

**What is the Human Being?:
Kant's Theory of Human Nature**

PART THREE: WHAT IS THE HUMAN BEING TODAY?

Chapter 11: Existentialism and Deconstruction¹

In 1966, Sartre criticized Foucault's *On the Order of Things* in a review for the journal *L'Arc*.²

What do we find in *The Order of Things*? Certainly not an *archaeology* of human sciences. Archaeology . . . studies a style that had been designed and implemented by men. This style could thereafter present itself as a natural state, taking the allure of something given. It is nonetheless the result of a practice, the development of which the archaeologist traces.

What Foucault offers is . . . a *geology*: . . . Each layer defines the conditions of possibility of a certain type of thought that triumphs for a certain period. But Foucault does not tell us what is most interesting: how every thought is built from these conditions, nor how people pass from one thought to another. This would require the intervention of praxis, thus history, and this is precisely what he refuses. Certainly its perspective remains historical. It distinguishes the epochs that precede from those that come after. But he replaces the cinema with the magic lantern, the movement with a succession of static states.

As we saw in the last chapter, historicists such as Kuhn and Foucault rightly pointed out the role of what we called an "historical a priori," a set of structures or paradigms that shape the way human beings think about and act within the world. Sartre, in one sense, agrees wholeheartedly with this historicist turn. Like Foucault (and Kuhn), Sartre insists that humans see the world in the context of styles of thinking that structure possible ways of thinking and acting. Like historicists, Sartre sees these a priori structures of cognition as historically contingent rather than universal across all times and peoples.³ But for Sartre, Foucault⁴ and other historicists still focus too much on looking at human beings from-without and thereby fail to recognize the role of human subjectivity for effecting shifts in the paradigms that structure humans' experience of our world and even the ways in which historicists themselves see the (historical) world. Similarly, Sartre argues that natural scientists who see human beings in terms of various natural forces (of biology or psychology) fail to recognize the role of subjectivity in defining the meaning and significance of our natural condition. Whereas historicists and naturalists see human beings primarily as the *products* of historical or natural forces, Sartre insists that instead that history and even biology

¹ Somewhere include Dostoyevski, if god is dead we can do anything → Foucault problematizing all values "for modern thought, no morality is possible" (*Order of Things* 328), also stuff about creativity, etc xxx.

² *L'Arc* 30(1966) 87-96, reprinted in Barry Smart, ed., *Michel Foucault, Critical Assessments* (Routledge: 1994). At the time of the review, Foucault had not yet articulated his "genealogical" method, which arguably comes closer to what Sartre sought in that it offers at least some outlines of explanations of the development of different modes of thought. Precisely because these explanations are offered "from-without," however, and especially given Foucault's radical questioning of the subjectivity that lies at the heart of Sartre's existentialism, Sartre would still see Foucault's account as replacing the cinema (within which subjectivity takes center stage) with the magic lantern (where all changes happen externally). (Though cf. Sartre's xxx, where he comes closer to Foucault, and Foucault's *Care of the Self* and xxx, where he moves closer to Sartre.)

³ Thus Sartre, like Kuhn and Foucault, rejects any naïve naturalism that would seek to find an answer to the question "What is the Human Being?" in the natural sciences of any particular era.

⁴ Kuhn may actually be less vulnerable to this attack than Foucault. Kuhn, like Anglo-American historians of science preceding him, tends to write the history of science as a history of episodes within which individuals loom large. Thus whereas Foucault sees shifting paradigms primarily as the effects of social forces, Kuhn provides a lot more room for individual human choices of one paradigm over another, choices that are undetermined not only by the "evidence" but even by the social interests and power relations at play at the time.

(insofar as they are significant) are products of humans' responses to their situations. And this opens the way for thinking of paradigms as expressions of human freedom rather than mere forces that constrain us.

Alongside the rise of naturalist and historicist approaches to human beings, the past century has seen the birth and development of "existentialist" approaches to being human that emphasize what we have called the transcendental perspective, from which one sees oneself as a free albeit finite being confronting a world of possibilities. The material expansion of choices for many people (especially in the developed world) has only heightened the sense that who we are is largely up to us. Existentialism rejects naturalist and historicist approaches as the last word on what it means to be human, prioritizes our sense of ourselves from-within, and emphasizes the importance of freedom for human life. Existentialism has its origins in the 19th century (especially in the work of Kierkegaard¹ and Nietzsche⁵) but came to its own during the 20th century, as the spread of science and technology both radically increased the range of options for human beings and radically narrowed our self-conceptions. The "existential phenomenology" developed in different ways by Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and others has exerted an important influence not only on contemporary philosophy but on our culture and popular conceptions of what it means to be human.

At the same time, the past twenty or thirty years have seen a turn away from the perceived egocentrism of traditional (especially Sartrean) existentialism. The rise of "deconstructive" approaches to the self, especially in the work of Derrida and Levinas, has combined existentialist resistance to formulaic reductions of human life with an emphasis on the radical and primordial *heteronomy* required by one's interactions with "alterity" (the incomprehensible otherness of another). This has brought a shift away from the "ontological" and first personal perspective of existentialism and towards ethical and radically second-personal approaches.

In many respects, existentialism is the most Kantian of the contemporary approaches to the human being that we have discussed so far. Like Kant, existentialists emphasize the importance of freedom and finitude for making sense of being human. And like Kant, existentialists focus on what being human means *from-within*, rather than analyzing human beings as objects in the world. Arguably, these two themes are as much at the core of existentialism as they are at the core of Kant. But existentialists radicalize and modify these Kantian themes. Where Kant defends the importance of freedom-as-autonomy that is subject to a moral law with a determinate form, Sartre insists upon an "absolute freedom" that can appeal to no "book of ethics" to help it choose (Exist, 25) and Kierkegaard describes an "absolute duty" that suspends the ethical and the universal and thereby cannot even be expressed in language.⁶ And where Kant emphasizes finitude primarily in the contexts of sensibility and inclination, existentialists attend in great detail to what it means for human beings to have a past, a body, and to be located in a particular situation. Finally, while Kant offers accounts of cognition, feeling, and volition "from-within," these are always accounts of cognitive, affective, and volitional contexts that are, at least broadly speaking, self-consciously reflective and highly structured. By contrast, existentialists aim to analyze "from-within" what they take to be an even more fundamental, primordial "from-within" perspective, that of our everyday lived experience of a meaningful world.

⁵ One might also include Dostoyevsky here, and both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are complicated antecedents of existentialism, for different reasons. More generally, with the exception of Sartre, there is no figure who can unambiguously be counted an existentialist, and many who might qualify under one or another description. For some general discussions of existentialism, see the works at the end of this chapter.

⁶ see *Fear and Trembling*, especially Problema II and III

To get a better sense for the significance of these existentialist developments of Kantian themes, this chapter focuses on five key aspects of existentialist thought.⁷

- (1) **Human “existence.”** Existentialists use the notion of “existence” (or “*Da-sein*” or being “for-itself”) to distinguish the way humans exist from the being of things in the world.
- (2) **Freedom.** As in the case of Kant, a focus on the distinctive “from-within” perspective of human being leads to an emphasis on human freedom.
- (3) **“Being-in-the-world.”** The from-within perspective of human being is not abstract, not distinct from our practical engagement with concrete situations in the world.
- (4) **Angst, Bad faith, and Authenticity.** Unlike Kantian freedom, which is paradigmatically a freedom to obey the moral law, existentialist freedom is groundless. Angst is the experience of this groundless freedom; bad faith and inauthenticity are ways of pretending that we are not really free.
- (5) **Others.** Human being-in-the-world is always also being with- or for-others (other human beings). Existentialists differ on the significance of others, but others always represent a threat to authenticity.

From this discussion of existentialist approaches to others (or “the Other”), I turn to the late Heidegger, Derrida, and especially Levinas, all of whom extend some existentialist insights but radically rethink the issue of the Other in a way that opens a space for what has come to be associated with “postmodernism” or “deconstructionism,” but which we might also see as a sort of radically “heteronomous” existentialism. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of some ways in which Kant might appropriate and respond to existentialism.

1. Existence

The name “existentialism” was first used by Gabriel Marcel to describe the circle that grew up around Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in Paris in the 1940s.⁸ The most classic formulation of existentialism is Sartre’s claim that “existence precedes essence,”⁹ or, as Heidegger put it, “*The ‘essence’ of Da-sein lies in its existence*” (BT 42).¹⁰ Here human “existence” does not mean that we are real things, that we exist in the world. Instead, existence is used as a *contrast* with anything like a human *nature* (E 30) or *essence* that defines the human being. A human being “exists before he can be defined by any concept” (E 15). What we do with our lives – our “existence” – defines who, and what, we are. Like cultural or historical relativists, existentialists deny that there is any universal answer to the question, “What is the human being?” But unlike these relativists, existentialists do not contrast this universal human nature with locally-defined traits but rather with “*subjectivity*,” the idea that “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself” (E 13, 15). Thus the answer to Kant’s question is a matter of how we decide to answer it in our lives. If a human being is anything at all, it is “the being whose being is a question for us” (Heidegger) or the being that is always “for-itself” (Sartre).

Although Sartre’s formulaic claim that existence precedes essence has become existentialism’s most famous articulation, the first to put the term “existence” to use in the way central to *existence*-ialism was Soren Kierkegaard: “That the knowing spirit is an existing spirit, and that every human being is such a spirit existing for himself, I cannot repeat often enough”

⁷ Throughout this chapter, I will primarily emphasize broadly shared emphases of existentialist thinkers (especially the early Heidegger and Sartre).

⁸ See Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance*, xxx, 1987; pp. 45-6; and Cooper 1990:1.

⁹ “Existentialism is a Humanism,” in *Existentialism and Human Emotions*, p. 13, hereafter abbreviated as E.

¹⁰ All references to Heidegger’s *Being and Time* are from the translation by Joan Stambaugh. Xxx full citation info. Xxx I use marginal pagination xxx. See too BT H 117: “The ‘substance’ of human being is not the spirit as the synthesis of body and soul, but *existence*.”

(CUP 189).¹¹ For Kierkegaard, existing is primarily contrasted with “Being” in the Hegelian sense; to exist is to be always in the “process of becoming” (CUP 190). An *existing* knower, in asking about any truth, always asks “what meaning it has *for him*” (CUP 189, emphasis added). Because human beings “exist,” truths can be truths for us only insofar as they are, in some sense, *relevant* or *meaningful* for our lives. In this way, “existence” takes on an important epistemological dimension: “truth is subjectivity” (CUP xxx) in that “only the truth that edifies [that contributes to our project of existing in the world] is the truth for you” (EO xxx).¹²

In the 20th century, Kierkegaard’s concept of “existence” was appropriated as the basis for an “existential analysis” (BT 13) by Martin Heidegger, and it is Heidegger’s conception of existence that set the stage for modern existentialism.¹³ The notion of “existence” is used to elucidate the Being of what Heidegger calls “Da-sein.”¹⁴ The German word *Dasein* is one of many possible words in German for the concept of existence, and German speakers will often refer, for instance, to the *Dasein* (existence) of a table or a chair. For Heidegger, however, *Da-sein* refers to its root meaning of being (*Sein*) here or there (*Da*), and Heidegger specifically *contrasts* this sort of Being with the “Being of beings” like tables and chairs. One important implication of Heidegger’s reinterpretation of this term is that *Da-sein* ceases to be a noun (existence) or even an adjective (existent), and becomes, first and foremost, a *verb* (as in to-be-there, or being-there).¹⁵ Like Kierkegaard, Heidegger aims to shift away from thinking of human beings as static objects of study and towards human *being*, as a sort of activity. The result is that the question “What is the human being?” shifts from being a question about an object – the human being – to one about an adverb: that is, what is a “human” way of being? What is the sort of “be-ing” that is human be-ing? Heidegger shifts from *what* a human being is to *how* we “are” humans, or, more generally, how does a human be?¹⁶

In order to think about the human be-ing without slipping into forms of thought that have been centered on the analysis of beings (as objects), Heidegger develops a whole new vocabulary of philosophical analysis. His use of Da-sein rather than human being is part of this shift; as Heidegger notes, “xxxxwhy not human being xxx”. But Heidegger’s new terminology does not end with Da-sein. Analysis of the “nature” of particular “beings” he calls “ontical” (xxx), while the sort of analysis that Heidegger proposes for Da-sein is “ontological,” an analysis of the be-ing of Da-sein rather than an analysis of human beings as objects. And in the context of distinguishing between these sorts of analysis, Heidegger reintroduces the notion of “existence”:

The “essence” of Da-sein lies in its existence. The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not objectively present “attributes” of an objectively present being which has such and such an “outward appearance,” but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this . . .

*We shall call the characteristics of being of Da-sein *existentials*. They are to be sharply delimited from the determinations of the being of those beings unlike Da-sein which we call categories. (SUZ 42, 44)*

¹¹ Johannes Climacus (aka Soren Kierkegaard), *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (trans and ed xxx), xxx; hereafter CUP.

¹² “What good would it do me if truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not, and producing in me a shudder of fear rather than a shudder of devotion.” Or, on the same page, he writes, “The thing is to find a truth which is true for me.” References xxx.

¹³ Heidegger also refers to his project as “existential phenomenology” xxx. emerges from a tradition of “phenomenology” that we will briefly discuss in the next chapter (on Normativity). Xxx. xxx

¹⁴ Heidegger’s most important contribution to existentialist philosophy came in his magnum opus, *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)*. Throughout this chapter (with the exception of section six), I refer primarily to this work in discussing Heidegger’s existentialism.

¹⁵ This implication does not *exhaust* the importance of the term Da-sein, for Heidegger. For more on the significance of the “Da-” of “Da-sein,” see section three, below.

¹⁶ As in Kierkegaard, the goal is not to discover some eternal essence of humanity but to provide the “subjective truth” of our existence.

Thus, while an object might have various properties that inhere in it as a sort of essence, Da-sein has various ways of being as different modes of its own “activity” of be-ing. For example, Heidegger contrasts the sort of spatiality that one ascribes to objects, where one might be included in another or beside another, with Da-sein’s existential “being-in-space,” which is a way in which humans “be” in the world. Similarly, for Heidegger, a mood like fear is not merely a “state” of a human being, but a *way* of be-ing (human).¹⁷ More famously, Heidegger famously discusses death not as a state that brings a particular human being’s life to an end, but as an existential “being-toward-death:” “Death is a way to be that Da-sein takes over as soon as it is.”¹⁸

Heidegger’s “existential” analyses of Da-sein end up driving him towards complicated German neologisms that require even more complicated English translations, such as his characterization of Da-sein as “being-ahead-of-oneself-already-in (the world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered)” (*SuZ* 192). But for our purposes here, the main point of all of these neologisms is that they reflect Heidegger’s efforts to rethink human be-ing using categories of “existence,” that is, categories that refer to a *way* of being rather than a *type* of being.

What Sartre takes from Heidegger and Kierkegaard, first and foremost, is this emphasis on human being as a way of being rather than a type of being. Sartre cashes this out in different terminology than Heidegger, but the fundamental point is the same. Sartre distinguishes between the “in-itself” and the “for-itself.” Tables and chairs and waterfalls and stars are “in-themselves” in the sense that their essence is not an issue for them. But human being is “for-itself” in the sense that “one must be what one is” (BN 101, and *passim*), which is to say that what one “is” is a *task set for* the human being. A table simply *is* what it is, but a human *must be* what it is.^{19 20}

This emphasis on human being as a way of being has roots in Kierkegaard’s conception of existence, but it also draws importantly from an early 20th century philosophical movement called “phenomenology.” In chapter 12, I will discuss phenomenology in more detail as a normative approach to human being, but for the purposes of this chapter, it is important at least briefly to discuss the phenomenological method of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, who was Heidegger’s mentor and under whom Sartre studied brieflyxxxcheckxxx. Husserl’s approach involved a sort of intuitionism that focuses on the phenomena of consciousness as a way of gaining insight into the essence of conscious experience. Husserl insists, however, on bracketing scientific claims about the world in order to focus on what he calls the “life-world [*Lebenswelt*]” and to isolate what he calls the “transcendental ego.”²¹ The point, in Kantian terms, is to gain insight into most basic structures of our naïve (pre-scientific) engagement with the world in which we live “from-within” the standpoint of that engagement. While criticizing central details of Husserl’s account,²² existentialists in the 20th century maintain a focus on offering from-within accounts of our engagement with our “life-world.”

For existentialists, moreover, this from-within perspective is privileged in that only for existing human being – Da-sein or the for-itself – does a world come to “be” at all: “Sartre quote xxx” Fundamentally, existential analysis makes any empirical-descriptive account of human beings secondary. The world is, as a world, only for a human who is in-the-world. Thus empirical human sciences are deprivileged; rather than being “views from nowhere”²³ on human beings as objects, the sciences are among the ways that humans can “be” in the world. As Heidegger puts it, “As ways in which human beings behave, sciences have this being’s (the human being’s) kind of

¹⁷ See *SUZ* 140ff.

¹⁸ *SUZ*, 245. For “being-toward-death,” see *SUZ* II.i.*passim*.

¹⁹ At times, the “in-itself” seems to be used to refer to “beingxxx,” a usage that is akin to Kant’s conception of things-in-themselves. Generally, however,

²⁰ (Add footnote re: criticisms of this as being too dualist.) xxx

²¹ See *Paris Lectures*, p. 10; cited in Cooper 1990: 42.

²² For a clear and concise summary of these criticisms, see Cooper 1990: 39-78.

²³ Reference Nagel, Williams xxx.

being . . . [but s]cientific research is neither the sole nor the most immediate kind of being of this being that is possible” (SuZ 11). Science becomes a human practice, a way of existing in the world, and thus the existential analysis of Being-in-the-world as such explains the possibility of empirical science, rather than vice versa.

All of this should sound familiar, and existentialists’ emphasis on existence can be put in rather Kantian terms: Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre all use notion of “existence” as a way of focusing attention on the from-within perspective of being human. Rather than treating humans like objects in the world, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre all focus attention on what it is actually like to be human, what living a human life is like from within.²⁴

But existentialists modify this Kantian transcendental perspective in several respects. For one thing, the method of analysis of existentialists (at least in their 20th century variety) is phenomenological. We will discuss phenomenology in more detail in the next chapter, but for our purposes here, the key contrast is the following: Rather than arguing for conditions of possibility of various essential ways of human being (i.e., as scientific knowers, morally responsible agents, or enjoyers of beauty), existentialists focus on describing, in detail, what appears or is “disclosed” (SUZ xxx) in the lived experience of being human. For example, Heidegger directs our attention to the lived experience of using a hammer, and Sartre offers detailed existential descriptions of phenomena as diverse as sexual attraction, shame, smoking a cigarette, and giving in to fatigue during a mountain-climb. The contrast here should not be overdone, of course. Kant was also interested in this sort of “phenomenological” analysis – that is, describing and attending closely to what one finds from-within – and existentialists often lay out “conditions of possibility” of the structures of human being that are disclosed phenomenologically. Generally speaking, though, Kant is more interested in *arguing* for certain a priori principles as necessary conditions of possibility of what he takes to be fairly obvious aspects of our “from-within” perspective, while existentialists are more interested in carefully describing that perspective.

This difference in method is tied to a difference in what we might call naïveté. Kant takes the basic from-within structures of thought, volition, and even feeling to be transparent to reflection. Proper thought involves justified ascriptions of objective properties and relations amongst objects situated in (Euclidian) space and (objective) time. Volition involves the pursuit of particular ends by means of particular actions, and human beings recognize that such pursuits are (morally) justified only insofar as they conform to a standard that is categorical. And so on. But for the existentialists, the basic structures of being human are *not at all* transparent. The from-within perspectives that become evident *upon reflection* are not the *primary* perspectives from within which human beings think, choose, and live our lives. And our naïve conceptions of what it means to think and choose from-within are pervaded by objectivizing and scientific perspectives of which we are often not even aware. (The discussion of introspection in chapter nine – see pp. xxx-xxx – helps confirm this existentialist insight. Even when one seeks to describe one’s perspective from-within, one often imports categories appropriate for scientifically explaining the behavior of others.) As a result, it requires great care and attention to bracket scientific and commonsense prejudices about what it means to “understand” something or to “desire” or “choose” something and instead to genuinely let the structure of human being manifest itself to oneself.

2. Freedom

²⁴ Xxx Strikingly, all three figures reject Kant’s transcendental philosophy as a suitable way of making sense of this perspective. Part of the reason for this, we will see in section four, has to do with Kant’s emphasis on the universality and necessity of moral and epistemic norms. But part of the reason has to do with Kant’s appeal to a noumenal self. Xxxx bring in critique of Kant’s subject as too much like an object. Xxx.

Unsurprisingly, the existentialist emphasis on “existence” as a perspective “from-within” which one finds and acts within the world leads to an existentialist emphasis on freedom. Sartre puts the point most dramatically, insisting that “existence” is nothing other than “the sudden thrust of the freedom which is mine,” so that “Freedom is identical with my existence” (BN 572). Thus the fundamental statement of existentialism could well read, “Human freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible” (BN 60). Similarly, Heidegger defines existence as Dasein’s “possibility to be itself or not to be itself” (SUZ 12).²⁵ Human being – Da-sein – is thus always “being-possible” or “potentiality-for-being” (e.g. *SuZ* 193): “Da-sein is always what it can be and how it is its possibility” (*SuZ*, 143). More paradoxically, one might say, “human reality . . . is what it is not and which is not what it is” (BN, 100 and passim). That is, one is defined not by what one “is” at any given time, but by the possibilities that one, at present, “is” not but that are nonetheless possibilities of being *for* one.²⁶

The emphasis on freedom is cashed out, in both Heidegger and Sartre, in terms of temporality.²⁷ Human being is always “being-ahead-of-oneself” (*SuZ* H 192-3) and thus Da-sein’s Being-in-the-world is always *incomplete*, or better, *to-be-completed*. And it is only because “One *must be* what one is” (101, emphasis added) that “I am not what I am” (108). That is, freedom is found in the fact that human being is defined in terms of its *future*. Because Da-sein is always a potentiality for being, there is an essential “not-yet” associated with Da-sein. Sartre gives the example of writing a book: “xxx.” This future-orientation brings with it an essential “being-ahead-of-itself” (BT H 236, cf BN xxx). One’s present (and even one’s past) is always defined in terms of one’s future, such that it is in terms of projecting oneself into one’s future that one makes sense of one’s past²⁸ and defines the meaning of the present. But this also means that one’s present and even one’s past are always, in some sense, defined by one’s freedom. It is only what one *will do* that can define the meaning of what one *is doing* and *has done*. As Heidegger puts it, deliberately emphasizing the existentialist inversion of typical conceptions of time, “having-been arises from the future” (*SuZ* H 326).

Importantly, existentialist freedom is not limited to freedom of action. Kierkegaard explains that

because the . . . existing *knowing* spirit is itself in the process of becoming, . . . truth is an approximating whose beginning cannot be established absolutely, because there is no conclusion that has retroactive power, [and thus] . . . every beginning, when it is made. . . is made by virtue of a resolution, essentially by virtue of faith” (kierk, CUP 189, emphasis mine).

²⁵ Da-sein is the being that “in its being . . . is concerned *about* its very being” (*SuZ* 12), which means that to “be” Da-sein is to take one’s own being as a task to be carried out rather than a fixed nature.

The “*essence*” of Da-sein lies in its *existence*. The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not objectively present “attributes” of an objectively present being which has such and such an “outward appearance,” but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this. (*SuZ*, 42).

