pertinent on the presupposition that the relation between possible and actual experience is entirely uncomplicated, something which Kant himself begins to doubt. One might even read the third *Critique* as being in part a response to this very problem. If for nature in general, as object of possible experience (“*als Gegenstand möglicher Erfahrung*”),⁴⁹¹ all the laws determining it might be considered as absolutely necessary, since they reside in the understanding *a priori* and, in the absence of which, nature could not be an object of experience at all (“*ohne welche sie gar kein Gegenstand einer Erfahrung sein könnte*”),⁴⁹² the same cannot automatically be said for the objects of empirical cognition (“*Gegenstände der*

⁴⁸⁹ “*Eingebildete, verachtungspottenswürdige Philosophie, die uns auf einen Standpunkt stellen will hoch über das Treiben der Gegenwart hinaus, damit wir uns ihrem Druck entziehen und alles innere Widerstreben unseres Busens aufhöre!*” Carl Von Clausewitz. ‘*Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen*’ in *Kleine Schriften: Geist und Tat - Das Vermächtnis des Soldaten und Denkers* (Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 1941), p.19.

⁴⁹⁰ “*sie [einzelne Geschlechter] nicht da sind, um die Welt zu beobachten, sondern um die Welt zu sein*”. Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ *KdU*, 5: 183

⁴⁹² *KdU*, 5: 184

empirischen Erkenntnis”).⁴⁹³ However, in addition to the laws governing possible experience, the understanding has need of a certain order of nature in regard to its particular empirical rules and “these rules, without which it would be impossible to proceed from the general analogy of a possible experience in general to a particular one” must be treated as laws (i.e. as being absolutely necessary), since otherwise they would not constitute an order of nature and a thoroughly internally coherent experience (“*eine durchgängig zusammenhängende Erfahrung*”)⁴⁹⁴ would be impossible. The understanding, Kant says, would be unable “to find itself” in the chaos of experience⁴⁹⁵ and the entire undertaking of the *Critique* would have been futile.

It is, further, in this sense that one might understand the preoccupation with the notions of purpose (*Zweck*) and purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) in the third *Critique*. If “purpose” is the concept of an object insofar as this concept contains at the same time the ground of the actuality of this object (“*Grund der Wirklichkeit dieses Objekts*”),⁴⁹⁶ it is by means of the concept of purposiveness, that nature as a whole can be represented *as if* an understanding contained the ground of the unity of its empirical laws. That is to say, *as if* actuality and possibility belonged to the same register or possibility produced actuality of its own accord.⁴⁹⁷ It is precisely this conception of nature as the actualisation of a pre-existing concept and hence as entirely internally organised and determined, which allows the understanding to orientate itself. In the Kantian system, however, a straightforward resolution of this question is precluded by the simple fact that the problematic of material truth is couched in terms of correspondence or agreement rather than in real actualisation, hence Kant cannot move beyond a tentative “as if” in the description of nature.

In Clausewitz’s thought, war manifests itself as something which actively resists, as that which does not let itself be reduced to a concept: it remains actuality rather than mere

⁴⁹³ *KdU*, 5: 183

⁴⁹⁴ *KdU*, 5: 184

⁴⁹⁵ *KdU*, 5: 193

⁴⁹⁶ *KdU*, 5: 180

⁴⁹⁷ *KdU* 5: 180-1

actualisation. This might also explain why *Sinn und Bedeutung* appears crossed out, why this model borrowed from Kant proves ultimately to be inadequate. To the reasons outlined in the early notes, the later Clausewitz adds numerous others. War is the realm of chance, of friction and uncertainty, of disturbed causal chains. It is a “liquid medium” (*erschwerenden Mittel*) where everything is bound together in relations of reciprocal causality and everything is subject to the continual loss of energy.⁴⁹⁸ All movement in this resistant medium constantly produces effects which not only cannot be predicted but whose influence cannot even be measured. In addition to this, one of the principal aspects of warfare is the art of deception. The constant need to disguise one’s movements and intentions, to give off intentionally false appearances, and to take by surprise is ever present in the confrontation with the enemy. War is hence an internally unstable and in part intentionally deceptive object.

At the beginning of *On War* Clausewitz articulates quite clearly how he conceives of his own position. He says: “Philosophy and experience should never despise nor exclude one another; rather each should act as guarantor for the other”.⁴⁹⁹ Despite the similarity that this affirmation bears to the insistence at the foundation of Kant’s critical project that experience, or to be more precise, possible experience, must be taken as the touchstone of philosophy, Clausewitz is in fact saying something quite different. According to Clausewitz, the use of ‘possible experience’ as a form of touchstone is already a gesture which excludes experience from philosophy. For Clausewitz, possibility, considered in itself (that is, abstracting from its origin in actuality and the effects that it produces) is always a falsification.

For Clausewitz the passage through actuality is inextricably bound up with the effects of chance, with the continual loss of energy through friction, elements which serve to distort the clarity and undermine the pertinence of a possibility traced out in advance. Actuality for Clausewitz always implies a certain excess or externality. Hence, when Clausewitz speaks of

⁴⁹⁸ *Vom Kriege*, p.87

⁴⁹⁹ “*Philosophie und Erfahrung dürfen nie einander verachten noch ausschließen; sie leisten einander gegenseitige Bürgschaft.*” *Vom Kriege*, p.23

experience, he means above all “actual experience”, which he also refers to as a relation to the “actual world”, to “actual life” or simply to “actuality”. It is, therefore “actual experience” (described by the concept of “friction”) which functions as criterium in Clausewitz’s mature work, replacing or nuancing the notion of material truth in his early notes and drafts. This commitment to actual experience means that Clausewitz ultimately gives up on concepts in the Kantian sense. *Friktion*, strategy (strategic judgement), tactics, centre of gravity become his fundamental concepts (*Grundbegriffe*)⁵⁰⁰ but they are far from having the same pure, transcendental status that Kant’s categories have, they are all intimately bound up with the empirical. Clausewitz does not leave the domain of philosophy: he rather puts it on unsteady ground. It is no longer the judge, who is merely concerned with applying pre-existing laws, that serves as model for philosophical thought, but rather the strategist.

One of the questions not yet addressed is the question of the relation to “politics” in Clausewitz’s thought. Up until here, a great deal of interpretative weight has been put on the actuality of war. However, Clausewitz’s most famous proposition, “war is the continuation of politics by other means”, seems to suggest that war must be understood as a manifestation or even as an actualisation of a political intention. Indeed, according to the concept that politics has of war, the latter is thought of as a mere “instrument” or “means”. The following chapter will show that this superficial reading of the Clausewitzian proposition entirely misses the intricate and complex logic at work. By resituating this proposition in its original contexts and by examining the status accorded to the terms (that is, politics and war), it will be shown that, far from contradicting the thesis of the externality of the actual, it rather nuances it.

⁵⁰⁰ See above (2nd chapter), where Clausewitz points out the one is not even in agreement regarding the *Grundbegriffe* of war.

5: War and Politics: Continuation by Other Means

5.1 Continuation by Other Means (Regulative Proposition)

5.2 Continuation by Other Means (Gefecht as Origin)

5.3 Inversing Clausewitz

In philosophical contexts, the principal reception of Clausewitz is through the prism of the proposition “war is the continuation of politics by other means”. Frequently, those who engage with this proposition are struck by the desire to inverse the terms, exposed to this “temptation” by what Massimiliano Guareschi refers to as “the formulaic symmetry of this well-known adage”.⁵⁰¹ The reversal of this formulation in order to arrive at the seemingly more radical proposition that “politics is the continuation of war by other means”, is perhaps most famously done by Foucault at the beginning of his 1976 lecture series at the *Collège de France, Il faut défendre la société*. Audrey Hérisson also cites Ludendorff, Lenin, Schmitt, and Girard as being attracted by this reversal.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰¹ Massimiliano Guareschi, “Reversing Clausewitz?; War and politics in Foucault, Deleuze-Guattari and Aron” in *Conflict, Security and the Reshaping of Society* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.70.

⁵⁰² Audrey Hérisson, “Clausewitz versus Foucault : regards croisés sur la guerre”, *Cahiers de philosophie de l’université de Caen*, 55 (2018), 143-162. p.144.

As shall become clear, it is only because the proposition has been abstracted from its context and from the logic determining the value of the terms and the precise nature of their relation that it is so easily reversible. Far from being a simple “aphorism”,⁵⁰³ as Foucault calls it, this proposition emerges from a strange but coherent logic which should be examined prior to all attempts at critique and subversion. The context of this proposition and the manner in which it is implemented in *On War* point to a *regulative* use rather than a constitutive one (which the attempts at inversion seem to presuppose).

The standard interpretation of this proposition will be further complicated by means of a study of a genealogical account of war that Clausewitz sketches in his early notes and drafts (again the principal source will be “*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*” in the second volume of *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*). In this account, it is the *Gefecht* or combat that is said to be the *origin* of war. By means of these two perspectives, it will be shown that this proposition points to an *ideal* and a *real* origin of war. This more nuanced understanding of “war is the continuation of politics by other means” will provide the basis for a critical evaluation of Foucault’s inversion of Clausewitz’s proposition.