²⁶ “As soon as we posit ourselves as a certain being, by a legitimate judgment, based on inner experience of correctly deduced from a priori or empirical premises, then by that very posting we surpass this being—and that not toward another being but toward emptiness, toward *nothing*.” (BN 106)

²⁷ Arguably, this is also true for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. For Kierkegaard, the importance of temporality shows up in his insistence on the distinction between existence as an *ongoing* process of becoming and the eternal, timeless conceptions of human being that he rejects. (Temporality also shows up in Kierkegaard’s discussion of the “moment,” especially in *Philosophical Fragments*.) In Nietzsche, xxxNietzsche’s claim in *Schopenhauer as Educator* that “xxx immeasurably higher xxx”

²⁸ Sartre puts this point in an even stronger way. It is by virtue of projecting oneself into one’s future that *there is* a past at all: “For human reality alone the existence of a past is manifest because it has been established that human reality *has to be what it is*. It is through the for-itself that the past arrives in the world because its “I am” is in the form of an *I am me*.” (BN 168, cf. Nausea)

Sartre puts the point even more radically (and in a quite Kantian spirit): “the world is human” (BN 297). More precisely,

The world by means of its very articulation refers to us exactly the image of what we are . . . the world necessarily appears to us as we are. In fact it is by surpassing the world toward ourselves that we make it appear such as it is. *We choose the world*, not in its contexture as in itself but in its meaning, by choosing ourselves. (BN 596)

Being is what it is; it can not possess in itself the determination “this one” . . . it is the presence of the for-itself which causes the existence of a “this” rather than a “that.” . . .

Negativity as original transcendence is not determined in terms of a *this*; it causes a *this* to exist. (BN 249, see too 264)

Sartre’s basic point here is that the brute world as it might be considered in itself is wholly undifferentiated, but the world that we actually know and experience is always already structured in terms of our own projects and priorities. Thus our knowledge, and even the world itself that we know, follow from our free orientation towards that world.²⁹ As Heidegger puts it,

“There is” truth only insofar as Da-sein and as long as it is . . . Newton’s laws, the law of contradiction, and any truth whatever, are true only as long as Da-sein *is* . . . If no Da-sein exists, no world is “there” either. (BT H 226, 365)³⁰

Put another way, “It is freedom which is the foundation of all essences since man reveals intramundane essences by surpassing the world towards its own possibilities” (bn 567).

This emphasis on freedom sets the existentialists with Kant and against both naturalists and historicists. For existentialists, human freedom is not merely something that emerges *from* a naturalistically or historically determined world, but that by virtue of which there *is* history or a world at all. In terms of the conceptions of freedom laid out in chapter nine, existentialists share with Kant a commitment to freedom-first perspectivism, according to which the from-within perspective of freedom is what makes possible any other perspectives on the world. But existentialists modify this Kantian emphasis on freedom in two respects that mark significant

²⁹ Sartre spells out this argument in more detail in terms of the notions of Being and Nothingness (hence the title of his work). Pure undifferentiated Being does not divide itself into the coherent sets of objects that we experience in our lives; it is only by virtue of thinking of the world in terms of what it is *not* that we come to give it the sort of meaningful coherence that can be a basis for “knowledge” of the world. For example, “in perception there is always the construction of a figure on a ground. No one object, no group of objects is especially designed to be organized as specifically either ground or figure” (BN 41). Thus it is by virtue of *our* activity of organizing the world in terms of *our* purposes that we are able to know anything about the world at all.

In order for the totality of being to order itself around us as instruments, in order for it to parcel itself into differentiated complexes which refer to one another and which can *be used*, it is necessary that negation rise up not as a thing . . . but as the rubric of a category which presides over the arrangement and the redistribution of great masses of being in things, thus the rise of man in the midst of the being which “invests” him causes a world to be discovered. . . . Man is the being through whom nothingness comes to the world. (BN 59)

This emphasis on nothingness is further enriched through Sartre’s account of the “negetiesxxx” that one experiences in one’s world, the experience of the absence of a friend or of the “destruction” of a rainforest. From the standpoint of Being, there can be no absence and no destruction; there simply is what there is. But *for human beings*, the world shows up as a world of distinctions, presences and absences, etc.

Being is what it is; it can not possess in itself the determination “this one” . . . it is the presence of the for-itself which cause the existence of a “this” rather than a “that.” . . . Negativity as original transcendence is not determined in terms of a *this*; it causes a *this* to exist. (BN 249, see too 264)

Sartre then considers what it necessary for this sort of “nothingness” to come into (and thereby form) the world, and finds the source of this nothingness in the nothingness that human beings always are insofar as “I am not what I am.”

³⁰ Heidegger rightly notes that in this sense, “as opposed to realism, *idealism* . . . has a fundamental priority” (BT H 207).

divergences from and challenges to Kant's transcendental anthropology. First, existentialist freedom is always freedom *in-the-world*. As Sartre puts it, "we reject Kant's 'choice of intelligible character.' The structure of choice necessarily implies that it be a choice *in the world*" (BN, 617). Similarly Heidegger emphasizes that human possibility is always "*thrown possibility*" (144):

As an existential, possibility does not refer to a free-floating potentiality of being in the sense of the "liberty of indifference" (*libertas indifferentiae*). As essentially attuned, *Da-sein* has always already got itself into definite possibilities. (144).

For existentialists, Being-in-the-world is inseparable from freedom and at least as central as freedom to understanding that "existence" that precedes essence. Second, existentialists reject Kant's conception of freedom as autonomy, that is, Kant's notion that to choose freely is to subordinate one's will to a universally applicable categorical imperative, or that to think spontaneously is to think in accordance with universally valid a priori categories. Instead, existentialists insist upon what Sartre calls "absolute freedom," a freedom that claims no justification; and existentialists emphasize, against the Kantian ideal of autonomy, an ideal of *authenticity* according to which one pursues one's "ownmost" possibilities.

3. Being-in-the-world

The existentialist emphasis on Being-in-the-world is one of the most important existentialist challenges to Kant's transcendental anthropology, and it is tied to the rejection of Kantian naïveté discussed at the end of section one and to the existentialist appropriation of Husserl's emphasis on the *Lebenswelt*, the pre-scientific world of direct, lived experience. For Heidegger, the "being which we ourselves in each case are" is not merely "Sein," or "Being," but *Da-sein*, or Being-*there*. To be *there* means that human being is always situated in a particular context. Whereas Kant generally treats the from-within perspective as a sort of "view from nowhere" (albeit a distinctively human one),³¹ existentialists emphasize that human existence is always existence *somewhere* and, equally importantly, is always existence somewhere with certain concrete projects and possibilities. Take the examples Kant uses to establish the a priori principle of causation: the house and the boat (see chapter 2, pp. xxx-xxx). Kant imagines how disinterested and only barely embodied observer would collect a set of subjective perceptions of boat-states or house-states into coherent objective states of co-existence or succession. But he does not think about where in this situation the knower finds herself, nor why she is looking at the house (or boat), nor how she came to find herself seeking to construe these objects *as* objects. Kant's knower could be anyone anywhere and has no particular stakes in the situations she surveys. Existentialists, by contrast, emphasize that, even from-within, human being is not a disembodied contemplation of the world, but a sort of being that always finds itself already "there," or, as Heidegger puts it more precisely, always "in-the-world." The person surveying the house is not only located some distance from it, but the survey of this house is conducted for some reason – the onlooker may be a prospective buyer, or may be returning back to his own house, or approaching a strange house to ask directions – and everything about the house (including, for instance, its perceived "distance" from one and even the detail with which one perceives it) is affected by one's purposes in surveying it.

Heidegger reflects this difference between Kantian "experience" and existentialist Being-in-the-world in his account of the paradigmatically human interaction with the world we experience. Heidegger criticizes Kant (and the whole Western metaphysical tradition) for

³¹ See Nagel. Contrast Hanna (especially chapters 1-2), who has argued that Kant's conception of the from-within is also highly situated, including in particular a sense of the spatiality of the world that is always centered on oneself. For an alternative view, see Friedman. The issue of whether Kant privileges commonsense perspective (Hanna) or scientific one (Friedman) is a vibrant issue amongst Kant scholars today. xxx.

focusing on objects that are³² “conspicuous” or “merely objectively present” (SuZ H71. 73), that is, objects that are the direct focus of reflective understanding. But Heidegger points out that the beings we encounter in the world are initially and for the most part “handy” objects, that is, beings that we put to use:

The closest kind of association [with things in the world] is not mere perceptual cognition, but, rather, a handling, using, and taking care of things which has its own kind of knowledge . . . To expose what is merely objectively present, cognition must first penetrate *beyond* things at hand being taken care of. *Handiness is the ontological categorial definition of beings as they are “in themselves.”* (SuZ 67, 71)

Kant’s house and boat are not first objects to be surveyed, but places to live or vehicles to travel on the river. The sort of objectivizing reflection that Kant takes as the most fundamental standpoint of human cognition is actually a highly derivative form of knowing, one that abstracts from the lived knowledge of the world as a world of handy objects that always already have a meaning in the context of Da-sein’s own being-in-the-world.

Because human being is this sort of “Being-in-the-world” rather than being-from-nowhere, human thought and action is always situated in a particular context and cannot be separated from that context. Sartre describes this as our “facticity,” and Heidegger as what he calls “thrownness” or our “*thrown possibility*” into “definite possibilities” (144). The point is that human possibilities are always understood³³ in terms of the situation in which we always already find ourselves. There is no transcendental “knower” or “agent” that exists in some noumenal realm free from the constraints of temporality: “The structure of choice necessarily implies that it be a choice *in the world*” (BN, 617). Thus Sartre suggests that asking, “what would Descartes have been if he had known of contemporary physics?” is “absurd” precisely by failing to recognize that Descartes is always Being-in-the-world. As Sartre puts it,

This [question] . . . suppose[s] that Descartes possesses an a priori nature more or less limited and altered by the state of science in his time . . . [But in fact] Descartes is an absolute upsurge at an absolute date and is perfectly unthinkable at another date, for he has made his date by making himself.” (BN 669)

It should already be clear that Being-in-the-world has radical implications for existentialists’ conceptions of human freedom. Unlike naturalists, existentialists do not take freedom to be a mere epiphenomenon of what is a fundamental causal determination. Existentialist freedom – like Kant’s – determines rather than being determined by the world, but this freedom finds itself always already thrown into its situation. Sartre describes this as “the paradox of freedom: there is freedom only in a *situation*, and there is a situation only through freedom” (BN 629, see BN 653, E 23).³⁴ Or, as he puts it elsewhere, “Human reality is indeed the *being which is always beyond its being-there*. And the situation is the organized totality of the being-there, interpreted and lived in and through being-beyond” (BN 702). What is, *is-there* (for me) only by being interpreted as meaningful in terms of projects and possibilities towards which I freely orient myself. But I can interpret as meaningful only a world that I find, at least in some sense, always already there as that beyond which I find my possibilities. Material wealth, for example, only becomes what it is – a means for luxurious living, a source of power over others, a temptation to impious self-reliance, a burden of responsibility – in terms of projects freely projected.³⁵ Even whether or not one *is* materially wealthy depends upon one’s projects and

³² “present-at-hand,”

³³ “Understanding” is a technical term for Heidegger, referring to the “xxx”. “Here, I’m using the term in a less technical sense.

³⁴ “I am absolutely free and absolutely responsible for my situation. But I am never free except *in situation*.” (653)

³⁵ Likewise the “situation” of physical illness is defined in different and incommensurable means for heroic overcoming (xxx) or a part of a life of intensified attunement (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche), or a

possibilities: neither the sheltered prince (who knows no other life) nor the ever-grasping corporate executive (who sees his six-figure income only in terms of the seven-figure income that it is not) sees their situation as one of wealth. Yet neither of these figures is capable of defining their situation in terms of the struggle for the means for physical survival. The freedom of each is constrained by their situation, but the meaning of this situation is itself defined by them.

In addition to refining the existentialist conception of freedom, understanding human being as “Being-in-the-world” also leads existentialists to reject a host of dualisms that permeate Kant’s philosophy. The dualism on which existentialists themselves typically focus is that between subject and object. The language here gets quite feisty. Sartre refers to “the hypothesis of a transcendental subject” as both “useless and disastrous” (BN 318), and Heidegger xxx.³⁶ In fact, however, the existentialist rejection of this dualism is more subtle than existentialists themselves often admit. Both Heidegger and Sartre have distinctions, if not dualisms, that closely resemble Kant’s own distinction between the transcendental subject/agent and objects in the world. For all their insistence that “subject and object are not the same as *Da-sein* and world” (SuZ H 60) or “xxx sartre” (BNxxx), Heidegger’s distinction between *Da-sein* and mere beings and Sartre’s between the “in-itself” and the “for-itself” are attempts to lay out the difference between a free, from-within, human being and the being of the objects of human thought and action.

The vitriol against *Kant’s* way of making sense of this distinction is really directed towards two problems with the way in which existentialists see Kant as making sense of the distinction between transcendental and empirical perspectives. One problem is simply that Kant fails to sufficiently recognize that human being is always being-in-the-world. By positing a subject-object dichotomy, or a distinction between the self-in-itself and the realm of appearance, Kant fails to recognize that “it belongs to the nature of *Da-sein* to exist in such a way that it is always already with other beings.”³⁷ As a criticism of *Kant’s* subject-object dichotomy, this objection falls short. Kant certainly rejects some aspects of existentialist’s emphasis on being-in-the-world, but the basic notion that human cognition, feeling, and volition all take place in the context of situation in which one always already finds oneself is intrinsic to the balance between freedom and finitude that lies at the core of Kant’s transcendental anthropology.

A second problem with the subject-object dichotomy is that laying out the dichotomy in these terms makes free human being too much like the being of objects. The danger here is that this distinction ends up construing subject and object as, in essence, two different sorts of objects that relate to one another. “xxx.”³⁸ And here, existentialists are certainly highlighting an important difference from – and potential problem with – Kant’s account. Strictly speaking, of course, Kant claims that “objects” are always empirical objects, subject to the transcendental conditions of experience (space, time, and categories like causation), and thus the human being as subject of transcendental anthropology cannot be an “object” in this strict sense. Nonetheless, for Kant it makes sense to talk about *the* human being (as a sort of thing), rather than human being (as a way of being). And Kant’s accounts of “intelligible character” and the *homo noumenon* suggest what has been called a “two-world” account in which human beings exist as free things-in-

³⁶

“Being-in is quite different from a confrontation which merely observes and acts, that is, the concurrent objective presence of a subject and an object” (BT, H176),

³⁷ Heidegger, *Basic problems of phenomenology* 1982: 157, quoted in Cooper 81.

³⁸ Xxxx lay out, note that overplayed, note accusations against Sartre and even early Heidegger show how close they really are to Kant (Kant also rejected substance of subject, e.g.) . But the existentialists are certainly correct that on the most natural readings of Kant, he is committed to something like a noumenal self-in-itself, and xxx note recent attempts to move away from this, real issue how much his philosophy depends on it, but if it does, it’s not clear that the existentialists have any real objections...they just don’t like the dualism (though cf. Sartre BN 570).

themselves in a “noumenal” world while ordinary objects, including the appearances of human beings in the empirical world, exist in a “phenomenal” world.

In the context of this interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism, the existentialist critique of Kant reconnects with the earliest criticisms raised against Kant in the 18th and early 19th century.³⁹ Echoing Jacobi’s “Affection Problem,” Sartre points out that “xxx” (BN 570). More generally, insofar as the notion of “the” human being as a “thing-in-itself” that grounds the world involves the attribution of merely empirical categories to a non-empirical thing, then existentialists are certainly correct that this is a notion that Kant cannot afford to keep. But within Kant’s transcendental anthropology of cognition, the categories of the understanding provide for the possibility of “thinking” of things that cannot be objects of any possible experience, and his practical philosophy provides reason to believe in the existence of at least one such thing – the free human being. In the context of the existentialist critique, Kant needs at least to show how thinking of human beings as things-in-themselves is consistent with the non-objective nature of human being. He further needs to alleviate concerns that this sort of dualism precludes the integration of freedom and world necessary to capture the most important existentialist insights about being-in-the-world. And he would need to provide strong reasons to think that the distinction between transcendental and empirical perspectives, so important for both Kant and existentialism, actually depends upon metaphysical commitments to separate *realms* within which human beings exist. Some contemporary Kantians have sought to meet these existentialist challenges. Others – we will discuss one prominent example in the next chapter – have articulated accounts of Kant’s philosophy that construe Kant’s transcendental idealism in a broadly existentialist way (and thus as not involving any commitment to the metaphysical reality of “things-in-themselves”).

One further aspect of the rejection of Kant’s distinction between phenomenal and noumenal human beings involves existentialist rethinking of the traditional mind-body dichotomy. In Sartre, de Beauvoir, and especially in Merleau-Ponty, human embodiment is a central aspect of being-in-the-world. Xxx

While the rejection of a strongly metaphysical subject—object distinction is the most *explicitly* articulated difference between existentialists and Kant, an equally important critique is the existentialist rejection of Kant’s distinction between cognition, volition, and feeling. The rejection of this distinction is already evident in Kierkegaard’s insistence that “truth is subjectivity” and that “only the truth that edifies is the truth for me” (xxx). For Kierkegaard and for all later existentialists, only knowledge that is relevant or practical is truly knowledge. So-called “objective” knowing, which was paradigmatic of knowledge for Kant, is derived and secondary and even this knowledge serves specific practical purposes. Nietzsche’s insistence on “philosophy as tool of drives” and Heidegger’s emphasis on handiness as the initial and predominate way in which objects present themselves to human being collapses the distinction between volition/use and knowledge. Moreover, beginning with Kierkegaard’s emphasis on “passion” and continuing through the Heideggerian and Sartrean emphasis on emotions or

³⁹ In their emphasis on breaking down (or at least showing the non-fundamental status of) Kant’s tripartite account of human mental life, existentialists share the commitment of Kant’s earliest critics and followers, from Pistorius to Reinhold and Hegel, to get to what Reinhold called the “xxx”. Heidegger in particular xxx tie to Heidegger in *Essence of Freedom* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* to get to the unified root. xxx

[[How/where should I include this (if at all...it seems pretty important, though)? ³⁹The existentialist attention to Being-in-the-world, with its breakdown of distinctions between subject and object and especially its emphasis on the from-within perspective of the *life-world*, is part of a broader movement within recent philosophical accounts of human beings. Xxx Discuss Wittgenstein, Thompson, McDowell. Xxx]]

“moods,” existentialists insist that what Kant would call “feelings” are, if anything, primary modes of orienting oneself in-the-world:

Xxx Kierkegaard re: passion xxx

“Mood [is] a primordial kind of being of Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself *before* all cognition and willing and *beyond* their scope of disclosure” (BT H136)

“Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something” (BT H 137).

Xxx Sartre quote xxx.

Breaking down Kant’s tripartite conception of human being is in many respects a more serious difference from and challenge to Kant than the existentialist arguments against Kant’s supposed transcendental dualism.

With respect to practical philosophy, the breakdown of a distinction between cognition, volition, and knowing means that one can be held responsible for one’s feelings and understandings of the world, just as for the “deliberate” choices of one’s “will.” Given that the world is primordially understood in terms of its “handiness,” in choosing who we are through projecting ourselves towards our possibility, we not only choose particular actions and ends, but we also “*choose the world*” (BN 596).

With respect to knowledge, breaking down this distinction implies that Kant’s whole attempt to derive a priori conditions of the possibility of an abstract human knowledge *in general* is bound to fail because it misses the whole basis of human knowing. Worse, by emphasizing the most abstract and “objective” scientific knowing, Kant privileges natural-scientific knowing and thereby reinforces the worse tendencies of the so-called “Enlightenment.” Not only does this blind Kant to the important role of “mood” or “emotion” as truth-disclosing, but it also leads him to privilege scientific knowing over everyday “knowledge” in our lived world.

xxx better transition...should I have a separate (sub)section on science? Here?

Being-in-the-world and the status of science.

One might think that understanding human being as “being-in-the-world” would imply that natural sciences would have a privileged place in understanding human being, but the existentialist understanding of this being implies precisely the opposite. Remember that for the existentialists, being-in-the-world is not an attribute of an object; humans are not like trees or spoons that are “in the world” in the sense of being spatially located in a greater context. For us, “being-in-the-world” is a way that we are *from-within*. Moreover, being-in-the-world, precisely because it collapses the Kantian (and modern scientific) distinctions between knowing, feeling, and acting, undermines the supposed “objectivity” of sciences. Heidegger and Sartre both discuss naturalism in detail, and both seek to show how a purportedly “objective” perspective can arrive, as a “way in which human beings behave” (SuZ H 11), from our more basic engagement with the world. Citing Heidegger, Sartre explains that “Even the disinterested attitude of a scientist, as Heidegger has shown, is the *assumption* of a disinterested position with regard to the object and hence one conduct among others” (BN, 613, emphasis added).

The result is that existentialists end up being much more anti-naturalist than Kant and thereby pose a significant challenge to Kant’s own limited scientific realism. Recall that for Kant, although the natural sciences do not reveal everything about everything, they do provide our best account of the world we experience. By collapsing the distinction between practical projects and empirical cognition of the world, existentialists undermine Kant’s attempt to carve out a privileged space for the natural sciences. Sartre puts the point particularly dramatically with an example:

I can establish that the warm water appears cold to me when I put my hand in it after having first plunged my hand in hot water. But this establishment which we pompously call “the law of relativity of sensations” has nothing to do with sensations. Actually we are dealing

with a quality of the object which is revealed to me: the warm water *is* cold when I submerge my heated hand in it. A comparison of this objective quality of the water to equally objective information which the thermometer gives me simply reveals to me a contradiction. This contradiction motivates on my part a free choice of true objectivity. I shall give the name subjectivity to the objectivity which I have not chosen. (BN 412)

Where Kant privileges the scientific standpoint as the correct and normatively required standpoint for understanding the world (even if not the exhaustive standpoint on human action), Sartre sees merely various sets of incompatible objectivity-claims, the priority of which is wholly a matter of “free choice.” Moreover, existentialists’ emphasis on the “life-world” suggests that the immediate awareness of the water as cold is the more objective understanding, while science is merely secondary, derived, and, in its theory-ladenness, subjective. As Heidegger puts it with respect to space and time,

An ‘objectively’ long path can be shorter than an ‘objectively’ much shorter path which is perhaps and ‘onerous one’ . . . When there is a prior orientation towards [scientific] ‘nature’ and the ‘objectively’ measured distances of things, one is inclined to consider such interpretations . . . ‘subjective.’ However, that is a ‘subjectivity’ which perhaps discovers what is most real about the ‘reality’ of the world. (BT H 106).

One might, of course, see the emphasis on the life-world as precisely what Kant needs to *salvage* his transcendental anthropology of cognition in the light of scientific historicism discussed in the last chapter (Kuhn). As I suggested there, one might read Kant’s transcendental anthropology of cognition as an account of ordinary human experience and thus insulate it from criticisms based on the development of the sciences. Unfortunately, existentialists show that, once the distinction between thought and action is rejected, once human “understanding” is disclosed as a way that “Da-sein projects its being upon possibilities” (SuZ H 148), Kant’s most basic analyses of human experience fail to reflect what ordinary life is really like “from-within.” Just as Kuhn seems to undermine Kant’s account of the conditions of possibility of scientific knowing, Heidegger and Sartre aim to undermine Kant’s account of the conditions of possibility of ordinary, lived, human experience.

At a very basic level, this is accomplished through drawing attention to the priority of an engagement with things as handy rather than as “objects” of theoretical knowing. But the existentialist critique cuts even deeper as it gets more specific. One of the most important examples of this undermining of Kant’s transcendental philosophy is the existentialist re-interpretation of the nature of *time*. (Heidegger’s magnum opus is not called *Being and Time* by accident.) Heidegger points out that, from-within the perspective of *lived* experience, time does not appear as what Kant called an “objective succession” (xxx), or what Heidegger calls a “vulgar understanding of time” (SuZ H326). Within Kant’s conception of “time” as objective succession, even the most basic temporal categories of past, present, and future are merely *derived* relations between the time in which events take place and the temporal location of oneself. First, then, Heidegger restores a focus on lived time. But for Heidegger, the categories of “past, present, and future” are all-too-commonly used in a sense derived from the broadly Kantian, “vulgar . . . derivative . . . [and] inauthentic” conception of objective time, where past, present, and future are merely objectively-locatable time-slices that include different moments. Instead, Heidegger develops a notion of “temporality” as “the unified phenomenon of the future that makes present in the process of having-been” (SuZ H326).

Despite the complex terminology, Heidegger is drawing attention to an important point about our lived experience of temporality. From-within, the “present” does not appear as a particular moment between other moments, some past and some future. Instead, human existence is a projecting towards possibilities, but a projecting that is always in the process of having-been in-the-world that one always-already is. The future is not first and foremost a quasi-objective time that will come to be present later, but a set of possibilities towards which one aims. The past is not first and foremost a set of events that occurred in previous moments, but rather that in one’s

situation that is given, that one can interpret but not “change.” And the present is not a moment that happens to occur between past and future but rather it is one’s existence itself, that way of being *from* the past *into* the future. Within our ordinary lived experience of the world, the heat-death of the universe is not an event in the future and the Big Bang is not an event in our past; these moments does not show up in “our” time at all. And the derision that “will” be directed towards me as a result of the email I have just sent is just as much a part of my “past” as the event of clicking the send button. (I act towards my future possibilities in the light of an embarrassment or defensiveness that reflects the fact that this derision has occurred, even though, in terms of “objective” time, the recipient of my email “will” not open it until tomorrow morning.)

What Kant isolates as “time” is thus not the lived temporality of human being but a highly derived sense of “objective” time, a sort of “time” that is important for objective, scientific knowledge, but not the primordial temporality of Da-sein. And while Heidegger focuses on human temporality, he offers a similar existential reinterpretation of space (as “the whereto of the possible belonging somewhere of useful things at hand in the surrounding world” (SuZ H368). Euclidian space, rather than being primitive to our experience, is a sort of abstraction from this lived spatiality. Similar existential reinterpretations could be offered for basic Kantian categories like empirical causality or substantiality. The upshot of these existential critiques is to highlight the distance of Kant’s transcendental anthropology of cognition from the ordinary ways of cognizing objects in which humans initially and for the most part engage. The “experience” of the first critique already involves a very scientific objectivizing of the empirical world.

4. Absolute Freedom: Angst, Bad Faith, and Authenticity

The consideration with which we ended the last section draws attention to an important way in which the very limitation on freedom implied by Being-in-the-world also supports a radicalization of freedom. Because human knowing is always situated in the context of our practical projects, the scientific perspective cannot be privileged, and thus it is always, in some sense, up to us whether we employ, say, Kant’s a priori categories of the understanding or not. Similarly, because human choices are always choice in particular contexts, existentialists argue, no abstract moral formulae can dictate how one must choose. The result is that even while human freedom is always situated by virtue of Being-in-the-world, this freedom also finds itself much more radically free than Kant envisioned because it is bound by no a priori laws of understanding or volition.

Sartre describes what has become the most famous illustration of this radical freedom, the case of one of his students:

his father was on bad terms with his mother, and, moreover, was inclined to be a collaborationist [with the Nazis]; his older brother had been killed in the German offensive of 1940, and the young man, with somewhat immature but generous feelings, wanted to avenge him. His mother lived alone with him, very much upset by the half-treason of her husband and the death of her older son; the boy was her only consolation.

The boy was faced with the choice of leaving for England and joining the Free French Forces--that is, leaving his mother behind or remaining with his mother and helping her to carry on. He was fully aware that the woman lived only for him and that his going off--and perhaps his death--would plunge her into despair. He was also aware that every act that he did for his mother's sake was a sure thing, in the sense that it was helping her to carry on, whereas every effort he made toward going off and fighting was an uncertain move which might run aground and prove completely useless; for example, on his way to England he might, while passing through Spain, be detained indefinitely in a Spanish camp; he might reach England or Algiers and be stuck in an office at a desk job. As a result, he was faced with two very different kinds of action: one, concrete, immediate, but concerning only one individual; the other concerned an incomparably vaster group, a national collectivity, but for that very reason was dubious, and might be interrupted en route. And, at the same time, he

was wavering between two kinds of ethics. On the one hand, an ethics of sympathy, of personal devotion; on the other, a broader ethics, but one whose efficacy was more dubious. He had to choose between the two.

Who could help him choose? Christian doctrine? No. Christian doctrine says, "Be charitable, love your neighbor, take the more rugged path, etc., etc." But which is the more rugged path? Whom should he love as a brother? The fighting man or his mother? Which does the greater good, the vague act of fighting in a group, or the concrete one of helping a particular human being to go on living? Who can decide a priori? Nobody. No book of ethics can tell him. The Kantian ethics says, "Never treat any person as a means, but as an end." Very well, if I stay with my mother, I'll treat her as an end and not as a means; but by virtue of this very fact, I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting, as means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and, by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means. If values are vague, and if they are always too broad for the concrete and specific case that we are considering, the only thing left for us is to trust our instincts. That's what this young man tried to do; and when I saw him, he said, "In the end, feeling is what counts. I ought to choose whichever pushes me in one direction. If I feel that I love my mother enough to sacrifice everything else for her--my desire for vengeance, for action, for adventure--then I'll stay with her. If, on the contrary, I feel that my love for my mother isn't enough, I'll leave." (Existentialism, pp. 24-26)

The point here is not merely that in *some* cases, we must make choices without sufficient reason. Sartre uses this as an illustration of a much more general phenomenon of human life. No particular ethical system can *ever* determine what I ought to do: "we apprehend our choice—i.e., ourselves—as *unjustifiable*. This means that we apprehend our choice as not deriving from any prior reality" (BN 598).

Similarly, Heidegger discusses Kant's "fact of reason" as a "fact . . . always and only given by us to ourselves," but Heidegger argues *against* any attempt to understand this fact in terms of "any formula or . . . value held up before us" (Heid, *Essence*, p. 201). Instead, Heidegger insists that the fact of pure reason is given only in our "resolve to pure willing of against this," where pure willing is "to be in the mode of self-responsibility, to answer only to the essence of one's self" (ibid.). Unsurprisingly, "conscience" for Heidegger is not a vague understanding of a possibly articulable moral law (as in Kant), but rather an invitation to a "resolution" that has no pre-articulable form: "to what does Da-sein resolve itself in resoluteness? On what is it to resolve? *Only* the resolution itself can answer this . . . The *indefiniteness* that characterizes every factually projected potentiality-of-being of Da-sein *belongs* necessarily to resoluteness" (BT H 298). Kierkegaard and Nietzsche arguably put the radicality of freedom in its most radical forms, with Kierkegaard defending a "teleological suspension of the ethical" in the name of an inarticulable and unjustifiable "absolute duty,"⁴⁰ while Nietzsche proposes moving "beyond good and evil" towards "your true nature [that] lies . . . immeasurably high above you."⁴¹

Given their rejection of Kant's distinctions between cognition, feeling, and volition, existentialists also radicalize Kant's conception of freedom in another way. Although Kant emphasizes the spontaneity of the understanding and the freedom of aesthetic pleasure, volitional freedom is both distinguished from and prioritized over these other sorts of freedom. For existentialists, however, the freedoms of thought, feeling, and choice all run together into a single, free, projection towards one's own possibilities. While Kant insists that we cannot be held directly responsible for emotions because they are not under our direct control (see 5:83), Sartre seeks an "existential psychoanalysis" that would ascribe *all* of one's thoughts, feelings, and

⁴⁰ See *Fear and Trembling*, Problemata II and III.

⁴¹ *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Brazeale (Cambridge, CUP: 1997), p. 129.

deliberate choices to an “original choice” or “fundamental project” (BN 728, 729), “the free project of the unique person” (782).⁴² Sartre takes this point as far as it can possibly go:

psychoanalysis must . . . understand someday why Pierre likes oranges and has a horror of water, why he gladly eats tomatoes and has a horror of beans. (770)

[T]astes do not remain irreducible givens; if one knows how to question them, they reveal to us the fundamental projects of the person. Down to even our alimentary preferences they all have a meaning.’ (783)

Kant, even in his emphasis on freedom, always preserved a sharp distinction between what is *merely given* to one’s choice and how one responds to what is given. But for Sartre, *everything* about a person is ascribable to freedom, including not merely choices for or against the moral law, but even one’s basic and apparently instinctual desires, immediate sensory attention to one’s world, and apparently uncontrolled “passions” or “moods.”⁴³

The rejection of Kant’s distinction between cognition, feeling, and volition also led, as we saw in the previous section, to an attentiveness to the disclosive function of moods and emotions. And for existentialists, one mood above all is preeminently disclosive of humans’ absolute freedom⁴⁴: anxiety, or *Angst*. (The word *Angst* is from Heidegger’s German, and can be translated into English as anxiety or anguish or xxx. Since *Angst* has come to be an accepted English word associated specifically with existentialism, I will continue to use the term throughout this section.) *Angst* has as its object “*being-in-the-world as such*,” and in particular the realization that “the world has the character of complete insignificance” (BT H 186). “What oppresses,” in angst, “is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the *possibility* of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself” (BT H 187). But the world experienced in angst is not merely a world set apart from oneself, but rather the world in relation to “the ownmost individualized being of Da-sein” (BT H 265).⁴⁵ That is, in the recognition of the fact that the world is meaningless, or better, meaningful but only through one’s own unjustified and unjustifiable being-in-the-world, one experienced the disorientation of freedom. As Sartre puts it,⁴⁶

in *Angst*, . . . we apprehend our choice—i.e., ourselves—as *unjustifiable*. This means that we apprehend our choice as not deriving from any prior reality. (BN 598).

There is ethical *Angst* when I consider myself in my original relation to values . . . my freedom is the unique foundation of values and . . . *nothing*, absolutely nothing, justifies me in adopting this or that particular value, this or that scale of values. (BN 76)⁴⁷

⁴² This emphasis on choice can easily be misread (as, for example, Merleau-Ponty does in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, xxx, p. xxx) if one forgets that Sartre (like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and others) fundamentally rejects Kant’s distinctions between cognition, feeling, and volition. Thus the free “choice” to which Sartre refers here is elsewhere called a person’s “passion” (BN 797), and Sartre insists that “the will, far from being the unique or at least the privileged manifestation of freedom, actually . . . must presuppose the foundation of an original freedom” (BN 571).

⁴³ **insert somewhere xxx.** Where Kant located human freedom in the capacity to choose in accordance with a moral law that sets us apart from all of our natural inclinations, existentialists radicalize this capacity so that nothing – not even the moral law – can provide a reason to act except in the context of our free choice of it as a reason. Moreover, this free choice is ultimately unjustifiable and without foundation.

⁴⁴ As Heidegger puts it, there is one “understanding attunement in Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself in a distinctive way” (BT H 182).

⁴⁵ See too BT H 188: “*Angst* discloses Da-sein as being-possible, and indeed as what can be individualized in individuation of its own accord.”

⁴⁶ Throughout, I modify the Barnes translation to translate Sartre’s xxx by the German *Angst* rather than the English “anguish.”

⁴⁷ “It is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or if you prefer, anguish is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being” (BN 65)

“Anguish has not appeared to us as the *proof* of human freedom; the latter was given to us as the necessary condition for the question” (BN 70)

This *Angst* is importantly contrasted with mere “fear.” Fear has as its object some *threat* to one’s being, while *Angst* has as its object one’s being itself, and in particular focuses on one’s *freedom* as a sort of threat. Sartre explains this point with the example of walking along a narrow precipice. One can be *afraid* of the precipice: it “presents itself to me as *to be avoided*; it represents a danger of death” (BN 66). But one experiences *Angst* in relation to oneself and the ever present “possibility . . . to throw myself over the precipice” (BN 67). The recognition that such a course of action is wholly up to me, that there is nothing – no prior commitments, no moral codes, no inclinations or desires – that can absolutely prevent me from making the fatal choice—this recognition prompts an existential *Angst* in the face of one’s freedom, one’s ownmost possibilities. More substantively, the mid-career professional may suddenly have her “midlife crisis” where she recognizes that xxx.

Importantly, *Angst* does not reveal simply that one is radically free. It also highlights that one’s choices are always *one’s own* choices. It is precisely as one’s *ownmost individualized* possibilities that possibilities are revealed in *Angst*. Insofar as one sees the possibility of falling off a cliff as something that can happen *to* one, it causes merely fear. But when one feels anxiety about it as *something one can do oneself, it is a source of Angst*. For Heidegger, the revelation of possibilities as one’s *ownmost* possibilities is preeminently accessible through what he calls “being-toward-death,” and thus “Being-toward-death,” for Heidegger “is essentially *Angst*.”⁴⁸ Heidegger’s point here is that death, properly understood, “*is always just one’s own*” (BT H265). While people can, to be sure, think of death merely “objectively,” as an event that will occur in one’s life, just as it occurs in the lives of others, such an account of death always fails to really understand death. When “one” finishes a project, or insults a person, or even has a child, these events are events that could occur in the life of another as much as in one’s own life. In principle, another can even undergo these activities for me: another can finish my project, or insult my enemy, or even have a child on my behalf (either giving birth to one for me or taking responsibility for the one I’ve begotten). But, Heidegger explains,

No one can take the other’s dying away from him. Someone can go “to his death for another.” However, that always means to sacrifice oneself for another “*in a definite manner*.” Such dying for . . . can never, however, mean that the other has thus had his death in the least taken away. Every Da-sein must itself actually take dying upon itself. Insofar as it “is,” death is always essentially my own . . . Death does not just “belong” in an undifferentiated way to one’s own Da-sein, but it *lays claim* on it as something *individual*” (BT H 240, 263).

The point here is that *to me*, my death cannot be something that another can undertake for me. If a project in which I am interested gets finished, or if an insult is delivered, or even if a child is successfully raised, I can, at least in principle, take the same stance towards those events whether or not I have performed them. But if “a person” dies, it makes all the difference in the world whether or not that “person” is *me*. For me, in fact, it makes the difference between there *being* a world, between my being-in-the-world or not, whether death “happens” to me or to another. In that sense, being-toward-death is being-in-the-world with the recognition that one’s *own* being-in-the-world *is* one’s own, that one “is” in the world as one’s *ownmost possibility* towards the world. *Angst* as the revelation of being-toward-death is the revelation of this ownmost possibility.

Famously, Sartre rejects Heidegger’s emphasis on death, arguing, for example, that in exactly the same sense that no one can die for me, no one can love for me, or xxx for me, or xxx for me. And, equally importantly, my death, for Sartre, is precisely something that *cannot* be my “ownmost,” in the sense that death is always something that “overtakes me” (683). Xxx man on gallows e.g., xxx. Importantly, though, despite an apparently vehement disagreement about the existential importance of death, Sartre and Heidegger fundamentally *agree* about the underlying point. Heidegger (like Sartre) does not see the state of having-died as something towards which is

Comment [1]:

Ok, this distinction captures why we would want to call the possibilities one’s *own*, but not one’s *ownmost*. Earlier you introduce the idea of one’s *ownmost* possibilities in connection with authenticity (where, presumably, authenticity is a matter of following one’s ownmost, rather than ownleast, possibilities), but it is precisely in the context of a discussion of angst that the difference between one’s *ownmost* and *ownleast* possibilities (among the set of one’s *own* possibilities) becomes untenable, so it’s odd that you (or they) bring up the idea in this context. There might be a way to reconcile what is disclosed by angst (or the first part of what is disclosed, one’s radical freedom) and the idea that some possibilities could be one’s *ownmost*, but you have not even hinted at how they would do this, and this leads to the confusion I’ve just expressed.

Comment [2]:

Funny, both of these Sartrean responses were exactly what I was thinking.

⁴⁸ BT H 266.

makes sense to aim, in the way that one might make having-married an aim. Death is existentially significant as a “possibility” that “gives Da-sein nothing . . . which it itself could *be* as something real” (BT H 262). (Because Heidegger agrees with Sartre that death is not something towards which one can aim as a concrete project, he also rejects suicide as an appropriate (general) existential response to absolute human freedom.)⁴⁹ Moreover, like Sartre, Heidegger sees “brooding over death” and even “expecting it” as *inauthentic* ways to *avoid* coming to terms with being-toward-death. Moreover, Heidegger agrees with Sartre that being-in-love, or xxx, or xxx can be just as authentic as being-toward-death, but only insofar as one takes up these sorts of being in just the way that Sartre recommends, as one’s *ownmost* possibilities, as possibilities that are just as non-substitutable as (Heidegger sees) one’s being-toward-death.

Comment [3]:

Huh? (The following doesn’t clarify this for me either.)

Of course, existential *Angst* does not seem to be the prevailing mood governing most of our lives: “‘real’ Angst is rare.”⁵⁰ The professional with a mid-life crisis throws herself into her work even more firmly and/or buys herself a zippy sports car and has a fling with a young co-worker, distracting herself from existential angst with business and empty pleasures. The hiker along the precipice may briefly entertain the possibility of throwing himself from it, but then quickly recalls his obligations to his family or his expectations of pleasures with his friends, and then focuses on the task at hand. Most of us, most of the time, evade our angst by focusing on concrete tasks that we assume as given, by doing “what must be done” or “what is expected of someone in my position” or “what I feel like doing,” without accepting that all of these supposed standards are standards that we are free to accept, reject, or modify in accordance with our freedom. Faced with absolute freedom, the typical response, one that for Sartre is all-too-common and for Heidegger is inevitable, is to flee from one’s freedom, one’s “ownmost possibilities,” into something more comfortable. Heidegger describes this flight as “inauthenticity” (Xxx). Sartre puts it in terms of bad faith: “most of the time, we flee *Angst* in bad faith” (BN 711).

Comment [4]:

I still don’t see a tight connection between radical freedom and death. I get why death is an ownmost possibility, and I get why freedom would be deeply related to one’s own possibilities, but that isn’t enough for me to connect the ownmost-ness of freedom and death. This last sentence, actually, hints at what the connection might be. The idea of my own death teaches me about non-substitutability, and then authentic freedom is just a matter of recognizing all of one’s possibilities in the same light. Still, though, Sartre seems right that while my own death is very much my own, it is not my own in the same sense in which my projects are my own, since death is fundamentally something that happens to me.

The essence of bad faith, for Sartre, is the denial of the fundamental existential insight that “‘I am not what I am’” (108). Here the “I am” refers to our facticity, our being-in-the-world. Freedom always starts in some situation, a situation defined by the choices we have made, the past we have lived, the roles in which we find ourselves. But the “I am not” refers to the absolute freedom that is always present for an existing human being. Whatever “I” am in my facticity – a father, a writer, a lover of chocolate, a philosopher – *I* am not that facticity. I can choose to accept or reject any particular role, any particular desire, any particular past. Or better, by taking up my situation, my past, my roles in terms of different future possibilities, I define the very facticity that “I” am, and thus *I* am not reducible to that facticity. The essence of bad faith, for Sartre, is to deny one or another of the aspects of this “I am not what I am.” We might take, as an example, someone who avoids and does not particularly enjoy socializing and is frequently shy or awkward in social situations.⁵¹ Such a person might say of herself, perhaps in response to criticism, “I’m not shy.” Sartre explains,

She would actually be right if she understood the phrase, ‘I am not shy’ in the sense of ‘I am not what I am.’ That is, if she declared to herself, “to the extent that a pattern of conduct is defined as the conduct of someone who is shy, and to the extent that I have adopted this conduct, I am shy. But to the extent that human reality can not be finally defined by patterns of conduct, I am not shy.” [But insofar as] . . . she lays claim to “not being shy” in the sense in which this table *is not* an inkwell, she is in bad faith. (BN 108)⁵²

⁴⁹ See BT H 261, BN xxx.

⁵⁰ BT H 190.

⁵¹ Sartre gives, as an example, a “homosexual” (who he also refers to as a “paederast”, BN 107-8) but we could envision any character who ashamed of past behavior or of his or her desires, preferences, etc.

⁵² I’ve modified the gender of the character and the relevant characteristic (from pederasty to shyness).

When the girl says “I am not shy” in order to deny her facticity, she thus speaks in bad faith; but were she to say “I am not shy” in order to deny that she *is* her facticity, she would speak truly. Alternatively, of course, our shy character might affirm, “I am shy.” But here, too, this is true only in the sense that “I am not what I am.” That is, this is an authentic self-understanding only insofar as she understands her shyness as something for which she is responsible, something that is up to her. But insofar as she claims to “be shy” in the sense that the table “is a table,” she is, again, in bad faith. In each case, she ignores either her facticity, supposing that freedom takes place without situation, or her freedom *from* her facticity, supposing that her previous patterns of behavior wholly determine who she is. Both poles are forms of denying one’s *absolute and radical* freedom, a freedom that is the source of one’s very situation even as it transcends that situation.

Rather than living in bad faith, one can and should live in good faith, “authentically” or “sincerely.” Authentic living is living with the full recognition that one’s choices are one’s own. It requires taking up one’s facticity in the light of the free projection of possibilities. Asdf Insert brief discussion of authenticity, include examples from Sartre E to show how radically adverbial it is. Sartre E pp. 47-48: “One may choose anything if it is on the grounds of free involvement.” Like Kant, the normativity here is adverbial rather than verbal or object-focused, but it is a *radically* adverbial normativity, unlike Kant. xxxx

In a sense, there is nothing “wrong” with bad faith or inauthenticity.⁵³ Sartre criticizes Heidegger for using the term authenticity, claiming that this expression is “dubious and insincere because of [its] implicit moral content” (BN 680). But Heidegger himself insisted that terms like inauthenticity⁵⁴ “do not express any negative value judgment” but rather merely refer to how “Da-sein is initially and for the most part” (BT H 175); his “interpretation has a purely ontological intention and is far removed from any moralizing critique of everyday Da-sein” (BT H 167). If no standard can constrain one’s freedom, then existentialism cannot propose a standard of authenticity that one “must” or even “ought to” live up to. In that sense, Sartre and Heidegger both face the problem that Nietzsche dealt with in his works, the problem of how to develop a normative standard “beyond good and evil.” For all three, their works do not moralistically require us to live up to certain standards, but rather *invite* us to live in a certain way. Bad faith does not involve moral corruption or failure to meet some absolute standard for living a good human life.

Still, there seems to be *some* admonition to authenticity in Heidegger, *some* reproach of bad faith in Sartre. Heidegger claims that “Da-sein *bears witness* to a possible *authenticity* of its existence . . . [and] *demands* it of itself” and that “conscience . . . summons Da-sein to existence, to its ownmost [and thus authentic] potentiality-of-being-a-self” (BT H 266-7, H294). And Sartre even claims to “bring moral judgment to bear” on one’s existential situation:

[T]here is . . . *dishonesty* if I choose to state that certain values exist prior to me . . . Suppose someone says to me, “What if I want to be dishonest?” I’ll answer, “There’s no reason for you not to be, but I’m saying that that’s what you are, and that the strictly coherent attitude is that of honesty.” (Existentialism is a Humanism, p. 45)

Those in bad faith deceive themselves about their freedom to define their own values, and even while recognizing that, by virtue of this freedom, bad faith is a possibility for them, Sartre (and

⁵³ “[Inauthenticity] would be badly misunderstood if we wanted to attribute to it the meaning of a bad and deplorable ontic quality which could perhaps be removed in the advanced stages of human culture” (SuZ H176)

⁵⁴ Strictly speaking, he is in this passage talking about the term “entanglement,” but the same point can be made of “inauthenticity.”