5.1 Continuation by Other Means (Regulative Proposition)

Clausewitz does not understand by the proposition, “war is the continuation of politics by other means”, a simple subordination of war to politics. The repeated assertion in Clausewitz’s mature thought that war is a mere “tool” of politics is not to be understood as a *constitutive* proposition. It does not directly and completely determine the object in question (that is, war). It should first of all be understood as a modulation of the *regulative* proposition, in the Kantian sense,⁵⁰⁴ that is to say, as guiding the manner in which the constitution and connection of objects is investigated by reference to an unattainable ideal. In the section on “the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason” in *KdrV*, Kant explains that

⁵⁰³ Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p.16

⁵⁰⁴ Caygill. “Clausewitz and Idealism”, p.410

Reason never relates itself directly to an object, rather simply to the Understanding and by means of the latter, to its own empirical use. It hence creates no concepts (of objects), but rather orders them and gives them the unity that they can have in their greatest possible extension, i.e., in relation to the totality of the series (A643/B671).⁵⁰⁵

Just as the faculty of reason does not act directly on objects of experience but rather acts on them indirectly by means of the understanding, politics acts indirectly on war by means of strategy. One sees this clearly outlined in the description of the relation between war and politics in the eighth book of *On War*, which, one might note, was the book that Clausewitz was most happy with.⁵⁰⁶

It is above all in the chapter entitled, “War is an Instrument of Politics”, that Clausewitz details the regulative function of the political conception of war, that is, the concept of war as an instrument. In this chapter, Clausewitz explains that it is only from a single external standpoint that “the masses of appearances” that compose war can be grasped as a unity.⁵⁰⁷ Politics is posited as occupying this position.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, in treating war as an instrument or as a mere expression of itself, politics makes it possible to ascribe a certain ontological coherency to war. Only from the perspective of politics can war be treated as “a thing” (*ein Ding*) and all wars “as things of one and the same species or kind”.⁵⁰⁹ However, this political standpoint, which sees war as a mere means for attaining ends external to it, is so far removed from the phenomenon of war that it barely knows what it is. The political element does not enter into the substance of war and all that is singular in the latter gets

⁵⁰⁵ “Die Vernunft bezieht sich niemals geradezu auf einen Gegenstand, sondern lediglich auf den Verstand, und vermittelt desselben auf ihren eigenen empirischen Gebrauch, schafft also keine Begriffe (von Objekten), sondern ordnet sie nur, und gibt ihnen diejenige Einheit, welche sie in ihrer größtmöglichen Ausbreitung haben können, d.i. in Beziehung auf die Totalität der Reihen”

⁵⁰⁶ Werner Hahlweg, “Niederschriften des Werkes „Vom Kriege“; Vorbemerkung” in *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*. Zweiter Band, erster Teilband (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), p.628

⁵⁰⁷ “denn nur von einem Standpunkte aus können wir die Masse der Erscheinungen mit Einheit auffassen”. *Vom Kriege*, p.685.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p.684

entirely glossed over.⁵¹⁰ Clausewitz says that he even delays the introduction of this perspective into his analysis for fear that it might distort the reflections on war and blind the reader to the singular objects that populate it and which must be studied in order to understand how it functions.⁵¹¹

So, despite the unifying force of politics, war in (or as) actuality very rarely conforms to this ideal. The force to overcome and to unify all the different elements composing the phenomenon of war and to make present the purpose of war in all of the parts is almost always insufficient and war reveals itself to be something completely other than what it should be according its concept, that is to say, it degenerates into a “half-thing” (*ein Halbding*),⁵¹² a being without internal coherence (*ein Wesen ohne inneren Zusammenhang*). The strict logical necessity prescribed by an instrumental conception loses itself in the actuality of war, in the play of possibility and probability, of luck and misfortune. From this Clausewitz draws the conclusion that one must consider war as a thing that is sometimes more sometimes less identical with itself.⁵¹³

The political standpoint is hence not constitutive but has rather a guiding or a regulative function, whereby it says what war should be but does not say what it is. It is important to note that Clausewitz seeks to put these two tendencies in tension with one another and certainly does not wish to subordinate the latter to the former. It is strategy which negotiates between the demands of politics and the actuality of war, that is, between the attempt to produce an abstract and falsifying unity and the movement towards a chaotic and

⁵¹⁰ Ibid, p.684-5. “*Freilich dringt das politische Element nicht tief in die Einzelheiten des Krieges hinunter*”

⁵¹¹ Ibid, p.685

⁵¹² *Vom Kriege*, p.652, p.684. It is not entirely clear where Clausewitz finds this notion and it is quite possible that he invents it himself. The term appears, in the plural form, in Hegel’s *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1813) in the chapter entitled “*B. Das Bestehen des Dings aus Materien*”. However, it seems to be used in quite a different manner and is accorded little importance. That is, it is employed by Hegel when describing the ontological confusion resulting from the distinction between things and their components (he says that it is unclear whether these latter are things or mere half-things). Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, zweites Buch (Leipzig: Verlag Philipp Reclam Jun., 1963), 152.

⁵¹³ “*auch folgt dann, daß der Krieg ein Ding sein kann, was bald mehr, bald weniger Krieg ist*” *Vom Kriege*, p.654

non-centralised discharge of energy (friction). Strategy is the floating centre which holds these two tendencies together without reducing or resolving their essential difference. This is one of the principal modifications of the Kantian model, the two terms are in direct conflict (there is not an assumed complicity between the object and the form imposed upon it as is the case with the passive forms of intuition). In a sense, strategy might be said to negotiate between the *teleological* conception of war and its *anti-teleological* actuality. When Clausewitz says that “politics” is the “womb in which war develops”, that “the outlines of war lie hidden” in politics “in a rudimentary form” just like “the properties of living creatures in their germs” this must be understood in a *regulative* sense.⁵¹⁴ Politics invents itself as the (ideal) origin of war.

Taking the above discussion into consideration, it is possible to suggest a Clausewitzian variation of the Kantian architectonic. As seen above, politics might be seen as taking on the role of reason, and the actuality of war, or more precisely, combat, replaces the empirical element. In a sense, strategy comes to occupy the place of the understanding, however, its role and manner of operating has shifted. In Kant’s thought, the understanding is the quiet realm of possibility, capable of determining the form of the object of experience purely *a priori*. Strategy, like the understanding, is the middle term between politics and war. Unlike the understanding, however, it is not ossified into a fixed, or what Clausewitz would call, “dead” form. The forms that strategy is concerned with must be continually in motion, responding to an ever-changing actuality. The possibilities that strategy seeks to impose are hence not entirely *a priori* but are grounded in an actuality with which it is confronted.

If one takes seriously the Kantian influence on Clausewitz, the inversion of this proposition becomes a little more complicated. The regulative proposition consists in a delicate imbalance of the two terms put in relation. There is also a priority accorded to war in

⁵¹⁴ “*der Schoß, in welchem sich der Krieg entwickelt; in ihr liegen die Lineamente desselben schon verborgen angedeutet wie die Eigenschaften der lebenden Geschöpfe in ihren Keimen*”. *Vom Kriege*, p.122

the regulative proposition in so far as war is considered as the only reality and as that to which politics must necessarily relate. This priority is completely lost in the attempts at inverting Clausewitz's proposition.

5.2 Continuation by Other Means (Gefecht as Origin)

There is a second manner in which one must understand Clausewitz's description of the *Gefecht* as the *Grundeinheit* and *Grundlage* of war. Coupled with the logical sense of this proposition, that is, that one cannot think warfare without actual combat (discussed in chapter 2), Clausewitz provides a genealogical description of the relation between war and combat. Certain commentators claim that Clausewitz remained immune to the quasi-mythological accounts of the movement from the state of nature towards the so-called "civilized state". For example, Bernhard H. F. Taureck in his text, "*Rettung oder Ausrottung. Warum Kants Zum ewigen Frieden von 1795 aktuell bleibt*", suggests that Clausewitz criticises precisely this "war-mythology", insisting that, for the Prussian theorist, war always has a political ground.⁵¹⁵ However, the quotation used to support this claim: "war...always starts out from a political state and is only called forth by means of a political motive",⁵¹⁶ elides, by means of a strategically placed ellipsis, an important qualification. The original quotation reads: "*Der Krieg einer Gemeinheit – ganzer Völker – und namentlich gebildeter Völker geht immer von einem politischen Zustande aus und wird nur durch ein politisches Motiv hervorgerufen*".⁵¹⁷ If the limitation that Clausewitz places on the claim, that is, "of a community – of whole nations – and especially *civilised* nations," is taken into consideration, as it should be, the sense and value of this proposition shifts quite dramatically. Rather than being a universally valid and necessary characteristic of war *in general* to have its origin in politics, that is, to

⁵¹⁵ Bernhard H. F. Taureck "*Rettung oder Ausrottung. Warum Kants Zum ewigen Frieden von 1795 aktuell bleibt*" in *Recht und Frieden in der Philosophie Kants; Akten des X. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses* ed. by Valerio Rohden, Ricardo R. Terra, Guido A. de Almeida and Margit Ruffing (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), p.715-724, p.720

⁵¹⁶ "*Der Krieg [...] geht immer von einem politischen Zustande aus und wird nur durch ein politisches Motiv hervorgerufen*". As quoted by Taureck in "*Rettung oder Ausrottung*", p.720n.6

⁵¹⁷ *Vom Kriege*, p.43

have to a certain degree a *rational* origin, this is only pertinent for a certain species of war and only under certain conditions. The idea of a type of war not brought into being by a political motive is hence implicit in Clausewitz's proposition. Further, elsewhere in *On War*, explicit reference is made to this kind of warfare. In the third chapter of the fourth book, "The Combat in General", Clausewitz writes:

If one thinks a state and its military force as a unity, then the most natural representation is to think of war as an enormous combat [*Gefecht*], and in the simple interactions of wild peoples [*einfachen Verhältnissen wilder Völker*], it is not much different.⁵¹⁸

If one examines the earlier notes and drafts contained in the second volume of *Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*, one can appreciate these mentions as being traces of a genealogical and quasi-mythological account of war. Far from being immune to such an account, these early notes contain two articulations of what seems to be the same genealogical description of the origin of war. The second version of this account, which, as far as the content is concerned, is largely similar to the first with slight variations in vocabulary,⁵¹⁹ is part of a long crossed out passage on the combat as *Sinn und Bedeutung* of war.⁵²⁰