Heidegger) insist upon calling their readers to something more, to authenticity, to honesty.⁵⁵ But the reference to “coherence” here actually gets at something deeper about the strategies of Sartre and Heidegger (and Nietzsche and Kierkegaard). By drawing attention to freedom, to the possibility of authenticity, Sartre and Heidegger both show that “the attitude of refusal and flight which remains possible is despite itself the free assumption of what it is fleeing” (BN 680). After reading Sartre and Heidegger,⁵⁶ it becomes impossible to continue to live in bad faith in quite the same way that one did before. In *Sickness unto Death*, Kierkegaard takes his readers from the sort of unreflective inauthenticity⁵⁷ that characterizes everyday life through a process of becoming self-aware of one’s potential for authenticity, one that ends with either a “demonic” sort of inauthenticity that “rebel[s] against all existence” (SUD 104-5) or a breakthrough into authenticity (or “faith”). Similarly, Sartre and Heidegger push their readers towards the recognition of their own freedom, in the context of which even bad faith takes on a more “authentic” character, since it is deliberately *chosen* in defiance of freedom. In that sense, at least, witnessing the possibility of authenticity is a sort of call *to* authenticity. Existentialism, by repeatedly bearing this witness, also continually issues this call.

5. *Being-with/for-Others.*

Given the discussion of existentialism thus far, it might seem to be a virtually solipsistic philosophy. The emphasis on human freedom from-within might seem to undermine the real role of others. Of course, Being-in-the-world opens a space for others in structuring one’s situation and thereby one’s possibilities, but only – apparently – in the same way as mere objects. But, as Kant insists in his moral philosophy and as is evident in our ordinary lives, other human beings are not mere objects, and others structure our existential situation in particularly profound ways. In fact, though I have sidelined it until now, the theme of others (or “the Other”) plays an extremely important role within both existentialist philosophy and within recent movements away from the existentialisms of Heidegger and (especially) Sartre.

That said, Heidegger and Sartre see our primary orientation towards others in radically different ways. For Heidegger, the primary existential orientation towards others is “Mit-sein” or Being-with. Heidegger’s discussion of Being-with begins with questioning “what we might call the ‘subject’ of everydayness” (BT H 114), that is, who it is that typically is in-the-world in one’s ordinary, everyday, being-in-the-world. The answer to this might seem obvious: oneself, but Heidegger argues that, paradoxically, “the who of everyday Da-sein is precisely *not* I myself” (BT H 115). “[A]n isolated I without the others in in the end . . . far from being given initially . . . [T]he ‘others’ are always already *there with us* in Being-in-the-world” (BT H 116). In a sense, Heidegger’s point here is merely an extension of his principle that Da-sein is Being-in-the-world. Just as Heidegger insists instead that who one is is a matter of how one exists in and towards the concrete situation in which one finds oneself, so he adds that one always also finds one’s situation to be a situation of being “with” others. But unlike the world of handy objects in which we find ourselves, others do not appear to us as handy tools for our use, but as those *with whom* we make

⁵⁵ xxx self-contradiction and willful self-blindness. Xxx kierkegaard SUD, Sartre has good quotes re: bad faith and also in existnetialism essay re honesty...see too Heid. Xxx One who chooses inauthentically xxx. But there is no absolute standard saying that one “ought not” be self-deceived, dishonest, and willfully blind. Nonetheless, by drawing attention to the way in which bad faith and inauthenticity are themselves choices – choices to deceive oneself about oneself, to ignore one’s ownmost possibility in order to xxx – existentialists make these unreflectively self-negating choices more difficult. SUD is a great model here...driving from unreflective despair to more and more deliberate despair (eventually suicide as a bad option but one always on the mind of existnetialists xxx)

⁵⁶ Or, better, this is impossible *while* reading (and reflecting on) Sartre and Heidegger. As Sartre, Heidegger, and especially Kierkegaard point out, it is remarkably easy, even immediately after being struck with the angst of one’s freedom, to throw oneself back into the distractions of everyday life.

⁵⁷ (which he calls, there, despair)

use of objects. To work with a hammer involves putting the hammer to use for one's purposes; to work with another person involves working *alongside* that other, *sharing* purposes with that other, seeing the world through common eyes. "The others' does not mean everybody else but me—those from whom the I distinguishes itself. They are, rather, those from whom one mostly does *not* distinguish oneself" (119). Thus insofar as our Being-in-the-world is always and for the most part a Being-with-(others), the "subject" of that Being-in-the-world is not the "I," not my *unique, ownmost* possibility but rather "the they," or, perhaps even better, "the we," the possibilities that I share in common with those with whom I always already exist.

Heidegger's understanding of our primary orientation with respect to others under the existential structure of Being-with has two important implications for the role of others in his philosophy. First, being-with is precisely "*the* kind of being in which Da-sein, initially and for the most part, lives" (117). This is so true that "Being-with existentially determines Da-sein even when an other is not [actually]⁵⁸ present and perceived" (120). Human being is oriented by the expectations and perspectives of others to such an extent that even when no others are present, one carries on one's life as though along-side of the others with whom, in principle, one can be-with. Second, however, and importantly for Heidegger's existentialism,

[In] being-with . . . , as everyday being-with-one-another, Da-sein stands in *subservience* to the others. It itself *is* not; the others have taken its being away from it. The everyday possibilities of being of Da-sein are at the disposal of the whims of the others. These others are not *definite* others. On the contrary, any other can represent them. What is decisive is only the inconspicuous domination by others that Da-sein as being-with has already taken over unawares . . . [B]eing-with-one-another as such creates *averageness*. It is an existential character of the they. (BT H 126-7)

The "they," for Heidegger,⁵⁹ is the "subject" that takes the place of the "I" in Da-sein's everyday activities. (In its capacity as a sort of group-subject, it might be better to translate Heidegger's term here as "the we.") Heidegger's point here is that insofar as human being is being-with-others, we are always open to losing our own unique being-towards-possibilities and instead merely thinking and doing what "everyone" thinks and does. We might engage in various activities because these are the sorts of activities that "one in my position" should be doing, in a sense letting "them" – that is, the diffuse, widespread, and internalized expectation of those with whom one exists – make my existential choices for me.⁶⁰

This "averageness" and "subservience" should sound at least somewhat familiar; it is importantly similar to Sartre's conception of "bad faith," and it involves a failure to exist towards one's ownmost possibilities as those are revealed in being-toward-death. In fact, this "being-with-one-another," which is "an essential tendency of Da-sein" that "level[s] down all possibilities of being" into those possibilities available to "the they" and thereby "takes the responsibility of Da-

⁵⁸ Heidegger uses his technical term "factically" here.

⁵⁹ The German here is "das man," which indicates xxx

⁶⁰ For Heidegger, by contrast, inauthenticity arises out of a particular existential structure that is "equiprimordial with being-in-the-world: being-with and *Mitda-sein*" of our being-in-the-world xxx. In particular, Heidegger argues that Da-sein is always already situated not only in a world, but in a world *with-others*. As *Mitsein*, or "Being-with," "others are always already *there with us* in being-in-the-world" (H 116). "Initially and for the most part" (H 117 and passim) Da-sein finds itself not only in a world, but in a world *with-others*. "[E]ven when an other is not factually present and perceived" (H 120) one is "with" others in the sense that one is-in-the-world in a way that is structured by the norms and expectations of others: "the everyday possibilities of being of Da-sein are at the disposal of the whims of the others" (H 126) in the sense that one sees one's possibilities in terms of what "they" expect, what "one" ought to do in "one's" situation. For Heidegger, this sort of "subservience" to "the they" (H 126) involves a "levelling down of possibilities," an "averageness" within which there is nothing special about what *I* think and choose. *My* possibilities are simply the possibilities of *someone like me*. Xxx. For Heidegger, this subservience to the they is *the* way in which Da-sein flees its ownmost possibility into inauthentic being.

sein away from it” (127) is precisely what Heidegger identifies as “inauthenticity.” *Angst*, in bringing Da-sein face-to-face with its being-toward-death and thereby its own, unique possibilities, “takes away from Da-sein the possibility of understanding itself, falling prey, in terms of . . . the public way of being interpreted. It throws Da-sein back . . . upon its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world” (BT H 187). The initial and dominant mode of being is an inauthentic being-with others that loses its *ownmost* possibilities through interpreting itself in the light of public norms. Authenticity, then, is a sort of achievement of independence from a condition in which one initially and for the most part finds oneself subservient to the expectations of others in the form of “the they.”⁶¹

For Sartre,⁶² as we have seen, “bad faith” does not depend upon others, though Sartre certainly accepts Heideggerian inauthenticity as one form of bad faith. Nonetheless, Sartre does recognize that “others,” or, better, the Other, has a special place within ontology. Like Heidegger, Sartre recognizes that one does not see others simply as things-in-the-world, there for one’s use, defined in their significance by one’s own projects. But Sartre rejects Heidegger’s claim that our primary relationship with others is a form of “being-with.”⁶³ Instead, Sartre argues that our primary orientation towards others takes the form of “being-for-others,” and he elucidates this being-for with the example of what he calls “the Look.” Sartre explains with an example:

Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole . . . The door and the keyhole are at once both instruments and obstacles; they are presented as ‘to be handled with care’; the keyhole is given as ‘to be looked through close by and a little to one side,’ etc. . . . Moreover, this ensemble exists only in relation to a free project of my possibilities. Jealousy, as the possibility which I *am*, organizes this instrumental complex by transcending it . . . But I *am* this jealousy; I do not *know* it . . . This ensemble . . . we shall call *situation*. This situation reflects to me at once both my facticity and my freedom; on the occasion of certain objective structure of the world which surrounds me, it refers my freedom to me in the form of tasks to be freely done . . . I cannot even define myself as truly *being* in the process of listening at doors. I escape

⁶¹ Heidegger does propose a more positive way in which one can *authentically* be-with others. Xxx See xxx. Basically, the idea here is a being-with others in which one does not subsume others’ possibilities into or as one’s own, and one does not merely share with particular others a subservience to the general expectations of “the they,” but one provokes others towards the angst within which they can assume their ownmost possibilities. Arguably, the writing (and reading) of *Being and Time* is supposed to be just such an exercise in authentic being-with.

⁶² Note that Beauvoir (and Merleau Ponty) insists upon Being-with as more fundamental.

“I am my acts” (BN 347)

Thus not only am I unable to *know* myself, but my very being escapes—although I *am* that very escape from my being—and I am absolutely nothing....But all of a sudden I hear footsteps...I now exist as *myself*...I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me” (BN 349).

Vs. Heidegger: “Being-for-others is not an ontological structure of the For-itself” (BN 376)

“it is by means of the other’s concepts that I *know* my body” (465)

“we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality” with others (529) “respect for the other’s freedom is an empty word” (531)

“The experience of a we-subject cannot be primary; it cannot constitute an original attitude” (551, see too 550, vs. Heidegger)

“one must either transcend the Other or allow oneself to be transcended by him. The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the *Mitsein*; it is conflict.” (555)

⁶³ The details of Sartre’s objections to Heidegger here are not necessary. See BN xxx. Instead, I focus on Sartre’s alternative positive view.

this . . . by means of my transcendence [i.e., my freedom, my “I-am-not-what-I-am”]. (BN 347-8)

So far, nothing in this situation involves the recognition of another *as* an other. No doubt, I am spying on some other person through the keyhole, but this person is merely an object of my activity; the meaning of this other is given by *my* jealousy. In my being-in-the-world, of course, my free possibilities are possibilities in the context of a concrete situation, but this situation, too, has its meaning only by virtue of *my* freedom (manifested here as jealousy).

But all of a sudden I hear footsteps in the hall. Someone is looking at me! What does this mean? It means that I am suddenly affected in my being and that essential modifications appear in my structure . . . I now exist as *myself* . . . I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me . . . my freedom escapes me in order to become a *given* object . . . The Other has to make my being-for-him *be* insofar as he has to be his being. Thus each of my free conducts engages me in a new environment where the very stuff of my being is the unpredictable freedom of another. Yet by my shame I claim as mine that freedom of another. (BN 349-51)

In feeling ashamed at the look of another – or, as Sartre usually puts it, “the Other” – I “am” *for* the other. And for Sartre, this is not *merely* a matter of being seen as an object, since it is precisely my freedom (or “transcendence”) that, in my shame, I feel as being objectified by the other: “my transcendence becomes for whoever makes himself a witness of it . . . a purely established transcendence, a given-transcendence” (BN 352). Here “the Other [is] given to me directly as a subject although in connection with me” (BN 341).⁶⁴ Moreover, as in the case of Heideggerian being-with, being-for-others need not even depend upon the presence of *actual* others. Even if I recognize that the “footsteps” were a “false alarm,” I can continue to feel ashamed and may even “give up the enterprise” in the light of my new awareness of myself as being-for-*the*-Other, not the “concrete historical event” of a particular other person appearing but the always present possibility of being-seen, the constant “relation to every living person” (370, 373).

For Sartre, this objectivity-before-an-Other can be a source of bad faith, much as being-with can be for Heidegger. Insofar as I merely accept the Other’s judgment of me, relinquishing my being-for-itself into a being-for-another, I fail to acknowledge that “I am [in my freedom] not what I am [for-others].” But for Sartre, being-for-others is a “fact” (377), a “contingent necessity” (337), something that we cannot ignore but that threatens the very freedom at the core of our existence. Thus, for Sartre, there is a sort of ongoing struggle with others in which one seeks to avoid being objectified by them through objectifying them in turn.^{65 66} The one looking through the keyhole can turn back on the one coming up the stairs, *looking* at the Other and thereby making the Other into an object. Instead of losing one’s objectivity to the look, one can overcome one’s shame towards a pride that says, in effect, “What are you looking at?” The contingent necessity of being-for-the-Other puts each person in a constant tension between “being-looked-at” and “being-looking-at” (373). In fact, Sartre points out, “I am responsible for the very

⁶⁴ Instead, Sartre suggests, others appear as such through what Sartre calls “being-for-others,” a mode of being that, Sartre argues, cannot be a mode of being *of* the for-itself (BN 376). Recall that one can think of a body, even one’s own, as merely an object in the world, describing its height, weight, position in space, and so on; but this conception of one’s body cannot be a mode of being of oneself as free being. Only when one takes up one’s “situation” as a situation from which one projects oneself into one’s possibilities does this situation become part of being-for-itself, but then it loses its objective qualities as a merely “in-itself.” Similarly, Sartre argues, one’s being-for-others cannot be a mode of being *of* one free self.

⁶⁵ From the play, *No Exit*.

⁶⁶ “through the look I experience the Other concretely as a free, conscious subject who causes there to be a world by temporalizing himself toward his own possibilities. That subject’s presence without intermediary is the necessary condition of all thought which I would attempt to form concerning myself. The other is that “myself” from which nothing separates me, absolutely nothing except his pure and total freedom” (BN 362)

existence of the Other” (382), or better, “the Other and I are . . . co-reponsible for Other’s existence” (383), in the sense that it is only by virtue of *my* freely taken up projects that I can feel ashamed at the look and thereby give the look meaning *as* a look, but in giving the look meaning as a look, I relegate its meaning – and thus, its existence – to the Other. As Sartre explains, “one must either transcend the Other or allow oneself to be transcended by him. The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not being-with; it is conflict” (555). Or, more concisely, “hell is other people.”

For both Heidegger and Sartre, others (or the Other, or “the they”) threaten authentic existence. Heidegger sees this threat as one intrinsic to *Da-sein*’s being-in-the-world itself, while Sartre emphasizes being-for-others as something distinctive from and in conflict with being-in-the-world as such. More importantly, we might say that while Heidegger’s conception of being-with involves “a we-subject” (BN 551), Sartre’s involves an awareness of oneself as a “you,” an object of another’s attention.⁶⁷ Xxx finish conclusion. xxx

6. *Heteronomous Existentialism*

Existentialism continues to play an important role in contemporary conceptions of the human being, but in recent years, a different approach has emerged that shifts away from Sartre’s self-centered existentialism. Shortly after Sartre published his “Existentialism is a Humanism” (1946), which became the classic statement of modern existentialism, Heidegger rejects the label “existentialist” and distances himself from Sartre in his own “Letter on Humanism” (1947). In that work, Heidegger reminds his readers of his *initial* emphasis in *Being and Time* on “the explicit and lucid formulation of the question of the meaning of being” (BT 7). For most of *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s focus is on *Da-sein*,⁶⁸ or distinctively *human* being; and Heidegger’s account of human being proves conducive for the sort of existential philosophy in which Sartre is particularly interested. But in this later letter, Heidegger recalls his interest in the question of Being itself, reformulates his conception of *Da-sein* in terms of “Being,” and clarifies that his conception of “possibility” (and even “freedom”) has a different, less self-oriented, tone than Sartre’s.

In his “Letter on Humanism” and other late writings, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of “thinking” as a form of “letting” oneself “be claimed by Being” (BW 218).⁶⁹ Heidegger rejects the Sartrean view that “the essential worth of man . . . consists in his being the

⁶⁷ We might think, in fact, of both Heidegger and Sartre as drawing on the experience of others in order to move beyond the straightforward dichotomy between transcendental and empirical perspectives on human being. The transcendental perspective, in Kant, is a sort of first-person perspective, the from-within perspective of an “I” *on* the world, while the empirical is a sort of third-person perspective from-without on things *in* the world (even on oneself as a mere object in the world). Heidegger, in his conception of being-with, broadens the notion of subjectivity to include a first person *plural* perspective on the world, the perspective that “we” take on the world, a perspective in which my own, unique, from-within perspective can get lost. Sartre, instead, emphasizes what we might think of a second-person perspective, a perspective not-my-own *from which* I am addressed, a perspective *on* me that sees me, not strictly as an object, but as a “transcended transcendence,” as something free that is *made into* an object through being addressed. xxx

⁶⁸ He justifies this focus on the grounds that “a prior suitable explication of a being (*Da-sein*) with regard to its being” is required for formulating the question of Being (BT 7).

⁶⁹ References to the “Letter on Humanism” will be taken from Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell, xxx; hereafter BW. “Man must let himself be claimed by Being” (BW 223). Recalling his earlier discussion of “care,” Heidegger insists that “care . . . tend[s] in the direction of bringing man back to his essence” (BW 223).

substance of beings as the ‘Subject’ among them” (BW 234⁷⁰). While Heidegger admits, with Sartre, that “by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man’s estimation,” Heidegger takes this to be a reason to *reject* values, or at least to “think against values.”

Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be.

Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid—solely as the objects of its doing. (BW 251)

Heidegger shifts from human freedom as the “foundation of all essences” (BN 567) to freedom that “conserves its essence” in “the realm of the truth of Being” (BW 247), from “man [as] lord of beings” to “Man [as] the shepherd of Being” (BW 245).⁷¹ While Sartre emphasizes the importance of situation but fundamentally locates even the meaning of situation in humans’ free responses, the late Heidegger insists,

Man is . . . “thrown” from Being itself into the truth of Being . . . in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are. Man does not decide whether and how beings appear, whether and how God and the gods or history and nature come forward into the clearing of Being . . . The advent of beings lies in the destiny of Being. But for man it is ever a question of finding what is fitting in his essence that corresponds to such destiny; for in accord with this destiny man as ek-sisting⁷² has to guard the truth of Being. Man is the shepherd of Being. (BW 234)

One crucial upshot of this re-emphasis on Being over human freedom is that human being is reconceived as something that *responds* to Being, that “lets” Being claim it, that exists “into the openness of Being” (BW 252).

At the end of his “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger draws on the example of Heraclitus, who, engaged in the “everyday and unexciting occurrence” of “warming himself at a stove,” nonetheless presents a model of thinking that lets itself be claimed by Being. When Heraclitus says to his visitors, “Here too the gods come to presence” (BW 257), he invites them, too, to think, to let themselves be claimed, to abide in the place where Being – the god(s) – presences itself. Like more traditional, Sartrean (and, arguably, early Heideggerian) existentialism, the notion of “thinking” emphasized by the late Heidegger is deeply adverbial; it is a *way* of being human. Moreover, just as Sartrean freedom is unconstrained by particular rules of forms of thought, Heideggerian thinking does not involve following rules of logic (it is “against logic” (249)) nor thinking about particularly profound things (a stove will do). In that sense, “thinking,” like existential authenticity, is fundamentally adverbial, a matter of thinkingly engaging one’s world. But unlike the Sartrean and early Heideggerian emphasis on authenticity as a recognition of one’s *freedom* and *ownmost* possibilities, thinking involves being human as being *receptive*, even passive, before Being. Here “be-ing” is a way of “be-ing claimed” rather than an active “be-ing” as projecting. Although Heidegger seeks to move beyond (or prior to) categories like subjectivity and objectivity and also beyond distinctions between autonomy and heteronomy, we can think of this effort to de-center human being as a sort of existential *heteronomy*.⁷³ Where Sartre sought an absolute freedom of activity that takes responsibility for itself and thereby creates a world, Heidegger seeks a thinking that is fundamentally receptive to the call of Being.

⁷⁰ For just one example of this theme in Sartre, see *Existentialism is Humanism*, p. 50: “There is no universe other than a human universe, the universe of human subjectivity.” See too passages above re: freedom.

⁷¹ While Sartre emphasizes the importance of situation but fundamentally locates even the meaning of situation in humans’ free responses, the late Heidegger insists,

Man is . . . “thrown” from Being itself into the truth of Being . . . in order that beings might appear in the light of Being as the beings they are. (BW 234)

⁷² Heidegger’s neologism, drawing attention to the root meaning of “existence” as “xxx.”

⁷³ Note that in some sense, this turn to heteronomy is a *return* to Kierkegaardian existentialism. For Kierkegaard, like the late Heidegger and unlike Sartre, humans truly exist only in relation to an “absolute duty” to a God that transcends xxx.

This emphasis on what I am calling heteronomous existentialism did not end with Heidegger, and his ontological formulation of it has not turned out to be the most important contemporary response to subject-centered, Sartrean existentialism. For that more radical response, one that not only rejects the emphasis on subjectivity but rejects the “ontological” tradition of which both Heidegger and Sartre are a part, we must turn to the work of Emmanuel Levinas.^{74 75}

Levinas’s work can be seen as a continuation of Heidegger’s interest in moving beyond concrete, determinate “valuings” or “understandings” of beings in order to “let [Being] say something to us” (442). For Levinas, however, this attempt at “letting” is bound to fail as long as one remains focused on Being:

In subordinating every relation with existents to the relation with Being the Heideggerian ontology affirms the primacy of freedom over ethics. To be sure, the freedom involved in the essence of truth is not for Heidegger a principle of free will. Freedom comes from an obedience to Being; it is not man who possesses freedom; it is freedom that possesses man. But the dialectic which thus reconciles freedom and obedience in the concept of truth presupposes the primacy of the Same, which marks the direction of and defines the whole of Western philosophy. (TI 45)

Levinas’s basic critique here is that even as Heidegger moves beyond many traditional categories of Western metaphysics, he remains committed to a project of overcoming any *irreducible* otherness (or “alterity”) in the world. The “primacy of the Same” here refers to the general tendency in Western metaphysics – including Heidegger – to xxx: “xxx” (BPW xxx). Levinas sees Heidegger as part of a continuous tradition in philosophy that seeks to “apprehend the individual not in its individuality but in its generality” (TI 44), since Heidegger, too, “subordinates the relationship to *someone*, who is an existent . . . to a relation with the *Being of existents*, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents” (TI 45). Put another way, Heidegger’s remains a philosophy of “knowing” rather than an “ethics.”⁷⁶

Levinas turns, then, from “ontology” – the problem of Being – to “ethics.” But Levinasian ethics is not ethics in the Kantian vein, not an effort to discern the universal principle of morality in accordance with which all rational agents ought to conduct themselves. Instead, Levinasian ethics is the

calling into question of my spontaneity in the presence of the Other . . . The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity. (TI 43)

As in the later Heidegger, Levinas de-emphasizes subjectivity and spontaneity in favor of a privileged heteronomy (TI 88) and “total passivity” (BPW 87, OB 110). But for Levinas, this heteronomy makes sense only in terms of *responsibility* for a *concrete Other*. This “passivity more passive . . . than any passivity” is the “passivity of the ‘for-another,’” a passivity “in which no reference, positive or negative, to a prior will enters” (OB 50-1). The “Other” here is not “Being,” but rather the “face” of the “neighbor” (BPW 92, TI 194f.). And Levinasian “ethics” thus cannot be a matter of laying out fundamental moral principles, but can only be a recurring provocation to truly see the infinite Otherness of this face, a clearing away of the distracting “categories” that prevent us from this seeing.