It is difficult to disagree with Alliez and Lazzarato's claim that Clausewitz's discussion of "non-civilised" social unities emanates from a "Eurocentric perspective". Indeed, Clausewitz repeats various stereotypes of his époque, associating, for example, rationality (or, more precisely, "*Verstand*") with "civilised" nations and a greater brutality

⁵¹⁸ "Denken wir uns den Staat und seine Kriegsmacht als Einheit, so ist die natürlichste Vorstellung, uns den Krieg auch als ein großes Gefecht zu denken, und in den einfachen Verhältnissen wilder Völker ist es auch nicht viel anders". *Vom Kriege*, p.213

⁵¹⁹ Clausewitz uses the term "*Gefecht*" a little less consistently in the second version of this account, substituting it at one point for the term "*Schlacht*" ("battle"). He speaks hence of "*die Schlachten der Wilden*" (the battles of wild peoples). "*Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“*", p.65

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

with “non-civilised”.⁵²¹ Clausewitz willingly accords a greater presence of warlike spirit (“*kriegerischer Geist*”) in “uncivilised” social unities. However, insisting that the degree of military genius depends upon the “*general intellectual development* of a nation [allgemeinen geistigen Entwicklung *des Volkes*]”, he claims that “amongst uncivilised people one never finds a great general, and only seldom what one can call military genius”. They presuppose “a development of the forces of the understanding, which is not to be found in an uncivilised state [*ein rohes Volk*]”.⁵²² Further, Clausewitz affirms that the “aims [*Absichten*]” of “uncivilised peoples” are largely derived from the “emotions [*Gemüt*]”, for “civilised peoples” it is above all the “understanding [*Verstande*]” which is determining.⁵²³

Alliez and Lazzarato, in their reading of Clausewitz, go so far as to claim that, for the Prussian general, a non-European perspective is “unthinkable”.⁵²⁴ Two things should, however, be noted. The first is that Clausewitz adds an important qualification to his treatment of this question. He says that the distinction between the “civilised” and the “uncivilised” state is not to be found in the “essence of savageness and culture themselves”, but rather “in the accompanying circumstances and institutions.” Thus, since it results from an arbitrary conjunction of external circumstances, this characterisation cannot be said to be necessarily true “in every singular case”; that is to say, it is not totally logically determining, and the distinction is not absolute but just pertains to “the majority of cases”.⁵²⁵ The second thing that must be taken into account is the precise meaning that Clausewitz gives to the terms used to qualify the two states. An examination of how Clausewitz conceives of the relation to

⁵²¹ *Vom Kriege*, p.28

⁵²² “unter rohen Völkern findet man nie einen eigentlich großen Feldherrn, und äußerst selten, was man kriegerisches Genie nennen kann, weil dazu eine Entwicklung der Verstandeskkräfte erforderlich ist, die ein rohes Volk nicht haben kann”. *Ibid.*, p.62. Quoted in Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Guerres et Capital* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2016), p.113n.15

⁵²³ “Bei rohen Völkern herrschen die dem Gemüt, bei Gebildeten die dem Verstande angehörenden Absichten vor”. *Vom Kriege*, p.62

⁵²⁴ Alliez and Lazzarato, *Guerres et Capital*, p.115

⁵²⁵ “allein dieser Unterschied liegt nicht in dem Wesen von Roheit [*sic*] und Bildung selbst, sondern in den sie begleitenden Umständen, Einrichtungen usw.: er ist nicht notwendig in jedem einzelnen Fall, sondern er beherrscht nur die Mehrheit der Fälle”. *Vom Kriege*, p.28-9

the so called “uncivilised” state will further nuance his position. It will also clarify the manner in which Clausewitz understands the relation between war and politics.

According to Clausewitz in his early notes, “war in its original form was nothing other than mere combat [*bloßes Gefecht*]”, a violent collision of forces, “whose end (*Zweck*) and gage of success lied only in the physical destruction of the enemy”.⁵²⁶ This is, he says, the form that war still has for less technologically developed social unities, possessing “neither livestock nor agriculture” and hence being unable to use “property as a weapon”.⁵²⁷ It is in these cases that the political entity is identical to the military force. Clausewitz offers two causes to explain the shift in the nature of war away from mere combat towards the “modern” or “civilised” form of warfare. The first is the development, by means of “agriculture, trade, etc.”, of populations and states “which correspond more or less to their current form”; the second is that the understanding (*Verstand*) began to take war as an object of “reflection” (*Nachdenken*) and “investigation” (*Untersuchungen*).

It seems, hence, to be two forms of technological development which fuelled this movement. There is, on the one hand, the occupation of land, prepared by agriculture (which also makes available property as a weapon), and the codification of the relations to other social unities by means of trade; and, on the other, the transformation of war into an object of study, that is, one might postulate, the creation of the *concept* of war (as means). These two processes resulted in the combat being attached to “other ends” (*andere Zwecke*), through which it became possible to inflict an even greater amount of damage upon the enemy than the mere physical destruction of forces.⁵²⁸ In transforming the combat into means and in using

⁵²⁶ “Ursprünglich war der Krieg nichts als bloßes Gefecht, dessen Zweck und ganzer Erfolg in dem bloßen Verlust von Todten, Verwundeten und Gefangenen, auf der einen und andern Seite bestand”. Clausewitz, “Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“”, p.63.

⁵²⁷ “und diese Gestalt hat er immer noch bei ganz rohen Völkern, die weder Viehzucht noch Ackerbau treiben und also kein Eigenthum als ihre Waffen haben.” Ibid, p.63.

⁵²⁸ “Sobald aber durch den Ackerbau, den Handel u.s.w. die Existenz der Völker und Staaten sich ihrer jetzigen Form näherte und sobald der Verstand anfang den Krieg zu einem Gegenstand seines Nachdenkens und seiner Untersuchungen zu machen, so mußten sich mit dem Gefecht bald andere Zwecke, wodurch man dem Feind mehr Schaden zufügte als durch den bloßen Menschenverlust, verbinden.” Ibid, p.63

it to achieve ends external to it, “the effect or influence [*Wirkung*] of the combat” is “infinitely extended”.⁵²⁹ It is by means of an instrumentalization of the combat that the latter takes on its devastating and distinctly “modern” form. It is here that Clausewitz locates the most crucial distinction between “civilised” and “non-civilised” nations. The “civilised” nations are characterized above all by a *project* of domination (an imperialist or colonialist project). War in this context is an instrument for imposing peace.

As demonstrated above, this is precisely the role attributed to politics in *On War*. In conceiving of war as mere “means”, or as “instrument”, politics can make use of it in order to impose a structure of domination (that is “peace”). In a sense politics can be seen to do what war was doing but more efficiently. It might even be seen to introduce the idea of efficiency in the first place, in so far as the external end imposed on war also provides a standard by which to judge it. In this sense, politics can be said to be a continuation and a sublimation war. This permits certain clarifications of the status of politics in Clausewitz’s thought. Politics is neither ontologically nor genealogically the *real* origin of war but rather only ever an *ideal* origin, something added on afterwards. It is combat which is the source or *real* origin of war and that to which war must always be related. As *ideal* origin, however, politics represents itself as that which calls war into being and, in so doing, it allows a certain organisation and reorientation of the phenomenon of war. A channelling of war, so to speak, which has even more devastating and far-reaching consequences than war as mere combat. Hence, one sees in Clausewitz’s thought a double origin of war: a real and an ideal origin.

What is also particularly interesting in Clausewitz’s genealogical account of war is that rather than this state of nature being repressed or replaced by something qualitatively different, it is conceived of as persisting but under a more technically sophisticated form. It is by means of technological and strategic development that Clausewitz understands the distinction between “civilised” and “uncivilised” states. It does not at all mark the transition to

⁵²⁹ “*man [erweiterte] die Wirkung desselben [d.h. des Gefechts] nach und nach so unendlich*”. Ibid, p.63.

a state of peace and justice, as is the case in Hobbes and Kant. What Clausewitz seems above all to emphasise is the continuity between the two states.

With the account of war at the origin of social formations, Clausewitz seems to evoke the philosophy of Hobbes (or Kant's re-inscription of it). However, there is an important distinction to be made. As Foucault shows in *Il faut défendre la société*, the transition traced by Hobbes from "the state of nature", characterised by perpetual war of all against all, is permitted by the fact that he does not treat of *actual* war. In his description, it is above all the threat or the *possibility* of war which characterises the state of war. The state that Hobbes describes is "not at all a natural and brutal state" in which opposed forces confront each other directly, we are not at all in the domain of "the direct relation of actual forces".⁵³⁰ Foucault refers to chapter XIII of the *Leviathan* to support his claim:⁵³¹

Warre, consisteth not in Battell onely, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre.⁵³²

Hobbes introduces several notions which dilute the importance of the actual "act of fighting" in his conception of war. In this description, the actual combat is largely subordinated to the knowledge of the "Will" to engage in combat. The moment of direct conflict becomes secondary and is replaced rather by a "tract of time" in which this conflict is possible. In appearance Hobbes' description bears certain similarities to Clausewitz's own conception of 'modern' warfare. Clausewitz speaks of the many causes of standstill (*Stillstand*) in war which interrupt direct conflict⁵³³ and says quite clearly in his early notes

⁵³⁰ "cet état que Hobbes décrit n'est pas du tout un état naturel et brutal, dans lequel les forces viendraient s'affronter directement : on n'est pas dans l'ordre des rapports directs des forces réelles." Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p.79

⁵³¹ Ibid, p.80.

⁵³² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* ed. by R. Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.88. Quoted in *Il faut défendre la société*, p.80 : "la guerre ne consiste pas seulement dans la bataille et dans des combats effectifs ; mais dans un espace de temps – c'est l'état de guerre – où la volonté de s'affronter en des batailles est suffisamment avérée."

⁵³³ *Vom Kriege*, p.37-42.

that “combat does not constitute the entire military activity”.⁵³⁴ Yet, as has been seen, for Clausewitz, *actual* combat is the “sense and significance” of war; it is its “foundation” and its “fundamental unity.” It is only by means of a philosophical sleight of hand or an idealist fancy that one might permit oneself to diminish or to deny its importance. Hobbes even more explicitly distances the actuality of combat from his concept of war in the following passage:

For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a showre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together: So the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.⁵³⁵

Here one sees even more clearly that the “actuall fighting” does not touch the “nature” or essence of war. It is, above all, rather the threat of actual fighting, that is, *potential* fighting that characterises war. It is for this reason that Foucault concludes that Hobbes does not start with war⁵³⁶ but rather with a “field of primary diplomacy [*un champ de la diplomatie primaire*].”⁵³⁷ It is this sleight of hand, the passing off of possible war as actual war, that makes the thought of the continuity between the state of war and the state of peace more plausible. Clausewitz, on the contrary, is concerned with *actual* combat, and it is precisely for this reason that the actuality of war *qua* combat is not something he can ever escape.

The oft-quoted proposition “war is the continuation of politics by other means” has begun to take on a more precise though perhaps less familiar meaning. It is hence important to critically reassess the consequences and the implications of this reversal.

5.3 Inverting Clausewitz

⁵³⁴ “Das Gefecht macht... nicht die ganze Summe kriegerischer Thätigkeit aus” “Entwürfe und Vorarbeiten zum Werk „Vom Kriege“; Vorbemerkung”, p.65nl1

⁵³⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p.88-9

⁵³⁶ “Donc il n’y a pas de guerre au départ, chez Hobbes”. *Il faut défendre la société*, p.80

⁵³⁷ *Il faut défendre la société*, p.80

Erich Ludendorff, the German military theorist and important figure in the rise of national socialism, is one of the earliest to have had the desire to totally inverse the logic of Clausewitz's famous proposition.⁵³⁸ Ludendorff's reading of Clausewitz, however, is not the most attentive one, which is perhaps not surprising given that he presents himself as "an enemy of all theories [*ein Feind aller Theorien*]"⁵³⁹ He reduces Clausewitz's position to the definition of war given at the beginning of the first chapter of *Vom Kriege*, into which he surreptitiously introduces as the idea of the relation between states. Rather than the more abstract opposition between "adversaries" (*Gegner*) which appears in the original text,⁵⁴⁰ Clausewitz is cited as saying that "war" as "an act of violence...through which one state seeks to bring another under its will".⁵⁴¹ By introducing the concept of "state" Ludendorff renders Clausewitz's definition of war, which is supposed to serve as a merely abstract model (an abstract model which is ultimately superseded), much more concrete and determinate. It is, further, the limitation of this Clausewitz's philosophical enquiries to this merely concrete and historically determinable phenomenon which allows Ludendorff to dismiss almost all of Clausewitz's thought. Ludendorff even goes so far as to say that its study can lead to a great deal of confusion.⁵⁴²

As part of his inversion of the Clausewitzian formula Ludendorff also identifies war with actuality ("*Wirklichkeit*"). Here, however, "actuality" is not used in a philosophically coherent way and further it is immediately subordinated to the concept of "*Volk*". He says: "War is actuality, the most important actuality in the life of a people/nation".⁵⁴³ He clarifies

⁵³⁸ Guareschi, "Reversing Clausewitz?", p.70. Lenin's reversal of this formula in his text, "Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism", predates Ludendorff's. Here, he says: "without the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois governments, peace *now* can only be an imperialist peace, a continuation of the imperialist war". In Lenin's conception, however, the sense of peace as domination is only historically contingent and does not touch the essence of peace itself. See, V. I. Lenin, "Bourgeois Pacifism and Socialist Pacifism" <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/jan/01.htm> (accessed online 12/04/2021). See also *Guerres et capital*, p.176.

⁵³⁹ General Ludendorff, *Der totale Krieg* (München: Ludendorffs Verlag, 1935), p.3

⁵⁴⁰ "*Der Krieg ist... ein Akt der Gewalt, um den Gegner zur Erfüllung unseres Willens zu zwingen.*" *Vom Kriege*, p.27

⁵⁴¹ "*ein Akt der Gewalt...durch den ein Staat einen anderen unter seinen Willen zwingen will*". Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ludendorff, *Der totale Krieg*, p.3

⁵⁴³ "*Der Krieg ist Wirklichkeit, ernsteste Wirklichkeit im Leben eines Volkes*". Ludendorff, *Der totale Krieg*, p.3

this remark by saying that “war and politics serve to preserve the life of the nation/people, war is, however, the highest expression of the nation’s will to life. It is for this reason that politics must serve warfare.”⁵⁴⁴ Ludendorff’s conception ultimately conforms to a logic of actualisation and is in no way a genuine thinking through of war as actuality. The fascist interpretation of Clausewitz which tries to base itself on the doctrine that war is actuality (or, even the highest actuality), only functions by means of the subordination of actuality to a concept, and hence entails a prior exclusion of all the exteriority that actuality brings with it. As such, Ludendorff completely misses the challenge that Clausewitz presents to philosophy.

Foucault’s reversal of the Clausewitzian proposition is much more philosophically coherent and hence requires a careful examination. Foucault seems to have first reversed this proposition in 1975 in an interview with B.-H. Lévy, as a way of criticising the concept of “crisis”.⁵⁴⁵ This term, he says, is just a way of qualifying a temporal present for which one lacks the appropriate instruments of analysis.⁵⁴⁶ If it appears that “a certain process has arrived at a point of contradiction such that it can no longer continue”, this contradiction “is only an image”.⁵⁴⁷ As soon as one remembers that “it is not war that is the continuation of politics, but politics that is continuation of war by other means”,⁵⁴⁸ the idea of a state of aporetic contradiction that renders all forms of progression impossible loses its pertinence.

It is in *Il faut défendre la société*, that Foucault methodologically works through what he means by the reversal of what he refers to as “Clausewitz’s aphorism”. Here, he presents three main ways of understanding it.⁵⁴⁹ In saying that “politics is war continued by other

⁵⁴⁴ “Krieg und Politik dienen der Lebenserhaltung des Volkes, der Krieg aber ist die höchste Äußerung völkischen Lebenswillens. Darum hat die Politik der Kriegsführen zu dienen.” Ibid, p.10

⁵⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, “La politique est la continuation de la guerre par d’autres moyens” in *Dits et écrits ; 1954 – 1975* tome 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.704.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, p.702-3.

⁵⁴⁷ “un certain processus est arrivé, en se développant, à un point de contradiction tel qu’il ne peut plus continuer”. Ibid, p.703-4

“[cette] contradiction n’est qu’une image”. Ibid, p.704

⁵⁴⁸ “ce n’est pas la guerre qui est la continuation de la politique, mais la politique qui est la continuation de la guerre par d’autres moyens”. Ibid, p.704

⁵⁴⁹ “l’aphorisme de Clausewitz”. Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p.16

means”,⁵⁵⁰ what he means, first of all, is that relations of power, as they function in a society like our own (“*une société comme la nôtre*”), find their roots in a relation of force established by means of war at a historically determinable moment in time.⁵⁵¹ In this context, if politics can be understood as having as its objective the attempt to put an end to war by installing a state of peace, it is not at all an attempt to suspend the effects of war or neutralise the imbalance of forces that manifested itself in the deciding battle of the war. On the contrary, the role of political power would be

to reinscribe perpetually this relation of force by means of a sort of silent war and to reinscribe it in institutions, in economical inequalities, in language, in bodies themselves.⁵⁵²

Politics is nothing other than the “ratification and extension of the imbalance of forces which manifested itself in war”.⁵⁵³ War, rather than being a more or less imperfect manifestation of a political project (as in the conventional understanding of Clausewitz’s proposition), constitutes the nature of politics entirely. Here, one might wish to inquire into the precise nature of this “*guerre silencieuse*.” What is this sublimated form of war? Can it, properly speaking, be referred to as such? It is here, of course, necessary to investigate more closely how the concept of “war” is employed by Foucault. This will be returned to further on.