⁷⁴ Surely I should make some joke here about the fact that Levinas has the same first name as Kant. Ah, I wish I could think of one.

⁷⁵ Also Derrida...

⁷⁶ In this section, I will not pursue the question of how fair this interpretation is to Heidegger. Arguably, Heideggerian ontology is also “ethical” in Levinas’s sense; Heidegger does not see the Being of beings as a universal under which individual beings can be subsumed, nor is Heideggerian “thinking” equivalent to “knowing” in the way that Levinas suggests. For helpful discussions of the relationship between Heidegger and Levinas, see xxx and xxx.

Comment [5]:

I’m not sure if you should say something to answer (or preempt) the reaction I’m about to express, but perhaps you should: I still don’t see how Levinas is doing “ethics.” It seems like he’s simply describing the phenomenology of ethically-significant situations. I suppose we could put it this way: When Kant tries to determine the fundamental principle of morality according to which all rational agents ought to conduct themselves, this counts as doing ethics because, well, he reveals the principle according to which we ought to conduct ourselves. “Ethics,” then, is something that we can do as philosophers who write books, because figuring out the principle of morality is different from applying it in practice on-the-ground. But Levinas, as you say, isn’t trying to give us a universal principle that we all ought to follow. He’s not telling us to follow the principle of always “calling my spontaneity into question in the presence of the Other,” or the principle of always assuming a state of “total passivity” in the presence of the Other. He says that ethics is the “calling into question of my spontaneity in the presence of the Other,” but wouldn’t this mean that we can’t do “ethics” as a philosophical project— as philosophers writing books. “Ethics” happens, it would seem, on the ground, when faced by the Other. But then, what could Levinas possibly be doing in his writings other than describing the phenomenology of ethically significant situations? And if that’s all he’s doing, how is he prioritizing ethics over ontology any more than Heidegger? **Does my added sentence (the last in this ¶) help?**

Levinas's overriding interest throughout his "ethics" is to highlight the originary status of the concrete other. His general strategy can be understood as a revaluation of Sartre's account of the Look, such that Levinas prioritizes being-for-another over being-for-itself. As in the case of Sartre, being-for-another is provoked through the encounter with a concrete other. Something "sensible" and "still graspable, turns into total resistance to the grasp" (TI xxx). Just as, for Sartre, footsteps heard in the hall become an Other and thereby transforms one's being into being-for-another; the Levinasian encounter with the Other begins with something sensible and graspable, but quickly transforms "by the opening of a new dimension. For the resistance to grasp is not produced as an insurmountable resistance, like the hardness of a rock against which the effort of the hand comes to naught, like the remoteness of a star in the immensity of space. The expression . . . introduced into the world does not defy the feebleness of my powers, but my power of power⁷⁷" (TI xxx), that is, this sensible expression defies the very power by which I am able to grasp anything at all, to make the world "my own."

For Levinas, the sensible expression that opens this new dimension is "the face": "The unicity and alterity of the unique is concretely the face of the other human, of which the original epiphany lies not in the visibility of the plastic form, but in *appresentation*" (BPW 166). Levinas borrows the concept of "appresentation" here from Husserl, who used the term to describe the way in which objects are presented to human consciousness. For Husserl, when one perceives an object, a single facet of that object is directly presented – one sees it only from one angle – but the whole object is perceived; its not-directly-seen aspects are *appresented*. Levinas appropriates this notion here, but modifies it in some important respects. First, what is appresented by the face of the other is not *something*, but "unicity and alterity," the wholly-unique and wholly-other.

The face resists possession, resists my powers . . . The face, still a thing among things, breaks through the form that nevertheless delimits it. This means concretely, the face speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it enjoyment or knowledge. And yet this new dimension opens in the sensible appearance of the face . . . The face at the limit of holiness . . . is thus still in a sense exposed to powers. (TI 197-8)

Levinas's point is that when another *speaks* to me, the other ceases to be merely an object in the world that I must categorize and understand in terms of my own projects and possibilities. Instead, I am addressed *by* the other and thereby made responsible *for* the other. Neither I nor the other are "objects" in the traditional sense. The other is a subject by and for whom I can be held to account, and "I" am really a "me" (and hence not primordially an "I"), one *to* whom speech is addressed. The emphasis on *language* in opening this new dimension is not directed towards the particular words spoken (what Levinas elsewhere calls "the Said"), but simply in the fact that by "speaking to me" ("the Saying") the face reveals itself as something that is not always-already defined by my knowledge of or desire for it; by speaking, the face shows itself to be a Other capable of *addressing* me.⁷⁸

While both the distinctive vulnerability characteristic of the human face and the role of language play important roles in Levinas's account of the Other (and the primacy of the Other), neither "speaking" nor the "face" need be understood strictly literally. Levinas recounts how "the backs of others" waiting in line for news of imprisoned relatives can be "the face" insofar as these reveal "the extreme precariousness" of the other and thereby "speak" to us (BPW 167). Levinas's

⁷⁷ I've modified Lingis's translation of "mon pouvoir de pouvoir" here.

⁷⁸ Levinas makes much of the importance of language in this respect, and develops an account of the distinction between the Saying, the irreducible address of the Face, and the Said, the particular and comprehensible contents of any particular Saying. Metaphysics (and Western philosophy) are then described (and criticized) as attempts to reduce the Saying to the Said, the Face to the categories in terms of which that face can be something "for us."

basic point here is similar to that of Sartre's account of the Look; in the face of the Other, one is *addressed*: "It is no longer a question of the Ego [the I] but of me" (BPW 120). In contrast to Kant's dichotomy between the first-personal "I" of transcendental anthropology and the third-personal "that" of empirical science, Levinas privileges the second-person perspective of another for whom one is a "me."⁷⁹

Importantly, for Levinas, the Other who addresses me is not merely a concrete other with determinate qualities that one can recognize and accommodate, nor a universal "humanity" in the other that one can respect. Levinas emphasizes that the Other is *wholly* Other and thus outstrips any attempts to conceptualize it or reduce it to preset categories. The very attempt to "understand" the other is a way of trying to reduce the Other to the Same, and thereby to make oneself, one's own subjectivity, the center of the universe. "xxx" "xxx" "xxx".

For Levinas, moreover, the encounter with the Other is not merely *irreducible* to the order of the Same, to some expression of human subjectivity or spontaneity. The encounter with the Other is *originary*; it is only by virtue of responsibility to the absolutely Other that one comes to be at all: "[T]he identity of the subject comes from the impossibility of escaping responsibility" (BPW 120).⁸⁰ There is, for Levinas, a "responsibility preceding freedom" (BPW 94⁸¹), and thus a responsibility that "cannot have begun in my commitment, in my decision" (BPW 117). Against both Sartre and Kant, Levinas argues,

Existence is not in reality condemned to freedom, but it is *invested* as freedom . . . To philosophize is to trace freedom back to what lies before it . . . Knowledge as a critique, as a tracing back to what precedes freedom, can arise only in a being that has an origin prior to its origin—that is created . . . The presence of the Other, a privileged heteronomy, does not clash with freedom but invests it. The shame for oneself, the presence of and desire for the other are not the negation of knowing; knowing is their very articulation. The essence of reason consists not in securing for man a foundation and powers, but in calling him into question and in inviting him to justice. (TI 84-5, 88)

It is only in response to the responsibility felt in the presence of another that one can make sense of one's own freedom.

Xxx note epistemic version as well...representation only possible as a response to other, ontology after ethics. Xxx.⁸²

⁷⁹ Levinas actually resists second-personal language here, specifically contrasting his account with any I-thou relationship and coining the neologism "illeity" (from the French "il" (he)) to describe what he has in mind. But when explaining what he means by illeity, he says,

The illeity in the beyond-being is the fact that its coming toward me is a departure which lets me accomplish a movement toward the neighbor. The positivity of this departure, that which makes this departure . . . be more than a term of negative theology, is my responsibility for the others.⁷⁹ Or, one may say, it is the fact that the others show themselves in their face. There is a paradox in responsibility, in that I am obliged without obligation having begun in me. (BPW 119).

The point of illeity is that there is an il, a he, that addresses me and thereby imposes responsibility upon me. The shift away from I-thou is really towards a him-*me* language, where the "me" is doing most of the work. But the perspective of "me" as the object of address of another is really the perspective of seeing myself as a "you" that is addressed by another, a "you" that is responsible to the other. In that sense, Levinas's illeity is, misleadingly, an allusion to a second-personal standpoint.

⁸⁰ "Responsibility for the Other, in its antecedence to my freedom . . . is a passivity more passive than all passivity," but thereby "Subjectivity [itself] . . . takes place as a passivity more passive than all passivity" (BPW 121).

⁸¹ See too "antecedence of responsibility" (BPW 119).

⁸² "The responsibility for the other cannot have begun in my commitment, in my decision" (BPW 117).

"Illeity" from the French "il" (he), Levinas contrasts this with "the 'thou'", but then explains, The illeity in the beyond-being is the fact that its coming toward me is a departure which lets me accomplish a movement toward the neighbor. The positivity of this departure, that which makes this

Xxx Levinas even worries about using terms such as “the Other” or “the Saying,” here: “we have been seeking the *otherwise than being* from the beginning, and as soon as it is conveyed before us it is betrayed in the said that dominates the saying which states it. A methodological problem arises here, namely whether the preoriginal element of Saying . . . can be led to betray itself by showing itself in a theme” (BPW 113). xxx.

Even while infinitely exceeding my powers, however, the face is also “in a sense exposed to my powers” (TI 198) precisely because its appresentation is occasioned by sensible conditions. Thus just as, for Sartre, one can overcome one’s being-for-another through subjugating (though always in bad faith) the other to one’s own freedom, so here one can “kill” the Other. Levinas rightly points out that to truly kill the Other “is not to dominate but to annihilate” (TI 198). Every other that is not wholly Other can be dominated, and even cutting off the physical life of an organism is really a way of *dominating*, rather than *annihilating*, that organism. By putting it to my purposes – as food, as a vanquished threat, or even just as sport – I can dominate an organism by “killing” it in the literal sense. But to kill the Other, in the Levinasian sense, is to “totally negate” the Other, to reject its hold over me, its infinite incomprehensibility. For Levinas, “The Other is the sole being I can wish to kill” (TI 198), precisely because every other being can, in some sense or another, be made to serve my purposes. But by calling me into question, by imposing an infinite responsibility on me through its address, the Other challenges me to (re)assert myself against it, to (re)impose the order of the Same. In that sense, one “kills” the Other whenever one interprets the Other in terms of the familiar categories, as just an object of one’s own projects. “Killing” is a sort of Levinasian equivalent of “bad faith,” where one pretends that the infinite otherness of the Other can be subsumed into familiar categories. To take an extreme but salient example, when one sees another merely as an instance of a “humanity” that universal morality requires one to respect, one thereby “kills” the Other, even if, out of “respect,” one promotes the happiness and well-being of what has become the *object* of one’s attention.⁸³

With Sartre, Levinas would maintain – against Heidegger⁸⁴ – that in the face (or look) of the Other, “one must either transcend the Other or allow oneself to be transcended by him” (BN 555). But whereas Sartre takes this to imply that “The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is . . . conflict.” (BN 555), Levinas sees the essence of consciousness itself in the *responsibility* for the Other that tempts to murder but also prohibits it. Precisely because of the

departure . . . be more than a term of negative theology, is my responsibility for the others.⁸² Or, one may say, it is the fact that the others show themselves in their face. There is a paradox in responsibility, in that I am obliged without obligation having begun in me. (BPW 119).

The ego is an irritability, a susceptibility . . . delineating a passivity more passive than any passivity relating to an effect. The *hither side* of identity is not reducible to the *for itself*, where a being recognizes itself in its difference beyond its immediate identity. Xxxx” (BPW 86, OB xxx.)

“In order to say what is human nature, it is not so much a matter of opposing one essence to another. It is above all a matter of finding a place where the human no longer concerns us from the perspective of the horizon of being, that is to say, no longer offers itself to our powers. A being as such (and not as incarnation of a universal being) can only in a relation where we speak to this being. A being is a human being and it is as a neighbor that a human being is accessible – as a face.” (BPW 8)

“Man is conceived of as an I or as a citizen – but never in the irreducible originality of his alterity, which one cannot have access to through reciprocity and symmetry” (BPW 14)

⁸³ Here there is a close parallel with the bad faith involved in obeying the moral law as a “categorical” imperative.

⁸⁴ The following quote continues “The essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not *Mitsein*.”

vulnerability of the Other to being “killed,” the speech of the other, whatever its particular content, is always also “the primordial expression, the first word: ‘you shall not commit murder’” (TI 199). The face imposes an “ethical resistance,” sense of *responsibility*:

The thought that is awake to the face of the other human is not a thought of . . . ⁸⁵, a representation, but straightaway a thought for . . . , a nonindifference for the other, upsetting the equilibrium of the steady and impassive soul of pure knowledge. (BPW 166)

The appresented Other is not an other *of* whom we are aware, but the Other *for* whom we are responsible, precisely insofar as the Other is both “absolutely other” (TI 199) and “vulnerable”⁸⁶ (xxx). By imposing an absolute responsibility *on* one, “The ethical relationship . . . puts the I in question” (TI 195).⁸⁷ The I becomes a “me,” passive before the Other who addresses me. In this relation, “the Same welcome[s] the Other, not by giving the Other to itself as a theme (that is to say, as a being) but by putting itself in question,” which occurs “precisely when the Other has nothing in common with me, when the Other is wholly other, that is to say, a human Other . . . [, w]hen, through the nakedness and destitution of his defenseless eyes, he forbids murder and paralyzes my impetuous freedom” (BPW 16). In this way, the primordial “letting” that Heidegger sought in Being is found, for Levinas, in the overcoming of the Same, of the I, of spontaneity, through one’s responsibility for another.

Precisely because the Other is infinitely Other, no set codes or principles can be sufficient for guiding one’s response to an Other. For Levinas, the absolutely free Sartrean subjectivity that rises above given codes or laws proceeds from a heteronomy that is responsible to the absolutely Other. Absolute freedom is necessary because no fixed laws can guarantee that one will avoid *cruelty*, that is, that one will fulfill one’s responsibilities to the Other:

There are cruelties which are terrible because they proceed from the necessity of the reasonable Order . . . [I]t is absolutely necessary to affirm the infinite responsibility of each, for each, before each. In such a situation, individual consciences are necessary for they alone are capable of seeing the violence that proceeds from the proper functioning of Reason itself.

To remedy a certain disorder which proceeds from the Order of universal Reason, it is necessary to defend subjectivity. (BPW 23).

This emphasis on the impossibility of subsuming responsibility under fixed categories of reason marks a sharp contrast from the Kantian attempt to derive a “formula” of morality from the conditions of possibility of moral responsibility as such. Levinas’s rejection of such formula follows from his thinking about the radical Otherness of the Other, and as in the case of Sartre and Heidegger’s rejection of similar formula, **it results in a radically adverbial conception of ethics; responding to the Other is not a matter of doing any particular thing, but of having a certain attitude, of doing whatever one does in a certain way, with a sense of responsibility before**

⁸⁵ Ellipses original.

⁸⁶ “The epiphany of the Absolutely Other is a face by which the Other challenges and commands me through his nakedness, through his destitution.” (BPW 17)

⁸⁷

“Can the Same welcome the Other, not by giving the Other to itself as a theme (that is to say, as a being) but by putting itself in question? Does not this putting in question occur precisely when the Other has nothing in common with me, when the Other is wholly other, that is to say, a human Other? When, through the nakedness and destitution of his defenseless eyes, he forbids murder and paralyzes my impetuous freedom?” (BPW 16)

“The relation to the Other does not immediately have the structure of intentionality . . . The absolutely Other is not reflected in a consciousness; it resists the indiscretion of intentionality. It resists it to the point where its very resistance does not become converted into a content of consciousness. The relation with the Other . . . is not a thought that directs itself to an object that is too obscure and too great . . . The resistance of the Other . . . consists in overturning the very egoism of the Same; that which is *aimed at* unseats the intentionality which aims at it.” (BPW 16)

Comment [6]:

But this doesn’t distinguish their approach from Kant. Formulaic approaches to morality can be just as “radically adverbial” so long as you say, with Kant, that what matters is not that your actions conform to the formula, but that you do those actions “from duty” or out of respect for the “formula.” (Also-- and I don’t know if this is a feeling you or I should trust, but I’ll put it out there-- when I read this, I had the feeling that you’ve milked the “adverbial” cow one too many times in this chapter.)

something infinitely other to and for whom one is infinitely responsible. Xxx give a Levinasian e.g. of one-on-one ethical encounter xxx.

In recent years, this Levinasian ethics of Otherness has been particularly important in two (somewhat surprising) contexts: literary theory and legal-political theory. Within literary theory, Levinas's ethical theory has been used to make sense of the ethical importance of "deconstructive" readings of texts. xxx^{88 89}

Politics pose a particularly important problem for Levinas, one that he well recognizes. Given Levinas's privileging of the face-to-face encounter within which one has infinite responsibility to the other, it can be hard to make sense of the situation in which one is suddenly faced with the appearance of "the third" (TI xxx, OB xxx, BPW xxx). If an Other imposes an infinite responsibility upon me, and then another Other appears and imposes infinite responsibility, the possibility of conflicting responsibilities permeates this encounter. Xxx Peace and Proximity xxxx.

Xxx revise into concluding ¶ xxx There is, in the late Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida,⁹⁰ a sort of heteronomous correlate to authenticity. Where for Sartre and the early Heidegger, authenticity was primarily a matter of embracing and fully recognizing one's absolute freedom, HLD propose a sort of authenticity that consists in a genuine *openness* to the ways in which the Other outstrips one's attempts to categorize it. Derrida's deconstructive approach to texts, in which one reads a text in ways that reveal xxx, Levinas's "individual conscience" that transcends "Reason," and the emphasis, in both Derrida and Levinas, on the Other that is *wholly* Other, are all ways of reinforcing the fact that no set of categories can ever fully capture the xxx. Living authentically in terms of the Other requires recognizing and remaining open to an Otherness that will always call one's own determinate consciousness into question, that not only limits one's own freedom but that, in limiting it, refuses to allow it to "settle" into patterns of thought or action. In its resistance to living life in the light of pre-given categories, this philosophy fits in line with traditional Sartrean existentialism, but in its emphasis on passivity and radical heteronomy, xxx.

7. Kantian Existentialism.

Existentialism raises three central challenges to Kant's conception of the human being. First, in its emphasis on Being-in-the-world, existentialism calls into question Kant's privileging of "objective" experience and his related endorsement of a limited scientific realism. In this context, existentialism also challenges Kant's sharp distinctions between cognition, feeling, and volition. Second, with its emphasis on absolute freedom (or absolute Otherness), existentialism challenges the ways in which Kant seeks to constrain individual freedom and our relations with

⁸⁸ Now transition to Derrida and D's emphasis on this radical Otherness. Note that Derrida makes the inscrutability of infinite Otherness so important that he dissolves the boundaries between Levinas, Sartre, and Heidegger. Levinas privileges the concrete and infinite human Other, Sartre privileges one's own infinite freedom, and Heidegger privileges the Being of each being. Derrida focuses on alterity (Otherness) *as such*, finding such alterity in xxx, cats, and self xxx (draw from *Gift of Death* here).

Derrida has become best known within the circle literary criticism for his practical of "deconstructing" texts, wherein xxx. Xxx tie to finding traces of radical Otherness, exposing the alienness and inscrutability of texts, shattering the stability of our categories xxx.

⁸⁹ Derrida actually has a view that combines, or transcends, Sartrean and Levinasian existentialism. Xxx discuss the two moves in *Gift of Death*, parts III and IV.

⁹⁰ See too Lacan, Kristeva, late Heidegger, and very recently and from a quite different philosophical background, Steven Darwall.

others in terms of the moral law. While Kant insists that the moral law provides the law of our freedom and a structure of respect for others, existentialists insist that freedom (and the Other) necessarily outstrip *any* law. Moreover, given the collapse of the dichotomy between cognition and volition, this freedom has implications for our knowledge of the world as well. These implications are particularly pointed in the case of heteronomous existentialists, who emphasize that the Other (or, for Heidegger, the Being of beings) always outstrips any determinate categories with which one tries to make sense of it. While Kant seeks to subsume all knowledge into a coherent set of a priori categories, (heteronomous) existentialists see this as an ultimately misguided privileging of “reason” or “the Same” over the infinite “Other.” Finally, the emphasis on absolute freedom (or infinite Otherness) brings with it an ideal of authenticity. Where Kant saw the good will as the only thing good without qualification, existentialists pose the possibility of a way of being – and thereby “call” us to that way of being – within which the submission of one’s freedom to universalizable laws appears to be an inauthentic enslavement to “the they,” a form of “bad faith” in which one pretends that some law arises “necessarily” for the will, or a way of trying to ignore the infinity of the Other through xxx.² In this section I argue that, in each of these cases, existentialist challenges to Kant can be answered xxxx.

Kantian Being-in-the-world.

With respect to Being-in-the-world, existentialists show that the account of empirical knowledge offered in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* is an account of only a very special sort of knowledge, the sort of “objective” knowledge that, among other things, lies at the heart of modern science. Most people, most of the time, in their “average everydayness,” do not experience the world as merely a succession of alterations amongst objects in Euclidean space. Objects are understood in terms of practical purposes and projects, and even their basic spatial and temporal attributes are defined in terms of the goals we are pursuing and the tools at our disposal.³ Kant should not, and does not have to, deny any of these existentialist claims. To take one mundane example, Kant himself points out in his *Anthropology* that “German miles (which are not . . . indicated with milestones . . .) always become shorter the nearer we are to a capital (e. g., Berlin), and longer the farther we are from one (in Pomerania)” (7:234).⁴ Kant’s epistemological focus on objective spatial and temporal relations does not preclude his awareness of and attention to the *non*-“objective,” ordinary, lived experiences of human beings.⁵

Where Kant and existentialists differ is with respect to how one should deal with this everyday world, and here there are deep differences between Kant and existentialists relating to the relative priority of the “life-world” and the objective, scientific world.⁶ Heidegger emphasizes that any object of our experience “is always already a thing at hand in the surrounding world and precisely not ‘initially’ merely objectively present ‘world-stuff’” (BT H 85, see too BT H 106), while Kant insists that, at least in some sense, an objective world presents itself to cognition “initially.” It is important to recognize, however, that this “initially” is neither *temporal* nor *phenomenological*. Kant does not claim – at least not in his transcendental anthropology⁷ – that we *first* have cognitions and *then* practical purposes.