The second meaning that Foucault gives to this reversal is that, within the state of peace, all political struggles, all forms of confrontation pertaining to power, all modifications regarding the relations of force, should be understood as continuations of war.⁵⁵⁴ The third and final meaning that Foucault wishes to draw out of this reversal is that “the final decision can only come from war, that is, from a test of force where, in the end, arms must be

⁵⁵⁰ “*la politique, c’est la guerre continuée par d’autres moyens*”. Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² “*Le pouvoir politique...aurait pour rôle de réinscrire perpétuellement ce rapport de force, par une sorte de guerre silencieuse, et de le réinscrire dans les institutions, dans les inégalités économiques, dans le langage, jusque dans les corps des uns et des autres.*” Ibid, p.16

⁵⁵³ “*la sanction et la reconduction du déséquilibre des forces manifesté dans la guerre.*” Ibid, p.16

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

judge”.⁵⁵⁵ Later, as part of the same lecture series, Foucault even goes so far as to suggest that Clausewitz’s proposition is itself a mere inversion of a more original formulation:

the principle according to which politics is war continued by other means was a principle quite anterior to Clausewitz, who merely inverted a thesis at once diffuse and precise which had been circulating since the 17th and 18th century.⁵⁵⁶

The discourse that Clausewitz supposedly covered over with his seeming reduction of war to politics is what Foucault calls the “discourse of race war”, a discourse which he wishes to praise in *Il faut défendre la société*.⁵⁵⁷

For Foucault, this discourse implies a certain notion of truth and with it a curious distribution and association of terms. Most importantly, this discourse affirms a fundamental connection between relations of truth (“*relations de vérité*”) and relations of force (“*rapports de force*”). Here, truth is no longer bound up with the idea of peace and neutrality, as it was, Foucault affirms, in ancient Greece,⁵⁵⁸ as support for this claim he refers to Jean-Pierre Vernant’s thought.⁵⁵⁹ It is, on the contrary, aligned with a form of violence and brutality. Foucault outlines his schema of truth as follows: he compares it to an “axis with, at the bottom, a fundamental and permanent irrationality, a raw and bare irrationality” in which “truth breaks out”. On the opposite side of the axis, “towards the higher parts”, a “fragile, transitory rationality” is to be found, a rationality “which is always compromised and bound up with illusion and malice.”⁵⁶⁰ In contradistinction to the schema which treats reason and

⁵⁵⁵ “*la décision finale ne peut venir que de la guerre, c’est-à-dire d’une épreuve de force où les armes, finalement, devront être juges*”. Ibid, p.16-7

⁵⁵⁶ “*le principe selon lequel la politique, c’est la guerre continuée par d’autres moyens était un principe bien antérieur à Clausewitz, qui a simplement retourné une sorte de thèse à la fois diffuse et précise qui circulait depuis le XVII et le XVIII siècle.*” Ibid, p.41

⁵⁵⁷ “*discours de la guerre ou de la lutte des races*”. Ibid., p.57

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p.45

⁵⁵⁹ In particular to chapter VII and VIII in *Les Origines de la pensée grecque*, chapter III, IV, VII in *Mythe et Pensée chez les Grecs*, chapter III in *Mythe et Tragédie en Grèce ancienne*, and *Mythe et Société en Grèce ancienne*. Ibid., p.54n.10

⁵⁶⁰ “*On a un axe avec, à la base, une irrationalité fondamentale et permanente, une irrationalité brute et nue, mais où éclate la vérité ; et puis, vers les parties hautes, on a une rationalité fragile, transitoire, toujours compromise et liée à l’illusion et à la méchanceté.*” Ibid, p.47

rationality as the gatekeepers of truth, the discourse of race war associates reason and rationality rather with cunning (“*ruse*”) and illusion: “reason is on the side of illusion and of cunning; truth, on the side of unreason and brutality”.⁵⁶¹ According to this discourse, truth does not at all have the pretention of impartiality, following the model “of the legislator or the philosopher,” who, standing “between the two camps”, is a “figure of peace and armistice”, a position which Foucault associates with Kant’s thought.⁵⁶² On the contrary, truth is rather explicitly bound up with a certain dissymmetry: it is above all a question of “founding a truth bound to a relation of force, a truth-weapon and a singular right.”⁵⁶³ Hence, the speaking subject is no longer a legislating subject but rather “a warlike...subject [*un sujet...guerroyant*]”.⁵⁶⁴

War is, hence, presented as the truth of politics. Yet this identification between politics and war (politics is merely war) proposed by Foucault entails certain conceptual complications. The representation of the state of peace as nothing other than a generalised civil war (“*guerre civile généralisée*”) which is itself understood as a “silent war [*guerre silencieuse*]” characterised by “*dispositifs*” of control or mechanisms of domination, is to allow the concept of war to be identified with that of domination. This conceptual alignment is suggested by certain formulations in *Il faut défendre la société* where domination and war seem to be used synonymously.⁵⁶⁵ For Clausewitz, however, the concept of war necessarily entails *actual resistance*: “war is not the activity of a living force on a dead matter [*tote Masse*], but rather, since an absolute passivity would not be war, it is always the collision of two living forces”.⁵⁶⁶ Absolute passivity is not war. War always passes through combat, the actual and violent putting in question of the respective positions. This implies a greater deal of

⁵⁶¹ “*La raison est du côté de la chimère, de la ruse[,]...la vérité...du côté de la déraison et de la brutalité*”. Ibid, p.47

⁵⁶² “*du législateur ou du philosophe, entre les camps, personnage de la paix et de l’armistice*”. Ibid, p.46

⁵⁶³ “*fonder une vérité liée à un rapport de force, une vérité-arme et un droit singulier*.” Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁵ For example, “*le schéma guerre-répression, ou domination-répression*”. Ibid, p.17

⁵⁶⁶ “*Nun ist der Krieg nicht das Wirken einer lebendigen Kraft auf eine tote Masse, sondern, weil ein absolutes Leiden kein Kriegführen sein würde, so ist er immer der Stoß zweier lebendiger Kräfte gegeneinander*”. Vom Kriege, p.30

precarity and uncertainty regarding the end result than the relation between oppressors and oppressed.

Hérisson employs a conceptual distinction that is not present in Foucault's text in order to try and avoid the schema of unidirectional domination. This, however, leads to other problems. She says that unilateral repression or "pure domination" is an "extremely rare" case (citing "slavery" as an example) and claims that Foucault's analysis really has as its object the relations of force between those who dominate in the *mild* sense of the term ("*au sens faible*") and those who are dominated, also in mild sense of the term, since the latter "resist".⁵⁶⁷ One imagines that the dominated must also resist in the mild sense of the term since otherwise the schema would fall apart (if the resistance was disproportionately greater than the domination the relation of power would be overthrown). The characterisation of this tension as one of mild domination and mild resistance already greatly diminishes the urgency of the discourse of race war. According to Hérisson, Clausewitz's "binary model [*schéma binaire*]" of war based upon "the logic of the duel [*sur la logique du duel*]" offers itself up perfectly to the Foucauldian analysis, since it allows him to think the "reciprocity of the conflict [*la réciprocité de la lutte*]"⁵⁶⁸ However, this reciprocity of conflict seems largely neutralised by Hérisson's own introduction of a mitigated form of domination and resistance. Here, the discourse of war seems even somewhat hyperbolic.

It should further be noted that this binary model is largely surpassed by Clausewitz himself, above all by means of his rigorous commitment to actuality. War is not constructed out of its concept but is rather bound up with a plethora of "externalities". Clausewitz identifies the barrier separating the abstract concept of war and actual wars in "the great number of things, forces, relations" in the existence of the state which war draws upon and draws into itself and whose incalculably knotted and entangled nature disrupts all strict logical

⁵⁶⁷"*les rapports de force entre le dominant, au sens faible, et le dominé, au sens faible également puisqu'il résiste*". Hérisson, "Clausewitz versus Foucault : regards croisés sur la guerre", p.146.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

succession. Here, the rigorous logical progression gets stuck (“[*die logische Konsequenz*] *bleibt ... stecken*”) and one finds oneself in a state of obscurity (“*Unklarheit*”), incompleteness (“*Halbheit*”, literally ‘halfness’), and inconsequence (“*Inkonsequenz*”). Here, it is logic itself which breaks down and loses its form in the viscosity of actuality. The resulting inconsistency is the reason why war becomes something entirely other, a half-thing, a being without internal coherence (“*zu etwas ganz anderem wird, zu einem Halbdinge, zu einem Wesen ohne inneren Zusammenhang*”).⁵⁶⁹ It is precisely because it is bound up with these externalities that it cannot completely conform to a logic of domination.

Foucault also moves beyond this binary model in his 1977-8 lecture series *Sécurité, territoire, population*, that followed *Il faut défendre la société*. Here, his analysis of “security” also takes actuality (“*réalité effective*”) as its starting point.⁵⁷⁰ In many ways, “security” seems to be a modulation on strategic thinking. It dominates actuality and creates stability not through prohibition (as in the case of law), nor through prescription (as in the case of discipline),⁵⁷¹ rather it regulates actuality by responding to it, by using one actuality to cancel out another.⁵⁷² However, it remains only one-sided, the simple fact that it is referred to as “security” rather than as strategy means that the thought of reciprocity is to a certain degree precluded (security would have as its opposite insecurity or uncertainty, not counter-strategy). Foucault only thinks strategy from the point of view of domination.

From the Clausewitzian perspective, it is essential to keep these two notions, domination and war, conceptually distinct. Domination is more immediately in the interest of politics; it is the aim (*Zweck*) that politics imposes onto war. It is only in so far as war is made to conform to the instrumental conception that politics has of it, that it takes on this aim as

⁵⁶⁹ *Vom Kriege*, p.652

⁵⁷⁰ Foucault. *Sécurité, territoire, population*, p.48.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.7-8

⁵⁷² *Ibid*, p.38-44

well. War in itself, in its actuality, however, is not to be reduced to a logic of domination. It is only through the workings of strategy that war can begin to take on this role.

Foucault offers a slightly false genealogy for his conception of truth. The Greek philosophical notion of truth repudiated by the “discourse of race war” seems to be too quickly identified with a discourse of peace and neutrality. The entry on truth in the *Dictionary of Untranslatables* does not immediately associate the Greek notion of truth, *alêtheia*, with peace. Only the Hebraic word “*Èmèl*”, whose original meaning seems to be that of “stable” or “durable”, is mentioned as bearing a relation to peace. *Alêtheia* is rather thought of in terms of “unforgetting” or “deconcealment”.⁵⁷³ The *Dictionary of Untranslatables* also introduces an important distinction between *alêthês*, *pseudos*, and *etumos*. Unlike the modern “usage of ‘true’ and ‘truth’”, *alêthês* and *alêtheia* do not “immediately entail a corresponding real and observable referent”. While *pseudos* is precisely a question of mimicking “the ‘real [*réel*]’ (*etumos*), as if it presented and duplicated all the opacity of the real”, it is not seen as “embodying the ‘true’ (*alêthês*).”⁵⁷⁴ According to this text, “[f]rom Homer on, *etumos*... is used to indicate the register of the actual [*le réel effectif*]”.⁵⁷⁵ Numerous examples are cited of those who employ *etumos* outside of a relation of *alêtheia*, including Democritus (who speaks of “the actuality [*réalité effective*] of atoms and vacuum as opposed to their sense qualities, which are simply conventional”), and Parmenides (“the path which is and is actual [*réelle*]”).⁵⁷⁶ Here, the authors of this text have recourse to the *actual*, when discussing a term (that is, *etumos*) which exceeds the paradigm of truth. This non-coincidence of truth and actuality is one of the consequences of

⁵⁷³ Rémi Brague, Barbara Cassin, Sandra Laugier, Alain de Libera, Irène Rosier-Catach, and Michèle Sinapi, “Truth” in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* trans. by S. Rendall, C. Hubert, J. Mehlman, N. Stein, and M. Syrotinski (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), p.1159, p.1160

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.1161

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, (translation modified). The English translation of this text renders “*le réel effectif*” as “the effectively real”. See Rémi Brague, Barbara Cassin, Sandra Laugier, Alain de Libera, Irène Rosier-Catach, and Michèle Sinapi, “*Vérité*” in *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), p.1344

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Clausewitz's philosophy of actuality. Truth is not applicable to the entire sphere of actuality but has merely regional pertinence and is established and maintained by means of strategy.

Foucault's reference to Vernant to support the conceptual identification between truth and peace is also somewhat questionable. In the first of the texts cited, at least, *Les Origines de la pensée grecque*, it seems to be more explicitly a question of *order* than that of truth. Indeed, in the two chapters referred to, the word "truth" does not appear once. It is rather "order [*l'ordre*]", in "all domains, naturel, social, ritual [*tous les domaines – naturel, social, rituel –,*]" which is the product of "this victory of the souverain god [*cette victoire du dieu souverain*]" i.e., Zeus' victory over the titans.⁵⁷⁷ The "establishment of souverain power and the foundation of order appear as two indissociable aspects of the same divine drama, the stakes of the same struggle, the fruits of the same victory".⁵⁷⁸ This order must not only be *established* but also *perpetuated*: "in order to exist, it must be established, in order to persist, it must be maintained; it always presupposes an organising agent, a creative power capable of promoting it."⁵⁷⁹ Far from being characterised by a form of neutrality, this "order" is imposed and artificially maintained.

Further, as Vernant and Detienne show in *Les ruses de l'intelligence*, the establishment and perpetuation of this order is entirely contingent upon a form of strategic activity, what they refer to as "*mètis*" or cunning. They show how in Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example, Zeus's superiority and almost unquestionable sovereignty comes from the fact that he has allied himself with or, more precisely taken possession of, Metis, the goddess of cunning: "The *Theogony* insists above all upon the role of Metis in the putting into place and

⁵⁷⁷ Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Les Origines de la pensée grecque* (Paris: PUF, 1962), p.107

⁵⁷⁸ "L'établissement du pouvoir souverain et la fondation de l'ordre apparaissent comme les deux aspects, indissociables, du même drame divin, l'enjeu d'une même lutte, le fruit d'une même victoire". Ibid. p.110

⁵⁷⁹ "L'ordre, sous toutes ses formes et dans tous les domaines, est placé sous la dépendance du Souverain. Ni dans le groupe humain, ni dans l'univers, il n'est encore conçu de façon abstraite en lui-même et pour lui-même. Il a besoin pour exister d'être établi, pour durer d'être maintenu ; toujours il suppose un agent ordonnateur, une puissance créatrice susceptible de le promouvoir." Ibid. p.111

the maintaining of sovereignty”.⁵⁸⁰ Without the help of the goddess of cunning, Zeus would not have been able to overthrow the titans. Yet the externality of “*mètis*” or cunning remains a problem for sovereignty. Fearing that his first wife, Metis, would give birth to a son just as endowed with cunning as herself, and who would eventually usurp him, Zeus swallows her.⁵⁸¹ Under the pretence of wanting to test Metis’s capacity of transformation, Zeus gets her to adopt various different forms, the last of which being that of drop of water. At this moment Zeus jumps on the occasion and swallows Metis whole.⁵⁸² What this myth shows is that the mere alliance with cunning is not sufficient: cunning is an ambivalent and unstable phenomenon and in so far as it remains in part external to sovereign power, it can always be used against it.

In their interpretation of this myth, Vernant and Detienne suggest that after the assimilation of cunning, Zeus’s victory is definitive since the possibility of a ruse which might take him by surprise has been forever ruled out.⁵⁸³ However, there is a slight incoherency in this reading. As Vernant and Detienne say themselves, Zeus uses Metis’s own weapons against her: cunning is used to combat cunning.⁵⁸⁴ Further, it is the Goddess of cunning herself, that is overcome through ruse. Even the divine embodiment of duplicity and deceit (the most cunning God) can be subdued by means of cunning. The myth seems, hence, also to suggest that the unstable and shifting phenomenon that is cunning thought, can offer no absolute certitude or mastery. One can trace the logic of this instability more carefully outside of a mythological context, where inconsistencies and jumps in logic can be to some degree overlooked. For the Clausewitzian philosophy, strategy always implies a relation to a shifting and unpredictable externality on which and within which it acts. As such, it can never be

⁵⁸⁰ “*La Théogonie insiste surtout sur le rôle de Mètis dans la mise en œuvre et dans la permanence de la souveraineté*”. Detienne and Vernant. *Les ruses de l’intelligence*, p.62

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, p.65

⁵⁸² Jean-Pierre Vernant - Topic, “*La mythologie, à quoi ça sert ? - vol. 1 : la guerre des dieux*”, Youtube, 17th May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpZPAjb85zs>

⁵⁸³ Detienne and Vernant. *Les ruses de l’intelligence*, p.74-5

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid, p.74.

completely assimilated, its logic is precisely one of non-assimilability, of imperfect subsumption. Rule through strategy is never absolute, its dominion is always bound up with a certain precarity: anything built on strategy is necessarily unstable.

It is the double identification, firstly of war with domination (or the imposition of peace) and secondly of politics with war, which prevents Foucault from developing a radical notion of strategy (or which leads to a merely one-sided notion of strategy). Strategy occupies the space between war and politics, it negotiates between these two contrary tendencies. In Clausewitz's thought it is strategy which describes the continuity between the state of war and the state of peace and hence is also that which allows the thought of its reversibility. For Clausewitz, the state of peace is maintained by means of strategy or the calculated use of violence rather than by means of war. It is, hence, also by means of strategy that it is to be undermined. Foucault criticises the Hobbesian account of the origin of the state because it does not think *actual* war, because it tries actively to eliminate it.⁵⁸⁵ By identifying war with the threat of war (that is, with the fear of war or with *possible* war), Hobbes neutralises the disquieting and potentially subversive nature of a thesis which attempts to think war at the origin of the state.⁵⁸⁶ As Foucault points out Hobbes's account acts as the state's last defence.⁵⁸⁷ However, in not providing a coherent notion of strategy, in not showing the workings of strategy in the founding and perpetuation of the state, Foucault does not greatly endanger its security himself.

For Clausewitz, resistance which is not founded on strategic thinking is doomed to failure. Although an "extraordinary courage" might be able to make up for the lack of careful strategic planning in an individual case, when it is a question of the *majority* of cases ("*Mehrheit der Fälle*") or the average of success ("*Durchschnittserfolg*"), it is ultimately

⁵⁸⁵ Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, p.83-4

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid, p.84-5

insufficient.⁵⁸⁸ At the beginning of his course, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, Foucault says he wants to offer tactical pointers (“*indicateurs tactiques*”) to those who might wish to resist.⁵⁸⁹ He says that the “conditional imperative” that underlies the theoretical analysis that he is undertaking is as follows: “if you want to resist [*lutter*], here are a few key points, here are a few lines of force, here are a few blockages”.⁵⁹⁰ However, mere tactics are in no way sufficient against the workings of strategy. For resistance to have any real meaning, and not simply to be conditioned and determined by a prior domination (that is, conceived of as mastered in advance), it must be preceded and guided by strategic thinking.

Conclusion – Strategic Idealism and a Philosophy of Actuality

The starting point of this thesis was the problematic of the priority of actuality over possibility, that is, the question of how one is to conceive of an actuality that is not already determined by a possibility that precedes it. This questioning was oriented by means of the conceptual distinction between actuality and actualisation: while the latter is thought of as being produced by possibility (it is a realization or a coming into being of something that was previously possible), the former is thought of as independent from possibility. The relation of *actualisation* to possibility remains relatively straightforward (since the latter is already contained in the former), and it is this relation which has largely served as a model for understanding the conceptual opposition between actuality and possibility throughout its history. The nature of the relation between an actuality (conceived of as independent) to possibility, however, is less evident and leads to numerous philosophical complications.

⁵⁸⁸ *Vom Kriege*, p.64

⁵⁸⁹ Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, p.5

⁵⁹⁰ “*si vous voulez lutter, voici quelques points clés, voici quelques lignes de force, voici quelques blocages*”.
Ibid.