Even in the first *Critique*, where he has already isolated an artificially abstract form of “experience” – objective, empirical knowledge – Kant recognizes that such experience always already involves *both* concepts and intuitions. One can abstract concepts away from the experiences within which they are typically situated, but, from-within, one does first find oneself with concepts or intuitions and then put them together to get a coherent experience.⁸ What Kant argues, however, is that we can make sense of the nature of these always-already-integrated objective experiences only by seeing that they involve two separate components that are synthesized into a single cognition.⁹ One might make a similar move in relating the “experience” that Kant analyzes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the everyday experience existentialists emphasize. Kant need not claim that most or even any of our lived experience is reducible to merely objective knowledge disconnected from feelings and purposes. And Kant can certainly

admit that our cognitions of objects employ purposive and affective concepts (such as “hammer” or “too heavy” or “fearsome”). Rather, what Kant claims is that in any cognition, whether or not that cognition is related to feelings and volitions, there is an element that is directed towards objects as such (independent of their role as tools for my purposes or sources of pleasure):

there is always a great difference between representations belonging to cognition, insofar as they are related merely to the object and the unity of the consciousness of it and their objective relation where, considered as at the same time the cause of the reality of this object, they are assigned to the faculty of desire, and, finally, their relation merely to the subject, where they are . . . [related] to the feeling of pleasure. (20:206)

Even if most of our relations with objects include all three components – mere cognition, desire, and pleasure or pain – there is still, for Kant, a distinction between these components of lived experience.

As a first step towards defending this claim, we might note that modern science, and even ordinary “objective” judging, at least *seems* to fit Kant’s description of “cognition” as such. Even if some aspects of science (especially engineering and technological applications) are directed specifically towards practical purposes, and even if a great deal of scientific research has practical ambitions in view, at least some areas of science are particularly praised as “pure science” for seeking merely to adequately describe and explain our world.¹⁰ Superstring theory and accounts of the origin of the universe may (come to) have some practical applications, but they are primarily ways simply of conforming our ways of thinking to a world that exists independent of our purposes. Even such things as evolutionary biology and modern chemistry are defended first and foremost as accurate representations of the world, not practical tools for medicine or industry. Many important debates within science (such as Galileo’s insistence that Copernican astronomy is not merely a good *model*, but *true*) and even the ambition for scientific progress itself seem best explained in terms of scientists’ striving to accurately map their beliefs onto the world. Relatedly, scientific knowledge – and “objective” knowledge more generally – at least *seems* less subjective, less tied to the particular situations or tendencies of individual knowers, than the average, everyday experience on which Heidegger and Sartre focus. In that sense, objectivity seems to get at something important about the world, something about how the world is independent of our particular relations to it. Finally, some sort of objective awareness of objects seems to be implicated even in our ordinary lived experience. It seems right to say that it is only because hammers are solid, etc. – and because, in some sense, I cognize them this way – that they can be handy for me when I want to pound a nail.

We can put these points in terms of Sartre’s example of immersing one’s hand in water. It is true that in *some* sense I can “give the name subjectivity to the objectivity which I have not chosen” (BN 412). And it is even true that, within our lived experience, the *felt* temperature of the water, rather than the temperature on a thermometer, is more often than not our primary engagement with water. (I don’t typically need a thermometer to tell me that the water with which I am washing my hands is too hot.) But for all that, it is hardly a merely arbitrary choice to describe the relatively high temperature on the submerged thermometer as “objective” and the perception of the water as cold by my hot hand as “subjective.” The former, but not the latter, remains constant as long as the condition of the water remains constant, while the latter is subject to wild fluctuations based on my present condition. Partly for this reason, the former, but not the latter, is something that I can share with others. And an explanation of why water that is “really” warm “seems” cold to my hand can be much more straightforward than an attempt to explain why water that is “really” cold “seems” warm to the thermometer.^{11 12}

This defense is not yet insufficient,¹³ but it puts us on the right track towards a sufficient response. We can get a sense both for what this defense is missing, and what is right about it, by comparing the optimistic account of science here with Heidegger’s own account of how “something at hand with which we have to do . . . turns into something ‘about which’ the statement that points it out is made” (BT H 147). Heidegger rejects the picture of science as

Comment [7]:

In answer to your footnote: One thing I have a problem with: You say that Kant solves the problem of avoiding the rationalist extreme and the Berkeleyan extreme by positing a new distinction: that between ideas, objects, and things in themselves. But then when you elaborate, you need to bring out how objects are distinct *both* from ideas *and* from things in themselves. You mostly show how they are distinct from objects, and then “even if not from my particular humanity” does all the work of distinguishing them from things in themselves. I partly have a problem in that there seems to be a contradiction in saying that the object is “distinct from me” and saying that it is not distinct “from my particular humanity.” Does my particular humanity not belong to me? On the other hand, there does *not* seem to be a contradiction in saying that the object is distinct from “the particular way that object appears to me in this particular moment” and yet the object is not distinct “from my particular humanity,” (or from “me”). This is all to say that if you make this point, I would recommend making this part of the distinction clearer, because otherwise it just sounds like Kant is a rationalist. That said, I think your point here is good. At first I thought that you should only make the point that Sartre can’t explain *why* the thermometer would be more intersubjectively valid, while Kant can by positing objects that are distinct from the particular way they appear to me at a particular moment. This is a satisfying response for many people, but for anyone already sympathetic to the extreme claims of the existentialists, this sounds like a reversion to “naive” (and “intellectually arrogant”) rationalism. I like this because it thwarts this reaction. Hm. So now I think you should at least keep it (which I know is not what you were asking)... but hm. I don’t feel too strongly about whether it should be in the text, but I’m leaning toward keeping it as a footnote.

merely “keeping our distance from handling” or “merely looking at beings . . . [by] *abstain[ing]* from any kind of use,” arguing instead that one must come to “look . . . *at* the thing encountered in a ‘new’ way, as something objectively present” (BT H 357, 361). This process involves at least two important components. First, an object that initially is handy and thus inconspicuous¹⁴ becomes “unusable” and thus “conspicuous” (BT H 73). When the hammer that we are using is “too heavy” or when a leg on the table on which we are working breaks, we come to see “the character of objective presence in what is at hand,” that is, we come to see the hammer or table as something that “just lies there,” something that, even when it is handy, “is always also objectively present with this or that appearance” (BT H 73). Second, the sort of conspicuous attention provoked by the unusability of things at hand can itself become a privileged activity; this happens when we begin to make “statements” about such things, and especially when we seek a sort of *uniformity* of judging about the thing.

[B]y and for this way of looking what is at hand is veiled as something at hand . . . [and] forced back to the uniform level of what is merely objectively present . . . This leveling down of the primordial ‘as’ of circumspect interpretation to the as of the determination of objective presence is the specialty of the statement. Only in this way does it gain the possibility of a pointing something out in a way that we can sheerly look at it. (BT H 158)

The reference here to a “leveling down” is a deliberate reference to Heidegger’s view of inauthenticity, “being-with-one-another as . . . *averageness*,” the “existential character of the they,” which Heidegger identifies with “the *leveling down* of all possibilities of being” that “takes the responsibility of Da-sein away from it” (BT H 127).¹⁵

For Kant, this analysis of the origin of science captures an important distinction between scientific objectivity and ordinary engagement with handy objects, one that gives good reasons to *privilege* scientific knowing. In particular, the “leveling down” of possibilities towards “uniformity” is another way of saying that the scientific project is that form of human engagement with the world in which we seek to develop an understanding of the world that can in principle be the same for all others, regardless of their contingent circumstances or particular practical goals. This striving for uniformity explains why it seems as though the thermometer gives a more accurate measure of temperature than the hand; it gives a measure that is more *uniform*. By analogy with Kant’s practical philosophy, we might see science itself as a sort of search for “categorical imperatives” within the realm of cognition.¹⁶ Rather than seeking to act on maxims that could be universal for all rational agents, we seek, in science, to cognize the world in ways that can be universal for all human knowers. But as in the case of the categorical imperative, we thereby “veil” our particular projects and situation in order to construct judgments that could be “uniform.” In so doing, we “level down” the world, but we also thereby *create* a world that we can universally, and categorically, share. Moreover, Heidegger rightly draws attention to the close connection between *this* sort of knowing and “statements,” or, in Kantian terminology, judgments. Kant’s account of cognition is based on the model of cognition as *judgment*, and both Kant and Heidegger rightly see that an emphasis on the sorts of cognitions we can *say* brings with it an emphasis on the sorts of cognitions we can *share* and thereby a sort of uniformity that is particularly conducive to some sort of emphasis on “objectivity.”

Kant takes this point about the origin of science further than Heidegger, however, by highlighting what he takes to be a distinctive “interest” of “reason.” Xxxasdf flesh out ¶. xxx

One might, at this point, simply ascribe the difference between Kant and Heidegger to a difference in emphasis. Kant is interested in offering transcendental analyses of the conditions of possibility of “knowledge” of (in Heideggerian terms) conspicuous objects and their qualities and relations; Heidegger is interested in existential analyses that privilege the lived experience of (in Kantian terms) objects already taken up into practical activity. If this were the only difference, Kantians might appropriately supplement their account of “knowledge” with a Heideggerian account of Da-sein, perhaps emphasizing the importance of “knowledge” and pointing out the

relative advantages of Kant for making sense of the sort of objective awareness that is particularly important for modern science.

But there are two deeper differences between Kant and Heidegger that are more difficult to accommodate. First, Heidegger links scientific objectivity with the inauthenticity that keeps us from taking responsibility and projecting ourselves towards our ownmost possibilities in part as a way of calling objectivity into question, or, better, bearing witness to alternative possible ways of knowing and thereby “demanding” or “summoning” his readers to these (see BT H 266-7, H294). Privileging scientific knowing is a threat to authentic Being-towards-death, to embracing one’s ownmost possibilities of engagement with the world. Thus for Heidegger, Kant’s emphasis is not only not to be preferred; it is positively dangerous in its potential to further entrench the growing deference to scientific objectivity over authentic understanding. Because of the connection of this difference with “authenticity” more generally, I will reserve discussion of this point until the end of this section.

The second fundamental difference between Kant and Heidegger relates to which sort of analysis – or better, which way of knowing – is more fundamental: objective cognition or the holistic being-in-the-world of Da-sein. For Heidegger, objective cognition is a subsidiary and artificial way of looking at what is first and foremost “at hand.” By looking in this way, “the primordial ‘as’ of circumspect interpretation” is “leveled down . . . to the as of the determination of objective presence” (BT H 158). Heidegger even finds oblique confessions in Kant’s own *Critique* of the priority of this primordial and holistic “as.” In his commentary on Kant’s *Critique*, Heidegger makes much of Kant’s allusion to the imagination as a “common root” of concepts and intuitions and of the fact that “thinking and intuiting . . . are not separated from one another like two completely dissimilar things. Rather, as species of representing, both belong to the same genus of pre-presenting in general. Both are modes of the representing of . . .”.¹⁷ Heidegger highlights a supposed common genus of concepts and intuitions, while Kant emphasizes – against Wolff and in contrast to Heidegger – the *irreducibility* of concepts and intuitions to any univocally understood general category of representation.¹⁸

Here it might help to recall that, even for Heidegger, there is a sense in which the objective world is constructed precisely *as* a privileged world, that is, as the world that was already there before our projects. For Heidegger, it is constructed in this way by us, for particular reasons, and subsequent to the breakdown of our handy world, so in those senses it is secondary. And it can be constructed only on the basis of veiling aspects the handiness of the handy world, so in that sense its priority is illusory. But even Heidegger recognizes that what one does when one seeks objective knowledge is to seeking to “sheerly look” at the world, that is, seeking knowledge of what the world is like in itself. In that sense, Kant and Heidegger agree that at least when we think of the world in terms of objectivity, we explicitly think of it as having a sort of priority. (By contrast, when we engage with the handy world, we do not take up the issue of priority at all; we are engaged in a different task than sheerly looking.) What Kant does is to show how it is possible to access a world that exists independent of our practical engagement with it, that exists “objectively.” The result is to show that at least in our engagement with the world as a world for us to “know,” we employ a priori concepts that justify our everyday objective judgments as well as those of math and science, but that are limited in their extent. xxx

To some extent, this difference can be resolved by noting that although Kant and Heidegger both emphasize a from-within perspective on human beings, they have different objects in view. As a phenomenologist, Heidegger emphasizes close and careful *description* of (immediate) *consciousness* of the world. In that sense, Heidegger’s approach is almost a complex form of introspection. But Kant emphasizes *transcendental* analysis of the conditions of possibility of *justifying* our cognition of the (objective) world. While Heidegger’s anthropological question is directed *towards* the from-within perspective, something like “What does human being-in-the-world look or feel like?”, Kant’s question is directed *from* the from-within perspective, something like “What should I believe (or feel, or do)?” And thus for Kant, but not

for Heidegger, normativity is essential to the from-within perspective. And when analyzing the from-within perspective that is *normative*, the perspective from which one is trying to decide what to believe about the world, one's world is already conspicuous and thus invites the effort to find "objective" measures for belief. In that sense, Heidegger shows that the from-within perspective does not always have the conspicuous character that it does for Kant. But for the from-within perspective from within which one can actually employ philosophy for deliberation about what to think (or do), Kant's philosophy offers the better account (so far).

One final point may be worth noting here. Kant's overall approach to anthropology involves making distinctions (between cognition, feeling, and volition; between transcendental and empirical anthropology; etc), analyzing different aspects of human beings separately, and then recombining the insights gained through these analyses into a overarching pragmatic anthropology. Already in Kant's own anthropology, the fruitfulness of this approach is evident; but its fruitfulness is even more evident today, as insights from contemporary psychology and biology are being put to use for the improvement of human lives. By contrast, Heidegger's holism about human being, in which xxxx.

In the end, even if lived human experience does not conform to the sort of "objective" cognition on which Kant focuses, Kant's account does a very good job of providing the transcendental conditions of possibility for at least one important sphere of humans' being-in-the-world, one connected in particularly important ways with both our efforts to find consensus amongst human beings and our need to provide *justifications* for beliefs about "conspicuous" things in our world. Moreover, there is at least some reason to think that this sort of objective cognition is a fundamental constitutive element even of the lived experience on which Heidegger focuses (especially insofar as there is a normative dimension to that lived experience). And privileging scientific objectivity has, at the very least, provided human beings with a self-understanding that, as indicated in chapter nine, is already being put to substantially improve human lives.

Freedom and Infinity

With respect to Kant's conception of freedom, there are four central existentialist critiques of Kant. First, following from the existentialist account of Being-in-the-world, there is an emphasis on freedom as always already *situated*, and thus worldly in a way that Kantians freedom seems not to be. Second, existentialists emphasize an *absolute* freedom at odds with Kant's attempts to provide necessary and universal laws for human thought, feeling, and choice. Third, heteronomous existentialism in particular calls into question Kant's emphasis on "autonomy" and his privileging of a "from-within" standpoint that focuses on the "I" of thought and action rather than the "me" of responsibility (to another).¹⁹

The first existentialist objection to Kant's account of freedom is tied to the existentialist insistence that we are thrown into "definite possibilities" (BT H 144), that our choice is always "choice *in the world*" (BN 617).²⁰ Existentialists often explicitly juxtapose this emphasis on situated freedom with Kant's own account of freedom, as when Sartre vehemently "reject[s] Kant's 'choice of intelligible character'" (BN, 617) as a way of making sense of existential choice. And there are certainly passages in Kant that lend themselves to this conception of timeless, situation-less freedom in Kant. Kant defines the free will "as independent of all empirical conditions (i.e. conditions belonging to the sensible world)" (KpV 5:29). His account of free choice seems to reduce human freedom choice to whether one subordinates morality to happiness or vice versa (see especially 6:36). And he does repeatedly use language of an "intelligible character, . . . which does not stand under any conditions of sensibility" (A539/B567) to explain the sense in which human beings can be free.

In fact, however, as should be clear from chapter two, the existentialist emphasis on freedom-in-situation is actually remarkably close to Kant. Within his epistemology, Kant shares with the existentialists an insistence that human cognition involves the application of concepts to

intuitions of *given* objects; human finitude implies that the “freedom”²¹ of human cognition is always a matter of how we *respond* to a *given* world. And with respect to human *choice*, Kantian freedom comes in our ability to subject our maxims to the moral law. This ability is independent of sensible conditions because (for Kant) the moral law is independent of those conditions. But the maxims that are subjected *to* that law are defined in terms of interests and situations in which we initially and for the most part simply find ourselves. To take Kant’s preeminent example, one only has the freedom to refrain from a false promise when one finds oneself in a situation in which one is inclined to tell such a promise, a situation such as one involving the need for money that one will be unable to repay. The life of freedom is a life of constraining the maxims that emerge from one’s situation in-the-world in terms of a moral law. What distinguishes free human choice from unfree animal choice is not the maxims, of course, but the moral law in terms of which we limit our maxims. And in that sense, there is something timeless about human freedom. But the application of this moral law is always an application to particular contexts, and in that sense Kantian freedom is just as situated as Sartrean. Now the moral dimension of this account is something with which existentialists will take issue, but here it is important to note that Kant, like existentialists, takes freedom to be freedom in the world.

The second existentialist challenge to Kant’s conception of freedom is the converse of the first. Where existentialists’ emphasis on being-in-the-world leads them to reject what they take to be an overly *unconstrained* sense of “intelligible” freedom, their emphasis on the absoluteness of freedom leads them to reject the *constraints* that Kant identifies as intrinsic to freedom. Within the epistemic realm, this means that existentialists tend to reject the absoluteness with which Kant prescribes the categories and forms of intuition to the “spontaneous” human understanding. In Sartre and Heidegger, this takes the form of a deprivileging of scientific cognition relative to understandings of our lived world. The most extreme form of this rejection of Kantian constraints on cognition comes in earlier, proto-existentialist thinkers. Kierkegaard, in particular, argues that “because the . . . existing knowing spirit is itself in the process of becoming, . . . truth . . . cannot be established absolutely . . . [so] . . . every beginning, when it is *made* . . . *is made* by virtue of a resolution, essentially by virtue of faith” (CUP 189). For Kierkegaard, this has profound implications since “faith,” for Kierkegaard, is a sort of “passion,” and the more “paradoxical” one’s beliefs, the more passionate one can hold them. Thus Kierkegaard defends a sort of irrationalism, within which the highest knowledge is precisely the faith that breaks through supposed constraints, faith, for instance, in “xxx godman eternal in time etc xxx.”²² Even if they do not go so far as Kierkegaard’s valorization of paradox, however, existentialists might point out, especially in the light of the sorts of historicist critiques (especially Kuhn’s) raised in the last chapter, that human beings seem precisely *not* to be dependent upon fixed and a priori structures of cognition. Rather, we cognize the world in terms that suit our particular projects. Our knowing-the-world is part of a being-in-the-world for which we are responsible, and while this being-in-the-world is always situated, it is never forced – neither by the world itself nor by any “nature” or “transcendental structures” of its own – to interpret that world in any given way. All cognition is interpretation, and interpretation is absolutely free.²³ In this context, Kant’s epistemology looks like veiled essentialism: human knowers “essentially” have spatial and temporal sensibilities of particular kinds, cognitive constraints of various kinds, and so on.

This connection between cognition and projects takes us to the more important existentialist critique of Kant: their rejection of Kant’s limitation of the freedom of *choice* by the moral law.²⁴ Sartre puts the point particularly clearly: “Freedom has no essence” (566).²⁶ To a considerable extent, this claim is connected with the existentialist ideal of authenticity, and I reserve a detailed discussion of the relationship between autonomy and authenticity for the end of this section. But there is also a broader, “metaphysical” point: that Kant is simply wrong to see the moral law as providing any sort of constraint on human freedom. In their most modest form, these objections merely take the form of Sartre’s observation, noted above with respect to the young student deciding whether or not to join the resistance, that the moral law is singularly

unhelpful in actually deciding what to do in human life. Somewhat more forcefully, one might put the point in terms of Kant's own distinction between the freedom that he identifies with "autonomy" and the freedom to which he refers in the *Religion* when he ascribes to human beings a "free choice" of "radical evil." Just as Kant claims that "an incentive [can] have influence on the power of choice of the human being . . . only because this human being incorporates the incentive . . . into his maxim" (6: 24), Sartre insists that "causes and motives have meaning only inside a projected ensemble which . . . is ultimately myself as transcendence" (BN 564). For Kant, however, the moral law has an authority over the will *regardless* of any choice to incorporate this law into a maxim. But, Sartre can ask, why privilege the moral law in this way?

A complete Kantian response to these objections would require (at least) rehearsing the arguments in chapter two for the necessity of the transcendental structures of cognition and volition. Put briefly, though, Kant's point in response to both would be to emphasize that freedom (whether in cognition or volition) has a negative dimension (in that one is free *from* complete determination from sensible influences) but it has this dimension only by virtue of being a positive capacity, a capacity *to* order one's experience, or one's life, into a coherent whole. In the moral case in particular, it may be helpful to recall that Kant does *not* think that the incorporation thesis alone is sufficient to ensure that human beings *really* have freedom.²⁷ Kant rules out the claim that our freedom is illusory not because we seem to free when we make choices from-within, but because our practice of holding ourselves *morally* responsible depends upon having a freedom that is *genuinely* undetermined by sensuous incentives. Kant's general point here is compatible with the broadly existentialist point that even if freedom lacks an "essence," one can use choose in ways that fail to properly recognize or live out one's freedom. In that sense, Kant is not far from Sartre's denigration of bad faith, Heidegger's account of inauthenticity, or Kierkegaard's analyses of despair. Because the differences in this area relate closely to the different *ideals* of autonomy and authenticity, I reserve discussion of these points until the end of this section.

A third challenge to Kant's account of freedom comes specifically from *heteronomous* existentialism. Kant fundamentally divides his anthropology into what we might call a first person perspective from which one justifies one's thoughts and actions and a third person perspective that one can take on human beings as objects in an empirical world. But when dealing with others, they are conceived either as empirical objects or as practical agents. Kant does not have a place for the radical Levinasian heteronomy that sees the self as fundamentally constituted by a response to an inscrutable but vulnerable other. Moreover, Kant has no room for practical (or even epistemic) norms or responsibilities that do not in some sense derive from my own autonomy. Autonomy is central to every aspect of Kant's transcendental anthropology. For Kant, as for Levinas, is it only through the recognition of one's ethical/moral *responsibility* that one is justified in seeing oneself as a free subject.²⁸ But this responsibility is both *autonomous* and *universal*. Kant's insistence that "the human being . . . is subject *only to laws given by himself but still universal* and . . . he is bound only to act in conformity with his own will" (4: 432) could not be further from Levinas's equally vehement insistence that in the experience of responsibility, "no form, no capacity preexisted in me to espouse the imperative and make it my own. Not being able to treat the law as a law I myself have given myself is just in what the sense of alterity consists" (OB xvii).^{29 30}

For Kant, "respect" is the paradigm "feeling" of responsibility for others, and this respect plays itself out negatively by not undermining the independence of others' wills from one's own (by not deceiving or enslaving or "killing" them) and positively by promoting the "happiness" of others, where happiness is both "indeterminate" (4:418) and highly individual. In these senses, Kant is entirely in agreement with Levinas about the dangers of reducing the "Other" to the "Same." Humans have a tendency, manifested in our self-conceit, to enforce our own identities by imposing them on others, thereby denying that others are unique individuals with their own goals and projects. Responsibility for the Other, for Kant as for Levinas, requires respecting others *in their uniqueness*. Moreover, for Kant, this obligation to particular others depends upon

their *vulnerability*, whereby they are capable of being undermined as distinct individual wills and whereby they “need love and sympathy” (4:423). But for Kant this respect is due not to *anything* that is vulnerable, but only to the sorts of entities – other *people* – that are capable of governing themselves. It is by virtue of others’ free capacity for choice that *they* – rather than, say, their instincts – are able to impose obligations. An adorable baby seal shares with “the neighbor” a “face” and even “the nakedness and destitution of his defenseless eyes” (BPW 18), but the sense of responsibility that one feels for that seal is, for Kant as for Levinas³¹, illusory. An immediate feeling of responsibility is not, even for Levinas, sufficient to establish one’s *real* responsibility. For Levinas (as for Descartes before him), speech provides a locus to distinguish the Other (person) from simply another (thing). But Levinas recognizes that literal speech is not necessary (as the language of the “face” emphasizes) and mere speech (say, in a parrot) is not even sufficient. What *is* both necessary and sufficient is that one recognize the other as an Other who addresses one, who calls one to responsibility. But – and here we might see Kant as providing the transcendental conditions of possibility of the “face” – this has two important implications. First, in recognizing the other, one asserts one’s autonomy. It is by virtue *taking* the other to be an Other than the other can be a face for one. And second, the basis on which one takes the other to be an Other requires that one see the Other as sharing in common with oneself at least the ability to choose freely, to be an I that can impose responsibilities on a you. And in that sense, the “Other” is, as Levinas fears but Kant does not, reduced to the order of the Same. It is by virtue of recognizing another as being the Same (sharing one’s free rational agency) that others can be “Others” (now in a Kantian rather than strictly Levinasian sense) to whom one can be responsible.

Moreover, by this Kantian standard, universal rules of justice need not be *totalizing* and thereby *violent* forms of interaction. When one seeks to enter into a community with multiple others governed by mutual respect, this *does* require subjecting individuality – one’s own and those of others – to universal norms, but it does *not* require the elimination of individuality (and even an irreducible individuality) in the face of those norms. In a self-centered context, Kant explains that “pure practical reasons merely *infringes upon* self-love [a promotion of one’s own particular ends] . . . [b]ut it *strikes down* self-conceit [an unconditional presumption in favor of one’s own particular ends]” (5:73). In a Levinasian context, we might make use of a similar distinction with respect to others. Practical reason merely *infringes upon* our responsibilities to an particular Other, in that it requires that we respect every other Other, but it *strikes down* the sort of absolute responsibility implied by Levinasian and Derridian heteronomous existentialism. Put this way, of course, it becomes clear that Levinas’s philosophy is valuable in that it helpfully draws attention to a dangerous risk of Kant’s (and many other) ethics. In the recognition of our common humanity and even in the endorsement of specific features of one another as valuable, there can be a risk of *reducing* personhood to this shared humanity. Kant, of course, insists that respect for others involves respecting and even promoting their individual projects and ends, but emphasizing general principles for dealing with all others can have the effect, as Levinas rightly realizes, of helping one complacency accept injustices against particular others, even against the immediate neighbor, that one ought to remedy.³²

At the same time, though, this Kantian response to Levinas can serve as a valuable corrective to the enthusiastic excesses of heteronomous existentialism. For Kant, the Other – every Other – *does* have an infinite worth one’s responsibility to the Other is infinite in that one must, if necessary, sacrifice every finite interest for the sake of one’s unconditional obligations. But, for Kant, one’s obligations to any particular Other are *not* actually infinite, in the sense that, for Kant, one has both very specific, mostly negative responsibilities (not to deceive or torture) and very general but “wide” positive responsibilities (to meet the needs of others). The former are sufficiently specific that one can usually meet them merely by conducting one’s behavior within certain limits. The latter, as “wide” duties, “leave room for free choice in . . . complying with” one’s duties (6:390). Kant’s general point, against both Sartre and Levinas, is that one is not

(morally) responsible for one's whole world, nor *wholly* responsible for the Other with whom one is faced.³³ One might think, of course, that Levinas is surely correct, that one should never succumb to the moral complacency of thinking that one has done "what one can" or "what one must" for another in need. And Kant, of course, agrees that moral complacency is a real danger, an especially important danger given the self-deception implicit in humans' radical evil. But Kant sees an equal danger in a "moral enthusiasm" or "moral fanaticism" that extols extraordinary moral demands but ignores the importance of ordinary duties. After offering an interpretation of the commandment "Love God above all, and your neighbor as yourself" (5:83)³⁴, Kant adds:

This consideration is intended not so much to bring clear concepts to the evangelical commandment just cited in order to reduce *religious enthusiasm* [or superstition, *Schwärmerei*]. . . but to determine accurately the moral disposition directly, in regard to our duties toward human beings . . . and to check, or where possible prevent, a *merely moral* enthusiasm which infects many people. The moral level on which a human being . . . stands is respect for the moral law . . . By exhortation to actions as noble, sublime, and magnanimous, minds are attuned to nothing but moral enthusiasm and exaggerated self-conceit . . . they produce in this way a frivolous, high-flown, fantastic cast of mind, flattering themselves with a spontaneous goodness of heart . . . and thereby forgetting their obligation . . . If enthusiasm in the most general sense is an overstepping of the bounds of human reason . . . , then moral enthusiasm is such an overstepping of the bounds that practical pure reason sets to humanity . . . If this is so, then not only novelists and sentimental educators . . . but sometimes even philosophers . . . have ushered in moral enthusiasm instead of a sober but wise moral discipline. (5: 84-6)

Kant's passion here has a practical purpose. There is a real danger that when Levinas, Derrida, and others emphasize "infinite" ethical demands to the absolutely Other in such a way that one could never, even in principle, fulfill them (or even articulate what they are!), they actually promote an even greater moral complacency than Kant's "sober but wise moral discipline" does. What seems to be the most intense ethical admonitions actually turn out to be frivolous and fantastic justifications for self-conceit.^{35 36}

This final Kantian critique of Levinas can also be put in terms of a more general problem with existentialist conceptions of freedom, or the absolute, or the infinite. Once freedom or the Other is distinguished from any conception that allows for discerning determinate paths of action, determinate obligations towards others, it becomes unclear just what kind of normative guidance any of these views provide. The diversity of practical prescriptions for action amongst existentialists – from Sartre's Marxism to the Nazism of Heidegger and de Man to Levinas's emphasis on brute human suffering – only reinforces the sense that existentialism, for whatever depth of insight it might provide about the human condition, ultimately fails to answer the urgent questions that one asks from-within, questions about how to live and what to think. In one sense, of course, this is precisely the point. Sartre sees any attempt to "find answers" to these questions a form of bad faith, and Levinas sees the attempt to discern *determinate* ways of interacting with "others" a sort of violence against the Infinite Other with who faces one. Rather than an ideal of *autonomy*, helping one properly govern oneself by norms, existentialists advance an ideal of *authenticity*, accepting the normlessness of the from-within and refusing to subject oneself or others to the violence of being forced into determinate categories of thought and action.³⁷ So it is, at last, to a Kantian account of authenticity that we must now turn.

Kantian Authenticity

Both Kant's privileging of objective knowledge and his emphasis on the moral law as the law of freedom can seem, from an existentialist standpoint, to be forms of inauthenticity. Nietzsche puts the point with suitable vitriol, criticizing the "herd mentality" involved in preferring "truths" xxx and submitting to "xxx. But Heidegger's analysis of "the they," Sartre's account of bad faith, and the Derridean-Levinasian critique of "Reason" all point to the same

general criticism. Kant seems to be the inauthentic philosopher extraordinaire, offering transcendental conditions of the possibility of thinking-just-like-everyone-else and acting-just-like-everyone-else. In a move that, from an existentialist standpoint, would be comic were it not so tragic, Kant even seeks to find the transcendental conditions of the possibility of making universal judgments about beautiful objects, to find universality even in “xxx most free xxx.” Against Kant’s attempts to justify necessary and universal standards of thought, feeling, and choice, we can see the existentialist ideal as a call to authentically think, feel, choose, and *be* for oneself.

To some extent, Kant would vehemently endorse the (early Heideggerian-Sartrean) existentialist ideal of authenticity. Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?” famously begins with the claim that “Enlightenment is the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred . . . inability to make use of his own understanding without direction from another” and Kant there mocks those who “have a book that understands for me, a spiritual advisor who has a conscience for me . . . and so forth” (8:35). In his account of character, so fundamental to both his moral and empirical anthropology, Kant insists that “the *imitator* . . . is without character; for character consists precisely in originality in the way of thinking. He who has character derives his conduct from a source that he has opened by himself” (7:293). And the conceptions of autonomy that play such a central role in Kant’s transcendental anthropology are based on the fundamental principle that “the human being . . . is subject *only to laws given by himself* and . . . is bound only to act in conformity with his own will” (4: 432). In these contexts, Kant accepts and even emphasizes the fundamental existential commitment to one’s *ownmost* possibility, to an authenticity that refuses to see its own choices as the choices of simply a generic “human being.” Kant’s conception of “autonomy” is precisely designed to capture this important commitment to what existentialists call authenticity.

But this emphasis on autonomy is combined, for Kant, with a fundamental commitment to *universality*. Hence in “What is Enlightenment?”, even in the midst of defending the importance of using “one’s *own* understanding” (8:35), Kant insists that only a “*public* use of one’s reason . . . *as a scholar* before the entire public of the *world of readers*” can bring about enlightenment (8:35, 37, emphasis original). In discussing character, Kant not only contrasts true character with “the imitator” but also adds, “However, the rational human being must not be an *eccentric*; indeed, he never will be, since he relies on principles that are valid for everyone” (7:293). And his insistence in the *Groundwork* that one is bound only to laws given to oneself adds that these laws must be “still universal” (4: 432). Kant’s emphasis on autonomy and thinking for oneself is *not* an emphasis on *uniqueness*. One’s ownmost possibility, for Kant, does not mean a possibility that sets one apart from others, but is rather a possibility that one shares with others.³⁸ And Kant vehemently protests against “egoisms” of various kinds, wherein one takes one’s own beliefs, feelings, or desires to be sufficient without testing them against “other men’s insights,” which Kant calls the “touchstone of the understanding” (Bloomberg Logic, 24:178).³⁹ ⁴⁰ xxx see too 5:294xxx

Moreover, Kant argues that human autonomy is not a merely negative capacity, not something that arises from Nothing or from an encounter with an inscrutable Other, but rather than autonomy has a positive structure. When one considers what is necessary in order to truly pursue one’s ownmost possibilities, one finds that certain determinate and universal laws must govern one’s thoughts and volitions.⁴¹ Against existentialisms of all sorts, for example, Kant argues that there can be and in fact *is* a single categorical imperative by which all *authentic* agents govern themselves. The fact that there *is* such an imperative, and that it can be known “a priori,” might seem to suggest that this moral law is somehow distinct from and supreme over one’s own freedom. But for Kant, as we saw in chapter two, subjection to the moral law is precisely the condition of possibility of having any freedom at all, and thus a condition of possibility of *any* sort of authentic engagement with the world. Even so, the fact that this law is the same *for everyone* seems to make Kantian morality a paradigmatic “herd morality,” a morality of “the they” rather than a truly authentic expression of one’s *ownmost* possibilities. Here again, though, it is important to recall the radically adverbial nature of existentialist authenticity. For Kant, as for existentialists, one ought not obey the moral law simply because others are doing so, nor simply because Kant says one should, not

even because it is a law of God. One ought obey the moral law because it is the law of one's own will. Thus even if the moral law is identical to the law of "the they," the Kantian moral agent will obey it *as* a law of her own will. She will obey this law authentically. Moreover, Kant is well aware that the particular judgments of particular societies – of "the they" – can often be at odds with the moral law.⁴² The fact that Kant's ideal moral (and even epistemic) standards are normatively universal (in that they ought to hold for all people) does not mean that they are universal "norms" (in the sense of actually being embraced by "the they"). Kantian universalist authenticity, by providing (universal) conditions of justification from-within for individual agents can even provide such agents the emboldening resources to stand up authentically against the "norms" of their societies.

In their appeal to authenticity and warnings about succumbing to "bad faith" or "herd mentality," existentialists rightly highlight concerns that can be missed by a Kantian focus on autonomy. Despite Kant's insistence on autonomy being a form of *self*-governance, it can often become merely a stale formula in the context of which one lives one's life. One can treat the moral law as a constraint given from on high, or as a social norm to which one must conform one's life. Instead, Kantian existentialists should emphasize the importance of always obeying the moral law *as one's own law*, a law that, although necessary, is nonetheless imposed upon oneself freely. But Kant, in return, can enrich existentialism by highlighting that taking seriously the existential imperative to authenticity cannot be merely a matter of asserting one's uniqueness or constantly reinventing oneself.⁴³ To say, as Sartre's student said about joining the Resistance, "In the end, feeling is what counts. I ought to choose whichever pushes me in one direction" (E 25), is a far cry from authenticity. *True* authenticity comes, as Kant insists, from *autonomy*, from governing oneself in accordance with laws that one can see as truly coming from one's *self*, laws that will, by virtue of being *laws* and thereby susceptible to justification, be universal.

Even within the broad universal laws by which we govern ourselves, however, Kant admits the importance of individuality and respecting the individuality of others as well as of oneself. The moral law is not *radically* adverbial as the existentialist ideal of authenticity; it does imply some content, such as that we must avoid false promises and promote the perfection and happiness of self and others). But it is still fundamentally a *formal* law, one within the constraints of which there is a considerable range of possibilities; there are lots of (incompatible) ways of being moral, and thus lots of room for more particular, expressions of one's "ownmost" possibilities. There is room, even within Kant's own system, for authentic actions that are universalizable in principle (and hence moral) but still expressions of one's unique individuality. Sartre's own example illustrates this point particularly well. Sartre rightly notes, in the case of the student deciding whether or not to join the French Resistance, that Kant's ethics does not help him decide whether to join or to stay with his mother. But Sartre is wrong about the *reason* why Kant's ethics fails. As Sartre sees it,

if I stay with my mother, I'll treat her as an end and not as a means; but by virtue of this very fact, I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting, as means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and, by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means. (E 25-6)

Sartre suggests that one violates one's moral responsibilities whatever one does, but in fact, the problem is quite the opposite. In the present case, the relevant duties (to his mother, to the Resistance) are imperfect ones. One must be responsive to imperfect duties, but one is not strictly required to fulfill any particular ones. Thus the student can be autonomous whichever of these options he chooses. This does not, however, mean that "authenticity" is *all* that matters. The moral law restricts the *range* of choices. He cannot deceive his mother for the sake of her feelings, telling her that he is going to a desk job when he will really be going to the front. He cannot sign a pledge to join the Resistance and then back out when the going gets tough. He cannot join the Nazis and fight against the Resistance. But within the limits of the norms that he ought to impose on himself, there is still room for him to decide on his own destiny.

Here, again, Kant has something important to learn from existentialism. For Kant, (2) particulars can matter to identity, and mere inclination/happiness might not be the best way to think of them.

(3) Kant can teach existentialism: (4) particulars don't matter as much as morality.

One of the great insights of both existentialism and deconstruction is that much of what makes human life worth living cannot be reduced to any tidy formulae, that one must make choices about what to think, feel, and do that cannot be dictated by rules xxx. Or, rather, that insofar as one does choose what to think, feel, and do in accordance with rules, one is necessarily blind to something – whether, as for Sartre, something *in oneself*; or, as for Levinas, something *in others* – that transcends those rules. This attention to what cannot be reduced to rules, categories of the understanding, or publically-accessible language and concepts reflects a genuine contribution of broadly existentialist approaches to the self. But for all that, one must still think and act in the world. And knowing merely that one's rules and concepts underdetermine one's thoughts and choices does not actually help xxx. → normativity issue. xxx

But once we understand what it really *means* to be authentic, we can see that the apparent conflict between Kant and existentialism here is really only apparent, and we can use the existentialists' critiques of Kant to clarify and improve Kant's own conception of autonomy, rather than as a replacement or even supplement to it.⁴⁴

[[[xxxxxxxxx But xxx]]]

And here the existentialist emphasis on authenticity has something important to add to Kant's philosophy. When it comes to choosing *amongst* morally acceptable ends, Kant's emphasis is on happiness (both oneself and others') and perfection (especially one's own). He has a lot to say about this pursuit that is quite sophisticated (as we saw in chapter 6). But Kant does not sufficiently recognize the importance of manifesting one's freedom even with respect to not-strictly-moral choices. And existentialists rightly show that these sorts of choices can be extremely important for one's sense of oneself. Xxx come back to Sartre's classic e.g. xxx⁴⁵

A very real problem for Kant: For Kant, *moral* responsibility requires freedom, and Kant's *Religion* appeals to a fundamental choice of either a good or an evil will. Existentialists rightly point out, however, that we take ourselves to be "responsible" for much more than simply our moral status. Even if I recognize that marrying X or Y or choosing as career A or career B would be equally morally permissible, I am still held responsible (by myself and others) for my choice, and my choice, in some important sense, defines who I am without wholly eliminating the possibility of my "not being who I am." The challenge to Kant is how to make sense of this sort of non-moral responsibility, non-moral freedom. Kant's *argument* for practical freedom is based, quite specifically, on the conditions of possibility of *moral* responsibility (recall chapter 2, pp. xxx), so the mere sense that one is responsible is insufficient. One obvious move would be simply say that once we know we are morally free, we can extend this beyond the moral realmxxx.

Also a practical problem: how do we *decide* what to do when, as is always the case, the *categorical* imperative underdetermines our choice?

That said, Kant has something important to add to this existentialist emphasis. Xxx.

First, although this is a real problem for Kant, I think it important to point out that Kant's moral philosophy provides much better help, much better orientation, than the problem suggests. In

particular, Kant's transcendental analysis of volition shows that there is a fundamental difference in urgency between two sorts of choices. His intuitive example of the gallows (kpv, difference between the sense of choice in sex vs death and in perjury vs death) is helpful here. As important as it might seem – and really be – to choose the right partner(s) in love; the right career(s); the right balance of work, deep relationships, and raw pleasures; these choices are not as important as choices in which one must decide whether to do what is right or to forego moral requirements for the sake of other ends. Xxx tie to Williams vs. Herman xxx. Moreover, Kant rightly points out that even within the structure of morality, there is important room for choice. One has a imperfect duties to perfect one's talents and promote the welfare of others, but this general structure of duty does not tell a person whether to become a concert pianist, a subsistence farmer, a work-a-day paralegal with a vibrant social life, or a professional philosopher. Which of these careers one chooses will have immense impact on one's sense of oneself and the quality of one's life. But Kant insisted that all of these lives, if constructed in the context of an overall commitment to one's duties, would be good without limitation; any such life constitutes the supreme good for human being, irrespective of its specific form. Xxx note too here that it's not just the conformity to morality that has worth, but the *whole life* structured in conformity with duty...even our particular choices become autonomous because they are chosen as part of an overall moral plan xxx.

But what of authenticity, the existentialist "ideal" (if there is such a thing)? Here, I think, Kant's overall account offers a valuable antidote to the cult of authenticity that is so prevalent today. For Kant, something like authenticity is extremely important. Autonomy, like authenticity, involves governing oneself, refusing to let one's decisions be dictated by the "they," xxx. And for all of the content (albeit formal) that Kant gives his conception of autonomy, Kant – like existentialists – insists that merely following the categorical imperative is insufficient to be autonomous; one must do what is right *autonomously*, that is, one must will universally and respect the humanity of others *because one legislates this law to oneself*. For Kant, one who does what is morally required because it required by God, or one's society, or one's ultimate happiness, or, frankly, for any reason other than as an form of *self-command*, does not act autonomously and thus does not even really do what is morally required. In that sense, Kant's ethics of autonomy *is* an ethics of authenticity. But for Kant, this authenticity is limited in two important respects. First, one can only be authentic insofar as one acts morally. In that sense, a Kantian ethics of authenticity is action-guiding. Secondly, and relatedly, Kant's emphasis on autonomy rather than "authenticity" per se helps clarify precisely what about an authentic life is so important. Xxx helps avoid overemphasizing the crises of choices xxx also help[s] prevent the striving for authenticity in being counter-cultural or in constantly seeking to exert one's freedom *against* society or one's own previous choices. Xxx. ⁴⁶

8. Conclusion

So far, this chapter has described existentialism in terms of its most influential proponents, but existentialism is not merely an isolated philosophical theory espoused in mid-20th century Germany and France. Alongside the rise of naturalist approaches to understanding human beings, there has been an increased interest in the ways that existing human beings – oneself as well as others – transcend any attempted categorizations. Alongside the rise of universal charters of human rights and increasingly powerful social norms, there has been an emphasis on being "true-to-onself," in exploring individuality and rejecting mindless conformity to set rules. Increased wealth has brought a vast array of choices to those in the developed (rich) world, which has only heightened the dizzying angst in the face of our freedom. Our culture is largely defined by such existentialist emphases as the *relevance* of knowledge, *creativity* as the main form of freedom, *authenticity* as our highest ideal, and the *indefinability* of "human beings" as such.

The emergence of existentialism represents a profound challenge to, but also an important opportunity for, Kant's anthropology. The challenge comes in the existentialist rejection of autonomy as the paradigm sense of freedom. For Kant, "xxx all freedom follows a

law xxx” and, importantly, in both thought and action, the laws that one freely follows are a priori, universal, discoverable, and articulable. xxx

The opportunity comes with the felt need, to which Sartre draws especially acute attention, for norms guiding our thoughts and actions. Xxx Kant’s unique blend of universal norms and arbitrary choice allows him to make sense of the xxx while still xxx.

Kant’s own life as a model of moral, epistemically honest, existentialism. (20:44... his inclinations are not enough, since he knows he can rise above them, but he finds a way to situate them into life as a *moral* whole. Even here, though, because his contribution involves “research,” or reasoning, he is bound by epistemic standards, hence B-preface...choosing the dignity of humanity does not absolve him of the need to discern whether such a choice is allowed by *universal epistemic norms*...) Kant takes where he is, his particular situation, inclination, talents, etc., and transforms it xxx. Also mention marriage xxx.

“if you seek authenticity for authenticity’s sake, you are no longer authentic” (Sartre, Notebook Ethics, p. 4)

“*Good* habits: They are never good, because they are habits” ((Sartre, Notebook Ethics, p. 4, cf. Kant MM)

Works.

Sartre secondary source?

deBeauvoir, The Ethics of Authenticity

Cooper, *Existentialism*

Heidegger, Being and Time

Basic Works (ed. Krell, see especially “Letter on Humanism”)

Kaufman, Walter. xxx

Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception

Safranski, Heidegger

Sartre, Existentialism is a humanism

Being and Nothingness

Notebook for an Ethics

Solomon, Robert. Xxx.

¹ Or at least, of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms. Xxx add obligatory footnote here, note that I’ll use “kierkegaard” to refer to his pseudonyms throughout this chapter.

² These are not mutually exclusive. Xxx.

³ Include in text?: My son’s school is “15 minutes away,” because that is how long it takes me to drive there under normal conditions, etc.

⁴ Kant’s explanation is that “the *abundance* of objects seen (villages and farmhouses) produces in our memory the deceptive conclusion that a vast amount of space has been covered and, consequently, that a longer period of time necessary for this purpose has also passed.”

⁵ Kant uses this spatial example as an analogy for an even more interesting temporal one, “the phenomenon that a human being who has tortured himself with boredom for the greatest part of his life, so that every day seemed long to him, nevertheless complains at the end of his life about the *brevity* of life” (7: 234).