This thesis worked through some of these problems by engaging with Kant's thought, where the problematic of an actuality which is not already determined by possibility plays out in a persistent yet, for the most part, unthematized way. By identifying possibility with the concept (that which is thought without being given) and actuality with the sensible object (that which is given without being thought), Kant began to move away from a philosophy determined by a logic of actualisation. Once actuality and possibility are thought of as belonging to different registers, however, one finds oneself confronted with the problem of explaining the relation between the two. This is one of the central problematics of the critical philosophy: the attempt to show that an external actuality necessarily conforms to a possibility which exists only in the subject. Kant, despite his claims to the contrary, never really managed to close the gap that he opened up between actuality and possibility.

By working through Kant's thought, this thesis showed how a non-conceptual and non-ontological actuality began to take form in his philosophy, almost against his express intentions. This problematic and unstable actuality only began to surface and be actively thematised by Kant under the form of the externality of the object in the refutations of idealism. It was this problem of the relation to an external object or to an external actuality which allowed a reopening of the Kantian legacy. Instead of following the dominate history of the development of Kant's philosophy, which passes through the German idealists and is largely characterised by the attempt the resubordinate actuality to the concept (to treat actuality as if it were already conceptual), this thesis traced a less well-known tradition of post-Kantian thought: from Kant to Kiesewetter and from Kiesewetter to Clausewitz. Although Kiesewetter's writings do not show the signs of a radical restaging of the critical project, he was responsible for preserving the problematic of the externality (and non-conceptuality) of the actual and for transmitting it to Clausewitz.

The major theoretical work of this thesis consisted in the uncovering of Clausewitz's response to this problematic. The various conceptual tools that Clausewitz developed in order

to describe this problematic were outlined and analysed, focusing, in particular, on one of Clausewitz's most important theoretical innovations: friction. Friction describes the non-centralised dispersal of energy that accompanies all gestures within the field of actuality and hence also the impossibility of totally determining in advance the effects of one's actions. It was by means of this term that he tried to think the essential non-correspondence between actuality and possibility. This is what should be understood by a philosophy of actuality: a philosophy which is grounded on the relation to an actuality which is not surreptitiously preformed by a presupposed possibility.

Clausewitz's thought does not, however, end in aporia, that is, with the non-coincidence of actuality and possibility. Only those who suffer from a lack of cunning find themselves entangled in aporias.⁵⁹¹ For the Clausewitzian mutation of the critical philosophy, it is through a violent and strategic intervention in the present that one determines in advance the nature of the external world (that one makes actuality correspond with possibility). As Clausewitz says in his short text "*Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen*": "It is today, that tomorrow, it is in the present, that the future is created."⁵⁹² However, as is suggested by the anxious oscillation between the two temporal categories of the present and the future (the sentence starts in "today" and projects into the "tomorrow", before being immediately cast back into the "present" only to hurtle back again into future), this act of determining is not something that takes place once and for all. Precisely because actuality is characterized by *externality*, any hold that one might have on it is to a certain degree precarious. Strategic idealism entails a *constant* activity of synthesis, one which adapts to the movements and shifts of energy in the field of actuality while, at the same time, trying to determine them in advance by means of the calculated use of violence.

⁵⁹¹ The creature endowed with "*mètis*" always has "*póroi*" at its disposal, "*póros*" meaning both "stratagem" and "passage" or "opening". Faced with *aporia*, a seeming dead end, it is precisely the task of cunning to invent a way out. See Detienne and Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence*, p.25, p.110-11, p.142, p.165

⁵⁹² "*Heut ist es, wo das Morgen, in der Gegenwart ist es, daß die Zukunft geschaffen wird.*" Clausewitz, "*Bei Gelegenheit deutscher Philosophen, die es gut meinen*", p.19.

It is in this sense that strategic idealism must be understood as the other side of a philosophy of actuality. Strategic idealism offers pockets of stability, regions in which actuality conforms to our concepts, regions where, by means of strategic intervention, actuality becomes an actualisation of a possibility that we have imposed. It differs fundamentally from the conception of idealism found amongst Clausewitz's contemporaries insofar as it does not seek to diminish the primacy of the relation to the object, that is, the relation to the outside of the subject. For the philosophical idealisms composed immediately in Kant's wake (referred to under the title of "German idealism"), the problem of the relation to the object was circumnavigated insofar as the object had been collapsed into the conceptual activity of the subject (or the subjective). It is, further, almost certainly a position that Kant would have outright rejected, most likely dismissing it as a form of "moderatism".⁵⁹³ Insofar as the emphasis is put on the externality of the object, rather than on a preconceived idealism from which the object is derived, no idealism can claim to have rights over the object. Rather, the Clausewitzian position thinks a plurality of different idealisms (positive and negative) which, through cunning and force, that is, the use of calculated violence seek to determine or undermine the sense and meaning of actuality.

Clausewitz's strategic idealism entails an activity that is imminent, continual and reciprocal. Its fundamental problematic is not that of the actualisation of a possibility already in our possession but rather the conditions for the creation and destruction of possibility in general.

The notions of strategy and strategic idealism also permit a sharpening of the critique of Foucault's employment of Clausewitz, outlined in the fifth chapter. As Caygill points out, the reference that Foucault makes to Clausewitz at the beginning of *Il faut défendre la société* is almost immediately recodified in Nietzschean terms, that is, as the idea that "the essence of the relation of power is the bellicose confrontation of forces" which Foucault refers to as

⁵⁹³ See, "Verkündigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktats zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie", p.80.

“Nietzsche’s hypothesis”.⁵⁹⁴ As Caygill says, this subtly diverts attention away from the direct inspiration of Clausewitz. However, rather than being simply a manoeuvre to distance himself from Clausewitz’s “sulphurous reputation”,⁵⁹⁵ the reference to Nietzsche can also be seen as serving a theoretical end, that is to say, as permitting the exclusion of the concept of strategy from his analysis, a concept which, as has been seen, is so important for Clausewitz’s understanding of the proposition “war is the continuation of politics by other means”. Further on in the same lecture series, Foucault has once more recourse to Nietzsche, this time under the form of the idea of “the barbarian [*le barbare*]”. This important conceptual point of reference is taken above all from Nietzsche’s *Morgenröte* (§112) and from *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, that is, §11 of the first essay (“„*Gut und Böse*“, „*Gut und Schlecht*“”) and §16-8 of the second (“„*Schuld*“, „*schlechtes Gewissen*“ und *Verwandtes*”).⁵⁹⁶

Foucault’s reference to Nietzsche in relation to Clausewitz is in a certain respect completely understandable: in many ways, Nietzsche’s thinking of war and peace resembles Clausewitz’s. In this context, it should be noted that Nietzsche was familiar with *Vom Kriege*, quoting it in one of the notes associated with the composition of *Also sprach Zarathustra*.⁵⁹⁷ Similarly to Clausewitz, Nietzsche remains highly suspicious of the idea of peace. As is suggested in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, peace (“*Friede*”) must be understood as *victory* (“*Sieg*”) and not as a neutral state.⁵⁹⁸ In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche says that it is only once humankind finds itself under the “spell of society and of peace [*Bann der Gesellschaft und des Friedens*]” that “bad conscience” begins to develop and all old instincts, suited more to “wilderness, war, wandering around, adventure [*der Wildniss, dem Kriege, dem*

⁵⁹⁴ “*le fond du rapport de pouvoir, c’est l’affrontement belliqueux des forces*” ; “*l’hypothèse de Nietzsche*”. *Il faut défendre la société*, p.17.

⁵⁹⁵ Howard Caygill, “Also Sprach Zapata: Philosophy and resistance”, *Radical Philosophy* 171, Jan/Feb 2012, p.20

⁵⁹⁶ *Il faut défendre la société*, p.132, p.147-8n.13

⁵⁹⁷ See Caygill, *On Resistance*, p.218n.28

⁵⁹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche. *Also sprach Zarathustra* ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari 14th edition (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), p.58.

Herumschweifen, dem Abenteuer]”, are hindered and turned back against humankind itself.⁵⁹⁹ Further, in *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, it is the conclusion of a peace treaty (“*Friedenschluss*”) which first brings about the misleading “drive to truth [*Wahrheitstriebes*]”, in so far as it brings with it “a uniformly valid and binding designation of things” as a precondition of social cohesion.⁶⁰⁰ Any deviation from this conventional meaning becomes morally reprehensible, since it endangers the social whole. The origin of this conventional meaning is then forgotten and one begins to believe that there really is ‘an objective truth’ outside of the human’s relation to the world.⁶⁰¹

War, on the contrary, is fairly consistently characterised as a productive force.⁶⁰² Zarathustra says to his “brothers in war [*Brüder im Kriege*]” that they should always have an eye on the lookout for an enemy, for an enemy of their own.⁶⁰³ Above all, this enemy should be hated but not despised: one must be proud of one’s enemy.⁶⁰⁴ Further, he tells them to love peace but only as a means to new wars and to prefer a short peace over a long one.⁶⁰⁵ War is, here, not a means to an external end (domination or peace, for example) as in what Clausewitz refers to as the political conception of war but seemingly an end in itself.

The concept of “strategy” as such, however, does not appear often in Nietzsche’s thought.⁶⁰⁶ The related concept of cunning (*Klugheit* or *List*), on the contrary, plays a more

⁵⁹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* in G. Colli and M. Montinari ed. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse; Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 14 edition (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 2; §16, p.322

⁶⁰⁰ “Jetzt wird nämlich fixirt, was von nun an „Wahrheit“ sein soll d.h. es wird eine gleichmässig gültige und verbindliche Bezeichnung der Dinge erfunden”. Friedrich Nietzsche, “*Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*” in G. Colli and M. Montinari ed. *Die Geburt der Tragödie; Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* 12th edition (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), p.877.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.877-83.