⁶ Include?: as well as to how one should properly analyze phenomena that appear from-within as already integrated into practical-sensory-rational wholes.

⁷ Within his empirical psychology, Kant does claim that cognitions precede feelings and volitions, but these cognitions need not be “objective” in the sense relevant here. Moreover, while there are, for Kant, some cognitions that are not conjoined with feelings or desires, many (perhaps most) cognitions are part of a causal series that culminates in a volition, and in these cases, one’s lived experience may well be primarily of the cognition-feeling-volition complex; only for experimental psychologists dissecting human mental states will the separation and causal relations emerge clearly.

⁸ What one finds, “initially and for the most part” (to use Heidegger’s terminology), are coherent, integrated experiences that are both conceptual and sensible, that already include what Kant will distinguish as concepts and intuitions.

⁹ The details of Kant’s account here are scrutinized by Heidegger in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, where Heidegger argues that xxx. While a full response to this Heideggerian reading of Kant would be worthwhile, it is beyond the scope of this chapter. (For some first attempts, see xxx and xxx.)

¹⁰ We might even put this in terms of a sort of experiment: Granted that Kant can allow that cognition, volition, and feeling are often and perhaps usually connected, how can we decide whether they are in fact distinguishable, as Kant claims, or whether they are indistinguishable, as the existentialists claim? If Kant is correct, but not if the existentialists are correct, then we would expect to find cases in which we find cognition without relation to our desires or practical purposes. And it looks like we do find this in many theoretical sciences.

¹¹ **Brian: Include some form of this in text?** xxx Sartre’s warm water example and note how Kant is actually more insightful here...there is something non-arbitrary about preferring the thermometer...but what? Intersubjectivity? (Yes, partly.) More importantly, though, Kant is interested in developing a response to *both* rationalists who thought we could understand things-in-themselves *and* Berkeleyan idealists who thought that all that we have access to are mere illusions, mere ideas. And while post-Kantian – including Hegelian as well as existentialist – ways of avoiding these extremes involve *eliminating* distinctions (between ideas and objects, for instance, via the notion of intentionality), Kant’s approach is to *introduce* a new distinction, between mere ideas, *objects*, and things-in-themselves. And this actually seems to get the thermometer case just right. The point here is that the apparent coldness of the water is something that merely appears to me. It is not a property of the object distinct from the particular way that that object appears to me in this particular moment. The temperature, as measured by the thermometer, *is* a property – or at least, is measuring a property – of the object distinct from me, even if not from my particular humanity. This is *why* measured temperature is more intersubjectively valid than felt temperature. And it is only this sense of “objective” that can make sense of why one would posit an objective-subjective distinction. Xxx also how/why science progresses (or changes) the way it does...aiming for, even if not achieving, this sort of particular-subject-independent knowledge. xxx

¹² The insufficiency can be explained

(2) can we *really* have any cognition at all without any interest? E.g. would we be able to pick out different objects if we didn’t do so with purposes in mind? Link back to science as just as contingent on free projects as anything else xxx → Kant agrees that we cannot, but he sharply distinguishes between the pure interests of theoretical reason as such (for systematic completeness of judgments) and other *practical* interests, whether moral or hedonic. → discussion of difference in emphasis.

The previous two paragraphs both point out that the difference between Kant and existentialism is largely a difference of emphasis: existentialists focus on the from-within perspective of everyday, lived experience of the world; Kant focuses – at least in his *Critique of*

Pure Reason – on a sort of “experience” of the world that emphasizes its objective character, the sort of experience that is central to science. One way of putting the existentialist challenge to Kant, then, is in terms of whether or not it is appropriate to privilege the sort of knowing characteristic of science. Xxx defend Kant here in terms of (1) ways that people can get things wrong...there does seem to be a difference between getting something wrong by having the wrong volitions and getting something wrong by having the wrong cognitions. What Kant is interested in doing is isolating the cognitive dimension of everyday life and thinking about an activity of knowing that is governed wholly by these epistemic norms. Importantly, for Kant, this will involve two important components: first, freeing our thinking from merely practical concerns, since these are, relative to knowing
(2) why did/does science arise? Why do we ever move beyond table and chairs to electrons?

(Note even true for sciences: BN 275: “the scientist is *concerned* [my emphasis] only with establishing pure external relations”)

(3) note too a more fundametnal difference in method...Kant is not a phenomenologist, and he actually distrusts purportedly pure intuitions. He is a transcendental philosopher. Thus looking at from-within perspective is not so much a matter of trying to look really hard at what it “feels” like from-within, but taking our ordinary judgment and thinking of them as claims that we believe and asking why, that is, how do our justificatory practices work and what underlies them (as opposed to introspection or empirical psychology). xxx
(4) note emphasis on universality, “understanding of all men” (24:187), cf. Mental illness paper. Xxx → note that in this sense, Kant’s project is deliberately anti-authentic...not trying to get to one’s ownmostxxx.

¹³ For one thing, it is not clear that the provisional objectivity that seems to underlie both scientific explanation and ordinary being-in-the-world really applies to Heidegger’s paradigm case of using a hammer.

asdf (1) does this sort of analysis really apply to the sort of knowledge that one has of a hammer when one is using it? It might. Arguably, the objective knowledge that one comes to have of the hammer when it breaks is knowledge that was implicit but not fully conscious in one’s use of the hammer. Just as one is not always *conscious* of the principle of causation when one experiences objective succession, one might not be conscious of the objective spatial properties of the hammer when one uses it. But one’s lived use of that hammer can be made sense of only by seeing it xxx. This approach could potentially bear fruit, but even if it does not, one might still see Kant’s approach as providing an adequate account of a certain *kind* of knowing, the one most traditionally considered “knowledge” and identified, for instance, with something like Aristotelian episteme. Heidegger might then be seen as exposing a different sort of relationship with the world, one more or less implicated in Kantian “cognition” but not Kantian “knowledge,” and there would then be need for thinking about the conditions of possibility of the sort of “knowledge” involved in xxx *techne* xxx. Such an account might not be *reducible* to Kant’s, but it need not contradict Kant’s account of more self-conscious “knowledge” of objects. → difference in emphasis. xx

¹⁴ (in that it is not an “object” for looking *at* but something for working *with*)

¹⁵ Similarly, for Sartre, xxx science as bad faith. xxx

¹⁶ “True,” here, in a familiar but deeply anti-existentialist sense. Recall Kierkegaard’s claim that “subjectivity is truth.” (See his great story in CUP of the one who went around town saying “The world is not flat” to prove that he was sane.) xxx

¹⁷ *Kant and the problem of metaphysics*. For the quotation, see english p. 103, german 148.

¹⁸ See chapters two and three for details on Kant's insistence upon irreducible pluralism of understanding and sensibility.

¹⁹ **Include? (See later footnote below):**

Finally, all forms of existentialism emphasis, in different ways, the Infinity or inscrutability of what is most originary (either one's freedom or the Other), and thus call into question the order and rationalism of Kant's anthropology.

²⁰ Also calls into question Kant's ethics in a very similar way. Xxx quotes re: ethical choices are not made in abstract (cf. Notebook and BN quotes) xxx

²¹ spontaneity

²² For Kierkegaard, of course, "faith" is tied to religion, and to Christianity in particular. The incomprehensible infinite is "the god" (PF) or even the "God" of Abraham. But Kierkegaard's God is not the medieval God xxx. Closer to the awesome infinity of Nietzsche's ocean, what is left over once we kill off everything comprehensible and stable about God. In that

²³ It is freedom which is the foundation of all essences since man reveals intra-mundane essences by suppassing the world towards its own possibilities" (567)

²⁴ Here again, Kierkegaard paves the way by proposing a "teleological suspension of the ethical" in which one "xxx puts individual ahead of universal xxx." But Sartre's approach is more typical.

²⁵ There is another important but secondary existentialist critique of Kant's limitations on freedom. As we saw in chapter four, Kant's account of radical evil posits that our evil choices xxx. In contrast, Sartre insists that "There is no inertia in consciousness" (BN 104) and that "This implies for consciousness the permanent possibility of effecting a rupture with its own past." (BN 563). That is, for Kant our radical evil implies that, regardless of the particular decisions that we might make now, there is a sort of inertia that prevents us from being wholly good (in the sense of morally faultless), not only in our life as a whole but even in our particular actions in the future. For Sartre, by contrast, there is no such limitation of present freedom. In this case, Kant not only has two possible responses to Sartre but even seems to explicitly employ both at various times in his account of radical evil. On the one hand, Kant rejects Sartre's account, for two reasons. First, he takes one's past misdeeds to reflect one's character, a character ascribable to one's choice but a character that persists throughout one's life. Thus past misdeeds indicate, for Kant, an underlying structure of one's faculty of choice, an one will choose in accordance with that structure. Second, Kant notes – and he is clearly right about this – that our choices often effect changes in our condition that prevent us from even properly reflecting on future choices, such that the free capacities that might have been able to effect a rupture are bypassed are subdued by prior exercises of those capacities. On the other hand, however, Kant – with Sartre – insists that human beings are always capable of rebelling against their own radical evil. xxx

²⁶ "I am condemned to be free" (568)

No limits to freedom can be found except freedom itself" (568, but note radically different meaning from Kant!)

The indispensable and fundamental condition of all action is the freedom of the acting being" (BN 563, cf. next few pages re: Sartrean version of incorporation thesis.)

²⁷ In this respect, Kant's response to Sartre differs significantly from that of Christine Korsgaard (and other recent kantians.) we will discuss Korsgaard's view in detail in the following chapter.

²⁸ Unconditional (Kant's term) or infinite (Levinas's term) obligation is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom, what makes our freedom known to us (see 5: 5n). (For Levinas, of course, it is also the *ratio essendi*.)

²⁹ **xxxInclude?** To some extent, Kant and Levinas can actually accommodate one another. Kant insists that his analysis of obligation in terms of autonomous and universal obligation is the imposition of a philosophical "formula" on a "common moral cognition" that is more often felt than described in rational terms. And Levinas admits that once "the third" becomes a factor, Reason is required in order to do justice to the Other(s) with whom one is faced. Thus one might see Kant as providing the best rational reconstruction of how do deal with the world in which one faces, not merely *an* Other, but others, while Levinas might be seen as offering the best account of the originary moral experience. Such a rapprochement would, however, please neither side. Levinas's insistence upon the importance of the third is a call to constantly revisit every possible formula of morality, every attempt at justice; while Kant is precisely trying to give a philosophical analysis of our originary moral experience, one that he takes to be – against Levinas – fundamentally universal and autonomous.

³⁰ Levinas's critique here has two main aspects that should, I think, be dealt with separately. There, first, Levinas's insistence that the *Other* rather than the *Self* is originary, that responsibility precedes freedom, that ethics precedes metaphysics.

³¹ But not for Derrida. See *Gift of Death*, where literally *every* other is every bit other. Derrida explicitly includes "my cat" as an incomprehensible other, but presumably must include even a river, a star, a crystal, an earthworm, a old abandoned tractor, a new nanoparticle, etc. xxx

³² While disagreeing in important ways with Levinas, however, Kant actually provides, with respect to others, what seems to be a very compelling alternative to the dynamic at play between Heidegger, Sartre, and Levinas.

Unlike Heidegger, being-with-others is not an inevitable but problematically inauthentic form of being, but a *moral ambition*. Kant certainly fails, vis a vis Heidegger, in insufficiently attending to the role of "the they" in heteronomous motivation (though cf. religion book III 6: xxx, re: community and the need for moral community). But Kant develops an inspiring account of what a truly autonomous – and in that sense truly authentic (though non-unique) – being-with-others would be like. In the realm of ends, one's identity is always and for the most part defined in terms of the expectations of others, but one takes into account only the *legitimate* expectations of others, and the legitimacy of these expectations is established *autonomously by oneself but always at the same time in community with others*. For Heidegger's standpoint, the emphasis on universality and interchangeability undermines the authenticity of this standpoint, but (as we saw in the last section), there is no reason to think xxx.

Against Sartre, Kant does not see being-for-another as, in itself, an objectivizing loss of freedom. The look of another *can* be an objectivizing look, but it can also be a look that treats one as an end-in-itself (even if also treating one as a means, but not a *mere* means). The "look" is not a categorization of another, but an invitation to xxx.

³³ Compare this great passage from Derrida: xxx **Should I put this in text somewhere? xxx**

"As soon as I enter into a relation with the other, with the gaze, look, request, love, command, or call of the other, I know that I can respond only by sacrificing ethics, that is, by sacrificing whatever obliges me to also respond, in the same way, in the same instant, to all the others . . . By preferring my work, simply by giving it my time and attention, by preferring my activity as a citizen or as a professorial and professional philosopher, writing and speaking here in a public language, French in my case, I am perhaps fulfilling my duty. But I am sacrificing and betraying at every moment all my other obligations: my obligations to other others whom I know or don't know, the billions of my fellows (without mentioning the animals...), my fellows who are dying of starvation or sickness. I

betray my fidelity or my obligations to other citizens, to those who don't speak my language and to whom I neither speak nor respond . . ." (Derrida, *Gift of Death*, 68-9)

³⁴ This commandment is taken from Luke xxx; the initial sources are xxx and Deuteronomy xxx

³⁵ As in the case of Kant, Levinas and Derrida *need not* slip into merely fantastic ethical prescriptions. But at least in the case of those two thinkers, xxxx. (When Levinas actually turns to concrete examples of ethical engagement, Kant's suspicion of this sort of danger seems, in fact, to be justified. Xxx flesh out. Xxx **put in text—separate ¶ -- or in footnote?**)

The situation is even worse when one includes committed Nazis like Heidegger and Paul de Man into the ranks of the heteronomous existentialists. xxx

³⁶ **Asdfxx Include as a final part of this subsection?**

Finally, one last existentialist critique is shared in common between Sartre and heteronomous existentialists, and that is an embracing of the inscrutable, unknowable "infinity" that structures our most fundamental experiences. In the context of Sartre, this is an infinite transcendence of the for-itself over its situation; for Levinas, it is the infinite otherness of the other and thereby our infinite responsibility *to* that other.

A last point: infinity, irreducibility, inscrutability, etc.

"The boy was faced with the choice of leaving for England and joining the Free French Forces – that is, leaving his mother behind – or remaining with his mother and helping her to carry on Who could help him choose? . . . Who can decide *a priori*? Nobody. No book of ethics can tell him. The Kantian ethics says, "Never treat any person as a means, but as an end." Very well, if I stay with my mother, I'll treat her as an end and not as a means; but by virtue of this very fact, I'm running the risk of treating the people around me who are fighting, as a means; and, conversely, if I go to join those who are fighting, I'll be treating them as an end, and by doing that, I run the risk of treating my mother as a means." (Sartre, *Existentialism*, 24-26).

Three claims must be distinguished here. First, there is the claim that the root of our most fundamental moral (and epistemic) convictions is pre-linguistic or not itself articulated. Second, there is the claim that this root is in principle *inarticulable*, such that any formula – such as Kant's categorical imperative – that aims to articulate the principle will always fall short of xxx. Third, there is the claim that this root is inarticulable in the stronger sense that any articulation of it is not only limited but in some way *untrue* to it (or unfaithful to it, or violent, or xxx). It is important to see that this claim does not follow from the previous sense of inarticulability. It is entirely possible that any articulation of xxx could fall short of describing the fullness of xxx without thereby being false of it. When someone says of me that I am a philosophy professor, they say something true of me, but do not exhaust everything that I am. Similarly, one might argue that Kant's articulation of the moral law is true in that in order to be morally good, an action must proceed from a maxim that conforms to that moral law. But one might insist that there are further requirements for good action that are not reflected in Kant's formula, and might even argue that *no* formula could *ever* fully describe what is necessary. Thus no articulation of

the moral law would be *sufficient* to xxx, but some might still be *necessary* and, in that sense, completely true of xxx even if not true of xxx in its completeness.

The first of these claims – that there is an inarticulate root of the moral law – is one with which Kant entirely agrees, and it poses no significant threat to his transcendental anthropology. KpV footnote, tie to Kant’s early *Inquiry* point. Xxx The second, stronger point – that the root is *inarticulate* – is more complicated to assess. Kant was initially drawn to a position much like this, xxx *inquiry* xxx. But he later rejected it, in part because he desperately *wanted* to find “xxx some fixed bank xxx,” but primarily because he believed himself to have actually *found* a formula that was true to the fundamental feeling of moral obligation while still having determinate (but wide) content. xxx But even in Kant’s mature moral philosophy, the notion of respect for the moral law opens up room for an aspect of moral action that is, strictly speaking, inarticulate. Kant does not think that action *contrary* to the moral law can be motivated by respect (see 4:xxx), but even if one acts in accordance with the moral law, one’s action might not have moral worth, if it is not properly motivated. Xxx footnote re: kpv on respect. Xxx also discuss how this approach can help solve the motivational overdetermination problem. The right response here might well be for Kantians to acknowledge something like a sartrean/derridian point. In cases of overdetermination, there are just two different ways of being, and precisely because of the overdetermination problem, there is no clear way of articulating which is “really” the motive . . . but it still matters.

The third point is the one that is most serious for Kant, since it would imply that the moral law is not merely limited but false/unjust/violent. (1) re: false... a Sartrean argument: once we recognize that there must be a *freie Willkuhr* to make us responsible for evil, then it seems up to us whether or not to be moral. (in response, note (a) sartre himself moves away from this in notebooks; (b) Kant’s response: moral responsibility always shows up as privileged, a quasi-levinasian point; (c) korsgaard’s argument – also Kant’s – that there is a necessary connection between freedom and morality, see problema in kpv) (2) why should we think this? Counter-examples (Nazi at the door case, . . . it just seems wrong sometimes). (3) Levinas’s totalizing objection: subsuming another under a category or categorical principle is violent to them (one thought too many). All of these objections have some weight, but both also fall into precisely the sort of abstract reasoning that deconstructive approaches to ethics/the self are trying to get rid of. Really, these arguments are just ways of highlighting what shows up in concrete face-to-face interactions with others, where the abstract formalism of the moral law seems not only limited, but wrong, or even wrong *because* it is limited.

Kant’s response: similar to re: Kuhn . . . (1) bite the bullet → essay on “right to lie” and anthro lecture re: wives . . . it might *seem* like CI is wrong here, but it’s really our feelings here that are wrong.

(2) make it fit – e.g. showing that people need to be valued for who they are, not reduced to categories, and thus making such attentive respect an imperfect (or perhaps even a perfect) duty, a way of respecting them. Given Levinas’s own abstract formulations of this, it seems almost unavoidable that one will totalize even when arguing against totalizing, but one can be self-aware of that, and be self-aware *for ethical reasons*, and xxx.

(3) retreat into more basic categories.

there is an increasing (and correct) tendency among kantians today to downplay the specific importance of the formulations of the moral law in favor of more general ideals of respect for the humanity of others, freedom and autonomy, etc. One could then move Kant in a more Derridian direction while still taking CI to be a good approximation that requires continual refinement and while taking Kant’s moral philosophy to be drawing attention to features of human life that are important for action.

(4) give up the ghost . . . embrace a more historical and deconstructive approach . . . take Kant's transcendental anthropology of desire as an articulation of a particular stance, one still largely dominant today . . . and then . . . what?

37

End with issue of normativity again...Sartre really realizes Korsgaard's point re: naturalism, that it can't help us decide, but he gives no way of deciding either! – the unfinished work.

Derrida, too, fails to deliver here.

Heidegger barely tries.

Levinas does the most, but his ethics ends up being pretty lame, a sort of utilitarianism with a different tone

And note that we can get much of this tone while still keeping kantian normativity. Xxx. Note that this is also true re: Sartrean epistemology (make parallel to Sartre's point about dishonesty re: freedom . . . if there are certain universal and necessary structures of cognition, we can embrace those while still being honest about the fact that they are true only because we make them true, such that their "necessity" is an anthropological one, it is something that *we* need to do . . . and this is just what Kant's Copernican turn is!)

³⁸ (note how this is left open in Heidegger, and explicit in Sartre, cf. especially humanism and later ethics notebooks)

³⁹ Kant discusses egoism in detail in his anthropology (7:128-9) and lectures on logic:

[Logical] egoism is . . . when one holds that he alone judges rationally, that no one else is in a position to judge something or better to be able to have insight into it. . . . [But] one cannot be certain whether one has judged rightly or not if one has not compared his judgments with the judgments of others and tested them on the understanding of others. For a cognition is not correct when it agrees with my private understanding but when it agrees with the universal laws of the understanding of all men. (Bloomberg Logic 24:187)

⁴⁰ **Xxx Include?** The "experience" for which Kant's first *Critique* provides the conditions of possibility is not the experience of isolated individuals. Kant consistently uses the first person *plural* in the first *Critique*: "objects must conform to *our* cognition" (B xvi) or "objects conform to *our* way of representing" (Bxx) or "all *our* cognition begins with experience" (B1). These are not, it turns out, mere stylistic features of his work. Nor does Kant intend the work to apply only to a small "club" of philosophers covered by his magisterial "we." Rather, the point of the use of the first person plural in the first *Critique* is tied to Kant's long-standing concern with egoism. The only sort of *Critique* that can truly ground objective knowledge of the world must be a *social Critique*, one that can itself be criticized and refined by others.

⁴¹ Aesthetic feelings are a special case, governed by universal but indeterminate "laws," xxx.

⁴² See for instance, "What is Enlightenment?" and *Perpetual Peace*.

⁴³ See the great dialogue between Matthieu and his brother re: marriage in *Age of Reason* . xxx insert somewhere? xxx

⁴⁴ Contrast Hanna NDPR review. xxx

⁴⁵ Kant does provide some important resources for thinking about how to make choices amongst morally permissible alternatives. Most basically, Kant argues that the "highest good" for human beings is not merely a life of virtue, but a life of virtue *plus happiness*. When one seeks to choose amongst xxx. In this respect, of course, Kant's overall transcendental account of volition seems, even if more helpful for making actual choices, much lamer than the existentialists. Surely the choice of one's life is not a mere matter of trying to tally up the life that will have the greatest probability of the most pleasures over time, within the constraints of the moral law. Unfortunately, Kant often does speak this way. Xxx note how pragmatic anthropology enriches this, but still within the same basic paradigm. Xxx Fortunately, however, Kant's claims about the impossibility of ever knowing with certainty what will make a person happy can be extended in a more fruitful direction. For Kant xxx

judgment → aesthetic approach to life, note that aesthetic freedom is more like existentialist freedom (not rule governed, constantly revisable, xxx).

⁴⁶ There is, alas, a difficult tension between two strands of Kant's moral philosophy here. On the one hand, Kant rightly insists on autonomy at the center of moral agency. It is by virtue of laws *that we give ourselves* that we can be morally good. And this brings Kant close to an emphasis on authenticity. On the other hand, though, Kant insists that moral responsibility nothing particularly fancy, not a privilege of a few, xxx. This suggests that common folk simply incorporating and acting on the proper moral norms of their society – of the “they” – can have good wills. This might fit with claims, like Heidegger's that we are “always and for the most part” inauthentic, but it also seems to drive a particularly sharp wedge between authenticity and autonomy. In fact, the conflict with existentialism need not be as acute as this dilemma makes it seem. Existentialist authenticity (even Kierkegaard's) need not require acting *against* the dictates of the “they.” Authenticity is *adverbial*, a matter of *how* to choose, not *what* to choose. The ideal model, for Kant, might well incorporate this; even the most simply peasant can choose to do the right thing because it is the right thing, and in choosing it *in this light*, rather than merely because it is what is expected by the public, or what one's neighbor would do, xxx.