⁶⁰² For an extensive and perspicacious commentary on Nietzsche conception of productive conflict or resistance see, in particular, the work of Herman Siemans, for example, Herman Siemans, “Nietzsche on Productive Resistance” in *Conflict and contest in Nietzsche's philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); or, *Agonal perspectives on Nietzsche's philosophy of critical transvaluation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

⁶⁰³ “Ihr sollt mir Solche sein, deren Auge immer nach einem Feinde sucht – nach eurem Feinde.” Nietzsche. *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.58.

⁶⁰⁴ “Ihr dürft nur Feinde haben, die zu hassen sind, aber nicht Feinde zum Verachten. Ihr müsst stolz auf euern Feind sein”, p.59

⁶⁰⁵ “Ihr sollt den Frieden lieben als Mittel zu neuen Kriegen. Und den kurzen Frieden mehr, als den langen” *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p.58.

⁶⁰⁶ There is one reference to strategy in *Die Geburt des tragischen Gedankens* (the same reference appears in *Die Dionysischen*), where Nietzsche speaks of the “strategy of the Hellenic will”: “*Sein Dasein, wie es nun einmal*

explicit, if somewhat ambiguous role in his conceptual landscape. At times Nietzsche seems to oppose the concept of cunning to that of war, violence, or action. This is particularly visible in the opposition between the noble human being (“*der vornehme Mensch*”) and the human being of *ressentiment* (“*der Mensch des Ressentiment*”), an opposition which informs Foucault’s reading of Nietzsche (and hence also his philosophical engagement with Clausewitz).⁶⁰⁷

The human being of *ressentiment* can be considered as cunning incarnated: “its spirit loves hiding places, secret paths, backdoors, everything concealed it considers as its world, its security, its refreshment”.⁶⁰⁸ The human being of *ressentiment* “is an expert at keeping silent, not forgetting, waiting, temporally belittling itself, humbling itself”.⁶⁰⁹ Such beings will necessarily be, Nietzsche says, “more cunning [*Klüger*]” than their noble counterparts,⁶¹⁰ their “cunning [*Klügheit*]” is indeed a “condition of existence [*Existenzbedingung*]”. It is cunning which knows when to wait, when to give up terrain, when to obey. Further, it is cunning which projects into the future, beyond the immediate suffering or humiliation. For the noble human being, on the contrary, cunning is somewhat superfluous, much more important is “the functional security of the regulating unconscious instincts or even a certain imprudence [*Unklugheit*]” what Nietzsche calls “a brave going in head first, be it in regards to danger, to an enemy, or to that ecstatic suddenness of anger, love, respect, gratitude, and revenge”.⁶¹¹

ist, in einem verklärenden Spiegel zu sehn und sich mit diesem Spiegel gegen die Meduse zu schützen — das war die Strategie des hellenischen Willens, um überhaupt leben zu können.” Friedrich Nietzsche. “*Die Geburt des tragischen Gedankens*” in G. Colli and M. Montinari ed. *Die Geburt der Tragödie; Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* 12th edition (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), p.589.

⁶⁰⁷ It is the noble races who are at the origin of the concept of “barbarian”. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1; §11, p.275.

⁶⁰⁸ “*sein Geist liebt Schlupfwinkel, Schleichwege und Hinterthüren, alles Versteckte muthet ihn als seine Welt, seine Sicherheit, sein Labsal*”. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1; §10, p.272.

⁶⁰⁹ “*er versteht sich auf das Schweigen, das Nicht-Vergessen, das Warten, das vorläufige Sich-verkleinern, Sich-demüthigen.*” Ibid.

⁶¹⁰ “*Eine Rasse solcher Menschen des Ressentiment wird nothwendig endlich klüger sein als irgend eine vornehme Rasse*”. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1; §10, p.272-3.

⁶¹¹ “*die vollkommene Funktions-Sicherheit der regulirend unbewussten Instinkte oder selbst eine gewisse Unklugheit, etwa das tapfre Drauflosgehn, sei es auf die Gefahr, sei es auf den Feind, oder jene schwärmerische Plötzlichkeit von Zorn, Liebe, Ehrfurcht, Dankbarkeit und Rache*”. Ibid, p.273.

The noble human being is rather characterized by a form of spontaneity (perhaps even idiocy) and strategic considerations are here completely foreign.

In is according to a similar logic that Nietzsche conceives of the formation of the state. For Nietzsche, far from being a question of contracts, the formation of the state passes through “some pack of blond beasts of prey [*irgend ein Rudel blonder Raubtiere*]” who arrive “like fate, without grounds, reason, consideration, excuse”.⁶¹² Their arrival is spontaneous and inexplicable: “they are there like lightning is there, too terrible, too sudden, too ‘other’ even to be hated”⁶¹³ and “their work is an instinctive form-creating, form-impressing, they are the most involuntary, the most unconscious artists that exist”.⁶¹⁴

This idea is mostly clearly articulated under the form of the bird of prey (“*Raubvögel*”) which Nietzsche characterises as pure acting. Its force (“*Kraft*”) is precisely “drive, will, acting [*Trieb, Wille, Wirken*]”.⁶¹⁵ It is only through the seduction of language, coupled with the most thoroughly engrained error of reason, that one is lead to “to understand and to misunderstand” “all activity as conditioned by something that acts, by a ‘subject’”.⁶¹⁶ As Nietzsche puts it:

just as the rabble separate lightening from its flashing and take the later as *doing*,
as the effect of a subject called lightening, rabble-morality separates strength from
the expression of strength, as if there were an indifferent substrate behind the one

⁶¹² “*sie kommen wie das Schicksal, ohne Grund, Vernunft, Rücksicht, Vorwand*”. *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 2; §17, p.324

⁶¹³ “*sie sind da wie der Blitz da ist, zu furchtbar, zu plötzlich, zu „anders“, um selbst auch nur gehasst zu werden*”, *Ibid*, 2; §17, p.324-5

⁶¹⁴ “*Ihr Werk ist ein instinktives Formen-schaffen, Formen-aufdrücken, es sind die unfreiwilligsten, unbewusstesten Künstler, die es giebt*”. *Ibid*, 2; §17, p.325

⁶¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1; §13, p.279

⁶¹⁶ “*welche alles Wirken als bedingt durch ein Wirkendes, durch ein „Subjekt“ versteht und missversteht*”. *Ibid*.

who is strong [*dem Starken*], which would be free to express or not to express strength.⁶¹⁷

However, Nietzsche insists, “there is no such substrate; there is no ‘Being’ behind the doing, acting, becoming; “the doer” is simply a fiction added on to the doing – the doing is everything”.⁶¹⁸

Although, in Nietzsche’s text, it is not directly a question of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), but rather of acting (“*Wirken*”), his thesis resembles in many respects the Clausewitzian critique of possibility and of being. As seen above, for Clausewitz, actuality is not to be understood merely as the expression (or actualisation) of a pre-existing possibility which, qua possibility, is capable of materialising or of not materialising itself. Clausewitz’s actuality is non-ontological and is not determined by underlying substance but rather has only an *effective* existence, that is to say, it exists only as the plenum of disjointed causal relations whose effects pass through its entire field in a continuous wave-like movement. Clausewitz does not, however, entirely disregard the category of possibility, rather he derives it, and continually reinscribes it in the category of actuality. For Clausewitz a play possibilities and probabilities is woven into every strand of the fabric of war⁶¹⁹ but these possibilities and probabilities are not ontologically abstract, rather they are to be manipulated, created, and destroyed. It is here that Clausewitz locates the activity of strategic thought.

Nietzsche’s thesis excludes entirely all strategic activity, it leaves no space for *actual* strategic intervention. The cunning of the human being of *ressentiment* is ultimately an

⁶¹⁷ “wie das Volk den Blitz von seinem Leuchten trennt und letzteres als Thun, als Wirkung eines Subjekts nimmt, das Blitz heisst, so trennt die Volks-Moral auch die Stärke von den Äusserungen der Stärke ab, wie als ob es hinter dem Starken ein indifferentes Substrat gäbe, dem es freistünde, Stärke zu äussern oder auch nicht.” Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ “Aber es giebt kein solches Substrat; es giebt kein „Sein“ hinter dem Thun, Wirken, Werden; „der Thäter“ ist zum Thun bloss hinzugedichtet – das Thun ist Alles”. Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ “ein Spiel von Möglichkeiten, Wahrscheinlichkeiten... welches in allen großen und kleinen Fäden seines Gewebes [d.h. des Krieges] fortläuft”. Vom Kriege, p.42

impuissant cunning (“the vengeful cunning of impotence [*rachsüchtigen List der Ohnmacht*]”⁶²⁰, Nietzsche calls it) which seeks to outwait existence, that is, to find its vengeance and its satisfaction in another, metaphysical world. Hence, Foucault’s use of “Nietzsche’s hypothesis”, that is, of the idea that “the essence of the relation of power is the bellicose confrontation of forces”, which appears as the recodification of the Clausewitzian problematic, justifies in part the exclusion of the role of strategy in the formation and maintenance of power relations.⁶²¹

By ignoring the importance of strategic activity, the Foucauldian position in *Il faut défendre la société* seems to tend towards a form of hopelessness or pessimism where intervention or resistance is, if not impossible, at least conditioned and determined by a prior domination, that is to say, ultimately doomed to failure. Clausewitz’s strategic idealism permits a way of thinking the complexities of the formation and maintenance of power relations while at the same time tracing their limits and offering a way of radically transforming them.

It is not “tactical pointers” that Clausewitz offers to the attentive reader but rather strategical ones: “*Heut ist es, wo das Morgen, in der Gegenwart ist es, daß die Zukunft geschaffen wird.*”

⁶²⁰ Ibid, 1; §13, p.279

⁶²¹ As seen above, Foucault associates cunning with illusion and chimera. *Il faut défendre la société*, p.47

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